

MATURE UNITY
AN APPEAL TO FELLOW MINISTERS
FOR A FUNDAMENTAL-EVANGELICAL DEVELOPMENT
IN CHRISTIANITY



ROBERT A. SNYDER

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The picture on the front cover is taken from a set of samples provided with Microsoft Word.

To the Bride of Christ,
for the increase of her beauty,
and to the original Standpoint Group

Mike Durning
Jason Janz
Brian McCrorie
Tom Pryde
Joel Tetreau

in gratitude to God for our time spent together.

*Jesus, from whom all blessings flow,
Great builder of Thy church below;
If now Thy Spirit move my breast,
Hear, and fulfil Thine own request.
The few that truly call Thee Lord,
And wait Thy sanctifying Word,
And Thee their utmost Saviour own,
Unite and perfect them in one.*

*O let them all Thy mind express,
Stand forth Thy chosen witnesses;
Thy power unto salvation show,
And perfect holiness below.
In them let all mankind behold
How Christians lived in days of old;
Mighty their envious foes to move,
A proverb of reproach and love.*

*Call them into Thy wondrous light,
Worthy to walk with Thee in white;
Make up Thy jewels, Lord, and show
Thy glorious spotless church below.
From every sinful wrinkle free,
Redeemed from all iniquity,
The fellowship of saints make known,
And oh, my God, may I be one.*

—Charles Wesley (1707-1788),
as found in *Still Waters: A Collection of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*
(Decatur, TN: Christian Community, 2000).

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Introduction

How to Avoid the Zeal of Saul

“Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.”

—2 Samuel 21:2

Several times in my life I have felt like Saul, overdoing something in my zeal for the house of Israel. Perhaps the zeal was commendable as a desire, but zeal without knowledge is dangerous, even eternally dangerous (Romans 10:1-2). Recognizing this danger is especially important today, when sincerity is often treated as the badge of reality, regardless of content. We need more than zeal. We also need discernment. Therefore, I propose a series of articles that will hopefully help to rectify some of the one-sided thinking often common in today’s Christian leadership. Before addressing specifics, let me first lay out two general principles that correct the blind zeal of Saul.

First, it is important for Christian leaders to recognize the difference between antithesis and complement. In other words, we must know the difference between ideas that oppose each other and ideas that agree with each other. It is the age-old question: “Are ye friend, or are ye foe?” In his zeal for the children of Israel, Saul did not discern the fact that, though the Gibeonites were Amorites, they were not in antithesis to the house of Israel, but rather in complement, designated by covenant to live among them.

Let us consider an example of right thinking from the Lord Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made it very clear that we can only have one supreme loyalty in life: “No man can serve two masters.” As proof, Jesus pointed to the psychological impossibility of attempting dual loyalty: “Either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.” Then, by way of application, Jesus concluded, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). Therefore, in our capacity to love, we can only have one supreme loyalty. This hard-wired fact does not, however, mean that we cannot have multiple loves. Later, Jesus even reiterates the Law’s demands that we love God with all our being and love our neighbor as ourselves. How can that be? As you know, love for one’s neighbor is “the second” commandment (Matthew 22:27-39). As long as we have only one *first* love, we can have several secondary loves. There is both antithesis and complement.

On paper, this seems easy, but in real life it is truly hard at times to discern the difference between ideas that oppose each other and ideas that complement each other. Concerning the example cited above, I remember reading about the consternation that both George Whitefield and Jim Elliot felt in struggling with the desire to marry while yet having the call of God on their lives to preach. When does the call become so great that marriage should be foregone (as God called Jeremiah)? In this area, as in many others, “Great men are not always wise” (Job 32:9). Indeed, we often will not achieve a true, balanced judgment without counsel, even much counsel (Proverbs 24:5-6).

This distinction between antithesis and complement becomes very important in times of controversy. Then it becomes far too easy for Christian leaders to latch onto a position and

defend it to the death, fearing that even a small concession to the opposition would jeopardize the entire cause. It is as if *all* the Amorites are to be killed, simply because as Canaanites they will bring a snare. True, Amorites do bring a snare; but *these* Amorites had a covenant.

Let us consider another example, this time from the apostle Paul. In the midst of the circumcision controversy, Paul told the Galatians flat-out, “If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing” (Galatians 5:2). Then, four verses later, he writes, “In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availed any thing, nor uncircumcision” (Galatians 5:6). Do you see? As an attempted means of salvation, circumcision meant condemnation—to be “fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). In and of itself, however, circumcision meant nothing (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 6:15). Paul himself had Timothy circumcised to avoid unnecessary offense (Acts 16:3). We, however, may have been tempted to equate *all* circumcision with apostasy, avoiding it at cost! No, while circumcision as a means of salvation was antithetical to the Gospel, circumcision as a cultural expression was complementary to the Gospel’s mission.

The writings of Paul also illustrate the fact that one-sidedness can go both ways. Just as some might conclude that all circumcision is bad based on its abuse (as if uncircumcision availed anything), so also others might conclude that all circumcision is good based on its status as simply a ritual. In other words, since circumcision is simply a ritual and not a fundamental of the faith, what harm could come from it? This type of error is especially seen in the debate over meat offered to idols. True, Paul affirmed, idols are nothing; therefore, a Christian can eat meat offered to idols. The Corinthian Christians did this freely, exercising their liberty in Christ from pagan superstitions. However, Paul pointed out that not every aspect of this practice complemented the Gospel. Two in particular bothered him. First, some Christians still thought the practice was evil; therefore, in their presence overtly eating such meat should be avoided. Moreover, though the idols were nothing, the demons behind them were real; therefore, Christians should not eat such meat in the pagan temples or in their festivals (1 Corinthians 8-10). Like Halloween today, we know that ghosts are not real, but the devilish themes are real; therefore, why join in such so-called festivities? Let us learn the difference between antithesis and complement.

In light of these thoughts, I invite you to consider with me a series of theological ideas that are complementary in nature. Instead of the usual topics in systematic theology, these ideas are more abstract, but they often form the framework for how certain theological positions are conceived and presented. The topics are:

Primitive and Progressive
Fundamental and Evangelical
Truth and Love
Form and Fullness
Divine and Human
Static and Dynamic
Perfection and Presentation
Universal and Local
Polemics and Irenics
Already and Not-Yet
Israel and the Church
The Father and the Son

At first glance, some of these topics appear to be antithetical to each other, but I will argue that each pair should be embraced and pursued in a complementary manner. For long-range stability and growth in the church, we must affirm the balance of related truths. While this balance may place more weight on one idea, the idea's complement will be necessary to fill out the picture. Jesus modeled this weighted balance, when He corrected the Pharisees on their tithing: "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23). In other words, instead of simply majoring on the majors and forgetting the minors, Jesus commands us to major on the majors and also to minor on the minors—to keep both majors and minors and to keep them in proper priority.

Second, it is important for Christian leaders to understand the historical background to contemporary problems. Saul treated the Gibeonites like ordinary Amorites. Perhaps in his zeal, he lost sight of Israel's history. Too often, we fail in the same way, not realizing that God has often prepared for today through the experiences of yesterday. Why should we reinvent the wheel or learn lessons the hard way? It is time, once again, to pay attention to church history.

For a complete survey of church history, we would need knowledge on twelve historical movements that continue to affect the church in America today. Not all these movements are biblical; in fact, none of them is completely biblical and some of them are downright heretical and godless. In their own way, however, whether for weal or for woe, each of these movements have shaped the discussions we face today in the American church. The twelve movements are orthodoxy, Protestantism, pietism, the Enlightenment, evangelicalism, dispensationalism, modernism, fundamentalism, neo-orthodoxy, new evangelicalism, the Southern Baptist Convention, and postmodernism. If done justice, each of these historical topics would constitute a book in itself—a formidable task indeed! Thankfully, it is not necessary for us to know all the details about the past in order to profit from the past. Saul did not need to know everything about the Gibeonites, but he did need to know about the covenant that Israel had made with them before the Lord. Likewise, we need to know about certain key decisions made in the past and about the lessons to be learned from the resulting movements.

For this series of topics, the two key movements are evangelicalism and fundamentalism. For the sake of clarification, here is a quick sketch of my understanding of these two movements.

Evangelicalism is an interdenominational movement that began in Great Britain and then spread to the United States in the early 1700s. Many early evangelicals, such as George Whitefield and John Wesley, were itinerate revival preachers, who emphasized the necessity of new birth for personal salvation instead of the sacramental theology of salvation through a traditional church. In fact, both Whitefield and Wesley were largely forbidden to preach in the Anglican church that had ordained them, yet this did not stop them from preaching and ministering to people. They formed "society" meetings (like Bible studies) and eventually a new denomination, the Methodists. Later in the 1700s and into the 1800s, evangelicalism became more organized, emphasizing "united effort" in evangelism and cultural benevolence and expanding their acceptance of extrabiblical structures to include parachurch organizations such as the American Bible Society (established in 1816), the American Sunday School Union, and many other benevolent societies. Secondary differences in creed were ignored in order to work together on the basis of a minimal *evangel*. This early movement weakened in 1837 due to both

sectarian strife (largely over baptism) and sectional strife (over slavery). The evangelical impulse reappeared after the Civil War and continued until the fundamentalist controversy. After World War II, it reappeared under the name “neo-evangelicalism,” which has now once again broadened into a generic movement known as “evangelicalism.”

The *sine quo non* of evangelicalism is united effort to win the culture for Christ. Defining traits of the movement include:

Evangelical Unity – a unity based on faith in the Gospel that ignores secondary differences in creed. Beyond doctrine, the central unifying factor is an experience: being born of God.

Emphasis on Love – especially in united efforts of benevolence and missions. The “benevolent societies” are now called “parachurch organizations.”

Cultural Dominance – a latent postmillennialism that seeks to reclaim American culture for Christ. Two means are used: revivals and parachurch organizations.

Like evangelicalism, fundamentalism is also an interdenominational movement, but it began in the United States during the 1910s. Leaders recognized that liberals were avowing the historic creeds but defining the terms of those creeds in a novel, unorthodox way. In contrast, the “fundamentalists” (a neologism of that era) affirmed the literal fundamentals with an attitude of militancy. While it may appear that their lists of fundamentals are truncated creeds, it is important to note that fundamentalists often affirmed the historic creeds and then *further* asserted that certain doctrines in those creeds, the *fundamentals*, were essential to Christianity. Strategically, the fundamentalists’ goal was to separate Christianity from liberalism: first, by putting the liberals out or if that failed, by coming out themselves. The mainline denominations fell into the hands of the liberals, so fundamentalists mainly came out and built their own institutions.

A new phase of the fundamentalist movement began in the 1940s in response to the neo-evangelical movement. Neo-evangelicals criticized fundamentalism for its separatism—both its separation from the culture and from the old denominations. The straw that broke the camel’s back was when Billy Graham, against warnings, purposely invited a liberal onto the platform in his 1957 New York Crusade. In response to such disobedience, fundamentalists separated from the neo-evangelicals, which is a practice called “secondary separation.” In addition, fundamentalist groups have largely operated independent of one another.

