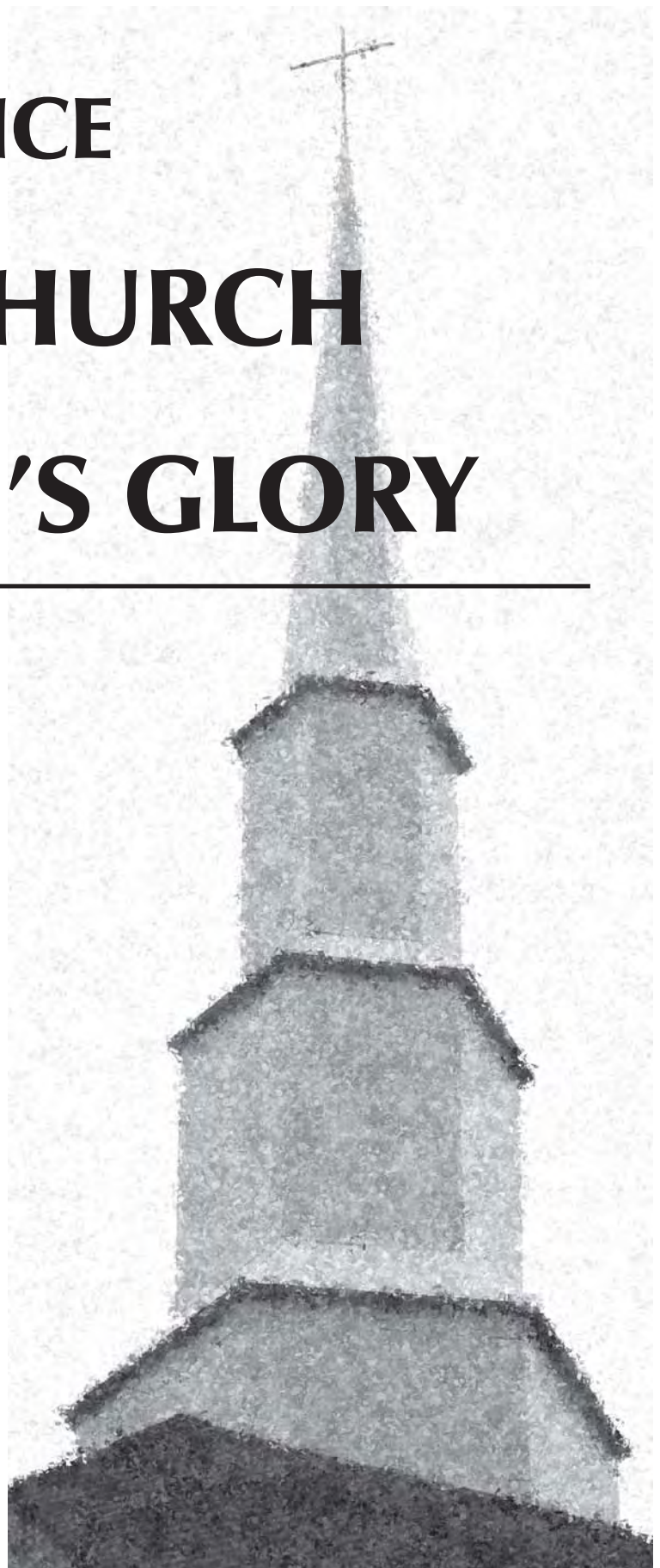


# **CONFERENCE ON THE CHURCH FOR GOD'S GLORY**

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MAY 17, 2004

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS



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# The Boundary of Christian Fellowship

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## Kevin Bauder



*Dr. Bauder is president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Plymouth Minnesota. He holds M.Div. and Th.M. degrees from Denver Baptist Theological Seminary, a D.Min. degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and a Ph.D. degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. Before going to Central, Dr. Bauder was engaged in pastoral ministry and church planting in Colorado, Iowa, and Texas. His academic interests include ecclesiological issues, Baptist distinctives, and the development of American evangelicalism and fundamentalism. He and his wife, Debbie, have two children.*

### 1 Corinthians 12.13

Christian fellowship has a boundary. Outside of that boundary, no Christian fellowship is possible. I intend to argue that the boundary of Christian fellowship is constituted by the gospel itself. The gospel forms the church, and where the gospel is not professed, no Christian fellowship should be pretended. The functioning of this boundary is seen with special clarity in two images of the church.

#### I. The image of the flock (John 10:1-16).

A. This parable contrasts two forms of unity.

1. The unity of the fold.
2. The unity of the flock.

B. The passage clearly defines the unity of the church.

1. It is like the unity of the flock.
2. It is defined by hearing and following Jesus.

Summary: this is church unity from the human point of view. Unity is based upon that which unites. Fellowship is defined as that which is held in common. What unites us as Christians? What is it that we hold in common?

## II. The image of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

A. In this chapter, Paul chooses two ways to emphasize the contrast between the many and the one.

1. Many gifts but one Spirit.
2. Many members but one body.

In both instances, the focus is on church unity. Paul intends to address the problem of unity in this chapter.

B. Our Landmark brethren confront us with several questions concerning 1 Corinthians 12:13.

1. What spirit are we talking about?
2. What baptism are we talking about?
3. What body are we talking about?

C. The answers to these questions yield a specific perspective on the unity of the church.

Summary: this is church unity from the divine point of view. Unity is based upon that which unites. Fellowship is defined as that which is held in common. What unites us as Christians? What is it that we hold in common?

### Conclusion:

Both images emphasize the centrality of the gospel. The gospel is therefore what defines the church. Whoever denies the gospel must not be recognized as any part of the visible church.

# Church Planting Endeavors in Early American Baptist History

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## Gerald Priest



*Dr. Priest is professor of church history and pastoral theology at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary in Allen Park, Michigan. Dr. Priest holds M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from Bob Jones University. He has also studied at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Wake Forest University. Besides his academic qualifications, Dr. Priest has had extensive experience in the practical aspects of ministry. He has pastored the Northside Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and has had held numerous interim pastorates. He and his wife, Beverly have two children and four grandchildren.*

Three remarkable and not unrelated events occurred in early American history that prompted our Baptist forefathers to seek the practical fulfillment of the Great Commission by proclaiming the gospel of Christ and growing New Testament churches. Setting in motion the heroic evangelistic enterprise of the Baptists were (1) the establishment of the first Baptist church in America at Rhode Island in 1638, (2) the creation of the first Baptist association in America at Philadelphia in 1707, and (3) the pioneering missionary efforts of the Separate Baptists in the South by the Sandy Creek Association beginning in 1758. These ministries were all born out of the desire for unfettered religious freedom, a fervent love for the souls of men, and a holy ambition to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ's gospel as the means of their salvation from sin and entrance into eternal life. They were all produced in answer to intense and persistent prayer to the Almighty God and were pursued in obedience to the Word of God at great personal cost. We will briefly look at these three endeavors of local church planting in their respective contexts as both models and incentives for our own mission.

### I. The First Baptist Church in America and Church Planting.

A. The First Baptist Church started by Roger Williams (c. 1603–1684) at Providence, Rhode Island in 1638.

1. The circumstances of that occasion are recorded in John Winthrop's diary, dated March 16, 1639.

*A sister of Mrs. [Anne] Hutchinson...being infected with Anabaptistry, and going last year to live at Providence, Mr. Williams was taken (or rather emboldened) by her to make open profession thereof, and accordingly was rebaptized by one [Ezekiel] Holyman [sic], a poor man late of Salem. Then Mr. Williams rebaptized him and some ten more. They also denied the baptizing of infants, and would have no magistrates [governing the churches] (James K. Hosmer, ed., Winthrop's Journal, 1630–1649, 2 vols. [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908], I:297).*

2. Excerpts from the brief confession of Boston's First Baptist Church (1665) express well the sentiments of early New England Baptists (including the Providence church) as to what constitutes the local church.<sup>1</sup>

*(k) Christ his commission to his disciples is to teach & baptise (l) And those that gladly received the word & are baptised are saints by calling & fitt matter for a vissible church (m) And a com- petent number of such joynd together in covenant & fellowship of the gosple are [a] Church of Christ.... (o) wee believe that a church thus constituted are to walk in all the appointments of Christ (p) And have power from him to chuse from among themselves there owne officers whom the gosple allowes to administer in the ordinances of Christ among them whom they may depute or ordaine to this end.... (q) And this church hath power to receive into there fellowship vissible believers (r) & if any prove scandelouse obstenate & wicked to put forth such from amongst them.... (t) & they ought to meete together the first day of the weeke to attend upon the Lord in all his holy ordinances continuing in the Apostles doctrine & fellowship & breaking bread & praise.*

3. First Baptist experienced instability, however, from 1638 to 1771. Williams remained a Baptist for only a few months, rejecting his baptism as invalid because not administered by an apostle (i.e., successionist baptism). In 1652, the First Baptist Church split over doctrine. The majority had become Six Principle<sup>2</sup> (General/Arminian) Baptists. One issue in dispute was the rite of laying hands on new church members. A reunification took place by 1718. The Arminians found themselves in the minority by 1771 and left to establish another church.
- B. The First Baptist Church under the leadership of James Manning (1738–1791), beginning in 1771.
1. Before 1734, there were in New England only 15 Baptist churches of all varieties (Regular, Six-Principle, and Seventh Day). Only 33 Baptist churches existed in all of the 13 colonies, but by 1750 there were 58 churches in New England alone. By 1795 this number had increased to 325. What accounted for this remarkable growth? Much of it can be attributed to the energetic church planting activity of First Baptist Church under the leadership of Manning and his Calvinist successors.
  2. James Manning came to the church as its 12th pastor in 1771. He was the first since Roger Williams to have a formal education. His coming to preside over Rhode Island College (1764) and pastor First Baptist signaled a new era for

<sup>1</sup> This is the earliest known Baptist confession adopted in America.

<sup>2</sup> So named for the 6 principles found in Hebrews 6.1-2: repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life.

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Baptists in New England. Manning's arrival in Rhode Island was a consequence of the Great Awakening (1734–1745).

- a. The coming of the Great Awakening substantially increased Baptist activity. Stanley Lemons writes,

*It is ironic that most of the old [Arminian] Baptist churches of New England were feeble in their outreach. They believed in general atonement, that salvation was possible for all people; but they tended to look inward. On the other hand, the great expansion of Baptists in the eighteenth century arose through the Calvinist or Particular Baptists and came as a consequence of the fervor of the Great Awakening—which was a revival of Calvinist beliefs. While the Particular Baptists held that Christ had died only for those predestined by God to be saved, they were energetic in their evangelism. Eventually most New England Baptists were transformed by the Great Awakening into the Particular [Regular] variety (The First Baptist Church in America [East Greenwich, RI: Charitable Baptist Society, 1988], pp. 28–29).*

Most Baptist church planting during the Awakening was due to the efforts of the Regular Baptists.

- b. Another result of the Great Awakening was the establishment of new colleges in order to produce educated ministers for denominational churches. New Side Presbyterians began the College of New Jersey (Princeton) in 1746, New Side Dutch started Queen's (Rutgers) in 1766, New Light Congregationalists founded Moore's Indian Charity School (Dartmouth) in 1769, and the Philadelphia Baptist Association sent James Manning to organize at Warren, RI the first Baptist college in America in 1764 and the first Baptist association in New England (the Warren) in 1767. With Manning in the lead, the Providence church, the college (renamed Brown in 1804), and the association became major promoters of Baptist activity.

- c. One reason for the growth of Baptist churches was the phenomenal energy and vision of Separate Baptist<sup>3</sup> leader Isaac Backus (1724–1806), convert of the Great Awakening and co-founder with James Manning of the Warren Association. From his church in Middleborough, Backus made over 900 trips, traveled 68,000 miles, and helped to establish scores of Baptist churches. William G. McLoughlin writes that

*It is significant that Backus himself believed that the Old Baptists in New England were not true Baptists because they were not good Calvinists. He considered most of them Arminian.... During the early years of Backus's career as a Separate Baptist (after he had reconstituted his church on closed-communication, antipedobaptist principles in 1756) he applied himself to the task of persuading other Separate churches to adopt his principles and spreading the new evangelical Calvinist principles among the Old Baptists.... Backus considered that virtually all the Old Baptists in Massachusetts and Six Principle Baptists in Rhode Island were tainted with Arminianism, and as a strict Calvinist (a follower of the New Light theology of Jonathan Edwards) he could not hold fellowship with them (from the introduction to The Diary of Isaac Backus, 3 vols. [Providence: Brown University Press, 1979], I:xxv–xxvi).*

As a result of his endeavors, nearly all of the "Old" (General) Baptist churches in New England were converted to Separate or Regular (Calvinist) Baptists. An indication of Backus's success may be drawn from Baptist statistics of church growth in New England. In 1740, there were 31 Baptist churches of all varieties (more than double the number from 1734). By 1777 Backus had listed 119 closed-communication Calvinist Baptist churches and by 1795 there were 325! (see Backus Diary, I:xxvi–xxvii).

3. The Warren Association, founded in 1767, modeled after the Philadelphia Baptist Association, was formed for the multi-purpose of advancing union among Baptists, maintaining faith in Calvinism and antipedobaptism, addressing grievances to colonial governments against religious restrictions, and planting new churches. McLoughlin writes, "The Warren Association was successful in all its

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<sup>3</sup> New Lights were those who favored revival and separated from those New England Congregational churches who resisted the Great Awakening; hence, they were known as Separates. For many of these groups it was but a logical and scriptural step to require believer's baptism and to endorse separation of church and state as a means of maintaining soul liberty. These became known as Separate Baptists. They were both Calvinistic and intensely revivalistic. Observing so many New Light Congregationalists becoming Baptists, George Whitefield is reported to have said, "My chickens have turned into ducks" (cited in William Lumpkin, *Baptist Foundations in the South: Tracing Through the Separates the Influence of the Great Awakening 1754–1787* [Nashville: Broadman, 1961], p. 20). The Separates were something of an answer to Increase Mather's "prophecy" of 1705: "If the begun apostasy should proceed as fast [in] the next thirty years as it has done these last, surely it will come to pass in New England...that the most conscientious people therein will think themselves concerned to gather churches out of churches" (ibid., p. 13).



aims. By 1780 it had 38 member churches, mostly in Massachusetts. By 1804 there were 13 Baptist associations in New England, with 23,638 members from 312 churches" (Backus Diary, I:xxviii).

4. As a leading member of the Warren Association, First Baptist Church of Providence was a vital part of Baptist growth. Manning oversaw the construction of a new meeting house in 1774–75, necessary because of a revival during which 110 were saved and added to the membership. It was the first Baptist church in New England to be erected with a steeple. Elegant in its classic Georgian style, it yet retains the Baptist emphasis on simplicity; there is very little ornamentation and religious symbols. The pastor also insisted that the pulpit be centered against the wall in order to emphasize the preaching of God's Word and not genuflecting at an altar. The structure would seat 1,400 in a town of 4,321. And it was often full of worshipers under Manning's preaching.

C. The First Baptist Church under the leadership of Stephen Gano (1762–1828), beginning in 1792.

1. Stephen Gano was son of the famous John Gano (1727–1798), and nephew of James Manning. He served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Providence for 36 years.

*His ministry was marked by the greatest growth in the history of [the]...Church, and he presided over several major revivals and the planting of four daughter churches. A national Baptist leader, he traveled widely to mediate problems and to encourage new congregations and missions. He was one of the founders of the Triennial Convention [1814, the first Baptist foreign mission society in America] and a founder and first president of the Rhode Island Baptist State Convention. Under him First Baptist entered into the home and foreign missionary movements, the Sunday school movement, and the Bible and tract societies (Lemons, p. 43).*

2. Gano began his career as a physician, fought in the Revolution (twice captured by the British and nearly died) and later was converted and accepted the call to ministry being ordained in his father's church at Long Island in 1786.<sup>4</sup> During a trip to visit family members in January 1790, he planted the first Baptist church in the Northwest Territory at Columbia, Ohio, within present-day Cincinnati.

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<sup>4</sup> The occasion of his call is quite remarkable. Gano recalled, "Being on my way to my new home, my uncle's residence,—my father accompanying me,—we called on my father's mother, who was eminently pious, and had reached more than fourscore years; and, on her first seeing me, she bade me kneel beside her, and then gently placing her aged hand on my youthful head, she prayed fervently for my salvation. And directly after, looking upon me, she said, 'Stephen, the Lord designs thee for a minister of the everlasting Gospel: be thou faithful unto death, and He will give thee a crown of life'" (cited in William Sprague, *Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit* [New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860], VI:232).

