

**A HEART FOR SEPARATION**  
or  
**Are Fundamentalists Done Bleeding?**

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**Intro: Definition or Description of Ecclesiastical Separation**

Broadly, ecclesiastical separation is the refusal to collaborate in, or the withdrawal from, a working relationship with an organization or religious leader that does not obey the Word of God in doctrine and practice.

Fundamentalists have always been “separatistic.” They tried to separate the liberals from themselves, and when that did not prove productive, they separated themselves from the liberals in a more formal practice of ecclesiastical separation.

David Beale speaks of “non-conformist” fundamentalism (pre-1930s) and “separatist” fundamentalism (after 1930). After their failure to recapture the denominational machinery and preserve the faith, the fundamentalists separated from the apostasy of the corrupt denominations and started new organizations around strong leaders, beginning about 1930. During the 1930s and early 1940s there arose within the fundamentalist/evangelical coalition a dissatisfaction with separation by the moderates against the militants.

The unity-separation issue was primary in the break-away of the new evangelicals to form a new, distinct movement in the 1940s, beginning with the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942. This problem festered and came to a head in the controversy over the inclusive evangelism strategy of Billy Graham in the 1950s.

It was then that the fundamentalists had to think in terms of separation from fellow Christians and evangelical churchmen and institutions. Some refused, and continue to refuse, to practice ecclesiastical separation on that level.

**I. A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF BAPTIST FUNDAMENTALISM AND SEPARATISM.  
The struggle among fundamental Baptists, principally in the Northern Baptist Convention.**

The Northern Baptist Convention was formed in 1907 as an incorporation of corporations. It was tainted with liberalism and was sown with the seeds of its own destruction from the beginning.

**1920 The Fundamentalist Fellowship of the Northern Baptist Convention**

This was a “loyal opposition” coalition within the Convention. Fundamentalists used the technique of pre-Convention conferences to plot strategy, and the Fundamentalist Fellowship grew out of the pre-Convention session in Buffalo, NY, June 21-22, 1920.

In the Fundamentalist Fellowship there were militants (e.g., W. B. Riley, John Roach Straton, William Pettingill, and Robert T. Ketcham) and moderates (e.g., Russel Conwell, Curtis Lee Laws, J. C. Masee, James Whitcomb Brougner, John Marvin Dean, and Frank Goodchild).

Out of the 156 signers of the original call for the pre-Convention conference, few ever actually left the Northern Baptist Convention. The Fundamentalist Fellowship was renamed the Conservative Baptist Fellowship of Northern Baptists in 1946, the Conservative Baptist Fellowship in 1951, and the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship in 1967.

**1923 The Baptist Bible Union**

There was agitation within Baptist fundamentalism for a larger testimony than that within the Northern Baptist Convention. The Baptist Bible Union was formed in Kansas City, MO, with three main influential leaders: W. B. Riley, 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist, Minneapolis, J. Frank Norris, 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist, Ft. Worth; and T. T. Shields, Jarvis Street Baptist, Toronto. The Union was more separatistic, more organized, and more militant than the Fundamentalist Fellowship. The Union's technique was to withhold support from non-sympathetic institutions rather than support them while trying to purge them of unbelief.

### **1932 The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches**

The GARBC was the successor to the Baptist Bible Union which had declined drastically. At the 1932 meeting of the Union at the Belden Ave Baptist Church, Chicago, the GARBC was formed with leaders such as Robert T. Ketcham, Harry Hamilton, O. W. VanOsdel, and Earle Griffith. The GARBC was a fellowship of churches, not of individuals; nor was it a convention. It had the technique of "approving" existing agencies rather than starting them.

### **1943 The Conservative Baptist Movement**

The Fundamentalist Fellowship of the Northern Baptist Convention launched the Conservative Baptist movement by forming the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society in 1943 with Vincent Brushwyler the first general director. The leaders were R. V. Clearwaters and George Carlson, among others. (Dissatisfaction over the Convention's social gospel in foreign missions had already led Mrs. Lucy Peabody, who had served on various boards and agencies of the Convention, to lead the formation of the Association of Baptists for Evangelism in the Orient [now the ABWE] in 1927.) The original intent of the CBFMS was to operate within the Convention but be free of Convention control. Because of the new evangelical drift of the CBFMS, the Baptist World Mission was launched by the Conservative Baptist Fellowship in 1961.

The Conservative Baptist Association of America was formed in 1947 with I. Cedric Peterson the first director, followed shortly by B. Myron Cedarholm. Under Cedarholm CBA of A was far more separatist than the CBFMS and CBHMS.

In 1950 the Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society was formally organized with George Washburn the general director, followed in 1952 by Rufus Jones.

### **1953 The Portland Manifesto**

A strong and definitive statement on ecclesiastical separation was adopted by the CBA of A meeting in Portland, OR, in 1953.