The *sine quo non* of fundamentalism is the idea that certain doctrines are essential to Christianity. Defining traits of the movement include:

Doctrinal Unity – groups are defined by their doctrines, some of which may be secondary in nature.

Literalism – the words of Scripture are taken literally, as in dispensationalism and creation science.

Militancy – the slogan “contend for the faith” (Jude 3) is taken seriously as a stance and as an attitude.

Separatism – the centrality of truth demands not just a verbal response but also an organizational response.

Interestingly, both evangelicalism and fundamentalism have recognized two kinds of

doctrine: fundamental doctrine, which is essential to Christianity and necessary for salvation (cf. John 8:32), and secondary doctrine, which defines the denominations and pertains mainly to polity, ordinances, and liturgy. Moreover, both movements have often kept this distinction in proper order, although for different reasons. Evangelicalism has often minimized secondary doctrine in order to accomplish united effort. Fundamentalism has often maximized fundamental doctrine in order to keep the lines of heresy clear. Both are helpful. In this distinction, both movements teach us the wisdom of prioritizing our doctrines. Further chapters will explore how fundamentalism and evangelicalism are complementary, not antithetical.

May the Lord grant His church the wisdom to discern between antithesis and complement, keeping in mind the lessons from the past!

A Fundamental-Evangelical Creed

We believe in one God,
The *Father*, who is the Almighty,
 Both in His actions (according to His name),
 And in His knowledge (according to His plan).
He is the Creator of heaven and earth
 In six days, and
 Of male and female
 In His image and in their order.
He is the Justifier not of him who has works,
 But of him who has faith in Jesus Christ.
He saved us according to His mercy—
 By His grace alone, through faith alone,
 For His own glory and for our good.
We exist to worship Him in fear and joy forever!

We believe in one Lord,
Jesus, who is the Christ,
 The only-begotten Son of God;
The eternal Word of Life,
 True God of True God,
 Begotten, not made,
 Consubstantial with the Father.
In the fullness of time, He also became man—
 Conceived in the virgin, Mary, beneath the Holy Spirit,
 Born under the Law of Moses before the Holy Spirit.
He suffered at the hands of both Jews and Gentiles,
 Yet made the good confession to Pontius Pilate.
He died for our sins (according to the Scriptures),
 And was buried;
He rose again on the third day (according to the Scripture),
 And was seen by many witnesses.
He ascended into heaven
 And is seated at the right hand of the Father.
All authority in heaven and on earth belong to Jesus,
 Who is Christ the Crucified and Christ the Lord!
He is the one Mediator between God and men,
 The sole Head of the church, and
 The promised Redeemer of His people Israel.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead:
 Resurrecting bodily the righteous and the wicked,
 Rendering to each one according to his deeds—
 Everlasting life to the righteous, and
 Endless torment to the wicked.

We believe in one Spirit,
The *Holy Spirit*, who is the Life-Giver,
 Both in wonders and in salvation.
He is the Author of the Holy Scriptures,
 Which are the living and abiding Word of God, and
 Which are totally true and pure of all error.
He is the promised Advocate,
 Who sanctifies all true believers
 And convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

We confess our utter sinfulness
 And absolute dependence on grace,
Our need for spiritual rebirth
 And progress in holiness.
We confess believer baptism by immersion
 And the Lord's table of remembrance,
The fellowship of all believers
 And the covenant of our local assembly.
We freely submit ourselves
 To the Great Commission of our Lord,
 To the keys of His church on earth, and
 To all human institutions under God.

Amen.

Chapter One

Primitive and Progressive Doctrinal Development and the Maturity of the Church

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

—Ephesians 4:13

In discussions on church unity, it is common to confound foundational unity with functional unity. “We are all Christians,” one might say, “so why should we have separate organizations?” True, we are all Christians, sharing the same personal salvation under the same Trinity and going to the same heaven; but this foundational unity does not necessarily mean that we have achieved enough functional unity to justify a union in all efforts. In Ephesians chapter four, Paul cites both a unity of relationships to maintain (v. 3) as well as a unity of faith to attain (v. 13). There are two kinds of unity. The first is permanent, but the second has yet to be attained. The first is more a question of health, while the second is the embodiment of maturity. Just as a human being must strive to be both healthy and mature, so also the body of Christ needs to be both healthy in the unity of relationships and mature in the unity of faith.

Of the two kinds of Christian unity, the least understood—or even recognized—is this goal of a “unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (v. 13). In its context, this unity has at least a *doctrinal component*, produced lovingly by the grace of Jesus Christ through ministers of the word (v. 11) and ultimately expressed when every member is “speaking the truth in love” to one another (v. 15). As a result, members are not tossed about by heretical winds and the body grows up into Christ, with every member the others serving in love (vv. 14-16). This is a goal to which every minister and every member should seek to contribute. No member is exempt from the necessity of “speaking the truth in love” (v. 15); therefore, we should each take an interest in how the church has developed in doctrine over time and in where our current difficulties reside. In name, this topic is called *doctrinal development*.

In scholarly circles, doctrinal development became an excuse for liberal theologians to abandon the truth of the Bible. Just as Woodrow Wilson argued in 1912 for an evolutionary interpretation of the Constitution, so these liberal theologians treated the Bible and the creeds as sufficient for their day, but not for modern times. What was needed, they argued, was an organic development of the life-principle of Christianity, as seen in the ever-changing doctrinal development of the church. As a result of the liberals’ abuse of this concept, it is easy to be suspicious of doctrinal development and not recognize the legitimate growth of the church’s understanding of the unchanging Bible.

In contrast to the liberals, a biblical view of doctrinal development is based squarely on Paul’s vision for the unity of the church in Ephesians. The biblical foundation for doctrine never changes. The church is a temple built squarely on “the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). The faith has been “once [for all time] delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). However, our comprehension of this faith grows, both as individuals and as a collective church. Church history amply testifies that the church grew in understanding the Trinity during the controversies of the fourth century, and in understanding the doctrine of justification during the controversies of the sixteenth century. Just as we individuals grow in our understanding of the Bible through the crises we experience,

so has the church as a whole. Just as a father uses both the rod and reproof to give wisdom (cf. Proverbs 29:15), so the Lord has both given the word and then added circumstances that provoke better understanding—circumstances as varied as the manna in the Wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:1-3), the return from the Exile (Ezekiel 36), and the discipline of churches in the New Testament (Revelation 2:23). Once learned, these lessons, grounded in the Scriptures, become part of the continuing tradition of the church. In a sense, we have learned that lesson once, and do not desire to repeat it. Therefore, the church of Jesus Christ should be both primitive and progressive.

First, the church must remain *primitive* in its foundational unity. Contrary to the liberals, who use doctrinal development as a cloak for innovations that actually destroy the foundation rather than build upon it, we hold firmly to the Bible, God’s final revelation to man through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). In this sense, we are “primitive.” Anyone who goes beyond this standard and “abideth not in the doctrine of Christ” is rightly regarded as “a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7-8). As fundamentalist W. B. Riley liked to point out, the self-proclaimed “progressives” of his day literally fulfilled John’s words by *going beyond* (Gr. *proagon*) the teaching of Christ. We cannot be “progressive” at the expense of being primitive. “To the law and to the testimony,” proclaimed Isaiah, “if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

This, however, does not mean that the goal of the church is to return to some pristine era, according to some restorationist desire. There has never been a pristine era. Some of the New Testament churches were loaded with scandals, sometimes to such an extent that we today would hardly dare to have fellowship with them! Similarly, we today should avoid the temptation to resurrect the Reformation, restore the Puritan forms of worship and doctrine, or reenact the fundamentalism of the 1920s. To return to any historic stage of the church is an improper primitivism, for it denies the maturation of the church through the catalyst of ministers building upon the unchanging word of God. In other words, just as there must not be a so-called progress without primitivism, neither should there be primitivism without progress.

We know this intuitively by personal experience. As individual Christians, there have been times in our lives of great growth in understanding and practice. We mark those times as benchmarks in our lives. But even though we treasure those moments, do we desire to return to that point? Do we not desire to keep growing, treasuring those past insights but also looking ahead to new ones? Similarly, the church should treasure the insights of the past without idolizing them. We have been given one great foundation, the Bible. As God’s word, the Bible alone is our *creed*, that is, what we must believe. Our confessions of faith simply mark our progress as a body in understanding that one Book. By design, the Lord provokes us through experiences to gain further understanding into the Book. As a result, our *confession* of faith keeps growing, while our *creed* does not. Building on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, we are yet seeking to attain “the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:13). In this sense, we are both progressive and primitive.

Therefore, let us not unite on *mere Christianity*, on patristic creeds alone, as if the Reformation had not occurred. Let us not unite on *Reformed Christianity*, as if history has passed no verdict on infant baptism and the union of church and state. Nor let us unite on *fundamentalism* or on *evangelicalism*, as if either of these movements provide us a pristine ideal to which we must return. Let us rather unite on the Bible alone, and seek to be *Christians*—not just *mere* Christians, but *mature* Christians.

Second, the church must become *progressive in functional unity*. It is an irony in church history that those who have championed the “Bible alone,” that is, to the exclusion of learning from men, have often become heretics. At first, this troubled me, but now I see that God does not reward pride with insights (cf. Matthew 11:25). Though it may appear to be a humble statement of trust in the Lord to say, “I will only listen to God and take all my doctrine from the Bible,” it is actually an act of rebellion, for the Lord did not set up the church for any member to say to other members, “I have no need of you” (1 Corinthians 12:21). Yes, God could give every insight and provision directly from heaven, but He normally does not; instead, He often supplies our need through the hand of a brother, and thereby increases our humility and our love for one another. We are interdependent on each other in Christ.

The same is true in doctrine. No teacher is a full lord over pupils. God commended the Bereans for double-checking Paul (Acts 17:11). Nor are pupils independent of teachers. The Ethiopian eunuch confessed, “How can I [understand], except some man should guide me?” (Acts 8:31). We need each other. Similarly, we need the past ages of the church as well. No era can say to a previous era, “I have no need of you.” What God taught the church then is now for our benefit. Yes, we have “apostles and prophets,” the foundation with Christ (Ephesians 2:20); but He also gave the church “evangelists . . . pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). This is one of the values of tradition. Tradition is not the foundation; but it is the scaffolding through which we build the temple of God today. Once this insight is grasped, studying church history takes on new significance and becomes an exciting search for insights we can use today—all based on the word of God alone.

May the Lord ground the church in the knowledge of Scripture and enable the church to grow through truth and love informed by tradition!

The next chapter will continue this discussion, by asking what can be learned from both evangelicalism and fundamentalism in the area of doctrinal development. A more detailed examination of fundamentalism in particular can be found in the appendix.

