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THE REVIEW

Separated unto the Gospel of God

By Pastor Al Harris, Moderator IBFNA

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1).

The doctrine of separation is neglected today in most circles. The political correctness of society has silenced many churches, Christian colleges, and Christian institutions, softening their stance on the doctrine of holiness and its application to the life of a believer. But separation is the natural practice and belief of those who choose to follow God.

Paul stated that he was *separated unto* the gospel of God. For Paul, separation was not something that was negative. It was the glorious truth of the greatness of God. Something changed in the heart of Paul when he met the Lord on the road to Damascus. His intention of finding Christians who followed Jesus Christ and of putting them in chains was changed. When the light of God’s glory shone from heaven and he fell to the earth, Paul asked, “Who art thou, Lord?” He was sincere in his worship as a Pharisee, but on this day he learned that his sincerity was misguided. He met the Lord in all his glory, and he submitted himself to God.

Paul now began to seek to know the Lord. He went to the street called *Straight* to find the house of Judas to wait for one whom God would send. Ananias came and revealed the Lord to him, and Paul put his faith in Christ alone. Paul’s seeking to know the Lord led him into the wilderness of Arabia for 3 years to be taught of the Lord (Gal. 1:15-17).

The life of Paul evidences this same attitude. Paul sought to please the Lord and preach His Word. He endured great hardship, persecution, and even stoning, without ceasing to proclaim the Word of God. Paul’s own testimony records, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but



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dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. That I may know him" (Phil. 3:7-10a.).

But this truth is expressed in many ways in the Bible. Abraham was called to follow God to a land he had never seen. Would Abraham separate unto God? What would this desire to follow God mean? Rahab chose to hide the spies of Israel, believing that the God of Israel was the true God. Her choice to separate unto God would determine her whole future. Joshua called the people of Israel to "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Josh. 24:15). They would make this choice based upon what they knew of God from having conquered the promise land under the leadership of God. Elijah asked Israel, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, then follow him: but if Baal, then follow

him" (1 Kings 18:21). God demonstrated His power that day by sending fire from heaven and defeating the prophets of Baal.

These illustrations can be multiplied many times. The point is that God has revealed Himself in His Word. To separate unto Him is to desire to know Him and to follow His Word and His will. When I began dating my wife at college, I could stand on the steps of the dining hall and watch all the students come to eat. But out of that mass of students, I could find my girlfriend. When I asked her to marry me, I was separating myself unto her. I did not bemoan the fact that there were so many other girls on campus that I could not date. That attitude would reveal half-heartedness at best. Did my love for my wife separate me from others? Yes it did. But it did so because of how precious she is to me. If separation has become old-hat to you, or if you have considered it a negative doctrine, then perhaps you need to be reminded about what it means to be separated unto God and all His glory.

A. C. Dixon

By Pastor John Ashbrook*

**Editor's note: This article is adapted from one by the author originally published in the Visitor. Pastor John Ashbrook was the Pastor of Bible Community Church of Mentor, Ohio for over 40 years. Though not a Baptist, he was a friend of Baptist separatists and personally known and loved by many of the founding members of the IBFNA. Used by permission from Here I Stand Books (www.hereistand.com).*

Amzi Clarence Dixon; now there's a name! Perhaps that is why history knows him as A. C. Dixon. A. C. Dixon was Baptist all the way through. The son of a Baptist preacher, he was educated at Wake Forest and later sat at the feet of the great Baptist professor, John A. Broadus.

He pastored several churches in North Carolina and then worked his way north to Baltimore, Brooklyn, Boston, Chicago's Moody Church, and overseas to Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle, where he spent eight years. Along the way he found time to be a delegate to the World's Sunday School Convention in London in 1889 and to preach with D. L. Moody in his World's Fair Evangelistic Campaign.

In the era when fundamentalism was being defined, Dixon was always known as a fundamentalist, a strong premillennialist, and a vocal opponent of Darwin and higher criticism. On a preaching trip to California in 1909, he met

Lyman Stewart, President of the Union Oil Company, who had a burden for publishing fundamentalist literature. Through that contact Dixon became the editor of *The Fundamentals*, a task he relinquished about halfway through the series when he took the pastorate of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London.

