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STRIVING FOR SOULS BY THE POWER OF GOD:
THE LIFE OF AMZI CLARENCE DIXON

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Jeffrey Shane Mayfield

December 2010

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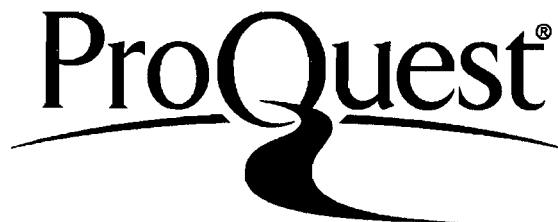
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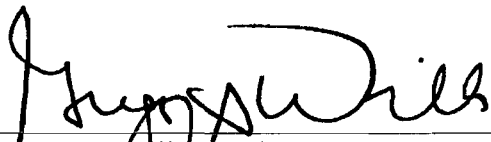
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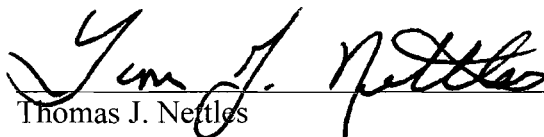
STRIVING FOR SOULS BY THE POWER OF GOD:
THE LIFE OF AMZI CLARENCE DIXON

Jeffrey Shane Mayfield

Read and Approved by:



Gregory A. Wills (Chairperson)



Thomas J. Nettles



David L. Puckett

Date October 13, 2010

To Adrienne,
the love of my life and my best friend,
and to
our children,
Jude, Eli, Ava, Belle, Evangeline, and Lillian

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PREFACE

This dissertation was made possible by many people who supported, assisted, and prayed for me throughout the process. First, I must give praise God for his grace in saving me. It is by his grace that I persevered to the end of this project.

I am thankful for the help and insight of three men in particular. The final form of the dissertation was improved by input from Gregory Wills. It's unusual to find both scholarship and love of God in the same person, but this rare and valuable combination is present in his life. Thomas Nettles has been a friend and wonderful model of a Christian scholar whose wisdom and humility have blessed me. David Puckett has been helpful and understanding throughout the long process, extending his kindness to me on many occasions. Thanks also to Southern Seminary for providing study grants that made much of the research possible.

Words seem a weak instrument to convey my thankfulness for my family. My wife and children have encouraged, prayed for, and sacrificed for me in the completion of this project. I love you all dearly. Significant support also came from my mother as she was available and supportive throughout the process.

Jeffrey Shane Mayfield

Edinburgh, Indiana

December 2010

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Amzi Clarence Dixon (1854-1925) was one of D. L. Moody's most prominent lieutenants. In important ways he played the part well. He defended the fundamentals, attacked the liberals, and promoted the Keswick holiness ideas adopted by Moody. He edited the first five volumes of *The Fundamentals*. His leadership of fighting fundamentalism is how historians remember him. But in significant respects this is misleading. His public role as a fundamentalist fighter was in a sense accidental to his primary identity. He saw himself as a soul-winner and a Bible-preacher. His ambition was to build up his church for winning the lost through the proclamation of the good news and lives of consecrated service. He was a pastor-evangelist. Everything else was subordinate to this.

This dissertation is a study of the life of A. C. Dixon. Dixon's ministry was primarily in the northern part of the United States and mostly in Baptist churches. He was known as an evangelistic preacher and defender of the fundamental doctrines of the faith. Dixon was a pastor, whose influence extended beyond his local church through his extensive travels and writings. This dissertation examines his pastoral and evangelistic ministry, his writings, and his wider sphere of influence. By emphasizing the pastoral and evangelistic ministry the dissertation focuses on the heart of Dixon's

ministerial career: a relentless effort to win souls to Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the preaching of the gospel as recorded in the Bible.

Born in Shelby, North Carolina, Dixon professed faith in Jesus Christ at a young age. His father was a Baptist minister, serving as pastor of numerous small churches at the same time and traveling frequently to fill requests as special preacher for revival services. Dixon learned at a young age about working hard in pastoral ministry and desiring the blessing of God in revival for the conversion of souls.

Dixon spent his educational years in the South, graduating from Wake Forest University and then attending the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Greenville, South Carolina. At seminary he studied under John A. Broadus, whom he held in high esteem for the rest of his life. Dixon served as pastor of a number of smaller churches in North Carolina before being called to Baltimore. Most of Dixon's moves in ministry were characterized by moving to bigger cities, bigger churches, or both in an effort to have a ministry of widest influence in order to reach as many as possible with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Not long after Dixon's move north, he became acquainted with two religious leaders who influenced his life in significant ways: Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Dwight L. Moody.¹ Dixon met Spurgeon when in London for the World's Sunday School Convention in 1889. A trustee from Spurgeon's church, Thomas Olney, was impressed by Dixon while hearing him pray at the conference. This led to an invitation to Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle to meet Spurgeon himself and pray in the

¹Dixon would later say of Moody, "I had the great privilege and blessing of knowing him for several years rather intimately, and I can say truly that he has influenced my life more than any other person in this world with one exception [his father]." "D. L. Moody," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

morning service. Spurgeon invited Dixon to join him in his office for prayer before the service. Dixon was impressed by the way Spurgeon prayed, imploring God to work in and through the sermon for the church service. Dixon was no less impressed by the preaching of Spurgeon. Years later he was able to recall the text and content of the sermon, calling it one of the most powerful sermons he had ever heard. While in town Dixon participated in the open air preaching ministry of Metropolitan Tabernacle. Dixon left his visit at Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle impressed with its preaching, prayer, and evangelism. These would be ongoing emphasis of Dixon's ministry for the rest of his life.²

In September 1893, Dwight L. Moody invited Dixon to Chicago to participate in an evangelism campaign concurrent with the Columbian Exposition. The six-month-long exposition drew over twenty-one million visitors, thus providing the perfect opportunity for evangelism. Dixon ministered in the city for the month of September, during which time Moody's well-organized campaign was said to be reaching 150,000 each week.³ Though Dixon had participated in widespread campaigns before this point, Chicago gave Dixon a vision for what was possible when a precisely organized evangelism campaign operated in a highly populated community. Dixon's ministry

²Dixon recounted his impression of Spurgeon's prayer in "Dr. Dixon on Spurgeon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 5. Dixon explained that Spurgeon's sermons had an impact on him as a boy, inspiring him to preach the gospel in "Interview with South London Press," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2. Dixon told of the impact of Spurgeon's sermon on Revelation 5:6, saying "that sermon marked a crisis in my Christian life and ministry, for I left the Tabernacle longing and determined as never before to enthrone in my heart, life and ministry 'the Lamb as it had been slain.'" See "Thomas Spurgeon Memorial Sermon," *Sword and Trowel* 52 (December 1917): 364-69. Dixon recounted being asked by Charles Spurgeon to preach in the street one evening after the church service in "My First Experience in Open-Air Preaching," *Christian Observer*, 25 July 1900, p. 4.

³"Moody's Season Over," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 November 1893, p. 6.

thereafter was characterized by attention to good organization, positioning himself near a large number of people, and praying that God would send revival.⁴

From 1882 onward, Dixon served as pastor of churches in metropolitan areas: Baltimore, Brooklyn, Boston, Chicago, London, and then Baltimore again. Two of these churches were of considerable reputation on a local and even global scale: Moody Church in Chicago and Charles Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in London.⁵ Dixon was called to Chicago Avenue Church (the name was changed to the Moody Church while Dixon was pastor) in 1906. D. L. Moody started the church and served as pastor for the first few years. The church had recently been led by Reuben A. Torrey, a friend of Dixon. For the four years before Dixon's arrival Torrey had arranged for special speakers to fill the pulpit. When Dixon arrived, the church began to add to its membership at an increased rate. For the years Dixon was pastor, the church increased in membership by three hundred per year, more than twice its growth rate for the few years preceding Dixon's pastorate. The records show over five hundred professions of conversion and the overall church membership increased by eight hundred during his ministry of less than five years. When he left the Sunday School had a membership of 2,768, and average worship service attendance was 1,557.⁶

⁴It was Moody who suggested that Dixon give all his time except Sunday mornings to evangelistic work among the churches in greater New York. See "Amzi Clarence Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

⁵Preaching not long after Dixon's death, W. B. Riley recounted that Dixon was able to follow after Moody and Spurgeon. Riley explained that "Moody was easily America's greatest evangelical minister, and Spurgeon, in England, was without a peer." In light of this Riley marveled that Dixon was able "to succeed each of them in turn and prove oneself a success in both of these exalted pulpits." In *The Baptist Beacon*, Sept. 1925, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 6.

⁶"From an Unknown Country Parish to the World's Metropolis," *Moody Church Herald*, June 1911, pp. 107-10.

Dixon left Chicago in response to a call from the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. Dixon was pleased to accept a call from the church Charles Spurgeon had made famous. Dixon arrived with grand plans for energetic activity, intending to implement an aggressive ministry similar to his work in Chicago. What Dixon did not anticipate was World War I and the bombs that would fall on London during that time. Despite this challenge, the membership numbers indicate relative stability in the midst of the chaos of war facing London. During Dixon's eight years' pastorate 1,059 persons were received into membership, and 723 of them had passed through the waters of baptism.⁷ After Dixon's arrival mid-year 1911, the number on the church roll on January 1, 1912 was 2,698, and just before his departure the membership as of January 1, 1919 was 2,606. The stability Dixon brought is seen when this decline of 92 persons over seven years is compared with a decline of 383 for the six years prior to his coming. In view of the extraordinary challenges posed during the war years, it was a remarkable record.⁸

Dixon's influence extended beyond his church and evangelism work due to the popularity of his efforts to defend the faith in the face of the challenge of theological liberalism. This led to his involvement with a series of books known as *The Fundamentals*. This series first appeared in twelve paperback volumes released from 1910 through 1915. Dixon served as the editor of the first five volumes before

⁷"The Farewell to Dr. Dixon," *Sword and Trowel*, May 1919, p. 71.

⁸The numbers from Dixon's years come from Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1912-1919. The numbers for the years prior to Dixon's years are from *Sword and Trowel* 41 (1905): 141; *Sword and Trowel* 42 (1906): 80; *Sword and Trowel* 43 (1907): 140; *Sword and Trowel* 44 (1908): 186; *Sword and Trowel* 45 (1909): 184-85; and *Sword and Trowel* 46 (1910): 191. In 1905 the membership was at 3,153 compared to 2,770 in 1911, just a few months before Dixon accepted the call to Metropolitan Tabernacle.

relinquishing his duties to accept a call to the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London.

Many of the essays related to defending the authority of Scripture, especially against the challenge of higher criticism. Other articles dealt with theological issues such as the virgin birth of Jesus, his blood atonement and resurrection, the deity of the Holy Spirit, and justification by faith.⁹

Dixon also campaigned against social vices. He was an outspoken opponent of the theater, dancing, playing cards, and liquor. He did not hesitate to speak out against individuals who promoted social vice. Dixon often spoke against noted agnostic Robert Ingersoll in public. Particularly offensive to Dixon was Ingersoll's effort to repeal the Comstock Laws, which prohibited sending offensive and potentially lewd literature and pictures through the U.S. mail. Dixon's public statements about Ingersoll prompted Ingersoll to accuse Dixon of libel. The controversy between the two men was a regular feature in New York newspapers for weeks.¹⁰

⁹Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 3 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 4 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 5 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Louis Meyer, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 6 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Louis Meyer, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 7 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Louis Meyer, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 8 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Louis Meyer, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 9 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Louis Meyer, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 10 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); R. A. Torrey, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 11 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); R. A. Torrey, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 12 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.).

¹⁰See *New York World*, 14 February 1892, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 6, folder 9; "Christian Faith Defended," *New York Times*, 17 April 1894, p. 8; "Mr. Dixon Courts a Libel Suit," *New York Times*, 15 February 1892, p. 2; "The News from Brooklyn," *New York Times*, 6 March 1892, p. 16; "Secretary Tracy to Defend Dixon," *New York Times*, 21 March 1892, p. 9; and elsewhere. Dixon was accused of libel by Ingersoll; see A. C. Dixon to W. T. Snead, 21 July 21 1905, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7. Ingersoll wrote to Dixon about their differences; see Robert Ingersoll to A. C. Dixon, 8 February 1892, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 6, folder 9.

Dixon precipitated another newspaper controversy when he attacked the liberalism at the University of Chicago in 1905. He was especially troubled by the errors of university president William Rainey Harper. Dixon's accusations prompted professor Shailer Matthews to defend Harper in the newspapers.¹¹

A. C. Dixon's extraordinary life and ministry had wide influence. He held two prominent pulpits in major cities throughout his career. He was deeply influenced by the innovative ministries of Spurgeon and Moody and helped to shape evangelical piety and ministry.¹² His involvement in numerous evangelistic campaigns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries advanced evangelicalism and its evangelistic methods at the turn of that century. His outspoken and active opposition to theological liberalism shaped the fundamentalist response to liberalism in its formative years before the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s. Dixon's role in creating twentieth-century fundamentalism deserves thorough study for its importance to scholarship in the fields of evangelicalism, Baptist studies, and fundamentalist engagement with liberal Protestant theology.

Thesis

A. C. Dixon saw himself not as a fundamentalist leader but as a pastor. A desire for soul winning through the preaching of a divine message, in dependence upon

¹¹See "Chicago University Slandered," *The Independent*, 11 May 11 1905, vol. 58, p. 1086; "Ministerial Irresponsibility," *Outlook*, 20 May 1905, p. 164; "Dr. Dixon's Reply," *The Independent*, 1 June 1905, vol. 58, p. 1266; A. C. Dixon to Dr. Judson, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7; Edward Jones to A. C. Dixon, 24 May 1905, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7; A. C. Dixon to Shailer Matthews, 29 April 1905, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7; newspaper clipping of unknown origin Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7; "Attacks Harper and University," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 May 1905, p. 9; and elsewhere.

¹²For a discussion of the leadership of Spurgeon and Moody in the evangelical movement in the nineteenth century, see David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

God through prayer and the enduement of the power of the Holy Spirit, determined his identity. For Dixon, soul winning through reliance on an inerrant Bible required aggressive outspoken defense of the faith against those who would deny the authority of the Bible and fundamental doctrines of the faith. Other aspects of his life and ministry, including his efforts as a public fundamentalist, are best explained through this lens.

Dixon was committed to serving as the pastor of a church for nearly his entire ministry, yet his service extended beyond his congregation alone. It was Dwight L. Moody who encouraged Dixon to engage in evangelism outside his church's pulpit ministry. Much of Dixon's effort went into evangelism, usually in coordination with other churches in the area. His methods were aggressive and progressive. He put a great deal of personal effort into these evangelistic campaigns which were typically held in larger venues such as a theater or music hall. These local evangelistic efforts were publicized well in advance by newspaper announcements, personal tracts, and volunteer enlistment. When he left a congregation to minister in another town, many felt the loss. Not only his own congregation, but also other ministers in the area voiced their judgment that Dixon's evangelistic leadership and energy would be missed.¹³

Dixon believed that evangelistic results came only by the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Bible's divinely inspired message. For Dixon, complete reliance on the authority of the Bible was critical to faithful and effective ministry. Dixon believed that the Bible contained no errors. This was the basis on

¹³See "Dr. Dixon in Old Pulpit," *Boston Daily Globe*, 21 April 1901, p. 2. When Dixon went to Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, James Gray wrote, "I do not feel the loss to the Moody Church more than I do to the cause of evangelical truth and evangelistic work throughout the United States. I recall no pastor-evangelist among us who occupies a place like Dr. Dixon and the strength of his testimony and the inspiration of his example will be greatly missed by our churches and ministers." See James Gray to [unknown], 12 May 1911, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 4.

which he so strenuously opposed higher criticism. Those who pursued this method eventually questioned the virgin birth and miracles. From there it was a short step to questioning the blood atonement of Jesus Christ. Dixon had little patience for those who did not believe the Bible was true. Throughout his ministry, Dixon condemned those who would not preach and believe that the whole Bible was inerrant. This was rooted in his conviction that unless preachers believed in the inerrancy of the whole Bible, the lost would not be converted.¹⁴

But, Dixon held that the church's hope was not ultimately in well reasoned arguments but in the sovereign grace of God. He believed that the most important church service of the week was the midweek prayer meeting. It was here that the people of God prayed, asking that God would work through the church. Dixon often reminded church members that numerous great revivals began when believers sought God through prayer, for God often answered those prayers by sending revival through those people. Dixon also believed it was the prayer of others for the ministry of D. L. Moody that was the secret behind his evangelistic success.¹⁵

Dixon nevertheless undertook outspoken defense of the faith throughout his life. It was a necessary aspect of his belief that souls were saved by God through the preaching of the Bible. If the authority of the Bible or the fundamental doctrines of the faith were lost, then the power to save souls would be lost also. Dixon's defense of the

¹⁴See *Moody Church Herald*, 1 August 1909, vol. 8, no 8; "Scripture and the Power of God," *The Bible League* (London: W.C., n.d.).

¹⁵See "Soul-Winning," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 1; "Bible League Summer Conference," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 5; "Pentecost in Jerusalem A.D. 33, in Wales and in Keswick A.D. 1905: Can There Be a Pentecost in New England?" Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 1; "How a Revival Started," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 3. Dixon's father advised him, "My son, have as many prayer meetings and revivals as you can, and as few church meetings as possible," in "Church Meetings," *Sword and Trowel* 52 (1917): 333-34.

faith was seen most publicly in his involvement in the series *The Fundamentals*. Yet, his defense of the faith was evident throughout his life as he was involved in the Niagara and Northfield Bible Conferences in the late nineteenth century and the World's Christian Fundamentals Association beginning in 1919. Such organized efforts do not represent the full extent of Dixon's work in this area. In addition, Dixon defended the faith in the pulpit and in newspapers, magazines, and journals. The efforts were not ends in themselves, but necessary for effective preaching and soul-winning.¹⁶

Significance of the Study

Fundamentalism is difficult to understand. There are many reasons for this, not the least being that it was not limited to a single person or institution. The movement itself was very broad. Its rise to prominence in public observation happened in the 1920s, while the individuals involved in the movement in the 1920s had long and varied ministries of their own before that time. Historians have done much good work explaining the movement. Ernest Sandeen's *The Roots of Fundamentalism* and George Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture* are two important works describing fundamentalism in and before the 1920s. From these works we understand that fundamentalism was not merely anti-modernist and anti-liberal. Fundamentalism was an emerging religious movement with particular beliefs. Joel Carpenter identified the hallmarks of fundamentalism as "an intense focus on evangelism as the church's

¹⁶Dixon believed he stood with Spurgeon and Moody in a "faith in the original autographs of the Bible as the inerrant, infallible and authoritative Word of God." Dixon explained that this was essential to converting souls: "For Spurgeon or Moody to have listened to the vagaries of scientific speculations which cast discredit on the supernatural in Christianity, and throw doubt upon the historicity of the Scriptures, would have been to end their power as soul-winning preachers. They might have gathered crowds round them . . . but the power that saves would have been lacking." See "The Power of Spurgeon and Moody," *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (January 1913): 87.

overwhelming priority, the need for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit after conversion in order to live a holy and effective Christian life, the eminent, premillennial second coming of Christ, and the divine inspiration and absolute authority of the Bible, whose very words were free from errors.” This is an accurate description of Dixon. The study of Dixon's life highlights that there were priorities among these beliefs. For instance, for Dixon the focus on evangelism was the highest priority among those listed by Carpenter, while the pre-millennial second coming of Christ, though a belief held by Dixon, was not considered an essential fundamentalist belief. Dixon’s belief that souls were saved only through preaching the truth contained in an inspired and authoritative Bible made the defense of the Bible’s authority the foundational truth upon which his evangelistic ministry was built. The study of Dixon’s life makes it clear that the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture was the cornerstone fundamentalist belief. The other beliefs faltered if their foundation, the Bible, was destroyed.¹⁷

Fundamentalism is also difficult to understand because it is primarily associated with controversy. The Scopes trial of 1925 and the infighting within various denominations throughout the 1920s and beyond are examples of how fundamentalism is linked with controversy. From the perspective of fundamentalists, controversy was part of defending the faith. If controversy and fundamentalism go together, then the life of the fundamentalist might be perceived as primarily a life on the defense. The study of Dixon's life shows that this is not always true. Dixon spent far more time on the

¹⁷Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: the Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6; George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Dixon believed that postmillennialism was a viable option and considered those who held the postmillennial position to be holding to “fundamental” doctrine, so long as they believed that Christ would literally

offense, proclaiming the faith, than he did on defense, defending the faith. Further, Dixon's life shows that his efforts for defense were a necessary component of doing his offense well. This is much like an army who recognizes that it must not only concentrate on destroying the enemy in front of them, but the key to victory also lies in defending the city in which their families reside. Dixon believed that proclaiming an authoritative word from God was an essential part of his offensive effort, therefore defending that authoritative word against its enemies was essential lest the destruction of the word render his offensive efforts powerless. Dixon's extensive efforts in evangelism show that his life was primarily lived on the offensive: proclaiming the good news.¹⁸

Fundamentalism may well be described as a traditionalist movement. This description has advantages and liabilities. The advantage is that traditionalists work to preserve traditional beliefs and practices in a modernizing world. Fundamentalists did seek to defend the historic orthodox understanding of the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture. The liability of calling fundamentalism a traditionalist movement is that traditionalists are perceived as old-fashioned. But a fundamentalist is not merely an old-fashioned person who prefers the old ways of doing things and doesn't want to get with the times. Today one might say that a traditionalist prefers to sing hymns on Sunday rather than contemporary Christian music. The study of Dixon's life makes it clear that Dixon's fundamentalism was not a result of being old-fashioned, but was a result of

return to earth in His glorified body. See Amzi Clarence Dixon, "What is Fundamentalism?" Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5.

¹⁸For an examination of the Scopes trial, see Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). For an examination of the Presbyterian controversy of the 1920s and 1930s, see Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalism, Modernists, and Moderates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), and D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994).

submitting to the reliability and authority of Scripture. Dixon was traditional in areas where his submission to the Bible led him to be traditional. Dixon's commitment to the traditional understanding of the Bible did not stop him from being modern in his evangelism: employing newspaper advertisement, parades, tents, and ticket distribution to spread the gospel.

The study of Dixon's life is a study of how an early fundamentalist lived. Such a practical look at living out a life under the authority of the Bible will assist in understanding why a fundamentalist was so willing to be involved in controversy.

Background

My interest in A. C. Dixon emerged from my overall interest in conservative responses to liberal Protestant theology. Dixon's life is an example of an early conservative pastor who recognized the challenge that liberal theology presented and responded to it. More than that, a study of Dixon's life shows why he believed it was necessary to respond to liberal theology: the gospel itself, Dixon held, was at stake. As an overflow of Dixon's pastoral concern for evangelism, prayer, and dependence upon God, he also defended the gospel against all who set themselves against it.

Major works examining the life of Dixon include a biography written by Dixon's widow, Helen C. A. Dixon, in 1931 as well as two doctoral dissertations written in the late 1980s.¹⁹ These are the three most extensive treatments of Dixon's life and thought. The biography by Helen Dixon was published but has been out of print for

¹⁹Helen (Cadbury) Alexander Dixon, *A. C. Dixon: A Romance of Preaching* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1931); Gerald Lee Priest, "An Examination of the Apologetical Ministry of Amzi Clarence Dixon," Ph.D. dissertation, Bob Jones University, 1988; Donald L. Martin, Jr., "The Thought of Amzi Clarence Dixon," Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1989.

many years. The two dissertations remain unpublished. Extensive information about A. C. Dixon is not readily available. Additionally, the two dissertations focus on Dixon the fundamentalist rather than Dixon the evangelistic pastor. This dissertation intends to focus on those aspects of Dixon's life where he spent the most time and energy: his pastoral and evangelistic ministry.

The focus on Dixon's pastoral and evangelistic ministry will not be to the neglect of his fundamentalist endeavors. Dixon was a fundamentalist. But his editing duties of the first five volumes of *The Fundamentals*, his involvement in Niagara, Northfield, and other Bible conferences, and his cooperation with early organized fundamentalist groups such as World's Christian Fundamentals Association and Baptist Bible Union are best understood in the light of his commitment to evangelism and pastoral ministry. The treatment of Dixon in other writings is generally brief, he is generally recognized as a leading figure, yet other leaders are considered as deserving of more attention.²⁰

Methodology

The best source of information for this project is the A. C. Dixon Collection at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee. This collection is extensive, featuring correspondence, sermon manuscripts, and drafts or

²⁰Dixon's identification as a leading fundamentalist and his contribution to the fundamentalist cause is noted in numerous major books on American Fundamentalism, including: George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Stewart Grant Cole, *The History of Fundamentalism* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1963); George W. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1973); David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986).

copies of published writings. The collection size is fifteen linear feet. Much of the primary source information for this dissertation came from this collection.

Research for this dissertation also included trips to Chicago and London. The Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, near Chicago, holds the minutes of the executive committee at Moody Church, Chicago. These minutes provided valuable insight into Dixon's ministry at the Moody Church. The elders, deacons, and church minutes for the Metropolitan Tabernacle, where Dixon served as the pastor from 1911 through 1919, were also of great benefit in gaining understanding of Dixon's ministry at this historical church.

Newspapers also provided essential information. These were accessed primarily by computer, though many others were accessed in print copy. Hardcopy newspapers were found primarily at the British Library Newspaper in London and the Moody Bible Institute Library in Chicago. In excess of 1,600 newspaper articles were accessed and read via computer from the *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, *The Times (London)*, *Washington Post*, and others.

Dissertation Overview

This first chapter has been a brief introduction of A. C. Dixon. Dixon was a pastor-evangelist first, and his defense of the faith was subordinate to this first priority.

Chapter 2 is a general overview of Dixon's life and church ministry. This covers his early years, education, and highlights of his ministry in the various churches he served. The chapter explains his ties with persons, institutions and movements of academic interest. The focus is on topics such as size and character of church, how the church fared with Dixon as pastor, and any events of significance. Many of the issues

discussed later in the dissertation are introduced here in brief form, putting them in context for treatment in later chapters. This chapter shows how Dixon's life must be understood in the context of church work. Except for a few years, Dixon's adult life was spent at the head of a church, leading Christians to serve God through the spreading of the gospel. Thus, Dixon's commitment to winning souls was tied to having an authoritative message to proclaim.

Chapter 3 focuses on the pastoral ministry of Dixon. It gives some idea of what Dixon was like as a pastor: his preaching, his ministry focus, his leadership style. Attention will be given to Dixon's promotion of the church through advertisement and newspaper articles. This is the first of three chapters focusing on the key to understanding Dixon: he was a pastor who was an evangelist and wanted to see God save souls through the power of the Holy Spirit. Heavy emphasis is placed on Dixon's active involvement in evangelism in the church context, leading his church to be evangelistic.

Chapter 4 explores Dixon's evangelistic campaigns. This was an area of emphasis for Dixon. Though he desired to see conversions through the work of his local church, Dixon worked hard to organize widespread evangelistic campaigns in the cities in which he lived. The chapter will discuss the campaigns themselves, the results and the methods Dixon employed to gather and keep a crowd. Dixon learned his evangelism from evangelists who drew large crowds. Dixon employed these methods to gather large crowds himself. Dixon's zeal to see souls saved superseded his desire to see his own church grow, as Dixon's efforts resulted in the growth of other churches as well.

Chapter 5 is about Dixon's firm belief in the power of God and the necessity of that power for any ministry. The focus will be on prayer and the Holy Spirit. Dixon was confident that all the work he did would be of no effect without God's power at work through the efforts of men. This belief explains why Dixon was so insistent on the centrality of prayer for the ministry. God's power came through the believer seeking it through prayer. This chapter also explains that though Dixon was originally opposed to Keswick teaching, it was his openness to its influence that led to his enduring emphasis on prayer throughout most of his ministry. Dixon's emphasis on the necessity of the enduement of the Spirit helps us see why he opposed worldliness: worldliness hindered enduement.

Chapter 6 covers a broad section of the rest of Dixon's life. It was Dixon's belief that conversion occurred through the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of an authoritative word that led to his involvement in *The Fundamentals* and later fundamentalist organizations. If the Bible was rejected as authoritative, then the message was compromised. It was Dixon's concern for the conversion of souls that led him to speak out so clearly against liberal theology. For the same reason he opposed evolution. Evolutionary teaching challenged the biblical teaching of creation. The authority of God's word was at stake and the eternal destiny of souls hung in the balance. This chapter builds upon the argument in chapter five, that Dixon's opposition to worldliness was tied to the necessity of enduement for the conversion of souls.

Chapter 7 argues that Dixon's ministerial emphases support his highest priority of winning souls to Christ. This chapter argues that a study of the life and ministry of A. C. Dixon contributes to numerous areas of academic study related to

evangelicalism, Baptist studies, and conservative evangelical interaction with liberal Protestant theology at the beginning of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 2

THE PASTORATES OF A. C. DIXON

A. C. Dixon was born in Shelby, North Carolina, on July 6, 1854. He was the oldest of five children. His father, Thomas Dixon, Sr., was a Baptist minister who served as pastor of multiple small churches at the same time. At one point he was the pastor of four small churches, preaching in each church two times a month, once on Sunday and once on a weekday. This was his method for most of his life. He also regularly preached throughout the region for special revival services. He preached the gospel sixty-nine years and apparently organized seventeen churches around Shelby County, North Carolina. On more than one occasion he baptized more than one hundred people at one time and probably baptized over five thousand people in his lifetime.¹

A. C. Dixon's busy father apparently had a small library that consisted of three books: the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and a volume of Spurgeon's sermons. It was from reading Spurgeon's sermons as a boy that Dixon came to desire to preach the gospel and become a minister.²

Dixon made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ at age eleven. It occurred when he accompanied his father to one of his revival meetings. On the way to the

¹“Amzi Clarence Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee; “The Dixon Family,” Scrapbook, 1880-1964, Microfilm Roll 6515, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee; “Church and Clergy,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 October 1906, p. B4.

meeting his father spoke to him about Christ and conversion. Then his father said, “I am willing to acknowledge, my son, that I have ambitions for my children. I would like you to grow up and be something in the world, but I want you to remember this, that whatever you may do or be, whether a merchant, a farmer, a physician, a lawyer, or even a labourer, if you will be a good Christian you will please me. That is all I want—just that one thing only.” Dixon said he then decided that, God helping him, he would do the best he could just to please him. He went on with his father to a church where his father preached on the text, “what must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Dixon did not remember much else from the sermon, and “there was no feeling such as Bunyan's pilgrim seems to have felt, but I think my new life began then. There was no ecstatic joy, and some doubt about it afterwards because there was no ecstatic joy, but I began by simply resting upon Christ, and the promise that He has made.” His father put his hand on Dixon's head and asked, “are you converted my boy?” Dixon's reply was, “I do not know, but I am believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.” His father said, “that is it, do not seek for anymore.” Soon after, Dixon was baptized in a mountain stream with ninety-seven other converts.³

Dixon began his college studies at Wake Forest College in 1869, when he was fifteen and was determined to study law. Just before his senior year his plans changed. When he was home for summer vacation his father sent him to cancel a preaching engagement that his father could not fulfill. The old farmer who greeted Dixon at the

²“Amzi Clarence Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; “Dixon Interview,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2.

³“Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; “Salvation through Faith,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 7; “The Early Years of Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

church asked him to stay and preach. Dixon continued to come and preach daily for two weeks and over forty souls were converted. When Dixon's father came on the last day of the meetings to baptize the converts he made the announcement, "I thank God he has called one of my sons into the ministry." Dixon said that this was the first he knew of it, but that since then he had wanted to do nothing other than preach the gospel. The next year Dixon graduated from college and was ordained to the gospel ministry. He was nineteen.⁴

The elder Dixon's commitment to evangelism left an enduring mark. His son's life and ministry was similarly characterized by a strong hunger for the conversion of the lost and the employment of revival meetings as a means to the conversion of souls. He would often quote his father's advice about how a minister may profitably use his time: "My son, have as many prayer meetings and revivals as you can, and as few church meetings as possible."⁵

⁴"Personal Ideal," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; "Amzi Clarence Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; "Brooklyn's Great Revival," *New York Times*, 24 January 1894, p. 8; "A. C. Dixon," *Our Journal* 15, no. 5, May 1899 in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 6.

⁵"Church Meetings," *Sword and Trowel* 52 (1917): 334-34. Dixon's upbringing also influenced his views of race. His father inherited twenty five slaves from his wife. Dixon's mother gave him over to the care of his "old family nurse," who taught him to sing gospel hymns. Dixon recalled that his father's slaves did not rejoice at the news of the Emancipation Proclamation. A year later, they returned to his father to see if he would be willing to take them back under the previous arrangement. Dixon considered blacks dependent and childlike. He did not approve of giving them the right to vote so soon after their emancipation. He held a similar view about giving voting rights to immigrants (if uneducated) or Native Americans. Though not as outspoken or committed to white superiority as his brother, Thomas Dixon, Jr. (author of *The Clansman* and *Birth of a Nation*), he opposed intermarriage of the races. A. C. Dixon held similar views regarding American Indians. He marveled that persons with such faces of "savagery" could be taught to sing. "The Future of the Educated Negro depends upon Three Things: First, the Education, Second, the Negro, and Third, the Future," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 2; "After Death—What?," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 7; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Glories of the Cross* (New York: George H. Doran Co., n.d.), 87-88; "The World for Christ," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; "Immorality of Amusements," *New York Times*, 14 December 1897, p. 4; "Topics of the Times," *New York Times*, 15 December 1897, p. 6; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Lights and Shadows of American Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898), 70; "Ballot

Bear Marsh and Mount Olive, North Carolina

Dixon began his career as a gospel minister in 1874. His first pastorate was at Mount Olive, North Carolina, a little village of about three hundred people. He preached in the village church two Sundays in the month and in an old country church named Bear Marsh the other two Sundays. He served these churches for nine months.⁶

Two incidents from this time in Dixon's life convinced him that God accomplishes his purposes through prayer. The first occurred during Dixon's first revival as an ordained minister at an old schoolhouse near Bear Marsh Church. Dixon had been invited by a group of people to preach a special service on a Sunday afternoon. On the day he was to preach it was cold and rainy and Dixon had nearly decided to not go to the afternoon service, but a member of the community persuaded him to go. Only seven people attended the meeting, two of whom said that they were anxious to be saved. They urged him to come back that evening, when twenty-five people attended and six or seven requested prayer. Dixon preached in that schoolhouse for two weeks and about seventy-five people professed conversion. Forty-one of the converts joined Bear Marsh Church. Dixon marveled at God working in such an unlikely place. At the end of the meeting a woman approached him and identified herself as a school teacher from sixty miles away, but with relatives residing near Dixon's meetings. When she heard about Dixon's initial Sunday service she spent an hour in prayer for the service. When her niece wrote to say that the meetings were to continue through the week she dismissed her students half an hour early and spent the time in prayer. Dixon concluded

for the Negro," *Boston Globe*, 19 May 1902, p. 8; "The Race Problem," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 27, folder 3.

that God sent the revival in response to those intercessory prayers. From that day forward, Dixon made prayer an essential component of his revival efforts.⁷

The second incident convinced Dixon that his own faithfulness in praying for the salvation of sinners was just as important as the intercessory prayer of others. Soon after Dixon began his ministry he began praying that God would give him one hundred converts before he went to seminary. He had only nine months until he would enroll at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for theological training. He prayed, “Lord if You will just give me one hundred, no more and no less, I will know that Thou answerest prayer. I will take it as proof positive that Thou dost indeed answer prayer.” By the last Sunday before he was to leave for the seminary he had baptized ninety-four converts. That morning he welcomed five more requesting baptism, leaving him one short of his prayer. He proceeded with them to the mill pond to baptize them that afternoon. As he was standing beside the pond for scripture reading and prayer before going down into the water a man approached and said he had accepted Christ as his Savior and wished to be baptized with his wife, who was already among those about to be baptized. This made exactly one hundred baptisms. This answer to prayer made a deep impression on the mind of Dixon. Here was proof in his own life that God was powerful and could do mighty things through prayer. Throughout his ministry Dixon made prayer the foundation of life and ministry.⁸

⁶“Amzi Clarence Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; “A. C. Dixon,” *Our Journal* 15, No. 5, May 1899 in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 6.

⁷“The Early Years of Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; “Amzi Clarence Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6. This theme will be discussed at length in chapter 5.

⁸Dixon reflected on this answer to prayer after his resignation from the Metropolitan Tabernacle, see *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 21 February 1919, p. 97; for more on the one hundred

In 1875 Dixon enrolled at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina. He initially desired to study at the Pastor's College at Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in London and wrote Spurgeon requesting admission. Spurgeon advised Dixon not to come unless he planned to preach in England. At Southern Seminary, Dixon attended seminary for just seven months before he was called home to be near his mother who was struggling with severe illness.⁹

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

When Dixon returned to North Carolina in April 1876, he was invited to preach at Chapel Hill Baptist Church, a church of about 150 members located near the University of North Carolina. In May the church elected him as their pastor. The church had ties with the university, having two professors as members and a large number of students in attendance. While Dixon was pastor the church regularly practiced church discipline for such offenses such as drunkenness, distilling liquor, non-attendance, disorderly conduct, and profane language. Many of these issues were settled with public confession of offense. In other cases the offender was excluded. In at least one case an excluded member was restored to membership by the church body. At least

conversions see Helen (Cadbury) Alexander Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), 40-43; "Amzi Clarence Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

⁹See "Southern Baptist Seminary, Greenville," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 7; "Amzi Clarence Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6. Dixon's mother suffered a total nervous prostration at age forty-six which left her an invalid for ten years. She eventually recovered. See "The Dixon Family," Scrapbook, 1880-1964, Microfilm Roll 6515, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

twelve members were excluded during Dixon's pastorate of three years and seven months.¹⁰

Dixon kept up a lively ministry in the church. New converts were regularly added into church fellowship. Converts joined the church by relating their Christian experience and presenting themselves for baptism. More than twenty-four people were added to the church by baptism during Dixon's pastorate. He held protracted meetings to seek the conversion of the lost and invited other preachers to assist him in the effort. Chapel Hill Church was associated with the Southern Baptist Convention. While there Dixon attended the annual Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans in 1877 and was involved with his local association, the Mt. Zion Association.¹¹

In Chapel Hill Dixon learned one of the most important lessons of life when he realized that spiritual power was a gift of the Holy Spirit rather than a result of his striving for influence. With the church having close ties with the university, Dixon was burdened to reach the students in particular. Some students' mothers wrote letters to Dixon asking that he pay special attention to their sons. At the same time, many of the students who came to church were indifferent to Dixon's preaching. Over time, students began to openly mock Dixon as he walked about campus. Dixon began to feel inadequate for the task of ministering in such an environment. One day Dixon had a time of particular struggle with a feeling of a lack of spiritual power. He decided to spend a day in Bible reading, meditation, and prayer. When he came home he fell on the

¹⁰“Minutes from Chapel Hill Baptist Church,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 7. Church records also indicate the church acted on the race issue. On November 23, 1878 they indicate that when several blacks requested admission into fellowship of the church, a resolution was proposed “that no such persons will be admitted.” The resolution was passed.

ground and prayed earnestly. After a half hour of prayer, he began to feel calm. He came to see that he did not have to be powerful, but the Holy Spirit was the source of power. That night Dixon went to the chapel and seventy-five students were converted. Dixon said of this night, “As I look back upon this experience, it seems clear that the secret of it all was that I was led by the Holy Spirit to turn from dependence on myself to simple faith in God the Holy Spirit. I had been expecting that preaching would interest and save the young men. . . . It was a transition from influence to power. I had been up to that time striving to influence the young men by argument and appeal.” Though he did not give up seeking personal influence, he would now depend on God to change the hearers by the power of the Holy Spirit. Dixon continued to stress the endowment of power by the Spirit throughout his career.¹²

Asheville, North Carolina

Dixon next moved to Asheville, North Carolina in 1880. Upon his arrival in Asheville he began his ministry in great earnest. His plan was to hold a series of evangelistic services beginning on Wednesday evenings. When the time came a large snowfall threatened to derail the meeting. Only eleven men and no women came to the first meeting. One of the men was saved that first night. That was the first conversion

¹¹Ibid. One of the most famous converts under the ministry of Dixon in while in Chapel Hill was Charles Aycock, who later was elected governor of North Carolina.

¹²“Memories of the Ministry,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 24 July 1902, p. 101; “Personal Ideal,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; “The Early Years of Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

of many to follow. Over the next six weeks more than three hundred persons professed faith.¹³

In Asheville, Dixon's reputation as an effective preacher spread and he received invitations to speaking engagements outside the church. He held meetings with First Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia and about seventy young men were converted and joined the church as a result.¹⁴

In 1882, Dixon received two calls to leave Asheville. One call was to the presidency of Wake Forest College. The second call was to a new church in Baltimore. Though the church in Baltimore had no building, the call was appealing. There were about sixty people interested in starting a new church. The biggest difference for Dixon was the size of the town. Asheville had about 3,000 people compared to 500,000 in Baltimore. In the end, Dixon decided to leave Asheville, decline the offer from Wake Forest, and undertake the challenge of pastoral ministry in a large city. He accepted the Baltimore call.¹⁵

Immanuel Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland

Soon after his move to Baltimore the congregation built a beautiful marble church to accommodate 350 people. The first service easily held the congregation of

¹³“Rev. A. C. Dixon, Preacher, Lecturer, and Author,” *The Christian*, 9 February 1893, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; “Amzi Clarence Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; “From an Unknown Country Parish to the World's Metropolis,” *The Moody Church Herald*, June 1911, p. 107.

¹⁴J. G. Pulliam to Mrs. A. C. Dixon, 8 April 1929, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 33, folder 3; “From an Unknown Country Parish to the World's Metropolis,” *The Moody Church Herald*, June 1911, p. 107.

¹⁵Donald Martin, “The Thought of Amzi Clarence Dixon” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1989), 13-14; “Personal Ideal,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

seventy-five people. Dixon found that growing a new congregation was much more difficult than he imagined. In consideration of coming to Baltimore Dixon reasoned that if he could get 500 or 600 in a town of 3,000 he could get far more in a town of half a million. Of this way of thinking Dixon exclaimed, “What a greenhorn I was in those days.” He found that in fact he attracted a smaller audience in the bigger city.¹⁶

Of early concern for Dixon was the congregation’s practice of the pew rental system. This was the first of several churches in which Dixon would seek to persuade the congregation to abandon the practice. Dixon led a study on the practice of pew rental and concluded that free seat churches in America gave more per capita than the rental churches. He believed that renting pews was unscriptural, but it was also an unsound financial policy. The congregation initially was not persuaded so he let the matter rest. Eventually however the church came to see Dixon’s point of view and voted in support of free seats. Having free seats did not lead to any significant membership growth initially.¹⁷

As Dixon began to encourage more evangelistic outreach he met with some unexpected opposition. At a time when there had not been a conversion in several months, Dixon announced that he would be glad to preach every evening for at least two weeks providing they were willing to pray and exert themselves for the salvation of the lost. This idea was opposed by the oldest, and in some respects the most influential, member of the church. He made his opposition to revival meetings clear to the entire congregation. In the face of this opposition, Dixon continued to prepare the

¹⁶“Personal Ideal,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

¹⁷“Amzi Clarence Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

congregation for the revival meetings by preaching on the importance of seeking the salvation of lost souls. The next evening the opposing church member was used of God to speak a word of encouragement to an unbelieving visitor. Through this encouragement the visitor was converted. The conversion broke the obstinate church member's hard heart and he decided to support the revival. Dixon regarded this as one of the great crises in his life, for he was tempted to yield to the opinion of this respected and godly man. If he had done so, the result might have been a non-evangelistic church and pastor.¹⁸

Dixon's pastoral ministry included the development of a strong visitation program. Dixon encouraged members of the church to do their share in visiting other members, visitors, or neighbors. When new neighbors moved near a church member, Dixon urged the member to visit and make a report to the church about the visit. Over time the church began to see some growth. After two years the church had grown from 53 charter members to 155 members. The Sunday School attendance grew from 45 students to 258.¹⁹

In 1885 Dixon began editing a quarterly called *The Gospel Worker*. This publication included biographical sketches, poems, and articles. Dixon's goal was to make the way of salvation plain to the reader. He also wanted to promote denominational causes, especially theological education. He planned an edition dedicated to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and requested articles from

¹⁸“Three Crises in My Life,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 24 July 1902, p. 101.