Chapter Two

Primitive and Progressive

Doctrinal Development in Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism

In the previous chapter, we learned from Scripture that there is within the church both a foundational unity to maintain and a functional unity to attain. On the one hand, the foundational unity of relationships among Christians is permanent, and should be maintained in “the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3). This represents the health of the body of Christ. On the other hand, the functional unity of maturity is still future, and must be attained in part through doctrinal development, as the church corporately grows in understanding the unchanging revelation once-for-all-time given to the saints (Ephesians 4:11-16). Therefore, a sincere pursuit of doctrinal development is necessary for the church to grow up into Christ as a body.

For the purpose of this series of articles, we need to ask *what can be learned from both evangelicalism and fundamentalism in the area of doctrinal development?* Remember, since we are called to be progressive in a good sense, building upon the insights of the past, it does little good for us to identify ourselves as “historic fundamentalists” or “historic evangelicals.” As heirs of these two traditions, we must ask what lessons may God be teaching us through the history and present conditions of these two movements? As stated in the introductory article, both movements agree that prioritizing doctrine is wise. Identifying the fundamentals of the faith is necessary for maintaining genuine Christian unity and for preserving doctrinal purity. As for the movements individually, let me offer the following suggestions, being open to revision and precision from others.

As a movement, evangelicalism has been mainly known for united effort to win the culture. On the positive side, we learn that national and international goals *within* Christianity and *for* Christianity are legitimately achieved through cooperative effort. For example, while the first Jerusalem relief-effort was a local church endeavor (Acts 11:27-30), the second relief-effort confirms the wisdom of cooperative effort for non-local needs (2 Corinthians 8-9). Moreover, the Lord Jesus may raise up ministers-at-large to spearhead endeavors that exceed local church ministry. It is hard to envision how local churches alone could have effectively helped the persecuted church, apart from ministers such as Brother Andrew and Richard Wurmbrand. To some, this may be a challenge to the idea of legitimate ministry occurring through local churches alone, but I will leave that topic for a later article to discuss.

On the negative side, we learn that neglecting doctrine and focusing only on the commonality of an experience leads in time to a vague unity that dances with heresy. It is ludicrous to separate Christian experience from Christian doctrine, for through the truth we were born again (cf. James 1:17; 1 Peter 1:23). Also on the negative side, the fruit of the nineteenth century shows that aiming at cultural dominance does in fact lead to the social gospel. Moreover, when social action and evangelistic mission are placed as twin goals, the former tends to eat out the latter. We must remember that the sword of Jesus prevents cultural dominance (Matthew 10:34). The world *will* hate us (John 15:19), and the only way to avoid this would be to remain silent or to compromise our message (cf. John 7:7). Neither is an option. Furthermore, cultural dominance easily forgets the meekness of the Gospel, often confounds our real enemy with people, and may neglect the priority of the saints. Jesus Himself, though letting benevolence interrupt Him, kept the word as His primary mission (see Mark 1:38).

As a movement, fundamentalism has been mainly known for its militant defense of the faith and for its consequent separation from heretics and compromisers. Historically, the *sine quo non* of fundamentalism is not separation, but the belief that certain unchanging doctrines are essential to Christianity. In light of this unchanging core doctrine, true Christian unity can only be based upon fundamental doctrinal agreement. As a corollary, when such agreement is not present, separation must occur, either by putting out or by coming out. On the positive side, the history of many historic denominations has shown that separation from false teaching is necessary for the long-term health of the church. It is true; false teaching does spread like gangrene and should not be tolerated (2 Tim. 2:16-18). Even when non-separatists are true believers, tempting us to conclude that such a neglect is acceptable, we must remember that Jehoshaphat-like alliances corrupt future generations.

On the negative side, we learn that it is dangerous to define fidelity in negative terms, such as militant and separatist. Such negative traits are merely the necessary corollaries of positive traits, such as truth and love. When we define fidelity negatively, we must constantly prove our faithfulness in like manner, looking for a fight and making a stand. Such behavior can become our default mode. Remember, it is possible to be doctrinally faithful and yet to lose one's standing as a church by forgetting one's former love to the brothers (Revelation 2:1-7). Also on the negative side, so-called secondary-separation is ungodly when it regards an errant believer as an enemy and not as a brother (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). In light of this observation, we should ask whether it is ever legitimate for a believer to sever all communication with another brother? We must remember that reproofs are essential for the church's mature unity, and that separation is primarily activity-driven, not communication-driven (cf. Ephesians 5:11).

In general, it does appear that evangelicalism has rallied around love often at the expense of truth, and that fundamentalism has rallied around truth often to the neglect of love. To some degree, both movements have hurt the true functional unity of the church. Christians today must be different, learning from both groups and making progress in both truth and love. As stated earlier, mature unity requires that all members are "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Communication is the means to unity, and love is the motive. Both truth and love must be present. In practice, it may be best to broaden the concept of a "fundamental" to include both truth and love—both creed and conduct, as fundamentalist W. B. Riley used to assert. Both a heart of faith and a resulting life of love are essential to entering heaven, as both Jesus and the apostles asserted (e.g. Matthew 7:21; John 8:24; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 12:3; Galatians 1:8-9; 5:19-21). Apart from repentance, neither heretics nor scandalous individuals inherit the kingdom of God. As an aside, it is good to note that although there is merit for including piety along with creed and conduct as defining marks of a genuine believer, piety cannot be used as a defining mark of fellowship, for only God knows the heart, nor is it necessary as a defining mark of fellowship, for piety is proven over time through both creed and conduct.

Doctrinally, I do believe that fundamentalism has something to offer us today that evangelicalism does not have. It is my belief, and one that I was taught, that the real threat to Christianity today is in the area of hermeneutics, in the separation of form and meaning. By hermeneutics, I mean the science of interpretation that includes not only the interpretation of words, but also the interpretation of manners and styles. Historically, the separation of form and meaning entered the church through pietism and spread through the revivalism of the previous

centuries. Though both fundamentalism and evangelicalism are heirs to this pietistic revivalism, there is a literalism in fundamentalism that could become the germ for a solid doctrinal development in orthodox Christianity. This literalism is part of the *sine quo non* of fundamentalism, as seen in some of its historic documents.

Let me illustrate my point historically, using a philosophical distinction that has often been used in historic theology. Theological movements have at heart both a material principle and a formal principle. The material principle is the theological content itself, and the formal principle is the ground on which it is built. In the material principle, the question “What?” is answered; in the formal principle, the question “Why?” is answered. For example, in the Protestant Reformation, the material principle of justification by faith alone was grounded in the formal principle of *sola Scriptura*. Of the two, the formal principle largely determined the material principle. Once the question of authority was answered, it was mainly a matter of time before the question of content was settled.

A similar sequence occurred in the early twentieth century. Regarding the material principle, the liberals would give tacit “agreement” to the confessions of faith, but then either reduce a doctrine to the level of a theory, as the Auburn Affirmation did to the doctrine of the atonement, or else dismiss the confessions as valid but outmoded expressions of piety from a former day. It was practices such as this that made J. Gresham Machen shy away from the word “interpret,” and made W. B. Riley insist on taking the Bible literally, instead of “that weasel method of sucking the meaning out of words and then presenting the empty shells with an attempt to palm them off, as giving the Christian faith a new and another interpretation” (“What Is Fundamentalism?” *The Christian Fundamentalist*, July 1927). According to both Machen and Riley, the form of words has meaning. This connection between the form of words and their meaning is the formal principle of the fundamentalist controversy. Therefore, the material principle of fundamentalism is essentialism; the formal principle, literalism. By broadening the application of this principle, as a later article will seek to do, the church receives a precious gift from its fundamentalist heritage for addressing the questions of worship and the role of women in the church.

Ultimately, we are Christians; therefore, the history of both fundamentalism and evangelicalism belong to all of us. Instead of returning to the roots of either of these movements, seeking to be an “historic evangelical” or a “historic fundamentalist,” let us rather press on into a new development of Christianity—a development that learns from the hard lessons of the past and builds upon the best of both traditions. We truly can be both primitive and progressive.

May the Lord grant the current generation of Christians wisdom, love, and humility to merge the best of evangelicalism and fundamentalism into a new doctrinal development toward the mature unity of the church!

Chapter Three

Fundamental and Evangelical The Basic Elements of the Christian Faith

*“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?
Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.
And we believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

—John 6:67-69

In this pivotal interchange between Jesus and Peter, we have the defining essence of true Christian faith. Jesus had just spoken more than one “hard saying,” causing many of His disciples to return and no longer walk with Him (John 6:60-66). In response, Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked them, “Will ye also go away?” (John 6:67). Here, then, is the defining moment. What makes a man stay in Christianity? What are the two essential elements of Christian faith? Peter responds. It is the authority of the word of God and the person of Jesus Christ. Here we have both the formal principle and the material principle of Christian faith—elements that I will call “fundamental” and “evangelical.”

First, true Christian faith is fundamental in authority. In response to Jesus’ words, we believe God. Several times in the Gospel of John, Jesus makes clear that His words did not come from Himself, but from His Father (e.g. John 7:17; 8:28; 12:49-50). To hear Jesus’ words and then to believe meant to believe the One who sent Him (John 5:24). Therefore, when Peter said that Jesus alone had “the words of eternal life,” these words are the words of God the Father—His testimony to His Son (1 John 5:9-10). To believe Jesus’ words is to believe God.

The foundation of Christianity is the word of God alone. The church is built firmly on “the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). To this, all the classic documents of Protestant Christianity agree. The Bible alone is the final and sufficient authority in all matters of faith and practice. Greater than all that man can learn inductively by observation or deductively by reason, the Bible stands as the final revelation of the Spirit in Christ—a revelation that is both mysterious, plumbing the deep things of God, and yet also propositional, being spoken in words which the Holy Spirit taught (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). Greater than all the traditions of the church, the Bible stands as the written tradition of Jesus’ very own official representatives, the apostles, in conjunction with their partners, the New Testament prophets. Granted, the testimony of men has weight, but the testimony of God is greater (1 John 5:9; cf. John 5:31-39).

The Bible’s claim to verbal inspiration must be taken seriously. Jesus certainly did. In speaking of the authority of a small quote from the Old Testament, Jesus said, “The scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Regarding the smallest detail of the Old Testament, Jesus said, “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail” (Luke 16:17). In fact, Jesus defined His own ministry as fulfilling every “jot and tittle” of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17-18). According to Jesus, the Bible is truthful down to the smallest detail, including both historical and scientific facts. Those who wish to argue differently and yet retain the title of “Christian” must reckon with the fact that the biblical Jesus, the true Jesus, has taught us a different view.

