



# IBFNA

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## THE REVIEW

### Stand Together or Fall Alone

By Pastor Al Harris, Moderator IBFNA

The city of Jabesh-Gilead was surrounded by the armies of Nahash the Ammonite. Israel had just called Saul to be their king, but there was still no real kingly function, army, or political government put in place (1 Sam. 11:1-15). "Every man did what was right in their own eyes" was the rule of the day. Judges had been raised up by God to deliver Israel, but they continued to follow other gods and the lifestyle of the nations around them. Every city and tribe was independent, and there was little effort to unite to fight the enemies of the people and of the Lord.

Nahash knew that the cities and tribes did not work together well. So when Jabesh-Gilead asked for 7 days to see if any would come to help, Nahash agreed as long as he could put out their right eye and render them useless in battle when no help came.

Just as Nahash expected and the people of Jabesh-Gilead feared, the initial response of the people of the land was one of defeat and helplessness. Verse 4 tells us that they wept. The feeling of despair was so thick it could be cut with a knife. They wept, and no doubt they complained and argued with men and God about how unfair this attack was on this city. They no doubt feared what would happen next, and their fear for their own lives caused them to think only of themselves.

But something had changed. Saul came from the field, heard the news, and the Spirit of God came upon him. The Spirit of God upon the heart of one who humbly desired to serve the Lord brought about a swift and forceful response. Saul cut an ox into 12 pieces, sent it to the 12 tribes, and warned them that this would be done to them if they did not come and stand together against the enemies of God.

The outcome was that the people of God saw the threat, both from Saul as their king and from the enemy Nahash. They came together with a force of 330,000 men and defeated the enemy with God's help.

Pastor Martin Niemoller was a Protestant pastor in Germany, when Hitler began his program of extermination, who spent 7 years in a concentration camp. He is best known for his quote: "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me."



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America is facing the beginning of intense opposition and persecution from the liberal forces of our government and society [see: WallBuilders.com/libissuesarticles.asp?id=106938]. These issues threaten the very freedoms to practice our faith and to propagate it to others. Like Jabesh-Gilead, we can try to do our best as individual churches, but the weight, power, and regulatory force of the government slowly crushes religious freedom. We can choose to stand together and lift a united voice for the religious liberties we have enjoyed, and as salt we can hold back the tide of persecution for those who follow us.

The message of Saul was very pointed. Either come and join us in this battle, or we will come and cut you up like this ox. While our message does not

carry a threat toward those who choose not to work together, the result is much the same. We cannot make the excuse that it is too much expense to gather for a conference, because the expense of not standing together may be much greater. There are major issues facing Bible believers today that we must address and understand. I urge you to come and help us raise the banner of truth in a gracious but firm manner.

As Benjamin Franklin said, "If we do not hang together, we will most assuredly hang separately." There is a blessedness that comes as God's people work together for His glory. May the Lord bless our churches as we stand for Him and "Occupy Till He Comes."

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## The Normal Hermeneutic

By Dr. Clay Nuttall

In the end, all theological error comes from an errant hermeneutic. What a person believes is not the issue; how he arrives at what he believes is. Dispensationalism is not where you begin, it is what you arrive when you use a biblical hermeneutic. There is no such thing as a dispensational hermeneutic. There is only one biblical hermeneutic, and when it is followed faithfully, it will always result in dispensational theology. Renald E. Showers clearly makes this point in his book, *There Really is a Difference*.

Beginning with a theological system or movement will result in error, because all humanly generated things contain error. Only the Bible text is without error, and so we must begin and end with the text. It is not enough to say we use only the text. That is true only when we actually do so. There can be only one biblical hermeneutic, and all others are the inventions of flawed humans. The one biblical hermeneutic is the "clear, plain, normal, consistent, literal" use of language. The faithful exegete always asks, "What does the text say?" rather than trying to tell the text what it means.