3. Under Gano's ministry at First Baptist, Providence, the church grew to be one of the largest Baptist congregations in the country. One reason for the growth—revival! Gano presided over four "awakenings."<sup>5</sup>

YEAR	MEMBERS ADDED	BY BAPTISM
1805	152	124
1812	112	110
1816	114	96
1820	157	147

By 1821 First Baptist Church counted 648 members.<sup>6</sup>

4. First Baptist Church's procedure of establishing new churches involved transferring members to the new work and providing financial support.
- a. Second Baptist (Providence), organized May 1, 1805 with 16 original members; 13 from First. Fifty years later, when Second Baptist needed a new building, First contributed \$4,900. Today, this would be the equivalent of \$90,000.
  - b. First Baptist (Pawtucket), organized August 27, 1805 with 39 original members; 33 from First. David Benedict, Gano's son-in-law and Baptist historian, was the pastor for 25 years (1806–1831).
  - c. Pawtuxet Baptist, organized November 18, 1806. All of the initial 34 members were from First.

<sup>5</sup> The New York *Baptist Memorial and Monthly Record*, 2 January 1843, p. 17, reported nine seasons of revival between 1793 and 1820, "and much people was added unto the Lord," cited in Terry Wolever, *The Life and Ministry of John Gano, 1727–1804* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press), p. 391. For a most interesting account of the life and labors with Stephen Gano, along with a related bibliography, see *ibid.*, pp. 365–406, 446–49.

<sup>6</sup> A friend and fellow minister, Daniel Waldo, wrote that Gano's "reliance for success in his labors was not upon his own might or power, but upon the Turth and Spirit of God; and while he was diligent in his work, he never failed to render due honor to that Divine agency in which after all, is the main spring of all ministerial success (Wm. Sprague, *Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit* [NY: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860], VI:235).

- d. Third Baptist, organized in 1821. All of the original 16 members were new converts in the revival of 1820 and came from First. Within a year of the first pastor's installation, Third split over the issue of free will. Several of the founding members returned to First Baptist. After the pastor (Allen Brown) left in 1828, Third Baptist returned to Calvinism and was readmitted to the Warren Association.<sup>7</sup>
5. Stephen Gano and First Baptist helped to found the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society in 1802. Gano's daughter Margaret and her friend, Eliza Pitman, started the Female Mite Society at First Baptist (1806) to collect money for the support of Baptist missionaries. Enough money was raised by 1825 for the creation of the Rhode Island Baptist State Convention, begun for the purpose of facilitating domestic and foreign missions.

#### D. First Baptist Church after 1828.

1. More church planting.
  - a. Congdon Street Baptist Church was started by Blacks who attended First Baptist. It was organized as the Meeting Street Baptist Church on December 3, 1840 and changed its name to Congdon Street in 1870. Throughout its early history First Baptist supplied teachers and funds for Congdon's support.
  - b. Eighth Baptist (Smith Hill) was organized in May 1847 with 13 of the 29 founding members from First Baptist. For years financial aid and personnel from First flowed into Eighth.

*For example, in 1849–1850 the Young Ladies' Bible class was directed by John Jolls from First Baptist. The following year three members of First paid off half of the indebtedness of Eighth Baptist. When the church built a new meeting house and changed its name to Jefferson Street Baptist Church, \$2,000 [40,000] was given by First Baptist for the construction. Again when a financial crisis threatened Jefferson Street Baptist Church in 1873, First Baptist contributed another \$1,132 [16,000] (Lemons, p. 53).<sup>8</sup>*

- c. Brown Street Baptist Church was organized in November, 1855 with 65 members from First and 46 from Third. Those who transferred from First included Francis Wayland, who had retired as president of Brown University after 28 years.

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<sup>7</sup> Fourth Baptist was begun as a Free Will congregation in 1820. First Baptist refused fellowship with this church until its first pastor (Zalmon Tobey) left in 1833 and Fourth accepted Calvinism.

<sup>8</sup> Figures in brackets would be the equivalent amount of money in the year 2000.

2. Local church support.

Throughout the 19th century, First Baptist contributed to the planting and sustenance of many Baptist churches throughout Rhode Island and the country. Here is a partial list of churches that First Baptist aided (in addition to those listed above).

Rhode Island

Friendship Street (later Calvary) Baptist—helped erect a meeting house  
 Lime Rock Baptist  
 Albion Baptist  
 Block Island Baptist  
 Knight Street Baptist (Pawtucket)  
 Woonsocket Falls Baptist—helped rebuild burnt meeting house

Other parts of the country

Camanche (Iowa) Baptist—helped rebuild after tornado destruction  
 Burlington (Iowa)  
 Iowa City (Iowa)  
 Rock Island (Illinois)  
 Galesburg (Illinois)  
 Joliet (Illinois)  
 Milwaukee (Wisconsin)  
 Oshkosh (Wisconsin)  
 and churches in Salt Lake City, Vicksburg, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D.C.

3. The Sunday school contribution.

Other churches were planted as a result of the Sunday School movement. By 1815, Rhode Island had 100 textile mills (leather and cloth); most of the workers were children.

- a. Sunday schools were started to teach them the 3 Rs and the Bible. First Baptist not only ran its own school, but operated missions and outposts elsewhere, helping to create at least 3 more Baptist churches.
- b. Children memorized large portions of Scripture. In 1819, one boy (age 12) had memorized 2,421 verses and recited 640 of them one Sunday.
- c. From 1832–1842 fifteen teachers and 128 students were baptized. In 1869, 285 members were added to the church from the Sunday school.

- d. First Baptist Sunday school generated interest in missions. One SS product was Durlin Brayton, a Black man ordained by First Baptist in 1837 as a missionary to Burma.

E. First Baptist Church a casualty of "Finneyism."

Unfortunately, Finneyite "new measures" revivalism contributed to a transformation of First Baptist Church in the 1850s.

*A major casualty was Calvinism, with its doctrine of particular or limited atonement. When the century began, Particular Baptists like those at First Baptist regarded Free Will Baptists to be utterly wrong; and adoption of the Free Will idea (that everyone had at least a chance at salvation) led to expulsion from the church. As stated earlier, Free Will Baptist churches were excluded from association with the regular Baptists. But, by the late 1850s, this hostility had faded substantially as American Protestants in general moved toward the Free Will idea. The Calvinist notion that only a predetermined few could be saved was felt to be incompatible with the revivalist and missionary impulses. The Calvinism of First Baptist had simply evaporated in the 1840s. With the decline of Calvinism came a fundamental change in the way individuals gained entry into the First Baptist Church. Before, one had to be able to testify to a definite and profound conversion experience.... such a stringent requirement prevented any number of individuals, such as Nicholas Brown [for whom Brown University is named], from ever being baptized into the church. Such persons might live righteous, upright lives and believe the tenets of Christianity, but never undergo the...experience of conversion. However, by the 1840s some began to gain admission by affirming the beliefs of the church, not by testifying to a conversion (Lemons, p. 78).*

As a result, First Baptist Church of Providence succumbed to modernism and is today one of the most liberal churches in the American Baptist Churches denomination.

## II. The Philadelphia Baptist Association and Church Planting.

A. The founding of the first Baptist association in America at Philadelphia, 1707.

1. Baptists enjoyed the greatest liberty in the middle colonies due mainly to the Quaker proprietorships. William Penn, for instance, allowed religious diversity in his colony of Pennsylvania (begun 1681).
2. In 1688, the Pennepek (Lower Dublin) Baptist Church was organized with 12 members under the leadership of Elias Keach (1667–1701), son of the famous British Particular Baptist, Benjamin Keach. This is the oldest continuing Baptist church in Pennsylvania. Keach traveled extensively, preaching the gospel and baptizing converts in such places in the Middle colonies as Philadelphia, Trenton, Chester, Burlington, Middletown, Cohansey, and Salem. These converts were eventually organized into five churches: Middletown (1688), Piscataway (1689), and Cohansey (1690) New Jersey; and First Baptist in Philadelphia (1698,

connected to Pennepek until 1746). These churches, including Pennepek and the Welsh Tract (1701) in Delaware, began holding periodic meetings which developed in 1707 into the grandmother of all Baptist associations in America—the Philadelphia Association. Its purpose was four-fold:

- a. Provide advice and counsel for the settlement of disputes.
- b. Discipline errant ministers.
- c. Warn churches of imposters.
- d. Act as a council of ordination.

The records of the Pennepek church record the following minutes of the first meeting in July 1707.

*It was...agreed, that a person that is a stranger, that has neither letter of recommendation, nor is known to be a person gifted, and of a good conversation, shall not be admitted to preach, nor be entertained as a member in any of the baptized congregations in communion with each other.*

*It was also concluded, that if any difference shall happen between any member and church he belongs unto, and they cannot agree, then the person so grieved may, at the general meeting, appeal to the brethren of the several congregations, and with such as they shall nominate, to decide the difference; that the church and the person so grieved do fully acquiesce in their determination.*

Yet it should be added that the Association had no absolute binding power on the churches; it was a voluntary body with final discretion left to the local church. The Association would not jeopardize the principle of church autonomy.

*As the churches increased in number, and also in membership, various questions arose, both as to matters of faith and discipline. It was, of course, desirable for all the churches to have the same rules and to act in unity; and yet each Baptist church being independent of all others, it was apparent to the pastors and brethren that some general meeting was necessary where such questions could be freely and amicably discussed, and where counsel and advice could be given. Hence, it was proposed to associate, once a year, for this purpose, by representatives from the several churches. This annual meeting was, therefore, designated by the name of an "Association;" but it had no power or authority to bind the churches composing it, and from the very first was regarded as an Advisory Council—and such is the character of all Baptist Associations in America, as well as in all other parts of the world (Horatio Gates Jones in David Spencer, *The Early Baptists of Philadelphia* [Philadelphia: William Syckelmoore, 1877], p. 46).*

Robert G. Torbet adds,

*It should not be concluded, however, that the Philadelphia group had no defined powers. To the contrary, a statement of these powers was prepared by the Reverend Benjamin Griffith, pastor of the Montgomery Baptist Church of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and signed by all of the delegates present at the annual meeting on September 19, 1749. It affirmed that the Association was not a "superior judicature" over the churches concerned, and that each particular church is autonomous. Nevertheless, the author made it quite clear that the Association had considerable power over its member churches in cases of defection from generally accepted doctrine or practice. Such power was to manifest itself in the exclusion of such a church from the fellowship of the Association (A Social History of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: 1707–1940 [Philadelphia: Westbrook, 1944], p. 17).*

3. A remarkable spirit of unity prevailed throughout the colonial history of the PBA as evidenced by the circular letter of greeting sent to member churches in 1729. Here is an excerpt:

*Dearly beloved Brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ,—We heartily rejoice to see your care, diligence, requests, and desires, on our behalf, at the throne of grace; and also your care and diligence in maintaining our yearly correspondence and communion in the gospel. We, your representatives, met together in love, perused your letters and gladly received your messengers. We find cause to rejoice that God has crowned the labors of his ministers with such success. There have been considerable additions the past year in several churches, and some in most. Praise be rendered to our gracious God, we find the churches generally to be at peace and unity amongst themselves. We think it expedient to give you an account of our proceedings. We conferred together, without any jars or contentions in our debates; our souls have been refreshed, hearing of the welfare of the churches in general; also, in hearing the sweet and comfortable truths of the gospel declared among us, by the faithful labours of our ministering brethren, which we hope is to the glory of God and the good of souls. We earnestly desire you to walk worthy of our holy vocation, standing fast and striving together for the faith of the gospel (Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association from 1707 to 1807, ed., A. D. Gillette [Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851], p. 29).*

4. To provide a basis of theological agreement, the Association produced the first major Baptist doctrinal confession in America—the Philadelphia Confession of 1742. This confession was essentially the 1688 London Baptist Confession (approved at the 1689 General Assembly of Particular Baptists in London). Shortly after its publication a treatise of church discipline and a catechism were attached. A young Philadelphia printer by the name of Benjamin Franklin published the confession. "Thus the Association, by an adroit coupling of a Calvinistic Confession of Faith with a definition of its relationship to the member churches was in a position to change the bent of Baptist theology in the Colonies"

(Torbet, *Social History*, p. 18).<sup>9</sup> By 1762 the Association claimed 29 congregations whose members totaled 4,018.<sup>10</sup>

B. Church Planting in connection with the Philadelphia Baptist Association.<sup>11</sup>

1. Fortunate influences on the PBA.

Once again, the Great Awakening facilitated Baptist evangelism, mainly because of the GA's emphasis on Calvinism, which complimented Particular Baptist theology, and because of the GA's agreement with Baptists on a regenerate church membership. Another influence was Andrew Fuller's theology of the atonement and its implications for missions.<sup>12</sup>

2. The procedure of organizing new churches by means of commission.

By the middle of the 18th century, Philadelphia had become a center for the dissemination of the gospel by the Baptists (Torbet, p. 19).

<sup>9</sup> This fact is supported by the comment of William Lumpkin: "The Philadelphia Association published many editions of the Confession, and it was adopted by many churches and associations: ...the Kettocton of Virginia led the way in 1766. The Warren Association...in 1767. The Charleston Association...in 1767; here the Confession exerted extraordinary influence especially in the churches of the coastal section where Arminian sentiments had earlier been dominant.... A fourth edition appeared in 1850 and is an indication of the continued use of the Confession in the South. Indeed in this region it influenced Baptist thought generally and has been perhaps the most influential of all confessions. Local church covenants still reflect its outlook and summarize its doctrines." With the proviso by the Separate Baptists that no confession would be considered "superior or equal to the scriptures in matters of faith and practice," the Philadelphia Confession became the basis of union between the Separate and Regular Baptists of Virginia in 1787 (*Baptist Confessions of Faith* [Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969], pp. 352–53).

<sup>10</sup> By 1740, there were 96 churches in the northern colonies alone, and by 1750, 135—New England had 58 (including 30 in Rhode Island); the Middle Colonies had 47—PA and DE (29), NJ (14), NY (4). By 1800, there were 48 Baptist associations in America, including 30 in the South and 8 beyond the Allegheny Mountains, 6 of those in Kentucky alone.

<sup>11</sup> Ironically, while the PBA was at the vanguard of missionary endeavor and church planting, Pennsylvania did not keep pace with the rapid growth of the Baptist denomination in the rest of the country. "It should not be forgotten, however, that the Philadelphia Association, though surpassed in membership by many of its more recently organized contemporaries, still maintained in the early decades of the nineteenth century prestige and importance as the nucleus for the national development of the denomination" (Torbet, *Social History*, p. 30; cf. James L. Clark, *To Set Them in Order: Some Influences of the Philadelphia Baptist Association Upon Baptists of America to 1814* [reprint ed., Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press], p. 2).

<sup>12</sup> In addition to revival in America, the impetus for these domestic missionary endeavors was the work of William Carey and his fellow laborers in India. Providentially, a promoter of American missions was a British Baptist, Dr. William Staughton. Staughton, who became a prominent Philadelphia pastor, had been present in Kettering, England during the formation of the British Particular Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. This was the agency that sent Carey to India in 1793.



- a. In the decade of 1750 to 1760 two significant events took place which were to change the course of Baptist history in the South: (1) the transformation of the General Baptists into the Regular Baptists, and (2) the rise of the Separate Baptists. One of the PBA's most significant contributions is their part in the first event. A brief account follows:

*Robert Williams, a Regular Baptist pastor of Welsh Neck, S.C., was deeply concerned over the irregular methods and ignorance of doctrine among the General Baptists. When he complained to the Philadelphia Association, they sent John Gano<sup>13</sup> in 1754 to examine the pastors and churches. Many of them welcomed him as one who spoke with authority. He found them to be sorely lacking in scriptural knowledge and, therefore, recommended several changes, most of which were accepted. Among these, was the emphasis on a regenerate church membership, and hence a reexamination of church members regarding their faith. Once again, the PBA voted in 1755 to send two other ministers, Peter Peterson Vanhorn of New York and Benjamin Miller from of Pennsylvania, to evangelize in North Carolina. These two men had planted a church at Winter Run, Maryland on November 1, 1754. They went to NC to "reconstitute" General Baptist churches into Particular churches: Fishing Creek in Granville County (Dec 6, 1755) and Kehukee (Dec 11, 1755). "Their example was soon followed by most of the other General Baptist churches of North Carolina" (G. W. Paschal, History of North Carolina Baptists, 2 vols. [Raleigh, NC: General Board, North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 1930–1955], I:210). Paschal lists another 9 churches that were converted to Calvinistic doctrines. Each church was reorganized on the basis of the Philadelphia Confession and maintained by a strict discipline. As a result, nearly every General Baptist church in North and South Carolina became a Regular Baptist church! David Benedict writes that "the introduction of Calvinistick [sic] sentiments amongst them...had the happy effect of purifying the churches," and added that "Mr. Gano appears to have shaken the old foundation, and begun the preparation of the materials which Messrs. Miller and VanHorne organized into regular churches" (A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America, 2 vols. [Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1813], II:98).*

*In summing up the whole matter, it is not too much to say that with the reformation from General to Particular Baptist churches came a new standard of church membership in North Carolina. From this time the churches set new standards of morality and righteousness which most profoundly and beneficially*

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<sup>13</sup> Upon hearing John Gano preach in Lexington, Kentucky, Henry Clay wrote, "He was a remarkably fervent preacher, and distinguished for a simple and effective manner. And of all the preachers I ever listened to, he made me feel the most that religion was a divine reality" (cited by Henry Jackson, son-in-law to Stephen Gano, in Sprague, *Annals*, VI:231).