While pastoring in London, Dixon authored an article for the series titled, "The Scriptures." He affirmed: "The Bible is literature written by the command of God, under the guidance of God, and preserved by the providential care of God." He then presented a biblical definition of the Bible, of its proper use, of how it should be studied, and of the right motive for that study.

His ten-year ministry in Brooklyn was in the former pulpit of Henry Ward Beecher, one of the winsome liberals of that day. Dixon corrected the false teaching of Beecher in no uncertain terms. He was active in the battle against modernism in the Northern Baptist Convention. He was one of the speakers at the pre-convention conference in 1920, which sought to rally the fundamentalists. He was a founder of the Baptist Bible Union, along with T. T. Shields, W. B. Riley, and J. Frank Norris. Despite the great names, that group failed to take a clear-cut separatist position. They ministered in a day when fundamentalism was still trying to win the battle from within denominations.

There is one tragic thing about the ministry of

A. C. Dixon. He did not end as he had begun. In his final years, after his second marriage to the widow of songwriter Charles Alexander, he simply gave up the fight. He resigned his leadership position within the Baptist Bible Union in February, 1925, which proved to be the year of his death when he suffered a heart attack the following June, one month before the infamous Scopes Trial. Modernists used Dixon's resignation against the fundamentalist cause. David Beale, in his *In Pursuit of Purity*, writes:

"Dixon, like many other Fundamentalists, fought the good fight almost to the midnight hour of his life, then virtually gave up the militant stance. . . A. C. Dixon was simply becoming more mellow. W. B. Riley himself described the aging Dixon as a man who loved and preached all the great doctrines, but who was becoming 'remote from contention'" [Dr. Beale quotes from Riley's "Why the Baptist Bible Union?" *Western Recorder*, May 3, 1923, p. 9; see *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986), pp. 222-225, for Dr. Beale's treatment of A. C. Dixon.]

May God give us the staying power to persevere to the end in contending for the faith! "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

A Brief Survey of Fundamentalist History

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

The history of the battle between right and wrong extends back to the fall of Genesis 3. God was right; Satan was wrong; and Adam and Eve

tried to fit into the middle somewhere. When they did they became wrong too. This brief survey of fundamentalist history takes a look at the

recent part of this struggle of the ages, which gave rise in American church history to the term *Christian fundamentalism*. That term needs to be better understood and embraced by God's people.

With this first article, I would like to note the beginnings of fundamentalism – what gave rise to the term and its movement. Fundamentalism is to Protestantism what Protestantism was to Catholicism. When the New Testament church apostatized into the theological monstrosity we know today as the Roman Catholic Church, God raised up the Protestants. When the Protestant denominations apostatized away from the orthodox doctrines of New Testament Christianity, God raised up the fundamentalists. I would like to note two factors of this apostasy of Protestantism, which called for a response from fundamentalists: evolution and religious pragmatism.

Origins and Fundamentalism

It is not far off the mark to say that the origin of fundamentalism as an orthodox response to Protestant apostasy extends back to the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859). Acceptance of evolution is negatively correlated with the acceptance of the supernatural realities of biblical Christianity. Where you have more of one, you have less of the other. Soon after Darwin, Protestant theologians, especially German ones, began to question the supernatural origin of the text of Scripture under the scrutiny of their often contradictory evolutionary hypotheses for how the Bible and the religion of Israel came to be.

These seminary teachers concluded that the sophisticated monotheism found in the Old Tes-

tament, beginning with the very first pages of Genesis, was impossible until a period of human evolution much later than Moses's time. Consequently, the books of Moses, what we call *the Pentateuch* (Genesis through Deuteronomy), had to come from a period of time much later than Moses. That idea undermined the authenticity of the Bible, which teaches that Moses wrote these books.

So modern man's rejection of the authenticity of the Old Testament can be traced in part to a number of scholarly tomes in a category of biblical studies called *higher criticism*, which drew conclusions from this evolutionary approach to the Old Testament. The best known of these was published in 1878 and translated into English soon after as *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* by Julius Wellhausen. One of the critical conclusions of this approach to the Old Testament was the assumption that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because archeological research had shown that writing had not yet been developed in Moses's time. The earliest evidence of writing available to Wellhausen was the Moabite Stone of Mesha, king of Moab, which dates from about 850 B. C.