### A Specific Focus

This discussion is not about people. People are not relevant except for our love for them. Good

people may have all kinds of views, but the Bible is not about good people; it is about a good God. In every theological system, there is a wide variety of views. Reformed theology encompasses beliefs that include fundamentalism, evangelicalism, Calvinism, and covenant theology. Dispensationalism ranges from ultra and classic to progressive. There is no single focus in any one movement; there is only a range of belief. When one deals with biblical dispensationalism, however, there is a single focus; and it has to do with the one biblical hermeneutic. Even here there are those who use the term *literal interpretation* without a clear explanation, definition, or understanding.

It is in this system of interpretation that the one biblical hermeneutic stands alone. It is this one system that results in a biblical dispensationalism. The normal hermeneutic is clearly found in the use of all language. Once again, the definition is the clear, plain, normal, ordinary, consistent, literal use of language. The specific rules used with all languages are the (1) grammatical, (2) contextual, (3) historical setting of the text. There are many tools that apply to specific genres, but they are not the same as the general laws required in language.

Literal interpretation does not mean making everything a literal object, such as the beast images.

This is a straw man. Literal interpretation simply means that we take the text literally for what it says. If the text tells us that something is a picture or a figure, then it is. We don't have to create anything or dig for spiritual meanings behind the text. The text is the driver in this exercise, and the interpreter is an observer. No one can choose when to use allegory. The text is the authority, and it communicates the form. We do not use allegory sometimes and then choose literal other times. Our only task is to ask the text for this information. The text will provide the answer, and if it is not clear, we do not have the license to create an answer.

David L. Cooper has given us a standard for this, called "The Golden Rule of Interpretation": "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise" [[http://www. biblicalresearch.info/page47.html](http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page47.html); accessed 5/9/2015].

#### Contrast to Other Systems

The great advantage of the one biblical system is that it is mathematical. If the system is used and the rules obeyed, it always gives us the same answer - the answer that the text intended for us to embrace. Other systems allow the interpreter to make decisions that adjust the meaning of the text to agree with their theological construct.

It is disingenuous to state that you use a literal hermeneutic and then to demonstrate otherwise. This is only part of the problem with theological movements. The one biblical hermeneutic creates a centerpiece for a theology that is biblical. It is doxological in that it not only states that God is the primary focus, but it also demonstrates that He is. Reformed theology, with its many tangents, claims to be doxological, but it constantly demonstrates that its centerpiece is soteriological. Everything centers on the salvation of man. This does not mean there is not an emphasis on God, but it does not demonstrate this primary focus on God.

In the same manner, these theologians claim that the greatest good is the "glory of God." Their documents and writings contain statements about this, but their theology demonstrates the strong mind of man on many occasions. This can be clearly seen in the issue of prophecy, Israel, and the church. These contrasts are the result of a flawed hermeneutic that allows man to create beliefs to insert in the text.

To be very plain, the one biblical hermeneutic always produces a theology that is biblical and that includes a biblical dispensational theology. Others may choose another hermeneutic, but the results are not the same. These two contrasting systems do share equally the importance of a doxological foundation, but they are not equal in their dependence upon the glory of God. They do not share equally in a perspective of Israel and the church or the central issues of prophecy.

Of course there are similarities, but similarities are not equalities. They may share theological views partially, but partial is less than the whole.

#### Let's Get to the Point

It is not alright that our brethren use only some of the biblical hermeneutic, because the error in interpretation systems is far-reaching. This is not just about prophecy; a flawed system reaches into almost every major doctrine. It is impossible to have just one error. Please remember that this is not about individuals; it is about ideas and a theology that is biblical. While people have the right to their own views, we do not have to be silent or polite about error. We do have to love them and should not be cruel to them personally, but do not ask me to support their error by my silence or even to complement or protect their error. Yes, it is error - not because we are the jury and judge, but because the Word of God is plain, clear, normal, consistent, and literal in its statements. Standing up for the biblical text is not unkind. What is unkind is to be silent or accommodating when the text is being adjusted and rewritten.