¹⁹Helen C. A. Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching*, 87-88.

John Broadus and from President James P. Boyce. The quarterly had a circulation of about 3,500.²⁰

That same year Dixon had the opportunity to hear Dwight L. Moody in person for the first time. Later that year he went to Northfield and hear Moody again and began a personal acquaintance with Moody. This friendship grew over the course of Dixon's life. Moody influenced him greatly.²¹

A real breakthrough in the ministry of the church occurred in 1886 when Dixon organized a religious service in Kernan's Theatre on Sunday afternoon. The meeting was organized as a follow-up to the recent Sam Jones evangelistic meetings held in the city. Dixon wanted to build upon the interest in religion that came from the Sam Jones event. Dr. F. M. Ellis joined Dixon in the service in which more than 1,200 people attended. About two hundred people made a public confession of their need of salvation and requested Christians to pray for them. The Sunday meetings continued for three months. As summer approached, Dixon asked the church to purchase a tabernacle in which to have larger meetings. The original request from Dixon was for a tent that could be moved around the city. The church decided instead to erect a large temporary

²⁰A. C. Dixon to John Broadus, 13 November 1885, John Albert Broadus Collection, Archives and Special Collections, James P. Boyce Centennial Library, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; A. C. Dixon to John Broadus, 1 September 1885, John Albert Broadus Collection. While in Baltimore, Dixon continued to keep ties with Southern Seminary by working to secure seminary bonds for James P. Boyce (A. C. Dixon to James Boyce, 8 August 1881, James Petigru Boyce Papers, Archives and Special Collections, James P. Boyce Centennial Library, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; A. C. Dixon to James Boyce, 4 February 1887, James Petigru Boyce Papers). When Dixon was looking for an assistant pastor he wrote to Broadus for a recommendation (A. C. Dixon to John Broadus, 23 November 1885, John Albert Broadus Collection). Dixon also kept in contact with the seminary by serving on the board of trustees (A. C. Dixon to John Broadus, 14 November 1885, John Albert Broadus Collection).

²¹Helen C. A. Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching*, 91. The impact of Moody in the life of Dixon will be discussed in further detail in chap. 4.

building on land adjacent to the smaller marble church. The temporary building was soon filled. When the crowds did not diminish, the church decided to tear down both marble chapel and tabernacle to erect a brick structure to seat three thousand people, though the church abandoned the plan before Dixon left the church.²²

In December 1888, with church membership around five hundred, Dixon continued to press the church forward.²³ His plans for the future would include progressive means of reaching the lost. His desire was to have a church composed of Christians seeking to reach the lost. The church was to be a saving institution. Not content with the advances made, he urged them to press forward: “It is our heart’s desire to make this church a great soul-saving centre. We would like to have a printing press in the basement, turning out ten thousand issues a week until this city shall be sown knee-deep with evangelical truth.” Dixon explained that “the weekly paper is a power for good, but, as an evangelizing agency it is next to nothing. Only church people take and read church papers and what needs to be done is to carry the gospel to the homes of those who do not attend church. The tract . . . is one way of doing this. The small paper full of gospel truth . . . is another. Subsidizing columns of our daily press and filling them with saving truth is still another.” Dixon concluded that “the church of Christ has not begun to realize the power of the press as a means of evangelizing the world.” Dixon was eager to use all legitimate means of spreading the good news.²⁴

²²“Amzi Clarence Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; “From an Unknown Country Parish to the World’s Metropolis,” *The Moody Church Herald*, June 1911, p. 107; Helen C. A. Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching*, 92-93.

²³The exact size of the church is not known. About six months after the sermon referenced in the following paragraph, Dixon’s wife reported the church size to be “well passed the five hundred mark.” See Helen C. A. Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching*, 112.

²⁴“True Success,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 27, folder 4.

In 1889 Dixon made a trip to London for the World's Sunday School Convention. Through his participation in the events of the convention, Dixon became acquainted with Thomas Olney, a trustee at Metropolitan Tabernacle. This gave Dixon the opportunity to meet the Tabernacle's pastor, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Dixon was invited to join Spurgeon before the Sunday morning service and offer a prayer during the service. What particularly impressed Dixon about Spurgeon were the prayers he offered before the service. He recalled, "We were in the little prayer meeting with him and his elders ten minutes before the sermon on Sunday morning. There were several earnest prayers, all breathing a spirit of entire dependence upon God. Spurgeon prayed twice and poured out his soul before God like a little child, all dependent upon his father for guidance and strength." Dixon's time in prayer with the highly-esteemed Spurgeon deepened Dixon's commitment to prayer in utter dependence on God. If the great Charles Spurgeon was in need of God's strength, then Dixon knew himself to be especially in need of God's power.²⁵

Following a service at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Spurgeon asked Dixon if he would go to the street and preach. The fact that Spurgeon and his church regularly engaged in the practice made Dixon consider the importance it should play in a church's regular ministry. On his way home from London he stopped in Liverpool and found a church that engaged in regular open-air preaching as well. Dixon joined one of the three-hour street services. After the service Dixon learned from the rector that nearly all professions of faith in the church came through the open-air ministry. Dixon's

²⁵"Foreign Flickers," *Baltimore Baptist*, 8 August 1889, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 5; Helen C. A. Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching*, 106-07.

experience with these two open-air ministries had Dixon to return to Baltimore ready to have open-air preaching as part of the regular ministry of his church.²⁶

As Dixon sought to implement open air ministry, some members were not sure they wanted to engage in a practice mostly associated with the Salvation Army. Many of the leading members of the church thought it was below the dignity of their pastor to preach in the street. Eventually, Dixon moved forward with the street preaching and gathered a crowd of 350 on the first night, 200 of whom appeared to be non-churchgoers. This began a long-standing practice of open air work in this church. Years later Dixon would say that some of the best workers in the church were those won through open air preaching.²⁷

Dixon began to attend Bible conferences during his Baltimore pastorate. He attended Moody's Northfield conference and the Niagara Conference held at Niagara-on-the-lake near Ontario. He spoke at Seaside Conference in 1890.²⁸ Dixon's involvement with the conferences raised his interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He led Immanuel Baptist Church in Baltimore to host a conference on "The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit" in 1890. Later that year he co-edited a book by that title containing the addresses delivered during that conference.²⁹ Also in 1890 Dixon

²⁶"My First Experience in Open-Air Preaching," *Christian Observer*, 25 July 1900, p. 4.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Helen C. A. Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching*. 91; Gerald Lee Priest, "An Examination of the Apologetical Ministry of Amzi Clarence Dixon" (Ph.D. Diss., Bob Jones University, 1988), 148.

²⁹Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Baltimore: Wharton, Barron & Co, 1890); Dixon hosted another conference on "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit" when he was at Hanson Place Baptist Church in Brooklyn in 1894. This conference featured A. J. Gordon, A. T. Pierson, and George Needham. See "Conference in Brooklyn," *New York Evangelist*, 6 September 1894, p. 7.

published another book, *The True and the False*. The first half of this book argued for the divinity of Jesus Christ, the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible, and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The second half of the book addressed Roman Catholic beliefs in light of the Bible. The next year, the first half of the book appeared on its own under the title, *The God Man*.³⁰

Though Dixon was growing in popularity and his church was growing large, he thought that the church was not ready to follow him completely in all-out evangelism. As the church was raising money for a new three thousand seat structure to replace the small chapel and temporary tabernacle, some church members began to question the idea. Some leading men in the church decided that the church should retain the smaller marble church and build a larger one to match it rather than build the large brick structure. They did not consult Dixon, who felt estranged for being left out of the decision. He concluded that the church would need to find someone else to lead them in this new direction. In 1890, Hanson Place Baptist Church in Brooklyn called Dixon as pastor and he accepted. In leaving the Baltimore church Dixon expressed his desire to labor in a field of wider usefulness.³¹

Hanson Place Baptist Church, Brooklyn, New York

Dixon's time in Brooklyn got off to a rocky start in the way of evangelism. Dixon spoke one Sunday morning about leaving the ninety-nine and going after the one lost sheep. That afternoon a leading deacon of the church announced at the deacon's

³⁰Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The True and the False* (Baltimore: Wharton, Barron & Co., 1890); Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The God Man* (Baltimore: Wharton, Barron & Co., 1891).

³¹"Amzi Clarence Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; A. C. Dixon to Ruggles Street Baptist Church, 23 October 1890, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 6, folder 8.

meeting that he did not like the sermon. He explained that Dixon had enough to do taking care of a church of six hundred or more members, without going after people outside the church. Dixon responded by encouraging the member to not come the following week because he planned to preach along similar lines. The next week Dixon came to church “with the sort of feeling that [he] was preaching [his] funeral sermon.” The sermon resulted in the public profession of faith of five people. The opposing member soon apologized for his opposition. He later prayed in a church service that God would help the church forget the ninety-nine and go after the one lost. About this incident, Dixon praised God for giving him the grace to stand and for delivering him from people. Dixon learned the necessity of preaching to please God and not man.³²

Early in his ministry in Brooklyn, Dixon noted the enduring influence of Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887). Dixon spoke out against the famous pastor. While acknowledging Beecher’s numerous gifts, he believed Beecher lost his way. Dixon explained that Beecher believed and proclaimed the Bible early in his ministry, but in his later ministry “it was almost impossible to learn just what he believed as to the inspiration of the Scripture, future punishment, the atonement, etc. At times he seemed to be orthodox, then Unitarian, then again Universalist.” Dixon believed the problem for Beecher was he read the culture more than he read his Bible. On Beecher’s sermons on evolution, Dixon said it seemed to him that Beecher “read Herbert Spencer more than he did Moses.” Dixon thought Beecher’s downturn followed his famous trial for adultery in 1875, and that out of respect for the strength of his early ministry his church

³²“Personal Ideal,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; “Memories of the Ministry,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 24 July 1902, p. 101.

made allowances for the “inconsistencies and vagaries of his preaching in his later days.”³³

The early days of Dixon’s ministry in Brooklyn also saw him face a familiar foe: pew rental. This was a serious matter to Dixon. He addressed the matter and the church abandoned pew rents. In April 1892 the church adopted the free pew system.³⁴

In 1893, D. L. Moody invited Dixon to Chicago to participate in an evangelistic outreach in conjunction with the World’s Columbian Exposition. The six month long exposition was an event that Chicagoans hoped would re-establish them as a major world city and prove they had recovered from the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Chicago competed with New York and St. Louis for the honor of hosting this event designed to salute the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the New World. The city wanted to make sure that they put on a world-class show. They sent a committee to Paris to visit and report on the major features of Exposition Universelle de 1889 in order to see what they were up against. The original plans for Chicago included a large tower, significantly larger than Paris’ Eiffel Tower. This plan had to be altered due to financial concerns and the Chicago event featured the first Ferris wheel, standing 264 feet high, built by George Ferris. Even without the tower the Columbian Exposition outdid Paris in many ways. The grounds covered 686 acres compared to just 72 in Paris. The buildings were much larger than those in Paris. The largest Columbian building had four times the square footage of the largest building of

³³“Dixon on Beecher,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 29 June 1891, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3.

³⁴“Slocum Manuscript,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7.

the Paris exposition. The World's Columbian Exposition drew nearly 21.5 million people.³⁵

More than one religious meeting was organized in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition. The most noted was the World's Parliament of Religions. Organizers intended for the representatives of the religions of the world to set forth "their common grounds of union." The purpose was to help secure "the coming unity of mankind, in the service of God and of man." The parliament kicked off on September 11, 1893, with the ringing of the Columbian Liberty Bell in the Court of Honor of the World's Columbian Exposition. The bell tolled ten times to honor what were considered at the time to be the ten great religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. At the same time, in the Memorial Art Palace, more than sixty religious leaders from around the globe processed into the Hall of Columbus to meet.³⁶

A strikingly different kind of religious effort was also put forth in connection with the Columbian Exposition. This effort was headed by D. L. Moody. Moody used his Chicago Bible Institute as his center of command. The Institute housed most of the visiting evangelists and revival workers, which had required him to add two more stories to the facility to accommodate the visitors. Preparations were extensive. He completed the addition to the buildings, arranged the training of workers, began a newspaper

³⁵Richard Hughes Seager, ed., *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religion, 1893* (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1993), 3-15; John E. Findling, *Chicago's Great World's Fair* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 6-13; Reid Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), 131.

³⁶John P. Burris, *Exhibiting Religion: Colonialism and Spectacle at International Expositions 1851-1893* (Charlottesville: University press of Virginia, 2001), 124-32; Seager, *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism*, 3-15.

publicity campaign to solicit additional workers, and he raised the money for this ambitious campaign. Moody expected that the fruit of his labors would be the salvation of 100,000 souls.³⁷

Moody organized a campaign to be composed of open air preaching as well as local church events. He arranged for many meetings through nearly fifty local churches, which required the cooperation of local ministers. Circus tent tabernacles were erected to accommodate the large crowds, with Moody often preaching three sermons at three locations on Sundays. On one occasion Moody was able to fill a circus tent with over 15,000 people. It was expensive. He paid \$18,000 to rent the Auditorium Theatre for one service a week for six months. Moody bought daily advertisements of campaign events in the Chicago newspapers. According to the register at the Bible Institute, the campaign drew nearly two million people.³⁸

Dixon joined the campaign in the month of September. Dixon preached up to three times a day to gatherings at various local churches. The attendance for the campaign was large in September, averaging nearly 150,000 per week city-wide. The extraordinary number of people reached through this cooperative effort gave Dixon a

³⁷James F. Findlay, Jr., *Dwight L. Moody: American Evangelist 1837-1899* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 401; "Resolution of Censure," *Sword and Trowel* 50 (1915): 264-65; Thekla Ellen Joiner, *Sin in the City: Chicago and Revivalism 1880-1920* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 82-86; "Items," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 September 1892, p. 3; "War Against Sin in Chicago," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 October 1892, p. 8.

³⁸J. C. Pollock, *Moody: A Biographical Portrait of the Pacesetter in Modern Mass Evangelism* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), 283-84; Joiner, *Sin in the City*, 82-86; "D. L. Moody's Mission," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 16 January 1893, p. 1; "Opens the Campaign," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 May 1893, p. 6; "Is Looking for Good Halls," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 May 1893, p. 6; "Moody Gets a Call," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 31 May 1893, p. 1; "Offer Moody Advice," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 June 1893, p. 1; "Moody Preaches on Salvation," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 August 1893, p. 2; "Being Yoked with Christ," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 18 September 1893, p. 3; "Will Preach in Central Music Hall," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 October 1893, p. 6; "Moody's Season Over," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 November 1893, p. 6.

vision for what could be done when evangelistic campaigns had careful planning and interdenominational cooperation.³⁹

Dixon's involvement with Moody and the Chicago campaign made a deep impression. He had always been interested in reaching many with the gospel. He was interested in praying that God would send revival. He was already using large public facilities to accommodate crowds. Even as recently as January 1893, Dixon was holding meetings in the Grand Opera House in Brooklyn in order to hold evangelistic meetings in a setting more acceptable to those opposed to coming to church. Additionally, just before the campaign Dixon had contemplated leaving pastoral ministry in order to devote himself to general evangelistic work. His Chicago experience convinced him that he wanted to remain pastor of his church. At the same time it convinced him to seek to duplicate Moody's work in Chicago. He would begin to organized local ministers across denominational lines to reach as many as possible with the gospel message. This was a turning point in Dixon's ministry that changed the way he went about his task of serving in pastoral ministry.⁴⁰

In the years ahead, Dixon built a close relationship with Moody. Moody often invited Dixon to speak at his Northfield Bible Conferences. Dixon in fact became a regular figure at Northfield and other Bible conferences.⁴¹

³⁹Newspaper advertisement including Dixon's name for speaking engagements in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 September 1893, p. 6 (at least seven additional advertisements included Dixon's name throughout month of September); "Moody's Season Over," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 November 1893, p. 6.

⁴⁰"Preaching at the Theatre," *New York Times*, 2 January 1893, p. 8; "The Reverend A. C. Dixon May Resign," *New York Times*, 21 August 1893, p. 8; "A Gospel Campaign in Brooklyn," *Outlook*, 11 November 1893, p. 856.

⁴¹Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 172-87; "Summer Meetings At Northfield,"

By January 1894, Dixon was involved with the Central Committee of the Evangelistic Campaign Association of Brooklyn clergymen. This group organized an ambitious revival campaign for Brooklyn. The campaign was similar to Chicago in that there was a large meeting combined with smaller local meetings in churches. The newspapers reported up to twenty thousand people each night involved in the campaign. The *New York Times* reported on the revival regularly and ran several articles featuring the leaders of the movement, one of which included a brief biographical sketch of Dixon. As interest grew, the committee invited D. L. Moody to carry the revival along. They rented a larger theater to accommodate the crowds Moody attracted.⁴² Revivals of this type became a regular feature of the remainder of Dixon's ministry in Brooklyn. Dixon began spending most of his time in evangelistic work outside the church. In September 1897, Dixon reported that his church required of him only one sermon on Sunday, leaving him free the rest of the week to preach in and around New York. Just the year before the church gave him an extended vacation in preparation for the fall evangelistic campaign he had planned in the city.⁴³

Though Dixon was busy in outside evangelistic work, the church saw continued growth during Dixon's pastorate. In his first four years at Hanson Place the

New York Times, 10 June 1894, p. 16; "Mr. Moody's Bible Conference," *New York Times*, 22 July 1894, p. 19. More information about Dixon's involvement in Bible conferences will be discussed in chap. 6.

⁴²"Nineteen Revival Meetings," *New York Times*, 23 January 1894, p. 9; "Brooklyn's Great Revival," *New York Times*, 24 January 1894, p. 8; "A Religious Tidal Wave," *New York Times*, 26 January 1894, p. 8; "Children in the Revival," *New York Times*, 28 January 1894, p. 16; "Brooklyn's Revival Grows," *New York Times*, 29 January 1894, p. 8; "Revival's Test of Strength," *New York Times*, 30 January 1894, p. 8; "Moody Tells of the Bible," *New York Times*, 14 March 1894, p. 8.

⁴³"Evangelistic Work in New York," *New York Observer*, 21 January 1897, p. 96; "Wants an Auditorium in New York," *New York Observer*, 9 September 1897, p. 335; "New York and Brooklyn," *New York Observer*, 30 July 1896, p. 167; Dixon's involvement in evangelistic campaigns will be handled more fully in chapter 4.

church membership increased from 602 to 1,037. By 1896 the church had grown to a membership over 1,100. In 1897 he led the church to employ an evangelist as an associate pastor to the church. They called Rev. F. H. Jacobs, who had “a wide reputation as a singer and evangelist, having long been associated with Dwight L. Moody.”⁴⁴

In 1898 Dixon was invited by Moody to participate in another evangelistic effort. This time he was invited to minister to an encampment of soldiers at Tampa, Florida as part of the Spanish-American War effort. In exchange, Moody agreed to preach at Hanson Place Baptist Church for a portion of the time Dixon was way. Moody’s plan was to send evangelistic workers such as Dixon along with religious supplies for the soldiers, such as New Testaments, religious books, and periodicals. Some of the meetings in Tampa in which Dixon took part attracted over ten thousand people. Dixon reported that the men were ready to consider the seriousness of religion in the face of the dangers of war. Dixon reported to Moody that one service resulted in two hundred soldiers coming forward for prayer. On one particularly hot day the crowd was sweltering under direct sun, leading Dixon to dismiss them from the meeting to alleviate their suffering. Dixon reported that to his surprise “the interest that they took in hearing of the love of Jesus Christ was so great that hundreds of them staid [sic] there for forty minutes.” Dixon ministered in Tampa for three weeks and estimated that more than one thousand made a profession of faith in Christ.⁴⁵

⁴⁴“The Rev. A. C. Dixon’s Anniversary,” *New York Times*, 5 November 1894, p. 9; “Slocum Manuscript,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7; “Dr. A. C. Dixon’s New Assistance,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 20 May 1897, p. 749.

⁴⁵“Lectures by the Rev. A. C. Dixon,” *New York Times*, 19 June 1898, p. 12; “A. C. Dixon’s Trip South,” *New York Times*, 20 June 1898, p. 3; “Troops Held Back,” *The Washington Post*, 14 May

Dixon did not relax his ambitious leadership of the Hanson Place church. And the church continued to grow. On a single Sunday in 1899 the church accepted 136 people into fellowship. Plans were underway for a larger church building. It would hold 1,800 with plans to expand by rolling back doors to accommodate 3,000. The structure was also to have a new and controversial feature: a flat roof. Critics said that a flat roof on a church looked as much like a skating rink as a church. The flat roof served a purpose: it could accommodate 1,500 seats for open-air religious meetings in good weather. In response, Dixon quoted Moody's endorsement of the plan: "It is no use talking; things have got to be revolutionized in New York before we can reach the masses. Some people may be surprised and even scandalized, but I unhesitatingly state that every church in New York should have a roof auditorium." Dixon had some words of his own to offer: "We do not all agree with you in your view that it looks as much like a skating rink as a church. To us it has a very churchly appearance, and the roof auditorium adds to the beauty of the design. To look at it on a hot day will make you anxious to go up and enjoy the fresh air. While you are enjoying the fresh air we will try to give you the gospel in songs and sermon as fresh and pure as the atmosphere you breathe." The cost of the project was initially set at \$200,000 and the hope was to have the building ready for the fiftieth anniversary of the church in 1904.⁴⁶

1898, p. 9; "Evangelists in the Field," *The Washington Post*, 23 May 1898, p. 7; "200 Soldiers for Prayers," *Boston Daily Globe*, 14 May 1898, p. 12; "Amzi Clarence Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

⁴⁶"Large Accessions to Dr. Dixon's Church," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 7 December 1899, p. 760; "Personals," *Zion's Herald*, 13 December 1899, p. 1591; "On the Roof Auditorium," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 28 January 1900, in Moodyana-Historical Collection, Moody Archives at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois; "Dr. Dixon Plans New Church," *New York Times*, 8 December 1899, p. 2; "A Costly Edifice for Its Jubilee," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 22 June 1899, p. 817; "Religious Revival in Brooklyn," *New York Times*, 8 October 1899, p. 22; "A New Departure in Church Building," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 21 December 1899, p. 824; "The Plans Prepared for Dr. Dixon's New Church," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 25 January 1900, p. 112.

The plans for the new church building went forward for about a year. In that time about \$20,000 was raised for the project. The building plan faced growing opposition within the church and was laid aside. For Dixon, such opposition to his plans and ambition for greater evangelistic outreach was a sign of trouble in the church. He soon concluded that to move forward he must move on. In 1901 he accepted a call to Boston to serve as pastor of the Ruggles Street Baptist Church. Dixon was grateful for his time of ministry in Brooklyn. He later looked at that time as significant for how God led him into interdenominational evangelism. Dixon explained: "In Brooklyn, [God] led me out of denominational work and into interdenominational work. I did more work outside of the Hanson Place Baptist Church than in it. That was their complaint about me. That is what they roasted me for in the official board and others in a kindly spirit, but the Lord led."⁴⁷

Hanson Place Baptist Church expressed regret upon news of Dixon's departure. The church had grown from 600 to over 1,300 in the ten years Dixon was pastor and many members were reluctant to let him go. The trustees refused to accept Dixon's resignation until they were assured that he would not reconsider the action. The Baptist minister's association also passed a resolution regretting his departure. Although Dixon still enjoyed considerable support among the members of the Hanson Place church, Dixon judged that Ruggles Street church offered greater opportunity for evangelistic labors. The church was located in urban Boston and had recently been left an endowment of \$350,000 for use in philanthropic work in the community. Dixon was excited at the prospect of developing the church's work with the poor as the base on

⁴⁷"Slocum Manuscript," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7; Amzi Clarence

which to build evangelic work. Writing to the church in acceptance of the call, Dixon explained that he believed his call to the church was the call of God. Dixon expected that great spiritual blessings would result from effective evangelism of all classes of people: “Relying upon the Holy Spirit for guidance and power, I will delight to cooperate with each and all of the members of the Ruggles St. Baptist church in seeking the salvation of all classes and ages, and in response to the spirit of the will of the late Daniel S. Ford, which impresses me as breathing the spirit of Christ, I will strive, in cooperation with the Boston Baptist social union, to build up a church among the working people, which in its spirituality and many philanthropic activities will be worthy of the carpenter of Nazareth, our Savior and Lord.”⁴⁸

Ruggles Street Baptist Church, Boston, Massachusetts

Dixon came to Boston with great excitement and expectations. He was welcomed by large crowds in his first services and explained his plan for the ministry to be carried out at Ruggles Street Baptist Church. He explained that he expected them to be a working church, in which the members of the church would be especially active in evangelism, all doing their part to reach the lost. Dixon assured the members that he intended to be active himself, not merely stirring the people up to do the work. His

Dixon, “Past, Present, and Future,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3.

⁴⁸“Slocum Manuscript,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7; “The Rev. Mr. Dixon’s Resignation,” *New York Times*, 9 February 1901, p. 7; “Rev. Dr. A. C. Dixon Accepts,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 8 February 1901, p. 6; “Dr. Dixon in Old Pulpit,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 21 April 1901, p. 2; “Dr. Dixon Going to Boston,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 14 February 1901, p. 210; “Notes from Dixon Ministry at Ruggles Street,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10.

message was warmly received. All six hundred members present seemed entirely captivated by Dixon's ambitious plans.⁴⁹

The arrangement under which Dixon accepted the call to Ruggles Street included his liberty to engage in extensive evangelistic work outside the church. He had agreed to apply himself in the church's local ministry half the year in exchange for six months of freedom to apply himself to evangelistic work the rest of the year. The arrangement seemed to work. In the first three months the church heard 126 professions of faith, though it appears only about half joined the church. Dixon led the church to undertake other changes. A large choir of about 150 volunteers replaced the paid church quartet, and a children's choir of about seventy-five voices was started. By April 1902 the church was hearing an average of twenty professions of faith each Sunday, and fifty-five had joined the church in the month of March alone.⁵⁰

In March Dixon also recommended that the church enlarge its facilities by erecting a new Sunday school building. Dixon favored a simple building plan. He wanted a building that would be inviting to both rich and poor. He hoped also that the building would be suitable for aggressive work for Christ. "In a word," Dixon explained, "[the building] will give what is needed for religious and philanthropic work on a scale commensurate with the money expended and the responsibilities which great possibilities impose." As Dixon had done in Brooklyn, he proposed the inclusion of a

⁴⁹"Greeting to Dr. Dixon," *Boston Daily Globe*, 2 May 1901, p. 3; "To His New Flock," *Boston Daily Globe*, 6 May 1901, p. 2.

⁵⁰For Dixon's arrangement that he would be away six months a year see handwritten note on Ruggles Street Baptist Church letterhead in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10. Also see, "Notes from Dixon Ministry at Ruggles Street," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; "From Mrs. Crowe's Scrapbook," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; "Personals," *Zion's Herald*, 23 April 1902, p. 519.

roof garden scheme to allow roof-top meetings in the summer months. He explained that this design had been accepted in at least five great cities, but that he left the decision on the matter to the church.⁵¹

About a year after his arrival Dixon was organizing evangelistic meetings in Boston. One of the first was an interdenominational outreach at the city baseball grounds. The report in the newspaper announcing the June meetings encouraged attendance by notifying the public that at the time of day the meetings were held three thousand seats would be in the shade. The first meeting had about two thousand present. The meetings extended into July. In July the attendance still topped one thousand.⁵²

In May 1903, after two years in Boston, Dixon was able to report that the church had received 440 new members. Dixon also reported that in the six weeks prior, as he evangelized in Franklin, Pennsylvania and other places, he recorded over five hundred professions of faith. In June Dixon began a ministry of open-air preaching in Boston. By November of that year, the church scrapbook records, “the pastors and laymen of various evangelical denominations repeatedly tell us that Pastor Dixon is the spiritual leader in New England and that they thank God that he came to Boston. God is greatly using him in promoting the revival which the churches so greatly need. Our church cannot help but feel the reflex influence of the great work which our pastor is

⁵¹“His Full Help,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 3 March 1902, p. 11.

⁵²“From Mrs. Crowe’s Scrapbook,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; “Gospel on Ball Grounds,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 7 June 1902, p. 3; “Open-Air Meeting,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 7 July 1902, p. 7.

enabled by God to do outside our immediate parish. Let us pray more for him and for the world-wide revival.”⁵³

This ambitious pattern of activity characterized Dixon’s Boston ministry, just as it had elsewhere. In March 1905 Dixon commented in a sermon that this was the ninth service in which he had taken part that day, thus his voice felt a bit weary. That same month the church reported more than 175 people made a public profession of faith on one Sunday. In the morning service, following Dixon’s sermon on “Confessing Christ,” more than twenty-five persons made a public confession of Christ. In the afternoon Bible school more than one hundred young people decided for Christ. In the evening service, following a sermon on “Deciding for Christ,” fifty more professed faith.⁵⁴

In July 1905 Dixon traveled to London again to attend the first Baptist World Congress. This gave him the opportunity to preach many times in England. He preached the first four Sundays of July in Westminster Chapel for G. Campbell Morgan and for the last two Sundays of August in the Metropolitan Tabernacle for Thomas Spurgeon.⁵⁵

Dixon’s ministry outside the church carried him to large venues in and around Boston. Tremont Temple was one such center of activity for him. Dixon had spoken at Tremont Temple many times before moving to Boston. While Dixon was a pastor in

⁵³“Notes from Dixon Ministry at Ruggles Street,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; “New Church Work,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 4 May 1903, p. 3.

⁵⁴“The World for Christ,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; “Begin a Christian Life,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 14 March 1905, p. 12.

⁵⁵“Notes from Dixon Ministry at Ruggles Street,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10.

Brooklyn, he often traveled to Boston to take part in evangelistic services at Tremont Temple. Upon moving to Boston, Dixon continued to preach there, often to crowds of over two thousand sometimes holding meetings every day of the week. Weeklong meetings were not the norm, but Monday meetings at Tremont Temple were a regular part of Dixon's ministry in Boston. The *Moody Church Herald* reported of Dixon's ministry in Boston that "his Monday noon meetings in Tremont Temple became the evangelistic center of New England." The *Herald* reported that ministers looked forward to those meetings as a source of encouragement in their ministry. Dixon's commitment to evangelism was infectious. The *Herald* article explained that "competent judges have stated that Dr. Dixon was the greatest evangelistic force in New England at the time he was called to Chicago."⁵⁶

Dixon's tenure in Boston lasted five years until he was called to Chicago's Moody Church in 1906. The Boston ministry was marked by nearly continuous evangelistic activity. Dixon was convinced that preachers should expect to see conversions each time they preach. Though the Sunday morning service should be for Christians, there should be something in it "for the indifferent businessman who never goes to church on Sunday evening." This conviction induced him to introduce a new practice: an invitation to walk forward after the Sunday morning sermon. Dixon described that one Sunday morning he "felt impressed that the Spirit was moving upon the people with unusual power, and I did what I had never done in Boston before, asked

⁵⁶"Dry Bones Shaken," *Boston Daily Globe*, 9 February 1897, p. 6; "From an Unknown Country Parish to the World's Metropolitan," *The Moody Church Herald*, June 1911, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; "How To Save Cities," *Boston Daily Globe*, 16 August 1897, p. 2; "Sermon by Rev. Dr. Dixon," *Boston Daily Globe*, 7 December 1896, p. 6; "Tremont Temple Noon Meetings," *Boston Daily Globe*, 21 November 1902, p. 4; "Cross and the Flag," *Boston Daily Globe*, 21

all who had not confessed Christ as Saviour and Lord to come forward during the singing.”⁵⁷

Dixon was however disappointed with his ministry in Boston. He was not satisfied with the number of additions made to the church compared to the number of professions of faith. He felt that though many were willing to call on Christ for salvation, too few were willing to join the church. Dixon believed also that there was too little evangelistic concern among the members. In one sermon he reminded the church members of the recent unwillingness on the part of many members to covenant to pray and work with him for the salvation of at least five hundred people in connection with the ministry of the church. He complained that he had heard no public prayers from anyone other than himself in seeking God’s help to reach five hundred. In addition, many leading members have objected to the prayers, saying they do not have the heart to pray for it. Dixon said this led him to tremble and fear, “Oh, my God, is it true, is the church getting into that position when they are not as a church burdened and yearning for the salvation of the lost.” Dixon intended to use the sermon to stir the church up in evangelistic concern. He was confident that the church could reach five hundred each year based on the number of members and resources at their disposal. When the church failed to support heartily Dixon’s call to action, the result was predictable. Dixon resigned.⁵⁸

April 1903, p. 6; “New Church Work,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 4 May 1903, p. 3; “Tremont Temple Noon Meetings,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 3 October 1903, p. 10.

⁵⁷Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Dixon’s Sermons: November 1903* (Boston: William H. Smith, 1903), 9-10.

⁵⁸Amzi Clarence Dixon, “The Mission of the Christian,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 26, folder 6.

Dixon's resignation from Ruggles Street was met with protests and sadness on the part of many in the church and in the Boston area. The church had grown from about 800 to 1,200 during his time there. Upon announcing his resignation Dixon received letters from people who felt that Boston especially needed him. The church expressed their appreciation for leading their church to "a united church membership, the spiritual life of which never showed a higher register in its self-sacrificing service and gifts of money." While a writer in *The Watchman* judged that the greater loss would not be the loss to the church, but the loss of "Dixon's aggressive and unremitting evangelism in Boston, and in New England."⁵⁹

Dixon's departure from Boston no doubt had as much to do with the larger field of opportunity at Moody Church as with discontent with the Ruggles Street membership. Dixon had grown discontented nevertheless. He concluded that the great philanthropic work necessitated by the large church endowment was more of a burden than a blessing. Dixon's complaint was that upon closer observation the benefits of the philanthropic work were offset by its liabilities. Dixon judged that "there seemed to be no conversions or additions to the church as a result of this beautiful philanthropy." After three years he became convinced of the error of a philanthropy-based ministry. Many poor people had been encouraged to move close to the church in order to receive help. Yet "when they come with that motive, it is almost impossible to really benefit them, while the congestion of such families around the church does much to pauperize the whole community." Once the church had a reputation for helping the needy it served to discourage some of the more independent families from attending, lest they be

⁵⁹"The Institutional Church," *Congregationalist and Christian World*, 18 August 1906, p.

considered needy. This handicapped the church from meeting the spiritual needs of families because of its reputation for meeting the physical needs of those in want. In the end, Dixon concluded that Christians should do what they can to relieve the physical wants of their neighbor, but they should always remember that the main work of the church was the redemption of souls.⁶⁰

Dixon viewed the call to Chicago as an opportunity to refocus on evangelism without the necessity of managing the philanthropic work required at Ruggles Street Baptist Church. In Chicago Dixon supported social ministry through the church. The Moody Church for example fed men who were out of work. Dixon never again supported the kind of philanthropy-based ministry that he had in Boston. Such social ministry worked against the greater purpose of the church: the salvation of souls. The call to Chicago offered Dixon an opportunity to get back to “first principles.”⁶¹

Moody Church, Chicago, Illinois

Dixon’s move to the renowned Chicago Avenue Church (the name was changed to the Moody Church while Dixon was pastor) was met with some opposition. The Moody Church was Congregational and practiced infant baptism, while Dixon was Baptist and opposed to the practice. In the end it proved a minor hurdle for Dixon. He personally held to believer’s baptism, but he had no objection to serving as pastor of a church that practiced infant baptism as well. Dixon’s Baptist friends however did not

221; “In and Around Boston,” *Congregationalist and Christian World*, 11 August 1906, p. 182.

⁶⁰“The Institutional Church,” *Congregationalist and Christian World*, 18 August 1906, p. 221.

⁶¹Amzi Clarence Dixon, “Does War Bring Revival?” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelicalism and Social Concern*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1977), 30-42.

approve of his acceptance of a call from a church that was not truly a Baptist church. One newspaper reported that Chicago Baptists turned a cold shoulder on him. The Baptist leaders in Chicago were unwilling to give Dixon a formal welcome even though he was widely known as a Baptist preacher. He was guilty of complicity with infant baptism. Dixon however believed that the shared commitment to maintaining fundamental doctrine was a sufficient basis for church fellowship, despite their differences concerning infant baptism. The Moody Church took a strong stand against liberal theology and opposed institutions that did not uphold a high view of scripture and of Jesus Christ. These similarities were enough for Dixon to accept the call. Dixon did not personally baptize any infants while at Moody Church, but he did not oppose the practice either.⁶²

The opposition to Dixon's coming to Moody church was not merely from outside the church. Some members of the committee responsible for finding a new pastor favored calling James M. Gray, President of the Moody Bible Institute. The influence of Reuben A. Torrey was still strong in the church and Torrey had commented favorably concerning Gray and his fitness to serve as the Moody Church's pastor. Torrey himself worked to unify the committee behind Dixon. In a letter to a church elder, Torrey explained that he no longer wanted to be understood as supporting Gray. He recognized that some of the committee was not enthusiastic about Dixon because he was a Baptist, but Torrey thought it best that Dixon come. He believed that differences concerning baptism would not provoke controversy in the church. The real source of

⁶²“Interdenominational Baptism,” *Congregationalist and Christian World*, 29 September 1906, p. 395; Amzi Clarence Dixon, “Past, Present, and Future,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3.

division was that some of the men who initially supported Dixon had changed their minds and now supported Gray. Torrey said these men should be ashamed of themselves for changing their mind after proceeding as far as they had with Dixon. To turn back at this time would disgrace and wrong Dixon, and would dishonor the church. Additionally, if Gray were called it would appear that Dr. Gray had been working to change the committee's mind after Dixon had been chosen. By the time Dixon came to town, the church and its leadership committee stood behind Dixon. Torrey's judgment proved to be right. Dixon's Baptist views apparently created no difficulties related to baptism during his tenure at the church.⁶³

Even before he assumed official duties on October 1, 1906, Dixon began to lay out his plan for the church. In late August Dixon came to town to meet with the executive and conference committees. He spoke with them about the importance of prayer and soul-winning in the life of the church. The meeting concluded with prayer for the Moody Church. A few weeks later he sent a letter to the church asking that they set a day aside for fasting and prayer in his first month. In his first sermon as pastor he urged the necessity of Christ's atonement as the only means of salvation. His arrival was met with a few changes to the regular operation of the church, such as moving the weekly prayer service from Friday to Wednesday night and the choir practice to Friday. He also implemented a house-to-house visiting program to find out if residents were church members and if the children attended Sunday School. By early November he had organized a street parade of church members to follow the Wednesday evening

⁶³William G. Reyer to A. C. Dixon, 11 June 1906, Moodyana-Historical Collection; R. A. Torrey to Hitchcock, 18 June 1906, Moodyana-Historical Collection; R. A. Torrey to Gaylord, 18 June 1906, Moodyana-Historical Collection.

prayer meeting. The parade was headed by a brass band where bystanders were encouraged to join the procession which ended at the church for a night-time service. Dixon led a half-week of evangelistic meetings at the church in November and planned a soul-winning conference for early January. Dixon hit the ground running.⁶⁴

“Special services” became a regular occurrence at the Moody Church. In the winter of 1906-07 and 1907-08 the church conducted evangelistic services in the Great Northern Theatre located in the center of the business district. These meetings were held once a week at the lunch hour for businessmen to attend. The church employed aggressive advertising methods to spread the word about church services. Invitation cards were distributed in person, in barber shops, drug stores, and even cigar stores. The church also regularly evangelized through open-air preaching.⁶⁵

In Chicago Dixon began writing articles for publication in the *Chicago Daily News*. These articles were placed in the newspaper as advertisements and were paid for by the church. One reason for paying for the article was that the newspaper editors could not make changes to them. Dixon feared that they would edit out the gospel. Some church members opposed this approach initially, but eventually the idea was accepted and carried forward. The article usually consisted of a summary of one of Dixon’s sermons and a short invitation to the Moody Church on Sunday. The articles began in January 1908 and by March 1908 the *Moody Church Herald* reported that the

⁶⁴“Minutes of Executive Committee, Moody Church (1906),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “New Pastor at Moody Church,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 October 1906, p. 11; “New Moody Church Pastor Starts Strenuous Revival,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 November 1906, p. 9; “Outlook for the Winter,” *Congregationalist and Christian World*, 27 October 1906, p. 558.

⁶⁵“Scrapbook, 1907-1911,” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1907-1908),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

articles reached a circulation of 330,000, with plans to extend their publication to about one thousand other newspapers. This was expected to bring the total circulation to one million. Dixon believed that these articles in the daily press were “next to the living voice, the most effective method of preaching the gospel to a great city.” Dixon continued this practice of advertising in the newspaper for his entire time in Chicago.⁶⁶

During Dixon’s time in Chicago the church also decided to change its name. It had been the Chicago Avenue Church, though many already referred to it as Moody Church. In October 1908 the church officially changed its name to Moody Church.⁶⁷

Dixon’s call to minister at the Moody Church was largely a result of his growing popularity. Each church he led experienced marked growth, and his strenuous efforts in extensive evangelistic endeavors had established his reputation among conservative evangelicals. In Chicago his reputation got another boost. The occasion was a preaching engagement Dixon fulfilled in California. Dixon preached at the Temple Auditorium in Los Angeles near the time that Chicago Baptists were questioning the orthodoxy of George Burman Foster, a professor at the University of Chicago’s Divinity School.⁶⁸ In Los Angeles Dixon addressed the danger of heterodox theology and asserted that it could be found in the published book of a certain University of Chicago professor. In the audience was millionaire Lyman Stewart. He was troubled

⁶⁶Amzi Clarence Dixon, “Past, Present, and Future,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; *The Moody Church Herald*, March 1908; “Poverty, Crime, Sin and Their Treatment,” *Chicago Daily Press*, 22 February 1908, 11.