According to the Law, the test of a prophecy involves both its claim and its accuracy. If a prophet came in the name of another god, even with miraculous signs, he was to be rejected outright (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). To this, the New Testament agrees (1 John 4:1-6). If a prophet came in the name of the true God, the people were entitled to ask for a sign. If the sign then came true, he was to be feared and his word believed, because it came from God. If the sign did not come true, he was a fraud and not to be feared (Deuteronomy 18:15-22). From these rules, we learn that the test of inspiration (written prophecy) is not simply inerrancy (truthfulness), but infallibility (not failing to come to pass). By logical contraposition, any word that has either errors or false prophecies cannot possibly be from God, for it is “impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18; cf. Titus 1:2). His word is pure purity (Psalm 12:6).

Today, the word of God is attacked on a deeper level than it has been previously. In the modernist era, the debate raged around inerrancy, with skirmishes here and there over archeological points and scientific data. In these debates, the naturalistic presuppositions ruled out the possibility of the supernatural before the issues were even engaged. To these folks, J. Gresham Machen rightly responded near the end of his classic book of the virgin birth, that these skeptics would not seriously entertain the possibility of the supernatural until the Spirit convicted them of their sin, forcing them to realize that there would be no hope without a supernatural intervention of God in time and space. Today, the postmodern mindset questions the validity of truth itself. In a sense, the very nature of word as word is under attack. To these folks, hermeneutics is everything. A text may be admitted, but *what does it mean?* Often we hear in response, “Well, that is your interpretation,” or, “The Bible can be interpreted in many different ways.” Among the more sophisticated, for example, though they may not be postmodernists, one hears talk about a “redemptive-movement hermeneutic” (William Webb) and a “trajectory hermeneutic” (R. T. France and David Thompson) that put into doubt traditional understandings about the Bible’s view on gender roles (see Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006], 65). In such a climate, what should the church do?

It is my conviction that a fundamental understanding of Scripture is in order. What does Scripture say in its most basic sense? In other words, we should take the Bible literally. Now, let me clarify. This does not mean that I somehow literalize figurative language. When Jesus said that the Pharisees were straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel, it is understood that He was using hyperbole. Similarly, the mention of the mustard seed as the smallest in the garden should not be taken to seed, as some scholars seem to do with no pun intended. In historical context, it is understood that it was the smallest seed of their familiar set. Such language is acceptable under a literal, fundamental hermeneutic. Moreover, a literal interpretation does not rule out a double meaning. Tracing the word “fulfill” in its usage in Matthew shows that Jesus intended to actualize the fuller meaning (*sensus plenior*) of the entire Old Testament (Matthew 5:17-18). Finally, a literal interpretation does not rule out the spiritual dimension necessary in understanding the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:14-16). Men must receive the Holy Spirit, not because the words themselves are incomprehensible, but because these words point to a referent that in its own nature is foreign to the natural man. By analogy, those unfamiliar with a sport can hear words that designate plays and moves, but experience alone will give these words meaning. The Spirit Himself supplies the necessary experience factor for words with spiritual referents to have meaning.

In all these debates, the Bible itself teaches that only two kinds of speech need interpretation: foreign language (e.g. John 1:38) and figurative language (e.g. John 16:25-30).

Historical referents would fall under foreign language, for over time referents appear or change names, making even the same language become strange, even as Old English is to us today. The fact that foreign languages can be learned, whether they are geographical or historical, shows that man himself is fundamentally the same and enabled by God to communicate, even as the Tower of Babel bears witness (Genesis 11). Therefore, fundamental Christianity will demand the plain interpretation of Scripture.

Moreover, fundamental Christianity will also defend Scripture by Scripture itself. To the world, this seems hopelessly circular, but it is not. Scripture is the voice of God Himself. This voice carries with it its own authentication, which John Calvin called the “majesty of Scripture” (*Institutes* 1.5). John Owen described it as the “divine original” of the Bible, in which the Spirit bears witness in and by the word of God that it is indeed from Him. Regarding its power, we know a sword is a sword when it slays us. Such is the nature of God’s word (Hebrews 4:12). Regarding its truthfulness, we know that we have entered into the light when we begin to see. Similarly, the psalmist testified, “In thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36:9). In the nature of things, it would be impossible for God’s word to receive a higher endorsement than from Himself. Jesus made this point in His parable, when Abraham tells the rich man, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31). As a result, Jesus Himself said that He did not receive the testimony of men, for His Father alone testified of Him (John 5:34, 36-38). In our apologetics, we would do well to just quote the Bible more and let postmodern man feel the plain truth of God, regardless of his sophisticated hermeneutics.

On a personal level, we do not have saving faith until the reason for our faith rests on the word of God alone. This is the testimony of Peter cited above. It is also the testimony of the Samaritans, who told the woman from the well, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42). It is also the promise Jesus Himself gives to us, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). Oh, for the blessing of hearing the voice of the Shepherd and following Him! “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:9).

Therefore, against the modernists, we hold to the inerrancy, accuracy, and supernaturalness of the Bible. Against the postmodernists, we hold to the perspicuity of the Bible and even of language itself. Against the rationalists and traditionalists, we believe the Bible because of its own self-authenticating character. We have a fundamental faith.

Second, true Christian faith is evangelical in content. Peter not only acknowledged the authority for his faith, he also acknowledged his faith in Christ Himself. The one follows immediately from the other. If I believe the testimony that God gives of His Son, I will also believe in this Son. Therefore, the nature of true, saving faith is two-fold: I believe God (His word) and I believe in Jesus (His Son).

It is interesting that God the Father has reserved the right to testify of His Son (cf. Matthew 11:27; 16:17). Apart from the inspired witness of the Bible, we know nothing about Jesus. The so-called search for the historical Jesus shows how futile it is to try to reconstruct Jesus without the full witness of God in Scripture. The search itself shows the impossibility of unraveling the divine portrait and putting it back together into something rational, as Machen demonstrated so soundly in his classic *Christianity & Liberalism* (1923). Not even demons were allowed to testify of Jesus (e.g. Acts 16:16-18). God Himself testifies of His Son.

This fact is very important in today's world. For those who want Jesus in their lives, there are only two options. We either receive the Jesus of the Bible, the real Jesus who lives today and will soon return, or else we manufacture a "Jesus" of our own making. Even if this new "Jesus" incorporates elements from the Scriptures, it is still not the real Jesus anymore than we would appreciate having a reporter interview us and then present only the aspects of our life that he approved or found credible. Much of Jesus' work and character is under attack, but we must hold to whatever the Bible says about Him, regardless of whether we understand it fully or not. I so appreciated the comment Luther made once to Erasmus about the Word becoming flesh (John 1:14). In essence, Luther said that even though the phenomenon itself is very unclear (even a grand mystery), the fact itself is clear. I am not required to explain the nature of the Incarnation, but simply to believe the fact of the Incarnation.

Though it is beyond the scope of this article to plumb deep, the Incarnation was necessary for two main reasons. First, we needed revelation in order to know God. Jesus is the Word, the image of the Father, who is the translation of God to us in fully human terms—so fully, He Himself became man (John 1:1, 14, 18). It is one of the ironies of history that Immanuel Kant denied that the true knowledge of the supernatural, when his very name—Immanuel (meaning "God with us")—signifies the bridge God gapped in explaining Himself to us on our terms (cf. Matthew 1:21-23). Second, we needed redemption in order to come to God. Jesus is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The Bible is clear: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). In order for God to remain just in justifying sinners—indeed, for God to remain *righteous* in upholding the infinite value of His honor, as Athanasius hinted and Anselm asserted and John Piper so beautifully articulated recently—someone must pay for the sin with death. Sin is serious, because God is glorious. But here we face a dilemma. No sinner can pay for his past sin with future obedience, for he already owes this obedience to God. Moreover, no sinner can pay for another's sin, for he has his own to die for. Nor can a lamb or lesser animal die in the place of a sinner, for the value of such a life would not equal the value of human life. Where, then, can a Life be found that had so much value, that taking it *once* in violent death will atone for not only all the sins of one sinner, but even the sin of the world? Only *God* possesses such a life; and in order for *God* to die—and I speak reverently—the Word had to become flesh (Hebrews 2:14-17); and in order for His death to apply to us *rightly* and not arbitrarily, He had to be united to us and we had to be united to Him (2 Cor. 5:14-15, 21). The *one* Righteous One, to whom every believer is united, died for us and in our place (Isaiah 53:11; 1 John 2:1-2). *Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

Perhaps no part of Jesus' witness is under attack more today than His claims to exclusivity. If any verse should be plastered across barns and placed on letterhead, it is the word Jesus gave once to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the way to God, the truth about God, and the life from God. Three times the definite article "the" stands against the pluralism and tolerance of our day, as if there must be some other way to Heaven than Jesus. No. Jesus is not *a* way; He is *the* way. Therefore, it is crucial for the church to engage in missions, for salvation is found in no other name than Jesus, but how shall they believe in and call upon Him whom they have not heard (Romans 10:14-15)?

How much of this must I believe in order to be a Christian? This has been the traditional question about fundamental doctrine. In other words, which doctrines are essential to Christianity? A later article will address secondary doctrines. For now, let it be known that whatever the Father says of the Son should be believed. Jesus Christ is the central doctrine of

Christianity—the one foundation, the one criterion of orthodoxy (1 Corinthians 3:11; Colossians 2:8; 1 John 4:1). This is fundamental Christianity. This is evangelical Christianity. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).

May the Lord Himself strengthen our faith in the incarnate Son of God, based on the written word of God!

Chapter Four

Fundamental and Evangelical The Basic Elements of the Christian Church

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

—Jude 3

According to Jude’s example, the theme of the church should be our “common salvation,” though at times it will be necessary to interrupt this theme in order to “contend for the faith.” Though we may aim (and must aim) at being a peaceful evangelical, there will be times when we must be a fighting fundamentalist. Both are necessary, but in proper order. The war exists for the peace; but without the war, peace is impossible. Here then are the two sides of the Christian church. In our fundamental character, we stand firm against the devil; in our evangelical character, we walk united in the Gospel. Defensively, we are fundamental; offensively, we are evangelical.

First, the Christian church is fundamental in defense. The devil relentlessly attacks the church, either through overt persecution and intimidation, or through covert temptation and infiltration, as when “certain men crept in unawares” (Jude 4). In either case, the church must stand firm against the devil, having on its armor and persevering in prayer for all the saints. In no way should the church ignore these attacks and let down its guard. The deceitfulness of sin hardens a heart (Hebrews 3:13). False doctrine spreads like gangrene (2 Timothy 2:17). Wolves do not spare the sheep (Acts 20:29). Therefore, the church must be vigilant and active in withstanding the devil’s advances. This fundamental ministry of the church will require at least three aspects.

First, a fundamental ministry takes the Bible literally and authoritatively in all areas of doctrine and practice. The church must insist on the plain meaning of the sacred text and not budge. When the Lord faced the devil, he did not “dialogue” with *diabolos*, he took the *rhema* of the Spirit and quoted three times, saying, “It is written.” As Luther hymned years ago, one little word shall fell the devil. Why do we search for a better sword, when we have “none like that,” as Joseph Parker once noted David saying of Goliath’s sword (1 Samuel 21:9)? In the power of the Spirit, we too can wield a giant’s sword!