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# A Brief Survey of Fundamentalist History—Part 2

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

The Lord raised up Christian fundamentalism as a response to modernist Protestant unbelief, just as He raised up Protestant orthodoxy as a response to centuries of Roman Catholic error. In the first article of this series, we traced this modern unbelief both to the rise of evolution, which introduced a corrupt approach to biblical criticism, and to a new pragmatism in evangelism, which fostered a belief in the perfectibility of the heart of man and of his society.

History remembers that the response of Protestants to Roman Catholicism was not a uniform one. Its variety included wide differences among contemporaries as well as far-reaching developmental changes over time. Fundamentalists also have responded to the challenges of their day with significant differences.

Two factors account for most of these differences. First, fundamentalists have not always agreed on the relative importance of denominational distinctiveness to the right response of orthodox Christianity against heterodoxy; second, disagreement over the relative importance of ecclesiastical separation to their cause has produced at least four discernable forms of American fundamentalist response over time.

Mainline fundamentalism (1880-1930) was an effort to do battle royal against modernism from within the large Protestant denominations of our country. Separatist fundamentalism (1930-present) has emphasized the importance of separating from unbelief in obedience to the Lord. New evangelicalism (1940-present) has repudiated the doctrine of separation with the hope of greater influence through cooperation. More recently, new fundamentalism (1970-present) has become an identifiable effort of some separatist fundamentalists to emphasize separation less in order to foster greater cooperation among believers for various causes deemed more important than the doctrine of separation.

This article will briefly survey some of the history of that first response, mainline fundamentalism. The conflict in the Northern Baptist Convention is particularly instructive.

## The Northern Baptist Mainline Fundamentalists

Augustus H. Strong served as the President of Rochester Theological Seminary for forty years (1872-1912). From 1886 to 1907, he published a number of editions of his magnum opus, *Systematic Theology*. He describes his purpose for this monumental work in its last edition's preface:

Under the influence of Ritschl and his Kantian relativism, many of our teachers and preachers have swung off into a practical denial of Christ's deity and of his atonement. We seem on the verge of a second Unitarian defection, that will break up churches and compel secessions. . . .

I print this revised and enlarged edition of my "Systematic Theology," in the hope that its publication may do something to stem this fast advancing tide, and to confirm the faith of God's elect. I make no doubt that the vast majority of Christians still hold the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints, and that they will sooner or later separate themselves from those who deny the Lord who bought them. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will raise up a standard against him [(Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press), ix-x].

When Strong advocated separation from apostates in 1907, he envisioned the expulsion of liberalism from the Northern Baptist Convention. He still wanted to forestall the breaking up of churches and the compelling of secessions. To Strong's credit, coexistence with deniers of the faith was not an option for him, at least in theory.

And yet, these strong convictions notwithstanding, coexistence with liberalism had become a fact of life in the ministry of the Northern Baptist Convention by the time Strong finished his work. NBC seminaries had become infected with evolution, higher criticism, German rationalism, and the social gospel. Isolated victories like the dismissal of Ezra P. Gould from Newton Theological Seminary in 1882 and Nathaniel Schmidt from Colgate in 1896 gradually became even rarer.

Gould denied the apostolic authorship of a number of the books of the New Testament and called the Gospel and epistles of John departures from the thought of Jesus. Schmidt was a gifted young expert in Semitic languages, who wrote that the Sinai account of Moses's receiving God's law with written tablets was doubtful tradition because writing was not known in Moses's time.

Under the leadership of William Rainey Harper, the Divinity School at the University of Chicago became a bastion of NBC liberalism. Shailer Matthews taught apostate doctrine there. In spite of the leadership of Augustus Strong, the social gospel thrived at Rochester Theological Seminary, where Professor Walter Rauschenbusch published his *Christianity and the Social Crisis* in the same year as Strong's final edition of *Systematic Theology*.

As the enemy came in like a flood, God raised up a standard against it in the Northern Baptist Convention. That effort was led by strong fundamentalist leaders, such as W. B. Riley, A. C. Dixon, J. C. Mase, Curtis Lee Laws, and in Canada, T. T. Shields.