⁶⁷“Minutes of Executive Committee, Moody Church (Special Church Meeting, 21 October 1908),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁶⁸George Burman Foster was a professor at University of Chicago. More about Dixon’s part in Foster’s challenge from the Baptists in Chicago will be discussed in chap. 6.

by the challenge of liberal theology and wanted to do something about it. After the sermon he spoke with Dixon and proposed the production of a series of books that would be freely distributed and whose purpose would be to refute the assertions of liberal theology. Dixon agreed to serve as the editor of the project and take part in choosing the men best suited to write essays for the books. The result was twelve volumes that Stewart mailed to nearly every preacher, evangelist, pastor, theological professor, theological student, missionary, and Sunday School Superintendent in the English speaking world. The first volume was mailed to over 200,000 people. Dixon's role in leading this effort brought him still greater prominence in the evangelical community.⁶⁹

Dixon did not slacken his pastoral and evangelistic efforts during his time in Chicago. Church records indicate ongoing evangelistic efforts. The year-end report submitted in October 1910 was typical in reporting a high level of evangelistic activity, along with the encouraging results. This report explained that the previous year was one of the church's best years of soul winning due largely to the efforts of Dixon and the assistant pastor, E. Y. Woolley. They had sixty days of soul-winning services and deployed workers through the summer months in open-air services. In these endeavors a brass band was used with great effect. There was a thirty-day soul-winning campaign in November with an average of six converts each meeting. In January there was one week set aside for prayer followed by another week dedicated to soul winning. Other church minutes indicate the remarkable efforts that the church put into evangelistic

⁶⁹Lyman Stewart to A. C. Dixon, 29 July 1915, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 11, folder 6; Amzi Clarence Dixon, "What Is Fundamentalism," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5.

efforts. Some efforts were undertaken by the Moody Church alone, while others were undertaken in cooperation with other churches in a larger campaign involving evangelists such as R. A. Torrey and Gypsy Smith.⁷⁰

Dixon believed however that his duty went beyond saving souls. He also sought to strengthen the flock and keep it healthy. The church under Dixon pursued church discipline for issues such as non-attendance, erroneous doctrine, drunkenness, and adultery. The cases often resulted in suspension or excommunication. The cases of suspension usually required public confession, followed by a prescribed period of suspension from the Lord's Supper, before restoration could occur. Tending the flock meant also requiring theological agreement among the members. Each member was required to assent to a formal confession of faith in their application for membership. Confessional subscription framed the way in which the church understood its motto: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, love." The church agreed that there were certain essentials that were non-negotiable. One member was excommunicated in 1906 when she came under the influence of Christian Science. The church excluded her because she "specifically denies the truth of the atonement through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ." Church members were required to sign the membership book indicating theological agreement in order to join the church.⁷¹

⁷⁰"Church Clerk Reports (Box 31, folder 8)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; "Minutes of Executive Committee, Moody Church (1906-1911)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁷¹"Scrapbook, 1907-1911," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; "Minutes of Executive Committee, Moody Church (1906-1911)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

Dixon expected church members to do the largest share of the church's work. Dixon viewed the job of church visitor as perhaps the most important job in the church. The church visitor was a member of the church, employed by the church, to follow up with visitors of the church. Church visitors also canvassed areas designated by the church for surveys to discover residents' current church membership and interest in religion. The church visitors kept busy. One church visitor reported making 180 visits in just over three months. Dixon also had interest in some man "full of prayer and soul-winning spirit" to give all his time to organizing the church visitors. These lay visitors ought to include "every man, woman, and child" in the church who could be given definite soul-winning work to do. The lay visitors would be assigned certain houses, blocks, stores, barber shops, and saloons for whose evangelization he was responsible.⁷²

Near the end of 1910, Dixon received an invitation from Metropolitan Tabernacle in London to fill the pulpit for January 1911. Moody Church agreed to allow Dixon to go. A month away led to two, and by the end of the third month he was back in Chicago. Dixon enjoyed the privilege of preaching in the pulpit of the church made so famous by the remarkable preaching ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon who served the church from 1854 until his death in 1892. He also received an invitation from Metropolitan Tabernacle to be the next pastor. Dixon hesitated to accept the call in part because he opposed the practice of pew renting at Metropolitan Tabernacle. His fellow Chicago ministers joined his church members in urging him not to accept the call. Dixon weighed the decision until late April, when he submitted his resignation to the

⁷²"Minutes of Executive Committee, Moody Church (1911)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; A. C. Dixon to E. Y. Woolley, 8 August 1910, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3.

Moody Church. Once again, the opportunity for a wider field of usefulness seems to have been the determining factor. Dixon was accompanied by one thousand church members to the train station where he departed for London. Dixon's wish for the Moody Church upon his departure was that all members would be active soul-winners, who are "endeavoring in God's strength to win someone daily."⁷³

Dixon's departure to London cut short his editorial duties over *The Fundamentals*. In all, he oversaw the publication of five volumes. The fifth volume was distributed to 275,000 people. As for the Moody Church, the members considered themselves better for having had Dixon there. For the years Dixon was pastor, the church increased in membership by three hundred persons per year, more than twice its growth rate for the years preceding Dixon's pastorate. The records show over five hundred professions of faith, the church's net membership increased by eight hundred during his ministry of less than five years. When he left the Sunday School had a membership of 2,768, and its average attendance in the year he departed was 1,557.⁷⁴

Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England

Dixon's call to the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle made possible by his previous acquaintance with some of the church's leaders. Dixon's visit to London in 1889 put him in contact with the Tabernacle's trustee Thomas Olney. This led to his

⁷³"Dixon Souvenir Number," *The Moody Church Herald* 10, no.6 (June 1911); "Pew Rent Blocks Dixon Call," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 31 March 1911, p. 3; "Ask Moody Pastor to Remain: Chicago Ministers Implore the Rev. A. C. Dixon Not to Accept Call to London Church," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 April 1911, p. 3; "Dr. Dixon Resigns Pulpit at Moody," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 April 1911, p. 9.

⁷⁴Amzi Clarence Dixon, "The Motive of the Cross," *The Moody Church Herald* 10, no. 5 (May 1911); "From An Unknown Country Parish to the World's Metropolis," *The Moody Church Herald*, June 1911, pp. 107-10.

meeting with Spurgeon discussed earlier in this chapter. Olney was also impressed by a book edited by Dixon, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit*. So when time came to find a new pastor late in the year 1910, Olney thought favorably of Dixon as a candidate. This time it was Thomas Olney's son William, a deacon at the Tabernacle. William Olney encouraged the other office-bearers to invite Dixon to fill the pulpit, which he did for two months. Dixon's service proved agreeable to the church members and a number of souls were converted. They agreed to call him to be their pastor. Dixon accepted and began his duties on June 18, 1911.⁷⁵

When Dixon returned to London to assume his duties, he was greeted with large crowds. The newspaper reported that nearly every seat was filled at the Tabernacle as a crowd of about 2,500 gathered to hear his first sermon. At this service deacon William Olney spoke of the chain of providence that brought Dixon to London. He also relayed how Charles Spurgeon spoke of Dixon during his visit in 1889, saying Dixon was "a brother as great in heart as he is tall in body." Olney reported also that D. L. Moody had once commended Dixon as pastor of the Tabernacle. When Moody heard of Spurgeon's illness he said to Dixon, "if anything happens to that beloved man of God, you ought to go and succeed him." Dixon closed the service by announcing his pastoral vision for the Tabernacle—he prayed "that every member of it, from the youngest to the oldest, and from the weakest to the strongest, might be a soul-winner."⁷⁶

⁷⁵"Recognition Service and Public Meeting," *The Baptist Times*, 30 June 1911, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2; Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons to A. C. Dixon, 2 December 1910, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 4; Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons Minutes, 1909-1913, Metropolitan Tabernacle.

⁷⁶See "Dr. A. C. Dixon Now in London," a loose leaf article identified as from a Raleigh, N.C., newspaper in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2; "Dr. A. C. Dixon Welcome to London," *The Christian*, 29 June 1911, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2;

Although Dixon knew he was entering a different field of labor in a new country, he did not intend to significantly alter his pattern of ministry. He told the Moody Church in Chicago that he intended to “try to do in London what you are doing here.” He meant to continue an aggressive evangelistic ministry, endeavoring to have every church member busy in evangelistic work. An early newspaper report following his arrival in London picked up on this aim, reporting that “it is obvious that Dr. Dixon intends his ministry to reach outcast men and women, and intends also that the Tabernacle shall be a beehive of religious industry, with every department of its work directed at definite soul-winning.”⁷⁷

Things began well for Dixon in London. He wrote an American friend in November that “not a week passes without conversions. Congregations are large, and there prevails a spirit of prayerful hopefulness which is very encouraging.” A newspaper report that same month offered a similar report about Dixon’s first half year. “Dr. Dixon's ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle is so phenomenally successful that the very palmiest days of Mr. Spurgeon are being revived. Crowded on Sundays and full (excepting the top gallery) for the week-night services, the Tabernacle is enjoying a measure of prosperity not experienced since Mr. Spurgeon's death.”⁷⁸

As he had elsewhere, Dixon made evangelism his chief concern. In April of 1912 the *Christian Herald* reported that “at the present time the old Tabernacle is

“Recognition Service and Public Meeting,” *The Baptist Times*, 30 June 1911, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2.

⁷⁷“Dixon Gives Farewell Talk,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 May 1911, p. 10; “Dr. Dixon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,” *Life of Faith*, 21 June 1911, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2.

⁷⁸A. C. Dixon to A. T. Robertson, 6 November 1911, A. T. Robertson Papers. Archives and Special Collections at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; *The Christian World*, 16 November 1911, p. 4.

teeming with new life and vigour, and there are decisions for Christ, not only on Sundays, but at the Bible lectures on Thursdays. . . .” In the fall of that year Dixon organized an evangelistic outreach and reported many conversions. Dixon’s plan was to preach every day for twenty-one days, except Fridays, on “The Deeper Meaning of the Cross.” Dixon wrote to a friend at the time of this preaching that God blessed the work. “At every service there have been conversions and reclaiming of back-sliders.” He reported that one Wednesday night at least “forty children, about eleven years of age, accept[ed] and confess[ed] Christ as their Saviour.” The newspaper reported on this event as well, saying that about 150 conversions had occurred by October 17. In December 1912 the newspaper reported large crowds in the Tabernacle and that the two gallery tiers are always full, frequently to overflowing. Converts were coming for baptism and new members were joining the church. Dixon was encouraged. He wrote a friend that “God is giving us daily tokens of His Presence. Last Sunday was the best Sunday of all so far. In the morning for the first time, several persons confessed their faith in Christ and in the evening others were added. The newspapers, after their manner, have exaggerated things a trifle, but there is no doubt of the fact that God is with us, and there is more to follow.”⁷⁹

Throughout Dixon’s eight years in London he sought to carry on aggressive evangelistic work. His methods varied. He was involved in an evangelistic song

⁷⁹“Dr. Dixon among the Miners,” *The Christian Herald and Signs of our Times*, 11 April 1912, p. 338, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 6; “Great Mission at Spurgeon’s,” *Daily Chronicle*, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3; “Ecclesiastical Intelligence,” *The Times (London)*, 5 October 1912, p. 3, col. D; A. C. Dixon to R. L. Henson, 12 October 1912, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 8; “Dr. Dixon’s Mission at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,” *The Christian*, 17 October 1912, p. 30; Newspaper clipping of unknown origin, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3; “Tabernacle Tidings,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (1913): 86-87; A. C. Dixon to G. O. Manning, 11 January 1913, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 9.

campaign with a three hundred voice choir, a city-wide London campaign, a Bible and evangelistic conference with such speakers as James M. Gray, G. Campbell Morgan, and Charles Spurgeon, Jr., and a gospel picture mission in which a series of sermons which had been illustrated by an artist were preached by an evangelist from Scotland. Dixon also invited evangelists J. Wilbur Chapman and Charles Alexander to speak at the Tabernacle in October 1914. In a campaign that lasted eight days, backsliders repented and more than three hundred persons professed faith in Christ.⁸⁰

Dixon led the church to adopt a number of changes. He opposed the church's practice of raising its budget by an annual pew rental system. This arrangement was common in urban churches and had been in place at least since Spurgeon's time. Dixon had long opposed the practice. Dixon voiced his objection against it before he accepted the position and he immediately addressed the issue when he arrived. Dixon's position was that the church should not charge members a set amount each quarter for the right to sit in a certain pew, but that church giving should be voluntary, and all seats should be free of charge. He addressed this issue in private with the church's deacons and elders, and in public in the regular services of the church. Dixon believed that the pew rent system was sinful. He compared it to saving the best seats in your home for your family while relegating your guests to the corner. He published his objections also in the *Sword and Trowel*, arguing that rentals keep away the self-respecting poor. A free seat

⁸⁰“Evangelistic Song Campaign,” *The Times (London)*, 10 May 1917, p. 9, col. F; “Ecclesiastical News,” *The Times (London)*, 26 January 1915, p. 12, col. D; “London City Mission,” *The Times (London)*, 5 May 1915, p. 2, col. A; “Ecclesiastical Intelligence,” *The Times (London)*, 22 January 1913, p. 10, col. E; “A Gospel Picture Mission,” *Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times*, 27 September 1917, p. 227; “Meeting at Metropolitan Tabernacle,” *The Christian*, 22 October 1914, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 4; “Chapman-Alexander Mission at Metropolitan Tabernacle,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1914): 68; “Meeting for Men in London,” *The Christian*, 8 October 1914, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 4.

system would make the church guest feel at ease, knowing he can sit wherever he pleases. Dixon continued to press this issue through public addresses, church meetings, and a circular letter distributed to all church members. Finally, in February 1913, the church passed a resolution with 95 percent approval to designate their contributions as “subscriptions” rather than seat rents.⁸¹

Another issue Dixon repeatedly addressed was his desire to require the workers in the numerous missions associated with the church to be present at the Sunday morning service and one additional service each week. Dixon believed this would help maintain unity in the church. Dixon laid out his argument in the *Sword and Trowel* in December 1913, listing five “perils” of church missions. These issues all related to a lack of unity or feeling of alienation between the members of mother church and the workers in the missions. Dixon continued to press for this change in 1914 and 1915. His annual addresses to the church urged the importance of unity in the church. He explained that this was even more needed now than in the days of Spurgeon. Dixon reasoned that it was important that the members should rally to the Metropolitan Tabernacle and its pastor, as their fathers rallied to the church and to their pastor during the first fifteen years of Spurgeon’s ministry. Dixon argued that since the church had a weaker preacher in Dixon, there was all the more reason to rally to his support. His beloved deacon William Olney did not support the measure. Olney would not oppose Dixon but told him that requiring Sunday morning attendance by workers would be “a wrong step.” In a letter to Dixon, Olney explained that Dixon had little to gain and

⁸¹Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons Minutes, 1909-1913, Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England; “Dr. Dixon’s Attack on Pew Rents” in *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 22 December 1911, p. 821; “Free Seats,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (1912): 33-34; Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1908-1917, Metropolitan Tabernacle.

much to lose in forcing this through. Olney insisted that whatever the opinions of others, “the practice of Rev. C. H. Spurgeon was to *invite* the workers to be present on Sunday mornings, but *not to enforce* attendance.” In the end, Dixon decided to request, not require, the closing of the Sunday morning services at the church’s missions so the workers could attend the mother church. In his annual church report of 1916, Dixon reported that all but three missions acquiesced to the request.⁸²

From August 1914 to November 1918, Britain was at war. Disruption and turmoil marked life in London during the war. By August 1914 London alone had already contributed some eighty thousand enlisted men. In subsequent months many thousands more Londoners joined them. The city of London itself became the target of numerous attacks. London’s citizens practiced blackouts in the fall of 1914, and air raids, typically from Zeppelins, began in May 1915. The last Zeppelin strike was in October 1917, although other air raids continued for another year. In this environment the ministry of the church necessarily altered. Evangelism was still the focus. Yet evangelism was done within the context of families missing their husbands and sons, and as the war dragged on, with the tragic awareness that nearly every family was affected by the loss. The church began to focus on ministering to the soldiers in camp. Dixon urged soldiers preparing to leave for war to consider the importance of individual

⁸²“Annual Church Meeting Monday,” 21 February 1916, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3. Dixon’s five perils with church missions were: 1. They foster an interest apart from the mother church. 2. They become so independent as to cease to be part of the mother church. 3. They result in loss of *esprit de corps* which comes in the membership of a great organization. 4. They may become critical towards the mother church and regard those who do not work as mere idlers. 5. They may fall into the error of thinking that the mother church is a mere feeder of missions. See “The Church Mission Problem,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 2 (1913): 53. Metropolitan Tabernacle Elders Minutes, 1912-25, Metropolitan Tabernacle; Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons Minutes, 1914-1921, Metropolitan Tabernacle; William Olney to A. C. Dixon, 19 February 1915, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 10; Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1908-1917, Metropolitan Tabernacle.

faith in Jesus. Dixon warned against believing that salvation can be reached outside of Christ: “Now soldiers you do not believe that, do you? It is not right or fair to those noble young men who are going to the front to intimate that they may be saved simply by being soldiers and dying in battle. The Lord Jesus Christ is the door. . . . There must be the individual, personal entrance through that door if we are to go into safety and salvation.”⁸³

As the men left London the church shifted focused to ministering to the families with men away. A common sentiment in the *Sword and Trowel* was that the best way to help the soldiers at the front and prepare for their return after victory was to win to Christ their families and friends at home. Dixon put the church’s evangelism on a wartime footing. During the first few months of the war Dixon asked each church member to covenant with him to “endeavor every week during 1915 to win at least one soul to Christ.” Dixon had requested a similar commitment at previous churches. The war effort however intensified the urgency of evangelism. Dixon implemented a “Trench Campaign” in which he encouraged church members to reach those in the community who do not go to church and are “entrenched in their homes, shops, and factories.” Dixon urged that the only way to reach them was to enter their trenches and induce them to surrender to Jesus Christ. Workers were encouraged to visit house to house and inquire about their soul and Jesus Christ. Dixon commented that this was just the time for evangelism, saying “this awful war is convincing even the atheists that there

⁸³For more on the First World War, see John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Vintage, 2000); for London and Zeppelins particularly, see Arthur Whitehouse, *The Zeppelin Fighters* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), and Kenneth Poolman, *Zeppelins against London* (New York: The John Day Company, 1960). For the Tabernacle during the war, see “Our Field Glass,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1914): 1-6; “Our Field Glass,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1915): 167-70; Amzi Clarence Dixon, “I Am the Door,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 24, folder 4.

is a God, and the atmosphere of sacrifice in the homes from which the soldiers have gone has prepared their loved ones to listen to the story of the great sacrifice for them on Calvary.”⁸⁴

During the war Dixon exercised leadership among England’s evangelicals. On Good Friday 1915, Dixon accepted the presidency of the London Christian Endeavour Federation. He held this position for one year and spent much time engaging in evangelistic work among young people. He traveled all over town addressing Christian Endeavour groups and leading many to decisions for Christ. Dixon carried this ministry on amid darkened streets, air raids, and the uncertainties of war. Dixon was not deterred and carried on this ministry on most Tuesday nights throughout the winter. At the same time Dixon was also the president of the London Baptist Association. Dixon often gave Monday through Thursday afternoons each week to personal visitation of the churches in various districts of town.⁸⁵

Though the air raids spread fear, it also brought a unique opportunity for ministry. The London City Council said the Metropolitan Tabernacle was a comparatively safe place to seek refuge during an air raid. When the warnings sounded in the city, the church lecture room would often fill with people. Many times Dixon read and explained Psalm 46, reminding the hearers that God is a refuge in time of trouble. Sometimes they came several nights in a row, and might remain until two

⁸⁴“Our Field Glass,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1915): 131-36; “Our Field Glass,” *Sword and Trowel* 51 (1916): 417-23; “Our Field Glass,” *Sword and Trowel* 52 (1917): 33-40; “Our Field Glass,” *Sword and Trowel* 52 (1917): 129-32; “Thy Will Be Done,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 6.

⁸⁵For Dixon in London Baptist Association, see Rev. B. Reeve to F. S. Turney, 20 November 1925, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 4; “London C. E. Federation,” *Sword and Trowel* 51 (1916): 197-98; “Thy Will Be Done,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 6; “The LBA Campaign,” *Sword and Trowel* 51 (1916): 143.

o'clock in the morning. One crowd was estimated at 1,500 people. Dixon guessed that he was able to preach the forty-sixth Psalm fifty times in those circumstances and that this was blessed with hundreds of conversions. Dixon reported on these meetings: "People who have not been inside a house of worship for ten years will listen without flinching to a sermon an hour long, and after a song or two you may give them another hour, if strength permits, without losing one individual from your audience. Even after 'all clear' was sounded many still remained an hour or more longer." Dixon said it was the shelter the community received during the air raids that months later made the local residents more welcoming to the Tabernacle's evangelistic workers. He believed this was a direct answer to prayer, as the church had been praying for years to reach the people around the Tabernacle.⁸⁶

With the end of the war in November 1918, Dixon began to think again of returning to America. In a letter to a friend written in December 1918, Dixon responded to a suggestion that he return to minister in Boston. Dixon said he would like to do so "but it looks as if the pillar of cloud still lingers over London. . . . Yet I must confess that my heart is to a large extent in America."⁸⁷ On January 1, 1919 Dixon wrote to Charles Alexander proposing that Alexander come to London for the purpose of holding evangelistic campaigns. Dixon said "the thought of it thrills me for I believe it would mean a campaign of soul-winning in Great Britain such as has not been seen for years."

⁸⁶"Victory," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 4; "Pastor's Annual Address," *Sword and Trowel* 53 (1918): 113-16; "Air Raid Memories," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 4; Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons Minutes, 1914-1921, Metropolitan Tabernacle; Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1917-1933, Metropolitan Tabernacle; "Unique Times at the Metropolitan Tabernacle," *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 12 October 1917, p. 617.

⁸⁷A. C. Dixon to G. O. Manning, 20 December 1918, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 5.

Four days later however Dixon changed his mind about remaining in England and submitted his resignation to Metropolitan Tabernacle. His letter explained:

Time has come when I ought to respond to the urgent appeals from America and return. . . . I have felt that I could not leave the Metropolitan Tabernacle during the testing times of this terrible war. Now that peace with victory has come, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle is in a good spiritual condition, I am certain that God would have me enter this door of opportunity. . . . I, therefore, resign the pastorate of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Church to take effect April 1, 1919. . . . While I remain the pastor during the coming three months I would like to win more people to Christ than during any other three months of my life.⁸⁸

The elders responded to the news of the resignation in a letter to Dixon conveying that “there was a feeling of deep regret and sorrow, unanimously expressed, and each speaker had kind things to say concerning yourself.”⁸⁹

Some church members and church leaders were dissatisfied with Dixon’s ministry. Church member Charles Noble, for example, thought Dixon held Arminian views and was therefore in violation of the church’s constitution, which specifically committed the church to Calvinist doctrine.⁹⁰

Dixon was no Charles Spurgeon. He differed both theologically and methodologically. Dixon’s ministry at the Tabernacle faced internal opposition on two occasions. The first occasion was in 1913 and was prompted by the publication of a pamphlet designed to embarrass Dixon. It was entitled “Was Not C. H. Spurgeon a Prophet?” The circular was an excerpt from Spurgeon’s autobiography in which he

⁸⁸A. C. Dixon to Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons, 5 January 1919, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 11.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰See Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1966), 209-49; Craig Skinner, *Spurgeon & Son: the Forgotten Story of Thomas Spurgeon and His Famous Father, Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1984), 251-252; “Pastors at the Tabernacle,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (2003): 4-7; “The Devil Is in the Detail!” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (2003): 8-10.

criticized churches that left their first love, failed to pray and win souls, and instead sought to build up the church through organs and choirs, or by some other outward attraction, in order to draw in a crowd. Dixon responded to this circular in an elder's meeting as a libel against himself and the church. He asked that each elder respond to the circular individually. A few apparently agreed with the pamphlet's insinuation and failed to speak against it. This led at least three elders to resign. While the elders were dealing with this issue, the deacons were addressing it as well. Their attention turned to a Mr. Cox, who was an elder, class leader, and clerk in the office. He was accused of participating in organized opposition against Dixon and admitted that he was not in accord with the pastor in regard to some of his methods and teachings. Mr. Cox was terminated from his employment as a clerk in the church office. The overall dissatisfaction in the church was traced to Cox's Bible class. This class was disbanded by the deacons and was not allowed to meet in any room of the church.⁹¹

The second disagreement concerned the resignation of the assistant pastor Thomas Llewellyn Edwards. His ministry at the Tabernacle predated Dixon's ministry. The two men disagreed over a number of issues. Edwards also differed with the church treasurer. Edwards offered his resignation, but the deacons did not act on it for some time. When they finally acted on it, Edwards objected. By this time he felt that his reputation would be blackened because of the differences he had with Dixon and the treasurer. He asked the church elders to be allowed to make his case before the church. The elders declined and urged Edwards to not do anything to cause strife in the church.

⁹¹Metropolitan Tabernacle Elders Minutes, 1912-25, Metropolitan Tabernacle; Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons Minutes, 1909-1913, Metropolitan Tabernacle.

The matter of Edwards's resignation was brought forward in a church meeting on January 22, 1918. Edwards was the chairman of the meeting. He declined a request to appoint someone else to chair the meeting due to his conflict of interest. Some wanted simply to read the resignation and the church leaders' response accepting the resignation and expressing regret at his departure. The meeting became heated however when certain members insisted on knowing the reason for the resignation. The church record of the meeting includes a confusing account of motions and votes and heated debate. Dixon was appalled by the proceedings. At the March 11, 1918 meeting of the church, Dixon presided over the disposition of the matter. Someone moved that the church accept Edwards's resignation. Sufficient opposition emerged that the church laid over the matter to another meeting. At that meeting on March 18, 1918, Dixon made his case against Edwards, Edwards responded, and the church took a vote in favor of the resignation. Charles Noble wrote an open letter in which he argued that some members wanted Dixon to resign rather than Edwards. Noble claimed that Dixon said that he would not resign, and that if Edwards's resignation was not accepted, Dixon would not give Edwards any work to do, so that he would just have to sit there. Noble accused Dixon of defying the will of the church.⁹²

The elders apparently were dissatisfied with Noble and Dixon's other opponents. After Dixon's resignation, the elders encouraged the "unsettled" members to

⁹²Metropolitan Tabernacle Elders Minutes, 1912-25, Metropolitan Tabernacle. Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons Minutes, 1914-1921, Metropolitan Tabernacle; Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1917-1933, Metropolitan Tabernacle. Dixon's determination to change church business meetings expressed by Mrs. Dixon to a friend in Mrs. A. C. Dixon to Miss E. W. MacGill, 30 January 1918, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 4; Charles Noble letter in Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 239-49.

“show a more Christlike spirit in all their actions.” The elders proposed that some leaders meet with the faction, and in particular with Charles Noble.⁹³

The elders’ action suggests that they believed that the internal opposition helped drive Dixon away. Perhaps it did. But it was a small faction by all appearances. Noble for example opposed to the abolition of pew rental. When the motion to abolish pew rental came to a vote in 1913 the church approved it overwhelmingly with over eight hundred voting in favor of the change, while just four people voted against it. In 1918 Noble opposed also the adoption of the *Baptist Church Hymnal* as the church’s hymnbook. When the church considered the matter, Noble moved that consideration be deferred until a later meeting. Only three members voted in favor of Noble’s motion and it failed. The church voted to adopt the *Baptist Church Hymnal* with all present voting in affirmation with the exception of three people.⁹⁴

Despite Dixon’s strenuous evangelistic efforts, church membership declined. During Dixon’s eight years’ pastorate 1,059 persons were received into membership, and 723 of them by baptism.⁹⁵ After Dixon’s arrival mid-year 1911, the number on the church roll on January 1, 1912 was 2,698, and just before his departure the membership as of January 1, 1919 was 2,606. Attendance in the Sunday School ministry saw a decline from 6,844 in 1912 to 5,934 in 1919.⁹⁶

⁹³Metropolitan Tabernacle Elders Minutes, 1912-25, Metropolitan Tabernacle.

⁹⁴The record of the church vote on pew rental was in Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1908-1917, Metropolitan Tabernacle; Skinner, *Spurgeon & Son*, 251-52. On the *Baptist Church Hymnal*, see Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1917-1933, Metropolitan Tabernacle.

⁹⁵“Some Tributes,” *Sword and Trowel* 54 (1919): 71.

⁹⁶Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1912-1919, Metropolitan Tabernacle.

**Biola, Ministry-at-Large, and University
Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland**

Dixon returned to the United States because he believed that God was indicating that he should apply himself to evangelistic work without the responsibility of a pastorate. He felt a duty to the Metropolitan Tabernacle and to London during the war, but with the passing of the war he felt free to resign and to return to America. He accepted an invitation to teach for three months each year at the fundamentalist Bible Institute of Los Angeles, leaving him the remaining nine months to pursue ministry at-large. Ministry at-large was a joy and challenge for Dixon. Evangelistic meetings filled his schedule and required extensive travel in the United States and abroad. In the United States he preached frequently at the Bible Conferences which were so popular at the time. In 1920 he conducted an extensive tour of American cities in conjunction with fundamentalist leader William B. Riley in order to preach at conferences designed to rally conservative Christians to join the recently organized World's Christian Fundamentals Association.⁹⁷

By 1921, Dixon was renewing ties with Baptists in Baltimore, Maryland. Joshua Levering, a prominent Southern Baptist philanthropist and denominational leader, sought Dixon's services as pastor of Baltimore's University Baptist Church. Dixon favored the idea with certain conditions. He needed assurance that the church had adopted a confession of faith in harmony with the fundamentals of the historic Baptist faith and without sympathy for rationalistic modernism, and that the church

⁹⁷Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons Minutes, 1914-1921, Metropolitan Tabernacle; "Dr. Dixon Resigns," *Christian Herald*, 6 February 1919, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 5; Helen C. A. Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching*, 243-45.

would seek to be soul-winning, welcoming rich and poor equally, having free seats, and aiming above all else to please God. In 1922, the church called Dixon as their pastor and he agreed to begin his ministry at the church October 15, 1922. When he accepted the call he delineated his expectations regarding his ministry at the church, including the expectation that all members should attend the mid-week prayer service and that he planned to preach at least once a month on Sunday evenings in some hall or theatre to reach those who did not attend church.⁹⁸

Before Dixon began his ministry at the University Baptist Church, he went to China to preach. While the trip brought many opportunities to strengthen the Christians and proclaim the gospel to the unconverted, it also was an occasion of great personal grief. His wife died as she accompanied him on his China tour. Molly Dixon had in recent years been in poor physical health. Molly's health had often prevented her from traveling with him. While traveling with him in China, her health deteriorated. On August 5 he wrote that "symptoms of meningitis have developed with complication of serious kidney trouble, and she is partially unconscious with intermittent breathing. It dawns upon me for the first time that she is going to leave me, and I have an almost irresistible desire and impulse to go with her for it seems well nigh impossible to bear the separation. But I turn to Jesus whom she trusteth and loveth so well and make a complete commitment of myself to Him. A great peace possesses my soul." The following day, Dixon had an engagement to preach to a large crowd and did not know what to do. He finally decided to go preach. He chose the subject "Why I am a

⁹⁸A. C. Dixon to George O. Manning[?], 16 July 1921, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 3; A. C. Dixon to Joshua Levering, 29 September 1921, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 3; A. C. Dixon to University Baptist Church, 1922, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 3.

Christian” so that he could preach the gospel his wife loved to the people of China. About this service Dixon recalled that “while I was preaching at 11:55 her Christlike spirit took its flight to God. Once during my sermon I had an almost overwhelming sense of her presence. My thoughts were so fixed upon her that I could hardly continue my sermon. I wonder if her delivered spirit came by the church on her way to glory and somehow impressed my mind with her presence. Was it the farewell kiss of her pure, precious soul?” When he learned after the service that his wife had died, Dixon said that his first thought was that “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” His grief deepened his dependence on Christ and his resolve to labor for him: “A great empty world. My heart is buried in China, but for the sake of Christ and my precious children I must be brave and keep on with my work. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who can take the place of everybody and everything He may take out of our lives.”⁹⁹

Upon his return to America, Dixon turned his attention to his plan for ministry at University Baptist Church. It was the familiar pattern: full of energy, ambition, and desire for the conversion of lost souls. He also continued to give much of his time and energy to Bible conferences and evangelistic efforts in various places. In Baltimore he evangelized in the downtown theatre and in open-air services. By 1923 some of his sermons were being broadcast on the radio.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Date book for 1922, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 10, folder 7.

¹⁰⁰“University Baptist Church Historical Sketch, 1917-1926,” in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 3. It is unclear how regularly Dixon’s sermons were broadcast. Dixon’s sermon on the radio was reported in “Today’s Radio Program,” *The Washington Post*, 2 September 1923, p. 8; A. C. Dixon to University Baptist Church, 11 September 1924, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 3.

In 1924 Dixon remarried. He married the former Helen Alexander, the widow of evangelistic gospel singer Charles Alexander. His own health was in decline. In the early months of 1925 Dixon was suffering much and under the constant care of a physician. He continued to battle on and preached his final sermon on Easter Sunday, April 12, 1925. On June 14, 1925, A. C. Dixon died.¹⁰¹

Dixon spent nearly his entire adult life in pastoral ministry and his life is best understood in this context. As a pastor he sought to lead his church to evangelize. He was always seeking ways to maximize his evangelistic reach, thus he continued to move to larger churches and larger cities in order to obtain the widest possible field of influence. Even then, he was not content to restrict his ministry to one congregation alone. He often sought lost souls outside the bounds of his local church. He desired to persuade Christians, not only in his church, but also outside of it, to spend themselves in the high calling of soul-winning. Dixon used all available means to promote soul-winning, and to challenge every hindrance to it, in order to save as many souls as possible.

Dixon was a fundamentalist pastor. Aspects of his life were dedicated to the defense of the faith, such as his involvement with *The Fundamentals* and his participation in the World's Christian Fundamentals Association. These activities did not define him, nor were they the main factor in where he ministered or how he

¹⁰¹“Baptist Pastor’s Marriage,” *The Times (London)*, 24 January 1924, p. 13, col. F; Alice Connor to J. Brown More, 19 March 1925, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 5; Helen C. A. Dixon to J. Brown More, 18 February 1925, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 5; “University Baptist Church Historical Sketch, 1917-1926,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 3; News of Dixon’s death was covered in many newspapers, including “Dr. A. C. Dixon: Great Preacher Laid at Rest,” *The Christian*, 18 June 1925, p. 4, and “Dr. A. C. Dixon,” *The Times (London)*, 16 June 1925, p. 11, col. C.

ministered once he got there. The salvation of souls was his highest ministerial priority. Dixon must be first understood as a pastor who positioned himself and lead his church to win the maximum number of souls to Christ.

CHAPTER 3

DIXON THE PASTOR

From his call into pastoral ministry in 1872 onward, Dixon desired to serve God as a pastor. He was a pastor-evangelist. His approach to pastoral ministry demonstrated his passion for the salvation of lost souls. He led church members to be evangelists in their community. His approach to ministry also demonstrated a reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit for the salvation of souls. He led his church to prioritize prayer as a vital part of church ministry.¹

Except for a few years, Dixon was a pastor for all of his adult life. During the few years outside pastoral ministry, he was either in seminary or an itinerant preacher. Dixon was a conservative Baptist pastor. Dixon insisted on two emphasized practices that characterized his pastoral ministry and involved him in conflict with his churches. The first was Dixon's insistence upon free seats. In several of the churches Dixon served, giving was done through the practice known as pew rental. In this system, the church member paid a certain amount on a regular basis for the pew in which he sat each week. This money was used for the regular expenses of the church, as well as evangelistic endeavors. In this way, the members had pews that they considered their own. Dixon strongly opposed this system of giving and insisted that each church

¹For more on the character of pastoral ministry, see E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams, eds., *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).

abandon the practice and adopt a system of giving not tied to the pew in which the person sat. For Dixon, the pew rental system gave preferential treatment to members, giving them the best seats, while relegating the guests to the inferior seats. Though this was part of his reason for disliking the pew rent system, the more important reason was the evangelistic implications. Dixon feared that guests who did not own a pew might not feel welcome and that poorer guests might be discouraged from attending due to inability to contribute to the expenses of the church through pew rent. Dixon believed that pew rental hindered evangelism.²

Dixon insisted also on evangelism. Dixon taught evangelism to be a Christian duty and exhorted each member of his church to engage in evangelism. Dixon argued that “the Lord Jesus, if he was anything, was a professional evangelist. He never accepted the care of an individual church. The Apostle Paul was a professional evangelist.” Such evangelists as Moody, Whitefield, and Wesley had changed the world. Dixon insisted that the evangelistic spirit should be the foundation of all church organizations. “The Board of Deacons ought to be organized for soul-winning, and let them do what else they can and ought. The Board of Trustees ought to be organized for soul-winning.” From the members of the sewing-circle to the sexton every Christian was an evangelist.³

²“Reasons for Free Seats,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (1913): 142; “Free Seats,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (1912): 33-34. For more on church finance and pew rental, see Kenneth Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind in the Old South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997); Mark Noll, *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). For church finance that focuses on Britain, see S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline: Organisation and Experience in Industrial Yorkshire, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³Amzi Clarence Dixon, “The New Evangelism,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 24, folder 1.

In order of importance evangelism came before free seats. All other aspects of how a church operates were examined under the lens of how it either helped or hindered the church's evangelism.

Dixon's emphasis on evangelism above all shaped his preaching. In preaching he particularly emphasized that man is a sinner and Christ is the Savior. Similarly, Dixon insisted on more and better prayer, preaching, and work to win souls for Christ. In order for a preacher to adequately pursue the end of pleasing God in pastoral ministry, the preacher must be delivered from the desire to please the people. Pleasing God first and pleasing the people were often times at odds. Dixon explained, "the ideal preacher—a prophet of God, not a leader of men at all, but simply taking the stroke from God, witnessing to Christ and growing from the primary things into the deep things of God by keeping in touch with His Word and with Himself and being delivered from the people."⁴

Preaching the Word: Doctrine and Delivery

Preaching was of course one of the most common activities in which Dixon engaged. A key part of effective preaching was being a thorough student of the scriptures. In this endeavor Dixon dedicated much effort. He spent an average of three hours each day in the study of the Bible and books about the Bible. The act of preaching was central to his ministry.⁵

⁴"What Pastors Are Doing," *Zion's Herald*, 5 November 1902, p. 1422; "Personal Ideal," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

⁵Near the end of his ministry Dixon claimed to have spent an average of three hours a day for forty-five years in the study of the Scriptures and books about them. See "The Fundamentals of Modernism," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 3.

God saved souls through the preaching of the Bible. But false doctrine didn't save. Consequently, the preacher's doctrine mattered. Dixon was not a theologian, but he had great concern for sound doctrine. He defended sound doctrine against its detractors. What follows is an explanation of some of the doctrinal convictions of A. C. Dixon.⁶

Doctrine of Scripture

Dixon believed in the authority of scripture and the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible. The only chapter Dixon contributed to *The Fundamentals* was on the scriptures. In the chapter, he described the Bible as "literature written by the command of God, under the guidance of God, and preserved by the providential care of God." Dixon believed that the words were God's words, while reflecting the character of the human writer. Dixon explained, "There are many writers, but one Author. These writers were not automatons. Each one shows his own style and personality which the Holy Spirit uses." Though the personality of the human author is present, the inspiration of the Bible extends even to the individual words. Dixon pointed to Paul's interpretation of Old Testament scriptures to prove the point. In Galatians 3:16 Paul argues that the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 13:15 was made to his seed (singular) rather than seeds (plural). Dixon argued that this proves that the very words of Scripture were inspired, right down to whether a word is singular or plural.⁷

⁶Evangelism, prayer, and endowment of the Holy Spirit for service will be handled in greater detail in chapters four and five. Dixon's defense of sound doctrine is the subject of chap. 6.

⁷Amzi Clarence Dixon, "The Scriptures," in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.), 5:72-80. For Dixon on the very words being inspired, see Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Milk and Meat: Twenty-four Sermons*. (New York: The Baker & Taylor Co., 1893), 185-86.

Dixon considered the truth and authority of the Bible to be essential to sound doctrine and the Christian ministry. He taught that Bible was completely free of error. Dixon opposed those who questioned the Bible's truth. Against those who claimed that the Bible merely contained the word of God, Dixon replied that this was not sufficient, for the Bible was the word of God.⁸

Dixon believed that an authoritative, inerrant Bible was necessary also to sustain missionary effort. Dixon explained, "There is no need to send missionaries [to China and Africa] to tell them that the Bible is inspired only as other books." Without an authoritative word, the distinctiveness of the gospel message quickly eroded and undermined missionary effort: "There is no need to train missionaries to go . . . and tell the people that the death of Christ makes no difference, for they believe that already if they believe anything at all."⁹

Doctrine of Christ

Dixon believed that Christ was the key to understanding the Bible. The prophets of the Old Testament wrote predictions about Jesus. Christ taught that these prophecies were to be understood in reference to Him. The Old Testament is full of types and symbols pointing forward to Christ. The work of Christ on the cross is the

⁸Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Scriptures and the Power of God* (London: Bible League, 1916); Dixon, *Milk and Meat*, 185-86; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Lights and Shadows of American Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898), 133-36; "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 5.

⁹"A Trustworthy Bible the Warrant of An Unquestioning Faith," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 5. For more on the doctrine of Scripture, see Stephen J. Nichols and Eric T. Brandt, *Ancient Word, Changing Worlds: The Doctrine of Scripture in a Modern Age* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009); Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 6 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999).

center of what God is doing in the world, and Christ is the fullest revelation of God.

Dixon taught that the Scriptures must be understood in view of the work of Christ:¹⁰

The fullest display of God ever made on his planet is not seen in his works, but in himself, as he makes atonement for sin, on the cross. . . . If we would see God himself we must go to Calvary.

And this manifestation of the God of love was not sudden. We see an intimation of it in the bloody altar of Abel. We see it more clearly expressed in the Passover lamb. Every piece of furniture in the tabernacle and Temple, from the brazen altar to the ark of the “holy of holies,” was suggestive of the great fact that God is love, in his provision for the cleansing, enlightening, and sustenance of his people. The prophecies which have their climax in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah portray the suffering Messiah, which is only another term for the love of God as expressed on the cross.

Nor does the Lamb of God pass out of sight with the resurrection and ascension of Christ. When the door heaven opens in the book of Revelation, we see on the throne the “Lamb as it has been slain,” and we hear the song of the redeemed, “Worthy is the Lamb.” The enthroned God of heaven, before whom saints and angels bow and worship, is a Lamb and not a lion.

The cross of Calvary has become the throne of heaven. . . . Christ as the Lamb of God is still the key to the Scriptures.¹¹

With such a strong view of Christ at the center of the Bible, it stands to reason that Dixon considered several doctrines related to Christ to be essential doctrine. Most important was Christ’s work of propitiation, which will be discussed below. Yet, necessary to a biblical doctrine of atonement were other basic affirmations about Christ, namely His deity, His virgin birth, and His literal return. All these affirmations were necessary for an orthodox doctrine of Christology and Dixon held them to be non-negotiable.¹²

¹⁰“Christ—Our Priest King,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 28, folder 5; “The Bible a Revelation,” *Christian Observer*, 19 September 1900, p. 4; “Christ and the Scriptures,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 4.

¹¹“How to See God,” *Christian Observer*, 20 January 1904, p. 4

¹²Amzi Clarence Dixon, “What is Fundamentalism,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5. For more on the doctrine of Christ, see Stephen J. Nichols, *Jesus Made in America: Cultural History from the Puritans to the Passion of the Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008); John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

Doctrine of Salvation

Dixon taught that Christ came to earth for a purpose: to die in order that man may live. This was rooted in his belief that all had sinned and deserved to be punished by God for sin. Because God is just, He always does what is right. Thus, it would be wrong for Him to forgive sin without punishment. God's justice must be satisfied in order for man to be forgiven. Dixon understood that this happened through a substitute. Jesus Christ was the substitute who bore the wrath of God in the place of sinners.¹³

Dixon taught that a sinner must be justified in order to be saved. In teaching the doctrine of justification, Dixon emphasized two imputations: the sins of the guilty imputed to Christ and the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer. He often called sinners to repentance by asking them to trust Jesus as their sin-bearer in order to picture the imputation of a sinner's iniquity to Christ.¹⁴

Dixon taught that Christ's death atoned for the original sin of every man. Thus, all men still are guilty before God for the sins they commit, but not for the guilt they inherited from Adam. He also taught that though the death of Christ was sufficient for the sins of all people, it was efficient only for the sins of those who repent and believe.¹⁵

¹³"The Birth of Jesus," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 4; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Glories of the Cross* (New York: George H. Doran Co., n.d.), 11-22, 143-52; "The Ethics of Prayer," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 15, folder 1; Amzi Clarence Dixon, "What Is Fundamentalism," (sermon delivered at University Baptist Church on 5 January 1924), Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5.

¹⁴"Justification without Works," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 29A; "The Glories of the Cross," (bulletin from University Baptist Church, 1 April 1923), Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5.