*modified the lives of the people who came under the influence of their ministrations (Paschal, I:220).*

- b. Between 1743 and 1762, PBA missionaries planted at least 4 churches along the Atlantic Coast as far south as Charleston, SC: Opekon (1743), Ketockton (1751), Smith's Creek (1756), and Broad Run (1762). By 1766, these churches were able to constitute their own association—the Ketockton. Three years later churches in Virginia and North Carolina organized the Kehukee Association modeled after the PBA and it, in fact, adopted the PBA Confession of Faith. In its first five years the Kehukee enjoyed a growth from 5 to 14 churches (Paschal, I:417).
- c. Following the lead of Massachusetts Baptists, who organized a missionary society in 1802 to plant churches throughout its region, PBA Baptists began the Philadelphia Baptist Missionary Society in 1804 for missionary work among frontier settlers and "the Aborigines when convenient." Afterwards, Baptists in several states likewise organized missionary endeavors: Maine (1804), New York (1806 and 1807), Connecticut (1809), and New Jersey (1811).
- d. After the "conversion" of Adoniram and Ann Judson and Luther Rice from Congregationalists to Baptists in 1812 and the resulting desperate need for an organized effort to support foreign Baptist missionary efforts in Burma and elsewhere, Rice returned home to solicit support for a Baptist missionary agency.
  - (1) Due mainly to Rice's efforts, the regional missionary societies banded together in 1814 to create the first Baptist foreign mission society in America, the General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions, simply known as the *Triennial Convention*. Following the example of the PBA, at its very first meeting the Convention voted to make the first Monday of each month a day of prayer. The first meeting was in Philadelphia with PBA pastors taking an active role in its leadership. For example, 17 of the 33 delegates were members of the PBA. The Triennial Convention was destined to carry on the foreign missionary work of all American Baptists until 1845.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Triennial Convention marked a shift in Baptist organization that set a precedent for Baptist activity mainly in the North. This was the adoption of the society versus the associational method. The society method by-passed entirely the need for local church representation, replacing it with individual subscription membership. The society had the advantage of promoting a single cause but, as Winthrop Hudson points out, the change from an emphasis on association to a society strategy happened without any "appeal to biblical precept, theological doctrine or historic Baptist principle." To Hudson, this pragmatic approach was a "stumbling into disorder" (cited in Francis W. Sacks, *The Philadelphia Baptist Tradition of Church Authority, 1707–1814: An Ecumenical Analysis and Theological Interpretation* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989], p. 173).

(2) At its 1817 meeting the Triennial Convention amended its constitution to support domestic, in addition to foreign, mission work. John Mason Peck and James E. Welch were commissioned as missionaries to Missouri. Domestic missions later came under the direction of the American Baptist Home Mission Society beginning in 1832.<sup>15</sup> In that year, the Society sent out 50 church planters to Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, and New York. Peck became one of its foremost missionaries. The accomplishments of Peck and another Baptist missionary, Isaac McCoy, were nothing short of incredible.

(a) John Mason Peck (1789–1856) was born in Litchfield, Connecticut and was converted there during a revival meeting. He became a member of the Congregationalist church where the famous Lyman Beecher was pastor. However, Beecher could not explain infant baptism to the satisfaction of Peck and his wife. In 1811, they joined the Baptist church in New Durham, New York. That year God called him to preach. He served two churches as pastor but longed to serve as a missionary after hearing reports of Carey and others in India. In 1815, Peck met Luther Rice and invited him to his home. Rice encouraged Peck to travel to different churches on behalf of foreign missions. In 1816, he offered himself to the Triennial Convention as a missionary to the West. William Staughton tutored him for a year in Philadelphia before the Triennial Convention sent him to Missouri in 1817.

*I have now put my hand to the plow. O Lord may I never turn back—never regret this step. It is my desire to live, to labor, to die as a kind of pioneer in advancing the Gospel. I feel the most heavenly joy when my heart is engaged in this work (from John Mason Peck's Journal, May 18, 1817).*

These are a few examples of his labors:

- In 1818 established the First Baptist Church of St. Louis and organized an association of churches.
- In 1819 organized the first missionary society in the West, the United Society for the Spread of the Gospel.
- In 1827 started Rock Spring Seminary (Shurtleff College).

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<sup>15</sup> By 1842, the ABHMS had reported nearly 11,000 baptisms, organization of 400 churches and several benevolent societies, Sunday schools and Bible classes (Torbet, History p. 361).

- In 1834 the Illinois State Baptist Convention was formed with Peck as its first president.
- In 1836 the Illinois Baptist Education Society was formed, with Peck as secretary.
- In April 1829 he began producing *The Pioneer*, which later merged with the *Baptist Banner* of Kentucky.
- From 1837 to 1839 he served as general agent of the ABHMS of the Illinois State Convention.
- From 1841 to 1843 he was general agent of the Western Baptist Convention.
- From 1843 he was made secretary and general agent of the Western Baptist Publication Society.
- From 1840 he became the first secretary of the Western Baptist Society.

A journal entry describing one of his many journeys:

*I have been absent from home fifty-three days; have traveled through eighteen counties in Illinois and nine in Indiana, rode nine hundred and twenty-six miles, preached regular sermons thirty-one times, besides delivering several speeches, addresses and lectures. I have been enabled to revive three Bible Societies which would never have been recognized but for my visit; to establish seven new Societies; to visit and give instruction in the management of two Societies which had been formed without my aid, and to provide for the formation of four others. I have aided in forming three Sabbath-school Societies, and in opening several schools where no Societies exist, and improved many important opportunities to aid the great cause in various ways. Now, Lord, give me both gratitude and humility, that I may praise THEE for all my success, and seeing my own weakness and insignificance may sink into the dust of self-abasement, that I may never be proud or vain! (quoted in Baptist Home Missions in North America; a Full Report of the Proceedings and Addresses of the Jubilee Meeting, and a Historical Sketch of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Historical Tables, Etc., 1832–1882 [New York: Baptist Home Mission Rooms, 1883], pp. 304–05).*

*During his forty year ministry Peck contributed to the establishment of 900 churches, saw 600 pastors ordained into the ministry, and 32,000 members added to the churches!*<sup>16</sup>

- (b) Isaac McCoy (1784–1846), the great Baptist apostle to the American Indians, was born in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, but came with his father to Kentucky in 1790. In 1801 he was saved and joined the Buck Creek Baptist Church. He and his wife Christiana were faithful missionaries to the Indians. In 1804, they came to Vincennes, Indiana and served in the western part of the state until 1818. He was licensed to preach by the mother of all Indiana Baptist churches, Silver Creek, and ordained in 1810 by the Maria Creek Baptist Church, where he pastored. In 1817, McCoy offered himself to the Triennial Convention as a missionary to the Indians. They appointed him on a trial basis of one year for the area of Fort Wayne. His first mission was at Raccoon Creek and then Fort Wayne itself. After 1821, with the provision of the Treaty of Chicago, the McCoys were able to establish an Indian mission with the Pottawatomies at what is now Niles, Michigan, and among the Ottawas at the present site of Grand Rapids. In 1825, he preached the first Christian sermon ever delivered in Chicago. His book *A History of Baptist Indian Missions* (1840) describes the plight of the American Indian and issues a plea for help to evangelize him. McCoy served the federal government as Agent of Indian Affairs and perhaps did more than any other man of his day to help the Indians, both spiritually and physically. In nine years he helped settle and evangelize 22 tribes in the Indian territory.

3. The procedure of planting new churches by means of itineracy. Example: Hezekiah Smith.

*Hezekiah Smith (1737–1805) was Born in New York, reared in New Jersey and educated at Hopewell and Princeton. He was a multi-gifted man. As an itinerant evangelist-at-large in the South for the PBA, Smith labored 15 months, traveled 4,235 miles, preached 173 sermons, strengthened existing and started several new churches. Afterwards, he accepted the pastorate of the Haverhill (Massachusetts) Baptist Church, serving there for nearly 40 years. Under his leadership that church helped to form 13 others. Torbet relates that "between 1740 and 1790, eighty-six new churches were formed in" Massachusetts, a work in which Smith and his fellows workers from the PBA had an active part (History of the Baptists, 3rd ed. [Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1963], p. 224). Vedder writes that "no preacher was in*

<sup>16</sup> The Baptist denomination in America (the "United Baptists") by 1844 numbered 720,046 members; 9,385 churches; and 6,364 ministers, an increase in 30 years (since 1814) of 360 percent. By comparison, during the same period the U.S. population increased 140 percent.

more demand for services of all kinds, and none was more influential in denominational councils" than Hezekiah Smith (Short History, p. 312).<sup>17</sup>

4. The indispensable requirement of church planting—prayer.

Because of the alarming "profaneness, pride, luxury, unjustness, intemperance, lewdness and every species of debauchery and loose indulgence" which seemed to abound in America toward the close of the eighteenth century (Frank Beardsley, *A History of American Revivals*, p. 83), a group of twenty-three New England preachers, including Baptists Stephen Gano and Isaac Backus, sent out a circular letter in 1795 calling for a concert of prayer for spiritual awakening. They suggested devoting the first Tuesday in January and once a quarter thereafter to public prayer for revival in the land. The result was the Second Great Awakening during which hundreds of churches, numerous colleges, and thousands of individuals were affected spiritually. Congregationalist preacher and later president of Hartford Seminary, Bennet Tyler, recorded amazing accounts of churches being awakened in his *New England Revivals* (1846). He wrote that, "within the period of five or six years, commencing with 1797, it has been stated that not less than one hundred and fifty churches in New England were visited with times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (p. v). In 1794, the North Carolina Baptist Kehukee Association had "agreed to appoint the Saturday before the fourth Sunday in every month as a day for prayer meetings throughout the churches...to make earnest prayer and supplication to Almighty God for a revival of religion" (Lemuel Burkitt and Jesse Read, *Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association* [New York: Arno Press, 1980], p. 143). The PBA responded in October 1795 to a query from the Cohansey (New Jersey) Church which read, "Is it not proper, from the consideration of abounding error, infidelity, lukewarmness, and decay of vital piety in the world, and in professors of religion, that a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, should be observed in our churches?" The Association responded favorably by agreeing "to appoint and recommend Wednesday, the 28th day of October, as a day of fasting and prayer throughout our churches, for the above mentioned reasons, ... Also, agreeably to a query from the Philadelphia church, and in conformity to the general concert of prayer, in which many churches have engaged,—We appoint and recommend the first Tuesday in January, April, July, and October, beginning at two o'clock, P.M., particularly to implore a blessing on the Word, and the general spread of the Gospel" (Minutes of the Philadelphia Association from 1707 to 1807, p. 306).

Should we wonder that, with such a widespread concentration of united prayer, God saw fit to pour out His revival blessings? Can we not see a correlation between group prayer and its gracious results when we read such accounts as that

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed account of Smith's ministry, see Reuben Aldridge Guild, *Chaplain Smith and the Baptists: Life, Journals, Letters, and Addresses of the Rev. Hezekiah Smith, D.D., of Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1737–1805* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1885).

given by Lemuel Burkitt, clerk for the Kehukee Baptist Association? He reported before an Association meeting in 1801 that six thousand persons had been converted beyond the Appalachian mountains, and the supernatural work gave no sign of abating. Accordingly, revival came to several Kehukee Association churches with approximately 1,500 converts added through baptism by the end of 1802. J. Edwin Orr relates that Baptist congregations in the backwoods of the Carolinas grew as much as eighty percent in the years 1802–03 (*Eager Feet*, p. 69). One notable convert of the South Carolina revival was Baptist leader, Richard Fuller (1804–1876), whose Seventh Avenue Baptist Church in Baltimore grew from a membership of 87 to over 1,200 under his 24-year ministry (1847–71). He also served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1859 and 1861. Among the many positive consequences of the great revival born from the Concert of Prayer movement is the mid-week prayer meeting, an almost universal practice among our Baptist churches today. *Prayer is the hand of faith that lays hold of the promises of God and is used in the plan of God to further the program of God in planting and growing New Testament churches.*

### III. The Sandy Creek Baptist Association and Church Planting.

#### A. The formation of the Sandy Creek Baptist Church in 1755.

##### 1. Their beginning.

New Light Congregationalists of the Great Awakening stressed regenerate church membership. Several of these realized that this could not be maintained by infant baptism, and began studying the Scriptures to determine that there is no justification for pedobaptism. These revived New Lights left the Congregationalist church to found "separate" Baptist churches. Among the Separate Baptist leaders interested in planting new churches were Connecticut preachers Shubal Stearns (1706–1771) and his brother-in-law Daniel Marshall (1706–1784). Heeding a "Macedonian call" from North Carolina to preach the gospel to the many settlers flooding into that region, Stearns and Marshall and their families came to the area of Randolph County in 1755 and started a church with 16 people at Sandy Creek.

##### 2. Their doctrine.

*Holding believers baptism; the laying on of hands; particular election of grace by the predestination of God in Christ; effectual calling by the Holy Ghost; free justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, progressive sanctification through God's grace and truth; the final perseverance, or continuance of the saints in grace; the resurrection of these bodies after death, at the day which God has appointed to judge the quick and dead by Jesus Christ, by the power of God and by resurrection of Christ; and life everlasting. Amen (Preamble of the Sandy Creek Church covenant [ca. 1757], cited in Robert I. Devin. A History of the Grassy Creek Baptist Church, From Its Foundation to 1880, With Biographical Sketches of Its Pastors and Ministers [Raleigh, NC: Edwards Broughton, 1880], p. 43).*

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B. The Sandy Creek Baptist Association (1758) and its lineage.

1. Organization.

*After three years there were as many fully organized churches (with their branches) in the Sandy Creek area. Stearns set out to form an association. In Semple's words, Stearns "conceived that an association composed of delegates from all would have a tendency to impart stability, regularity, and uniformity to the whole" (A. B. Semple. A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists of Virginia, rev. and extended by G. W. Beale [Richmond: Pitt & Dickinson, 1894], p. 6).*

2. Growth.

Morgan Edwards' Materials includes the following amazing comment:

*Sandy Creek Church is the mother of all the Separate Baptists. From this Zion went forth the word, and great was the company of them who published it. This church in seventeen years has spread her branches westward as far as the great Mississippi River; southward as far as Georgia; eastward to the sea and Chesapeake Bay; and northward to the waters of the Potomac; it, in seventeen years, is become the mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, to forty-two churches, from which sprang 125 ministers, many of which were ordained, and support the sacred character as well as any set of clergy in America.*

Included in this data is Daniel Marshall's own ministry of planting and pastoring several Baptist churches in South Carolina and Georgia. Among them is the first regularly constituted Baptist church in Georgia, the Kiokkee Baptist Church (1772) under great hardship. Marshall suffered imprisonment for preaching the gospel without Anglican orders.<sup>18</sup> During the year of his death (1784) the Georgia Baptist Association was formed and nearly all of the 19th century Baptist associations of Tennessee and Kentucky owe their existence to the Separate Baptists.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Churches were planted by individuals or other churches, and frequently with the assistance of an association. But the success of church planting hinged on individual initiative and leadership.

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<sup>18</sup> "At one time, Marshall was arrested, convicted, and commanded to preach no more in Georgia. Not only did he continue but also his wife asserted publicly that the authorities were interfering with the preaching of the gospel, quoting Scripture to sustain her view. A young man named Cartledge was convicted by her words and became a minister. Also, the arresting constable and even the magistrate who had tried Marshall were soon converted and baptized!" (Lumpkin, *Baptist Foundations*, p. 55).