Fundamental Baptists rallied together around opposition to their denomination's Interchurch World Movement. The IWM was an ecumenical effort designed to foster greater cooperation between Northern Baptists and other liberal churches. Criticized as American Protestantism's League of Nations, the IWM began after the end of World War I, a time when the desire for global peace through religious cooperation flourished. The prospect of a one-world apostate church once again threatened God's people in a way the Protestants of old were threatened by the universality of Catholicism. Riley wrote of his denomination's IWM efforts:

When this super-church is created, spirituality will fare poorly; preaching a pure Gospel may easily be made again a criminal offense; the men who dare to believe in the blood of Christ may once more endanger their own blood thereby. It is a strange procedure, to say the least, that a Protestantism which knows what church hierarchy accomplished in the middle ages. . . should deliberately plan to reintroduce it into the world ["The Interchurch World Movement," *School and Church* 2 (April-June 1920): 320-25; cited in William Vance Trollinger, Jr., *God's Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press), 53].

These Baptists were premillennialists. They believed that a final apostasy would form a one-world church, and they believed that their own denomination had elements within it that encouraged this spirit of antichrist. Their opposition efforts were successful, and by 1920 the NBC withdrew its support of the IWM.

### A Turning Point

In the same year of that victory, Curtis Lee Laws, Editor of the *Watchman-Examiner*, led 154 signatories in calling for a pre-convention meeting of fundamentalists in order to discuss ways to combat modernism at the NBC annual meeting in Buffalo. Riley addressed the meeting with a message titled, "The Menace of Modernism in Baptist Schools." He proclaimed in part,

The Samson of Modernism, blinded by the theological fumes from Germany, feels for the pillars of the Christian temple and would fain tear this last one away and leave Christianity itself in utter collapse. If, in any measure that ever be accomplished, let it not be said to the shame of Baptists that they were engaged as 'pipers of peace' at the very time when their denominations perished [*School and Church* 3 (October-December 1920): 407-22; cited in Trollinger, 54].

Under this rallying cry, the fundamentalists managed to convince the Convention to form a committee to investigate their schools. Later, they organized their common cause as the Fundamentalist Fellowship. To their dismay, however, the following year the committee's report did not find much that was problematic with the denominational schools and pointed out that, as a Baptist convention, they had no judicial mechanism for correcting what problems they might have found anyway.

Some fundamentalist leaders, like Riley, believed that adopting a common confession was the solution to the need for such a mechanism in the Northern Baptist Convention. Yet Riley and his allies had trouble engendering support for this cause among their fellow conservatives, in spite of the fact that the Fundamentalist Fellowship had adopted a confession for themselves. No decision to call for such an action was planned for either the 1921 meeting in Des Moines or the 1922 meeting in Indianapolis.

In spite of this lack of conservative support, Riley moved for the adoption of a Baptist confession at the 1922 meeting. The liberals were ready with a response. With unified solidarity and clever subtlety, they offered a countermeasure: "Resolved that the Northern Baptist Convention affirm that the New Testament is an all-sufficient ground for Baptist faith and practice, and they need no other substitute" [Trollinger, 56]. The issue was hotly debated for three hours, and the debate was concluded with a passionate plea from Riley, but to no avail. His effort was defeated 1264 to 637. The NBC would remain without a confession.

The Baptist Bible Union was organized in response to these events with a call for greater militancy, but still no call for separation from the NBC. A resolution passed at the first meeting of the BBU stopped short of separatism: "We declare our determination not to withdraw from the various conventions represented by our membership; but on the contrary with renewed vigor to endeavor to purge our beloved denomination from such heresies, which if unchecked must inevitably destroy the foundations upon which Baptist churches rest" [Trollinger, 57].