However, within a generation of Wellhausen's work, archaeology uncovered prolific evidence of ancient writing, usually on stone tablets, dating as far back as 3500 B. C., well before the time of Moses (ca. 1500 B. C.). The archaeological site of Nippur is about 100 miles southeast of Baghdad. There archaeologists even found a Sumerian flood narrative dating back to about 2100 B. C. Wellhausen is long gone, and the archeological and evolutionary bases of his theories are

too, but those theories still continue to provide the historical foundation for the approach of many apostate Protestants to the Bible today. They see it as a merely human production, full of errors, and not to be trusted as the infallible Word of God to man.

Fundamentalism arose as a response to this denial of the Word of God within Protestantism. One example of this response is the work of William Henry Green. He was the Professor of Biblical and Oriental Literature at Princeton Seminary for nearly fifty years, who defended the unity and authenticity of the Old Testament in his *Unity of the Book of Genesis* (1895) and *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (1896). The lines were drawn and the battle within Protestantism between orthodoxy and heterodoxy began to rage. Dr. Green said of this battle against the higher critical theories: "There can be no impropriety in subjecting novelties to careful scrutiny, before we adopt conclusions at war with our most cherished convictions and with what we hold to be well-established truths"

[<http://www.thisday.pcahistory.org/tag/william-henry-green-1825-1900>; accessed 2/2/2015].

In the year Dr. Green's second book was published, the faculty of Princeton Seminary honored their colleague for his years of service. One of the invited guests, Dr. Theodore Cuyler, a classmate of Dr. Green's 1846 graduating class at Princeton, said of his friend and co-laborer: "William Henry Green, illustrious and beloved classmate, to you, more than to any other living man, Princeton has entrusted her standard of purity, truth, and unwavering loyalty to the sacred Word. Right gal-

lantly hast thou borne it aloft in many a hard conflict.

"At the close of the day of Agincourt, King Henry rode over the field and came upon a standard-bearer bleeding to death, the standard still grasped in his hand. The king knighted him on the spot. And when the last hour comes for our beloved friend – and distant, far distant, be the hour when it shall come – he will be found lying on the battlefield for Christ, holding the snow-white standard of Princeton in his hand; and the King of Kings will crown him with glory and honor" ["Our Fellow-Student," *Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Appointment of Professor William Henry Green As Instructor in Princeton Theological Seminary May 5, 1896* (New York: Scribners, 1896), 71]. W. Henry Green fought the fundamentalist fight before men were called fighting fundamentalists.

Finney Pragmatism

There was a second phenomenon within American Protestantism that called for a faithful response. Charles G. Finney was a popular evangelist who ministered with great numerical success in churches, primarily in New York and New England, in the middle part of the 19th century. He died in 1875 after a long teaching career. He authored *An Autobiography*, a *Systematic Theology*, and *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*.

Finney was ordained a Presbyterian minister, an ordination that required adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith. When asked during his examination whether he believed the Confession, he said he did in spite of the fact that he had not read much of it. He wrote of the occasion, "When they had examined me, they voted

unanimously to license me to preach. Unexpectedly to myself, they asked me if I received the confession of faith of the Presbyterian church. I had not examined it—that is, the large work containing the catechism and confession. This had made no part of my study. I replied that I received it for substance of doctrine, so far as I understood it. But I spoke in a way that plainly implied, I think, that I did not pretend to know much about it. However, I answered honestly, as I understood it at the time” [*Charles G Finney: An Autobiography* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1876), 51].

That dishonest form of “honesty” is Finney pragmatism. Just as serious were Finney’s theological errors. He called the doctrine of imputation, the truth that the righteousness of Christ is ours although our nature is still sinful (Rom. 4:6), “theological fiction” [*Autobiography*, 56]. He denied original sin, the truth that we inherit the sinful nature of Adam and the consequences of his sin (Rom. 5:12). Finney’s complaint against this biblical doctrine was that reason did not affirm it [*Autobiography*, 339].