¹⁵Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Heaven on Earth* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897), 70-79; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Bright Side of Life* (Greenville, SC: S. W. Partridge and Co., n.d.), 39-47; Dixon, *The Glories of the Cross*, 67-76. For more on the doctrine of salvation, see John Murray,

Doctrine of Repentance

When Dixon spoke of repentance, he was calling men to cease sinning. Dixon often explained that repentance was taking God's side against sin. By nature man took the side of sin against God. When a man came to see his sin as a punishable offense against God, he had to switch sides and take God's side against sin.¹⁶

Repentance did not merely result in an outward change, but a change within. The Spirit of God entered into the heart of the repentant sinner and transformed him, making him hate sin and love that which is good. The Holy Spirit "harmonizes our will to the purpose of God." Those that are truly saved are those who have turned from their sin for the sake of Christ. Dixon urged his hearers to repent by turning from the things that God hates.¹⁷

Most importantly, the sinner must be called to repent of self-reliance. Dixon taught that no one was saved by good works. Teaching from Hebrews 6:1, Dixon urged his hearers to repent from dead works. Dixon taught that "a dead work is a work upon the merit of which one depends for salvation apart from Jesus Christ." Thus, when Dixon called men to repent, he called them not to personal reformation and reliance, but

Redemption Accomplished and Applied (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955); Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007).

¹⁶Dixon, *The Glories of the Cross*, 119-30; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Through Night to Morning* (London: Robert Scott, 1913), 52-64; "What Must I Do To Be Saved," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 4.

¹⁷"The Glories of the Cross" (bulletin from University Baptist Church, 1 April 1923), Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5; Amzi Clarence Dixon, "The Mission of the Christian," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 26, folder 6.

to a rejection of all self-reliance. He was calling men to trust only in Jesus Christ's shed blood for their salvation.¹⁸

Doctrines of Sovereignty and Responsibility

Dixon's emphasis on winning souls led him to speak about the tension between sovereignty and responsibility in the Scriptures. Charles Spurgeon, an outspoken Calvinist, was one of his lifetime heroes and he was glad to affirm the sovereignty of God. Dixon tended however to emphasize the responsibility of man more often than God's sovereignty.

Dixon affirmed the doctrine of election, but he could not reconcile it well with responsibility. "From the depths of my soul I believe in the Pauline doctrine of election . . . I do not deny that you belong to God's elect from all eternity." Election did not interfere with the call for all to come to salvation. "Reconcile the two, do you say? Well, that is not my business." The idea of election made him uneasy nevertheless. In his explanations of election, he therefore tended to emphasize human responsibility. He sympathized with Spurgeon's Calvinism and he affirmed limited atonement: "There is a sense, and a very precious sense, in which Christ died for the elect, for His own people." Dixon explained that the atonement of Christ was sufficient for all to be saved, if all would repent and believe. The gift of salvation was efficient only for those who accepted it. Dixon illustrated this idea in sermons, explaining that there was enough

¹⁸Amzi Clarence Dixon, "Foundation Principles of Christian Life," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 28, folder 3. For more on the doctrine of repentance, see Thomas Watson, *Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988).

bread in the bakery and enough water in the reservoir, while one must accept the provision for it to do any good.¹⁹

Dixon taught that only God could save a sinner. God has His part that only He can do for a man to be saved. Yet, the work of God in salvation stops short of effecting salvation. That is to say, man has the final say in salvation. If a man is not saved, we are to conclude that “God is justified, for He has done all that infinite love and power could do for a free moral agent to save and bring them to heaven.” Dixon taught the decisive role was that of man who must open his heart to God. “The latch and the key are on the inside. . . . Even God himself will not break down the door, we must lift the latch of our will, and let him in, if we would have him to occupy our heart house.” God cannot save a man against his will. God can only seek to persuade by appealing to his reason, love, gratitude, interest, fear, hope of reward and so on, but will not go beyond these means. The freedom of man did not override the sovereignty of God, but sovereignty seemed to suffer some debility in Dixon’s treatment.²⁰

Human inaction prevented God from doing great things. Speaking at Moody’s memorial service, Dixon explained that God worked through Moody because of his belief. “He enabled God—I speak it reverently. Omnipotence stood helpless because of unbelief; but God worked through Moody because he believed.” Dixon went on to describe a great steam engine, full of power, but unable to do anything because it

¹⁹Amzi Clarence Dixon, “How Peter Escaped,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 3; Dixon, *The Glories of the Cross*, 67-76.

²⁰“The Bright Side of Death,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 4; Dixon, *Lights and Shadows of American Life*, 166; “Jesus the Savior,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 7.

had a broken bolt, rendering it impotent. Yet, Moody was the difference. Moody's faith was the bolt that enabled God to do great things.²¹

Dixon believed that he was a good Calvinist—the right kind of Calvinist—like his hero Charles Spurgeon. Dixon often asserted that Spurgeon was much like him: Spurgeon was a Calvinist and an Arminian too. After declaring that Spurgeon “was every inch of him a Calvinist,” he concluded, “the fact is Spurgeon was a Calvinist and an Arminian too. He was a Calvinist in prayer and an Arminian usually when he came before his congregation on Sunday morning.” Dixon believed that Spurgeon was just the right kind of Calvinist, but knew of another kind that should be avoided. This type accepts the decrees of God for salvation, while refusing to obey the commands of God. Dixon called this type “the hardest, ugliest, most repulsive people” he had ever met.²²

The Preaching of Dixon

Though he often focused on the importance on the authority of the Bible and sound doctrine, Dixon's sermons were not highly doctrinal. Dixon preached for about forty minutes on average.²³ He focused on a simple message that could be understood

²¹J. Wilbur Chapman, *The Life and Work of Dwight L. Moody* (Toronto: Bradley-Garretson Company, 1900), 456-84; Dixon, *The Bright Side of Life*, 214-21.

²²“What the World Owes to Presbyterians,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 26, folder 1; “Our Field Glass,” *Sword and Trowel* 54 (1919): 67. The last article appeared after his resignation, just before his return to America. It may be that Dixon was taking a parting shot at some he had encountered in London that fit the description of an angry Calvinist. This type of Calvinism made persons “become selfish, critical, caustic, and bitter toward all with whom [they] disagree.” For more on sovereignty and responsibility, see Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will, Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957); J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

²³For the length of Dixon's sermons, see Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3 and “Sunday at the Tabernacle,” *The Christian World*, 21 June 1911, p. 11. The sermon manuscripts may not be manuscripts strictly speaking. The sermons are written out in paragraph form, thus are not merely sermon outlines. The manuscripts are typically not very long and could be read in less than twenty minutes. Yet, while he was in London Dixon was reported to preach sermons near forty minutes in

by all. As a pastor, he recognized his responsibility to feed the sheep, yet he was afraid this could be overdone. Dixon believed that he could feed the sheep to the extent that they became fat and useless for evangelism. Evangelism was the duty of all Christians, including the pastor. Dixon believed that “the primary mission of the pulpit was to win men to Christ.” Instead of ministry that focused primarily on building up the saints, Dixon said, “what we really need is to set our though[ts] about winning the world to Christ, and the edifying as opportunity may come.”²⁴

Dixon was a tall and trim man, standing 6 foot 4 inches tall. He was known to gesture, sometimes quite forcefully, as he preached. At times he leaned forward toward the crowd and shook his fist at those in the front row. Usually however he was pleasant in the pulpit. He did not impress audiences with the eloquence of his speech, but he somehow communicated sobriety and power. One listener explained that “half the force of the sermon lies in the personality of the man—his splendid presence, his finely-chiselled face, his graceful and free gestures and the ring of sincerity in his voice.” Typically Dixon was serious, with just a hint of humor. The humor was dry and came through the various stories which were a regular part of his preaching. In the pulpit he appeared comfortable and preached almost entirely without notes. Some found

length. One possible reason for the discrepancy is that he preached longer in London, since the congregation was used to longer sermons by Spurgeon. Some of the sermon manuscripts from London were longer, though not all of them were. Another possibility is that Dixon had a manuscript, yet diverted from the manuscript occasionally and spoke extemporaneously for a time before returning to the manuscript. The possibility of an incomplete manuscript is even more reasonable, when one considers that Dixon was known to speak with very little use of notes. If diversion from the written sermon was the norm, it would account for the discrepancy in length. It would also make evaluating his sermons more difficult. If, for instance, Dixon had the gospel so clear in his mind that he did not bother putting it into the sermon manuscript, one would have trouble faulting Dixon for little gospel in the manuscript if Dixon always put it extemporaneously into the sermon itself.

²⁴Amzi Clarence Dixon, “The New Evangelism,” (sermon preached at Park Street Church, Boston on January 13, 1902), Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 24, folder 1.

Dixon to be a very gifted preacher with a style that was most captivating. One listener recorded,

Dr. Dixon is one of those men who have an irresistible fascination for their hearers. You are, without knowing it, drawn towards the man, you listen, quite casually at first, then your interest grows, and you strain your ears so as to catch every word that falls from his lips. There is much that is charming about Dr. Dixon; at times he is grave, at others times he is gay. At one moment his voice is full of pathos, at the next there is a merry twinkle in his eye and he is humorous.

He did not seek to impress with his intellect, aiming rather to be understood even by children in the audience. His style seems to be one he developed on his own, yet some detected the influence of another. One listener reported detecting the influence of D. L. Moody in his method of preaching and use of quaint sayings. Many listeners however found the prayers more remarkable than the sermons they accompanied. Dixon prayed with a sense of seriousness and dependence upon God.²⁵

Active Pastor: Dixon Always on the Move

Dixon was not content to confine all his energy to his church alone. His heart to see the lost saved led him out of the church and into the community. Sometimes this took the form of evangelism in public places. Other times it took the form of meeting with pastors to encourage them, preach special services, or organize group evangelistic

²⁵For insights to Dixon's preaching style, see "Dr. Dixon Among the Miners," *The Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times*, 11 April 1912, p. 338, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 6; "Schwab Wins Race to Board Majestic," *New York Times*, 13 January 1924, p. 21; "Sunday at the Tabernacle," *The Christian World*, 21 June 1911, p. 11; "Sunday Morning at the Tabernacle," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2; "Pen Picture of Dr. Dixon," *South London Press*, 21 June 1912, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3; "Personal Impressions of Well-Known Preachers," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 5; "Says Christians Must Not Dance," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 January 1907, p. 4; "Dr. Dixon's Sermon," *The Christian World*, 3 October 1912, p. 4. For the perceived influence of Moody on Dixon's preaching, see "Dry Bones Shaken," *Boston Globe*, 9 February 1897, p. 6.

efforts. Throughout his ministry he asked his church to allow him the freedom to minister elsewhere as the need arose.²⁶

Dixon was interested in ministry outside his church even during his earliest pastorates. He held special services for evangelistic purposes beginning with his first churches in North Carolina. At Immanuel Baptist in Baltimore in the 1880s, Dixon traveled around the country districts of Maryland, strengthening the weak congregations there and preaching the gospel.²⁷

Dixon continued his practice of ministry outside the church while at Hanson Place Baptist Church in Brooklyn. This church is the only church that left evidence that it objected to Dixon's sometimes extensive time on ministry outside the church.²⁸ In Brooklyn, Dixon engaged in evangelistic work in theatres and other public houses. One member recorded that he considered Dixon more of an evangelist than a regular minister. The criticism did not deter Dixon. He carried on just the same, obviously enjoying his freedom to minister outside the walls of his church. In an article in the *New York Observer* Dixon explained that the greatest need in greater New York at that time was an evangelistic hall where services could be held year-round. As Dixon explained how such services should be conducted, he remarked that "the pastors of city churches are not all so fortunate as I am. My people require only one sermon a Sunday from me and relieve me of all pastoral work, leaving me free to preach every day in and about

²⁶Dixon's effort in organizing evangelistic outreach will be handled in chap. 4.

²⁷"Mr. Alfred Bagby," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 4.

²⁸Dixon said he only had one church object in his entire ministry, see A. C. Dixon to Brother Edmonds, 20 January 1925, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 5. Yet, he is writing it because it appears the church at that time, University Baptist Church, also had its concerns about Dixon's time away. This would then make two churches complaining about Dixon's absence.

New York.” This statement must have caught the attention of some church members, who may not have been aware of their generosity. Two weeks later the same paper reported on evangelistic activity in the city and reported that “Dr. Dixon says that he must this year give his services on Sunday nights to his church, which so generously waived its right to his pastoral ministrations during last winter.” Years later Dixon admitted that his ministry outside the church was a point of contention in Brooklyn: “I did more work outside of the Hanson Place Baptist Church than in it. That was their complaint about me. That is what they roasted me for in the official board and others in a kindly spirit, but the Lord led.” Dixon worked extensively outside the church and was not concerned that some in the church opposed it.²⁹

Dixon came to Ruggles Street in Boston with the understanding that he would be away six months out of the year. This allowed him to minister significantly outside of the church and even outside of the city of Boston itself. Even when in the church he kept a busy outside schedule. On one occasion he announced that he was involved in his ninth service of the day, thus was “feeling a trifle voice weary.”³⁰ He kept a busy schedule while in Chicago, yet was mindful of the church’s need of his services. In preparation for one soul-winning emphasis Dixon urged the church members to get behind him in the effort, announcing “I have refused all outside engagements that I may

²⁹“Slocum Manuscript,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7; Amzi Clarence Dixon, “Past, Present, and Future,” (sermon preached at the Moody Church on 3 October 1908), Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; “Wants an Auditorium in New York,” *New York Observer*, 9 September 1897, p. 335; “New York and Brooklyn,” *New York Observer*, 23 September 1897, p. 399.

³⁰“Notes on Ruggles,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; “Dixon Souvenir Number,” *Moody Church Herald* 10, no. 6 (June 1911); “The World for Christ,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10.

work with you every day in seeking and saving the lost. Will you not join me in this holy work?"³¹

While at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Dixon continued to exert much effort in reaching the lost through the direct ministry of the church and through other organizations. For a time while he was in London, he spent Monday through Thursday each week in personal visitation of the churches as part of his role as President of the London Baptist Association. His participation in work outside the church is seen in his estimation that he had preached just over one sermon per day on average for the entirety of his ministry.³²

Dixon's final pastorate, at University Baptist in Baltimore, was also characterized by extensive ministry outside the church. He accepted the call to the church indicating that his goal in Baltimore was to have an evangelistic service at least once a month on a Sunday evening in some public hall or theater. The church eventually expressed some concern over Dixon's extensive outside work. Dixon responded in a letter to a church member about these concerns explaining that he took the concerns under consideration and planned to cut back his schedule. Dixon wrote, "I am, therefore, trying to arrange my engagements in England as to be away only three months next summer and in the future I shall reduce it to two. In all my pastorates during the last 35 or 40 years, I have not been in my pulpit, with the exception of one year, more than nine months out of twelve. I rather think that if I could strike an

³¹*Moody Church Herald* (November 1909) in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3.

³²"The LBA Campaign," *Sword and Trowel* 51 (1916): 143; "Thy Will Be Done," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 6; "A Powerful Preacher of the Gospel," *The Life of Faith*, 11 January 1911, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2.

average, it would be about four or five months absence every year. Only one church, so far as I remember, complained about it. The others seemed to feel that my preaching in different places during my absence was a help to the work at home.”³³

Active Ministry: Doors of the Church Always Open

Dixon’s idea of an active church was best exemplified in evangelistic zeal. Dixon thought that an apt description of the church’s ministry should be summed up in the word “strenuous.” Dixon’s church was described as a “beehive” of activity. This is how Dixon wanted it. In 1898, while pastor of Hanson Place Baptist Church, Dixon joined the Open Church Movement. This movement favored the church being open for religious work and worship every day in the year. The goal of such activity and openness was the winning of souls to Christ.³⁴

Dixon kept an aggressive ministry schedule at the churches he served. At Moody Church in Chicago they averaged seven meetings a day year round and “scarcely a day passes without conversions.” Some of the meetings were small, but Dixon insisted that all of them include prayer for God’s blessing upon the church and for the salvation of the lost. When Dixon moved to London he brought with him a plan for a full schedule of church activity. Besides the regular Sunday morning and evening services, the church had a Monday evening service for praise, prayer, and testimony; a

³³A. C. Dixon to University Baptist Church, 1922, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 3; A. C. Dixon to Brother Edmonds, 20 January 1925, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 5

³⁴“Dr. Dixon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,” *Life of Faith*, 21 June 1911, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 2; Dr. Dixon and the Flowing Tide at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,” in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 5; “Brooklyn,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 27 October 1898, p. 546.

Thursday evening service for the exposition of Scripture; and prayer every day at noon, Saturday evening, Sunday morning at ten o'clock, and Sunday evening at 6:45. These regular meetings open to all members were supplemented with other meetings for various groups within the church.³⁵

Throughout his ministry Dixon continued to stress the importance of a busy church calendar. The benefits were seen in the importance that such a schedule placed on prayer, as prayer for God's blessings on the church and the salvation of souls was a regularly scheduled daily event. This emphasized the dependence of the church on God for church health and progress. Additionally, a full schedule allowed opportunity for believers to be built up in the faith by the word of God. Bible teaching was central to the spiritual strengthening of Christians, and a regular course of it at the church left no excuse for inaccessibility of the preached word. But most important for Dixon was the accessibility of the church and its members to unbelievers who wanted to hear the good news. Dixon believed that if taverns and pubs were open each day to offer their services, then the same should be true of the church. Dixon complained that many churches were closed more than half the week, as if they had gone out of business. Dixon reasoned that "if factories, shops and offices were left idle so much of the time, proceedings in bankruptcy would be multiplied." Thus Dixon concluded that "every Church building in our great cities and larger towns should be used daily in some way

³⁵"Are Meetings Too Frequent," *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (1912): 34; "Annual Church Meeting," 22 February 1915, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3.

for Christ; and there should be in each one of them every evening a meeting, large or small, to which a sin-burdened soul may come and find salvation.”³⁶

Open Air Ministry

Public proclamation of the gospel was at the heart of Dixon’s active church. The gospel was proclaimed from the pulpit each week. Dixon also advocated regular open-air preaching. Dixon practiced open air preaching from his earliest days in the ministry, though early on the event normally included an improvised platform and people sitting on benches or standing under a shade tree. Such preaching always played a somewhat minor part of his overall evangelistic strategy. That all changed when Dixon traveled to London for the World’s Sunday School Convention in 1889. It was here that Dixon began to conceive of open air preaching on the city streets for the purpose of preaching the gospel to those who did not attend church. Following a Thursday night service at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Charles Spurgeon asked Dixon to go to the street and preach. In the street, Dixon observed an earnest speaker addressing a small group of listeners. Dixon noticed that people approached the street preacher in groups of two. He later learned that these couples were a Christian worker with someone she found to bring to the meeting. Dixon was impressed by this earnest and practical work for the salvation of the lost. On his way home from London he stopped in Liverpool and found a church that engaged in regular open-air preaching as well. Through this regular ministry a group gathered for singing and preaching. The

³⁶“Are Meetings Too Frequent,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (1912): 34; “How to Save Cities,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 16 August 1897, p. 2; “Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1908-1917,” Metropolitan Tabernacle; “Times of Refreshing at Metropolitan Tabernacle,” *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 18 October 1912, p. 755.

service lasted about three hours, consisting of seventy-five minutes of song followed by an hour and forty-five minutes of preaching. In that time over 1,200 people heard from five minutes to an hour of gospel. After the service Dixon learned from the rector that this was the most fruitful ministry of the church for the conversion of souls. In the church, only the children of church members confess faith in Christ, in the open air those who do not attend church are converted. Through a combination of seeing Spurgeon's church engage in open air ministry and the testimony of fruit from the regular practice of open air work in Liverpool, Dixon returned to Baltimore ready to have open air preaching as part of the regular ministry of his church.³⁷

Dixon's support for and participation in open air preaching was consistent from 1889 onward. The ministry was a regular part of the church's evangelistic strategy. Dixon encouraged members to pray for the church's open air ministry. Open air work was a church ministry, therefore those out of fellowship with the church were prohibited from participating in open air ministry. Also, the open air ministry was not to conflict with the regular services of the church. Dixon reminded the workers that all open air work must conclude in time for the workers to participate in the Sunday evening service.³⁸

³⁷"My First Experience in Open-Air Preaching," *Christian Observer*, 25 July 1900, p. 4.

³⁸In 1910, the Executive Committee of Moody Church minutes records the motion that the open air committee notify Mr. Young that as long as he is out of fellowship with this executive committee he is requested not to cooperate with the open air work of this church. See "Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1910)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College. For more on Dixon's support of open air work, see "What the World Owes to Congregationalists," *Moody Church Herald*, vol. 8. no. 6, 1 June 1909; "Times of Refreshing at Metropolitan Tabernacle," *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 18 October 1912, p. 755; Amzi Clarence Dixon, "The Motive of the Cross," (a sermon on Romans 5:8), *Moody Church Herald* 10, no.5 (May 1911); "Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1907)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College.

Open air work was an ongoing ministry of the church and was a major part of its overall evangelistic strategy. In the summer of 1908, Moody Church conducted a sixty-day open air campaign, averaging thirty services per week. At other times, the ministry went on less as a campaign and more as a regular ministry of the church. Moody Church had an open air committee in the church. This committee oversaw the ministry and saw to the continuation of the ministry. The committee produced leaflets for distribution that contained hymns for singing and select texts of Scripture. The committee also secured other supplies for the ministry, such as hymnbooks for singing during the open air meeting.³⁹

Dixon's support for open air ministry was not limited to his own church. He became an advocate for this ministry to other local ministers. While speaking to a local Methodist ministers' meeting Dixon argued for the practice of open air preaching, saying "Many New-York ministers are just forty feet from success. They should go out on the sidewalk and preach to the people." In Boston, Dixon made a similar appeal to Christians of various denominations that they engage in open air ministry. Dixon taught that "in open-air work the people must be taken by surprise. There must be preaching in the streets and on the sidewalks." The work should be carried out with gospel preachers along with gospel singers to attract a crowd in order to gain the interest of those who never go to church. In London, Dixon practiced open air ministry at Metropolitan Tabernacle, while encouraging believers outside his church to continue its practice. While editing the *Sword and Trowel*, Dixon included a brief word of encouragement

³⁹"Special Business Meeting of the Chicago Avenue Church on Oct 21, 1908," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, box 31, folder 8; "Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1907)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

from the ministry of C. H. Spurgeon directed at those who engage in street preaching. In the story, Spurgeon recounted an instance of a woman's conversion after listening to only a few minutes of the street preacher's sermon. Dixon highlighted Spurgeon's word of encouragement to street preachers:

What cannot the Holy Spirit accomplish even by a few words heard in the street? One soul can be won, and that soul may win another, and so the light may be passed on for many a mile and for many a year. Do not think that when you preach at the street corners, you will at once see the harvest of your seed sowing, although the Lord may survey for you. If you see no immediate results, your labor may, nevertheless, have been owned of God. Street hearers perhaps live far away from the preacher's residence, and they may have no idea of who it is or where he resides, and so they may obtain eternal benefit and yet not speak with the man who is their spiritual father till they meet him in heaven.

Dixon's continued inclusion of open air preaching in the normal ministry of the church highlights his emphasis on the centrality of winning lost souls for Christ.⁴⁰

Active Members: The Members Do Their Share

Dixon's expectations for church members were consistently high. He expected to have their support in attendance, but also in many other areas. Most importantly, he encouraged the members to support the work of the ministry through evangelism. When Dixon was in Chicago, he regularly encouraged members to engage in evangelistic activity, not only from the pulpit, but in letters sent to church members as well. In a two-page letter sent to the members of the Moody church, Dixon spent the first page encouraging the people to support the church through regular financial giving. The second page reminded the members of the church motto text for the following year:

⁴⁰“Forty Feet from Success” *New York Times*, 7 May 1895, p. 7; “How to Save Cities,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 16 August 1897, p. 2; “Encouragement to Street Preachers,” *Sword and Trowel* 51 (1916): 326.

1 Corinthians 3:9, “We are laborers together with God.” In the spirit of this text Dixon made the following six requests:

1. That you pray daily for the salvation of some one or more, 2. That you give at least fifteen minutes a day to the reading of God’s Word, 3. That you endeavor to lead at least one soul to Christ each week, 4. That you adopt the biblical method of giving, 5. That you attend our mid-week Rally on Wednesday evening, 6. That you take the few houses we shall assign you for your special over-sight and do all you can to help the people who live in them to become careful Christians.

Of the requests in the letters of this type, the most frequently repeated requests from Dixon to church members were about prayer and evangelism.⁴¹

Dixon began his ministry at Metropolitan Tabernacle with a similar emphasis. The Tabernacle Church welcomed Dixon to England with a recognition service and a grand service featuring Lord Kinniard, who extended a public welcome to Dixon on behalf of the London Churches. Thomas Spurgeon welcomed Dixon with gratitude that his friend and his father’s friend should occupy the position of pastor of such a great church. Dixon addressed the church members, explaining “My ambition is to have a Church in which every man, woman and child is at work, and at work for God. . . . Why should not every Christian Church double itself once a year?” Dixon, expected that each Christian to actively take part in reaching the lost for Jesus Christ and made regular exhortations for evangelism from the pulpit.⁴²

Dixon accepted the call to University Baptist Church, Baltimore, with a letter in which he challenged the church members to activity. He made clear that he believed in the power of prayer and expected every member to attend the church’s weeknight

⁴¹A. C. Dixon to Moody Church, 19 December 1907, in Scrapbook 1907-1911, Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁴²“Dr. A. C. Dixon’s Recognition Service,” *Sword and Trowel* 47 (1911): 598-600.

meeting for prayer. He also urged each family to gather daily, if possible, or at least weekly for family Bible reading and prayer. In this, he expected the church to reach out into its community and beyond in the spread of the gospel. This work necessarily involved the activity of all the members.⁴³

Calls to involvement in the ministry of the church were not limited to the first weeks of Dixon's pastorate, but were part of the regular diet of exhortations from the pastor. One of the most frequent exhortations was either from the pulpit or in a letter to all church members to endeavor to win at least one soul each week. Often, the commitment was higher: endeavor to win at least one soul each day. Sometimes the call for commitment was public. On the first Sunday of 1909, Dixon requested a "soul winning" covenant of his church members. He asked that they pledge to endeavor to win one or more persons to Christ per month for each month of 1909. Over six hundred members publicly arose to their feet to make the pledge. Dixon provided advice as to how best pursue regular soul winning, suggesting that members keep a prayer list in order to pray for people by name and invite them to church.⁴⁴

In his annual church address to the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1916, Dixon encouraged the daily seeking of the winning of souls, suggesting that "all at it all the

⁴³A. C. Dixon to University Baptist Church, 1922, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 3.

⁴⁴"Annual Church Meeting," 22 February 1915, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3; "What the World Owed to the Methodists," *Moody Church Herald*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1 April 1909; "Dixon Souvenir Number," *Moody Church Herald* 10, no.6 (June 1911); "How to Retain Converts in the Church," in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 6; "Is It Right to Covenant," *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1915): 134; A. C. Dixon to University Baptist Church, 17 August 1924, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 5; *Moody Church Herald*, 15 August 1906, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; "Note from Dixon to Select Church Members," 10 January 1908, in Scrapbook 1907-1911, Records of the Moody Church. Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

time” is a good motto for every church. The conversion of souls became the special focus of one group within the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Here the Fraternity of Philip and Andrew met regularly having agreed upon two duties: the rule of prayer, being, “I will pray daily for the salvation of some man or men,” and the rule of service, being “I will endeavor at least once a week to win some man or men to Christ.” The *Sword and Trowel* reported an influx of Andrews and Philips in March 1912. While encouraging each to do their part, Dixon also warned of the dangers of failing to evangelize. He urged each Christian to have an evangelistic conscience that realized it was a sin to not win souls to Christ. Each Christian had the duty to cultivate an evangelistic habit. To not evangelize was to be asleep and though it was not the same thing as being dead, there was but a very slight difference in appearance between sleep and death.⁴⁵

Members were also expected to attend the special weekday services of the church held at regular intervals throughout the year. These special services were sometimes for evangelistic purposes and other times for the spiritual growth of believers. Dixon expected all members to attend if they were able. He also expected them to pray, whether in attendance or not, and to invite someone else to attend.⁴⁶

Prayer for revival was a regular point of emphasis for Dixon. He asked church members to be in prayer for revival. He organized prayer circles for revival

⁴⁵“Annual Church Meeting Monday,” 21 February 1916, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3; “Mid-Winter Bible and Evangelistic Conference,” *Sword and Trowel* 48 (1912): 62; Dixon, *The Glories of the Cross*, 209-18; “Cultivating the Evangelistic Habit,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 1.

⁴⁶“The Family Altar,” *Moody Church Herald*, November 1909, p. 174-83; “Notes from Dixon Ministry at Ruggles Street,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; “A Worshipper,” *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 13 January 1911, p. 20.

within the church, often before special evangelistic services in the church. Dixon believed that the success of such meetings depended on prayer.⁴⁷

In Chicago, Dixon encouraged involvement of church members through the distribution of cards to all members containing a diagram of the church. Each member was to mark where they planned regularly to sit. Then they were to indicate which service they could be counted on attending, whether morning, evening, or both. Finally, each member was asked to welcome those around them, especially the strangers, and secure the name and address of anyone near who asked for prayer or stood to confess Christ, and help in any way possible for them to accept Christ.⁴⁸

Church members were encouraged to engage in house to house ministry. Members were asked to canvass an area, to ask if any were church members, if any attended church, and what children attended Sunday School. Willing members were assigned clusters of houses for which they were to pray. Additionally, members were to visit the houses, distribute literature, and talk with the people if they could. Dixon explained that “prayer without visiting is worth more than visiting without prayer.” In London, the house-to-house visitation brought new visitors into the church.⁴⁹

Not all visitation work was done by volunteer church members. In Chicago, Moody church had a number of paid, part-time church visitors. These visitors received

⁴⁷“Annual Church Meeting Monday,” 21 February 1916, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3; “Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1908-1917,” Metropolitan Tabernacle

⁴⁸A. C. Dixon to [Visitor], 26 October 1910, Records of the Moody Church. Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, box 1, folder 2.

⁴⁹“Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1906),” Records of the Moody Church. Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “House to House Evangelism,” *Sword and Trowel* 52 (1917): 2; “The Torrey Meetings,” *Moody Church Herald*, vol. 6, no. 12, 15 December 1907, p. 195; “Times of Refreshing at Metropolitan Tabernacle,” *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 18 October 1912, p. 755; “Evangelistic Mission,” *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 31 October 1913, p. 813.

financial remuneration for dedicating significant time to visiting on behalf of the church. One church visitor reported making 318 visits in just over three months. As the need arose, the church hired additional church visitors. Eventually, Dixon desired to have a man employed by the church to give all his time and strength to giving every man, woman, and child in the church definite soul-winning work to do. In this, Dixon understood that if the members, whether volunteer or paid, were to oversee designated parts of the community surrounding the Tabernacle, they needed a church staff member to oversee the work and to whom they could report the progress. It is not clear if Dixon got the man he desired while in Chicago, though it appears he may have tried to persuade Assistant Pastor Woolley to take a larger role in church visitation. Soon after suggesting a full-time visitation oversight position for the church, Dixon wrote Woolley about spending less time in the office and more time in visitation. Three months after this, Dixon was filling the pulpit in London and soon after accepted a call to Metropolitan Tabernacle. Dixon insisted that house-to-house visitation was an important priority for evangelistic outreach in the church.⁵⁰

Advertising: Newspaper, Tract, and Card Distribution

Dixon believed in the value of getting the church's message out to the public. In part, this could be achieved through promotion of the church through signage. When in Chicago, the church agreed to spend \$180 to erect an electric sign for the church. In

⁵⁰“Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1909),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1911),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; A. C. Dixon to E. Y. Wooley, 8 August 1910, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; Wooley to [Dixon?], 16 September 1910, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3.

London an electric sign was also proposed. It is unclear if either sign was ever put into use. The point is that Dixon was interested in using modern technology to gain the attention of the community by advertising the church's presence. By this means, Dixon hoped to attract more visitors. Moody church had a publicity committee that made many recommendations regarding achieving greater visibility in the community including erecting two bulletin boards to be placed on street corners near the church. Part of Dixon's plan for reaching his city involved making the church more visible to those who regularly passed by the church, but did not enter its doors.⁵¹

Dixon sought to reach the man in the street through the distribution of literature. The literature was most commonly a tract or simple card of invitation to an upcoming Sunday sermon at the church. The tracts often contained the gospel message along with a call to repent and believe. One tract entitled "Two Questions" begins with the question "what shall I do with Jesus?" The reader was asked to consider that this was the very question put to Pilate when Jesus stood before him. Yet, this is also the question every person must answer. The tract ended with a second question: "What will Jesus do with me, if I come to Him?" The answer given was that forgiveness of sins was granted to all who come to Jesus. The tract also contained an invitation to hear Dixon preach at Metropolitan Tabernacle. The tract was both evangelistic and an invitation to church.⁵²

⁵¹"Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1908)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; "Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1909)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁵²(Promotion cards), Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, box 57, folder 4; "Two Questions," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 4.

Other tracts were simple, made as a postcard or business card. These tracts often featured a verse of Scripture. Some literature was distributed to announce special services at specific venues in town. For one R. A. Torrey event in Chicago the church printed two thousand window cards for display in local businesses and shops. Additionally, 100,000 small tickets for general distribution were made. Invitation cards had other uses as well. One card served as an invitation to Sunday School. At Moody Church the card invited the recipient with the words, “Nearly 1,500 boys, girls and adults attend.” Other literature was simply an invitation to the regular services of the church. The cards announced the topic of the sermon for the following Sunday and indicated Dixon as the preacher.⁵³

Dixon believed that the distribution of invitation cards or tickets were an important and viable way of growing an audience. He preferred this method above other options, especially since this also meant a word of mouth invitation from a church member. Invitation card distribution was not to be limited to special occasions, but should be done by every member, every week. At times invitation cards were sent to the homes of church members with instructions to distribute and report the completion of the task to the church. One letter exhorted the member to complete the task by reminding them that the large number of cards were printed “at considerable expense,” thus the cards should be “faithfully and conscientiously placed in homes.” This

⁵³“Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1909),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, Scrapbook, 1907-1911.

dedication was necessary because “the money will be wholly wasted just so far as any cards are left undistributed.”⁵⁴

Another common technique for advertising and crowd gathering was the use of a parade. The parade consisted of church members marching through town accompanied by a band. Occasionally special banners were made to be carried in the parade. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported one parade to have attracted nearly 1,500 people. As the parade proceeded through town, everyone along the route was invited to join the procession. The parade commonly lingered in front of businesses and saloons as church members broke off and invited customers and saloon patrons to join the procession either through word of mouth invitation or by ticket distribution. The parades generally preceded a service at the church. Thus, the parade ended where the preaching of the gospel could be heard. Occasionally, the parade commenced after a church service, the parade having circled around town, it concluded with another service at the church. Articles in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* indicate some concern with the unusual methods used by Dixon, most notably, the use of a parade. Dixon was quoted in the paper to answer that “while our methods may be criticized, we feel that it is our duty to do what is necessary to bring results.” He further added that though the method was new in Chicago, religious parades had been around for some time. Dixon explained that “the plan was originated in England several years ago by Gypsy Smith, who is perhaps the greatest of the evangelists since Moody died, and the Welsh revival was carried on

⁵⁴Other acceptable ways to grow a crowd were to make the service attractive or advertise sensational subjects, but the invitations by word of mouth were to be preferred. See “Babel Builders,” *Moody Church Herald*, vol. 8, no. 8, 1 August 1909, pp. 120-21; also see, A. C. Dixon and Wooley to Moody Church, 10 October 1908, Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, Scrapbook, 1907-1911.

very largely by this method.” Dixon used this method in Boston, Chicago, and London.⁵⁵

Dixon’s reputation for advertising preceded him when he went to London. Upon his arrival to assume the role as pastor of the Tabernacle, *The Christian World* reported that “his reputation is for attracting the man in the street by novel methods and even more ingenious advertising.”⁵⁶

Dixon’s favorite medium was the newspaper. The newspaper had the potential of bad press, but Dixon largely avoided negative press. For his part, Dixon saw the newspaper as an ally in promoting evangelistic events, the church and as a means of evangelism.⁵⁷ Dixon promoted the church through paid advertisements in the newspaper. In some towns, the newspaper was in the practice of announcing the upcoming, regular services at the church, including service times and sermon title. Dixon even promoted promotion itself, as seen in his use of an announcement in the *Boston Daily Globe* to promote his sermon “How to Promote a Revival.” Dixon’s relationship with the press was such that he was asked by the managing committee of

⁵⁵“Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1906),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “Parade and Sing in Religion’s Cause,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 19 April 1905, p. 1; “Religious Conditions in Europe,” *Zion’s Herald*, 11 October 1905, p. 1292; “‘Bums’ Drawn Into Church,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 August 1907, p. 3; “Dr. Dixon Resigns Pulpit at Moody,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 April 1911, p. 9; “New Moody Church Pastor Starts Strenuous Revival,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 November 1906, p. 9; “Night Parade by Church,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 November 1906, p. 4; “Seek Sinners in Highway,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 January 1907, p. 4; “Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1909),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁵⁶“Sunday at the Tabernacle,” *The Christian World*, 21 June 1911, p. 11.

⁵⁷Dixon’s use of newspaper to support evangelistic events will be discussed in chap. 4.

the Gospel Song Evangelistic Movement to ask the *Chicago Daily News* to give larger space to Chicago religious news.⁵⁸

Dixon believed that the newspaper was an underutilized means of spreading the Gospel. He believed that the two methods of spreading the Gospel were the living voice and the written or printed word. He argued that Jesus called men to preach, and then the Holy Spirit called them to write. Dixon believed that the churches missed this second part, “for the only way to reach the millions is through the printed page.” Dixon continued, “If I were to preach every day to twenty thousand people in London, I should only just be reaching the fringe of things, but if I could get access to the daily press at least once a week, I should then be reaching millions upon millions. My prayer is that the Church may wake up to the importance of preaching the gospel through the press—weekly and daily.” Dixon compared the daily press to the marketplaces where Paul went to preach the Gospel. He argued that the market places where Paul preached were where people went to gossip. Dixon believed that there was not a contemporary market place like in the days of Paul. Rather, the daily press was the market place of the great cities, and the weekly press “is to a large extent the market place of the world.” Thus, Christians must use this means to preach the Gospel to a greater number of people.⁵⁹

While in Chicago Dixon wrote articles for publication in the *Chicago Daily News*. Dixon placed the articles in the newspaper as advertisements and the church paid for the advertisement so as to avoid having the gospel removed by newspaper editors.

⁵⁸“Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1908),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “Arrangements for To-Day,” *The Times (London)*, 10 May 1917, p. 9; “Ecclesiastical Intelligence,” *The Times (London)*, 18 May 1912, p. 4; “Spiritualistic Meetings,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 1 November 1902, p. 12.

⁵⁹“Bible and Newspaper,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 4.

Dixon's commitment to retaining the gospel in these publications is seen when one considers the significant cost of a weekly publication in a major Chicago paper at that time. Moody Church paid \$60 per week to publish Dixon's sermons unedited. This amounted to an average of \$3,120 annually. This was significantly more than the \$2,000 annual salary that the Moody Church paid Assistant Pastor Woolley. The article usually consisted of a summary of one of Dixon's sermons and a short invitation to Moody Church on Sunday. The articles began in January 1908 and by March 1908 the Moody Church Herald reported that the articles had a circulation of 330,000. Later, the articles were syndicated in about one thousand other newspapers. This was expected to bring the total circulation to one million. The practice of advertising in the newspaper in this way was carried on to the end of Dixon's time in Chicago. Some in London took notice of Dixon's practice of paying to publish sermons when he was doing supply work in London. *Baptist Times and Freeman* ran an article entitled "Soul-Saving By Advertisement: Unique Methods of Dr. Dixon, the New American Preacher, Pastor, and Slave Owner" in which the writer noted that Dixon's "soul-saving methods are unique" and "he has great confidence in the daily press as a means toward conversion." Once Dixon accepted the call to the Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit, he had his sermons published in London newspapers. In 1916 Dixon reported that the gospel in the newspaper had resulted in the conversion of some and the inquiry of many others.⁶⁰

⁶⁰"Poverty, Crime, Sin and Their Treatment," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; Amzi Clarence Dixon, "Past, Present, and Future," (sermon preached at The Moody Church on 3 October 1908), Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; "Dixon Souvenir Number," *The Moody Church Herald* 10, no.6 (June 1911); "Scrapbook, 1907-1911," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; No Title, *Moody Church Herald* (November 1909) in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; "Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1908)," Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at

Mid-Week Prayer Service

Dixon laid great emphasis on prayer in the ministry of the church. His conviction that prayer was effective was firmly established when he baptized his one hundredth convert on his last Sunday before attending seminary, this being in answer to his specific prayer for one hundred baptisms. Dixon believed the prayer meeting was the most important meeting of the week. When Dixon wrote to accept the call to serve at University Baptist Church in Baltimore, he made it known that attendance of the prayer meeting was expected to be the practice of each church member.⁶¹

Attendance of the church prayer meeting was regularly encouraged by Dixon throughout his pastoral ministry. He made sure hindrances were removed by not allowing any other meeting of the church to be held at the same time as the prayer meeting. He regularly exhorted the members to attend the prayer meeting from the pulpit and in the church newsletter. He warned members to not allow business concerns to cause them to miss this important meeting. He warned that low attendance of a prayer meeting reflected poorly on the church, saying “empty pews say unbelief is winning.” One of his strongest encouragements to prayer meeting attendance came in writing while Dixon was at Immanuel Baptist Church in Baltimore: “It is expected that every one, if not prevented by sickness, shall attend our Wednesday evening devotional

Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, Scrapbook, 1907-1911; “Soul-Saving by Advertisement: Unique Methods of Dr. Dixon, the New American Preacher: Pastor and Slave Owner,” *Baptist Times and Freeman, Supplement*, 20 January 1911, p. 4; “Annual Church Meeting Monday,” 21 February 1916, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3; “Bible and Newspaper,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 4; “Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Minutes, 1908-1917,” Metropolitan Tabernacle; 1279; On Woolley’s salary of \$2,000, see “Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1907),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁶¹A. C. Dixon to University Baptist Church, 1922, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 3; “Mr. Alfred Bagby,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 4.

meeting. If you refuse to do so, the Pastor has little hope of seeing any progress in your spiritual life.” This was followed by a warning of the dangers of letting business or social engagements prevent prayer meeting attendance. Rather, “all our friends should know that Wednesday evening is set apart for the prayer meeting.”⁶²

Ministry to the Needy

For portions of time in Dixon’s ministry, his church engaged in ministry to the needy. This was especially true in Boston and to a lesser extent in Chicago. In the end, Dixon’s opinion of the validity of such ministry was at best mixed, with leanings against an emphasis in social ministry. Dixon came to Ruggles Street with the responsibility to use large sums of money to ease social ills. After his first year at Ruggles Street Dixon was encouraged, for the church had a full-time salaried person dedicated to finding employment for the out of work with the result that more than eight hundred were given employment in the first year. Yet, as the next two years passed, Dixon was less pleased about this emphasis in the church. In particular, the church had attracted many with only an interest in financial or medical help, thus driving away the honest workman who did not want to be associated with the church lest he be thought to be seeking charity. Those seeking financial or medical help were getting exactly what they were seeking and were not as interested in conversion. The result was that few souls were saved and many potential hearers were driven away by the church’s philanthropy. Dixon knew that a clean shirt and a full belly did little toward the

⁶²“Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1910),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “Annual Meeting Address,” 28 March 1917, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3; “A Worshipper,” *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 13 January 1911, p. 20; Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 1.

salvation of the soul, and that conversion was effected by God through the gospel.