Not all of the members of the Fundamentalist Fellowship joined the Baptist Bible Union. J. C. Masse, once an ally as the president of the Fundamentalist Fellowship, repeatedly disappointed BBU men by siding with liberals in NBC battles. As for Riley, in spite of his militancy and frustration with the compromise of moderates, he also stayed in the NBC until just before he died in 1947. By that time, he had placed his mantle on a young Billy Graham, whom he hoped would carry the torch of Northwestern and the Northern Baptist mainline fundamentalists into a faithful future.

### Observations

Many lessons can be learned from the example of our mainline fundamentalist forefathers. They declared truth against error in tones of courage that are seldom heard in our churches today. We find in them the passionate jealousy for God's church that we find in Christ in His denunciations of the Pharisees and in Paul in his warnings against false apostles. Let us speak forcibly against the error of our day with Christ-like courage. They were heroes of the faith whom God greatly used. Nevertheless, these men made mistakes, and we can learn from those things too. I would note two lessons in conclusion.

First, the cause of the mainline fundamentalist was an undeniably political one. Augustus Strong admits the importance of the majority to the efforts of that day when he wrote, "I make no doubt that the vast majority of Christians still hold the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints, and that they will sooner or later separate themselves from those who deny the Lord who bought them" [*op. cit.*]. There is an inherent weakness in this view of separatism. It depends on the force of the majority in a way never intended by the Lord for an obedient church. God always uses the faith of the minority.

Scripture describes church discipline as essentially a local church responsibility (Matt. 18:15-20). In the Bible, we see local churches disciplining their own members, not denominations disciplining their churches or schools. Scriptural church discipline never depends on skillful political maneuvering, but always on a congregation's submission to find the will of the Lord together on a matter. Denominational politics work very differently from this.

God's people can separate in times when liberalism happens to be less popular. The 1910's was such a time because our nation's enemy in the First World War happened to be the country where higher criticism originated. But we can do so equally well in times when liberalism happens to be more popular. This was true in the 1920's because Clarence Darrow and a powerful media made William Jennings Bryan look foolish in the public eye.

The mainline fundamentalist could not win back his denomination in the latter context, only the former. What seemed to work well in the politically supportive 1910's simply did not work well in the politically adverse 1920's. Times had changed. Unlike these mainline political efforts, biblical separation can be accomplished successfully by God's grace in any circumstance requiring it, because it does not depend on politics. Obedience in the pursuit of purity is itself the victory (2 Cor. 7:1).

Second, the cause of the mainline fundamentalist was an undeniably dangerous one. Ecclesiastical separation can be costly in terms of physical assets and public prestige and influence. But failure to separate is dangerous theologically and spiritually over time. Augustus Strong, for example, waived on the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture as he continued to minister as the colleague of men like Walter Rauschenbusch. He wrote in the last edition of his *Theology*:

It is noticeable that the common objections to inspiration are urged, not so much against the religious teaching of the Scriptures, as against certain errors in secular matters which are supposed to be interwoven with it. But if these are proved to be errors indeed, it will not necessarily overthrow the doctrine of inspiration; it will only compel us to give a larger place to the human element in the composition of the Scriptures, and to regard them more exclusively as a text-book of religion. As a rule of religious faith and practice, they will still be the infallible word of God [Strong, 222].

This is not Strong's finest work. God's Word must be accurate in earthly things and heavenly things to be believable (John 3:12). Too many mainline fundamentalist men who did not separate began to sound like the liberals they tried to oppose. This is where theistic evolution came from. This older generation of mainline fundamentalists were succeeded by a generation who knew that they had to go further. These younger men became the separatist fundamentalists of the 1930's.

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**2015 IBFNA Annual Family Conference**  
**Occupy Till I Come**  
**June 16-18**

**Place:**

Marshal Baptist Church – 5739 Old Rural Hall Rd. – Winston Salem, NC 27105

**Hotel:**

Holiday Inn Express at 2520 Peters Creek Parkway, Winston Salem, N.C. 27127 – 1-336-788-1980

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

**Speakers:**

Billy Martin, Marty Marriott, Clay Nuttall, Steve Pittman, and John Holmes of Marshall Baptist Church.