2. Longevity of pastorates was common among early American Baptists and is a fairly reliable barometer of success in Baptist stability and growth. Thirty, even forty, year pastorates were not unusual. This is a mark of serious ministerial commitment to the local church.
3. Revival, especially the Great Awakening, was a major impetus in the zealous efforts of church planting ministries. Reproduction is the inevitable result of consecration.
4. Carefully articulated doctrinal confessions, especially the Philadelphia Baptist Confession, were the instrumental means of theological conversion, ecclesiastical constitution, and practical cohesion.
5. The holy ambition of the early Baptists was not necessarily big churches but more churches.
6. Regular Baptist associations were facilitators of church and mission activity and advisory counselors to local churches; but they did not assume superior authority over their constituents. Their role was advisory not adjudicatory. When Separate Baptist associations became centralized and attempted to usurp the authority of the local church, division or dissolution was the result (see Lumpkin, *Baptist Foundations*, pp. 158–59).
7. Local Baptist churches, as well as associations of Baptists, reserved the right of exclusion and expulsion from membership of doctrinal deviants.
8. Early Particular Baptists recognized that Arminianism is but a vestibule into the house of Rationalism and they therefore abhorred it.
9. During times of financial prosperity (e.g., Industrial Revolution), Baptists used their wealth to finance church planting and missions. What are we doing with the tremendous influx of money from an economy driven by the Technology Revolution? The reason America has enjoyed great economic prosperity is because of freedom. True freedom is the by-product of biblical Christianity. The unction of biblical Christianity is the Holy Spirit's power through evangelism. If we fail to evangelize we will fossilize.
10. "The Particular Baptists led the way among Baptists in America in both domestic and foreign missionary endeavors" (Wolever, John Gano, p. 318). When Particular Baptist Calvinist theology was in the ascendancy, there was more per capita growth of churches, more missionary enterprise, and more church planting than with the General (Arminian) Baptists. The idea that biblical Calvinism necessarily impedes evangelism is absolutely false. Just the opposite is true. Genuine revival, doctrinally sound churches, and the forward movement of Baptist evangelism and missions have not only been aided, but have actually been driven, by the doctrines of divine sovereign grace. Richard C. Gamble writes,

*One of the fruits of Calvin's ministry in Geneva was the missionary activity that proceeded from there and the care for the destitute who arrived in Geneva. It is clear from the records of that time that Geneva became the most famous place to which religious refugees fled. We are also informed that Geneva sent out a host of well-trained missionaries, especially to France but even as far away as Brazil. The records of those missionaries who were martyred for their faith are also in our possession. Professor [Philip E.] Hughes...summarizes well when he says: "Here is irrefutable proof of the falsity of the too common conclusion that Calvinism is incompatible with evangelism and spells death to all missionary enterprise" [Hughes, "The Geneva of John Calvin," *The Churchman* 78 (1964), p. 271, cited in John Calvin, *His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 59.*

O, glorious Christ! Thy outstretched arms excite  
To holy zeal and ceaseless consecration,  
Until, like Thee, arrayed in spotless white,  
Our blest Redeemer claims His ransomed nation!

—from *Patria Nostra Christo*, the Jubilee Poem by Sidney Dyer, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1832–1882.

*My mind is often deeply impressed with the thought that I am laboring for future generations; and that the principles inculcated and the habits introduced in the Baptist Society in this country, will last for ages. Under what high and weighty responsibility should every professor, and particularly every preacher, act, who lays the foundations in a new country (from the Journal of John Mason Peck, quoted in Baptist Home Missions in North America, 1832–1882, p. 305).*

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# The Theology & Influence of Charles Finney on American Fundamentalism

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Gerald Priest

If recent Finney biographies and the republication of Finney's works are an indication of continued interest, Finneyism is a very popular topic.<sup>19</sup> A Yahoo web search yielded an amazing 278,000 results on this colorful and controversial nineteenth century "father of modern evangelism." Most responses to Finney fall into one of two categories—the highly critical and the highly complimentary.<sup>20</sup> Unfavorable works usually attack Finney's unorthodox doctrine and methods; the favorable defend him as a godly soul winner who is misunderstood or unjustly vilified by those who disagree with his "successful" methods.<sup>21</sup> My contention is that a critical evaluation of Finney's own writings will reveal that he is in substantial disagreement with the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, and that his revivalist methodology, when examined in that context, is a defective paradigm for evangelism and revival. I would also suggest that Finney's teachings and methods have generally been harmful to evangelical Christianity.

Fundamentalism was born out of intense opposition to theological liberalism, and so it would appear a mega-contradiction to even suggest that fundamentalists could ever be "taken in" by rationalism in any form. Yet, interestingly, George Marsden has suggested that one of the formative features of early fundamentalism was Scottish Common Sense philosophy, a moralistic rationalism which contributed to the evidentialist epistemology of early fundamentalist

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<sup>19</sup> Amazon.com has 91 author entrees for Finney, including his three most popular works: his *Memoirs*, his *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, and his *Lectures on Revival*, all re-issued within the last two years. Add to this the "Charles G. Finney Legacy of Revival" conference at Wheaton College in 1990 and the "Charles G. Finney Conference on Theology" in Fort Worth in 1991.

<sup>20</sup> Some works sympathetic to Finney include L. G. Parkhurst, Jr., *Finney's Theology: True to Scripture, True to Reason, True to Life* (Edmon, OK: Revival Resources, 1990) and his article, "Charles Grandison Finney Preached For A Verdict," *Fundamentalist Journal* 3 (June 1984), pp. 41–43; J. E. Hamilton, "Finney: An Appreciation," *Christianity Today* 19 (August 8, 1975), 13–16; H. Conn, foreword to *Finney's Systematic Theology* (reprint, Minneapolis: Bethany, 1976).

<sup>21</sup> Amazon.com lists several mostly favorable reviews of Finney's *Systematic Theology*: "This book ultimately transformed my walk and understanding of the Bible." "I highly recommend this book...because it will truly cause a person to 'make their calling and election sure'.... history is proving Finney less of a heretic year after year." "The most authoritative discussion I have ever seen.... I wonder if any of you have truly read his works with an open mind (if at all), and whether you have the spiritual insight to realize that what you are preaching is NOT WORKING." "If one perseveres [sic] [in reading this book] they [sic] will discover an incredible depth of theological thought and argument which has been the inspiration of several revivals of faith around the globe."

apologetics.<sup>22</sup> One version of Common Sense, rooted in Princeton, did play a significant role in fundamentalism, as Ernest Sandeen and later Mark Noll sought to prove.<sup>23</sup> But Finney's "new measures" theology, a derivative of New Haven's brand of New Divinity, commonly called Taylorism, provided another source of rationalistic thought. It was in several respects contradictory to the Princeton brand of Common Sense in that it took up arms against traditional Reformed Calvinism by replacing God's sovereignty with man's.<sup>24</sup> Princeton's epistemological starting point began with God who freely decrees all things; Yale's began with free man who determines his own destiny. In the words of Napoleon, "God proposes, but Napoleon [man] disposes."<sup>25</sup> Finney's brand of Taylorism represented a new humanism dressed up in pietistic garb.

There was also a definite strain of empiricism in Finney as reflected in his dogmatic views on sanctification. If the vehicle for Finney's rationalism was revivalism, empirical mysticism drove his perfectionism, achieved sensationally by the "baptism with the Holy Spirit." To Finney, man can be revived by the sheer power of his will. When this happens, he can and should experience moral perfection through the "second blessing" of Spirit baptism. Revival and Spirit baptism came to be inseparably linked in fundamentalist revivalism.

One reason fundamentalists have been accepting of Finney's methodology is because it sounds so reasonable, and at times down right spiritual. Finney uses many of the appropriate evangelical terms with apparent sincerity. A second reason they have been lured into Finneyism is pragmatism. "Just look at the results; how can you argue with success?" Estimates run as high as five hundred thousand converts to Christ during Finney's evangelistic tenure. "Now that's revival, and that's what I want," they say. Finney's success has provided a perennial (and seasonal!) incentive for revival. His forthright confident manner is compelling; his logic irresistible to many. But the arguments of the Gibeonites also proved reasonable to Joshua and the elders of Israel. However, consider Joshua 9:14—"So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the Lord." This, I believe, is the reason that fundamentalists have been taken in by Finney. They have sincerely wanted the benefits he promised, but have not investigated carefully his theology in light of God's Word. Nor have they examined his methods critically as compatible with orthodox belief. Success came to be measured

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<sup>22</sup> George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870–1925* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), esp.14–21. See also, Mark A. Snoeberger, "Engaging the Enemy...But On Whose Terms? An Assessment of Responses to the Charge of Anti-Intellectualism," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 8 (Fall 2003): 69–84.

<sup>23</sup> Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970); Mark Noll, "Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought," *American Quarterly* 37 (1985): 225–26.

<sup>24</sup> See the excellent treatment of this phenomenon with several citations in Jay E. Smith, "The Theology of Charles Finney: A System of Self-Reformation," *TrinJ* 13 (Spring 1992): 61–93.

<sup>25</sup> It should be instructive to note that these words were supposedly uttered just before Waterloo!

quantitatively by numbers of converts, not by the quality of perseverance in sound doctrine. And this is just the problem: fundamentalists, beginning with Moody and Torrey and continuing with John R. Rice, wanted the "second blessing" they believed essential for revival and soul winning, and this irrespective of the theological confusion it entails. Finney's evangelism can be euphemistically remembered for the western district of New York state where it flourished for a time, where revivals spread like wild fire, leaving the area "burned over" as a religious wasteland. If we present an erroneous theology with a likewise flawed methodology are we not in danger of creating a similar wasteland?

## I. Finney and Revivalism.

A. The nineteenth century witnessed a new kind of revival.

1. Iain Murray, in a critique of revivalism, laments what he considers a new view of revival that came into vogue during the latter half of the nineteenth century—a view which displaced the old with a distinctly different understanding of the subject. A shift in vocabulary marked the change. He writes,

*Seasons of revival became "revival meetings." Instead of being "surprising" they might now be even announced in advance, and whereas no one in the previous [eighteenth] century had known of ways to secure a revival, a system was now popularized by "revivalists" which came near to guaranteeing results.*<sup>26</sup>

2. One may note this in the shift of revival emphasis after the Great Awakenings from submission to God to pragmatic results, i.e., numbers of decisions. This was due to a shift in theology away from the doctrinal content of faith to the subjective experience, paving the way for existentialism and rationalism. The Enlightenment on the one hand and Arminianism on the other combined to upgrade man from a totally depraved sinner to a totally free moral agent. As Michael Horton reminds us, "In the former, people were taught to trust in their reason, and in the latter, their emotions, but in both the individual was enshrined."<sup>27</sup> Bernard A. Weisberger identifies one cause of the problem: "As theology grew simpler, technique became predominant."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750–1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), p. xviii. For a contrast of revival and revivalism, using Jonathan Edwards and Charles Finney as examples of the difference, see my "Revival and Revivalism: A Historical and Doctrinal Evaluation," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (Fall 1996): pp. 223–52.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Scott Horton, *Made In America: The Shaping of Modern American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> Bernard A. Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact upon Religion in America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1958), p. 271.

3. Gardiner Spring (1785–1873), an Old School Presbyterian minister of the Old Brick Church in New York City and a contemporary of Finney, advocated genuine revival against superficial revivalism.

*With the obvious signs of the times in view, who does not see that this artful foe [Satan] would enjoy his malignant triumph, if he could prejudice the minds of good men against all revivals of religion? This he does, not so much by opposing them, as by counterfeiting the genuine coin, and by getting up revivals that are spurious and to his liking. Revivals are always spurious when they are got up by man's device, and not brought down by the Spirit of God.<sup>29</sup>*

B. New Haven theology and Jacksonian democracy combined to produce the change.

1. We may note a theological change with the "revivalist" New Haven theology of Nathaniel Taylor (1786–1858), professor of didactic theology at Yale beginning in 1822. He revised Edwards's Calvinistic theology to make it compatible with revivalism and serve as a rational defense for it.
  - a. Taylor denied the imputation of Adam's sin to all men, thereby denying original sin. Sin was only in the sinning. He taught a governmental view of Christ's atonement<sup>30</sup>, instead of a substitutionary penal death. Sin was an offense against the moral government of the universe. The Son died as a public example of God's hatred of sin and as an incentive for man to exercise his moral freedom by choosing not to sin and begin living righteously. Man as a free moral agent was perfectly capable of choosing his own destiny. Horace Bushnell's *Christian Nurture* (1847) was born out of this theology.<sup>31</sup>
  - b. New Haven Theology provided the garden in which Arminianism would bloom, and the Social Gospel would take root and eventually bear the fruit of liberalism. A biographer of Taylor stated that many of the 768 graduates from Taylor's classes "became the leaders in the great surge of liberal thought that

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<sup>29</sup> Gardiner Spring, *Personal Reminiscences of the Life and Times of Gardiner Spring*, 1:217–18, cited in Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, p. xv.

<sup>30</sup> The view made popular by Dutch jurist and Arminian, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645). "Christ did not bear our punishment but suffered as a penal example whereby the law was honored while sinners were pardoned.... The death of Christ was a public example of the depth of sin and the lengths to which God would go to uphold the moral order of the universe" (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Atonement, Theories of," by Leon Morris, p. 102).

<sup>31</sup> Bushnell taught that the child is to grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise

dominated Congregationalism during the next generation."<sup>32</sup> It was the New Haven theology that provided the impetus for much of nineteenth century revivalism, including Finney's preaching. As one writer put it, referring to an 1831 Finney sermon: "The voice was Finney's, the thinking Taylor's."<sup>33</sup> Another historian noted that Finney was "Taylor's true successor."<sup>34</sup>

2. Theology appeared to take on the characteristics of the political and cultural climate.
  - a. In the context of Jacksonian democracy, Americans seemed to emulate the character of their president. Self-determination and a euphoric belief in self-worth and prosperity displaced the old Puritan view of man's innate moral corruption and absolute dependence on a sovereign God. "Optimism was the order of the day with an emphasis on the ultimate perfection of society through progressive improvement in mankind."<sup>35</sup>
  - b. Andrew Jackson provided an incentive for unlimited human achievement.

*I believe man can be elevated; man can become more and more endowed with divinity; and as he does he becomes more God-like in his character and capable of governing himself. Let us go on elevating our people, perfecting our institutions, until democracy shall reach such a point of perfection that we can acclaim with truth that the voice of the people is the voice of God.*<sup>36</sup>

3. The product of these two phenomena: Charles G. Finney (1792–1875), whose moral theology asserted that *revival may be and should be generated by human means*. As a result pragmatism ruled and theology became anthropocentric and manipulative. The Holy Spirit became an agent at man's disposal. Revival was reduced to methodology or certain calculated measures to produce moral results.

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<sup>32</sup> Sidney Earl Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786–1858: A Connecticut Liberal* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1967), p. 163.

<sup>33</sup> Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, p. 261.

<sup>34</sup> Frank Hugh Foster, *A Genetic History of New England Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907), p. 453; cf. G. F. Wright, "President Finney's System of Theology in its Relations to the So-Called New England Theology," *BibSac* 34 (1877): 740–41.

<sup>35</sup> James E. Johnson, "Charles G. Finney and a Theology of Revivalism," *Church History* 38 (September 1969): 357.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 22. The original source of this excerpt is unknown.

These are the characteristics of *revivalism*. Charles G. Finney provides us a paradigm for it. Finney spread the democratic gospel of the New Haven theology along the eastern seaboard, and mainly across New York state prominently from 1825 to 1835.