This pragmatism and doctrinal error infected Finney’s revival ministry. He did not believe that a revival was a miracle of God’s Spirit. He believed that a miracle required a divine interference that set aside the laws of nature. He said that because the laws of nature and of the mind of man are not set aside in revival, it therefore is not a miracle. Nor should revival be seen as somehow above nature. He wrote, “There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature. It consists entirely in the *right exercise* of the powers of nature” [*Lectures on Revival in Religion* (Boston: Jewett, 1858), 12; emphasis origi-

nal]. Paul taught differently, of course: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Salvation is a supernatural miracle of God’s Holy Spirit called *regeneration* or *the new birth* (John 3:5-8). Man’s nature is dead in trespasses and sin and cannot regenerate itself (Eph. 2:1). That dead nature must be made alive by God’s grace in union with Christ by His Spirit (Eph. 2:4-5).

This reliance on the powers of man’s nature brought spiritual destruction to large parts of the Protestantism of the northeast in the wake of Finney’s revivals. Many churches plunged into the darkness of skepticism and unbelief as phony Finney conversions began to show their true colors. His emphasis on the perfectibility of human nature developed into a focus on the perfectibility of human society. This current of thought was called the New England Theology, and it fit well that age of optimistic progress. Ultimately, the pragmatism of Finney’s revivals gave way to the theological liberalism of the social gospel. Oberlin College, where Finney taught theology, became a hotbed of humanism and social change.

When Finney became the professor of theology at Oberlin, he switch from Presbyterianism to Congregationalism. One reason for this was that his error did not go unopposed. Charles Hodge, again of Princeton Seminary, wrote an essay for the April, 1847 *Princeton Review* entitled, “Finney’s Lectures on Theology.” Of Finney’s work Hodge wrote, “It is eminently logical, rationalistic, reckless, and confident. Conclusions at war with the common faith of Christians, are not

only avowed without hesitation, but 'sheer nonsense,' 'stark nonsense,' 'eminently nonsensical,' are the terms applied to doctrines which have ever held their place in the faith of God's people, and which will maintain their position undisturbed, long after this work is buried in oblivion."

Although Hodge never called himself a fundamentalist, the war he refers to with Finney came to be the fundamentalist war within Protestantism against the perversions of the social gospel. Hodge's colleague, Benjamin Warfield, fought alongside with his *Studies in Perfectionism*. Hodge understood that this war was not just a war against a mistaken evangelist and theology teacher, but against the spirit of an entire age. He concludes, "Mr. Finney's book is the best refutation that can well be given of the popular theology current in many parts of our country. How long have we been accustomed to hear that inability is incompatible with obligation, and that happiness is the highest good. Grant Mr. Finney these principles, and he need ask you no further favors."

The Twentieth Century Response

This spirit of the Victorian era, infected with the hope of human achievement and bolstered by the naturalism of evolutionary dogma, changed large sections of American Protestantism around the turn of the century. A biblical response was needed from orthodox Protestants, and the history of the American church in the twentieth centu-

ry chronicles four responses that have developed over the passage of time. I hope to deal with each in future articles. In chronological order they are (1) mainline fundamentalism (1880-1930), which was a fight from within infected Protestant denominations; (2) separatist fundamentalism (1930 - present), which has been a fight by coming out from denominations and ministries infected with error and disobedience; (3) new evangelicalism (1940 - present), which has argued that the fight against error is best engaged by repudiating separation and by cooperating with the enemy; and (4) new fundamentalism (1970 - present), which has emerged from separatist fundamentalism with a desire to separate less while maintaining the original fight.

It is written of the men of Issachar that they "had understanding of the time, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. 12:32). Our calling is the same in our time. We must understand the times in which we live if we are going to help our churches do what they ought to do. But understanding our time can only happen in the light of what has come before us. The spirit of our age of postmodernism is different from that of the 19th century, but it is no less deadly. Separatism, the repudiation of separatism, and the lessening of separatism are each potential responses to error that we must evaluate in light of historical precedent. May the Lord make us a blessing to His Church, believers who understand the times and who know what to do in the battle between truth and error.

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Be sure to mention you are with the IBFNA for the special rate of \$105.99 per night. We encourage you to make your plans to come to this family oriented conference. Our focus for the week will be Bible prophecy and the imminent return of Christ. We have made several changes that we believe will help our family emphasis and meet the needs of all our constituents. This year our schedule will start at 9 am and go until noon. The afternoons of all three days will be free to see the many sights in the area, swim, fellowship, recreate, or go back to the hotel for a refreshing nap. We will have our closing service each evening at 7 pm.

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