### **1963 The Boardwalk Betrayal**

The CBA of A refused to reaffirm the Portland Manifesto in Atlantic City, NJ, in 1963. The motion to reaffirm was first moved by Arno Q. Weniger. This rejection of separatism stirred the fundamentalists to new action.

### **1964 The Committee of 21**

The penetration and take-over of the Conservative Baptist movement by new evangelicalism caused the separatists to call for a new association of churches. A 21-member committee was chosen at the Central Regional meeting in October 1964 at the Marquette Manor Baptist Church, Chicago. Leaders on this committee were Richard Weeks, chairman, R. V. Clearwaters, Archer Weniger, Bryce Augsburger, Monroe Parker, Ernest Pickelring, Earle Matteson, and others of the "hard core" separatists within the CBA. The committee brought their recommendation to a meeting of the Conservative Baptist Fellowship at the Beth Eden Baptist Church, Denver, May 28-31, 1965. The recommendation was to form new association of churches the following year in

Indianapolis.

### **1966 The Formation of the New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches**

A formation meeting took place at the Eagledale Baptist Church, Indianapolis, June 8-10, 1966. The NTAIBC got off to a rocky start as a division occurred immediately over whether the new group was to be a pastor's fellowship or an association of churches.

### **1979 The Name Change in the CBA of Michigan**

The CBA of Michigan was controlled by elements of the hardcore separatists led by Harry Love in his long tenure as general director. At the annual meeting of the CBA of Michigan in Flint in 1979, the name of the Association was changed to the Independent Fundamental Baptist Association of Michigan. This was to clearly identify the Michigan group as a separatist, fundamental Baptist association and to unhorse its perceived association with the Conservative Baptist movement which had for years been solidly in the new evangelical camp.

## **II. DEVELOPING A HEART FOR SEPARATION.**

I will propose four questions to lay a foundation for having a heart for and a practice of ecclesiastical separation.

### **1A What is "The Faith?"**

**Acts 6:7** [In Jerusalem] "a great many priests were becoming obedient to the faith."

**Acts 13:8** [Elymas the magician] "was seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith."

**Acts 14:22** Paul went through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch encouraging the disciples "to continue in the faith."

**Gal 1:23** [Concerning Paul] "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

**1 Tim 1:19-20** [Hymenaeus and Alexander] "suffered shipwreck in regard to the faith."

**1 Tim 4:1** "in later times some will fall away from the faith."

**Jude 3** "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints."

"The faith" is a body of truths to be believed. More specifically the faith is Christianity itself. To ask "what is the faith?" is to ask "what is Christianity?" or "what is the true religion?" The faith, especially in Acts, is all that is implied in believing in Jesus Christ.

Christianity is first and foremost a set of beliefs; it is a set of truth-claims that must be believed or one will languish in hell forever. Some would say that Christianity is Christ. True. But who is the Christ? He is the Christ of Scripture; the one who said, "in the volume of the book it is written of me" (**Heb 10:7**). Others would say that Christianity is the new birth. Again, true, but reductionist. What defines the new birth? The only legitimate dictionary is the teaching of Scripture.

Our fundamentalist forefathers were not wrong to give first place to matters of faith—i.e., biblical doctrine. Not what you felt, not who your friends were, not how much money your church contributed to the denominational machine, but *what did you believe?* Especially what you believed about Christ and the Scriptures, and other doctrines crucially interlocking with those two.

### **2A What is the Gospel?**

The "gospel" is literally "good news," from the Greek word *euangelion*. It is used more than

75 times in the NT; 60 by Paul. The gospel is essentially the good tidings of redemption from sin through God's activity in Christ.