## II. Features of the Finneyan Formula for Revival.

### A. Finney was a professional revivalist and dynamic pulpiteer.

1. Finney was America's religious Andrew Jackson.<sup>37</sup> If Jackson was America's political folk-hero, Finney was its religious folk-hero. Finney was a spirited preacher with a magnetic personality, booming voice, and deep-set piercing eyes. For Finney's stare to fall on you while he preached was to be lifted up and turned slowly over the fire. When Finney said hell, you could smell the smoke. In democratic fashion, he called upon the common folk to come in, scrape off their boots, and cast their own votes for heaven or hell. They were perfectly free to choose either.
2. This law student turned evangelist would not only set revival fires but fires of contro- versy as well. It was Finney who promoted the Arminian gospel in opposition to the Calvinistic message of Edwards and Whitefield. Because of Finney's harsh criticism of Calvinism, many fundamentalists to this day unfortunately equate Calvinism with anti-evangelism.
3. There is no doubt that Finney provided a refreshing, if not colorful, change from Yankee divines in shoe buckles, lace, and wigs. His gospel written on buckskin was a radical switch from many a dry New England sermon. Ordained by the Presbyterians, he soon denied their doctrines, delineated in the Westminster Confession, and eventually left the church to become an independent; although he had much in common with the Methodists and helped launch the perfectionist and holiness movements often associated with that denomination. It is really hard to take Allen Guelzo seriously when he writes that Finney was only furthering Jonathan Edwards's views.<sup>38</sup>
4. Finney is often credited with the conversion of 500,000 people to the gospel, using evangelistic methods that are still popular with many preachers. Yet Finney

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<sup>37</sup> W. G. McLoughlin, Jr. writes, "Finney's Theology was the Christian counterpart of Jacksonian democracy." *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: Roland Press, 1959), p. 100.

<sup>38</sup> "The Making of a Revivalist: Finney and the Heritage of Jonathan Edwards" 7 *Christian History* (Number 4, Issue 20), pp. 28–30.



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himself, toward the end of his ministry, doubted the genuineness of many of those conversions.<sup>39</sup>

- B. Finney was a master of measures. Revivals could be and should be promoted by natural means, he believed.
1. His use of publicity and protracted meetings sensationalized evangelism and interfered with the regular services of local churches.
  2. He believed that revival was not a miracle, but "the result of the right use of the appropriate means."<sup>40</sup> He based his controversial *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* on this premise.
  3. His democratic gospel permitted and encouraged women to pray and preach in public.
  4. His use of the anxious bench at the front of the meeting house was designed to draw attention to the drama of a struggling soul which in turn would generate revivalistic momentum.
  5. His singling out of persons during the message—sometimes by name—for special censure antagonized many.
  6. He and his fellow revivalists invaded towns without invitation from local pastors, which often resulted in the mutiny of parishoners against their "unconverted" ministers.<sup>41</sup>

Finney's theology was adapted to fit his new measures.

### III. Finney's Doctrinal Direction (read "defection").

Finney consciously sought to develop a theology which would be "patterned to fit his career as a revivalist.... Since his theological system was designed to complement his career as a positivist, his theology often assumed strange shapes in order to accommodate the revivalist milieu."<sup>42</sup> **Basic to everything Finney taught was his emphatic belief that**

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<sup>39</sup> Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney 1792–1875: Revivalist and Reformer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), p. 381; Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, pp. 293–94.

<sup>40</sup> Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (New York: Revell, 1868), p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Jay E. Smith, "Theology of Charles Finney," p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> James E. Johnson, "Charles G. Finney and a Theology of Revivalism," p. 338.

**God would never command men to do anything they could not do.**<sup>43</sup> Finney helped prepare America's religious climate for Norman Vincent Peale's power of positive thinking, Robert Schuller's self-esteemism, the tele-evangelists' popular "Health and Wealth" message, and a host of other trendy gospels.

A. Finney was a rationalist.

Finney's "great talent was to make the complicated doctrines of Nathaniel W. Taylor's 'New Divinity' as clear and as sensible as the multiplication table."<sup>44</sup>

1. Finney refused to accept anything that contradicted his understanding. For example, in defending his view that God would never command anything beyond our ability, he writes,

*A gracious ability to do our duty is absurd. It is a dictate of reason, of conscience, of common sense, and of our natural sense of justice, that if God require of us the performance of any duty or act, he is bound in justice to give us power to obey; i.e., he must give us the faculties and strength to perform the act.*<sup>45</sup>

*He [George Gale, Finney's early pastor] held all those doctrines that logically flow from the fact of a nature sinful of itself. These doctrines I could not receive. I could not receive his views on the subject of Atonement, regeneration, faith, repentance, the slavery of the will, or any of their kindred doctrines.... When I came to the [Westminster] Confession of faith, and saw the passages that were quoted to sustain these peculiar positions, I was absolutely ashamed of it. I could not feel any respect for a document that would undertake to impose on mankind such dogmas as those, sustained, for the most part, by passages of Scripture that were totally irrelevant; and not in a single instance sustained by passages that a court of law would have been considered conclusive.*<sup>46</sup>

2. In reality, his own logic preempted the authority of Scripture. Charles Hodge, in refuting Finney's doctrine of benevolence as the only absolute good, states,

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<sup>43</sup> Finney wrote, "For it is a law of reason, that no being has a right to do what he has no power to do." *True and False Repentance: Evangelistic Messages* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1966), 55.

<sup>44</sup> Winthrop Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), p. 143; cf. David L. Turner, "A Critique of Charles G. Finney's Theology," unpublished paper presented at Theology Night, Baptist Bible College (1977), pp. 25–36.

<sup>45</sup> Charles Finney, *Sermons on Important Subjects* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1836), p. 25.

<sup>46</sup> *Idem, The Original Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, ed. Garth M. Rosell & Richard A. G. Dupuis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 36, 47.

*The system of Professor Finney is a remarkable product of relentless logic. It is valuable as a warning. It shows to what extremes the human mind may be carried when abandoned to its own guidance. He begins with certain axioms, or, as he calls them, truths of reason, and from these he draws conclusions which are indeed logical deductions, but which shock the moral sense, and prove nothing but that his premises are false.*<sup>47</sup>

In a review of Finney's *Systematic Theology*, Hodge remonstrated that "a very slight modification in the form of statement, would bring the doctrine of Mr. Finney into exact conformity to the doctrine of the modern German school [of rationalism], which makes God but a name for the moral law or order of the universe."<sup>48</sup>

B. Finney was a pelagianist.<sup>49</sup>

1. He denied original sin and man's total depravity.

Finney denied constitutional depravity because he said total depravity was unreasonable. Finney pronounced Jonathan Edwards's *Freedom of the Will* "an injurious monstrosity and misnomer."<sup>50</sup> Nothing is sinful but voluntary action. "All sin is actual, and...no other than actual transgression can justly be called sin."<sup>51</sup>

*We deny that the human constitution is morally depraved, 1. Because there is not proof of it. 2. Because it is impossible that sin should be an attribute of the substance of soul or body. It is and must be an attribute of choice or intention and not of substance. 3. To make sin an attribute or quality of substance is contrary to God's definition of sin. "Sin," says the apostle, "is anomia," a "transgression of, or a want of conformity to the moral law."*<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 3:8–9.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, "Finney's Lectures on Theology," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 19 (April 1847): 239.

<sup>49</sup> Roger Nichol comments, "My students ask me, What did Finney have that Pelagius didn't? I answer, A revival!" (cited in Richard Lovelace, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Evangelical Tradition," in *Faces of Renewal: Studies in Honor of Stanley M. Horton*, ed. Paul Elbert [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988], p. 227).

<sup>50</sup> Charles Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (Oberlin, OH: James M. Fitch, 1847), p. 30.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 478.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 473.



*In the atonement God has given us the influence of his own example, has exhibited his own love, his own compassion, his own self-denial, his own patience, his own long-suffering, under abuse from enemies.... This is the highest possible moral influence.... The influence of the Atonement, when apprehended by the mind, will accomplish whatever is an object of moral power.... To suppose...that Christ suffered in amount all that was due to the elect, is to suppose that he suffered an eternal punishment multiplied by the whole number of the elect.<sup>53</sup>*

Finney failed to see that the value of Christ's suffering was not its amount or quantity but its quality—a perfectly righteous substitution which propitiated the wrath of God.

3. He replaced justification with amnesty.
  - a. Justification is not "a forensic or judicial proceeding," but "a governmental decree or amnesty based upon the infinite love of God." Finney wrote,

*Christ died simply to remove an insurmountable obstacle out of the way of God's forgiving sinners;... That instead of Christ's having satisfied retributive justice, and borne just what sinners deserve, he had only satisfied public justice, by honoring the law.... I maintained that Christ in his Atonement merely did that which was necessary as a condition of the forgiveness of sin; and not that which cancelled sin, in the sense of literally paying the indebtedness of sinners.<sup>54</sup>*

*Gospel justification is not the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. Under the gospel, sinners are not justified by having the obedience of Jesus Christ set down to their account, as if he had obeyed the law for them, or in their stead.... This idea is absurd and impossible.... Jesus Christ was bound to obey the law for himself.... Nor does justification by faith imply that a sinner is justified by faith without good works, or personal holiness.... He [Paul] does not mean that good works are unnecessary to justification but that works of law are not good works, because they spring from legal considerations.<sup>55</sup>*

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<sup>53</sup> Idem, *Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures*, pp. 259, 255).

<sup>54</sup> Idem, *Memoirs*, p. 39.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, *True and False Repentance*, pp. 59–60.

"For sinners to be forensically pronounced just is impossible and absurd."<sup>56</sup> In fact, it was Nathaniel Taylor's aim to overthrow forensic justification, and Finney was the self-appointed agent to carry out the mission.<sup>57</sup>

- b. The ground of justification, then, is not the vicarious sacrifice of Christ for us but divine benevolence.<sup>58</sup>
4. He denied the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers.

*The doctrine of an imputed righteousness...is founded on a most false and nonsensical assumption.... [Christ's obedience] can never be imputed to us. He was bound to love God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and his neighbor as Himself. He did no more than this. He could do no more. It was naturally impossible, then, for Him to obey in our behalf.*<sup>59</sup>

5. Conversion was man's initiative.

Finney insisted "that the actual turning, or change, is the sinner's own act."<sup>60</sup> "Don't wait for God to change your heart. Why should you wait for Him to do what He has commanded you to do?"<sup>61</sup>

Benjamin B. Warfield's response to Finney's theology of moral determinism that "all holiness [consists in] the right exercises of our own will or agency" (Finney):

*It is quite clear that what Finney gives us is less a theology than a system of morals. God might be eliminated from it entirely without essentially changing its character. All virtue, all holiness, is made to consist in an ethical determination of will.*<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Idem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 382, 401, 395, 384.

<sup>57</sup> We should keep in mind that it was Edwards's preaching of this very doctrine that God used to bring about the Great Awakening in New England.

<sup>58</sup> Charles Finney, *Systematic Theology*, p. 401; Benjamin B. Warfield, *Perfectionism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958), pp. 153–55.

<sup>59</sup> Charles Finney, *Systematic Theology*, Bethany House Publishers reprint edition (1994), pp. 362–63, cited in Sean Michael Lucas, "Charles Finney's Theology of Revival: Moral Depravity," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 6 (Fall 1995): 209–10.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Finney, *Sermons on Important Subjects*, p. 20.

<sup>61</sup> Idem, *God's Love For A Sinning World: Evangelistic Messages* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1966), p. 112.

<sup>62</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 193.

Warfield compares Finney's theology with Jesuit "intentionalism." "The point of the comparison lies in the principle common to both Jesuit 'intentionalism' and Finney's teleological ethics that 'whatever proceeds from right intention is right.'"<sup>63</sup>

NOTE: Since man's liability before God is the result of his choices rather than his nature, he only needs something to motivate him to make them. "The sinner has all the faculties and natural attributes requisite to render perfect obedience to God. All he needs is to be induced to use these powers and attributes as he ought."<sup>64</sup> That inducement is revival. The work of the Holy Spirit is not regeneration, since man does not need it. The Holy Spirit's efforts are confined to persuasion. "Finney believed that the Holy Spirit's function was to persuade individuals to make right choices."<sup>65</sup> When the sinner decides to change, the result is "conversion."

D. Finney was a pragmatist.

Finney argued repeatedly that results were the infallible proof that his doctrines were correct.

1. In volitional intention. "Ultimate intention alone is right or wrong in itself."<sup>66</sup>
2. In methodology. "The results justify my methods."<sup>67</sup>
3. In "new measures" (protracted meetings, praying and preaching women, pulpit sensationalism, the anxious seat, promotionalism). "But when the blessing evidently follows the introduction of the measure itself, the proof is unanswerable that the measure is wise."<sup>68</sup>

*It is evident that much fault has been found with measures which have been pre-eminently and continually blessed of God for the promotion of revivals. If a*

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Finney, *Systematic Theology*, p. 221.

<sup>65</sup> Jay E. Smith, "Theology of Charles Finney," p. 80.

<sup>66</sup> Finney, cited by David L. Turner, "A Critique of Charles G. Finney's Theology," p. 31.

<sup>67</sup> Idem, *Charles G. Finney: An Autobiography*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1908), p. 83.

<sup>68</sup> Idem, *Lectures on Revivals*, p. 211.

*measure is continually or unusually blessed, let the man who thinks he is wiser than God, call it in question.*<sup>69</sup>

NOTE: What may we conclude from Scripture and church history about Finney's revivalist theology? It was heretical! Perhaps more than any other man, with the possible exception of Horace Bushnell, Finney paved the way for the social gospel and liberalism in America, and yet ironically, many evangelicals and fundamentalists have continued to endorse and practice his teachings.

#### IV. Finney and Oberlin Perfectionism.

##### A. Definitions.

###### 1. Biblical.

The NT *teleios* (derived from *telos*) reflects the idea of design, purpose, goal. It could be better translated "mature" rather than "perfect," for the Bible nowhere teaches the idea of entire sanctification in this life. The Christian can develop into a mature disciple morally and spiritually, a responsible person of godly behavior which reflects the image of Christ (Col 1:28; 4:12; Eph 4:13–14; James 1:3–4). But such perfection is by degree and is relative, not absolute, as with deity. Such perfection is "responsible, spiritual, intellectual, and moral development which conforms to the desired pattern."<sup>70</sup> Other Greek synonyms connote the idea of completeness with regard to moral or spiritual integrity before God. Obedience is always the condition for such perfection. The Christian this side of Heaven is always a work in progress, never arriving and never able to arrive at perfection (Phil 3:12–16; Rom 7:24–25).

###### 2. Theoretical.

"The teaching that moral or religious perfection (in some cases sinlessness) is not only an ideal toward which to strive, but a goal attainable in this life."<sup>71</sup>

##### B. Historical development.

1. Various systems of perfectionism have existed in church history: e.g., gnostic, monastic, quietistic, pietistic, ethical. What they invariably have in common is

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 212; emphasis Finney's.

<sup>70</sup> *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Perfection, Perfectionism," by R. L. Shelton, p. 839.

<sup>71</sup> *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "Perfectionism," by Donald W. Dayton, p. 765.



the ability of man to reach a level of freedom from sinning through personal achievement.

2. Nineteenth Century American Perfectionism. The Wesleyan view predominated.<sup>72</sup>
  - a. Wesley taught a type of "Christian perfection," or "perfect love" sometimes known as entire sanctification. This was the result usually of a crisis experience subsequent to salvation, or a "second work of grace," wrought instantaneously in the heart and confirmed by the Holy Spirit.
  - b. Perfection is not sinlessness but freedom from voluntary transgression of a known law and resulting in unbroken fellowship with Christ.
  - c. Perfectionism could be extended to and manifested in society through revival and reform.
  - d. Although Wesley did not deny original sin as Finney, he did view sin as more of a perverted relationship rather than a pervasive constitutional condition. Sin is relational or attitudinal. One great problem with the Wesleyan view of sin is that it is attenuated: sin involves only conscious will and intent. Therefore, while the Christian has weaknesses and involuntarily sins, he may still be able to achieve entire sanctification (freedom from willful sinning), but not absolute Christ-likeness.
  - e. Wesley always stressed that perfection was the result of divine grace transforming the life. But several holiness groups in America took perfectionism much further, e.g., eradication of the sin nature, experiential sign gifts.
  - f. Wesleyan "perfect love" is quite similar to the New Divinity's "disinterested benevolence" doctrine.<sup>73</sup>
3. Oberlin Perfectionism. One of the most popular expressions of perfectionism.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See John Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (reprint ed., London: Epworth Press, 1952), and Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1976), ch. 8.

<sup>73</sup> For similarities of Wesleyan and Oberlin Perfectionism see Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, pp. 141–42.

<sup>74</sup> For an interesting and historically accurate account of Oberlin perfectionism see Keith Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney 1792–1875: Revivalist and Reformer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), pp. 324–49.