It is interesting that our culture recognizes an appeal to religious authority as fundamentalism. To them, it is a putdown, for it implies that blind authority has replaced open-eyed reason. At times, Christians also use the term derogatively against each other, as Francis Schaeffer testified to experiencing shortly before his death: “I used to shift away uncomfortably when I was called a ‘fundamentalist,’ because of the negative connotation which had become attached to it. But now it seems that as soon as one stands in confrontation against that which is unbiblical (instead of accommodation), as soon as one takes such a stand, one is automatically labeled ‘fundamentalist’” (*The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 143-44). While Schaeffer chided those using the term, let me rather exhort those receiving the term to not be ashamed, but glorify God through this name (cf. 1 Peter 4:16). It is not a shame but an honor to be unashamed about not only Jesus, but His *words* in “this adulterous and sinful generation” (Mark 8:38).

Second, a fundamental ministry recognizes that certain doctrines are essential to Christianity, and that doctrine in general matters. As in the sciences, so in theology, there are certain basics that define the discipline—certain *fundamentals* that are essential to its structure as an integrated system of thought. This use of the word “fundamental” is nothing new to Christianity. It can be found in the 1677 preface to the London Baptist Confession of Faith. It can be found in the final chapter of William Wilberforce’s best-seller, *A Practical View of Christianity*. It can be found at the foundation of evangelical unity, around which the denominations coexisted in the nineteenth century. Certain doctrines are fundamental; others are secondary. If we agree on the fundamentals, we can mutually recognize each other as Christians, assuming we have also been born again. What is new is that such an idea needs defending! Amazingly, liberals one hundred years ago acted as if doctrine evolved, so that what had served the Puritans as truth no longer served the modern church as truth. Some even denied the necessity of doctrine at all! “Life, not doctrine,” taught Adolf von Harnack. Against such heresies, J. Gresham Machen and others asserted the necessity and permanence of core doctrine. The faith remained the faith. It is the faith once-for-all-time delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

What are the fundamental doctrines of Christianity? According to Paul, our faith revolves around the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Christ (1 Corinthians 8:6)—the doctrine of the Trinity is implied here, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. These twin concerns, God and Christ, have often informed the structure of the church’s classic creeds, stretching back even beyond the Apostle’s Creed. As stated in the last article, the faith rests on the authority of God the Father (Scripture), and centers on the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ (the Gospel). Therefore, any attack on Scripture and any attack on Christ is an attack on a fundamental of the faith.

What renders making a list of fundamentals so difficult is the immensity of the Gospel message, which encompasses not only a great span of doctrines, stretching from the past work of Christ to the present application of salvation, but also a web of other doctrines that are logically connected to the core in a grand network. For example, when Paul cited the Gospel as “first” importance, he not only cited the fundamentals of Christ’s atoning death and bodily resurrection, he also defended the reality of bodily resurrection in general, as logically connected to the fundamentals of the Gospel (see 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, 12-19). Moreover, any secondary doctrine can take on fundamental importance when it is twisted in such a way that a fundamental is attacked. For example, though baptism is a secondary doctrine over which good men have disagreed on mode and subject, the heresy of baptismal regeneration impinges upon the fundamentals of spiritual regeneration and salvation by grace alone, thereby elevating baptism in importance (see Ephesians 4:5). In some cases, citing secondary doctrines may make a fundamental ministry appear to be majoring on the minors, and certainly this has been done and remains a risk, but for want of a nail, a battle can be lost. Finally, while our creed remains constant (the Bible), the devil varies his attack; therefore, our confession of faith will vary as well. Not all the fundamentals will be cited, but only those necessary for defending the faith at a given time. In 1910, the Presbyterians emphasized the supernatural elements of the Bible and of Christ, because modernism attacked supernaturalism. In today’s postmodern climate, the fundamentals of the faith to be cited include the antithetical nature of truth (1 John 2:21b), the knowability of truth (John 8:31-32), and the exclusivity of the Way (John 14:6)—doctrines that have always been fundamentals, but were largely assumed in prior centuries.

Third, a fundamental ministry recognizes the need to fight heresy, when it has invaded the church (Jude 3). Though the Lord’s bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but meekly

correct those who oppose (2 Timothy 2:24-25), he is nonetheless called to be “a good soldier of Jesus Christ” and to “fight the good fight of faith” (2 Timothy 2:3; 1 Timothy 6:12). Paul often called fellow-preachers “fellow soldier” (Philippians 2:25). For the sake of the sheep, militancy must accompany the ministry. As Schaeffer declared again and again in his swan song, “*Truth demands loving confrontation, but confrontation*” (ibid., 142-143).

Within church fellowship, this “good fight” will demand that unity be based on fundamental doctrine and fundamental experience. When these are not present, due to heresy or scandal, church discipline must take place. Either the violator is excluded, with the loving desire that such a one “may learn not to blaspheme” and that his “spirit may be saved” through repentance (1 Timothy 1:21; 1 Corinthians 5:5), or, as in drastic cases where the orthodox have completely lost control of leadership, a new fellowship must be formed. In either case, whether by putting out or coming out, the church must maintain its fundamental defense in remaining separate from that which is unclean (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1).

Second, the Christian church is evangelical in offense. As in every great campaign, there is both defense and offense. The ministry is no different. Just as ministers must defend the church against heresy, so ministers of the word should imitate their Master in seeking the lost and feeding the sheep (cf. Luke 19:10; John 21:15-17). As with fundamental ministry, evangelical ministry also has at least three elements.

First, an evangelical ministry keeps the Gospel at the center of doctrine. This very idea is implied in the term “evangelical,” which comes from the Greek word for “gospel.” It is the good news about Christ. According to Paul, correct preaching is preaching Christ (Philippians 1:15-18). Conversely, the acid test of heresy is being “not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). All the Scriptures speak of Him (John 5:29), for “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10; cf. 1 Peter 1:11). Like a giant satellite dish, every point of Scripture focuses back on the center—Christ. Therefore, faithful preaching will not be satisfied with mere biblical truth, nor with expositions of law, but, as Spurgeon said once, will draw a beeline to the Cross, or, as John Stott once coordinated, “we preach Christ crucified,” and “we preach . . . Christ Jesus the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 4:5).

According to the model set forth by Paul in his letters, faithful preaching never goes beyond the Gospel. There is no deeper message nor higher truth. All truth is “in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21), and nothing can be seen in proper perspective without setting it against Him “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). Sanctification issues, in particular, are subtle applications of the death and resurrection of Christ (e.g. Colossians 2:20ff). The Gospel remains “the power of God unto salvation” to everyone currently believing (Romans 1:16). It does God’s people little good to be fundamental on Scriptural authority and yet continually harp on the moral taboos of the Bible to the exclusion of good news for God’s people, not just the lost in the congregation.

Second, an evangelical ministry asserts the necessity of personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. This idea has historical roots, stretching back to the Reformation, when Luther and the other reformers stressed the need for personal faith against the *ex opere operato* principle of the Catholic sacraments, as if the rituals alone, performed properly, conferred the grace. To this day, the Lutheran Church in Germany is known as the “evangelical church.” By the end of the eighteenth century, the word “evangelical” also came to emphasize the need for an inner experience of salvation—a spiritual birth from being dead in sin to being alive with Christ. Jesus made it clear, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). This

birth occurs through the word (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23); therefore, unless a man hears the word about Christ, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. There is no such thing as an implicit Christian in other religions. Jesus is the cornerstone, apart from whom there is no salvation, for “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:11-12). People must hear the Name in order to call upon the Name, but how “shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14). May the Lord send out preachers into His harvest!

Third, an evangelical ministry will be unashamedly evangelistic. In our postmodern world, where relativism is king and tolerance a virtue, evangelism is seen as unwarranted proselytism. Again, the devil is lying! The Great Commission is built soundly on the authority of Jesus Christ over all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). He deserves the nations as His inheritance by divine statute, and is told to ask for them (Psalm 2:7-8). In Christ, we too ask the Father to give the nations to His Son—now, in representation, as God calls out a “people for his name” from every people group (Acts 15:14); later, when Christ returns and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11). Therefore, we engage in world missions and local evangelism to the glory of the Son and the glory of the Father.

Ultimately, the concepts of fundamental ministry and evangelical ministry are intertwined in Christ. The great fundamental of Christianity and of the church is Christ. He Himself is the Gospel.

May the Lord Himself strengthen both the defense and the offense of the church into a fundamental-evangelical consensus!

Chapter Five

Truth and Love

Two Marks of the True Church

“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.”

—2 John 3

Years ago, I was sitting down with my good friend Joel Tetreau, watching him explain his insight from 2 John as he drew two pillars on a napkin. The first he labeled, “Truth,” and the second, “Love.” According to John, Joel concluded, these two should never be divorced, but always remain as the twin pillars of Christianity. At the time, I did not comprehend the significance of what my friend was saying to me, but now I do. A Christian never has the right, at any time, to stop practicing truth and love towards any brother, not even in cases of church discipline or ecclesiastical separation. This is a real challenge, and one that I first desire to prove before giving application.

In John’s gospel, Jesus gives two explicit marks of a genuine disciple. These marks, when rightly discerned, will help any Christian find a good church, for they are the marks that the Lord Himself gives of a true church—our very own personal ID badge. The marks are as follows:

Truth - Perseverance in the objective word of Jesus.

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make your free” (John 8:31-32).

Love - Loving fellow disciples as Christ loved us.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35).

John is not the only apostle who emphasizes truth and love. In his own way, the apostle Paul does as well, choosing to emphasize the subjective side of truth in his common pair “faith and love” (e.g. Ephesians 1:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:6). This is how Paul knew the Ephesians were genuine Christians and the Thessalonians had remained faithful. Both groups exhibited faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love for the brethren. Similarly, Christians through the ages have made discoveries similar to Joel’s, though also in different terms and passages. Francis Schaeffer often urged the dual practice of holiness and love, while a former pastor of mine, Dean Johnson from Minnesota, in a later conversation, spoke of “grace and truth” (John 1:14). In all of these instances, there is the repeated insistence that Christianity has both a vertical and a horizontal dimension. True Christianity has objective standards of truth given by revelation from God and also a subjective commitment of love towards all its members. What then does this look like, and why is it so important?