Dixon was interested in emphasizing gospel proclamation in the church. Dixon was not opposed to helping those in need, yet he was careful to not allow it to take the place of prominence within the church's ministry.⁶³

Dixon's move from Boston did not put social ministry behind him for good. Not long after Dixon moved from Boston to Chicago, he was aware of the unemployment issue in his new city. In January 1908 Dixon became concerned to meet the needs of unemployed men in Chicago. The church began to serve breakfast to sober, unemployed men and offer help finding employment, all the while preaching Christ to them. This was carried on for a number of months. In March 1908 the church reported serving an average of eight hundred breakfasts daily and had heard of two hundred professions of faith from preaching Christ each morning to the men. Dixon was clear throughout that the greatest need of the men was to get right with Jesus, even more than finding a new job. After three weeks, Dixon wrote of the ministry in one of his *Chicago Daily Tribune* articles. Here he invited those out of work to come and have a free meal and hear the good news of Jesus. He compared the work to Jesus feeding five thousand in which many came to have their bellies filled, yet Jesus "was careful to give them more than they came for and thus satisfy their deepest needs. If Christ had failed to feed their bodies, many of them, doubtless, would not have followed Him and thus made it possible for Him to feed their souls." By May, after serving fifty-eight thousand free

⁶³David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelicalism and Social Concern*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1977), 30-42; Dixon, *Milk and Meat*, 39-51; "Church Institutional Work Condemned and Defended," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 September 1909, p. 11; "How to Save Cities," *Boston Daily Globe*, 16 August 1897, p. 2; "The Institutional Church," *Congregationalist and Christian World*, 18 August 1906; p. 221.

breakfasts, Dixon had determined to stop serving free meals—the reason was similar to his explanation in Boston. Dixon explained that the church was forced to stop because “this work would not mix with the other work—that of providing a church for the workingman. The workingman who has a steady position and is working hard will not be classed with the man who is down and out and is trying to get on his feet. This is the rock on which the institutional church splits.”⁶⁴

As a fundamentalist pastor, Dixon placed a priority on actively seeking to win souls. Essential to this was the gospel itself. The message about salvation through the Divine Son of God, born of a virgin, who shed his blood, dying in the place of sinners, was essential if good news could really be proclaimed. These doctrines rested not on the opinion of men, but on the authority of the Bible. Dixon’s belief that a reliable revelation about Christ and salvation only came through the Bible made Dixon a defender of the trustworthiness and authority of the Bible.⁶⁵

Dixon taught his church the essentials of the faith, in order that their hope would be in the work of Christ and not in themselves. Additionally, each church member had the duty to evangelize and Dixon sought to exhort, equip, and enable each member to engage in active soul-winning. Dixon used his pulpit ministry in the church to model evangelism through preaching evangelistic sermons, while exhorting the man in the pew to join him in reaching the lost. Dixon’s churches provided ways for

⁶⁴*Moody Church Herald* (November 1909) in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; A. C. Dixon to Moody Church, 7 March 1908, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; “Poverty, Crime, Sin and Their Treatment,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3; “Why Rescue Work Stopped Told by Rev. A. C. Dixon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 May 1909, p. 1.

⁶⁵“A Trustworthy Bible the Warrant of An Unquestioning Faith,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 5.

members to get involved—from handing out tracts to going door-to-door. Each member knew his duty to win souls and was able to hear his pastor report on professions of faith under his ministry. Dixon was an evangelistic pastor who expected each church member to be an evangelist.

CHAPTER 4

DIXON THE EVANGELIST

Dixon aggressively evangelized the lost. He led his own church to reach the lost and organized others to do the same. Dixon challenged local pastors to support interdenominational evangelistic efforts in larger venues. Dixon convinced many pastors to mobilize their own congregations to reach the lost through spreading the word about the larger meetings and hosting smaller meetings to support the larger ones. The efforts to evangelize within and outside his church demonstrate Dixon's commitment to winning souls.¹

Influence of Charles Spurgeon and Dwight L. Moody

Two of Dixon's greatest heroes were Charles Spurgeon and Dwight Moody, two of the most prominent evangelical leaders of Dixon's lifetime. David Bebbington identified these two figures as embodying the essence of late nineteenth-century evangelism: "Spurgeon was the greatest preacher of his age; Moody was the most famous evangelist."²

¹ For more on evangelism before and during Dixon's lifetime, see Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Lyle W. Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Bruce J. Evensen, *God's Man for the Gilded Age: D. L. Moody and the Rise of Modern Mass Evangelism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

² David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 267.

Dixon had admired Spurgeon since childhood, when he read Spurgeon's sermons. Later Dixon sought admission into Spurgeon's school for young ministers, though Spurgeon advised against it. Dixon met Spurgeon in London and was impressed most by Spurgeon's prayers and preaching. Dixon believed that Spurgeon's prayers demonstrated that he depended on the power of the Holy Spirit to bless the preaching of the Bible. Dixon was also impressed with Spurgeon's confidence in preaching the Bible as "inerrant, infallible and authoritative," and with his emphasis on evangelism through church ministry evidenced by the church's commitment to open-air preaching. Dixon spoke of many of these events when he enumerated the ways in which Spurgeon influenced his own life and ministry. Dixon admired Spurgeon in the same ways in which he sought to emulate him. Dixon always insisted on an inerrant and authoritative Bible, insisted on the centrality of prayer in his life and ministry, depended on God to bless the preaching by the power of the Holy Spirit, and placed emphasis on his preaching ministry. And most importantly for this chapter, Dixon emphasized evangelistic efforts within the context of pastoral ministry, just as Spurgeon had invited Dixon to join in open-air preaching as part of the ministry of Spurgeon's Tabernacle.³

Though Spurgeon's influence was great, D. L. Moody made a greater impact on Dixon's life and ministry. Dixon said of Moody, "I had the great privilege and blessing of knowing him for several years rather intimately, and I can say truly that he

³"Dr. Dixon on Spurgeon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 5; "My First Experience in Open-Air Preaching," *Christian Observer*, 25 July 1900, p. 4; "The Power of Spurgeon and Moody," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 7; "Thou Art Worthy," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 29, folder 5.

has influenced my life more than any other person in this world with one exception.”

Dixon admired Moody for who he was and for what he did.⁴

In Moody Dixon found a man who lived his life before God in humility. Dixon was particularly impressed with the prayers of Moody, especially as God’s help was sought in the World’s Fair Campaign of 1893. Moody asked God for help and wisdom in a way that demonstrated his dependence on God, his need to be consecrated for service, and need for enduement with the power of the Spirit. Dixon sought to be as dependent on God as Moody had been. In Moody, Dixon found a man who lived what he believed.⁵

Moody lived what he believed especially in the proclamation of the good news. Moody preached the Bible as authoritative and, like Spurgeon, was confident that the Bible contained no errors. Moody focused in his preaching on proclaiming the gospel and did it unashamedly. Moody insisted that the shed blood of Jesus as essential for gospel proclamation. Dixon told of an incident of Moody being informed by a prominent pastor that they had gotten beyond that old doctrine of blood and hoped that he would not preach it. To this Moody replied: “You have gotten beyond that? I will preach nothing else for a week.” Dixon delighted in this story for he too believed in the necessity of the blood of Jesus for justification. Dixon also found Moody to be unique among men. Some men have the gift of being a prophet, someone who speaks God’s

⁴Dixon was referring to his own father when he said that Moody was second in influence in his life; see “D. L. Moody,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3.

⁵“D. L. Moody,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3. Dixon often made references to Moody’s dependence on the Holy Spirit for power; see “Moody Church,” *Moody Church Herald*, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3. The importance of enduement for service for Dixon will be discussed in the following chapter.

word regardless of consequences. Other men excel at leading others. These men often seek to avoid controversial issues, so as to meet with the least resistance. Yet, rare is the man that excels at both: a combination of prophecy and leadership. Dixon held that Moody embodied that rare combination. Moody was a man worthy of emulation.⁶

Dixon was impressed with Moody's emphasis on the conversion of souls. Moody was a man who worked diligently to win the lost to Christ. Dixon considered Moody an evangelist second to none. This was the most admirable of all Moody's attributes. Dixon sought to emulate this in his own ministry. Dixon often made reference to Moody in order to stir up others for greater effort in evangelism. Dixon, speaking at a memorial service for Moody, encouraged the hearers to continue using their lives to win souls to Christ just as Moody had done:

“Within the next twelve months,” if Moody were standing on this platform, I believe he would say, “Within the next twelve months we shall preach the Gospel to every creature in Greater New York.” Let that be the watch-word for 1900! The politicians can reach all the voters in three months, and I believe that Christian people can reach every sinner in Greater New York within the next twelve months. We can bring the Gospel to the people in the home and on the street—the Word of God Himself—and the work of the Church will make God wake them up. Let us bring the Gospel to the people everywhere—in the homes, in the churches, in the theatres, on the streets. If we are to perpetuate Moody's work, it will be by taking Christ into the homes and the hearts of the people.⁷

Moody's personal faith, holiness, proclamation of the good news through Jesus' shed blood, and his personal emphasis on evangelism, however, were not the

⁶“D. L. Moody,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3; “The Power of Spurgeon and Moody,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 7; “The Late D. L. Moody,” *The Living Word*, 22 January 1900, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 20, folder 4.

⁷P. B. Fizwater to A. C. Dixon, ca. December 1919, in Moodyana-Historical Collection, The Moody Archives at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois; “Dwight L. Moody is Dead,” *New York Times*, 23 December 1899, p. 4; “Dr. Dixon on Moody,” *New York Times*, 25 December 1899, p. 5; J. Wilbur Chapman, *The Life and Work of Dwight L. Moody* (Toronto: Bradley-Garretson Company, 1900), 456-84.

most significant ways in which Moody influenced Dixon. The greatest influence was in the way Moody operated. Moody's power lay in the way he rallied others to evangelize alongside him. This aspect of the life of Moody was highly regarded by Dixon and may be the most important way in which Moody changed him. Dixon explained this particular aspect of Moody, saying, "Mr. Moody brought to the world a message of fellowship. . . . Mr. Moody did more than any other hundred forces, it seems to me, in the last century in unifying Christendom, in bringing together evangelical Christians under the blood and making everyone realize that every man who believed in the Lord Jesus was his brother. He organized great interdenominational movements that have swept the world." This organizational genius was an integral part of Dixon's ministerial strategy from Dixon's first participation in a Moody campaign to the end of his life.⁸

Dixon had the privilege of knowing Moody personally for a number of years. Dixon considered Moody to be both an example and a friend. Dixon first met Moody in 1885 in Baltimore and visited Northfield the following year.⁹ In those early years, the relationship progressed to the point that Moody invited Dixon to be part of his evangelistic effort associate with the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Dixon ministered in the city for the month of September, when Moody's campaign was reaching 150,000 each week.¹⁰ Though Dixon had participated in widespread campaigns before this point, Moody's Chicago campaign was a cooperative effort that

⁸That Dixon highly regarded Moody's unifying and organizational skills, see "D. L. Moody," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3.

⁹"Dixon Souvenir Number," *The Moody Church Herald* 10, no.6 (June 1911); also see Helen (Cadbury) Alexander Dixon, *A.C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), 91.

¹⁰"Moody's Season Over," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 November 1893, p. 6.

gave Dixon a vision for what could be done when evangelistic campaigns had careful planning and interdenominational cooperation. Dixon was impressed with the campaign and with Moody himself. Dixon was eager to hear any advice Moody had to offer for his ministry. And Moody did have advice for Dixon: give all his time, except Sunday mornings, to evangelistic work among the churches of greater New York.¹¹ When Dixon returned to Brooklyn, he immediately put into practice what he learned in Chicago by organizing an evangelistic campaign in New York modeled significantly on the Moody plan. His plan even included an appearance by Moody himself.¹²

Throughout the rest of Moody's life, Dixon sought to keep his ties with Moody as close as possible. Dixon invited Moody to participate in as many campaigns as his schedule would allow. Dixon also accepted numerous invitations from Moody as well. He spoke at every Northfield conference, except one, from 1894 through 1902. Dixon also accepted an invitation from Moody to preach to the soldiers encamped in Tampa, Florida. In return, Moody preached for Dixon at Hanson Place Baptist Church for a portion of the time Dixon was away. Dixon also did follow-up preaching for one of Moody's campaigns. Moody held meetings for one month in New York City before turning the meetings over to Dixon, who carried them on for another two months.¹³

¹¹"Amzi Clarence Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; "From An Unknown Country Parish to the World's Metropolis," *Moody Church Herald*, June 1911, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

¹²Dixon was in Chicago with Moody in September and planned the New York campaign for November, see "A Gospel Campaign in Brooklyn," *Outlook*, 11 November 1893, p. 856.

¹³For Dixon's addresses at Northfield, see *Northfield Echoes*, vols. 1-10 (East Northfield, MA: The Northfield Bookstore, 1894-1903); also see, "Mr. Moody at His Best," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 17 March 1898, p. 357; "Lectures by the Rev. A. C. Dixon," *New York Times*, 19 June 1898, p. 12; "Church News and Notes," *New York Times*, 7 May 1898, p. 5; "Amzi Clarence Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; "Women's Patriotic Relief," *New York Times*, 25 June 1898, p. 3; "A. C. Dixon's Trip South," *New York Times*, 20 June 1898, p. 3; "Troops Held Back," *The*

Dixon's admiration for Moody was part of his consideration in accepting the call to the pastorate in Chicago. Dixon spoke of his desire to speak to "Moody's God." Dixon explained: "Mr. Moody lived for heaven and lived for God. That was the inspiration I had in coming to the pastorate of this church—that the God of D. L. Moody lives in Chicago and is trusted and loved by the membership that loved him, and the God that led him and girded him will lead and gird us for that work that lies before us."¹⁴

Leading Other Men: Dixon Organizes and Leads Widespread Evangelism

Much of Dixon's life as a pastor was spent in spreading the Gospel. He did this through his personal ministry and organizing other Christians to evangelize together. Dixon organized others in evangelizing even before his work with Moody in Chicago. The year before the exposition Dixon organized ministers in Brooklyn in order to preach the gospel in local theaters on Sunday afternoons.¹⁵ However, after the Columbian Exposition regular efforts at organizing others became a regular part of Dixon's ministry. Dixon's greatest success in this area was in Brooklyn, Boston, and Chicago, from 1893 through 1911. When he attempted to take this method across the Atlantic to London, it did not proceed as well. This could be due to the fact that London was not ready for the methods used in America. Additionally, during much of Dixon's time in London, England was involved in the First World War. This also could account

Washington Post, 14 May 1898, p. 9; on carrying on Moody meetings, see "A. C. Dixon," *Our Journal*, vol. 15, no. 5, May 1899 in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 6.

¹⁴"D. L. Moody," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3.

¹⁵"To Preach in Theaters," *New York Times*, 9 December 1898, p. 10.

for some of the decline. Even so, Dixon continued to encourage interdenominational evangelistic efforts in London, just as he had in the United States.

Just after returning from Chicago with Moody, in November 1893, Dixon invited all the evangelical ministers in Brooklyn to meet in order to discuss a plan for evangelistic work in the area. From this, a series of evangelistic services were planned beginning in January 1894. The meetings grew in attendance rapidly. Just past the mid-point of the month the newspaper reported that “the crowds flocking into these places, and the religious enthusiasm which possesses the thousands of men and women, young and old, who are participating in the revival recall the days of the great preacher Whitefield and John Wesley.” The meetings were interdenominational, with larger meetings held throughout the day, and smaller meetings held in churches throughout the city in the evenings. Morning services drew up to three thousand people, while afternoon service drew as many as two thousand. Afternoon services were presided over by A. C. Dixon. In the evening, Dixon’s Hanson Place Baptist Church was among the churches hosting evening services. Hanson Place hosted Methodist Episcopal evangelists from Canada, John E. Hunter and Hugh T. Crossley. In one week at Hanson Place the church was filled with worshippers, while scores of inquirers came forward every evening inquiring about their spiritual welfare.¹⁶

Dixon remained active throughout the meetings, presiding over many of the large gatherings and preaching in the smaller gatherings. On one Sunday Dixon preached in his church for the morning and evening services and in the afternoon he

¹⁶“Rejoice in Their Well Doing,” *New York Times*, 10 February 1894, p. 8; “Worshipped Out of Doors,” *New York Times*, 20 January 1894, p. 9

preached at a local Presbyterian church. By the end of January *New York Times* ran a series of pieces on those leading the revival meetings including a drawing of Dixon and brief biographical sketch about him. This article reported that the smaller evening meetings attracted a total between fifteen and twenty thousand people each night. Dixon himself reported that one Sunday evening his Hanson Place Baptist Church had forty people come forward to announce their conversion.¹⁷

As the month of January came to a close the revival meetings were still going strong. The leaders were still hopeful that Moody would arrive soon and the excitement surrounding the meetings prompted evangelist Edward J. Parker to predict that thirty thousand souls would be saved by the summer. Dixon took an even more prominent part by preaching at some of the larger gatherings. In one meeting he closed the service with an invitation for all who wanted to accept Christ to come forward to the platform. The platform was soon filled with people of all ages who accepted Dixon's invitation and over sixty "sought the way of salvation." Hanson Place Baptist Church continued to draw large crowds in the evening, up to three thousand gathered for evening services there and Dixon preached. Dixon closed the services with an invitation to those wishing to profess Christianity to meet in an adjoining room. In one evening three hundred joined Dixon for the after meeting.¹⁸

¹⁷"Moody May Aid the Revival," *New York Times*, 21 January 1894, p. 12; "Nineteen Revival Meetings," *New York Times*, 23 January 1894, p. 9; "Brooklyn's Great Revival," *New York Times*, 24 January 1894, p. 8.

¹⁸"A Religious Tidal Wave," *New York Times*, 26 January 1894, p. 8; "Children in the Revival," *New York Times*, 28 January 1894, p. 16; "Brooklyn's Revival Grows," *New York Times*, 29 January 1894, p. 8; "Revival's Test of Strength," *New York Times*, 30 January 1894, p. 8.

The revival meetings continued into February, and D. L. Moody and Ira Sankey came to assist. Services for the campaign continued in the large hall of the YMCA into the second week of the month. Hundreds of converts were reported during the campaign, and many churches accepted new members. As the crowds declined the meetings were moved into smaller halls for the evangelistic meetings and many churches continued to hold evening meetings. Dixon's Hanson Place reported having very successful services well into February, including continued responses to invitations to come to Jesus for salvation. In the final meeting in the large hall Dixon addressed the audience and spoke of numerous invitations he had received to take part in revival initiatives in other places. He announced that he decided to turn his focus to New York, with meetings to begin by the end of the month. Dixon hoped to build upon the momentum begun in Brooklyn and asked that crowd to get behind his vision of what was possible: "I want to tell you now of a vision I have had. I am not given to seeing visions, but I had this one, and I believe it. It is that, by July 1 or sooner, we will see the great auditorium of Madison Square Garden and all the theatres, week nights and Sundays, filled with people eager to hear the Word of God preached."¹⁹

In late February, the *New York Times* reported on this new series of meetings, saying "the evangelistic campaign in this city, inaugurated by the Rev. A. C. Dixon of the Hanson Place Baptist Church of Brooklyn and other ministers and evangelists who labored in the recent great revival in Brooklyn, was begun yesterday." The first meeting was said to be three times as large as the first meeting of the Brooklyn revival meetings, drawing one thousand people to fill the large hall of a YMCA building. The first

¹⁹"Rejoice in Their Well Doing," *New York Times*, 10 February 1894, p. 8.

sermon of the meetings was preached by George Needham. At the close of the sermon, Dixon had the congregation sing a few songs, and then he made an appeal to the members of the various churches represented in the meeting. He asked that the meetings in New York be along the lines of those in Brooklyn, under the watchword “workers together for God.” Dixon explained that “we are all workers together for God. We are not all believers alike on ecclesiastical points, but we unite on this platform, that man is lost, and his soul can only be saved by the redeeming blood and saving grace of Jesus Christ.”²⁰

The second meeting was also well-attended, drawing one thousand people again. Dixon was one of several to address the crowd for the meeting at which twenty responded to the invitation by asking for prayer. The meetings continued on with steady crowds through the end of February and on into the middle of March. At that time D. L. Moody came to assist in the effort. He preached at the Broadway Tabernacle to the largest crowd so far for the revival services. Three thousand crowded into the church and hundreds of others were turned away. Moody’s presence gave Dixon a large crowd to whom he announced future meetings for the revival.²¹ The next day Dixon’s revival meeting at Cooper Union drew between four and five thousand people. After an address by another speaker, Dixon made a stirring appeal to all those present to commit to sanctify their lives for the saving of souls for Christ. As he called for an appeal, nearly

²⁰Ibid.; “Revival’s Test of Strength,” *New York Times*, 30 January 1894, p. 8; “New-York Revival Opens,” *New York Times*, 20 February 1894, p. 8.

²¹“Prayer That is in Prayer,” *New York Times*, 22 February 1894, p. 8; “Enthusiasm at White Heat,” *New York Times*, 24 February 1894, p. 8; “Dr. Wharton Their Leader,” *New York Times*, 27 February 1894, p. 8; “Lessons Taught in Parable,” *New York Times*, 1 March 1894, p. 8; “Told How They Were Saved,” *New York Times*, 13 March 1894, p. 8; “Moody Tells of the Bible,” *New York Times*, 14 March 1894, p. 8.

the entire audience stood, indicating that they were willing to be soul winners. At this Dixon requested that all be seated “but those who wish to accept Christ now, at this moment.” About one hundred remained standing or stood in response to this new request. Dixon then dismissed the crowd and reported that there would be an after meeting conducted by Col. Evans. The *New York Times* reported on this after meeting:

The choir sang, and about half the audience retired. Then at the invitation to come forward, first came two women with the marks of dissipation on their faces. Then there came a young man, who said he had been a thief. A drunkard, well dressed, but with the marks of excess upon his features, came forward. Soon the rail about the platform was filled with at least fifty weeping inquirers. A Salvation Army girl brought up a shamefaced young man, who soon wept under her tearful pleading. There were several Hebrews among the suppliants.

As all knelt there, the homeless vagabond elbow to elbow with well-dressed men, women of the street, and with the workers who were gathered about them, the voices of Leonard Weaver, Col. Evans, and others arose in prayer. The company was dismissed with kind words of encouragement. It was a most extraordinary scene, and one that has not been witnessed before during the progress of the revival.²²

The following day anticipation was high as the *New York Times* compared the revival meetings to those in New York City under Charles Finney, the revivals following the Civil War, and the Moody and Sankey revivals of eighteen years prior. The meeting at Cooper Union was again large, attracting over four thousand people. A number of addresses were given, followed by an invitation by A. C. Dixon. Dixon invited all who wished to accept Christ to stand up. A number did stand and come forward, though not as many as the previous day. Again it was reported that many from various walks of life responded to the invitation.²³

²²“Met at the Altar to Pray,” *New York Times*, 15 March 1894, p. 8.

²³“Greater Revival Predicted,” *New York Times*, 16 March 1894, p. 8.

Services continued through the month of March and included preaching from Dixon's brother, Thomas Dixon, Jr. A. C. Dixon continued to preside over the meetings and closed the services with appeals for public professions of faith and requests for prayer. By the end of March, Dixon made public appeals for funds so that the services could continue. The meetings did continue through the end of April. In all, the New York campaign lasted ten weeks. The newspaper reported that nearly every Protestant church in New York increased in membership. In some cases, the membership increased by hundreds. More than one hundred different congregations either held services or joined another church for services for the campaign. It was estimated that every weekday except Saturday at least twenty-five thousand people, many non-churchgoers, had listened to the preaching of the gospel. The paper reported that at the lowest estimation, there were between four and five thousand conversions. In the last meeting of the New York campaign, Dixon found himself again not willing to give up the momentum of the recently completed campaign, so he announced an outdoor campaign under a tent that would hold 1,500 people to begin a few days later. This outdoor campaign received little newspaper coverage, yet was part of a normal open air preaching effort for the summer season in the city.²⁴

In the years that followed, Dixon continued to encourage as many evangelical churches as possible to join together for evangelistic efforts. In July 1895, Dixon addressed an audience of ten thousand at a World's Christian Endeavor meeting in Boston. His topic was "Denominational Loyalty and Interdenominational Fellowship."

²⁴"Revival Fills a Theatre," *New York Times*, 28 March 1894, p. 8; "Revival Work Progressing," *New York Times*, 29 March 1894, p. 8; "Crowded Revival Meetings," *New York Times*, 31 March 1894, p. 8; *New York Evangelist*, 29 April 1894, p. 8; "Revival Services to Close," *New York Times*, 28 April 1894, p. 8.

In his address he stressed the importance of truth and narrowness, especially on the key doctrines of the faith. This narrowness had led to various denominations. Dixon explained that his purpose was not to convince people to not be denominational, but to understand that many denominations hold fast to the truth. Dixon explained that “justification by faith, the witness of the Spirit, and the sovereignty of grace are not the possession of any one denomination.” Christians may be found in many denominations, thus all Christians must fellowship with those of different denominations. He felt that this was one of the strengths of Christian Endeavor. Dixon explained that

Christian Endeavor is not undenominational, but interdenominational, and as a Christian I have a fellowship of faith in Christ, a fellowship of love for Christ, a fellowship of service to Christ, and a fellowship of enthusiasm in the work of Christ, which I delight in, and share with every other lover of Christ. . . .

We are “workers together with God.” We may not believe together in all respects, but if we have taken Christ as Savior and master, we are ready to hear the command, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” and every Christian should have an evangelistic fellowship with every other Christian, which leads him to unite heart and hand for the spread of the gospel.²⁵

Dixon’s call was for the type of interdenominational evangelism he had seen in Moody and sought to organize in Brooklyn and New York.

The New York City campaign in the first four months of 1894 received the most newspaper coverage of any evangelistic efforts Dixon organized during his Brooklyn pastorates. Each year he faithfully organized pastors and other Christians to reach his community. Most regularly a campaign began in January with a separate open-air emphasis in the summer. Occasionally, the newspaper covered the events, but Dixon’s efforts did not usually attract significant attention from the press. There was an occasional story noting that Dixon and other prominent ministers in the city were

²⁵“Glory to the Lord of All!,” *Boston Globe*, 13 July 1895, p. 1.

holding regular meetings in a larger venue, yet there was little other mention of it in the press. But the meetings were not insignificant. In February 1896, Dixon led in a series of Monday evangelistic meetings in Cooper Union in New York. Large crowds and many conversions were reported. The meetings were helped by the participation of Moody and Sankey. The next month the meetings were still going strong, with large attendance and more decisions for Christ reported. In the following month Dixon wrote a report of the three-month-long meetings. He reported that more than three hundred, mostly men, had confessed Jesus Christ as their Savior. In the summer of that year Dixon's Hanson Place Baptist Church hosted the fourth annual convention of the Open Air Workers Association of America, where he was elected as one of the vice presidents along with R. A. Torrey and Josiah Strong, among others. At the end of the year Dixon assisted Moody and Sankey with evangelistic meetings in the city, again in Cooper Union. So, though the extent of newspaper coverage was relatively thin, the effort on the part of Dixon remained high during his years in Brooklyn.²⁶

In January 1897, Dixon again held Monday meetings at Cooper Union assisted by Ira Sankey. By the end of the month, J. Wilbur Chapman reinforced the meetings by coming to preach. In February, D. L. Moody came to provide a powerful evangelistic presence in the city. In May, there was another evangelistic endeavor begun by Moody and Dixon. In this case many unchurched people were being reached.

²⁶“The Evangelist At Work,” *New York Times*, 4 February 1896, p. 8; “Revival Services in New York,” *Outlook*, 29 February 1896, p. 404; *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 27 February 1896, p. 290; “New York and Brooklyn,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 12 March 1896, p. 359; “Cooper Union Meetings in New York,” *New York Evangelist*, 9 April 1896, p. 34; “New York and Brooklyn,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 28 May 1896, p. 792; “Mr. Moody Defines Grace,” *New York Times*, 17 November 1896, p. 9; “New York and Brooklyn,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 19 November 1896, p. 783.

The plan of Moody and Dixon was to hold meetings in theaters and other public venues to attract those who would not enter a church building. Many from the laboring class were reached in this effort and Dixon addressed “one of the most unchurchly crowds that ever came together to hear the Gospel preached.” Dixon was encouraged by the good attendance of joint evangelistic effort in the city and hoped that a more permanent structure could be erected for the purpose of preaching to the lost.²⁷

In September Dixon spoke at East Northfield about his desire for such a building. He hoped it would hold five thousand people in the auditorium with other smaller halls as well. He suggested a roof garden be included for services when the weather was nice. Such a structure should be appealing to those who do not go to church, yet may be willing to enter this more inviting setting. In such a building meetings could be held the year round and prominent speakers such as J. Wilbur Chapman and D. L. Moody could be invited to minister a month or two at a time. Dixon pursued a plan to build a hall like this until he departed Brooklyn for Boston. Dixon even conducted a meeting at Carnegie Hall to raise public support for the building. Subscription cards were issued in hopes that the necessary funds would be raised by 1905, yet Dixon left town in 1901 for Boston and did not see the plan through.²⁸

In Boston, Dixon continued his efforts in organizing evangelism outside his church. In 1902 he began preaching at a Boston baseball field with other local pastors

²⁷“Dr. Dixon at Cooper Union,” *New York Times*, 5 January 1897, p. 3; “New York and Brooklyn,” *New York Observer*, 14 January 1897, p. 55; “Evangelistic Work in New York,” *New York Observer*, 21 January 1897, p. 96; “Revival in New York,” *New York Observer*, 11 February 1897, p. 215; “Ministers and Churches,” *New York Evangelist*, 27 May 1897, p. 29.

²⁸“Wants an Auditorium in New York,” *New York Observer*, 9 September 1897, p. 335; “New York and Brooklyn,” *New York Observer*, 23 September 1897, p. 399; “Designer Service in Dance Hall,” *New York Times*, 29 December 1900, p. 5; “For an Interdenominational Tabernacle,” *New York Observer*, 22 February 1900, p. 238.

from various denominations. The first meeting attracted two thousand people. The services were in conjunction with the Evangelical Alliance of Boston and Vicinity. By the following year, Dixon was more actively involved in this organization, sending out letters in an effort to raise funds for renting theaters and other buildings to “bring in those who may not first enter a church to hear the Gospel.” Also in 1903, Dixon preached at evangelistic services in places outside Boston. In one six-week period, Dixon reported over five hundred professions of faith in Christ as Savior in Franklin, Pennsylvania and surrounding areas. In June of that year, an evangelistic tent meeting was begun in Boston with church members assigned to attend a particular nights of the week based on last name. That same summer open-air work was inaugurated as a regular ministry of the church.²⁹

As in New York, Dixon held regular weekly meetings at a larger venue in town. In Boston these meetings were at the Tremont Temple on Mondays and were held for the last two years of Dixon’s pastorate. Besides preaching to the lost, Dixon convinced Christians to pray for revival. At one meeting at Tremont Temple, Dixon addressed the one thousand present on the topic of revivals going on in other parts of the world. Upon telling the audience of a revival by Torrey and Alexander in London, Dixon said that “London was shaken by the spirit of God. If God can so shake London and Wales, and even Paris, he can shake Boston. Do you want him to?” Dixon asked all desiring revival in Boston to stand, and nearly the entire crowd rose. Dixon proposed

²⁹“Gospel on Ball Grounds,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 7 June 1902, p. 3; “Notes from Dixon Ministry at Ruggles Street,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; Letter from Executive Committee of the Evangelical Alliance of Boston and Vicinity in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 3; “From Mrs. Crowe’s Scrapbook,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; “National Gospel Campaign,” *Washington Post*, 8 February 1903, p. 13.

that Torrey and Alexander be invited to conduct revival services in Boston, then encouraged the crowd to pray for revival by asking them to pray a particular prayer every day until a revival should come: "O, Lord, bring a revival, and begin with me."³⁰

Dixon's time in Boston continued along the lines begun in Brooklyn. Dixon pursued and encouraged interdenominational efforts for evangelism. He was actively involved in planning these efforts in Boston and spent many months each year traveling outside of Boston to preach and work in evangelistic causes in many towns in the northeast.³¹

Dixon's ministry in Chicago began with public meetings. Dixon spoke at a local YMCA where more than one thousand people crammed into a room to hear him speak before the doors were locked and many were turned away. Soon after, a group of Chicago churches invited Dixon to speak for revival services in the city to begin in January 1907. After four weeks of meetings the newspaper printed a report of the meetings calling them "one of the most successful revival meetings ever held by a union of churches." By the fall of 1907, Dixon was part of another campaign in the city. This time he was preaching to crowds as high as 2,300 on Sundays and an average of 1,000 to 1,500 during the week. At the end of 1907, Dixon reported to his church on the

³⁰Untitled article from *The Pacific Baptist*, ca. 1906, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; "In and Around Boston," *Congregationalist and Christian World*, 11 August 1906, p. 182; "Revival in Boston," *Boston Globe*, 3 October 1905, p. 11.

³¹"The World for Christ," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Heaven On Earth* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897), 96-100; "From An Unknown Country Parish to the World's Metropolis," *Moody Church Herald*, June 1911, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6.

meetings in a letter to all church members, telling them “during the meetings hundreds accepted Christ as Savior and Lord.”³²

In Chicago Dixon was involved in an effort to attract large groups of people by assembling a large choir. This went under the name of the Gospel Song Evangelical Movement. It was declared by the promoters to be something that had never been seen in an American city. The plan called for including singers from nearly every Protestant church in Chicago. The choir itself was composed of nearly three thousand voices. Dixon served as chairman for the general committee that oversaw the movement. The idea for the large service came out of a monthly Gospel Song Ministry carried on at Moody Church. These meetings Dixon reported “invariably result in twenty-five to thirty conversions.” Dixon thought this could be done on a large scale if many churches of various denominations were invited to participate. Dixon invited local evangelical ministers to a luncheon to discuss the matter. More than two hundred responded to his call and committed to see it come about. Dixon organized two meetings consisting of fasting and prayer in preparation for a large New Year’s Eve service. These services lasted from 10 o’clock in the morning to 5 o’clock in the evening, without intermission. Thousands of people from all over the city attended, with hundreds making a profession of faith “including many drunkards, infidels, and outcasts.” The New Year’s Eve service lasted five hours with twelve thousand people in attendance. The police turned

³²“Minutes of Executive Committee, Moody Church (1906),” Records of the Moody Church. Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “Door Shut on C. E. Rally,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 23 October 1906, p. 3; “Revival Services Near Close,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 February 1907, p. 3; “Gospel Campaign in Tent,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 September 1907, p. 3; “How to Be Happy If Wedded,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 September 1907, p. 9; “Green Young Man Praised,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 September 1907, p. 3; “Tent, Steam Heat, Revival,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 September 1907, p. 1.

away more than one thousand others due to fire safety regulations. Dixon presided over the meeting and the choir of nearly three thousand voices sang. Many speakers urged the unsaved to come to Christ and the Christians to commit to win souls. Fifty people trusted Christ for salvation that night. The leaders asked the attendees to make the “Watch Night Covenant” printed in the souvenir leaflet: “From this moment and for all the time to come, I surrender all to God and will endeavor in his strength to do his will as revealed in the Word through the Holy Spirit. I will publicly and privately, as I have opportunity by both word and deed, confess him as my Lord and Master; I will have a daily prayer list and will endeavor, God being my helper, to lead a least one soul to Christ during each month of 1909.” The leaflet had a section below these words for the person to sign as a reminder of the covenant he had made.³³

Dixon continued to exert influence outside the church while he was in London. Through the *Sword and Trowel*, Dixon he encouraged evangelistic outreach and cooperation. He had the Metropolitan Tabernacle host evangelists such as J. Wilbur Chapman and Charles Alexander. In the *Sword and Trowel* he encouraged other churches to support such efforts. He did not have supporting his own church mainly in mind. Rather, he encouraged other pastors to build upon raised spiritual interests in the community which would naturally result from the presence of an evangelistic campaign in a large venue. So while he encouraged intra-denominational rallies with evangelists

³³“Plan Gospel Song Movement,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 31 October 1908, p. 7; “12,000 Pray at Year’s Dawn,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 January 1909, p. 5; “12,000 Hold ‘Watch Night’,” *Christian Herald*, 20 January 1909, p. 49; “Soul-Saving by Advertisement: Unique Methods of Dr. Dixon, the New American Preacher: Pastor and Slave Owner,” *Baptist Times and Freeman, Supplement*, 20 January 1911, p. 4; “The Monster Meeting for Prayer and Song with Which Chicago Welcomed 1909,” *Home Herald*, in Scrapbook 1907-1911, Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

like Chapman, he also asked each church to do their part to support the large rally with numerous smaller rallies. Dixon explained that “each pastor and church can conduct their own services, either alone or assisted by evangelists, in the manner they may select.” In this way, he left control of the specifics to the individual pastors. Here Dixon was doing just as he had in Chicago: proposing an intra-denominational large gathering, while challenging each church to work on maximizing the impact of the large gathering with numerous smaller gatherings to support it. This way of encouraging each church to maximize the efforts of a large campaign was just the way he had worked in Chicago after the Gypsy Smith Campaign. Not willing to let the momentum die, Dixon urged each church to organize local campaigns to “conserve the results of the Gypsy Smith meetings.”³⁴

Throughout Dixon’s ministry he worked to build the kingdom of God more than build his own church. Clearly, Dixon did have an interest in building his own church. This he saw as part of his responsibility as pastor. Yet, more than that, Dixon desired to see souls saved. This led him to speak wherever a crowd could be drawn. Sometimes he led rallies in his city and other times he traveled to meetings away from home. No matter the location, Dixon was ready to work to save souls. He desired to use

³⁴“Evangelism in Scotland,” *Sword and Trowel* (May 1915): 232-33, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 7; Elders Minutes 1914, in Metropolitan Tabernacle Elders Minutes, 1912-25, Metropolitan Tabernacle; “A General Evangelistic Movement,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1915): 169. A. C. Dixon and other evangelists in Chicago sent letters to area pastors encouraging them to hold simultaneous evangelistic campaigns in November 1909. Among the reasons stated for meetings at that time was “Gypsy Smith will preach in Chicago during October, and the inspiration which Christians will receive from his preaching will be a great preparation for soul winning work in their own churches” and “it will enable us to conserve the results of the Gypsy Smith meetings.” See Scrapbook 1907-1911, Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

churches irrespective of denominational affiliation, so long as each church had Jesus Christ in common.

Gathering a Crowd: Publicity, Public Places, and Parades

One major key for a successful evangelistic campaign was to gather a large crowd. Some of the components for gathering a crowd have already been seen in this chapter: spreading the word through Christian leaders, a spirited leading in song, and meeting in a large public location. When Dixon sent letters of invitation to local ministers or spoke to a large gathering of pastors he was already well on his way to gathering a crowd. Each pastor had the ear of numerous church members. Each church member could be used to spread the word of an upcoming campaign in their workplace and in the neighborhood where he lived. Gospel song was also a part of a successful campaign. Good singing could attract a crowd and had been used to good success by Moody and Sankey, as well as a number of other evangelistic preacher and song leader teams.³⁵ Additionally, these campaigns intended to be largely attended, and the mere fact that a large venue was expected to be filled served to raise public interest in the meeting.

Yet, this was not enough. Another commonly used means of attracting people to these campaigns was the newspaper. The newspaper was used to advertise times and locations of upcoming meetings. The committee heading up the campaign

³⁵Evangelists Hunter and Crossley, who came to Dixon's church for evangelistic services, also were a singer and preacher team; see Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1996), 218-22; Phyllis D. Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 34-37.

raised the funds necessary to purchase advertising space in the newspaper, in order that a large number of people would be made aware of evangelistic meetings through the printed press.³⁶

Additionally, newspapers could be used to carry along a campaign already in progress if the editor could be convinced that the meetings were newsworthy or that covering the event would benefit the newspaper. In his first widespread evangelistic effort after his participation with Moody in Chicago, Dixon showed that he understood the importance of newspaper coverage for a successful campaign. And the newspapers knew what a revival campaign could do for newspaper sales. Near the beginning of the campaign, Dixon began to publicly acknowledge the benefit of having the *New York Times* cover the event. Dixon encouraged the audience to make good use of the *Times*' coverage, "The *New-York Times* is doing good work for these meetings. A large number of copies are at the door for free distribution, but don't wait for the free copies. Buy them and mail them to your friends all over the country. A gentleman is now here from Newport who has come to attend these meetings. Take *The Times* and send it to your friends, and in that way may the Lord set the whole United States afire!" At the end of the ten week New York campaign in 1894, the *New York Times* boasted that they had faithfully covered the revival for the ten weeks and that this coverage led to "many revivals being started in distant places, where the papers were eagerly sought each day by the people who wanted to read the story of the New-York meetings." Mutual niceties were exchanged, the *Times* gave Dixon recognition for his part in the event, calling him

³⁶Advertisement, in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 May 1909, p. 11; "Ecclesiastical News," *The Times (London)*, 26 January 1915, p. 12; "Ecclesiastical News," *The Times (London)*, 26 January 1915, p. 12.

“the master mind in the ten weeks’ revival,” while Dixon referred to the newspaper as “our faithful and loyal friend.” In the last meeting, the service of thanksgiving, Dixon again had the opportunity to address the crowd and again took the opportunity to thank those who supported the revival efforts. Specifically he addressed the press, “To the press, particularly *The New-York Times*, which so nobly supported us, we desire to raise a pean of thanksgiving. It has scattered the Gospel, sowing good seed all over this country, carrying the good tidings even to foreign shores. I wish also to thank other secular and the religious papers for the kind support they have given us.”³⁷

Though the newspapers could be of great benefit in carrying along a campaign, they could not always be counted on to offer enough coverage to make a difference. This meant that a campaign must organize its own advertising and see any newspaper coverage as a bonus. The most basic means of advertising an event was through card distribution. Thousands or even hundreds of thousands of cards or tracts could be personally distributed over the course of an extended campaign to those on the street in order to generate public interest. Additionally, small signs were placed in local businesses and advertisements were placed on streetcars to get the word out. This printed advertisement was cheaply made and could be liberally distributed. When Dixon came to Boston the newspaper noted his evangelistic method, saying “his plan and his methods of publicity were decidedly unique.” The paper explained:

The meetings were thoroughly advertised. Signs were displayed in the street cars. One hundred large posters were displayed by a local agency. A notice was placed among the amusement advertisements. Tracts and cards were prepared and ten special committees were appointed. One committee secured permission to hold

³⁷“Brooklyn’s Great Revival,” *New York Times*, 24 January 1894, p. 8; “Revival Services to Close,” *New York Times*, 28 April 1894, p. 8; “Evangelistic Revival Ended,” *New York Times*, 30 April 1894, p. 2.

services in the mills. Another visited saloons and distributed cards. . . . Permission was secured at several mills and factories, and noon meetings were held with one or two instances of awakened interest, if not of conversion. In one large factory the meetings were not allowed, but access was given to the pay envelopes, in which were inclosed tracts and cards announcing the church services.

Thus, in any way possible the word was spread and the gospel was presented. Yet, these regular ways of getting the word out were not always options. On one occasion a local ordinance prohibited the distribution of cards. Dixon determined to get the word out by using banners. Dixon hired a number of unemployed Christian men to carry banners advertising the campaign. Thus, Dixon had to employ multiple means to announce evangelistic meetings.³⁸

Another means of generating public interest in an evangelist meeting was organizing a procession or parade through town. Some parades were quite large, numbering over two thousand people, which marched with Dixon and other prominent ministers associated with the campaign. Sometimes Dixon marched in a parade associated with an evangelist in town. Once after a Gypsy Smith campaign, Dixon led a procession through town mainly targeting saloons, in order to call men to repentance. A parade often gained attention beyond the man in the street. If a procession were of a large size, the newspaper covered the event and printed an account of it in the newspaper. This brought even greater attention to the campaign for which the parade was organized. Here is a portion from the *Chicago Tribune* of a Dixon-led evangelistic campaign and parade:

³⁸“Revival in the Open Air,” *New York Times*, 7 March 1894, p. 8; “New Moody Church Pastor Starts Strenuous Revival,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 November 1906, p. 9; “One Way of Reaching Outsiders,” *Congregationalist and Christian World*, 15 February 1902, p. 235; “Testimony in Song and Word,” *New York Times*, 3 March 1894, p. 8.