## a. Originator.

**Asa Mahan** (1799–1889), first president of Oberlin College (Ohio). Congregationalist background, graduate of Andover Seminary. Pastor of Sixth Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati and trustee of Lane Theological Seminary. Supported the "Lane Rebels" (several Finney converts) in their opposition to slavery. Students came to Oberlin under condition they could select president. Emphasis at the very beginning on social reform. School integrated; also coed. Supported by Tappan brothers (Arthur and Lewis, social reformers). Later, Mahan became president of Cleveland University and then Adrian (Michigan) College. In 1871, joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church (abolitionist). His important book *Scripture Doctrine of Perfection* (1839), along with Finney's lectures, is the definitive work on Oberlin Theology. Mahan was a popular speaker at Keswick conferences and one of the promoters of the so-called Deeper (or Higher) Christian Life Movement.

At Oberlin, Mahan and Finney trained professional evangelists and stimulated zeal for social reform. Many of the early peace, feminist, and abolitionist movements in America emanated from Oberlin. Today it is one of the most liberal schools in the country.

## b. Origin.

Came as a result of "seeking" students with a dilemma: "If sanctification is *not* attainable and a practical duty in the world either the devil is successful or Christ is impotent." Reduced to conclusion: not sanctified either from lack of motives in gospel or lack of sufficient power in Holy Spirit.<sup>75</sup>

*When a believer had come to me and confessed that he was not living as God requires, and asked me how he should escape the "bondage of corruption," and attain to "the liberty of the sons of God," I had instructed him to confess his sins, put them away, renew his purpose of obedience, and go forward with a fixed resolution to do the entire will of God. Now, here was a fundamental mistake. We are not only to be "justified by the faith of Christ," but to be sanctified also by the faith that is in him.... If you desire a victory over your tempers, your appetites, and all your propensities, take them to Christ, just as you take your sins to him, and he will give you the victory over the former, just as he gives you pardon for the latter.... It is not he that resolves, but "he that abideth in Christ and Christ in him, that bringeth forth much fruit."<sup>76</sup>*

<sup>75</sup> Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, p. 104ff.

<sup>76</sup> Asa Mahan, *Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (Boston: Waite, Pierce, 1849), p. 13.

## c. Finney's view.

*I gave myself earnestly to search the Scriptures, and to read whatever came to hand upon the subject, until my mind was satisfied that an altogether higher and more stable form of Christian life was attainable, and was the privilege of all Christians.... I was satisfied that the doctrine of sanctification in this life, and entire sanctification, in the sense that it was the privilege of Christians to live without known sin, was a doctrine taught in the Bible, and that abundant means were provided for the securing of that attainment.<sup>77</sup>*

## d. Characteristic features of Oberlin Perfectionism.

## (1) Entire sanctification can be attained immediately.

- (a) Based on Asa Mahan's own experience as expressed in his *Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection*, in which he equates perfectionism with Spirit baptism.

*While thus employed [in prayer], my heart leaped up in ecstasy indescribable, with the explanation, "I have found it".... The highway of holiness was now, for the first time rendered perfectly distinct to my mind....a second conversion.<sup>78</sup>*

- (b) Based on Finney's own experience of being "baptized" with the Holy Spirit —the second blessing.

*I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me,...the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love.... It seemed like the very breath of God....it seemed to fan me, like immense wings.<sup>79</sup>*

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<sup>77</sup> Charles Finney, *Autobiography*, pp. 340–41.

<sup>78</sup> Asa Mahan, *Christian Perfection*, p. 187.

<sup>79</sup> Charles Finney, *Autobiography*, p. 20.

- (2) Holiness is perfection of the will. "That we be in a perfectly sanctified and blameless state in regard to our wills, implies that the action of all our voluntary powers be in entire conformity to the will of God."<sup>80</sup>
- (3) It is the duty of every Christian to achieve perfection in this life. Since God wills sanctification of the Christian, he should be and he can be entirely sanctified.
- (4) Perfectionism can be extended to society via individual conversion and social reform as expressed in abolition, pacifism, and abstinence.

C. Benjamin B. Warfield's response in *Perfectionism*.

1. Perfectionism is impossible in this life because of the profound sense of sin. The Higher Life Movement, Perfectionism, etc., ignore that the "fact of sin consists of any lack of conformity unto the law of God as well as transgression of that law."<sup>81</sup>
2. Warfield's response to Finney's perfectionist argument that failure to attain sanctification due to either want of motives or want of the Spirit's power.

*Such dilemmas could be applied equally to every evil with which man is afflicted—disease, death, the uncompleted salvation of the world. If it is not a practicable thing to be perfectly well in this world, then Jesus Christ has been vanquished by the Devil and has no way to make His people well except by taking them out of the world. If freedom from death is not attainable in this world, then it must be due to want of sufficient power in the Spirit of God. If the world does not become at once the pure Kingdom of God in which only righteousness dwells, then we must infer either a want of sufficient motives in the Gospel or a want of sufficient power in the Son of God.*<sup>82</sup>

## V. The Influence of Finneyism on Fundamentalism.

A. In the area of doctrine.

1. The prevalence of Arminianism and deep-seated antipathy toward Calvinism as attested by the popularity of such books as Dave Hunt's *What Love Is This?* (2002), Clark Pinnock's works (e.g., *Grace Unlimited* [1975] and *The Grace of God and the*

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<sup>80</sup> From Asa Mahan, *Christian Perfection*, cited in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, s.v. "Oberlin Theology," by R. J. Green, p. 834.

<sup>81</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. xi.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59. See also Warfield's comparison of Finney's sanctification with the New Divinity view (*ibid.*, 206–08). Warfield says that there is only "a distinction without a difference."

*Will of Man* [1989]), and popular sermons, such as John R. Rice's "Hyper-Calvinism, A False Doctrine" (Sword of the Lord pamphlet, 1970), evangelist Ron Comfort's "Fruits of Calvinism" (Ambassador Baptist College chapel, October 1, 2002) and David Cloud's "I Reject Tulip Theology" (first published July 27, 1999; updated September 24, 2000).<sup>83</sup>

The usual approach is to condemn the five doctrines of Calvinism (TULIP) as hyper-Calvinistic and unscriptural. While some criticisms are credible, most are based on misunderstanding.

- a. The false logic of dichotomizing total depravity and total inability. While affirming the former, some fundamentalists deny the latter. Evangelist Ron Comfort makes such a case:

*They [Calvinists] make the analogy, Ephesians 2:1: And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; and they say that dead means "total inability." In other words, if a man is spiritually dead, he is unable to accept Christ. However, if you follow that analogy to its logical conclusion, then you would have to say that a dead man cannot receive nor can he reject. He cannot sin. Their analogy falls apart if you follow it to its logical conclusion.*

Rice says states that all men have the ability to repent by suggesting the Arminian doctrine of prevenient grace.

*Now the doctrine that all are sinful, incapable of being saved or doing good without God's help, is true. But it is certainly not true that some never could repent, that God leaves some intentionally without light or calling.... So every lost sinner is in some sense lighted by Jesus who "lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9), is somewhat moved by his conscience, is preached to by the creation about him, and when he hears the Word of God he is called by that. Then the fact of the depravity of every lost sinner does not mean there are some sinners who cannot be saved.*

- b. Salvation is based on divine foreknowledge, not unconditional election. Rice states,

*But it is wrong to make this election a whim of God whereby He saves some, compels them to be saved, and damns some whom He has decided He does not wish to save. No, election is not "unconditional." It is simply that God knows who will trust Him when they hear the Gospel and chooses them to be carried through till they be "conformed to the image of his Son."*

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<sup>83</sup> Even as Finney did, Cloud attacks the Westminster Confession as erroneous.

- c. The denial of irresistible grace. Even as Finney, many fundamentalists deny this doctrine. Comfort argues,

*Then you have I, which is Irresistible Grace. How can "grace" be irresistible? Anything imposed upon someone by a grace that is "irresistible" is not a gift received. If something is imposed upon you, without your desire to have it, I ask you, is that grace? That is a fallacious definition of grace to me: irresistibly imposed.*

- d. The suggestion that perseverance in the faith is salvation by works, not grace. Again, Comfort states,

*Here's what [B. G.]Armstrong says: "Perseverance is a necessary attribute of justification. God justifies, but man must have faith and obey." [John] Piper says, "We must also own up to the fact that our final salvation is made contingent upon the subsequent obedience which comes by faith." And I say what they are doing is mingling grace and works. Romans 11:6, "And if by grace, then it is no more works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. So here's what you've got to conclude: it's either all of grace, or all of works. You cannot mingle the two. "'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."*

2. The embrace of a misunderstood doctrine of Baptism with the Spirit as a second work of sanctification.
- a. Enduement for holiness as promoted by Wesleyanism and Keswick.<sup>84</sup> The so-called second blessing of entire sanctification came by way of Oberlin theology to several early fundamentalists who spoke at Keswick conferences and promoted its brand of victorious living. Asa Mahan himself was a frequent speaker in the early days of Keswick. Dwight L. Moody began promoting its teachings at his Northfield Conference after his personal experience of "baptism" with the Holy Spirit. While denying eradication, Keswick types affirmed counteraction of the old nature by the new. But the means were the same: a crisis experience subsequent to justification. For the advocates of this view, there are two types of Christians: the "carnal," the typical believer, and the "spiritual," the one who has been filled or baptized by the Holy Spirit. The transformation takes place in a single dramatic act of faith. We see this frequently displayed in camp meeting revivals where young people are suddenly "broken" and "surrender" to Christ's lordship. Several early

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<sup>84</sup> See William W. Combs, "The Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology," *DBSJ* 6 (Fall 2001): 17–44, wherein he traces the influence of Wesleyan perfectionism through Finney and Mahan to the Higher Life and Keswick movements and their impact on Dallas Theological Seminary, and its distinctive "Chaferian" second blessing view of sanctification.

fundamentalists identified with this type of sanctification: A. T. Pierson, W. H. Griffith Thomas, C. I. Scofield, J. Robertson McQuilkin, and Lewis Sperry Chafer.

Chafer's Keswick views can be seen in the distinctive traits of the Dallas Theology.<sup>85</sup> "What Dallas Theology shares with Keswick and all second-blessing theologies...is a distinction between justification and sanctification as separate works of grace."<sup>86</sup> Essential to the Christian life is dedication subsequent to conversion. Submission to Christ's lordship and complete repentance comes at the time of dedication. Thus, there are two types of Christians: the carnal who has accepted Christ as Savior and the spiritual who has accepted Him as Lord. It is only after the dedication to lordship that the life of sanctification begins. But the truth is sanctification begins at justification and every Christian is both spiritual and carnal at the same time to some degree throughout his earthly life. This is the whole point of Romans 6 and 7. This is the spiritual battle of the Christian which begins at the time of justification and continues through a life of on-going sanctification.

- b. Enduement for soul-winning as promoted by evangelists D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, William Biederwolf, Hyman Appelman, John R. Rice, and Jack Hyles, to name only a few. Most adherents of this view desire the Holy Spirit's enduement for evangelism, soul-winning, and revival campaigns. The principal concern is anointing for service. Taking their lead from Finney, representatives of this view often describe the enduement as a "baptism with the Holy Spirit."<sup>87</sup>

Finney's crisis experience has been recounted countless times in publications and sermons and still continues to influence fundamentalism.

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<sup>85</sup> See Chafer's *He That Is Spiritual* (revised 1918 ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967).

<sup>86</sup> William Combs, "Distinction Between Justification and Sanctification," p. 29.

<sup>87</sup> While encouraging a reliance on the power of the Spirit, most fundamentalists repudiated or at least down-played the miraculous sign gifts of the Spirit associated with Pentecostalism. Yet some of them inadvertently provided theological fodder for the Pentecostal movement. For example, Pentecostals have often appealed to R. A. Torrey for their doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit. His own son, R. A. Torrey, Jr., wrote, "While Dr. Torrey had no connection with the Pentecostal movements of his day and had many reservations and questions regarding their position, teaching and conduct, the fact remains that many leaders in the movement have drawn on his writings and teachings and held him in respect (letter of April 7, 1965 cited in Roger Edward Martin, "The Theology of R. A. Torrey" [Ph.D. dissertation, Bob Jones University, 1975], p. 157). See also, Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 61–61 and Donald Gee, *The Pentecostal Movement: Including the Story of the War Years (1940–47)* (London: Elim Publishing, 1949), pp. 4–5. Interestingly, Reuben A. Torrey, III (Torrey's grandson) was a charismatic Anglican priest.

"As I returned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost....the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy."<sup>88</sup>

Finney thereafter universalized his experience and made it normative for all Christian workers in his *Memoirs* and his *Lectures on Revival*. Richard Lovelace reminds us that, "from these sources it passed into the teaching of D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, and a host of Evangelicals both in America and Europe."<sup>89</sup>

In keeping with his Pelagian theology<sup>90</sup>, Finney taught that the securing of divine power for service must be initiated by man. The Christian must first consecrate himself before he can expect the baptism of the Holy Spirit and consequent success in ministry. The passage he cites for support, as do all second blessing advocates, is Luke 11:13: "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Yet there is no indication that Jesus meant this as a second blessing experience for power.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, Finney presents "the certainty that we shall receive the promised enduement of power from on high, and be successful in winning souls, if we ask in faith and fulfill the plainly revealed conditions of prevailing prayer."<sup>92</sup> According to Finney, the reason that Christians need the second blessing for power after conversion is the fact that "the disciples were Christians before the day of Pentecost,... but yet they had not the enduement of power necessary to the accomplishment of the work assigned them."<sup>93</sup> Once the early disciples

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<sup>88</sup> Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs* (New York: Barnes, 1876), p. 17.

<sup>89</sup> Richard Lovelace, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Evangelical Tradition," p. 227.

<sup>90</sup> Roger Nichol comments, "My students ask me, What did Finney have that Pelagius didn't? I answer, A revival!" (cited in Lovelace, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," p. 227).

<sup>91</sup> Larry Pettegrew has an excellent discussion of various interpretations of this passage and offers the suggestion that Jesus is using synecdoche when referring to the Holy Spirit: "The Lord uses a part (Holy Spirit) for the whole (good things [referenced in Matt 7]). He means literally that when we pray, the Father is willing to give us any or all spiritual blessings (i.e., good things). But the Lord uses the Holy Spirit as the best and highest" example of what is good. *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), pp. 58–64, esp. p. 63.

<sup>92</sup> Charles G. Finney, "God's Provision of Power," in Asa Mahan, *Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (rept. of 1880 ed., Clinton, NY: Williams, n.d.), pp. 173–75.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.



received the enduement of power at Pentecost, they set a precedent for all believers, according to Finney. The promise of enduement, therefore, is for all Christians. It is a gift available for all, but not all have it because they do not meet the criteria for receiving it. Yet the "possession of this enduement [is] an essential qualification for usefulness in the world."<sup>94</sup> The implication is clear: without the enduement of the Spirit a believer is useless. Therefore, one must persist in prayer until he gets it.

Finney's terminology, the descriptions, the very phrasing, are identical to the writings of those who advocate the second blessing of enduement for service. They may and often do utilize Scripture to support their claims, but the unseen guide giving direction is not the Holy Spirit, it is Finney. This is especially true in the works of Reuben A. Torrey (1856–1928)<sup>95</sup> and John R. Rice (1895–1980).

### Torrey

Early in his ministry, after reading Finney's *Memoirs* and his *Revival Addresses*, Torrey concluded "that the normal state of a church was revival, so I started out on that line."<sup>96</sup> As Torrey's biographer put it, "Finney's logic appealed to Torrey.... If a revival is needed, then it should be expected. If it is a duty, then it is possible. He decided, 'We shall have a revival.'"<sup>97</sup> This was the beginning of the Torrey city-wide union meetings. For Torrey, revival was the inevitable result of "the baptism with the Holy Spirit [which] is the Spirit of God coming upon the believer, filling his mind with a real apprehension of truth, especially of Christ, taking possession of his faculties, imparting to him gifts not otherwise his but which qualify him for service to which God has called him."<sup>98</sup> The baptism with the Spirit is only for service, not holiness. Torrey maintained that "it is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit to cleanse from sin,"

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>95</sup> Torrey's most popular works on the subject are: *Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1972); *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (reprint of 1910 ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974); *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923); and *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1910). Amazon.com lists 48 works by Torrey, attesting to their continuing popularity. Those dealing with the Holy Spirit have been republished within the last five years.

<sup>96</sup> George T. B. Davis, *Torrey and Alexander* (New York: Revell, 1905), p. 27.

<sup>97</sup> Roger Martin, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976), p. 51.