- 1b Paul was set apart unto the gospel of God (**Rom 1:3**).
- 2b Paul was entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised (**Gal 2:7**).
- 3b Paul said, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (**1 Cor 9:16**).
- 4b Paul was willing to become all things for the sake of the gospel (**1 Cor 9:23**).
- 5b The gospel was something revealed by God; God is the author of the gospel (**Rom 1:2**: "the gospel of God," i.e., it is God's gospel and it is from God and about God) (**1 Thess 2:2**: Paul preached "the gospel of God" to the Thessalonians).
- 6b What is the **content** of the gospel? **1 Corinthians 15:3-5**.
  - 1c The gospel concerns the **Jesus Christ** of the NT.  
 Jesus is the gospel's major theme. This is the Jesus of history, not the "Christ event" of neo-orthodoxy and existentialist philosophy. This is the God-man: He is completely and genuinely God (100% deity), and He is completely and genuinely man (100% human). Jesus Christ is neither more nor less human than we are. Anyone who diminishes either of the two natures of Christ has denied the Person of Christ, regardless of how sincere he may be. To deny the full humanity of Christ strikes at the heart of the gospel as much as to deny His complete deity, and this is heresy.
  - 2c The gospel concerns the **death of Christ**.  
 "Christ died" is a fact of history; but the gospel is "Christ died for our sins," and that is a fact of theology. Christ made a complete payment for sin, a sacrifice of infinite worth sufficient for the sins of the world. He is the "Savior of all men" (**1 Tim 2:4**) in that He paid the infinite penalty of sin but also He earned infinite merit or righteousness for His people.  
 Christ's complete and authentic humanity was necessary for Him to be able to die for sin, since God cannot die. His complete and genuine deity was necessary to give that death infinite value. Christ paid the last farthing that God's holy justice required as the wages of sin. For His death to be valid and to secure any "good news," His death had to be preceded by His virgin birth and an absolutely sinless life.
  - 3c The gospel concerns the **burial of Christ**, the proof of death.
  - 4c The gospel concerns the **resurrection of Christ**.
    - 1d His resurrection was the validation of His cross work—His atonement for sin. The resurrection was the proof that He had triumphed over all the effects of sin.
    - 2d His resurrection validated His claims to be the son of God.
    - 3d His resurrection validated His claims to forgive sin.
    - 4c His resurrection validated his claims to sit on David's throne and rule in the Kingdom of the Messiah
    - 5d The bodily resurrection of Christ is an article of saving faith— one must believe it in order to be saved (**Rom 1:9b-10a**). It takes a *living Savior* to save, and it takes one who has triumphed over sin and hell to save anyone from sin and hell (**Rev 1:18**).
  - 5c The gospel is **according to the Scriptures**.
    - 1d Only in Scripture do we have any authoritative information about Christ.
    - 2d Only in Scripture do we have any worthwhile information about Christ.
    - 3d Only in Scripture do we have any word about the love of God, the cross work of Christ, and the offer of the gospel of eternal life through repentance and faith.
    - 4d By "the Scriptures" is meant the inspired, inerrant, divinely authoritative 66 books of the Protestant canon *in the original manuscripts*. Whatever manuscript family or text-type a fundamentalist may prefer is a matter of *charity*. To say that there is only one divinely-protected text-type, reproduction, or version of the autographs that

contains the gospel is no longer a matter of charity but of *theology*; and worse, it is heresy.

### 3A What is a Christian?

- 1b A Christian is one who has exercised faith in Jesus Christ; he is a “believer.”
- 2b A Christian is one who has been exposed to the truth-claims of Scripture (**Rom 10:17** “faith comes by hearing...the word of Christ”).
- 3b What does a “believer” believe? What is the minimum content of saving faith? He must believe the truth-claims of Scripture about at least 5 things:
  - 1c The truth about **God**—the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Eph 1:3**), not just a bunch of God-talk.
  - 2c The truth about **sin**—what it is, who it is against, and what its penalty is.
  - 3c The truth about **Jesus Christ**, the heart of the gospel—the Christ of the Bible as noted earlier.
  - 4c The truth about **repentance** (**Acts 17:30** “God calls on all everywhere to repent”). This is a complete change of mind about God, sin, Jesus Christ, and the sinner himself, and a disposition or resolve to seek pardon.
  - 5c The truth about **faith**—The hallmark of a Christian is faith; Christians are called “believers” in Scripture, not converts or repenters.
    - 1d Saving faith includes:
      - Knowledge* (involving the intellect) of the gospel’s minimum tenets.
      - Assent* (involving the emotions), where the person sees himself as being spoken to by his knowledge of the Word.
      - Trust* (involving the will), a surrender, an abandonment of all reliance except on Christ. It involves a commitment of soul and life completely to Christ as Savior and Lord (**Rom 10:9**).
    - 2d Saving faith is a gift from God.
      - No one naturally has faith as though it were just a change of reliance from a chair or a light switch to Christ.
    - 3d Saving faith requires the Lord to “open the heart” (**Acts 16:14**).
    - 4d Saving faith results from the “power of God in the gospel unto salvation” (**Rom 1:16**). The power of God in the gospel is “not bound/imprisoned” (**1 Tim 2:9**).
    - 5d The gospel accomplishes or effects the salvation it announces in its good news. It imparts the life it promises so that people can call upon God in repentance and faith.

### 4A What is the Basis of Separation?

There is a difference between “heresy” and “error” that is helpful in determining the boundaries of cooperation and separation (Robert Delnay, *Faith Pulpit*, June-Aug 1987).

The word heresy (*hairesis*) comes from the idea of a taking, which came to mean a choice, a chosen opinion; a choice of false opinion or doctrine that is destructive (**2 Pet 2:1** “destructive heresies” that were introduced by false teachers who were headed for God’s judgment [“swift destruction”]). The word heresy eventually stood for theological error and false teaching.