The most strenuous of the Chicago political campaigners will be out-campaigned this evening by evangelistic workers of the Moody Chicago Avenue church.

Transparencies, dodgers, a precession through the streets of the lower north side, and a midnight revival meeting are to be the features of the program, which will constitute the first of a spectacular series of evangelistic services. The plan is the idea of the Rev. A. C. Dixon, who came from Boston recently to assume the Moody pastorate. . . .

At 9:30 the members of the church will start from Chicago and La Salle avenues and, headed by a brass band, will make a circuit of the lower north side, holding impromptu meetings on street corners.

Along the line of march outposts will be sent into saloons and stores with dodgers bearing invitations to the meeting at the church, and men and women will be urged to join the procession.

Parades were not only used by evangelists, they were also employed by politicians. At one point a Dixon-led parade had a standoff with a parade for the Twenty-first Ward Democratic party—when “Onward, Christian Soldiers” faced off against “You’re a Grand Old Flag.” The newspaper recounted the action, saying that “for fully five minutes the two processions faced each other, while a bigger crowd than ever gathered. Then the democratic band yielded in despair, and the church procession turned down Wells street, the political parade being nearly depopulated by desertions to the ranks of the religious workers.” While Dixon was willing to use parades often as a means of gathering a crowd, he also found himself forced to defend the practice. This he did by arguing that scripture said Christians were to “go into highways and hedges.”³⁹

Finally, though there is little reason to believe that it was used more than once, Dixon used a “gospel chariot” in conjunction with an evangelistic campaign. The

³⁹“Notes from Dixon Ministry at Ruggles Street,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 10; “Seek Sinners in Highway,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 January 1907, p. 4; “Gypsy’s Marchers Storm Sin’s Fort,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 October 1909, pp. 1-2; “Dr. Dixon Resigns Pulpit at Moody,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 April 1911, p. 9; “New Moody Church Pastor Starts Strenuous Revival,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 November 1906, p. 9; “Night Parade By Church,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 November 1906, p. 4.

chariot was in charge of Evangelist George W. Schiverea and his daughter, presumably to carry them from the large gospel tent for the afternoon meeting to a nearby church for an evening service. No other details about the chariot were made available. About the chariot the newspaper reported, that “this new agency in the evangelistic work of Brooklyn is proving to be just what was needed to effectively reach the people.”⁴⁰

Keeping the Crowd: Moody and Chapman Keep the Momentum

Dixon understood that part of gathering and maintaining a crowd could be done through association with the biggest names in the evangelical world. Thus, when Dixon proposed building a large structure in New York for interdenominational evangelism, he knew that maintaining such a building would require regular visits from popular evangelists like D. L. Moody, J. Wilbur Chapman, Archibald Brown, and John McNeill. Dixon knew that much of the draw to a place like Northfield required the presence of Moody, R. A. Torrey, Chapman, and many others. Dixon’s campaigns in Chicago involved R. A. Torrey whenever possible. Dixon organized churches in Chicago to take advantage of a Gypsy Smith revival, knowing that after a revival was a prime time for taking advantage of raised spiritual interests. And in London, Dixon urged churches to support a Chapman and Alexander campaign.⁴¹

⁴⁰“New York and Brooklyn,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 25 July 1895, p. 112.

⁴¹“Wants an Auditorium in New York,” *New York Observer*, 9 September 1897, p. 335; “Northfield Conference,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 6 August 1896, p. 211; “Minutes of Executive Committee, Moody Church (1906),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “Minutes of Executive Committee, Moody Church (1907),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “Minutes of Executive Committee, Moody Church (1909),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; Elders Minutes 1914, in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Elders Minutes, 1912-25*, Metropolitan Tabernacle; “A General Evangelistic Movement,”

Being aware that a campaign does well to have a nationally known speaker, Dixon sought to include them whenever he could. If a speaker could not be induced to begin a campaign with Dixon, he would report news of a successful campaign already in progress to convince a speaker to reinforce the efforts and carry it along a bit longer. Dixon was occasionally able to induce a prominent speaker to help inaugurate a campaign. The most notable example of this was Dixon's revival services in Worcester, Massachusetts, when D. L. Moody agreed to help inaugurate the meetings. For a portion of the first four days Moody preached many sermons and Dixon did his part in giving brief addresses before Moody and in speaking to overflow meetings when a building could not accommodate a crowd gathered to hear Moody. After Moody's departure, Dixon continued to address large crowds in the afternoon and evening for more than a week. One meeting was described as having a "mammoth audience" in which Dixon made a "powerful arraignment of infidelity." At the close of this sermon more than one hundred publicly confessed Christ.⁴²

Dixon also used prominent speakers to carry along a campaign already in progress. In one instance Dixon had been preaching at Cooper Union in New York and was reinforced by the preaching of J. Wilbur Chapman, who had been preaching for the weeks prior in Brooklyn. In another instance a campaign organized by Dixon was proceeding well for a number of weeks when the papers announced that Moody may come to town to help. One story covering the campaign announced "Moody May Aid the Revival." Another story a few days later also reported that Moody may come,

Sword and Trowel, n.s., 3 (1915): 169; Scrapbook 1907-1911, Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁴²"Revival in Worcester," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 31 January 1895, p. 156.

saying “Brooklyn may see the great evangelist next week.” The hopes were fulfilled when Moody did come to town and helped carry along the campaign a bit longer. Soon after that Dixon moved his focus to New York City. Here the campaign advanced well also. This campaign also was given a boost by news that Moody planned to come the following week. Moody’s appearance gathered some of the largest crowds Dixon’s New York Campaign had yet seen. It also allowed Dixon to announce future meetings of the campaign. Even after Moody’s departure, crowds of four and five thousand were gathering for the campaign.⁴³

Dixon’s zeal to see souls saved led him out of his church and into the community. Though he desired to see his own church grow, he did not allow that to keep him from working with other churches to grow all the churches in town through interdenominational evangelism. He sought to employ the evangelistic methods of those who had great numeric success, speaking favorably of evangelists George Whitefield, John Wesley, Gypsy Smith, Charles Finney, and especially D. L. Moody. Dixon was not critical of any methods from previous revivals, and sought to be used of God to see revival in his day.⁴⁴ Being a student of methods, Dixon employed those that gathered the largest crowd and was prepared to face any criticism that came his way for methods

⁴³“Evangelistic Work in New York,” *New York Observer*, 21 January 1897, p. 96; “Moody May Aid the Revival,” *New York Times*, 21 January 1894, p. 12; “A Religious Tidal Wave,” *New York Times*, 26 January 1894, p. 8; “Rejoice in Their Well Doing,” *New York Times*, 10 February 1894, p. 8; “Answers to Earnest Prayers,” *New York Times*, 9 March 1894, p. 8; “Moody Tells of the Bible,” *New York Times*, 14 March 1894, p. 8.

⁴⁴Dixon understood that most who sought revival in his day were following in the footsteps of Charles Finney. He explained, “May I call you attention to a little book, *Revivals of Religion*, written by Charles G. Finney. Many other books have been written on the subject, but most of them are borrowed from this. This book made D. L. Moody an evangelist, and it has been the textbook of all great evangelists since the time when God moved the world, especially the New World, through the preaching of this remarkable man.” See “How a Revival Started,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 3.

considered unique or unusual. Dixon's methods did draw large crowds and led to the profession of faith of a very large number.

Evangelism was central to Dixon's pastoral commitment. He should be understood as a pastor-evangelist rather than a fighting fundamentalist. The greater part of his life was spent in planning and executing evangelism for himself, his church, and his community. Just as with his pastoral ministry, Dixon evangelized through preaching an authoritative and trustworthy word while depending on God to work through prayer. Dixon's commitment to a traditional understanding of the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible did affect the message he preached: he preached the faith once for all delivered to the saints. But Dixon's fundamentalism did not lock him in traditional methods for reaching the lost. Dixon was modern in evangelistic method.

CHAPTER 5

DEPENDENCE UPON GOD: PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Prayer at the Center of the Ministry

A. C. Dixon believed that the difference between success and failure in any endeavor was the blessings of God. God wanted Christians to see themselves weak and needing his power. Dixon explained that “what we need above all things is to realize that we are weak, and that God’s strength waits to be made perfect in our weakness, for He prefers faith in Him to any sort of reliance upon ourselves.” This feeling of dependence characterized Dixon’s life and explains why he believed that prayer must be at the center of the ministry. The prayer meeting was the most important service of the church and Dixon’s visits in the homes of his people included “direct, earnest prayer.” Dixon emphasized the central importance of prayer through the following line of reasoning, a variation of which he repeated in a number of sermons:

At the back of everything that is worth while in Christian work is prayer. If we trust in our sermons, we will get what the sermon can produce, and that may be a little, for the Truth itself is powerful. If we trust in our organisation, we will get what the organisation can do. If we trust in our money, we will get what money can do, and that is not to be despised. If we trust in our social position, we will get what that can do. But if we trust God, we will get what He can do, and God works in answer to prayer.

Dixon stressed his point that the church must rely on prayer rather than activity, saying, “If I had to choose between a praying church—a church on its knees—and an active church, I would take the praying church, because then God acts, God will work.”¹

Dixon organized others in evangelistic efforts. He implemented a well-organized campaign as often as he could. Dixon claimed however that he did not rely on organization. Organization was fine as far as it went, and God may be pleased to bless that organization to the conversion of souls, yet if any soul would be saved it would only happen by God at work. When Dixon went to Metropolitan Tabernacle he called the church to join him in soul-winning: “I ask you, and I put my heart’s blood into the request—to join with me in a strenuous soul-winning campaign. We can organise, but that does not produce power. Long since I have ceased to trust in organisation for success.” Rather, Dixon depended on God in prayer. Thus, he led his church to emphasize the prayer meeting of the church. Dixon taught that in prayer the church accessed the power necessary for soul-winning. Dixon became convinced that God showed his power in answer to prayer when as a young minister he prayed to baptize exactly one hundred people before he left for seminary and God answered his prayer.²

¹Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Milk and Meat: Twenty-four Sermons* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Co., 1893), 105; “Mr. Alfred Bagby,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 4; “Bible and Newspaper,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 4; also see sermon preached by A. C. Dixon on 1 May 1912 from Acts 6:9, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 1; “A Song of Victory,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 1. For more on prayer among American Evangelicals, see Rick Ostrander, “The Practice of Prayer in a Modern Age: Liberals, Fundamentalists, and Prayer in the Early Twentieth Century,” in Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, Leigh E. Schmidt, and Mark Valeri, *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America, 1630-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Rick Ostrander, *Life of Prayer in a World of Science: Protestants, Prayer, and American Culture, 1870-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²“Dr. Dixon and the Flowing Tide at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,” in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 5.

Dixon defined prayer carefully: “Prayer is asking God to give or do something within the circle of His will, specified by the will and wish of man, in the name of Christ, that the Father may be glorified, while we are in fellowship with God and with one another.” Dixon wanted his people to believe that God would answer prayer, while mindful that all must pray in the character of God. Dixon explained, “it would be unfitting to ask a man to steal in the name of an honest man, or to lie in the name of One who is Truth, or to be impure in the name of the Most Holy One.” Therefore, the Christian should ask according to the character of God and according to the will of God as revealed in the Bible. Yet, once this was established, he must pray confident that God would answer. Dixon kept a prayer journal during his early years of ministry. In it he wrote the names of particular individuals to whom he had spoken about salvation and were not saved. Years later, Dixon reviewed the journal and was reminded of answered prayers as many of the names had a date opposite indicating the date of conversion. Dixon believed in the necessary power of God for the conversion of souls and lived that belief out in his faithful prayer for the conversion of individuals.³

Dixon believed in the power of prayer. He believed that “prayer is the key to success. Not to pray is to fail.” Thus, he taught his people to learn to pray as Jesus had taught His disciples. And having taught them what to pray, warned that many do not fail primarily at not knowing what to pray, but in failing to pray altogether. Too many let other good things take the place of time in prayer. This must not be so for the Christian. Dixon urged, “We must take time to do it, for God works in answer to prayer,

³“The Power of Prayer,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 4; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Young Convert's Problems and Their Solution* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1906), 42; “Testimony Sent by Mr. Norman H. Camp,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 1.

and God at work is our greatest need.” Dixon warned that it was dangerous to not pray and that it dishonored God. Dixon argued, “God is King, and it is right for a king to hear and answer the petitions of his subjects. Prayerlessness ignores, if it does not despise, the ruler of the universe by refusing to consult or petition him about any need or grievance.” Dixon taught that God was willing to make his resources available to His subjects, reminding that that God had promised to supply all needs according to his riches in glory. Why would anyone fail to make a petition? Dixon concluded, “prayerlessness is, indeed, disloyalty to the King of the Universe. . . . Not to pray is, therefore, to live an unethical life in our relations to God and man, in that we are not doing what we ought to do.”⁴

Because of his strong belief in the necessity and power of prayer, Dixon sought to keep it at the center of his church ministry. When Dixon came to Moody Church in Chicago he opted to forgo the regular welcome meeting associated with greeting a new pastor. In its place, Dixon urged the church to participate in a day of prayer, to last from 10 o’clock in the morning to 9 o’clock in the evening. This matched Dixon’s meeting with the Moody Church Executive Committee held weeks before he officially began his tenure as pastor. In that meeting he urged the committee on the issues of prayer and soul-winning. When Dixon went to London, he also urged the deacons and elders in the matter of prayer and suggested a day of prayer for the church near the beginning of his ministry at Metropolitan Tabernacle.⁵

⁴“Dr. Dixon and the Flowing Tide at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,” in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 5; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Through Night to Morning* (London: Robert Scott, 1913), 112-26; “The Ethics of Prayer,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 15, folder 1.

⁵“Moody Church Pastor Here,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 October 1906, p. 7; “Minutes of Executive Committee Moody Church (1906),” Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center

So central was prayer for Dixon, that he called it the primary business of the church: "If I understand the teaching of the Bible, the primary business of the church of Christ is intercession." By this he did not just mean individual members praying, but groups of believers joined together for the particular purpose of prayer. Though Dixon believed in accurate proclamation of the Bible, he held that the proclamation alone would not result in salvation. Dixon once argued that "there has been enough preaching in Boston to save everybody in it if they could be saved by an intellectual process." The solution to the problem was not just more preaching, but more prayer. Dixon urged his hearers, saying, "They know how to be saved, and what we need is to get on our knees according to God's method that God may work in answer to intercessory prayers. . . . The individual has power with God, but it is the social prayer that brings revival; it is the getting together and uniting heart to heart, and persisting along the lines of prayer, that lifts us and fires us for soul-winning work." Dixon believed that God worked in response to prayer, but the greater work was done when the church gathered to pray together. The church should not fail to do her part by faithfully praying for the conversion of souls. If a church were to fail to pray, it should expect that God would not work in it. Dixon explained: "Prayer is the biggest thing in the Church of God, for it is the thing through which God Himself works. The activities of God are linked with prayer, and when the Church ceases to pray God ceases to work."⁶

Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; Deacons Minutes 1911, Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons Minutes, 1909-1913, Metropolitan Tabernacle.

⁶"The Living Christ in Prayer," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 4; "Religious Conditions in Europe," *Zion's Herald*, 11 October 1905, p. 1292; "The Mission of the Church," Amzi

Prayer behind Every Revival: Praying for Revival

Dixon was committed to soul-winning and dependence on God in prayer. This led to much prayer related to the conversion of souls. Dixon believed that God brought revival in answer to prayer, thus Dixon was tireless in his prayer for revival. At Moody Church, Dixon met every Saturday with the same men to pray for world-wide revival. He was confident that revival would come only through prayer. When he conducted evangelistic efforts within the church he asked the church to pray that God would work through it. He specifically asked for prayer for the workers in the campaign. Before one month of soul-winning emphasis at Moody Church Dixon asked the church members to “pray constantly for the enduement of the Holy Spirit upon speakers, singers, and personal workers.” The church members were to believe that it was their duty to support the campaign with their prayers. In his Pastor’s Address at the Annual Church Meeting at Metropolitan Tabernacle, Dixon thanked the church members for past prayer related to evangelistic efforts and challenged them pray specifically for an upcoming evangelistic campaign:

I thank God for the group of prayerful Christians who meet every day at noon for intercession. We are very grateful for the gracious prayer meetings Monday and Saturday evenings, and are encouraged by increased attendance on Thursday evenings; but if the Metropolitan Tabernacle Church fails to respond to our appeal for prayer circles in our homes at least once a week during March we shall be greatly disappointed, for we believe that the success of the Mission will depend upon this special preparation more than upon any other feature. If we are not willing to assume this additional burden for special intercession, I fear that we may not have a special blessing. Our hope is in God, who has plainly taught us that His method of preparation for revival is by prayer and supplication.⁷

Clarence Dixon Collection, box 24, folder 4; “The Power of Prayer,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 4.

⁷“Annual Church Meeting Monday,” 21 February 1916, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 3. Also see “The Family Altar,” *Moody Church Herald*, November 1909, pp. 174-83; “Testimony Sent by Mr. Norman H. Camp,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 1.

The necessity of prayer was a regular feature of Dixon's teaching on revival and soul-winning. Dixon believed that revival and the conversion of souls happened in answer to prayer. He taught that this was the secret to revival, as no revival would come without it. He taught that evangelism "which brought results in the salvation of thousands, as revealed to us in the New Testaments, was God's search for man through prayer, preaching and testimony." And prayer was instrumental in the great religious movements throughout the centuries. Dixon pointed to examples like the apostles at Pentecost, Luther and Melanchthon in the Reformation, and the revivals under Wesley, Whitefield, Finney, and Moody. Dixon argued that "there never was a genuine revival of Christianity which did not have its roots in prayer."⁸

Dixon first came to believe that prayer was necessary for revival due to two experiences in his own life. The first was at a series of meetings held at an old schoolhouse near Bear Marsh Church in North Carolina in 1874. Many professed Christ and forty-one were added to the church during the two-week revival. After the revival Dixon found that a woman who told him she had prayed for the meetings every day. This woman's testimony first convinced Dixon that God sent revival in answer to intercessory prayer.⁹

The second incident was when Dixon was asked to preach at the old First Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. Dixon was near twenty years old at the time and hesitant to accept the invitation. Unrelated to the invitation, Dixon accompanied a group

⁸Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Evangelism Old and New: God's Search for Man in All Ages* (New York: American Tract Society, 1905), 34-35, 192.

⁹"The Early Years of Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; "Amzi Clarence Dixon," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 6; "The Power of Prayer," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 4.

of men to Concord, North Carolina for three days of waiting upon the Lord. The small group of men spent their days in Bible study and prayer. Here, Dixon explained, “There came to us a new experience, a new vision. On the last afternoon of those three days, as we were in Bible study and prayer together, the spirit of humiliation, of broken-heartedness for sin, came upon us with such quiet, overwhelming power, that some of the brethren fell on their faces upon the floor. There was no disturbance, no noise. The feeling was too deep for noise. It seemed that the surges of eternity were rolling over our souls.” Dixon left that meeting and proceeded to Richmond with no fear of failure. In Richmond, Dixon explained, “God came with His mighty power, and gave us a revival that swept into the kingdom over one hundred men and women of strength in the community.” Again, Dixon had his confirmation that God was pleased to bless petitioning him in prayer, especially from a group of people meeting together, with divine power for the salvation of many souls.¹⁰

Dixon also saw dependence upon God in prayer for revival in the lives of those whom he respected. When Dixon was with Moody at the campaign associated with the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893, Dixon heard Moody pray privately before God about the campaign. Dixon recounted that “[Moody] just told God his inmost soul. There was such a familiarity and such an awe and adoration.” R. A. Torrey also believed that his success in revival ministry was based on prayer. Dixon

¹⁰“The Living Christ in Prayer,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 4. This appears to be the first of two revivals for Dixon in Richmond, Virginia. According to Dixon’s memory, this first one was near 1874 and resulted in one hundred conversions. A later revival in Richmond, near 1882, was said to result in about seventy conversions and lead to Dixon’s call to Immanuel Baptist Church in Baltimore. For the 1882 revival, see J. G. Pulliam to Mrs. A. C. Dixon, 8 April 1929, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 33, folder 3; “From an Unknown Country Parish to the World’s Metropolis,” *The Moody Church Herald*, June 1911, p. 107; Helen (Cadbury) Alexander Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1931), 82-84.

knew Torrey was a man convinced of the need of prayer for his ministry. Dixon heard this from Torrey himself, who explained that the only reason God blessed him with the salvation of so many souls was because of prayers. Torrey believed he was a relatively poor preacher, but had a large number of people praying for him. Dixon recounted Torrey's explanation of his success: "over ten thousand people in the world are praying for R. A. Torrey, and R. A. Torrey, with all his limitations, has learned that God hears him." Dixon reflected on Torrey's words, saying "That is the secret of it, brethren, R. A. Torrey has got hold of God in the ministry of prayer."¹¹

Dixon believed that a survey of the New Testament and church history would confirm that God sends revival in response to prayer. Though Dixon did not discount the importance of sound preaching for revival, he put a higher priority on prayer. Dixon argued, "How much prayer did it take to produce Pentecost? Ten days . . . How much preaching did it take to produce Pentecost? About ten minutes. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost before the Holy Spirit fell upon them was less than ten minutes long. . . . We are so apt to think we have to preach up a revival, but Pentecost comes from praying down a revival." Prayer was behind the great historical revivals as well. Dixon insisted that prayer was the difference in the many revivals the church has experienced through the ages:

It was not the thunderbolt of Luther's anathema, but the power of persistent prayer that broke the arm of the papacy. Back of the great revival under the Wesleys and Whitefield was prayer. The habit of John Wesley was to rise for prayer and meditation every morning at four o'clock and it is known that he carried around with him a godly old man to pray while he preached. Back of the revival under Finney were the prayers of Abel Clary and the invalid saints whose diaries were found by Mr. Finney to record the fact that they were praying for him on the very

¹¹"D. L. Moody," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3; "Religious Conditions in Europe," *Zion's Herald*, 11 October 1905, p. 1292.

days on which the blessing came. Back of the revival of 1857 were the Fulton Street Noon Meetings. . . . Back of the great Moody revival was the man who came from his knees to the platform.

Dixon also believed that prayer was behind many other religious events. Dixon explained, “John Livingston preached and five hundred were converted. He had spent the previous night in prayer. Jonathan Edwards preached and awkwardly held up his manuscript to the light while the people held to the backs of the pews and trembled with fear. A little band of members had been praying all night before, and continued their prayer till the hour of service. Spurgeon’s prayers in the little room above his pulpit explained his tongue of fire as he preached to thousands in the Tabernacle.” In fact, Dixon believed that every revival could be traced back to prayer: “If you trace all the Revivals, from Pentecost to the present time, you will find that they have been God’s public answer to the prayer in secret.”¹²

For this reason Dixon frequently encouraged others to pray for revival and the conversion of souls because any success in these areas depended upon it. Though believers organized for evangelism, and Dixon believed it was good and necessary, they must not rely on organization to bring revival. The key was prayer. Dixon challenged the readers of *Sword and Trowel* to believe that God could bring in a large number of converts and “he is waiting to do it through our prayers and testimony. Are you willing to fulfill the conditions, first of coming together for prayer, and then of pleading with the people in public and private to ‘behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’?” Dixon taught that certain conditions preceded a revival: prayer and

¹²“The Living Christ in Prayer,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 4; “Soul-Winning,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 1; “Our Field Glass,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (1913): 84-91; “The Power of Prayer,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 4; Dixon, *Evangelism Old and New*, 34-35, 192.

evangelism. Dixon called prayer the secret to power. God Himself is the power that must move if evangelism is to have success. Dixon often compared the power of God to the power of a steam engine, electricity, or a great waterfall like Niagara Falls. This power must be used. Behind all these earthly forces “is the omnipotent arm of God. Prayer moves that, and prayer is the channel through which God’s almightiness flows.” Without prayer the believers would not have access to the mighty power of God. Through prayer, Christians can appropriate this power and put it in service of God.¹³

Dixon impressed on his people the importance of praying that God would bless the proclamation of the word. He gave priority to group prayer over individual prayer, though he did not despise the latter. Dixon encouraged the invalid to take advantage of his providential circumstance so that he may more fully be devoted to intercessory prayer. Other men are so busy with the responsibilities of life, that less time can be devoted to prayer. Yet, great benefit can come from one devoted to prayer. Dixon explained that “I have heard a Pastor who was surprised by a sudden revival in his Church. He learned the secret of it while paying a pastoral call. He found an invalid member had a long list for prayer, whom she mentioned over each day to God, and checked off each name as they were converted.” Yet, more than private prayer, Dixon encouraged group prayer for revival. The prayer of a few may be used to bring revival to a few, but greater work would be done through more prayer. Thus, Dixon encouraged group prayer for revival. At one Bible League Summer Conference, Dixon urged the

¹³“Soul-Winning,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 1; “A Glorious Consummation—And Now What?” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 2 (1914): 201; “A Worshipper,” *Baptist Times and Freeman*, 13 January 1911, p. 20; “Winning Souls,” *Sword and Trowel* 47 (1911): 285; “The Utility of Prayer,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1914): 276-77; Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Baltimore: Wharton, Barron & Co, 1890), 1-7.

audience to group prayer, saying “great revivals go forward through Christians meeting together for prayer. I do not know an exception. We ought to be in the inner chamber dealing with God. But inner chamber praying does not carry forward revivals. It may begin a revival, it may produce it in your heart, and in the hearts of a few. . . . Hence the need of Christians getting together for prayer. . . . When any two agree, it shall be done. When two thousand agree, what will be done? God waits upon us.” Dixon taught that the revival was likely to be as wide as the group praying for revival: “church revival along the line of church prayer; and community revival along the line of community prayer. The revival usually is just about as wide and deep as the prayer.”¹⁴

Depending on God for the Conversion of Souls

Dixon understood that God saved souls through human agency. Teaching on the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, Dixon explained the interplay between man and God in the salvation of souls: “No one is ready for the work of raising and restoring bones till he has learned that divine forces respond to the call of human need; that heaven has opened earthward, and God Himself is now at work in His world.” Dixon understood that the evangelist must call on God to work, then God must do the work that only He can do in raising up dead souls. He argued that “you cannot make bones live by manipulation. Only the touch of God through human agency can do that. In Christianity God has linked Himself with man, and would use him for the regeneration

¹⁴Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Bright Side of Life* (Greenville, SC: S. W. Partridge and Co, n.d.), 31-32; “The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 5; “Lessons from Pentecost,” *The Christian*, 30 July 1914, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 3.

of his fellows.” Thus, man prays for God to work through him and then faithfully brings the gospel message, while relying on God to save the lost soul.¹⁵

Dixon believed that prayer and soul winning necessarily went together. The best way to pray often was to seek to win souls often. Dixon explained that “if you have soul-winning in view all the time you cannot be dependent on yourself.” Christians realized that need of God when they talked to an unbeliever about Jesus. “You are in the biggest work in the world, and the work which only God is equal to. . . . Therefore in order to have a prayerful life, you must have a soul-winning life.” Dixon believed that when he dealt with an unbeliever, he was dealing with one who needed to be raised from the dead. As a Christian, Dixon understood that he must seek to win souls. Thus, he worked to organize evangelistic events so that the gospel might be heard by many unbelievers. This was not enough however. Dixon explained that these efforts ought to be made, “but that does not raise dead souls. You can go talk as loud as you like, but they are dead still.” A Christian must go to God in prayer, believing that God hears, before he goes out and speaks the word, in order that those who are dead may be reached and brought to life.¹⁶

Dixon prayed because he understood that it was the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the unbeliever of sin. The Spirit does not convict of sin in general, but of the sin of unbelief in particular. Dixon explained, “it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict of the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ. It is a great sin.” Only those who were shown their sin and need of a Savior could be brought to repentance. One would not be

¹⁵Dixon, *Evangelism Old and New*, 16-31.

¹⁶“Soul-Winning,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 1; “The Power of Prayer,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 4; Dixon, *Milk and Meat*, 138.

convinced of their need of salvation merely by the example of a Christian living uprightly: “Good influence will not of itself win a soul. God must give the new heart. . . . Only the Creator can make a new creation.” In God working through man for the conversion of souls, God was pleased for man to confess his own inability, and his subsequent dependence upon Him for the conversion of souls.¹⁷

Dixon’s understanding that God must give sight to blind eyes led him also to encourage unbelievers to pray that God might grant them sight. In a sermon on beholding the Lamb of God, Dixon closed the sermon by urging the unbeliever desiring sight to “make an effort of the will. Ask Him to save; ask Him to give you a vision of the Lamb that bears away the sin of the world. ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’ That is the appeal of a blind man for sight, and to appeal is to get the sight just as soon as he appeals. Will you strive to make an honest effort now to behold Him, and we Christians will trust God to give you a vision of the Lamb as it had been slain.”¹⁸

Seeking the Power of God for Service: The Enduement of the Holy Spirit

Dixon believed that God must save souls. But he also understood that God worked through means. In particular, God worked through individuals. Thus individuals must prepare themselves for and seek after God’s power to work through them. They needed enduement. Enduement was the filling of an individual by the Holy Spirit for service rendered to God. A person should seek enduement through prayer and

¹⁷“The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 5; “Soul-Winning,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 15, folder 1; “The Vision of God and Man,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 15, folder 1; “International SS Lesson (1882),” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 1a.

¹⁸“Behold the Lamb of God,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 24, folder 4.

right living. Dixon urged those who wished that God would pour His power into them to “seek the best character possible.” Those of upright character are of the type that God will fill with His Spirit.¹⁹

Dixon’s understanding about enduement for service followed the teaching of the early Keswick movement, especially from 1875 through 1920. The typical Keswick week was composed of five days, each with its own emphasis: sin, God’s provision for victorious Christian living, consecration, Spirit-filling, and powerful Christian service. According to Keswick teaching, Christians must counteract the sin in their lives. The Christian must not be satisfied with a weak and defeated Christian life, but must strive for an extraordinary and powerful life. The powerful Christian life is achieved by appropriating God’s power by faith alone. Once the Christian surrenders to God, he can be filled with the Spirit. The Spirit-filled Christian may be used mightily by the power of the Spirit to serve God.²⁰

Dixon understood enduement to be necessary for all believers. No believer should expect to be used of God for much good without this enduement. Dixon’s understanding of the necessity of enduement was rooted in Jesus’ words in Luke 24:49, “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost it fulfilled the Acts 1:5 promise for baptism, and throughout the book of Acts when people were filled with the Spirit’s power for service, it fulfilled the Luke 24:49 promise for “power from on high.” Thus, Dixon made a

¹⁹Dixon, *Milk and Meat*, 133-43.

²⁰Andrew David Naselli, “Keswick Theology: A Historical and Theological Survey and Analysis of the Doctrine of Sanctification in the Early Keswick Movement, 1875-1920” (Ph.D. diss., Bob Jones University, 2006); Mark A. Snoeberger, “Definitive Sanctification: Threading a Path between Legal Fiction and Works Righteousness” (Ph.D. diss., Baptist Bible Seminary, Clark Summit, PA, 2008).

distinction between “baptism of the Holy Spirit” which happened just at Pentecost, and what he was teaching as enduement, an appropriation of the Spirit who is present with power in the world. Dixon believed this enduement of the Spirit was the secret behind the early spread of the gospel. Believers must appropriate the power that is already here. Since the Spirit is in the world with power, it is the duty of each believer to seek the enduement of the Spirit in his life for power for service. Those that realize that God alone can save dead souls should seek God’s power to work through them. Dixon gave the three-fold method by which the Spirit could be appropriated: (1) by faith, (2) hand in hand with the Word, and (3) personal character. First, faith is necessary because it acts as “the connecting wire between the battery of God’s power and the hearts of men.” God always has omnipotent power, and it is the faith of God’s people that puts this power to work for the accomplishment of His purpose. Second, the Word is necessary because it is the Spirit’s sword. The mere words of men lack the authority and power of the Word of God. Thus, one must speak the Word of God in order that people should be moved. Third, character is necessary because “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2 Chr 16:9).²¹

Enduement can be hindered in many ways, and a believer should be on the lookout for these hindrances, in order to avoid them. Working against enduement are

²¹Dixon, *The Young Convert’s Problems*, 1-8. In another place, Dixon gave this guide from the story of Elijah and Elisha about how people should seek this power: (1) intensely desire it—only those who seek this enduement above everything else will receive it in fullness, (2) patiently wait upon God—it is those who today walk with God that will receive the mantle of power, (3) by appropriation—one must expect the Spirit to bless him and believe that He is with him and ready to work through his faith, and (4) using at once the faith and consecration you have—believe that the reign of the Spirit is the reign of power and make your expectations great and your plans large; see Dixon, *Milk and Meat*, 133-43. On the three-fold method of appropriating the Spirit, see Dixon, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 1-8.

the hindrances of sin, satisfaction with weakness, unbelief which quenches the fire of the Spirit, ignorance of the power of the Spirit, pride in what we have and vanity in what we think we have but do not have, and false expectations of a feeling of personal strength, rather than a feeling of weakness through with God shows Himself strong. These hindrances must be acknowledged and put away from us, that a believer may yield his will and plans to God. Yet, “above all” one must “wait upon God in prayer.” God must grant this enduement, and He does so in response to prayers for it. Additionally, a believer must avoid unrighteousness. Dixon explained, “Our power is in proportion to our inner isolation from the world . . . the current of God’s power does not fill us, because we are too close to the earth—its vanities, its pleasures, its ambitions.” Thus, the believer must put away these hindrances, and seek the enduement from on high, by “keep[ing] close to it in prayer and the study of God’s Word.”²²

Each man must seek the enduement of the Spirit in his own life. He must pursue it by faith, waiting on God, and upright living. He must understand that any sin that goes unchecked will weaken the work of the Spirit in him. Dixon argued, “The consumption of unbelief, self-seeking, or any other sin may so congest our capacity for receiving the Spirit that He can occupy only a part of our being.” Thus, a man will be of little use in the service of God.²³

At this point it is right to notice an argument of Dixon that will be picked up again in the next chapter: the correlation between enduement and unrighteous living. Dixon considered enduement as necessary to effective evangelism. He also considered

²²Dixon, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 1-8.

²³Dixon, *The Young Convert’s Problems*, 4.

unrighteous living to hinder enduement. Thus, when Dixon spoke against liquor or dancing, he had enduement partially in view. A man who engaged in unrighteous living should not expect enduement, thus should not expect to be of much use in saving souls.

Returning to Dixon's teaching on enduement, he believed that every Christian had received the Holy Spirit when he was saved. Yet, what was needed was to receive "the Holy Spirit by whom we are endued with power for service in saving others." It was the difference between "in" and "upon." Dixon explained, "Every regenerate child of God has the life of the Spirit *in* him, but the child of God must receive that Holy Spirit by an act of faith if he would have the power *upon* him."²⁴

Dixon taught that God was present in the world with great power, and his power was available to the church. God may do great things through the church, "but His power depends upon the channels of faith and faithfulness through which He flows in our lives." The Holy Spirit is like the sun that is always shining, but only filling the souls of those who keep the windows open. The Spirit is like the reservoir through which we obtain a constant water supply through the channels of faith. Dixon clarified that "to drop all figures of speech and state a blessed fact, the Holy Spirit is God with us all the time, inviting us to work with Him in omnipotent power for the salvation of the lost and the upbuilding of the saved."²⁵

Dixon did not believe that enduement was merely for the purpose of personal holiness, that is, a spiritual blessing that one would keep to himself. He always spoke of it as enduement for service, or enduement for the purpose of serving God. He explicitly

²⁴Emphasis added. See Dixon, *Evangelism Old and New*, 112-13.

²⁵Dixon, *The Young Convert's Problems*, 4-5.

excluded the idea that enduement meant a “second blessing” or “sinless perfection.” And though Dixon did believe in the enduement of the Spirit for the building up of other believers, he usually spoke of it as enduement for soul-winning. The great need of enduement was for the purpose of evangelism. Dixon explained that “God does not give us the Holy Spirit merely that we may be happy, or even that we may be personally holy. He gives to us His Holy Spirit for the specific purpose that we may be fitted for His work, the work of witnessing for our Lord. So it is perfectly futile for any to pray for the Holy Spirit if they are not willing to be used as witnesses.” Though the Spirit may bring joy into a believer’s life and grant victory over sin, if one seeks the Holy Spirit only for those purposes, he will not receive the Spirit.²⁶

Enduement of the Holy Spirit was needed in all areas of the church’s life. Dixon taught that the minister needed the enduement of the Holy Spirit while preaching. This was true of the weekly meetings and the evangelistic campaigns. Each believer needed to be endued with the Holy Spirit as he evangelized at work or in his neighborhood. The enduement was important in the large church service and in the small home prayer meeting. In every way, a believer was dependent on the enduement of the Holy Spirit for service. Yet, enduement did not negate means. In fact, enduement proved that means were necessary. The Holy Spirit has omnipotent power, but may be “unable to do might works because of our unbelief,” consequently, we have no

²⁶“Our Primary Work,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1915): 133-34; Dixon, *The Young Convert’s Problems*, 6.

endowment, resulting in quenching the Spirit. Additionally, the means the evangelist must use was important: the evangelist must preach the Word of God.²⁷

Dixon's conviction of the necessity of endowment made him determined to be personally endued. Dixon asked for the prayers of his people, that they would be faithful to pray that he be endued by the Holy Spirit for the work of the ministry God had given to him.²⁸ Yet, he also called people everywhere to seek endowment for themselves. This he did in sermons, in newspaper and other printed media, and as an invitation at the end of services. In one sermon at Metropolitan Tabernacle, Dixon urged his hearers to seek endowment right then, saying, "It is possible right here to be endued with power from on high. It is a passive reception. It is an appropriation. . . . You realize that you are a weak, helpless, poor Christian. That you are saved but not serving." This idea of weakness showed just how important it was to be endued. If one could minister well in his own power, then endowment would be less essential. Yet, since human activity was impotent and man was in need of God's supernatural power, endowment was essential.²⁹

Another important distinction was having Christ for salvation, while still lacking endowment. Dixon asked, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you accepted Christ, when you believed? Or did you just take Christ for salvation, and forget to

²⁷"Chapman-Alexander Mission at Metropolitan Tabernacle," *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1914): 68; "Revival in the Home," *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (1913): 119-20; Dixon, *The Young Convert's Problems*, 3; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Heaven on Earth* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897), 82.

²⁸"Our Field Glass," *Sword and Trowel* 48 (1912): 149-54; *Moody Church Herald*, 15 August 1906, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 14, folder 3.

²⁹"Endued with Power From on High," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 4; "Power From on High," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 3; "Heard Messages of Comfort," *New York Times*, 17 March 1894, p. 8.

receive the Holy Ghost for power? You came to Christ just as you were—as a lost sinner—and were saved. Now, come to the Father just as you are, as a poor, useless Christian, and He will endue you with power from this very moment.” Dixon himself believed he had done just that, he had received Christ at age eleven. Yet, it was years later when he preached to a rough university crowd that he realized he was powerless to reach them himself. It was in that circumstance, after a sleepless night and a full day of prayer and Scripture reading, that God “gave [him] such a vision as a result of that day’s experience of the Holy Spirit as my Power.” That evening, Dixon preached with confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit and many university students were converted.³⁰

Enduement was not a once-for-all-time experience. It was something that would come for some time, and later be lost. Thus, the believer was encouraged to be in regular petition to God that he be endued by the Spirit. At the same time, Dixon did have one particular experience which he considered to be the crowning moment of surrender to the Spirit. This happened to Dixon at Keswick. The first preacher of the night preached a simple sermon on the subject of “wood, hay, and stubble” burned up, and the “gold and silver and precious stones” revealed. The second preacher of the night was A. T. Pierson. As Pierson came up to preach he relayed the effect the first sermon had upon him and confessed the presence of wood, hay and stubble in his own

³⁰“What Every Christian Needs,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 23, folder 4; Sermon preached by A. C. Dixon on 6 May 1917 from Acts 19:2, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 1; Sermon preached by A. C. Dixon on 27 May 1917 from Acts 2:1-3, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 1; “Pentecost in Jerusalem in A. D. 33, and Wales and in Keswick A. D. 1905, Can There Be a Pentecost in New England?” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 1; “What is Pentecost?” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 4.

life. This was followed by thousands standing to weep and confess their sins. This had a profound effect on Dixon. Dixon explained,

I never felt so mean, so selfish, so weak, so sinful. I declare I felt like going off and putting my head in a dark hole, as the appropriate place for me to stay. I got a glimpse of the glorified Christ, and of the possibilities through the Holy Ghost, as I never had before. It kept me awake that night; and for days afterwards, in the quiet of my study, as God talked to me out of the Word, I had a new experience. . . . I did not surrender to Christ consciously again—I had done that; but I did surrender to the Holy Spirit for work and sacrifice, and for anything. . . . I have the consciousness as never before of surrendering to the Holy Spirit. You call that the second blessing, do you? I think it is the third or fourth, or about the twenty-fifth, I have had, and that is not the last of it; I am looking for more yet.³¹

At that moment, Dixon explained, he was surrendered to be used by God in any way He saw fit. This feeling of surrender, a willingness to “be the dust under the feet of Jesus, if He would just come and walk upon me,” was also accompanied by great joy. There was a joy that “filled me unutterably full.” It was a joy that did not continue indefinitely, yet the surrender remained with Dixon throughout his life.³²

In having a crowning moment of surrender, Dixon was explaining an experience similar to those expressed by others near him, such as Moody and Torrey. In calling people to seek the enduement of the Spirit, Dixon would often remind his hearers that the enduement of the Spirit was behind the ministerial success of great evangelists. In fact, the experience of many great men of God was being brought to the point of failure and humiliation so that they felt the need of the Spirit. “Charles G. Finney, D. L. Moody, Evan Roberts, R. A. Torrey, and many others, distinguished as soul-winners, passed from an experience of weakness to power with God and men by definitely

³¹“Religious Conditions in Europe,” *Zion's Herald*, 11 October 1905, p. 1292.

³²“Pentecost in Jerusalem in A. D. 33, and Wales and in Keswick A. D. 1905, Can There Be a Pentecost in New England?” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 1.

receiving the Holy Spirit for service.” Each had an experience like his Keswick experience, a defining moment when the surrender to the Spirit first occurred. “Chas. G. Finney, the great American evangelist, knew the very day and hour when the Holy Spirit came upon him for service. D. L. Moody knew not only the day and hour, but the very place.”³³

In calling men to seek enduement, Moody was a regular point of reference. Dixon believed that this evangelist, so greatly used of God, had the enduement of the Spirit as the secret behind his success. Dixon knew of Moody’s own crowning point of surrender, which he would on occasion recount: “Mr. Moody, while walking down a street in New York, received by a definite act of faith the Holy Spirit for power and he was so filled and thrilled that he could not explain his feelings. He rarely ever spoke about it. It was a Holy of Holies into which he would not take many people, but he received by a definite act of faith the Holy Spirit for power as he had received Jesus Christ for salvation.”³⁴

Dixon knew himself to not be alone in a crowning experience of surrender. He also knew himself to not be alone in calling people to seek the enduement of the Spirit. Before Dixon, Moody had preached on the importance of enduement. This enduement was a separate experience from conversion. It was an enduement that led to

³³Dixon, *The Young Convert’s Problems*, 6; “Moody Church,” *Moody Church Herald*, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3; sermon preached by A. C. Dixon on 27 May 1917 from Acts 2:1-3, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 1; “What is Pentecost?” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 4. For Moody on enduement, see D. L. Moody, “The Gift of the Holy Spirit,” in J. S. Ogilvie, *Ten Days with D. L. Moody: Comprising a Collection of His Sermons, Also Sermons and Addresses by Prominent Christian Workers at the Christian Convention Held at Northfield, Mass., the Home of D. L. Moody* (New York: J. S. Ogilvie and Company, 1886), 119-42.