First, there can be no true Christian union except on the basis of the truth of the word of Christ. Over the last century, there have been many calls for a greater union in the church. Often, the only element urged as the basis for such a visible union has been love. In contrast, the apostle Paul tells us that, while love is the motive of union in the church, the means is “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). It is not just enough to insist that we love each other. What is the basis for our union? There is no other foundation than Christ, and we know of Him only through the written revelation He gave through His apostles and prophets (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20). Mature unity ultimately comes when, through the teaching of the word of Christ, we are “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

On a personal level, individuals should not be added or restored to the church membership except on the basis of truth. Regarding initial membership, it is tempting to accept religious language without examining what the person himself actually means. Often, individuals have been conditioned to respond with the right phrases, who yet have no clue about the truth of Christ’s person and work. Please do not dismiss their muddled testimony lightly. According to Jesus’ words above, a person who does not yet *know* the truth is a person who is not yet *free* from sin (John 8:32). Somewhere, though often not confessed nor perhaps even made aware to the sinner, there exists a slavery to sin, which time will often reveal. Such a person should be acknowledged regarding the faith in what he does know (as Jesus spoke to Jews who had truly “believed on him”), but then be strongly encouraged to *continue* in the word of Christ, both in private and in regular church attendance, until he then truly does know the truth and is thus freed from his sin (John 8:30-32).

Similarly, in cases of church discipline, there is so much pressure to affirm the sinner without ever mentioning the sin. Yes, some fellowships have blared the truth in a harsh manner, showing almost a pride in dishing out the scarlet letter, but is it not today more often the case that we are afraid to name adultery as adultery, for example, and deal with it in the light of Scripture? Ignoring sin in the family of God is no more loving than ignoring it in our own families (Proverbs 3:24). It is still true: “Open rebuke is better than secret love” (Proverbs 27:5). Let us bathe these situations in prayer, adding tears if necessary, and then, by faith in the One who first sought us with truth, speak the truth with our brother, for “we are members one of another” (Ephesians 4:25).

Given the significant role that truth plays in the mature unity of the church, it is not surprising, then, that the Lord Jesus gave so many ministers of the word to His universal church: “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). All of these functions concern the distribution of the word of truth. In fact, though the term “pastors” by itself may not always imply a teaching role, it seems that Paul may have added the explanatory term “teachers” to “pastors” in order to make clear that these shepherds of souls are to feed the flock of Christ with the word of Christ. At the very minimum, the teaching of the word of Christ within the body of Christ must not cease. The book of God must be opened Sunday after Sunday, and the words explained in their proper context and significance. “The entrance of thy words giveth light,” says the psalmist, and “giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130). Where this is not done, we have lost one of the marks that such a group is indeed a church of our Lord’s disciples.

Second, love demands that we seek a relationship with all Christians, and never permanently sever ties with any. This is truly challenging. Like birds of a denominational

feather, we tend to flock together and never seek out our brothers in other fellowships. This does not mean that we ignore true differences over truth; but how will these differences be overcome if we lack the relational platform on which to speak intimately over our differences? Again, the word of truth will be the only means of true reconciliation, but relationships provide the arenas for such a word to be given and received.

This commitment to love becomes especially important when differences are first detected. In such situations, it may feel easy for one or both parties to feel betrayed. On the one hand, the innovator may feel dismayed that his enthusiasm for his supposed insight was not reciprocated; on the other hand, the conservative may feel that loyalty to a common cause has been betrayed. On both sides, there is plenty of opportunity for pride to grow where only love should show. In such situations, it does good for us to remember that we should appreciate the motives involved even if we disagree with the specific content of the other's agenda. Moreover, when separation does occur, for many times this involves practices antithetical to each other, we must not allow our differences to give us a license to quit that relationship. Here is where truth and love together make their greatest impact, and also their greatest demand on us. It is in these hard situations of differences that we must yet work hard at keeping the relationship alive, ever "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). In my own personal life, I am grateful that God used my parents to point out my tendency to do just the opposite, when Christ calls us to never stop pursuing love with the brothers (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:1).

At this point, someone might add, "Are there no exceptions to this commitment to relationship?" According to Scripture, there are no exceptions pertaining to true brothers in Christ. Even in church discipline, as long as I reckon the one disciplined a brother in Christ, I must not stop loving him as such. That love may take a firm form, as all discipline does, but I must "count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thessalonians 3:15). However, in cases of scandalous apostasy, I am required not to have association with such a man, not even to eat with him (1 Corinthians 5:11). Similarly, with regard to a false teacher who seek to proselytize me or the flock, I should not even greet him, lest I become a "partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 11). In both cases, however, it is not just personal purity that is at stake, but love for the true brothers of Christ. With regard to scandalous apostasy, a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6). With regard to false teachers, it is better to cut out the cancer than to let it spread (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Indeed, it is in Second John that we hear about both "truth and love" and separation from false teachers (2 John 3, 9-11).

Again, though I am to love "all men" (1 Thessalonians 3:12), the mark of true discipleship pertains to loving fellow Christians. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love"—not to "all men," which He could have easily have said, but—"one to another" (John 13:35). Do I truly love the brothers? In this, we must really ask the hard questions whether our separation from brothers (often called "secondary separation") is truly justified, or practiced in a biblical fashion of continued communication (e.g. "admonish him as a brother," 2 Thessalonians 3:15).

Finally, emphasizing truth and love has the advantage of emphasizing positive traits. Though this point could be easily dismissed as mere public relations, caring too much what others think, like the ubiquitous smiles on our photographs, it should not. It is also a matter of emphasis. If the Old Covenant emphasized "Thou shalt not," the New Covenant has emphasized positive virtues. We should be known for our positive virtues. Yes, it is often

required that we fight for the truth and separate from falsehood, but it would not be good if all we are known for is our fighting and separating, rather than our truth and our love. For example, while the psalmist addresses God, “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Psalm 5:5), it is never intimated in Scripture that God is hate. On the contrary, God is love; therefore, He hates all who do iniquity. Similarly, what would we think of parents who defend their faithfulness in parental duties by saying how often they spank their children? Though love does discipline, love does much more. Love is the badge of good parenting. In a similar manner, let us strive for the positive virtues of truth and love, knowing that at times this will require negative activities out of necessity.

May the Lord Himself bless His church with a discerning commitment to truth and love towards all the brothers!

Chapter Six

Form and Fullness

The Missing Debate behind Our Current Controversies

“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

—Genesis 1:2

When God first created the earth, He made it in the rough—formless and empty. For the first three days, He created form, separating one element from another into the distinct entities of time and space—Day and Night; Sky, Land, and Sea. On the next three day, He filled the forms that He had made. On day four, He filled with lights the day and night of day one; on day five, He filled with birds and fish the sky and seas He had formed on day two; and on day six, He filled with beast and man the land He had formed on day three. Then He rested. In creating the world, God has given us His usual pattern: first, form; then, fullness. Why is this biblical insight important for our day?

First, the neglect of form is at the heart of our current controversies. Ask most people to identify the controversies that our splitting the church in America today, and many will point to worship and women. By “worship,” I mean primarily the liturgy of the worship service, most noticeably its music. Can anyone doubt that music has been a divisive issue? By “women,” I mean primarily the role of the woman in the church, most noticeably in ministry. This issue has confronted most denominations at some point in the last one hundred years. Perhaps most recently, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) ratified the ordination of women to the ministry, causing a faction to break off to form the United Reformed Church (URC). Sometimes these two issues—worship and women—combine to form multiple divisions. In one small town of Dutch descent, I know of three Reformed churches: the mother CRC church with traditional liturgy, a twenty-year-old church plant with contemporary worship, and a fledgling URC church that objects to women in ministry. And the fracturing of the church goes on.

Both issues—worship and women—can be traced back to the neglect of form. With regard to worship music, the song’s message is the content, while the forms include the lyrical poetry, the tune, and the manner in which it is played. With regard to women in ministry, the sermon is the content, and the woman herself is the form. In either case, does the form matter? Let us explore each one.

In the case of worship music, let us simply consider the relationship between text and tune. Does the tune communicate something independent of the text, making it either compatible or incompatible with the text? Most definitely, yes. For example, take the older hymns and start singing them to different tunes of the same meter. You will notice incongruities immediately. The hymn “How Firm a Foundation” does not go well with the tune “Cradle Song,” which is an alternate tune for the lyrics “Away in a Manger.” Why is that? A tune communicates a spirit, resulting in both a motion and an emotion. Saul’s advisors understood this fact. David played his harp for Saul, because an evil spirit could not reside in the spirit of David’s music (1 Samuel 16:14-23; cf. 2 Kings 3:15). Given the holiness and majesty of God, some tunes simply cannot carry the weight of lyrics that praise His name. Because the Lord is holy, we should fear Him.

In fact, we are commanded to “serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling” (Psalm 2:10). Imagine: joy and fear simultaneously! Such attitudes should often be expressed in our worship tunes. Much of this is lacking from today’s theology and worship music.

In the case of a female preacher, the sermon is the content, and the woman is the form. For a given sermon, preached in exactly the same way, would it matter whether a woman or a man preached it? Not to God’s sovereignty. He can use anything from angels to donkeys to accomplish His good will through His word. Would the two forms communicate something different about God Himself? Perhaps. It matters that the Word became a male human being, and that we address God as “Father,” not as “Parent” or (worse yet) “Mother.” Neither of these points, however, strikes at the heart of the matter. When a woman preaches to men, the words used may be true, but the form itself communicates rebellion. Paul is clear. Based on transcultural reasons in Eden, a woman is forbidden to teach or be in authority over a man (1 Timothy 2:11-14). Granted, God has used women such as Deborah, Huldah, and Philip’s four daughters to communicate prophetic messages, but not in the context of a public address. To be honest, I think Paul’s words to Timothy also forbids a woman from being a teacher in the universal church, even if she only teaches women. God has ordained male shepherds to act in this capacity (as another article explains at length), while He has ordained older women to influence younger women in the context of local relationships (Titus 2:3-5).

Form, therefore, is important and communicates a lot. For example, what good does it do for a woman to call others to repent of their rebellion against God, when the woman herself is acting in rebellion, having usurped the role designed for man? Is this not hypocrisy? It is this same issue that also troubles me when I see flyers come to the church advertising youth rallies. The form communicates rebellion, not only in the look of the bands, but also in the slogans that advertise the rally’s theme. One recent one pictured Jesus and a skyline with the caption, “Here Comes Trouble.” Yes, the second coming of Christ does spell trouble, but the form makes Him look like an outlaw coming to town. But there is another reason why form matters.

Second, the separation of form and meaning is at the heart of liberalism. In the heyday of liberalism, just prior to World War I, liberal historian Adolph von Harnack wrote a popular book entitled *What Is Christianity?* His answer was simple: “Life, not doctrine.” In other words, fullness without form. In so-called higher criticism (which is ironically named), liberal scholars often seek to separate the kernel from the husk—in other words, the essence of Christianity from its cultural clothing. This devilish device refused to take the Bible literally. Supernatural references were redefined in an effort to make Christianity acceptable to its “cultural despisers,” as the father of liberalism once said. Against this technique, the historic fundamentalists championed the plain reading of the text regarding the fundamentals of the faith. Granted, on side issues, such as Genesis one, even these men allowed room for “day” to mean something different than twenty-four hours; but on the core doctrines of Christianity, they stood together for the plain reading of the Text. How does this legacy affect us today?