<sup>98</sup> Roger Martin, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976), p. 51.

but this was not the "Baptism with the Holy Spirit."<sup>99</sup> The means of baptism was a logical seven-step process. Torrey concluded that "it is absolutely certain that any one who takes these steps will be 'baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"<sup>100</sup>

### Rice

Rice promoted the enduement of the Spirit's power for soul-winning in the pages of his paper, the *Sword of the Lord*, in pamphlets, and in sermons he preached.<sup>101</sup> In a small pamphlet published in 1949, Rice disclaimed any "experience" that would lead to perfect holiness or eradication of sin, but described the experiences of prominent Christian leaders who had received "power from God for soul-winning work."<sup>102</sup> While he did not insist on the terminology preferred by Torrey, "baptism with the Spirit," Rice did completely accept Torrey's definition of it as a "special enduement of power from on high." Rice considered the terms used in Acts—baptism, filling, reception, pouring, etc. —as "referring to the special enduement of power in soul winning."<sup>103</sup> In other words, exegetical and contextual distinctions were not important; what was important was the experience of receiving power for soul-winning. His purpose was to challenge Christians to have the same experience as Torrey and other Christian leaders so that they, too, would be properly equipped to win souls. His conclusion bemoans the current "apostasy" from Pentecostal power:

*Those who have gone away from the doctrine of the fulness of the Spirit, the power of Pentecost, as a special enduement of power for soul winning possible*

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<sup>99</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), p. 15, cited in Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), p.103. Dayton goes on to say that Torrey was probably refuting the position of A. M. Hills, Torrey's former classmate at Yale, who countered that Spirit baptism was not "empowering for service" but the bestowing of "holiness and power," pp. 103–04.

<sup>100</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Baptism with the Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, n.d.), p. 155, cited in Martin, "Theology of R. A. Torrey," p. 150.

<sup>101</sup> Perhaps his most popular works are: *The Power of Pentecost or The Fulness of the Spirit* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1949); *We Can Have Revival Now: Annual Lectures on Revival at Bob Jones University* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1950); and *How Great Soul Winners Were Filled with the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1949). The *Sword of the Lord* web site lists twenty-one books under the topic of the Holy Spirit; most of them are written by Rice, Curtis Hutson (Rice's successor), and Jack Hyles. Many of them are "how to" soul winning books.

<sup>102</sup> John R. Rice, *How Great Soul Winners Were Filled with the Holy Spirit*, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Idem, *The Golden Path of Successful Personal Soul Winning* (Wheaton, IL: Sword of the Lord, 1962), p. 208.

*for every Christian and to be sought with prevailing prayer, have departed from the position of the great soul winners. This falling away in doctrine came with the falling away from revival! Men do not believe in the power of Pentecost simply because they do not themselves have the power of Pentecost.*<sup>104</sup>

According to Rice's own testimony, of the four books that had the greatest impact on his ministry, Finney's *Autobiography* was "most helpful." Rice counseled, "For a pungent and powerful revelation of how God works in soul winning and revival, few if any books ever written can exceed" this work.<sup>105</sup>

Over the years articles appearing in the *Sword of the Lord* by notable evangelists have kept the Finneyan emphasis on enduement of the Spirit for power in soul winning.

B. In the area of methods.

1. The formula method of revivalism—"the seven step approach to sure-fire revival."
2. The crusade model of evangelism ala Billy Graham—"the bigger the better."
3. The manipulative invitation system—"I see that hand."
4. The user-friendly models of ministry—"whatever it takes to win them."

These methods are based on the humanistic view that the natural man is fully capable of effectually responding to a persuasive gospel message. God's sovereignty in salvation goes a begging while technique rules the day.

## VI. Lessons.

- A. We should allow a sound biblical theology to inform our experience, not vice versa. Consider the contrast:

Comment by a New Measures revivalist, Horatio Foote: "That man's hope ain't worth a groat [piece of grain] that isn't founded on obedience."

Comment by an advocate of biblical revival, Joseph Brockway: "That man's hope is good for nothing that is not founded on the merits of Christ, and evinced by obedience."

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<sup>104</sup> Idem, *How Great Soul Winners Were Filled with the Holy Spirit*, p. 23.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

- B. We should avoid rationalism but through the illumination of the Holy Spirit draw from Scripture passages their intended meaning (1 Cor 2:10–16).

We should provide a defensive biblical instruction in sound doctrine, especially those doctrines essential to salvation: man is totally depraved (Jer17:9; Eph 2:1-3), his nature completely vitiated by sinfulness (Ps 58:3; 51:5; Rom 3:23) and an imputed wicked status rendering all men condemned before a Holy God (Rom 5:12, Eph 2:3); being totally depraved, man is incapable or unable to respond effectually unto salvation, but must be efficaciously called by God. There is absolutely no intrinsic righteousness within us meriting salvation; God's salvation of the lost is based solely on His unconditional love and graciousness toward His elect (Eph 1:4–5, 11; 2:8–9). The penal vicarious atonement of Christ is illimitable in its provision (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2), but limited only to those whom God effectually draws to Himself, regenerates, and enables to willingly receive the gospel through faith and repentance (John 6:37–40; Eph 2:4–7; 1 Thess 1:4–9; Acts 11:18; Eph 2:8); the elect are justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ, since they have no inherent goodness; and although free from the dominion of sin, nevertheless retain a defiled and sinful nature until glorified by God at the resurrection (Rom 5:15 3:22; 4:3, 5; 6:6–7, 11, 21–25; 8:18–25; 1 Cor 15:53). The true believer not only will but must persevere unto the end in his personal faith (John 8:31; 1 John 5:4), sound doctrine (Col 1:22–23), and good works (Eph 2:10).

- C. We should be intensely evangelistic and invitational. Christ was and so were the Apostles. But high pressure tactics and emotional manipulation can virtually undermine the work of the Holy Spirit.

*If C. G. Finney's evangelism rode the waves of confidence in man's abilities, Asahel Nettleton [a Calvinistic theologian and preacher] clung tenaciously to the rock of the older view that man is totally corrupt and cannot save himself. The symbol of one type of evangelism is the anxious seat, to which men were publicly pressured to repair. The symbol of the other is an inquiry meeting, where trembling sinners were pointed to Christ.<sup>106</sup>*

- D. The Pentecost revival in Acts 2 gives us marks by which other revivals may be tested. It appears that a revival must have at least the following evidences to be genuine.

1. It must include the simple and direct doctrinal preaching of the Word of God (vv. 14–36). Peter's gospel included the doctrines of predestination (v. 23), human depravity (vv. 23, 36, 40), the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ (vv. 23–36), repentance of sin and forgiveness (v. 38).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> F. Thornbury, *God Sent Revival: The Story of Asahel Nettleton and the Second Great Awakening* (Grand Rapids: Evangelical Press, 1977), p. 204.

2. It must be an activity of the Spirit of God (v. 33).
  3. It will produce a people of God (vv. 37–47), who will be convicted, repent, and be converted (v. 37–41); who will persevere in the faith (vv. 42–46); and who will properly worship God in fellowship one with another (vv. 46–47).
- E. We should never approach the possibility of revival by trying to work it up. Let us fervently hope and pray, let us preach sound doctrine, let us utilize scripturally-tested methods, and let us wait upon the Lord that He may be glorified through the marvelous work He will accomplish.

*That's why the concern for revival, it's [sic] central burden and most impassioned obsession is the restoration of God's name to the exalted position which it deserves in our lives and culture. In revival there is no room for self-centered motivations, only hunger for divine exaltation!<sup>107</sup>*

The use of carnal and manipulative methods only serve to undermine the integrity of the gospel message.

- F. Proper instruction on the baptism of the Spirit is necessary to avoid confusion.
1. The baptism of the Spirit is no longer experiential, only judicial, and occurs at the time of conversion (1 Cor 12:13) as an initial, non-repeatable, non-experiential event. Those instances of experiential baptism with the Spirit in Acts were unusual not normative for the church.<sup>108</sup> Spirit baptism in Acts was the divine means of incorporating diverse groups into one body—the church of Jesus Christ.<sup>109</sup>
  2. There is no mention in Acts nor anywhere in the NT where believers are admonished to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Yet we are exhorted to be filled with Spirit, that is, under the control or dominant influence of the Spirit, but this is not a second crisis experience; it is the ongoing experience of the believer as he continually submits himself to the rule of Christ (Eph 5:1–2, 18) .

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<sup>107</sup> Douglas R. McLachlan, *Reclaiming Authentic Fundamentalism* (Independence, MO: American Association of Christian Schools, 1993), p.147.

<sup>108</sup> There are many instances of the temporary in Acts: Jewish temple worship (2:46; 3:1); selling everything to support the poor (4:32–37); being killed for lying (5:1–11); prison doors opened miraculously (5:19); direct revelation (9:1–19); prophesying and speaking in tongues (13:1–2; 19:6).

<sup>109</sup> David Ewert, “The Baptizing Work of the Holy Spirit,” in *Encounter With The Holy Spirit*, ed. Geo. R. Brunk II (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1972), p. 45.

3. Advocates of the special second blessing enduement of the Spirit suggest that the power to live the Christian life from the time of conversion is inadequate, yet the Scripture indicates that when we are saved we are filled with the Spirit (Rom 8:9–17; Gal 5:25; Col 2:9–10, 12) and therefore spiritually equipped to serve Christ.

NOTE: John Stott reminds us of an excellent hermeneutical principle: "What is *described* in Scripture as having happened to others is not necessarily intended for us, whereas what is *promised* to us we are to appropriate, and what is *commanded* to us we are to obey."<sup>110</sup> I would add only that what is *forbidden* us we should avoid.

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<sup>110</sup> John Stott, *Baptism and Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1964), p. 4.

# Worldly Wisdom and the Gospel Ministry

## Scott Williquette



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### 1 Corinthians 1.18-2.5

**Proposition: Pastors must never allow worldly wisdom to influence their ministry.**

The ancient Greeks loved philosophy, public debate, and smooth oratory. Their culture overflowed with such things. Unfortunately many in the church in Corinth carried a love for human philosophy in their hearts as well. The philosophers and traveling sophists of the Graeco-Roman world often focused on form rather than content. They moved crowds and gained groupies with lofty words; with logic that was often nothing more than rhetorical tricks. They possessed great powers of articulation. They were exquisite communicators. The power of their words however, lay in the arrangement of carefully chosen terms, not in genuine truth. Fascinated by the rhetoric of such men, the Corinthians were more impressed by form and show than by content and truth. They loved words of human wisdom. They loved neatly packaged wit and eloquence.

In 1 Corinthians 1.17 Paul introduces the idea of “human wisdom.” He indicates that to preach the gospel using “human wisdom” would empty the cross of its power. The words “human wisdom” could literally be rendered “wisdom of word (σοφία λόγου).” This phrase speaks of wisdom that is characterized by attractive words and persuasive rhetoric. In verse 20 Paul calls the wisdom of word, “the wisdom of the world,” and in verse 25 he calls it “man’s wisdom.”

Paul begins this passage by saying that Christ sent him to preach not wisdom characterized by words but the gospel — the word of the cross — which is foolishness to those who are perishing. Those who are perishing love “wisdom of words,” but they despise the “word of the cross.” In 1.18-2.5 Paul contrasts wisdom of word with the word of the cross. The two are mutually exclusive. To have the one is to negate and reject the other. Some in Corinth saw the gospel of Christ as similar to a human system of philosophy. Paul’s point throughout this passage is that the gospel is nothing of the sort. Human wisdom despises the gospel. Human wisdom views the “word of the cross” and its simple proclamation as folly and foolishness.

Christian ministry today is being mixed with worldly wisdom. Often churches are controlled more by current wisdom than the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 1.18-2.5 provides a needed corrective for our day. An understanding of it will keep pastors and churches on a God honoring path.

**I. We Must Never Merge the Christian Gospel or Ministry With Worldly Wisdom Because the Two Are Contrary to Each Other (1.18-25).**

- A. The Christian Gospel Saves, the World's Belief Systems Damn (1.18).
- B. The Christian Gospel Leads to God, the World's Belief Systems Never Can (1.19-21).
  - 1. God always intended to destroy human wisdom with the gospel (1.19-20).
  - 2. God made it impossible for human wisdom to find Him (1.21).
- C. The Christian Gospel Would Never Have Occurred to the Human Mind (1.22-24).

Application: Because the Christian gospel is completely contrary to the ways of human wisdom, we must never allow the world's wisdom to influence our ministry.

Do not go to the world to learn how to serve God and lead His church.

Do not replace clear, precise, passionate Bible preaching with drama, pop-psychology or doctrinally thin sermons.

Do not replace the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with a gospel that excludes repentance from sin and represents Jesus as nothing more than a fire escape from hell. That may be a popular gospel, but in the words of Paul, it is "another gospel."

Do not ask "What does man want our church to be?" Ask instead "What does God want our church to be?"

**II. We Must Never Be Selective In Our Evangelism or Ministry Because God Typically Saves Those Who Are Common or Inferior by the Standards of Worldly Wisdom (1.26-31).**

Application: Because the majority of sinners God chose to be His are unattractive from the vantage point of human wisdom, we must never fall into the trap of seeking out only those who are bright and beautiful.

Your ministry must never be selective. A biblical ministry will never focus on any one segment of society. Many pastors today have chosen to follow the world's wisdom and seek out the bright and beautiful; the rich and the privileged. You must not.



**III. We Must Never Be Manipulative In Our Ministry Methods Because Genuine Conviction and Spiritual Persuasion Are Accomplished by the Holy Spirit and Not by Methods of Worldly Wisdom (2.1-5).**

- A. Paul's preaching ministry was clear and accurate (2.1b).
- B. Paul's preaching ministry did not rely on his physical presence (2.3).
- C. Paul's preaching ministry did not resort to manipulative methods (2.1, 4).
- D. Paul's preaching ministry relied exclusively on the persuasive work of the Holy Spirit (1.4-5).

Application: Unless God's Spirit convicts and persuades men, no genuine spiritual good is accomplished. That being true, we must shun any ministry method that eclipses the Spirit and attempts to do His work.

Let's ask a few questions of our ministry methods. The Spirit uses the truths of Scripture as His ministry tool. Do our methods aid His work by proclaiming biblical truth He can use, or do our methods attempt to do His work by manipulating people and their emotions?

In our worship services:

- (1) Is our congregational and special music designed to communicate biblical truth that the Spirit can use to teach, convict, and encourage, or is it designed to move people emotionally in order to gain some desired response?
- (2) Is our preaching designed to communicate biblical truth that the Spirit can use to teach, convict, and encourage, or is it designed to move people emotionally in order to gain some desired response?
  - (a) How many sermons will be preached this coming Sunday in fundamental churches in which the Bible is read and referenced but not truly expounded?
  - (b) How many sermons will contain more humor and personal illustrations than thoughtful Bible exposition?
  - (c) How many pastors will exchange the power of the gospel for the manipulative power of emotion-stirring words?
  - (d) How many pastors will feed their people the sugar and lard of human thought instead of the spiritually nutritious truths of the Word of God?
- (3) Are our invitations designed to aid the Spirit's obvious working or to manipulate people into doing what we want them to do?

# A Call to Biblical Separation – Over What Should We Be Separating?

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Steven Thomas



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The doctrine of separation is the cornerstone of fundamentalism. Separation functions in two related spheres: personal and ecclesiastical. Our concern focuses on the latter. The intent of this workshop is not to provide a stock list of issues over which we ought to separate (although illustrations will be included), but rather to provide a structure for thinking through separation issues. We will begin with a survey of foundational facts regarding separation in order to establish a context for discussion. The workshop will primarily focus on ideas for developing a balanced approach to separation. We will conclude with a survey of current challenges for separatists.

## I. Foundational facts regarding separation

### A. Defining ecclesiastical separation

The doctrine of separation is most simply defined as the withdrawal or withholding of fellowship from those who clearly violate the Word of God, either in doctrine or practice.

### B. Separation is not a recent cultural development

A common mistake associates the practice of separation with the rise of fundamentalism as a cultural movement. In actuality, separation is rooted in the character of God and must be reflected by all believers. Consequently, the practice of separation has always been a hallmark of God's people.

#### 1. Separation is rooted in the character of God.

- a. God's controlling attribute is holiness.

Isaiah 6:1ff.

Isaiah 57:15

- b. The basic meaning of holiness is “apartness” or “separation.”
- c. God’s holiness is expressed in His moral purity.

Because God is holy, He is separate from all sin. Separation is His very nature.

- 2. God demands that His children reflect His holiness.

Matthew 5:48

Romans 12:1

Ephesians 1:4

1 Peter 1:15-16

- 3. Separation has always been a hallmark of God’s people.