³⁴“Moody Church,” *Moody Church Herald*, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 2, folder 3.

service of God. It was not a one-time experience, but should be repeated many times throughout the life of a believer. It was not perfectionism.³⁵

Dixon had many opportunities to hear Moody speak about enduement and to be near Keswick influence through his participation with the Bible Conferences such as Northfield. Dixon's first time to attend Northfield was 1885. This year's conference included addresses by friends of Keswick, A. T. Pierson, and George C. Needham. The last day of the conference was "devoted to the contemplation and invocation of the Holy Spirit." On that day, Moody's address was said to be "superhuman." A prayer of special blessing was given on all those present.³⁶

Soon after his first trip to Northfield, Dixon hosted two separate conferences on the Holy Spirit, in Baltimore in 1890 and Brooklyn in 1894. Dixon's teaching on the Holy Spirit in general, and enduement in particular, in the years that followed the conferences was very similar to the sermons preached at the conferences. A few years after the second conference, Dixon invited prominent Keswick speaker, F. B. Meyer, to speak at Hanson Place Baptist Church on the subject of Keswick teaching.³⁷

³⁵T. J. Shanks, *D. L. Moody at Home. His Home and Home Work: Embracing a Description of the Educational Institutions There Established, Together with Some Account of the Various Christian Conferences, and the Best Thoughts Therein Exchanged. Helpful Hints and Practical Points* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1886), 32-33; D. L. Moody, *Glad Tidings. Comprising Sermons and Prayer-Meeting Talks Delivered at the N. Y. Hippodrome* (New York: The Tribune Association, 1876), 284-92. For Moody contra perfectionism, see T. J. Shanks, ed., *College Students at Northfield; or, A College of Colleges*, No. 2 (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1888), 186.

³⁶That Dixon was present in 1885 was according to Dixon's wife, see Dixon, *A Romance of Preaching*, 91. Record of the 1885 Northfield Conference in Shanks, *D. L. Moody at Home*, 35-36.

³⁷The 1890 conference addresses were published in a book edited by Dixon, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit*. Dixon's lifelong teaching on enduement is consistent with J. E. Grammar's address "Enduement of the Holy Spirit" contained in that book. The 1894 conference addresses were also published, with an introduction by Dixon, see Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Holy Spirit in Life and Service, Addresses Delivered Before the Conference on the Ministry of the Holy Spirit Held in Brooklyn, N. Y., October, 1894* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895). According to the Dixon's introduction the purpose of the conference was to "deepen spiritual life and seek enduement

Dixon initially was wary of Keswick, but later said this was due to the fact that he did not understand it. He believed that many advocates of Keswick teaching like him saw the enduement not in terms of “second blessing” or perfectionism. Inasmuch as Keswick emphasized the enduement of the Spirit as power for service, especially evangelism, Dixon could support Keswick’s emphasis on enduement. Dixon’s interest in Keswick never resulted in his close identification with the movement.³⁸

Dixon was convinced that souls were saved through the power of the Holy Spirit. A Christian should not only seek to win souls, but seek to get in line with God’s means of saving souls. Thus, the Christian was to pray for lost souls and seek the enduement of the Spirit by which God may use him to be an effective evangelist. Enduement came to those who sought it. It was pursued by actively living a holy life and removing hindrances to enduement, especially worldliness. Thus, Dixon personally sought to avoid sinful behavior and warned his people of the danger of worldliness. Dixon’s opposition to liquor or dancing was connected to his desire to win souls. If Christians became worldly, they would be of little use for God.

Dixon’s concern for lost souls made him zealous for personal usefulness in evangelism and desirous that spiritual strength and evangelistic usefulness would be possessed by all Christians. Thus, his emphases on prayer and enduement reinforce that his highest pastoral priority was winning souls to Christ. Enduement was to be sought in service to winning the lost. Prayer was practiced because only God could make the

of power.” On F. B. Meyer at Hanson Place, see “Mr. Meyer in Brooklyn,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 24 February 1898, p. 253.

³⁸“Religious Conditions in Europe,” *Zion’s Herald*, 11 October 1905, p. 1292; “Pentecost in Jerusalem in A. D. 33, and Wales and in Keswick A. D. 1905, Can There Be a Pentecost in New England?” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 25, folder 1.

preaching of the gospel effective. Dixon is not rightly understood unless these three major foci of his ministry are placed in order of priority: winning souls to Christ as the highest priority and was served by a commitment to prayer and enduement. In laying out these priorities, we have not come to the fighting fundamentalist part of his identity. That is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

DEFENDING THE FAITH AND BUILDING THE SAINTS

The two previous chapters focused on two of the three major concerns of Dixon's life and ministry: soul-winning and dependence on God in prayer. This chapter examines the third category: defending the faith. For Dixon, this was a necessary component of doing the first two well. If one only evangelized and prayed for conversions, while allowing the faith to be undermined by false doctrine and unwholesome living, then eventually the foundation upon which the gospel was built would crumble. Dixon integrated all three concerns, soul-winning, prayer, and defense of the faith, throughout his ministry. The three concerns were explained well in the sixth chapter of *Milk and Meat*, "How to Save the City." In this chapter Dixon explained that the greatest need of the city was salvation through Jesus Christ. It was not education, the eradication of poverty, or some other social remedy. Dixon commended the three-fold method of evangelizing the city as set out in the book of Acts: (1) the church endued with power from the Holy Spirit, (2) preaching continuously for three months in a building devoted to religious use, and (3) holding protracted meetings every day for two years in a purely secular building. Dixon's own evangelistic ministry followed the model in Acts through engaging in public evangelism in religious and secular buildings, all the while dependent on the Holy Spirit of God to save the lost. Dixon warned however that this was not all that was necessary to save the city.

Christians needed also to recognize and confront the foes of salvation. Dixon identified four: (1) religious people who do not believe in the power of the gospel and seek to substitute some other message than the gospel of reconciliation, (2) the imitators of the good, who seek to add Jesus to their false religious belief, (3) bad literature such as what may be found in many newspapers and other publications, and (4) businesses that would not do well if the Gospel were to succeed. Dixon singled out two of these foes because of their wide influence: liberalism and the liquor traffic. Thus, Dixon urged for an offensive and defensive approach to saving the city. Offensively, Dixon insisted that Christians focus on the main method of saving the city: preaching the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.¹ Defensively, Dixon opposed the foes of saving the city. This battle against the foes is the subject of this chapter.

Dixon believed there was a connection between good character and enduement for service. By God's enduement Christians were empowered to evangelize. The believer's witness was effective as God was at work through evangelism, or as Dixon put it: as a believer endued with power proclaimed the good news, souls were saved. As the last chapter showed, one key hindrance to this necessary enduement was lack of upright character. Thus, if one engaged in unholy practices, he would lack the character God rewards with enduement. So while man must rely on God to work through him, in a sense man demonstrates that he understands his need of enduement by upright living, through which God blesses with enduement, that by God's power the believer's evangelism was effective. Thus, when Dixon spoke against social issues such

¹Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Milk and Meat: Twenty-four Sermons* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Co., 1893), 39-51.

as liquor, he in part had the biblical prohibition against drunkenness in view, but in large part he had the conversion of souls in view, since Christians engaged in unrighteous living would not have the enduement of the Spirit, therefore were useless for evangelism.

Bible Conferences

Dixon's opposition to immoral behavior and to liberalism received a considerable boost through his growing prominence as a Bible Conference speaker. Near the mid-1880s, Dixon first attended Bible conferences such as Niagara and Northfield. In the beginning he went simply as an attendee. By the early 1890s he received invitations to speak at some conferences, and by the end of that decade he was invited to speak at Bible conferences regularly. Both the Niagara and Northfield conferences began with the spiritual growth of Christians in mind. In the early years of the Niagara Bible Conference, the most heavily attended services were the "Bible Readings" in which the speaker read a special arrangement of Scripture with little or no comment. When Northfield Bible Conference began in 1880, Moody invited people to come to "A Convocation for Prayer, and to wait upon the Lord for a new enduement of power from on high." In the early years of Niagara, the leaders drew up a fourteen-point creed, commonly called the "Niagara Creed." They required that conference speakers commit themselves to the creed's conservative Protestant beliefs. These Bible conferences became very popular and were replicated in many places throughout the United States.²

²Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 347. Niagara began in 1876 and the Niagara Creed was adopted in 1878; see David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American*

Dixon's increased popularity at the Bible Conferences coincided with his growing popularity as an evangelist. After his return from the World's Columbian Exposition with Moody in 1893 and his revival campaign success in Brooklyn and New York in early 1894, Dixon received his first invitation to speak at Northfield. Soon he was a regular fixture there and at an increasingly larger number of other conferences such as Keuka, Winona Lake, and Ocean City. At these conferences Dixon encountered an emphasis on the endowment of the Holy Spirit for service. In addition, he was around many who were intent on defending the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Historian Ernest Sandeen argued that by the end of the nineteenth century the Bible conferences gave its leaders (including Dixon) a position of relative success and influence. The leaders were treated with a measure of respect within Baptist and Presbyterian seminaries and denominational boards.³ Dixon's wide popularity and growing influence afforded him prominence and power in his battle against social sin and liberalism.

Speaking against Social Issues

Dixon addressed many social issues of his day. He believed that he needed to speak out against them in order to guard Christians against the danger and to protect

Fundamentalism since 1850 (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986), 23-25. For more on the Bible Conferences, also see Stewart Grant Cole, *The History of Fundamentalism* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1963), 31-35; George W. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1973), 67-81; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 132-61; George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 31-79.

³Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism*, 162-87. Dixon's participation at Northfield is recorded in the *Northfield Echoes* for many years beginning in 1894 on into the early 1900s. For Dixon at other conferences, see the books on the Bible conferences cited above, and see "Summering at Lake Keuka," *New York Evangelist*, 19 July 1894, p. 28; "Miscellaneous," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 28 July 1898, p. 112.

society from the negative effects of the practices. Dixon addressed Christians, addressed the public at large, and promoted legislative remedies when possible, to rid society of these social evils.

Liquor

Dixon opposed the use of liquor because it produced social misery on a large scale. It destroyed the home and the family. The saloons produced no good for anyone and brought down society in general. The Christian should avoid liquor, even moderate drinking, Dixon said, because he belonged to Christ. A Christian should see that he could best serve God by avoiding liquor. Dixon urged that “whatever mars the body, which is God’s temple, must not enter, and, if there, it must be cast out. Christ is worthy of a perfect sacrifice, and he will not, therefore, vitiate his body, while he presents it a living sacrifice to Him.” Additionally, the Christian’s spirit of self-sacrifice should keep him from anything that might injure others. Though a Christian had the liberty to drink wine, he had the “higher liberty of giving up my liberty for the sake of my weaker brother, who, if he should see me drink, will stumble into drunkenness.”⁴

Dixon used the argument of causing others to stumble to call even those not professing Christ to avoid liquor. Upon hearing that United States President Theodore Roosevelt held up a glass of champagne at a banquet and drank it down to the applause of those present, Dixon replied: “Your example, Mr. President, as a moderate drinker will do more harm than all your reform will do good. Even more harm than if you were a drunkard, for your charming personality will attract men and women to the social

⁴“The Battle with Rum,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 8.

glass, which for millions means a drunkard's experience with all that it means of broken hearts and wrecked homes." Dixon called the President to abstain from drink so that he may love his neighbor as himself. Dixon praised King George V for leading by example when he banished strong drink from the palace. Dixon called on the saloon-keeper himself to no longer consider the sale of liquor as a right, because it was at odds against the greater good of society. When two rights collide, the lesser right must give way to the greater. Dixon explained that "the saloon-keeper of to-day needs to be taught, and the prohibition movement is teaching him, that his liberty ends just where the rights of his neighbor begin."⁵

Dixon expressed sympathy for the dilemma facing saloon keepers. He believed that thousands of them were poorly paid and often conscience-stricken. He thought that many of them understood the damage their business did to society. Dixon's solution to the saloon keeper's dilemma was the gospel. He believed that they could be saved from their life of the saloon only by faith in Jesus Christ. Any true convert could not remain in the liquor business. Dixon knew of a number of revivals that had resulted in the salvation of saloon keepers which led to the closing of all saloons in a town.⁶

Dixon's main attack was against those who support liquor sales for financial reasons. Dixon dealt gently with the impoverished saloon keeper who struggled to make a living, but he dealt harshly with those who grew rich as saloon keepers and those who did not sell liquor but supported its sale for financial reasons. Dixon for example

⁵"Grills President for Taking Wine," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 October 1907, p. 4; "Our Noble King," *Sword and Trowel* (May 1915), in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 7; "The Prohibition War," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 1.

⁶"The Battle With Rum," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 8.

excoriated “the property-holder who is mean enough to vote for the liquor traffic in order that he may save a few dollars in taxes. A man who in order to save money will fix upon the community this curse of curses.” This group was the lowest of men, for they cared not for their neighbor or society, but only their own good.⁷

Dixon fought the saloon in order to rescue the victims of drink: the wives and children of drunkards. Dixon argued that God was on the side of the weak, the “widows and orphans of the 100,000 drunkards killed every year in this country” by the liquor traffic. These, Dixon argued, called to God for relief. Alcohol did not merely injure the alcoholic, it brought sorrow to those related to the offender. These helpless sufferers called out to God and must be heard. To illustrate, Dixon gave the following example:

A friend of mine in eastern North Carolina was walking out one Sunday morning, when he heard the sound of hounds in the distance. As he listened they came nearer, until, looking through the cracks of the fence he saw a little fawn, tired, panting, its sides covered with foam, and trembling with fear, for the loud, hoarse baying hounds, thirsty for its blood, were only a few hundred feet behind it. The poor creature had just strength enough to leap over the fence, and stood there for a moment trembling, until seeing my friend, instinctively it ran and fell down in the ploughed ground at his feet, as if to say “Protect me from my enemies.” My friend seized a cudgel and fought the dogs for half an hour. He felt that there were not enough dogs in the State to take from his protection the helpless fawn whose weakness had thus appealed to his strength. And just like that fawn chased by the hounds, so many helpless drunkards, certainly their helpless families, chased by the hounds of hell, are falling at the feet of God for succor; and to say that God will not hear is to give the lie to His own character and promise.⁸

⁷“The Prohibition War,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 1; “The Passing of the Saloon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 8.

⁸“The Prohibition War,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 1. Dixon often used this illustration to speak of a person chased by the hounds of hell, who would find help and safety if he fled to Christ. The story is basically the same, and then concludes: “Chased by the hounds of our sins, tired and weary, we caught a view of Jesus Christ on the cross, and we went and fell helpless before him, and from that moment to this the omnipotence of God has been there for our protection, and all the hounds of perdition cannot reach us. We are safe in Christ, safe under the blood.” For the full illustration, see “The Magnetism of Jesus,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 24, folder 2.

Dixon believed that he had God on his side in his battle against liquor. Dixon argued that “God himself, I say it with reverence, is a prohibitionist.” He believed that the defeat of liquor would happen through action. Dixon disagreed with those who believed that the liquor traffic would be overcome by mere influence. Instead, Dixon insisted, “we must stand before them with the lion power that is represented by the ballot—God’s substitute for the bayonet. It is your duty before God to see that just laws are made and executed.”⁹

During his time in Brooklyn, Dixon took an active part in encouraging enforcement of liquor laws. In 1892, when Brooklyn ministers found themselves unsuccessful in convincing Brooklyn Mayor David A. Boody to enforce the liquor laws, they formed the Excise Law Enforcement League and elected Dixon as president. Dixon appealed to the public offense involved in not enforcing liquor laws. In 1894, Dixon publicly indicted Brooklyn Mayor Charles A. Schieren and police Commissioner Leonard R. Welles for not enforcing the law prohibiting saloons from selling on Sunday. Dixon noted that across the river in New York enforcement of that law led to 156 arrests, while in Brooklyn “it seems that the safest place to be found was behind the swinging side doors of 4,150 saloons.” The following month Dixon claimed that Police Commissioner Welles told a committee from the Brooklyn Temperance League that he would not close the saloons because if he did it would cost the Republican Party thirty thousand German votes and jeopardize the election of Mayor Schieren for a second

⁹“The Prohibition War,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 1; Dixon, *Milk and Meat*, 223-32.

term. Mayor Schieren denounced the story as false, to which Dixon provided sworn affidavits from four committee members confirming his report.¹⁰

Theater

Dixon believed that Christians must avoid the theater because it was an evil institution. He admitted that there was an occasional performance acceptable to the Christian conscience, but in general the plays were immoral. The question for the Christian was not if they should see the moral plays, but should they support an institution that is mainly immoral.

Dixon urged pastors to decline any theater manager's invitations to attend the moral plays, knowing that those who attend plays would less likely denounce the immoral plays. By attending a moral play, a minister linked himself to an evil institution, and encouraged his congregants to attend the moral play, which served to lure them to attend immoral plays. Dixon argued that "so far as I know, there is not a theatre in the world which does not pander to depraved tastes in order to make money." Since the depraved plays were the norm, the institution as a whole should be avoided. The theater also worked against the purposes of the church. Dixon warned that "the purpose of the stage, as we have seen, is to teach men how to act the part. The purpose of the Church of Christ is to teach men how to be real."¹¹

¹⁰"Brooklyn Ministers Organize," *New York Times*, 2 July 1892, p. 5; "Dr. Dixon Again Attacks," *New York Times*, 25 June 1894, p. 9; "Dr. Dixon Offers Proofs," *New York Times*, 11 June 1894, p. 7; also see, "Brooklyn Sunday Preservers," *New York Times*, 27 November 1895, p. 8; "Unemployed of the City," *New York Times*, 27 April 1894, p. 8; "New Prohibition Union Forms," *New York Observer*, 12 January 1899, p. 47.

¹¹Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Present Day Life and Religion: A Series of Sermons on Cardinal Doctrines and Popular Sins* (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Assoc., 1905). 83-99; "Theatre-Going Preachers," *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 1 (1912): 32-33.

Dixon warned Christians against the false hope that demanding better plays would cleanse the evil institution. He argued that the theater should be avoided so that it may go away. He quoted a Boston man who owned three theaters who said that “his theatres would have to close if it were not for the patronage of Christian people, and in the next breath he denounced them as hypocrites who were often at the theatre when they ought to be at the church.” Dixon identified two issues: the continuation of an evil institution, and the role the theater played in keeping people out of church. Later, in the *Sword and Trowel*, Dixon compared the numbers between the declining attendance in the church and the increase in attendance of the theater, and concluded that “there is no doubt that during recent years the theatre and its sister institutions have largely taken the place of the churches. This is a national misfortune.”¹²

Dancing

Dixon taught that dancing was permitted for persons who were so happy that they could not contain themselves. This type of dancing was seen in the Bible when God’s people celebrated the return of the Ark of the Covenant and David danced with all his might. Dixon argued that this type of dance was completely different than dancing of his day. The modern dance is not “intended to express happiness, but rather to produce happiness.” And the type of dance taught in Dixon’s day must be learned at the hands of dance masters, who must persuade the learner to not blush at the movements and close proximity of the bodies engaged in the act. “There is no moral harm in the

¹²“Theatre Is Bad,” *Boston Globe*, 12 January 1903, p. 4; “The Monster Meeting for Prayer and Song with Which Chicago Welcomed 1909,” *Home Herald*, in Scrapbook 1907--1911, Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois. Also see, “Sunday at the Tabernacle,” *The Christian World*, 21 June 1911, p. 11.

square dance, provided you can keep it square.” But the modern dance is a round dance, “with all that it means of indelicacy, dissipation, and debauchery. Its home is the dance-hall, where the lowest disreputable congregate; the variety theatre, where it makes its display of spectacular obscenity; the public ball-room, where women, good and bad, swirl in the arms of men; the select company in the house, where liberties are taken under the spell of music which would be shocking without the musical accompaniment.”¹³

Dixon warned of the danger dancing posed to society and the church, saying “if people keep on dancing along present lines, the coming generation will have feet as big as hams.” Besides warning of the physical danger, Dixon also spoke of the moral danger. “The cause of the downfall of more than 70 per cent of fallen women can be traced directly to dancing and its accompanying evils.” Dixon made public appeals for commitments to stay out of the dance hall. Once, nearly five hundred responded to his public appeal and acknowledged that they had enjoyed the pastime and now agreed that the modern dance was dangerous. The majority of those attended an after-meeting convened to pray for the salvation of those who went to dance halls, which Dixon described as “the bottomless pits of hell.” Dixon urged voters to elect the man who would “stand for the home against the dive and the dance hall, the gambling den, and other public iniquities.”¹⁴

¹³Dixon, *Present Day Life and Religion*, 100-10; “What about the Dance?” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5.

¹⁴“Feet Big As Hams,” *Washington Post*, 13 February 1907, p. 6; “Dances Denounced by Pastor,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 11 February 1907, p. 11; “See Voters’ Duty from the Pulpit,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 March 1907, pp. 1-2.

Card Playing

Dixon also denounced card playing as sin. One of the dangers of the game was that it created and cultivated a dependence upon luck in life. This was especially dangerous if a young man began to think of himself as a lucky individual and came to trust in luck rather than honest, patient labor. The card table was also linked with gambling, since those who were lucky at the card table often tried their luck at gambling. Card playing was associated with all the ills that accompanied gambling. “A game of cards suggests to the beholder suicides, embezzlements, defalcations, quarrels, wrecked lives and ruined homes. The single game of cards cannot be separated from these evil associations.” Additionally, card playing fostered a desire to get something for nothing. Thus, it was suggestive of robbery. A Christian could not in good conscience become associated with those great evils by playing cards. Besides, Dixon said, card playing was a waste of time and could lead to addiction. Even if one did not become a gambler from card playing, he may be so interested in playing that he “consume[s] time that might be spent so as to bring greater happiness in the long run. There is no mental improvement at the card table, and you learn nothing of importance. Games of skill like chess, checkers, tennis, croquet, baseball and such like are not apt to throw an evil spell over us which will cause us to spend hours, days, weeks, months and years, every spare moment in their indulgence. They require some intellectual exercise, and are apt to weary us before they ruin us.” The addictive aspect of card playing could work ruin in the church. As a man further engaged in card playing, interest in such Christian duties as Bible study and church involvement decreased. In this way card

playing would lead some to fall away from prayer meeting and church services. Those that were real Christians may be “saved as by fire,” but their lives would be wasted.¹⁵

Social Issues and Weak Christians

Dixon typically did not separate social issues and attack them individually. He often grouped three main issues together: theater, card playing and dancing. He sometimes referred to them as a “three-fold peril.” Occasionally, other issues were grouped with them, such as smoking and Sabbath breaking, but generally the three were handled together. On numerous occasions Dixon concluded services with an invitation for Christians to commit to abstain from the evil practices.¹⁶

The calls to abstain from the theater, dancing, and card playing derived in part from their association with evil institutions. A Christian should abstain from every appearance of evil. Though the acts themselves were in some instances tolerable, such as attending certain plays or playing an occasional round of cards, one’s participation associated him with such genuine evils as attending immoral plays or the institution of gambling. Additionally, the Christian had the duty to give up his right to engage in the

¹⁵Dixon, *Present Day Life and Religion*, 111-17; also see “Ethics of the Card Table,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 2 (1914): 153-54. On at least one occasion, Dixon was taken to task in the newspaper about his attack of social issues. The article quoted Dixon as saying that “it takes no brains to play cards,” “no theatre is moral,” “only Comanche Indians should play football,” and claiming that a chief of police said that “three-fourths of the lost characters in this city could trace their fall to dancing.” The author responded with sarcasm and wit to Dixon’s comments and then concluded, “to speak seriously, however, why is it that clergymen, when dealing with practical matters, so often make remarks that sound like echoes from a lunatic asylum?” See “Topics of the Times,” *New York Times*, 15 December 1897, p. 6.

¹⁶For calls for decision, see “Scores Cards and Theater,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 January 1907, p. 3; “Says Christians Must Not Dance,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 January 1907, p. 4. For Dixon’s attack on these social issues, see “Pastor’s College Conference,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 2 (1914): 213-15; “Dr. Dixon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,” *The Christian*, 6 November 1913, p. 28; “Greatest Peril for Girls Seen in the Round Dance,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 April 1908, p. 9; “Immorality of Amusements,” *New York Times*, 14 December 1897, p. 4; “Parlor Dancing Denounced,” *New York Times*, 18 February 1894, p. 12; “Life of Pain,” *Boston Globe*, 26 January 1903, p. 2.

morally permissible for the sake of others. Dixon explained his own position: “I do not dance, play cards, or attend the theatre, because they are associated with great evil institutions. There is something higher than maintaining one’s rights, and that is the right to surrender rights for the good of other people.” Dixon continued: “There is nothing more heroic than the spirit which leads a man to surrender the harmless to him, the pleasurable, the honourable, the enriching, in order that others may not be injured by his indulgence.”¹⁷

Theater, dancing, and card playing had an additional peril: they produced a “pleasure-loving spirit.” Increased enjoyment in these activities diverted one’s love from God to the love of pleasure. Also, time occupied participating in these pleasures led to the neglect of the serious matters of life. Over time, indulging in pleasure led to an excessive love of pleasure, with the result of a decreased desire for God. “When the pleasure-seeking spirit fills a man’s life, he ceases to desire God. . . . He sees no profit in prayer, or in the service of the Almighty. Pleasure is his god, and he becomes vain and empty like the god he worships.” Additionally, when one was caught up in pleasure it meant that the serious work of life was neglected. When excessive time was consumed with pleasure, time for other things must suffer. Dixon explained the pitfalls for such a man: “duty is neglected, sacred obligations ignored. . . . When he ought to be serious and dutiful, he is dancing, or gambling, or in some other way frittering away his

¹⁷Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Bright Side of Life* (Greenville, SC: S. W. Partridge and Co, n.d.), 199.

time.” Dixon believed that the theater, card playing, and dancing must be seen as destructive to one’s spiritual well-being.¹⁸

The connection between the Christian’s pursuit of enduement for Christian service and the threat that pleasures posed to it was discussed in the last chapter, though more may be said. Social issues deemed not fitting for Christians, such as theater, dancing, and card playing were a hindrance to tending to the serious matters of life and hindered effective service to God. This argument is seen in a number of Dixon’s teachings. It is best seen in his sermon “Soul-Winning.” Dixon urged his hearers to win souls and called it the Christian’s primary work and Christ’s primary work in the world. Dixon taught that the conversion of souls happened through people proclaiming the Good News from the Bible, while depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to give new life. He explained that “it is the inspired man preaching the inspired word that regenerates the soul. . . . he has to trust the Spirit that wrote the book to regenerate souls through the sword that cuts and the balm that heals.” Dixon explained that when he said “inspired man” he meant the enduement of the Spirit. Enduement was the power of God at work through the Christian to do the will of God. Not all Christians had enduement all the time. There were hindrances to enduement. Dixon explained that “the power of God is with us all the time. . . . If you are not endued it is because . . . the pipe is broken and the water cannot flow. The pipe is stopped up with worldliness.” Dixon argued that a Christian must avoid worldliness in order to have the enduement of the Holy Spirit by

¹⁸Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Lights and Shadows of American Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898), 78-82.

which he may be used by God for soul-winning, which was Christ's and the Christian's primary business in the world.

The connection between holy living and enduement was also explained in *The Young Convert's Problem*. This book is especially important because Dixon gave new converts a Bible and a copy of this book. Thus, this book may be considered to summarize what Dixon thought to be most helpful for new believers to understand about the Christian life. In the introduction Dixon explained that the young Christian's greatest need is the enduement of the Spirit for power in service, while warning that amusements must be carefully treated because "a mistake here often means the wreck of usefulness." In the chapter insisting on the necessity of the enduement of the Holy Spirit, Dixon warned that sin may congest one's capacity for receiving the Spirit. The Holy Spirit was necessary for the conversion of the lost and the building up of the saved. Thus all hindrances and sins must be avoided, so that the believer may receive enduement. Amusements were threats to enduement because they distracted Christians from the important work and sacred obligations of life. Thus, the ideal Christian must not allow anything to push aside the word of God and his study of it; rather he must dedicate himself to maintaining a standard worthy of Christ.¹⁹

Dixon warned about the danger that amusements posed to evangelism in his *Through Night to Morning*. Dixon urged his reader to understand that "Christ would

¹⁹Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Young Convert's Problems and Their Solution* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1906), v-vii, 1-8, 74-93. On Dixon's giving this book to new converts, see "Mr. Alfred Bagby," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 4. Additionally, *Lights and Shadows of American Life* and *Heaven on Earth* address the issues of living a life committed to God, while warning of danger of worldly amusements, see Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Heaven on Earth* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897). In one chapter in *Heaven on Earth*, "The Hero of Faith," Dixon both encourages the reader to "Do His will, and all His power flows through your obedience," and later warns of the dangers of theater, card playing, and dancing (pp. 29-41).

make of each one of us an under-rower who takes the stroke from Him in all things. We do what He commands. . . . He is to-day seeking the lost, and He would have us seek them with Him.” He warned that Christians must be separate from the world to be of use in reaching the world. “You cannot reach . . . the profligate by sinning with him, nor the worldling by playing cards, going to the theatre and dancing with him. After Christ has delivered us from our set, then He sends us back to them with the gospel. The drowning man is in no condition to save other drowning men.”²⁰

Speaking against Error

Theological error could pose as great a threat to the gospel as the popular social vices. Dixon therefore adamantly defended orthodoxy. Dixon’s agreement with the conservative doctrine of the Bible conferences was not a mere adoption of the convictions of a larger body. Dixon believed that these basic doctrines were essential. If these doctrines were forsaken, then what was left would be something other than Christianity. Protestant liberalism was leading many to forsake orthodox beliefs. Dixon therefore felt it to be his duty to speak out against liberalism as theological error regarding Christian doctrines.

Rise of Liberal Theology

Protestant Liberalism, defined broadly, was a movement whose aim was to make religion acceptable to the modern mind. The challenge was based on the assumption that the knowledge possessed by modern man made it impossible to accept

²⁰Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Through Night to Morning* (London: Robert Scott, 1913), 140-44.

many of the ideas presented as fact in the Bible. Its most significant years of influence were the 1870s to 1930s.²¹

As much a methodology or spirit as a theology, liberalism was characterized by the following distinctions: an emphasis on the immanence of God over his transcendence, a stressing of the importance of Christian experience, and a propensity for doctrinal revision.

The immanence of God was stressed so that the distinction between supernatural and natural, between church and world, was diminished. The immanence of God was the ground of liberalism's remarkable optimism. Man was not as bad as the orthodox had previously conceived him. Society was moving toward the reality of the kingdom of God. Man was always moving toward the kingdom of God as man progressed. The gospel was a social gospel which would bring in the kingdom through the progress of human civilization.²²

The importance of Christian experience was another important concept. Liberals held that experience and feeling, not creed and doctrine, was the basis of Christian doctrine. Thus, liberalism had an ecumenical spirit because believers from many denominations had Christian experience in common. Doctrine should no longer divide believers because it was secondary to experience and it was continually subject to revision.²³

²¹William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 2.

²²*Ibid.*, 3-4.

²³*Ibid.*, 4-5; Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism & Modernity, 1900-1950* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 1-4.

Doctrinal revision itself was an important characteristic of liberal Protestantism. The emphasis placed on experience and the use of higher criticism provoked a rejection of the notion of an “inerrant” Bible. The rejection of this doctrine opened the floodgate for a revision of many traditional doctrines. Doctrines could be revised to such an extent that they bore faint resemblance to the ideas that they replaced. Liberals maintained that this revision was not an outright rejection of doctrine. Doctrine, they said, was not static but was a temporary expression of religious sentiment that needed periodical revision to measure up to the current knowledge of man. This knowledge was always changing especially in light of significant scientific discoveries such as evolution. Protestant liberalism in the United States had what William Hutchinson called a "modernist impulse."²⁴

Liberals aspired to bring in the kingdom of God. They believed that they now had a belief system suited to the modern man. They dispensed with the doctrine of original sin and were optimistic about what social reform could accomplish. Morality was progressing. Man was nearing the epitome of what he could be. They seemed near to bringing in the kingdom.²⁵

Protestant liberalism was a movement that attempted to make the message of scripture compatible with modern knowledge. In the process of trying to save the gospel, they destroyed it by conceiving and promoting a message that contradicted the gospel of scripture. Dixon opposed this movement. Though not a theologian, Dixon kept abreast of liberal teaching because he saw it as a threat to the

²⁴Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*, 1-11.

²⁵Ibid., 2.

authority of the Bible and sound doctrine. He sounded the alarm to those who trusted the Bible and derived their doctrine from it. The growing power of liberal theology made it necessary for Dixon to devote considerable effort to defending the faith against those whose efforts to save Christianity were destroying it.²⁶

William Rainey Harper

Dixon became deeply troubled by evidence of the spread of liberalism at the Baptist-affiliated University of Chicago. William Rainey Harper was the first president of University of Chicago. University of Chicago Divinity School, along with Boston University and Union Seminary, were the leading institutions of the liberal theological movement in the twentieth century. Harper hired theological liberals such as Shailer Matthews and George Burman Foster. Both Matthews and Foster received theological education in Germany and embraced the Ritschlian historicism popular in German theology. The University of Chicago Divinity School was committed to scientific naturalism in its approach to both historical criticism and empiricist methodology.²⁷

Dixon believed that Harper's commitment to higher criticism undermined the authority of the Bible. In one sermon, Dixon made reference to Harper's liberal teaching, though not mentioning Harper by name, and initiated a conflict between Dixon and Shailer Matthews, dean of the university's divinity school. In the sermon, Dixon

²⁶For more on Protestant liberalism in the United States, see Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*; Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism & Modernity, 1900-1950*; Kenneth Cauthen, *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

²⁷Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805-1900*, 311, 371; "Ethical Bankruptcy of Modern Philosophy," *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1915): 167-68.

spoke of the University of Chicago and John D. Rockefeller. Rockefeller had chosen Harper as the first president of the school. Dixon believed that Rockefeller objected to Harper's teaching on the Bible and sought to keep Harper busy with other tasks. Here is what the paper recorded from Dixon's sermon: "It is an open secret that when Mr. Rockefeller learned that a prominent representative of the Chicago University was tearing the Bible to pieces in a course of lectures, he ordered the lecturer to cancel his engagements and go to Europe for the purpose of purchasing a library."²⁸

What followed was correspondence between Shailer Matthews and Dixon. Matthews contacted Dixon and asked for the name of the man Dixon had in mind in the statement. Dixon informed Matthews that he was referring to Harper. Dixon explained that he was simply relaying an open secret circulating in New York when Dixon was a pastor in Brooklyn (Dixon was a pastor in Boston at the time of this controversy). Matthews spoke to Harper who denied the accusation. Matthews then demanded that Dixon make a "public correction." Dixon said he was unable to do that because of a "chain of circumstantial evidence" which he believed would convince a jury of its truth.

Dixon then wrote a letter in response to Matthews' defending his refusal. Dixon reiterated that he initially had no intention of naming Harper and was sure no one had Harper in mind with the original statement since the school had so many "destructive critics". He expressed his respect for Harper as an educator, though he wished Harper would stick to education and leave the Bible alone. Dixon expressed his belief that "scholarship of the world is now repudiating [Harper's] destructive criticism and views." Dixon continued: "I must stand for what seems to me to be true, regardless

²⁸“Dr. Dixon's Reply,” *The Independent*, 1 June 1905, p. 1266.

of consequences.” Dixon explained that as he traveled around the country he found men in Baptist pulpits, graduates of University of Chicago, who were “Unitarian in their views of the Bible and the way of salvation.” These pastors were destroying Baptist churches and Christianity “in its fundamentals.” Therefore, the University of Chicago should apologize to the Christian world for the harm it has done to the Christian church. “My battle is for the truth, and against the University of Chicago only in so far as it seems to me to be against the truth.” Dixon concluded by reiterating that he believed Rockefeller, though he stood by Harper, was not “in sympathy with the University of Chicago in its attacks upon the Bible.” Dixon believed that there was plenty of evidence that Rockefeller would like to see that change in the University.²⁹

Matthews received the letter and realized that Dixon had no intention of issuing a public apology. Matthews took the matter to the press. In Matthews’s retelling for the press he gave only the original statement of Dixon, mentioned his own request for public apology, and said that Dixon’s only evidence was a “bit of gossip” about the “open secret” floating through New York about Rockefeller sending Harper overseas. Matthews then chastised all “maligners” of the University of Chicago, Dixon especially, who spoke though they had no evidence. Such speech was nothing less than gossip. And since Dixon would not correct his error, Matthews had no choice but to publicly declare Dixon’s statement “false in general, in particular and in implication.”³⁰

Soon after this public rebuke by Matthews, another publication came to Matthews’ aid and chastised Dixon for “ministerial irresponsibility.” After a brief

²⁹A. C. Dixon to Shailer Matthews, 29 April 1905, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7.

³⁰“Chicago University Slandered,” *The Independent*, 11 May 1905, p. 1086.

rehearsal of Matthews' rebuke, the paper gave its opinion that the greatest hurt inflicted in this matter was not on University of Chicago or Harper, but the ministry. It guessed that many would read the account of Dixon's statements and be "inclined to relegate to the category of gossip every statement of fact which they may in the future hear from the pulpit." Ministers seemed to be willing to speak "heedless of facts" and were not aware of the "value of having corroborative evidence at hand." It concluded by calling ministers to no longer tolerate such reckless statements so that any who was guilty of it should no longer be allowed to maintain his standing as a minister.³¹

These public charges led Dixon to take his case to the press as well. Dixon, too, gave his summary of the situation and asked the press to reproduce a greater part of his letter of response to Matthews. In this way, the public would see that the apology was owed by the University of Chicago for the damage its destructive teachings had inflicted upon the church. Dixon felt he was merely defending Rockefeller by distancing him from the teachings of the University of Chicago.³² In all this, Dixon continued to withhold from the public a portion of his letter to Matthews in which he related Harper's inconsistency in matters pertaining to his liberal teachings. Though Dixon would not tell the press, he confided to Matthews that "Dr. Harper's memory is sometimes faulty in matters of this kind." What Dixon referred to was an instance where Harper was recorded by the newspaper to say "any one reading the tenth chapter of Isaiah must be convinced that it contains errors." Dixon wrote to Harper to say that

³¹"Ministerial Irresponsibility," *Outlook*, 20 May 1905, p. 164.

³²"Attacks Harper and University," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 May 1905, p. 9; "Raps Chicago University," *New York Times*, 25 May 1905, p. 2; *Literary Digest*, 27 May 1905. vol. 30, no. 21, p. 785.

he had carefully read the tenth chapter of Isaiah and found no errors, but if there were errors he wanted to see them. Harper's reply said that he was misquoted and that he must have said "any one reading ten chapters of Isaiah." Again, Dixon replied that he had read ten chapters and found no errors, and asked that Harper would please point them out. Dixon said Harper was slow to respond to his second request, speculating "Harper seems to have sailed for Europe, I think it was on his mission to buy a library, as reported in the papers." Upon return a few months later, Harper replied that he did not say that there were errors in Isaiah, but "if there were errors they ought to be acknowledged." Dixon believed that Harper's two letters could not be reconciled, because they flatly contradicted each other. Dixon's purpose in including this account in his letter to Matthews was to say that if Harper were to be publicly identified as the one whose liberal teachings were opposed by Rockefeller, Harper himself would likely not recall what liberal teachings he had made.³³

For their part, those who opposed Dixon believed they had won the public debate. They pointed out that Dixon had not produced the evidence that what he said really was Rockefeller's opinion. Instead, they argued, Dixon's letter just continued his attack on higher criticism at Chicago. For his part, Dixon said he was not concerned that Matthews charged him with lying, since Matthews also believed that the Bible had lied. Dixon noted that he preferred to align himself with "such distinguished company as Moses, Jonah and Paul." The debate subsided as Dixon said he was preparing to

³³A. C. Dixon to Shailer Matthews, 29 April 1905, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7.

leave the country for three months, but would provide the facts to substantiate his claim should the people of Chicago want him to do so.³⁴

As to the public debate, the matter did subside. Though seven weeks later, Dixon was still engaged in private correspondence about the matter. Dixon confided to Edward Judson that he felt he was right about Rockefeller and that just because Harper did not know why he was sent to Europe, it did not mean he was not sent for the reason Dixon stated. Dixon said he knew of a number of instances where Harper had changed his story to hide his liberal teaching and though he did not set out to make these matters public, he thought that “it may be that the providence of God has laid it upon me the responsibility of doing it.” Dixon said he shrunk from doing that more than death itself, but if God wanted him to do it, God would give him the grace to do so. Dixon concluded that he did not bear any ill feelings toward anyone in the matter, not even toward Matthews who “had done [him] a grievous wrong.”³⁵

Robert Ingersoll

While in Brooklyn, Dixon found himself in a public dispute with the famous atheist Robert Ingersoll. The issue came out of a series of lectures Dixon gave to young men in his church on Sunday afternoons. Dixon found that several of the men were influenced by the teachings of Ingersoll, so Dixon gave two lectures about Ingersoll. In the second lecture Dixon was reported to have said that Ingersoll was interested in

³⁴“Dr. Dixon’s Reply,” *The Independent*, 1 June 1905, p. 1266.

³⁵A. C. Dixon to Dr. Judson, 22 July 1905, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7. For more on this, see William P. Lovett to A. C. Dixon, 10 May 1905, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7; Edward Jones to A. C. Dixon, 24 May 1905, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 9, folder 7.

representing the publishers of impure literature in 1878, when Anthony Comstock protested against the repeal of the laws prohibiting obscene material from being sent through the mail. Dixon was reported to have said that Ingersoll was paid “to pollute the minds of the young of this generation.” Dixon claimed that he did not actually make the statement in the sermon at his church, but that he intended to. The statement was actually in his written notes, which were published in the newspaper. Dixon explained that he made notes in preparation for the sermon into a phonograph for his secretary in his office, but due to time constraints he did not include the statements in the sermon. Dixon was willing to stand by his statements because it reflected what he believed to be true about Ingersoll.³⁶

In response to the sermon as published in the newspaper, Ingersoll wrote to Dixon insisting that he retract his accusation, either saying that he used no such language or that the statement was untrue. In his letter, Ingersoll threatened that if a retraction were not issued, he would commence an action against Dixon for having uttered a “malicious libel.”³⁷

Dixon first responded to Ingersoll’s letter by reading it to his congregation. He did so to let them know that the letter had been received and that he intended to respond on his own to the letter. He later wrote to Ingersoll and explained that he did not say the words to which Ingersoll took objection “but I doubtless would have said them, or something like them, if in my hurried remarks they had not escaped my mind.”

³⁶“Mr. Dixon Courts a Libel Suit,” *New York Times*, 15 February 1892, p. 2; “The News from Brooklyn,” *New York Times*, 6 March 1892, p. 16.

³⁷Robert Ingersoll to A. C. Dixon, 8 February 1892, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 6, folder 9.