Externally, we must tell our own world that the form of words has meaning. Unless a word is a neologism, a word cannot mean whatever the author of the reader may desire. The meaning of the word has already been established by use within the community (*usus loquendi*). Proper hermeneutics must take this into account, and not act as if the meaning of the word is only in the author, as some modernists did, or only in the reader, as some postmodernists do. Internally, we must recognize that the divorce of form and meaning seems to lead to liberalism. For example, in a recent book, theologian Wayne Grudem has answered in the affirmative that

evangelical feminism is a new road to liberalism (see Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*). Moreover, historian Daryl Hart has noted that in creed, liturgy, and polity, much of evangelicalism employs the same old liberal technique, of separating the kernel from the husk. In doing so, the church has lost her God-given structures and become weak (see D. G. Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*). At heart, this is the error of pietism, and until this error is corrected, the church will continue to ignore form to her own peril.

Third, the union of form and fullness, in that order, is a recipe for recovery. As mentioned earlier, God is sovereign. His Spirit can blow where He pleases, and it is a joy to see how the grace of God is not hindered by the sinfulness of His people. God can make water come from the rock that Moses struck. But this grace did not excuse Moses, nor did it have no ill effects on the people. In disobeying God, Moses profaned His name in front of the people (see Numbers 20:12). Similarly, today, I rejoice that God's grace is saving souls in many churches where form is neglected, but this grace does not justify the neglect nor heal all the ill-effects. God's preferred mode of operation and the one that leads to lasting blessing involves our obedience. Again, God normally creates form before fullness—reformation, then revival. He may send revival anyways; but without reformation, the effects of revival rarely last.

Before going on to detailed application, let me clarify the relative importance of form and fullness. Logically, fullness is more important than form, even though chronologically form often precedes fullness. We all know Paul's warning about those "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). Without fullness, form is dead formalism. This is not Christianity. However, the answer to formalism is not pietism (trying to attain fullness without form) for two very practical reasons. First, the form often guards the substance of Christianity. Like the body guards the soul, John Calvin once noted that the sacraments guard the Gospel. Baptists, in particular, should recognize that form is important for communicating the Gospel. Second, the form leads to greater potential, to a freedom of ability that is one step beyond Francis Schaeffer's notion of freedom of choice within biblical form. As illustration, take poetry. In his preface to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, C. S. Lewis noted that modern poetry tries to have fullness without form and ends up with drivel. Loss of form led to loss of freedom. Why? He compared it to a marriage. The poet's inner idea is the maternal factor, while the pre-existing poetic form is the paternal factor. Once the poet has conceived the idea, he chooses a form. This union forces the poet to develop his idea better, and brings more out of him than he knew he had in him previously. Form leads to fullness.

By way of application, let us consider Paul's unique greeting: "Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:2). In this greeting, Paul seems to have combined two cultural greetings into a new Christian greeting. In Greek, the greeting *chaire* is closely related to the word *charis* ("grace"). Similarly, the Jewish greeting is *shalom* (Greek *eirene*, "peace"). Since the church is composed of Jew and Gentile, Paul incorporates clean elements from each culture, sanctifies them into a Christian form, and thereby creates a true, unique Christian culture. In microcosm, this is my desire for the church today. Rather than mimic the world in some attempt to be trendy and accessible, let us instead take that which is clean, sanctify it into something holy, and thereby offer to God a truly Christian culture.

For example, with regard to music, instead of describing it with the traditional bifurcation of sacred and secular, which easily slips into a false dichotomy of good and bad, theologian Kevin Bauder once noted that the book of Leviticus suggests three divisions: holy, common/clean, or unclean. In this light, common music that is appropriate for everyday life may

not be appropriate for a holy church worship. This does not mean that common music is bad, as if it were unclean, but only that it may have to be severely altered in order to be sanctified for use as holy music.

With regard to women, the challenge here is greater. Our culture today presents fewer and fewer forms that are in keeping with biblical hierarchy. For example, it is becoming increasingly difficult to avoid gender-neutral language. Our culture often says “they,” when it should say “he.” Because of this cultural fact, some have urged that Bible translation should also accommodate, for is that not the goal of translation—to speak in the language of the people? Not necessarily. When the culture is using even language itself rebelliously, unconsciously avoiding all references to male headship as representative of the female, the church should hold firm and refuse to conform (cf. Romans 12:2).

Going further, we should note the interrelation of issues. In his final book, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, Francis Schaeffer argued that feminism, which erases the distinctions between male and female, leads organically to abortion and homosexuality. I agree. In fact, the faulty logic of so-called evangelical feminism, which undermines Paul’s authority, works just as well for justifying homosexuality. It is this congruity that has led me personally to reconsider all the commands pertaining to women. To their credit, conservative churches have held the line against women pastors, arguing rightly that Paul’s reasoning in 1 Timothy 2 pertains to facts that are true for all cultures at all times and in all places. Unwittingly, these same churches often pass over the main thrust of Paul’s instruction, that women should be quiet in the church, as a sign of submission (1 Timothy 2:11-12). This is the same reasoning used in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, but most churches seem to treat this prohibition as cultural only. Why? Over one hundred years ago, Baptist theologian John Broadus argued that women should be silent in mixed assemblies, and that to argue against it was to undercut the authority of the apostle Paul. Nothing has changed hermeneutically. What has changed is the practice of the churches. In 1890, Broadus noted that the silence of women was the accepted practice of Baptists generally across the nation, though there were women meetings with a woman speaker. In fact, until the abolitionist Grimké sisters of the 1830s, no woman ever addressed a public meeting in America.

If we are going to be faithful to a biblical hermeneutic, we must accept forms that are based on transcultural reasoning. Let me be a bit risky here, but please hear me out. Even head-covering during worship should be reconsidered. Instead of dismissing this as mere custom, Paul first links it to the hierarchy of the universe: God, Christ, man, woman (1 Corinthians 11:3). Then he links the need for covering to glory and shame. Because woman is the glory of man, her head (representing man) should be covered in God’s presence. In contrast, man is the glory of God; therefore, his head (representing Christ) should not be covered in God’s presence (11:6-10). Even nature teaches these things (11:14-15), which may refer to the fact that it is the man who typically goes bald, while the woman typically glories in her hair (11:14-15). This entire discussion is rooted in the divine order and purpose of creation. Why should it be dismissed so easily today? In essence, just as believer immersion is the liturgical expression of individual salvation, so head-covering is the liturgical expression of biblical complementarian hierarchy. Ironically, men are still required to remove their hats in church, but the woman issue is ignored.

Form should not be dismissed easily, but neither should fullness. Both are important in their own right, and both are commanded. “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace;” therefore, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40).

May the Lord Himself grant His church obedient form and then fill it with the fruits of the Holy Spirit!

Chapter Seven

Divine and Human

The Mystery of the Incarnation, Salvation, and Inspiration

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”

—Romans 6:17

Many of you have experienced, and perhaps even perpetuated, ugly discussions over the doctrines of predestination and election. Since the time of the Reformation, and especially since the days of John Wesley, these doctrines have been known to be controversial, even though they cannot be avoided, for both Jesus and the apostles speak in these terms. To avoid them would not only be disobedient, for a preacher must preach on the whole counsel of God, but it would also be dishonoring to our Father in heaven, who revealed these doctrines to us because somehow they are profitable to us (2 Timothy 3:16). While it is not wise to go beyond what is written, what is written belongs to us for our benefit; therefore, as shepherds of Christ’s sheep, we are under obligation to Him, to the flock, and to ourselves to search out the nutrition of even controversial doctrines such as predestination and election. So how can there be peace and profit in the church with regard to these doctrines?

It is my contention that much of the heated generated in these discussions has arisen from wrong implications. A truth is held; then an invalid implication is drawn and defended to the death. In doing so, we have inadvertently denied the balance of Scripture, either in denying the divine element or in denying the human element in personal salvation. It is my purpose here to help rectify this situation by drawing an analogy from an even greater mystery of Scripture—the Incarnation. Before I do this, I first need to give a brief historical overview.

Since the apostles, the church of Jesus Christ has experienced three major controversies, all of which concern the relationship between the divine and the human in union. The first controversy occurred in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the so-called fathers defended the biblical testimony to the divine Trinity and the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The second controversy occurred in the sixteenth century, when the Reformers recovered the biblical doctrine of grace against the semi-Pelagian commitments of the medieval church. The third controversy still rages. It is the controversy over the Bible, whose first stage concerned the inerrancy of Scripture against the modernists, but whose current stage concerns the sufficiency of language itself against the postmodernists. In each of these controversies, the biblical position involves making subtle distinctions between the union of the divine and human elements. In order for the church to be healthy, we must recognize this union and embrace it in faith.

Of the three controversies, the mystery of the Incarnation sheds the most light upon the others, and is perhaps the most important, both by its nature and by its priority place in history. Even with regard to the fourth century, the mystery of the Incarnation was at the heart of the controversy over the Trinity. In a real way, the fourth century grappled with the fact that Jesus is fully God, while the fifth century then tried to square this with the fact that Jesus is nonetheless fully man. In doing so, the fathers gave us two insights that shed much light on both the mystery of personal salvation and the mystery of the incarnation.

First, in dealing with the mysteries of the faith, it is important to focus on facts, not explanations. From Alexander of Alexandria to Leo of Rome, it was the facts of Scripture that carried the day—the plain, direct quotation of the Bible. According to John’s gospel, Jesus is truly man, being wearied by a journey and desiring water to drink (John 4:6-7). According to that same gospel, Jesus is also God, telling the people, “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” rather than “Thus saith the Lord.” Together, we have in this one gospel a singular witness to two natures. Jesus has both divine nature and human nature. To deny either would be disobedient to the Author of the Text.

The rub occurs in trying to reconcile this data in our little head. Because there is no longer controversy within the church over the deity of Christ, many of us rarely think about this mystery, unless we happen to be approached by a pair of Jehovah’s Witnesses, who are false witnesses of the biblical Jehovah. Just think for a moment. Jesus is clearly said to know all things (John 16:30; 21:17), but we also know that He grew in wisdom, and that even then He did not know the timing of His own return (Luke 2:52; Mark 13:32). As an aside, it is comforting to note (as B. B. Warfield once did) that Jesus places Himself higher than the angels in His affirmation of ignorance (Mark 13:32). At any rate, my point is the affirmation of all the Scriptures, and the avoidance of invalid conclusions. Because Jesus learned, should I conclude He did not know everything? Conversely, because Jesus knew all things, should I conclude that He could not learn or be ignorant? On the surface, both seem like valid inferences, and they would be if Jesus possessed only one nature. He did not. Instead, He could simultaneously learn with His human nature and yet be omniscient with His divine nature.

Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century Reformer, greatly appreciated this aspect of theology. He called reason a whore for her wicked intrusion into the realm of God, as if everything that God is and does must somehow be subject to human examination and approval. In his controversy with Erasmus over the bondage of the will, Luther defended the perspicuity of Scripture by quoting John 1:14, “And the Word was made flesh.” The fact of the Incarnation is clear, even though the means of the Incarnation (in other words, “How did He do that?”) remains a mystery to adore.

