

Biblical Holiness



November 1, 1995

Faith Pulpit

Faith Baptist Theological Seminary

Ankeny, Iowa

November 1995

Biblical Holiness

Myron J. Houghton, Ph.D., Th.D.

Actually, this article is a review of two books that deal with the issue of separation. For many years fundamentalists who wanted a balanced, written presentation of their viewpoint had access to many pamphlets but very few books.

In 1979 Regular Baptist Press published *Biblical Separation: The Struggle for a Pure Church* by Dr. Ernest Pickering, and this book continues to be a leader in the field.

In 1994, however, Bob Jones University Press published two new books which address this issue. The first book is entitled *Be Ye Holy: The Call to Christian Separation* by Dr. Fred Moritz. The second book is called *The Tragedy of Compromise* by Dr. Ernest Pickering.

These books complement each other. Dr. Moritz's book emphasizes the biblical information and, as such, makes a wonderful study of key words and topics from God's Word. It has details but is not overly technical. It is clearly outlined and easy to understand, with stories to illustrate the truths being discussed. The book by Dr. Pickering surveys various aspects of modern evangelicalism including the drift toward compromise within fundamentalism – and gives an evaluation.

Summary of *Be Ye Holy: The Call to Christian Separation*

There are five main chapters in this book.

Chapter one describes the relationship between “holiness” and “separation.” Dr. Moritz says, “separation is not all there is to holiness, but it is a vital part of the concept” (page 9). A study of the major Hebrew and Greek words (also put in English form for those who don’t know Hebrew or Greek!) shows that “to sanctify, to make holy” includes the idea, “to set apart” (pages 8,9,105–113). God’s holiness is intrinsic (i.e. necessary to His nature) and is both negative (separate from evil) and positive (absolute purity). Also His holiness is both transcendent (higher and distinct from His creation) and immanent (able to fellowship with human beings through salvation and sanctification). God’s holiness produces in us the response of repentance, joy, worship, gratitude, and imitation (pages 10–18).

By the way, don’t ignore the notes at the end of each chapter. There are some real gems there (for example, a wonderful summary of what the Bible means by ‘the glory of God’ (#23, page 19).

Chapter two discusses personal separation, presenting both Old and New Testament concepts. There is an excellent discussion of justification. Because Jesus died for our sins and rose again, God is able to declare righteous those who trust in Christ.

As a result of this, we are now able to live a life of progressive holiness, a life characterized by evangelism and service. God uses Scripture, His Spirit, and chastening to bring about this progressive holiness (pages 26–35).

A very helpful description of legalism is found in this chapter. The key to understanding this issue is one’s heart attitude or motivation: if the motivation for following a standard is to gain favor with God, that person is a legalist. If the motivation, however, is to imitate God, to genuinely love Him, to be kind toward fellow believers and to look for Christ’s return, then following a standard is not legalism (pages 36–42). Another gem in the end notes is found in note #10 on page 43 where “the fear of God” means reverence and trust rather than terror.

Chapters three and four deal with ecclesiastical (organizational) separation. In chapter three, separation from those who preach a different gospel is discussed, summarizing the biblical reasons for such separation. In chapter four, separation from a brother in Christ is explained, using key New Testament passages (including a valuable discussion of 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15). Dr. Moritz recognizes the Bible does not solve every problem in this area and says each situation must be decided on its own merits, but in so doing, we must be sure not to violate principles Scripture does set forth (page 82).

Chapter five focuses on the proper attitude of the separatist. This attitude includes a passion for holiness, unwavering militancy, a zeal to win the lost to Christ, gentleness, patience, and compassion.

Summary of The Tragedy of Compromise

Dr. Pickering’s book has seven chapters. In it, the controversy between fundamentalism and modernism is traced, followed by the origin and rise of compromise within the camp of the fundamentalists.

Have you ever wanted a list of identifying characteristics of modernism? Dr. Pickering gives it on page 3. How about a list of characteristics describing the early new evangelicals? Dr. Pickering supplies it on page 14, supporting it with additional information on pages 14–24. Ecumenical evangelism in general, and Billy Graham in particular, is evaluated in a separate chapter. Therein, Dr. Pickering states, and then discusses, seven principles:

1. we are not to fellowship with liberals in order to win them to Christ,
2. we are not to honor false prophets as true Christian leaders,

3. we are not to disobey the Scriptures in order to win souls for Christ,
4. we are not to disobey the Scriptures on the plea that we are displaying God's love,
5. we are not to seek to please as wide a constituency as possible in order to gain a sympathetic hearing for the gospel,
6. we are not to condone false doctrine as though it were of little consequence, and
7. we are to recognize that sound doctrine has priority over fellowship and that true fellowship is based upon sound doctrine (pages 68–74).

In the next two chapters, Dr. Pickering shows what developments have been occurring within the new evangelical camp. Many of these are merely logical expansions of the earlier characteristics. Two issues separate the left wing of new evangelicalism from its right wing:

1. the nature of the Bible's inspiration and inerrancy, with the left wing denying and the right wing affirming them and
2. interpretation of the Bible, with the left wing interpreting the Bible in such a way as to permit feminism, homosexuality, universalism, and fuzziness in other key doctrinal issues (page 99).

In another chapter, Dr. Pickering draws our attention to the doctrinally weakened condition of evangelicalism, and he identifies some of the symptoms such as the church marketing movement and the fascination of evangelicals with psychology and contemporary music (pages 113–139).

In the final chapter, Dr. Pickering shows how some fundamentalist schools, mission agencies, and churches have made decisions which resulted in compromise. For schools,

1. financial pressures,
2. influence of faculty education,
3. lack of recurring instruction on the dangers of false doctrine and compromise along with failure to teach separatist principles on a regular basis, and
4. failure to keep aware of current issues and trends are among the reasons why they leave the ranks of fundamentalism (pages 160–162).

Much more could be said about both books. My recommendation? Buy them both and study them carefully!