Dixon rehearsed some of the evidence pertinent to his conclusion that his statements about Ingersoll were true, then concluded: "I believe, sir, that these charges against you are true, and if you desire to test them before a court of Justice I will be happy, indeed, to represent the purity of this country as against the defenders and propagators of obscene literature."³⁸

Ingersoll responded by speaking publicly on the matter as well. A newspaper reported that Dixon had been holding services at the Academy of Music in New York for six weeks and when the time came to renew the contract for the venue, Dixon saw that Ingersoll was speaking in the same hall and that later on the same day Dixon was to speak there. As a result, Dixon was reported to have declined to renew the contract and refused to speak at that venue while Ingersoll was there. To this report Ingersoll responded "I do not wonder that Mr. Dixon objects to speaking in a theater in which I am to speak. He is probably afraid that good sense is catching. An idea might force its way into his brain, and then he might stop preaching and go to thinking."³⁹

Ingersoll later announced publicly that he intended to sue Dixon for libel. This did not cause Dixon to back down, rather he began to publicly reiterate what he had said about Ingersoll. He also reported to his church his feelings on the matter, explaining that he was not in doubt as to the outcome and was willing to go through with

³⁸"Col. Robt. G. Ingersoll and Rev. A. C. Dixon, D.D.," *New York World*, 14 February 1892, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 6, folder 9

³⁹"Colonel Is a Bit Angry," *Boston Globe*, 14 February 1897, p. 4. It is not clear if there was any validity to report that Dixon refused to speak in the same venue that hosted Ingersoll. The newspaper reported it as a rumor to which circumstances appeared to support its truthfulness. There was no indication that Ingersoll thought the rumor was true, he simply responded to the report, believing that something of the sort could easily be true about Dixon.

the trial, considering that it came from the Lord and that it was an honor to stand for the church and the Bible.⁴⁰

Soon after, Dixon secured Benjamin F. Tracey, Secretary of the Navy, as counsel for his defense against the libel charge. He continued to speak out against Ingersoll in public, including his summer lecture to 1,500 people in Prohibition Park on “Ingersollism; or, the Myths and Moths of Infidelity.” In this lecture Dixon announced that Ingersoll had approached Dixon and confessed that he did labor for the repeal of the Comstock law against sending obscene literature through the mail. Ingersoll indicated his willingness to withdraw the suit if Dixon would admit that Ingersoll’s only intent was to allow his own writing in the mail. Dixon expressed his refusal to make that admission. Dixon continued lecturing on the dangerous work of Ingersoll for at least two years beyond the controversy.⁴¹

Evolution

Like most other fundamentalists of the era, Dixon was an outspoken opponent of evolution. His first mention of it in a book was in *Evangelism Old and New* (1905) in a chapter entitled “Revolution and Growth vs. Evolution and Magic.” His opposition increased during the First World War as he highlighted that he saw as evolutionary

⁴⁰“Col. Ingersoll Will Sue,” *New York Times*, 25 February 1892, p. 3; “People in General,” *Washington Post*, 1 March 1892, p. 4; “Dr. Dixon Explains,” *Boston Globe*, 29 February 1892, p. 2.

⁴¹For Dixon’s defense attorney, see “Secretary Tracy to Defend Dixon,” *New York Times*, 21 March 1892, p. 9; “People in General,” *Washington Post*, 22 March 1892, p. 4. For Dixon lecturing on Ingersoll in the summer, see “Many Reformers Will Speak,” *New York Times*, 3 June 1892, p. 2; “At Prohibition Park,” *New York Times*, 4 July 1892, p. 8. For Dixon on Ingersoll two years later, see “Christian Faith Defended,” *New York Times*, 17 April 1894, p. 8; “Dixon Attacks Ingersoll,” *New York Times*, 23 April 1894, p. 5.

ethics behind much of the war. After the war Dixon was even more outspoken about it and warned against it at length.⁴²

Dixon said he was against evolution on scientific grounds. He had four objections: (1) germinal life is never reproductive, (2) germinal life is unimprovable, except through the mature product, (3) germinal life is not preservable, except under favorable conditions for a limited time, and (4) one species does not evolve into another species. In arguing that germinal life is never reproductive, Dixon explained that eggs cannot reproduce themselves until mature enough to produce a bird, and this would have taken millions of years. Thus, it was unscientific to believe that this could take place without the power of reproduction. In arguing that germinal life is unimprovable, except through the mature product, Dixon explained that improvements to a product such as an egg could only happen by improving a hen, even though no hen existed to improve. In arguing that germinal life is not preservable, except under favorable conditions for a limited time, Dixon cited what a British scientist said while addressing the British Association: “If embryonic life had come into existence in the chaotic condition under which we claim that it did, it would almost certainly have been destroyed immediately.” In arguing that one species does not evolve into another species, Dixon explained that

⁴²Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Evangelism Old and New: God's Search for Man in All Ages* (New York: American Tract Society, 1905), 141-52. In this 1905 book, Dixon objected to evolution on scientific grounds. He said that observation would tell us that development happens after its kind, while evolutionary proponent Herbert Spencer would have everyone believe that all kinds have developed from a single cell. Dixon argued that observation and experience do not support the acceptance of his claim. For more on anti-evolution efforts in Dixon's era, see Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Edward J. Larson, *Evolution: The Remarkable History of a Scientific Theory* (New York: Random House, 2004); Michael Lienesch, *In the Beginning: Fundamentalism, the Scopes Trial, and the Making of the Antievolution Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Ferenc M. Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1982).

no reputable scientist claims that one species has ever been seen to evolve into another species. The net result of these scientific problems was that evolution was full of “biological absurdities” which Dixon’s scientific spirit could not accept.⁴³

During the First World War, Dixon spoke out against the implications of evolutionary theory for ethics. Dixon argued that evolutionary thinking was behind the idea that “might is right.” Dixon explained that “Darwinian evolution is largely responsible for the German attitude of mind and morals which caused this terrible war. . . . The struggle for existence, according to Darwin, is in large measure a battle between the strong and the weak, in which the strong are expected to prevail. It has thus become scientific for the strong to destroy the weak, and Germany has developed a purely scientific conscience.” Dixon concluded that “the infernal doctrine of Might is Right has grown out of the inhuman theories of . . . Darwin.”⁴⁴

Dixon was cautiously open to those who held to a theory of evolution as “God’s method of doing things.” This view maintained that God was the author of life, and that he guided evolution as the means of the development of species. He set forth James Orr as a proponent of that view. He believed Orr was a model for those who held such a theory because he continued to maintain fundamental Christian beliefs such as plenary inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth of Christ, and vicarious atonement.

⁴³“Why I Am an Evangelical Christian and Not a Modernist,” in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5. Also see “The Bible and the Origin of Life” *The Christian Workers Magazine* (October 1913), n.s. vol. 14, no. 2; Amzi Clarence Dixon, *Works of the Devil to Be Destroyed, and the Battle-Lines between Christianity and Modernism* (London: Bible League, 1924); University Baptist Church Bulletin, 6 May 1923, in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 12, folder 1; “Dr. Dixon Assails Darwinian Theory,” *Boston Globe*, 20 March 1922, p. 4.

⁴⁴“The Angelus . . . Is Ringing . . .,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 4. Also see Amzi Clarence Dixon, *The Facts Against Evolution* (New York: Book Stall, n.d.); “Darwin and Lincoln,” *Sword and Trowel* 53 (1918): 66-67; “Germany’s Responsibility,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1914): 33-34.

Orr's view of evolution did not result in a rejection of the supernaturalism in favor of naturalism, and he also stayed clear of higher criticism.⁴⁵ As the years went by Dixon became more wary of any view of evolution because it tended to lead to modernism. Upon learning that William Poteat, president of Wake Forest University, held to evolutionary theory, Dixon wrote to him expressing his hope that Poteat was seeking to be a "Christian evolutionist, and I hope you will succeed better than a dozen or more educators in the North, who began within my memory, by claiming that evolution was God's method of creation and development, and harmonizes with the Biblical record, but have, within a few years, ended by flatly denying the Biblical account of man's creation in the image of God . . . and, therefore, his redemption from sin through Christ's atoning death." These men had become rationalistic modernists and denied the virgin birth, vicarious death, and physical resurrection.⁴⁶

Dixon was convinced that evolution and modernism went hand in hand. Evolution was behind the rejection of the authority of the Bible. When the Bible is rejected, the fundamental doctrines of the faith lose their foundation. "Darwinian evolution has been the undertow which has dragged everything down with it. It has dragged down the Bible, the Church, the home, the Sabbath, and even sound ethics." In his final years, Dixon sounded the warning that evolution was to be rejected and opposed by those who want to maintain the authority of the Bible. Dixon was an outspoken critic of evolution and supported others who taught against it, including

⁴⁵"The Ingenious Critics," *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 2 (1913): 5-6.

⁴⁶A. C. Dixon to William Poteat, 11 January 1922, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 10, folder 1.

promoting a William Jennings Bryan address on “Christianity and Evolution” in January 1923.⁴⁷

Modernism

Dixon battled modernism because its proponents had departed from orthodox Christianity and fundamental Christian theology. Dixon’s most frequent complaint against the liberals was their commitment to the higher critical study of the Bible, which led them to conclude that the Bible contained errors and was not the authority on matters of faith and doctrine. This was the fundamental error from which they derived the rest of their errors.

Dixon frequently spoke out against the danger of using higher criticism to discount the authority of the Bible. Dixon was not against higher critical study itself. He argued that he agreed with Basil Manly Jr. of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary that the study itself was not bad. What was bad was the use of higher critical study accompanied by a rejection of plenary inspiration. Once plenary inspiration was rejected, the study of the Bible was approached with the assumption that the Bible had errors. Dixon believed this skeptical type of higher critical study came from German theology which he understood to be full of unbelief. He believed that modern skeptical higher criticism represented by Albrecht Ritschl and Julius Wellhausen was dangerous and led to the rejection of many fundamental doctrines of the faith. Often Dixon spoke

⁴⁷“The Origin of Life,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 4; “What Is Modernism?” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5; A. C. Dixon to [Brother Pastor], ca. 1923, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 4.

out specifically against the danger of skeptical higher criticism.⁴⁸ Other times he stressed the danger of not submitting to the authority of an inerrant Bible. The problem with liberalism was rooted in the transfer of the seat of authority from the will of God as revealed in the Bible to each man's inner conscience. The result was that reason was exalted above revelation. Dixon argued that a proponent of that view was ready to deny the authority of any Scripture that did not harmonize with what he thought Jesus ought to teach. The result was to make Jesus in one's own image. This was just the beginning of the errors one would adopt, consequent to rejecting the authority of the Scriptures.⁴⁹

The most serious repercussion of rejection the authority of the Bible was an alteration to the doctrine of the atonement so as to make Jesus' death and resurrection unnecessary, or nearly unnecessary. Dixon saw that many who rejected the inerrancy of the Bible began to deny the necessity of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. In its place liberals encouraged people to follow the ethics of Christ and live morally. While Dixon did not wish to discount the importance of ethical living, it was insufficient to save. Only the shed blood of Jesus could save a sinner. Liberal teaching sought to save the lost by the life of Christ without regard to the death of Christ, and this was to preach no good news at all, but a message

⁴⁸For Dixon on skeptical higher criticism, see "Higher Criticism and Professor Briggs," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 1. In the summer of 1899, Dixon began a series of tent meeting that was to include D. L. Moody, J. Wilbur Chapman and others intended to counteract the effects of higher criticism, see "Ambitious Church Effort," *New York Times*, 15 June 1899, p. 8; "Gospel Tent Services Open," *New York Times*, 19 June 1899, p. 7. For more of Dixon on the dangers of skeptical higher criticism, see "Scores New England," *Boston Globe*, 9 May 1904, p. 4; "Dr. Dixon Condemns 'Critics' of Bible," *Boston Globe*, 13 August 1923, p. 8.

⁴⁹Amzi Clarence Dixon, et al. *Back to the Bible: The Triumphs of Truth* (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., n.d.), 43-59; "The Transfer of Authority," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 3; "The Fundamentals of Modernism," Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 12, folder 1; "The Authority of Christ," *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 2 (1913): 52.

leading to death. Dixon believed this led to a life that depended on what man could do for himself rather than teach the Biblical truth: man was in “desperate need of what God has done for him through the shed blood of Christ as man’s Substitute and Savior.”⁵⁰

Dixon believed that when one rejected the authority of the Bible and substituted anything else in its place, he was no longer doing the work of God, but the work of Satan. The only noble thing for one who rejected the authority of the Bible and stopped teaching biblical theology was to stop using the name Christian, for they clearly were not Christian. They ought to declare themselves to be against Christ rather than camouflage themselves as Christian preachers and teachers in theological seminaries. Each day they assaulted Christianity with their unbelief and led astray many young men studying for ministry. In doing this, they discredited their Christian uniform. Dixon explained: “If you deny the atoning blood of Christ, the fact of His resurrection, His virgin birth, the inspiration of His Book, and still proclaim yourself a Christian, I think you would feel better tonight and sleep more soundly if you took off your uniform, for you cannot feel comfortable marching upon these great forts of God under the camouflage of Christianity.” This message was frequently directed at liberal teachers in particular. Dixon rebuked “the professor [who] takes an oath to teach what he does not believe, and draws his salary, because he thinks that he is doing good by teaching the opposite of what the old fogies who established the Theological Seminary at that time believed.” These professors should resign rather than deceive. Dixon held the same view of pastors who departed from fundamental doctrines. He urged pastors who no

⁵⁰Dixon, *Back to the Bible*, 43-59; “Works of the Devil to be Destroyed,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 12, folder 1; “The Most Dangerous Heresy,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 5, folder 2.

longer believed the deity of Christ and the inspiration of the Bible to resign from the church as the only honorable thing to do. Those who taught and believed such false doctrine needed to repent, and Dixon called true Christians to pray for their conversion.⁵¹

George Burman Foster

Dixon's battle against modernism drew him into controversy concerning George Burman Foster, a University of Chicago professor and proponent of liberal theology. Not one to keep his beliefs to himself or avoid controversy, Foster made his views known publicly through his books. His first two books were *Finality of the Christian Religion* and *The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence*. In *Finality of the Christian Religion*, Foster argued against an authoritarian religion that appealed to sources such as the Bible or historical scholarship. Instead, Foster advocated an experience-based religion. Not content with the common liberal practice of altering orthodox doctrine, Foster dismissed doctrines such as inspiration and atonement as impossible and out-of-date. In *The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence*, Foster argued that man had a hand in creating religion and gods, thus religion should not be conceived as merely a matter of revelation, but also as a product of human experience. And even though man had a hand in religion's creation, religion retained a useful service and was not mere illusion. In both of these books, Foster's

⁵¹“The Battle-Lines Between Christianity and Modernism,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 12, folder 1; Dixon, *Back to the Bible*, 51; “If I Could Have My Way,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 3; “What Is Modernism?” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 3; “Ethical Bankruptcy of Modern Philosophy,” *Sword and Trowel*, n.s., 3 (1915): 167-68; “The Creed We All Need,” *The Living Word*, vol. 3, no. 18, 11 June 1900. For the prayer for the conversion of the liberal, see “Herald the Coming of Continental Revival,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 December 1905, p. 6.

rejection of the Bible as authoritative, along with his rejection of numerous orthodox doctrinal beliefs, attracted the attention of the conservative evangelical Christians in Chicago.⁵²

Dixon associated with those critical of Foster's theology soon after his arrival in Chicago in 1906. At a session of the American Bible League, Dixon warned of the danger of higher criticism of the Bible by university professors who discarded the inspiration of the Bible. Dixon argued that these professors were tearing the Bible to pieces. At that same session, Rev. A. Lincoln Shute gave a short talk in which he called Foster's *Finality of the Christian Religion* a "destructive book." Foster's book was published in January 1906 and soon drew the attention of Chicago Baptists. For two months Chicago ministers discussed the book. The Chicago Baptist Ministers' Conference officially censured it, saying "the views set forth in this book are contrary to scripture." Other ministers were not convinced of Foster's errors and protested the censure. Controversy concerning Foster and his book soon quieted.⁵³

In 1909, Foster again attracted the attention of Chicago ministers with the publication of his second book, *The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence*. Dixon was not yet in Chicago for the 1906 controversy, but in 1909 he was the key conservative leader in the Baptist Ministers' Conference, with strong support

⁵²Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism & Modernity, 1900-1950*, 161-73; Edgar A. Towne, "A 'Singleminded' Theologian: George Burman Foster at Chicago, Part 2," *Foundations* 20 (1977): 163-80; George Burman Foster, *Finality of the Christian Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906). George Burman Foster, *The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), 82-84.

⁵³"Pastor Scores Biblical Critics as 'Infidel Mosquitoes,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 November 1906, p. 5; Towne, "A 'Singleminded' Theologian": 163-80.

from Johnston Myers, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church. Together, they led a charge against Foster that resulted to his expulsion from the Baptist Ministers' Conference.

The week before the actual expulsion, he was nearly dropped, but the motion failed because the wording of the resolution merely indicated that Foster would be dropped, without specifically renouncing his theology. The following week the ministers corrected this shortcoming by conducting a contest of sorts. Twenty five ministers were given an opportunity to present a suitable resolution and the ministers were to choose the best wording, then pass the winning resolution.⁵⁴

Between the two meetings, Foster expressed his belief that the first vote was a victory for him. He argued that tolerating differing views was the Baptist way and believed his opponents were allowed to have their own opinion. "I believe in freedom of thought and expression, which is one of the first principles of the Baptist faith." Since the ministers agreed to retain him, he believed this meant they "consider [him] a Baptist and not an infidel or an atheist." Atheism was the exact charge leveled against him by Dixon. The night before the second meeting, Dixon used his Sunday evening sermon to preach on the subject of "Heresy" in which he gave a preview of the resolution he intended to offer about Foster. In his resolution Dixon charged Foster with teaching atheism by denying the existence of a personal God, denying the deity of Christ, and denying the authority of the Bible. Dixon argued that Foster had a right to believe whatever he wished, but once his beliefs extended outside the essentials of Baptist faith, he should no longer claim the Baptist name. By retaining the name

⁵⁴"Foster's Critics to Renew Attacks," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 June 1909, p. 7; "Will Try Again to Oust Foster," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 June 1909, p. 8; "Twenty-Five Aim Shots at Foster," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 June 1909, p. 5.

Baptist, Foster and his liberal theology was bringing reproach on that name. Dixon concluded that “the man I receive into my home has rights which I must respect, but when he begins to destroy my treasures, breaks my furniture, and abuse my family, he forfeits the right to remain in my home.” Since Foster was intent on tearing down Baptists with his destructive teaching, he must leave and do no more harm. As he reflected on the vote from the previous week, Dixon was sure it was not a defeat, but a call for a better resolution upon which to vote. With that in place Dixon was confident that the expulsion would go through. Dixon believed it must go through because “[Foster] is an atheist. He denies the fundamentals of all evangelical Christianity. That’s why I oppose his remaining in the conference.”⁵⁵

With another vote about his views imminent, Foster diverted attention to Dixon. Foster noted that though some opposed him for preaching in a Unitarian church, none seemed concerned that Dixon preached in the non-denominational Moody Church. At the Baptist Ministers Conference the next day, Foster’s comment seemed to have the desired effect, as the ministers took a break from discussing Foster to question whether Dixon had a right to be involved in the proceedings. Dixon argued that he did have a right since he retained membership in a Baptist church of another city and paid his dues. When the discussion diverted even more to the topic of Moody Church, Dixon spoke up again, arguing “Moody Church is just as good a Baptist church as there is in Chicago.”

⁵⁵“Will Try Again to Oust Foster,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 June 1909, p. 8; “Twenty-Five Aim Shots at Foster,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 June 1909, p. 5; “Ready to Renew Fight on Foster,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 June 1909, p. 2; “Heresy War Raging; Storm Seen Today,” *Record-Herald*, 21 June 1909, in Scrapbook 1907-1911, Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; “Reopen Foster Case; Flight Will Be Better,” in Scrapbook 1907-1911, Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

Thus, Dixon used some criteria for a church being Baptist that did not require it to consciously identifying itself as such. Though Foster's comment about Dixon did divert the attention of the ministers for a time, it only served to delay the issue. After a heated four hours of argument, they voted to expel Foster, thirty nine votes to nine.⁵⁶

The Fundamentals

Dixon's experience in the Foster controversy became the occasion for the production of the series of pamphlets known as *The Fundamentals*. Dixon began working on the project and recruited contributors. On September 21, 1906 Dixon sent a letter to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president E. Y. Mullins, asking him to contribute an article to a magazine designed to correct the false teachings of the "destructive criticism." He explained that he hoped to distribute it by January 1, 1910. Just after Foster's expulsion from the Baptist Minister's Conference, Dixon made a trip to Los Angeles in August. On a Sunday afternoon, Dixon spoke at the Temple Auditorium about a book published by an "infidel professor" at the University of Chicago. This lecture prompted a man in the audience, Lyman Stewart, a California oil tycoon, to gather up his courage and speak to Dixon about a matter on his mind for some

⁵⁶"Twenty-Five Aim Shots at Foster," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 June 1909, p. 5; "Baptist Pulpits Shut to Foster," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 22 June 1909, p. 1; "Baptists after Row Expel Prof. Foster," *New York Times*, 22 June 1909, p. 3; "Foster Is Expelled," *Washington Post*, 22 June 1909, p. 1; "Vote To Drop Prof. Foster," *Boston Globe*, 22 June 1909, p. 10; "Professor Foster in New Attacks; Defended by Oil King's Pastor," *Inter-Ocean*, 21 May 1909, in Scrapbook 1907-1911, Records of the Moody Church, Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois. Reports differ as to the location of the Baptist church in which Dixon held membership; one paper reported Boston, another New York. Originally, two ministers refused to vote and it was carried through 39 to 9. Once it was decided to publish the names of how each minister voted, each agreed to have their names included, adding one vote to each side. For more on Dixon and Foster see, Gerald Priest, "A. C. Dixon, Chicago Liberals, and *The Fundamentals*," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (Spring 1996): 113-34; Barbara Dobschuetz, "Fundamentalism and American Urban Culture: Community and Religious Identity in Dwight L. Moody's Chicago, 1864—1914" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1996), 299-300.

time. Stewart wanted to help Dixon fight modernism and apparently suggested that he recruit the best conservative scholars to write essays refuting modernism and defending orthodoxy. Stewart pledged to meet all expenses. In the end they produced a total of twelve small volumes known as *The Fundamentals*.⁵⁷

The plan was for the project to remain confidential until the first volume was issued. When Dixon wrote to ask Mullins to contribute an article, he said that it was not to be advertised in advance. Dixon asked Mullins and other contributors to keep it quiet. Somehow news of the upcoming pamphlets leaked out. *The Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that \$300,000 had been donated by a Los Angeles millionaire. It also explained that the project would not be associated with Moody Church or the Bible Institute, but with Dixon himself. The next day, the story about the project began with the warning “Free thinkers [sic] and higher thinkers should take notice.” The article explained that Dixon planned to fight for orthodoxy and “anyone who gets in the way is going to be handled without gloves.”⁵⁸

The project was in fact intended to “answer destructive higher criticism.” Lyman Stewart and his brother Milton funded the enterprise. Dixon was assigned the task of organizing the Testimony Publishing Company. He assembled a committee of

⁵⁷A. C. Dixon to E. Y. Mullins, 21 September 1909, Edgar Young Mullins Papers, 1885-1928. Archives and Special Collections at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; Lyman Stewart to A. C. Dixon, 29 July 1915, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 11, folder 6. The close proximity of the Foster trial in June 1909 and the lecture on a book published by an “infidel professor” from the University of Chicago in August 1909, make the likelihood that the “infidel” in question was Foster almost certain. The connection between the Foster trial and *The Fundamentals* is argued by Edgar Towne in “A ‘Singleminded’ Theologian”: 163-80.

⁵⁸A. C. Dixon to E. Y. Mullins, 21 September 1909, Edgar Young Mullins Papers, 1885-1928. Archives and Special Collections at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; “\$300,000 Given to Religion,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 November 1909, p. 1; “Menace for the Scoffers,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 November 1909, p. 3; “\$300,000 to Spread Religion,” *New York Times*, 7 November 1909, p. 9; “Magazine For Orthodoxy,” *Washington Post*, 8 November 1909, p. 2.

seven to lead the project, and served as the first series editor. They planned twelve volumes and aspired to send each volume free of charge “to every pastor, evangelist, missionary, theological professor, theological student, Sunday school superintendent, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. secretary in the English speaking world, so far as the addresses of all these can be obtained.” Originally, the plan was to publish one every two or three months, but the project was spread out over five years, from 1910 through 1915. Dixon oversaw the first five volumes before giving up editorial duties to accept the call to serve as pastor of Metropolitan Tabernacle, London. Dixon was succeeded by Louis Meyer who oversaw the next five volumes until his death in 1913. R. A. Torrey assumed the editorial role for what Meyer had not done of volume eleven and handled all editorial work for the final volume. In all, they produced and distributed nearly three million volumes.⁵⁹

Under Dixon’s leadership the project focused on defending key doctrines regarding Christ and the authority and reliability of Scripture. The first volume included articles entitled “The Virgin Birth of Christ” by James Orr and “The Deity of Christ” by Benjamin B. Warfield. It also included an article on higher criticism. The second volume contained even more articles defending Scripture, examining its truth, archaeological support, and addressing the “fallacies of the higher criticism.” These themes recurred throughout the first five volumes. In volume five, Dixon made his own contribution with his chapter “The Scriptures.” The choice of topics reflected Dixon’s

⁵⁹Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); R. A. Torrey, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 12 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); “Information on The Fundamentals sent by Mr Thomas E Stephens of the Great Commission Prayer League,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 11, folder 6; Amzi Clarence Dixon, “What Is Fundamentalism,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5; Dixon, Meyer and Torrey were part of the original committee of seven for the project.

belief that the challenge of skeptical higher criticism was real, but it could be effectively met with a scholarly response. Dixon objected to the notion that intelligence and learning belonged to the liberal side. Dixon argued that he rejected liberalism and embraced evangelical Christianity precisely because he was a thinker. The contents of the first five volumes reflected Dixon's confidence that evangelical Christians could to beat the skeptic at his own intellectual game. They reflected also Dixon's conviction that more than the authority of Scripture was at stake. Liberal's erroneous views concerning the Bible's inspiration led them to erroneous views of the fundamental doctrines related to Christ and salvation.⁶⁰

Judging by the publisher's notice of the original pamphlets, the project was generally well received by its recipients. By the second volume there was provision for laity to receive it at a small fee. Volume three indicated that over ten thousand letters of appreciation had been received. Additionally, some letters of opponents, though fewer, had been received indicating that the publication was reaching its intended audience. By the end of the project over two hundred thousand letters had been received by the publishers. According to the project business manager, Thomas Stephens, most of these

⁶⁰Dixon, *The Fundamentals*, vol. 1; Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 3 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 4 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.); Amzi Clarence Dixon, ed., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 5 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.). For Dixon on rejecting liberal theology because he was a thinker, see "Why I Am an Evangelical Christian and Not a Modernist" in Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 4. Here Dixon gives many reasons for continuing to be an Evangelical Christian, including: being a thinker, not being an agnostic, being a rationalist, being willing to be guided by reason enlightened by revelation, being a scientist, and being an optimist.

were changes of address, very few had criticism, and thousands were filled with expressions of praise and gratitude.⁶¹

It is unlikely that the volumes changed the mind of many liberals. But no doubt the volumes helped keep many already convinced of the fundamentals to remain in the camp. They provided fundamentalists with intelligent and informed responses to the challenges that liberalism posed. Unsurprisingly they provoked little scholarly response. Liberal scholars barely noticed. Ernest Sandeen argued that the project “produced scarcely a ripple in the scholarly world and had little impact upon biblical studies and theology.” Thus he considered the project to have “plainly failed in its primary purpose—checking the spread of Modernism.” Stewart Cole likewise saw little enduring influence from the project, saying “the far-reaching influence of *The Fundamentals* can scarcely be measured.”⁶²

The series of volumes nevertheless played an important role in shaping and consolidating the fundamentalist movement. Within the movement it served as evidence of the credibility of fundamentalist commitment to traditional orthodoxy. William Hutchison identified this as the chief message of the project, and cited John Nelson’s article: “we too have doctorates. We have access to scholarship. And we can tell you that the scientific evidence is incomplete, contradictory, sometimes absurd, as well as impious.” George Marsden argued that the series “had a long-term effect of greater importance than its immediate impact or lack thereof.” The long-term effect was as “a

⁶¹Dixon, *The Fundamentals*, vol. 2; Dixon, *The Fundamentals*, vol. 3; Torrey, *The Fundamentals*, vol. 12; “Information on *The Fundamentals* Sent by Mr. Thomas E. Stephens of the Great Commission Prayer League,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 11, folder 6.

⁶²Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism*, 199, 206-07. Cole, *History of Fundamentalism*, 61.

symbolic point of reference for indentifying a ‘fundamentalist’ movement” and useful in “tracing the outlines of the emerging movement.”⁶³

David Beale argued that the series did much in “educating Fundamentalists in a broad range of specialized subjects.” Gerald Priest agreed with Beale. He generally agreed with George Marsden’s description of *The Fundamentals* as a point of reference for identifying the fundamentalist movement, but takes issue with Marsden’s belief that the volumes were “little studied.” As evidence that they were widely studied, Priest cited the fact that the Testimony Publishing Company had received “over two hundred thousand mostly favorable letters!” Even though most of those letters were changes of address, they indicate that recipients valued the books sufficiently to ensure that they would receive subsequent volumes at their new address. *The Fundamentals* played an important role among conservative Protestants.⁶⁴

Fundamentalist Organizations

After his return from London, Dixon became a leader in two major fundamentalist organizations: World’s Christian Fundamentals Association and Baptist Bible Union. He explained his involvement in an interview with *Watchman-Examiner* upon his return to the United States in 1919: “I believe that the time has come when all Christians who believe the fundamentals of Christianity should get together and organize an offensive against apostasy.” Dixon supported such organizations. Dixon wrote in *Sword and Trowel* commending a plea from such fundamentalist leaders as W.

⁶³Hutchison, *Modernist Impulse*, 196-98. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 119.

⁶⁴Beale, *Pursuit of Purity*, 41; Gerald Priest, “An Examination of the Apologetical Ministry of Amzi Clarence Dixon” (Ph.D. diss., Bob Jones University, 1988, p. 296.

H. Griffith Thomas, R. A. Torrey, and W. B. Riley for an organized effort to combat the forces of “destructive higher criticism” and the “so-called liberal tendency” of the church. They were organizing a federation that would promote and defend such fundamental doctrines of the faith as the inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Jesus Christ, the vicarious atonement, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and his coming again to be king of kings. When Dixon returned to America, he joined the cause.⁶⁵

Dixon believed that certain central doctrines were fundamental to Christianity. For Dixon, there were six essential doctrines: the plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth of Christ, Christ’s death on the cross as a vicarious sacrifice, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the literal return of Christ. These doctrines were essential to true Christianity. If they were lost, the church’s witness to Christ would be lost as well. It was in service of preserving fundamental Christian doctrine, doctrine essential to the conversion of souls, that Dixon entered these organizations.⁶⁶

The World’s Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) first met in 1919 and selected William Bell Riley as its first president. Riley was joined by other prominent ministers including R. A. Torrey, C. I. Scofield, John Roach Straton, and A. C. Dixon. Dixon’s role in the formation of the organization is debated. Riley recalled that it was he and Dixon that met and prayed together, then called together others to

⁶⁵“Interview with Dr. A. C. Dixon,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 1, folder 3; “A Call from America,” *Sword and Trowel* 51 (1916): 197.

⁶⁶For Dixon on fundamental doctrine, see Amzi Clarence Dixon, “What Is Fundamentalism,” Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 4, folder 5; A. C. Dixon to [Brother], 31 December 1923, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 11, folder 6.

form the WCFA. This planning meeting was held in the summer 1918 at R. A. Torrey's summer home in Montrose, Pennsylvania. Ernest Sandeen argued that Dixon could not have been at the meeting because he was in England at the time. Dixon was in London on May 28, 1918 to speak at the Bible League Conference. It appears however that he was away from London for the summer, for the church records are sparse for a number of months. On September 9, 1918 the Deacon's minutes records that Dixon needed to stay in Scotland longer to recover from influenza. Additionally, before Dixon resigned from the church he was scheduled to have a six month trip to America beginning June 1, 1919. Thus, it may be possible that Dixon was in America for a short time in the summer 1918 and returned by way of Scotland, where he was recovering for influenza. But no evidence seems to exist of a trip to America to join the planning of the new association.⁶⁷

According to Riley, the WCFA had three major propositions: the Christian creed, the Christian character, and the Christian commission. Membership in the WCFA required an affirmation of a nine-point doctrinal creed. The points covered fundamental doctrines including biblical inerrancy, the virgin birth of Christ, substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection of Christ, and premillennialism. Membership was open to individuals, churches, schools, and other organizations, providing they agreed to the creed and paid the small membership fee.⁶⁸

⁶⁷W. B. Riley, *What Is Fundamentalism? Address delivered by Dr. W. B. Riley, President, at the Ninth Annual Convention of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, Atlanta, Georgia, May 1, 1927.* (n.p., n.d.); Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism*, 243; Deacons Minutes 1918, Metropolitan Tabernacle Deacons Minutes, 1914-1921, Metropolitan Tabernacle; For Dixon's planned six-month trip in 1919, see A. C. Dixon to Brother Manning, 20 December 1918, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 13, folder 5.

⁶⁸Riley, *What Is Fundamentalism?*

The WCFA stood in opposition to modernism. It spoke out against especially against evolution since it saw this as a threat to the reliability and authority of the Bible. Additionally it also sought to initiate a great revivalist campaign. Dixon assumed a prominent role in the association's activities. He spoke regularly at its meetings and continued as a member for the rest of his life.⁶⁹

Dixon assumed a prominent role in the Baptist Bible Union (BBU) also. Formed in 1923, the BBU also sought to oppose modernism and evolution. T. T. Shields was the first president, with J. Frank Norris, W. B. Riley, and Dixon serving as members of the executive committee. The BBU also adopted a confession of faith, which was a revision of the New Hampshire Confession. The BBU aimed chiefly to protest the liberal influence in Baptist life, especially in the Northern Baptist Convention. They also made it clear that although they were protesting, they were not interested in separating. The original bylaws of the BBU stated: "We declare our determination not to withdraw from the various Conventions represented by our membership; but on the contrary with renewed vigor to purge our beloved denomination from such heresies, which if unchecked must inevitably destroy the foundations upon which Baptist churches rest." A tendency to separatism soon emerged nevertheless. Perhaps it was the influence of Norris, whose church by degree was expelled by the Baptist General Convention of Texas in the early 1920s. At any rate, BBU leaders

⁶⁹Ethel H. Blake to A. C. Dixon, 5 February 1925, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 30, folder 5; Riley, *What Is Fundamentalism?* For more on the WCFA, see Beale, *Pursuit of Purity*, 97-109; Larry James McKinney, "An Historical Analysis of the Bible College Movement during Its Formative Years, 1882-1920" (Ed.D. diss., Temple University, 1985); Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, 159-62; C. Allyn Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 97-102.

tended toward sensationalism and belligerence, and became more separatist than the WCFA.⁷⁰

Contemporary discussion about Dixon and the BBU concerns less what he did when he was in it and more the reasons for his departure. In February 1925 Dixon submitted his resignation from the BBU. In his letter of resignation Dixon said that he was “convinced that the Baptist Bible Union of America has fulfilled its great mission, and ought, therefore, to be dissolved.”⁷¹

Historians have struggled nevertheless to explain Dixon’s decision to leave the BBU. His wife listed additional reasons why Dixon made the move. First, there was tension between the BBU and the Southern Baptist Convention and Dixon was the pastor of a Southern Baptist church. Dixon believed that his friends in the South found the BBU too extreme. Second, the influence of “a popular Southern preacher,” doubtless this was Norris, caused Dixon concern for a year or two because his “methods . . . did not always savor of the spirit of Christ.”⁷² Some fundamentalist historians have interpreted Dixon’s resignation variously. David Beale, reflecting on the resignation, described Dixon as one who “fought the good fight of faith almost to the midnight hour of his life, then virtually gave up the militant stance.” Gerald Priest joined Beale in thinking that Dixon made a mistake in leaving the BBU. He dedicated his concluding

⁷⁰Robert George Delnay, “A History of the Baptist Bible Union” (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1963), 51-60, 100-01; Delnay included the full text of the bylaws for the BBU in Appendix D; Barry Gene Hankins, “Saving America: Fundamentalism and Politics in the Life of J. Frank Norris” (Ph.D. diss., Kansas University, 1990), 40-45. For more on the BBU, see Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, 162-72.

⁷¹A. C. Dixon to T. T. Shields, 19 February 1925, Amzi Clarence Dixon Collection, box 11, folder 6.

⁷²Helen (Cadbury) Alexander Dixon, *A. C. Dixon, A Romance of Preaching* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), 308-10.

chapter to answering the question of whether Dixon's departure made him a defector, or if he could still be considered a defender of the faith. In the end, Priest concluded that the mistake of leaving the BBU did not overshadow an entire life of defending the faith. Dixon's defection was a small stain on his record of fundamentalist valor.⁷³

In light of Dixon's entire life, his departure from the more militant BBU was no surprise. Though it is true that Dixon felt compelled to confront error in order to defend the faith, by nature he preferred union to division. This is seen in his willingness to go to Moody Church. At the time of his decision he came under scrutiny from some Baptists for going to a church that was not Baptist. Dixon was willing to unite with a church that practiced paedobaptism, though he did not agree with it personally. Dixon also showed his propensity to unite when he organized interdenominational evangelism campaigns. Thus, Dixon was willing to identify across denominational lines on the basis of the fundamental doctrines of the faith, and on that basis work together to save souls.

When Dixon saw that the militancy of some BBU leaders was working against unity, he apparently was troubled. Southern Baptists, with whom he wished to unite in evangelism, his first ministerial priority, were being alienated by some members of the BBU. When Mrs. Dixon pointed to a certain Southern minister, one cannot help but think of the division Norris was causing even among Southern Baptists. Identification with the BBU became a liability to evangelism. Dixon therefore could no

⁷³Beale, *Pursuit of Purity*, 225; Priest, "An Examination of the Apologetical Ministry of Amzi Clarence Dixon," 409-29.

longer support the BBU. Dixon maintained his association with WCFA, also a defender of fundamental doctrine.

Dixon's highest priority was soul-winning. Necessary to this task was defending the faith and warning the saints of the danger of worldliness. Dixon's belief that God saved souls through the proclamation of the gospel made it necessary for him to defend the gospel against those who altered it to the extent that it no longer resembled the biblical gospel. Essential to this was the defense of the Bible against challenges to its authority and trustworthiness. The gospel was not a creation of men, but came from God and was revealed in the Bible. Thus, Dixon defended the authority of the Bible and the fundamental doctrines taught therein. In this way he served the cause of soul winning. Additionally, Dixon's priority for soul-winning led him to oppose worldliness. A worldly Christian was of no use in soul-winning. Rather, those who were used to save souls lived holy lives, avoided worldliness, and sought the enduement of the Spirit, whereby one's evangelism was made effective. In short, a battle against worldliness was a battle for enduement, which itself was essential in the battle for winning souls.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The Legacy of A. C. Dixon

Dixon's life must be understood through the lens of his life's passion: soul winning. He was committed to winning others to Christ. He believed that God saved souls through the proclamation of the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was committed to that principle and spent his life promoting whatever would advance soul winning through these means and opposing whatever hindered it.

Promoting the salvation of souls through proclamation of the gospel by the power of the Spirit meant that Dixon spent every day proclaiming. He not only proclaimed the good news himself, but encouraged all Christians to join him. Dixon understood that this meant he must seek God's help for the conversion of souls. Dixon prayed often and led his church to make prayer a priority. Dixon believed that the Christian must be endued by the Holy Spirit for his evangelism to be effective. This meant that Dixon sought to live a holy lifestyle and encouraged all Christians to do the same.

Opposing all that hindered the salvation of souls through proclamation of the gospel by the power of the Spirit meant that Dixon defended the faith and opposed worldly living. The good news was truth that must be proclaimed upon the authority of the Bible. Dixon spent much time defending the Bible and sound doctrine so the good

news would be preserved and intact for use in preaching—that souls would be saved. Dixon understood this required keeping worldliness from entering the lives of Christians. Worldliness hindered the enduement of the Spirit, by which a Christian's evangelism was made effective. Dixon's defense of the faith and opposition to worldliness was rooted in his desire to be useful in soul winning.

Dixon's Contribution to the Studies of Evangelicalism, the Baptists, and Conservative Theology

Dixon was an evangelical and a fundamentalist. Like many fundamentalists he spent time defending the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible and opposing those practices that kept Christians from being useful in evangelism. As an evangelical, Dixon sought to win souls to Christ. He emphasized it in every aspect of his ministry and called his church to practice evangelism. He did this in sermons from the pulpit, in letters sent to member's homes, and in church business meetings. He gave his people opportunity to evangelize in support of church evangelism initiatives, through door to door visitation, and through inviting those in the street to hear the good news each week. Dixon himself evangelized. He did this personally and in corporate settings. He organized evangelism. There does not seem to be a moment in his adult life where he was not intent on soul-winning. He not only thought about it, but organized and practiced it. Dixon demonstrated the willingness of some evangelicals in the late nineteenth and early twenties centuries to adopt crowd-gathering methods that were considered progressive.

As a Baptist, Dixon showed commitment to conservative Baptist theology, even as he was willing to lead a church that was not a Baptist church. Even here he

would not practice paedobaptism, though he did not prevent it. Dixon acted as a Baptist in being evangelistic. He was a Baptist when he led his church to exercise church discipline. He was a Baptist in arguing that being a Baptist meant the affirmation of basic Christian truths, the absence of which made you something other than Christian, thus something other than Baptist (as seen in the case of George Burman Foster).

As a conservative, Dixon showed that conservative theology knows no denominational boundary. Thus, he evangelized across denominational lines. He also defended the faith across denominational lines. It was not merely the Baptist faith under threat by liberal theology. The attack on the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible was a battle in which all who worshipped God and evangelized in his name had a stake. Dixon believed that the orthodox faith on essential doctrines shared by many different denominations of Christians, with their various disagreements on tertiary matters, must be defended for the sake of the gospel.

Dixon's life demonstrated that a fundamentalist need not be a fighter first and foremost. Dixon was involved in defending the faith to be sure. Yet, his pastoral priority and the greater part of his time was not spent fighting the liberal, but in evangelizing the lost. Putting the liberal in his place did not occupy the first place in his mind; rather it was organizing others to bring the good news to a world that needed to hear it. Dixon's commitment to winning the lost made him modern in the ways he sought to get the message out: through newspaper advertisement, ticket and tract distribution, parade, or many other methods that were criticized by some. His belief that souls were only won through preaching the gospel preserved in an authoritative and trustworthy Bible forced him to defend the Bible against those who challenged it. Yes,

Dixon was a fundamentalist. But more than that, Dixon was a pastor-evangelist who wanted to win souls to Christ. The challenge his era brought to the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible forced him to also be a defender of the faith. This is how Dixon the fundamentalist must be understood.

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ABSTRACT

STRIVING FOR SOULS BY THE POWER OF GOD: THE LIFE OF AMZI CLARENCE DIXON

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010
Chairperson: Dr. Gregory A. Wills

The dissertation is a summary of the life and ministry of A. C. Dixon. The first chapter is a brief introduction of A. C. Dixon. While Dixon's fundamentalist identity is affirmed, this introduction explains how this dissertation intends to improve upon the current historiography: Dixon was a pastor-evangelist first, and his defense of the faith was in support of this first priority.

Chapter 2 is a general overview of the life and church ministry of A. C. Dixon. The chapter explains his ties with persons, institutions and movements of academic interest. This chapter shows how Dixon's life must be understood in the context of church work. Except for a few years, Dixon's adult life was spent at the head of a church, leading Christians to serve God through the spreading of the gospel.

Chapter 3 focuses on the pastoral ministry of Dixon. It gives some idea of what Dixon was like as a pastor: his preaching, his ministry focus, and his leadership style. Attention is given to Dixon's promotion of the church through advertisement and newspaper articles.

Chapter 4 explores Dixon's extensive evangelism efforts. Though he desired to see conversions through the work of his local church, Dixon worked to organize widespread evangelistic campaigns in the cities in which he lived.

Chapter 5 demonstrates Dixon's firm belief in the power of God and the necessity of that power for any ministry. The focus is on prayer and the enduement of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 6 covers a broad section of the rest of Dixon's life. All of his life was lived out in the context of pastoral ministry. This background informs Dixon's public statements and activities. Dixon believed that conversion happens through the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of an authoritative word that led to his involvement in *The Fundamentals* and his public opposition to liberal theology.

Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation, relating Dixon's ministry to various fields of academic interest.

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