The practice of religious separation permeates the Old Testament. Amazingly, some argue that the New Testament emphasis on unity precludes separation—even at the expense of doctrine. “Love unites, doctrine divides.” Therefore, they insist that separation from brothers is unbiblical.

Consider what the New Testament actually teaches.

- a. Sound doctrine is of high priority.

Jude 3

1 Timothy 4:11-16

2 Timothy 2:15

2 Timothy 3:16-17

2 Timothy 4:1-5

- b. Doctrine is the basis of fellowship.

Ephesians 4:11-16

1 John 1:5-7

2 John 1-4

- c. Falsehood is dangerous because it is infectious.

2 Timothy 2:15-18

1 Corinthians 15:33

Matthew 13:33

- d. Those who teach falsehood are to be identified.

Romans 16:17

1 Timothy 1:19-20

2 Timothy 2:17

2 Timothy 4:15

3 John 9-10

- e. Those who teach falsehood are to be avoided.

Acts 19:0

Romans 16:17

2 Corinthians 6:14; 7:1

1 Timothy 1:20

2 John 10-11

- f. Those who disobey truth are to be disciplined and/or avoided.

1 Corinthians 5:9-11

2 Thessalonians 3:6

- g. Falsehood is to be exposed.

Ephesians 5:11

1 Timothy 5:20

C. Separation applies in two spheres

1. Apostasy and unbelief

Few question that fact that the Bible mandates separation from apostasy. Today, many evangelicals repudiate the strategy of infiltration that characterized the early new evangelical movement. They at least give lip service to some measure of separation.

## 2. Disobedient brothers

The question of separation from disobedient brothers provides the clearest dividing line between evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Several passages pertain to the subject, but the nub remains 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.

### D. Separation functions differently at various levels

Fellowship exists on varied levels within the Christian community. For example, fellowship can take place at an informal luncheon or a formal ministerial association. It can be intercollegiate sports or a citywide evangelistic crusade.

For purposes of simplification, consider the following three levels.

#### 1. The level of corporation

The basic sphere of ecclesiastical fellowship is the corporate community of faith, the local church.

#### 2. The level of cooperation

Local churches may cooperate with other churches or organizations to accomplish a variety of spiritual objectives.

#### 3. The level of reproduction

The work of producing a new local church probably qualifies as the highest level cooperation and identification.

## II. Working toward a balanced approach to separation

The Achilles heel of fundamentalism has been the absence of a set of principles by which to identify the issues that require separation. Consequently, inconsistencies abound.

### A. Inappropriate approaches to separation

#### 1. Subjectivism (separation over *my* issues)

While no one should ever expect a purely objective approach to separation, neither should it be driven by whims and personal agendas. We must rely on

exacting exegesis and theological contemplation to minimize disagreements over the sphere of separation.

2. Inclusivism (separation over *any* issue)

Some separatists are too broad in their fellowship; they associate with men who embrace serious doctrinal error. This irony exists because of the tendency to elevate the doctrine of separation over most other doctrines. Therefore, separation becomes the primary litmus test for fellowship.

3. Reductionism (separation over a *few* issues)

Rejection of the doctrine of separation often masquerades under the affirmation of "historic fundamentalism." This is an attempt reduce the doctrines worthy of separation to the famous "five fundamentals." Another reductionistic approach focuses on the minimum requirements one must meet to qualify as a Christian. These are important, but insufficient to define the boundaries of ecclesiastical union.

4. Elitism (separation over *every* issue)

George Dollar, in his comprehensive and controversial book, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, offered this unworkable definition fundamentalism:

*"Historic Fundamentalism is the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes."*

Can anyone really claim such comprehensive knowledge?

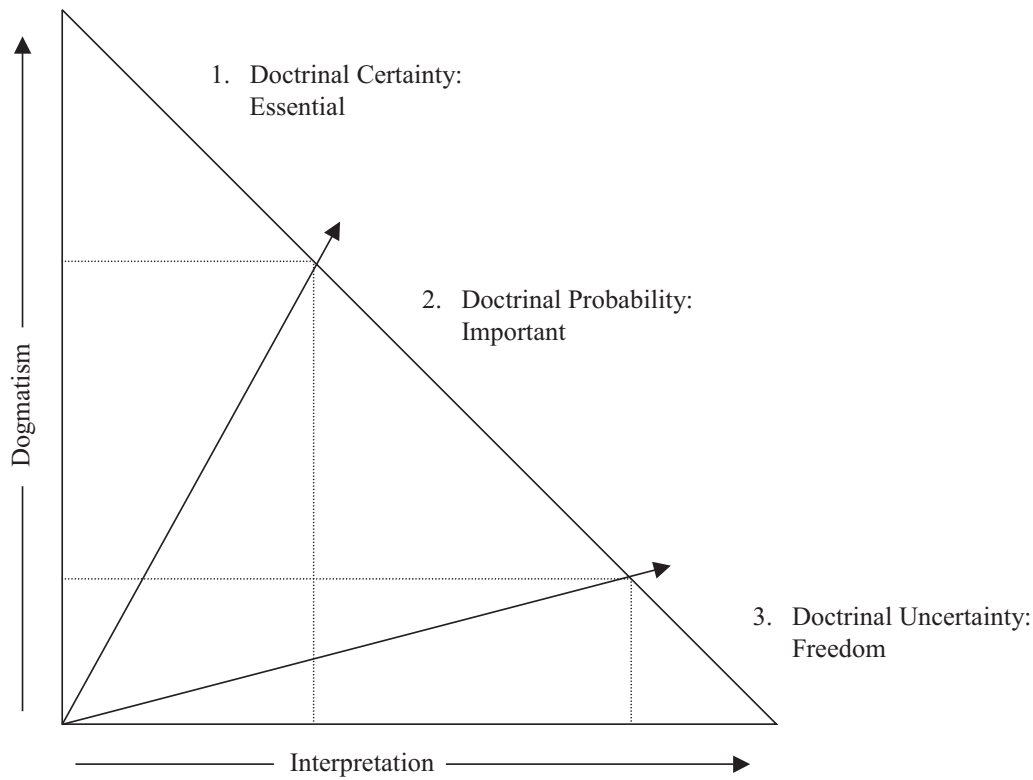
B. The key issue: Separation should always be theologically based.

The watershed issue is this question: What does the Bible clearly teach?

1. Separation deals with orthodoxy.
2. Separation deals with orthopraxy.

Doctrine and practice are not distinct, unrelated spheres. All issues of practice reflect a doctrinal position. Straight doctrine determines straight practice.

## C. Constructing a doctrinal continuum



## 1. Understanding the relationship between interpretive certainty and dogmatism

Any given doctrinal position may be held with a degree of dogmatism consistent with its degree of interpretive certainty: The greater the certainty, the greater the dogmatism; the lesser the certainty, the lesser the dogmatism.

All doctrines may be aligned on this continuum. Although the process necessarily requires some subjectivism, a commitment to exegesis and theological consistency will reduce the subjective element.

## 2. Identifying categories of doctrine

All doctrines cannot be treated with equal importance. Three categories are helpful.

## a. Doctrinal certainty (essential)

Some teachings of the Bible possess sufficient clarity so as to be certain. One may not reject these doctrines without rejecting the authority of the Word of God.

## b. Doctrinal probability (important)

Some doctrines require significant interpretive effort. They may not possess sufficient clarity to render them absolute, but that does not mean they are always unimportant. They may have logical connections to doctrinal absolutes and thus serve to support an overall theological construct.

c. Doctrinal uncertainty (freedom)

Some aspects of biblical teaching lack sufficient clarity to justify any dogmatism. In such matters, the interpreter is free to follow the dictates of his conscience.

D. Responding to those who disagree

1. Responding to the poles of the continuum

The doctrinal continuum described above presents the need think about ministry relationships in terms of a spectrum. At each end of the spectrum, we find:

- a. Error: Disobedience versus ignorance
- b. Response: Separation versus fellowship
- c. Basis: Biblical mandate versus practical expedience
- d. Attitude: Militant versus collegial

2. Responding to the middle of the continuum

It is my opinion that we stand to lose credibility with the next generation if we fail to articulate our stance in ways that distinguish between issues of doctrinal certainty and issues of doctrinal probability. When we use the same terminology to describe our relationship to open theists, on the one hand, and covenant theologians, on the other, is confusing at best. I suggest distinguishing between separation and non-participation, reserving the former terminology for resolute rejection of clear truth and using the latter for important issues that have a lesser degree of certainty. These may be termed “non-negotiables.”

E. Selected illustrations

At great personal risk ☺, I will offer several illustrations of doctrines that I categorize according to the structure described above.

1. Issues that cannot be compromised (doctrinal certainty)

- a. Derivative authority of translations/versions



- 
- b. Sovereignty of God in salvation
  - c. Perseverance of the saints
  - d. Cessationism
  - e. Ecclesiastical separation
2. Issues that are non-negotiable (doctrinal probability)
    - a. Dispensationalism
    - b. Pretribulational rapture
    - c. Baptist distinctives
  3. Issues that are a matter of conscience (doctrinal uncertainty)
    - a. Some aspects of the divorce/remarriage issue
    - b. "Closed" or "close" communion
  4. Issues that need careful attention
    - a. The regulative principle
    - b. The relationship between the church and culture

### III. Current challenges

If we will create a legacy of commitment to the biblical doctrine of separation, we must face several challenges.

A. We must check the tendency toward "contemporary conceit."

Os Guinness declared, "Nothing is more characteristically modern than a repudiation of the past" (*Dining with the Devil*, p. 80). Fundamentalism has need for improvement, but we must never ignore, or worse, repudiate the spiritual capital that we enjoy today because of the work of separatists in preceding generations.

B. We must fully and clearly articulate the doctrinal basis for our separatistic position to a new generation.

Intuition or tradition cannot transmit a commitment to separation from one generation to the next. We must demonstrate the biblical accuracy for our position using careful exegesis and theological thought.

C. We must pay the price for consistency.

Separatism cuts across the grain of the tolerance that characterizes the postmodern era. It will never be popular. Consistent application of its principles will bring conflict and criticism. If we refuse to pay this price, we demonstrate to the next generation that separation is unimportant regardless of our protestations to the contrary.

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# The Center of Christian Fellowship

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Kevin Bauder

## Ephesians 4.13

Christian fellowship not only has a boundary, it also has a center. Fellowship consists in that which is held in common. All those within the boundary hold the gospel in common, and some level of fellowship truly exists among them. The degree of that fellowship, however, will be defined by their proximity to the center. A key passage that addresses the center of Christian fellowship is Ephesians 4:1-16. This passage instructs us to “earnestly endeavor to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” From the passage we draw the following inferences.

### I. Concerning the nature of unity.

- A. It comes from the Spirit. We cannot contrive genuine unity. It is not something that we can aim at directly.
  
- B. Our experience of unity will be greater or lesser, depending upon our own attitudes and conduct.

### II. Concerning the conditions of unity.

- A. Seven conditions of unity are named.
  - 1. One body.
  - 2. One Spirit.
  - 3. One hope in calling.
  - 4. One Lord.
  - 5. One faith.
  - 6. One baptism.
  - 7. One God and Father.

B. These conditions are of different kinds and are met in different ways.

**III. Concerning the center of unity. Christian unity centers around two elements.**

A. The (one) faith.

B. The Son of God (the one Lord).

**Conclusion:**

We will not experience the same degree of fellowship with all believers. While all true Christians hold the most important things in common, they may hold those things in different ways and to different degrees. Not every believer follows the shepherd equally closely. In practical terms, when Christians differ over the requirements of the Faith, they must limit either their message or their fellowship. When the requirements of the faith are so serious that we cannot limit our message, we are left with no choice but to limit our fellowship.

This requires some element of separation between believers. Within every element of separation there is an implied censure (“we believe that the Bible requires this, but you do that”). The degree of the censure, however, has to be carefully attuned to the gravity of whatever aspect of the faith is under question.

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# Ekklesia Consortium Information Session

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## The Beginning of the Ekklesia Consortium

For some time a number of Fundamental Baptist pastors and educators have discussed the need for an organization committed to planting and strengthening theologically sound, separatistic Baptist churches. As a result, in late 1998 a handful of committed fundamental Baptist leaders met to discuss needs within fundamentalism and specifically the need for church planting. In June of 1999 this same group met again officially to plan their first church plant. At that meeting the Ekklesia Consortium was born.

## The Purpose of the Ekklesia Consortium

The Ekklesia Consortium was established to glorify God by producing and perpetuating independent fundamental Baptist churches.

EC projects may be direct or indirect church plants. A direct church plant is accomplished when an EC affiliated church “gives birth” to a new congregation. An indirect church plant is a pioneer work, domestic or foreign.

The purpose of EC is an expression of our affirmation of the primacy of the local church – that it is the exclusive institution commissioned to carry out God’s agenda for this age. Therefore, His people must uphold the reproduction of local churches as a priority responsibility.

## The Distinctives of the Ekklesia Consortium

### Historic Baptist Doctrine

The EC is committed to establishing churches that are not only *Baptist* in name, but also in doctrine. Therefore, we chose a modified version of the *London Baptist Confession (LBC) of 1689* to articulate the doctrinal position of the EC. The LBC is a superb document for two reasons. First, it is well known as a bold and accurate expression of theological orthodoxy. Second, it embodies the faith embraced by the majority of Baptists, from the beginning of the formal Baptist movement in the early seventeenth century until the early nineteenth century.

It is unfortunate that the Baptist movement suffered the erosion of doctrinal standards in the nineteenth century giving rise to the man-centered theology and practices that are prevalent today. We long to see Baptist fundamentalism return to the strong theological base found in its historical roots.

Among the many strengths of the LBC is its clear emphasis on:

- The absolute authority and sufficiency of God’s Word

- The uncompromising proclamation of man's complete depravity and inability, and God's absolute sovereignty
- The clear exposition of the marvelous doctrines of God's sovereign grace

### **Fundamental**

The EC is an organization born of and committed to fundamentalism. The cornerstone of fundamentalism is the practice of biblical separation. We are concerned about the inconsistent application of separation in some quarters of fundamentalism. Too often, personal and ecclesiastical separation are applied to practical matters while significant matters of doctrine are ignored. We believe that the doctrine of separation must be applied to matters of both faith and practice and that priority must be given to the preservation of pure doctrine because "belief precedes behavior."

### **Other Distinctives**

We are committed to establishing churches:

- That utilize a traditional dispensational hermeneutic
- That are committed to expository preaching.
- That are passionately evangelistic

This overview does not exhaust the distinctives of the EC. For further information, please request the following EC publication: *The Second London Baptist Confession – In Modern English & Modified by the Ekklesia Consortium to Reflect Its Theological and Philosophical Distinctives*.

## **The Church Planting Strategy of the Ekklesia Consortium**

### **Leadership Selection**

The first requirement for a successful church plant is the selection of a qualified church planter. Potential church planters must be commissioned by a church of like faith and practice. They must also adhere to the EC statement of faith and undergo an examination by the EC executive board or its designates. Qualified candidates will be recommended to EC members for priority consideration in their respective churches.

### **Team Approach**

EC encourages the development of a leadership team for each church plant. Ideally, the team will consist of one experienced church planter and at least one associate. The church planter will be one who has displayed faithfulness, ministry skill, and is spiritually equipped for such a work. When an associate serves on the team, he will function as an

apprentice with the possible goal of assuming the pastorate of the church or launching a future plant.

### **EC Participation**

All EC members commit to encouraging their churches to support EC church planting projects. Supporting churches contribute to the church planting process in at least three ways:

1. Financial Resources

Although the EC will consider support for any qualified candidate, priority consideration will be given to those candidates coming from EC affiliated churches.

2. Leadership Development

EC members seek to develop potential church planters within their own ministries. In those cases, the sponsoring church will aid the church planter in selecting a field and providing personnel for the church plant.

3. Human Resources

For domestic church planting, EC involvement will often go beyond financial support. The consortium will seek to provide personnel to serve alongside the leadership team. This means that a new church plant often will begin with a nucleus of committed members. In addition, supporting churches will also organize task forces to help establish the fledgling churches.

### **Church Planting Goals**

The EC desires to perpetuate church planting by establishing at least one new church every two years. This cycle can be maintained if new churches achieve self-supporting status within two years. We believe that in most instances, if a church has been planted in a strategic location with a solid nucleus and leadership team, this is a reasonable expectation.

For more information about the Ekklesia Consortium contact:

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