**Heresy** is error which strikes at the heart of the Christian faith; certain forms of error eviscerate the gospel and undercut the plan of salvation and basis of anyone’s hope of heaven.

Heresy is soul-damning by its very nature

Heresy involves another Jesus, a different gospel, and a different spirit, things which lead away from the simplicity of the things of Christ (**2 Cor 11:3-4**).

No one who knowingly espouses heresy can be a Christian.

**Error** is incorrect belief. If two Christians have a difference of belief about the same subject, one or both may be in error, but both cannot be right. “Error” as used here is something short of “heresy.” Separation from error is more delicate and requires more fine tuning and charity than separation from heresy. That is, how much “error” can be tolerated from other Christians without a formal separation becoming necessary?

This requires an understanding of different **levels** of fellowship (Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation*, p. 218). Different doctrinal requirements enter the picture for different forms of Christian relationships: e.g., personal, local churches, associations of churches, academic societies, softball leagues, violin concerts, interschool sports competition, and the like.

A pastor or a local church must decide where the line will be drawn on differences between professing Christians and even between professing fundamentalists. A professing fundamentalist may unknowingly be imbibing heresy, e.g., concerning the genuine and complete humanity of Christ, or concerning the inspiration of Scripture, or concerning a view of the preservation of Scripture that denies the biblical doctrine of inspiration and a closed canon for this age. These will certainly cause a separation if they are not rectified.

A professing fundamental Baptist pastor or a local Baptist church may hold views that are unacceptable to another fundamental Baptist pastor or local church, and a separation becomes necessary; i.e., error which cannot be tolerated in a working relationship.

A “heart for separation” takes time to develop. It requires a theological or doctrinal maturity that doesn’t come easily. It definitely transcends friendships, relatives (fathers, sons, uncles, cousins, in-laws and out-laws), ecclesiastical position and power, personal ambition, and a whole lot more.

Fundamentalists have been fractured in the last two and a half decades and will necessarily continue to fragment unless there is some major theological change in certain segments of the fundamentalist movement. Issues that have relatively recently come to the fore of fundamentalism include:

1. King James-Onlyism. This is really a matter of the doctrine of bibliology in the last analysis. What precisely is the Word of God written?
2. Lordship salvation. Does saving faith involve an unreserved commitment to Christ, or is such faith reserved for another experience?
3. Progressive sanctification. Does the Spirit begin His sanctifying work at regeneration and justification, or from a modified Wesleyan second blessing experience of dedication?
4. The blood of Christ. Is the “blood of Christ” referring to the saving power of the chemical components of His blood, or to salvation through His atoning sacrificial death for sin?
5. The sovereignty of God in salvation. Is salvation a unilateral work of God’s grace from start to finish, or is it a synergism of man’s and God’s cooperative efforts? Is saving faith a result of the Spirit’s life-giving work, or is it something native to the human psyche that can be aroused by emotional appeal?
6. The divine election of believers to salvation. Is election a loving choice out of God’s gracious good pleasure, or is it God’s ratification of man’s choice? Or is there no personal election to salvation at all, only God’s choice of a “plan” or of the corporate “church?”
7. The perseverance of the saints. Is perseverance a necessary outcome and evidence of everyone’s new birth, or is it an option only for the especially consecrated and anointed few?

### **Conclusion: Must We Continue to Bleed?**

The question before us is, are we going to go back to the soteriology of our Baptist forefathers that is rooted in Scripture as formulated in the Second London Baptist Confession and the Philadelphia Confession, to say nothing of the New Hampshire Confession, which all

professing Baptists claim to follow but few have ever read?

Or are we going to follow a modified Wesleyan and a quasi-Arminian theology with its emphasis on man in his autonomy rather than God in His majesty?

I suggest that as fundamental Baptists we are going to continue to bleed until we learn the difference between fundamental Baptists as a “good ole’ boys club” of fun and nonsense and one in which sound theology and expositional preaching are its markers.

The GARBC went through the struggle over election and related themes in the 1970s. At the 1975 Association meeting in Winona Lake, IN, the more Calvinistic forces led by Ernest Pickering, among others, were turned back by those of Arminian belief led by Robert Sumner. “Soulwinning,” “free will,” and glandular emotionalism trumped theology in Winona, and the record of the GARBC and of the quasi-Arminian crowd has not been very impressive since then.

At one of the World Congresses on Fundamentalism in the mid 1980s the question was raised to a panel of fundamentalist leaders as to what will keep fundamentalists on course and keep them in effect from become new, new evangelicals. The answer that made the most sense was by Dr. Harry Love. He felt that the main stay was *expository preaching*. I agreed then, and much more so today.

Delivered at the annual meeting of the Independent Fundamental Baptist Association of Michigan, Grace Baptist Church, Waterford, MI, October 30, 2001.