Truly, this observation applies to all of Jesus’ attributes. On the one hand, His temptations were real (for He is human), but on the other hand, there was no way Jesus was going to sin (for He is God). On the one hand, His death is real, He Himself having taken on flesh and blood for that very purpose (Hebrews 2:14-15); but on the other hand, it was impossible for death to retain Him (Acts 2:24). To press the issue even further, somehow the Baby in the manger, who needed to be picked up to be fed, was nonetheless holding the universe together by the word of His power, for “by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17; cf. Hebrews 1:3). Both are realities. Both are facts of Scripture. Better to adore within what is written than to explore beyond what is written.

Second, regarding the union of the divine and the human, the divine takes priority. In the text quoted earlier, it is the *Word* who became flesh. This divine Word, the second person of the Trinity, existed before Bethlehem and made a conscious choice in obedience to the Father to add human nature to His divine nature. As we know, the Word did not cease to be God just because He also became man. Even in Paul’s passage about the humility of the Son in coming to earth, the word “emptied Himself” refers to hiding His glory, not ceasing the use of any of His attributes. The wording there (as Warfield again helped me to see) is not that He subtracted any essential aspect of His divinity, but that He *added* humanity to

His divinity. The Word continued to know all things and to do all things, but added human nature to Himself so that He could now *also* suffer impotence, ignorance, and death. This is a high mystery, but woe to the individual who denies that God could do this and yet claims that God is omnipotent! Our God is so omnipotent, He could become man, while not ceasing to be God. How is this to be explained?

The early fathers of the fifth century stared these facts in the face. In fact, much of the century was preoccupied with this doctrine. In coming to a consensus, it is interesting that while the fathers could not explain the Incarnation in any positive fashion, they nonetheless could rule out what was not true. The so-called fences of Chalcedon (approved in A.D. 451 by ecumenical council) declared that Christ possessed two natures, united “without confusion, without conversion, without division, without separation.” The divine nature was truly divine and the human nature was truly human. Moreover, these two natures were united within one divine Person, the Word. (This is the doctrine of the “hypostatic union.”) There is only one Son. Even though He has two natures, the Scriptures do not say that the man-Jesus learned while the God-Jesus knew all things. Rather, it is the same Son who both learns and knows all things through His two natures. How that coheres will always remain a mystery to me, but it is glorious to think that someday I will embrace Him in person. Then the mystery will be to me, as it was even to the apostles, something that I know by experience of the Word of Life (1 John 1:1-3).

Granted, this has been a long explanation of a complicated doctrine, but the two points by now should become clear. First, just as it would be wrong for me to infer from Jesus’ learning or death that He is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, so also it is wrong for me to infer from personal conversion that predestination and election are not true. Yes, I do choose for Christ in salvation, but that does not mean that He did not choose me first. Beware of invalid implications! Conversely, just because God has pre-selected whom He will save, this does not mean that His offer of salvation to all is insincere. Jesus is said to have loved the rich, young ruler, but we have no hint in the text that the man ever repented and went to heaven (Mark 10:21). Jesus is truly the express image of the Father in human terms (Hebrews 1:3). It is not valid for me to interpret predestination apart from Christ, as if I were looking at the Father directly. This leads to the fatalism of the Greeks. Yes, predestination means determinism, but God’s own fullest interpretation of that doctrine and of all His attributes is the incarnate Word, who explains the God we cannot see directly (John 1:18). Therefore, using Luther’s terminology, I interpret the hidden God (the Father) with the preached God (the Son). Can I explain how all this works? No, but I hold to the mystery in adoring faith.

Second, just as there are two natures united in one divine Person, so also in salvation, I must affirm all three things in proper priority. On the one hand, human faith is real faith. As the text at the head of the article says, it is from my heart that I believe. It was a real, human act of the heart. On the other hand, divine power is also real and necessary for faith. Jesus said regarding unbelieving disciples, “Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father” (John 6:65). Then, just as one Person superintends both natures in Christ, so in salvation, it is God *alone* who saves, not freewill. Rightly did the apostle say, “But God be thanked” for the Romans’ conversion (Romans 6:17).

Do you see my point? We already believe in a divine-human mystery, for we hold to the Incarnation of our Lord without insisting first on a full explanation. In like manner, we should not deny any aspect of salvation in the interests of systematic theology or personal consistency. Regarding the Incarnation, Arius tried for supposed consistency, but denied that the Son was consubstantial with the Father. Apollinaris tried, but denied that Jesus had a human

mind. Nestorius tried, but acted as if Jesus had two persons, not just two natures. The only consistency we need is to be consistent with the full witness of Scripture, which is not contrary to reason, but above reason. Simply take the mindset you already possess regarding the Incarnation and apply it to personal salvation.

We need to recover this proper, biblical sense of mystery and faith. This issue is urgent for two main reasons. Personally, we need the worship and comfort that predestination and election bring. When the apostles mention these doctrines, it is for edification, either in giving glory to God and in shaming man (e.g. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31), or in giving comfort to true believers, that their salvation is permanent, for it rests on something more sure than fallible human will (e.g. Romans 8:28-38). We need these benefits personally and so do the flocks we oversee. We are not apostolic preachers if we fail on this point.

But even beyond edification, we need the biblical sense of mystery and faith for the current battle of today. We have not yet resolved the controversy over the Bible. Only the high road of divine sovereignty, as demonstrated in the Incarnation, provides a fitting answer for how the Bible can be so human and yet be so divine. Not all sections of the Bible were dictated. Many sections were written after men “gave good heed” to ideas, or expressed their “judgment” (Ecclesiastes 12:9; 1 Corinthians 7:25), yet even these sections came from “one shepherd” as men had “the Spirit of God” (Ecclesiastes 12:11; 1 Corinthians 7:40). In a real sense, the Scriptures are fully human and fully divine, yet united in such a way that the two natures cannot be separated (as the liberals at first tried), but together stand as the one, written word of God to man. It is the coordination of these divine-human doctrines that may explain why the doctrines of grace have such a “conserving power,” as Baptist historian Tom Nettles has said. Therefore, let us hold tightly to all three of the grand mysteries of the faith—the Incarnation, Salvation, and Inspiration.

May the Lord Himself grant His church to hold tightly to both the divine and the human elements of theology, realizing that over them all stands one divine Person, to whom belongs all our praise!

Chapter Eight

Static and Dynamic

The Day-to-Day Experience of Our Unchanging Salvation

“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

—1 John 1:7

For many believers today, the day-to-day needs of direction for decisions and dealings with sin are left to the study of an inerrant Bible and the remembrance of a past salvation experience, in which all sins were forgiven—past, present, and future. For others, these same needs are handled through intuitive experiences of the still, small voice, and through the common ritual of confessing sins and asking for forgiveness. For the former, the static elements are decisive—the inspiration of Scripture and justification from sin. For the latter, the dynamic elements of a relationship with God are left unanchored, drifting as the waves of daily experience dictate, with some days of feeling close to God and with others of feeling distant, and with no objective standard by which to test these experiences. In both cases, there is a divorce of the static and the dynamic that is not Scriptural, but contrary to the comprehensive reality we should enjoy in Christ Jesus, our living Savior.

To explain this beautiful tension and provision, let us consider two examples: the Bible and personal forgiveness. In both examples, emphasizing either the static or the dynamic element to the exclusion of the other leads to error. Groups in error could be cited for each tendency. For genuine Christians, the problem is not *exclusion* but *neglect*. We *have* sight, but we often *lose* sight of important aspects of our salvation. For this reason, Peter, the aged apostle, dedicated himself afresh, as long as he was still in the body, “to stir up” Christians by way of “remembrance” (2 Peter 1:9, 12-14). May this chapter be a timely reminder that stirs up our hearts to firmer faith and thankful praise!

First, we need to recover the dynamic element in biblical interpretation. For years, conservative Christians have been rightly asserting that the Bible is fully inspired down to the very word, and that as the word of One who cannot lie, the Bible is fully accurate in all that it says, both with regard to spiritual things and with regard to historical and scientific things. This is the doctrine of inspiration, which implies the doctrine of inerrancy. Scripturally, there is full merit to this logic. Jesus said it most simply in His prayer, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). If God said it, it must be true. Therefore, since “all Scripture is given by inspiration,” to borrow Paul’s phrase (2 Timothy 3:16), it must all be true. Note, this “inspiration” applies to the text, to what has been *scripted* (a.k.a. Scripture). Accordingly, it is not surprising to find both Jesus and Paul make arguments based on one word of holy writing (John 10:34-35; Galatians 3:16).

Interestingly, it is not these static elements of an inspired and inerrant Text that are emphasized in the Scriptures, but rather the more dynamic elements of movement, life, and force. For example, the process of inspiration involved the active working of the Spirit, and not just the providential supervision of God, as A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield once postulated. “Holy men of God spake as they were *moved* by the Holy Ghost,” wrote Peter (2 Peter 1:21), and Paul himself spoke with “words...which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Corinthians 2:13). As for means, there were times when the process was more mechanical, as when God dictated to Moses

the law or told the prophets what to say; however, there were other times when the process was subtler, involving the writer's diligent pondering, even to the point that the apostle was apparently left to suppose that he was writing under inspiration (e.g. 1 Corinthians 7:40). Even still, such ponderings under God produced "words...given from one shepherd" (Ecclesiastes 12:9-11). The dynamic Spirit in men produced the static Text in words.

Similarly, consider how Isaiah argues against idolatry based on *infallibility*, that is, that the word cannot fail to do what God intends (cf. Isaiah 55:11). Instead of trying to argue as we would, that the Bible is truly from God, Isaiah instead argues that the God of the Bible is the true God. He challenges the idols to announce ahead of time what they would do, so that when it came to pass, men would know that these idols were gods (Isaiah 41:23; cf. Isaiah 40-48). Of course, they could not. Only the word of God Himself is such a living, active force that everything He says must come to pass—and it does. In fact, His word calls into being that which did not exist (Romans 4:17), whether at creation, when "he spake, and it was done" (Psalm 33:9), or now in providence, when His voice breaks the cedars and shakes the wilderness (Psalm 29).

Importantly, infallibility is the test of Moses with regard to prophecy (Deuteronomy 18:15-22) and infallibility is on the mind of Jesus with regard to the written word. According to Jesus, every detail must be fulfilled: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18)—in other words, things *must* happen in the way foretold (cf. 26:54). This same standard also applied to His words (24:35). So high was Christ's view of the Text, He regarded it as easier for the universe to cease to exist than for one verse to fail (Luke 16:17). In quoting a key line of the Psalms and emphasizing one word, He added, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:34-35).

Is this our view of the Bible? Do we see the Text as "living and active," able to move mountains and to pierce our deepest being (Hebrews 4:12, NASB)? Do we feel with Luther that the word has feet to run after us, and hands to grab us? Or is the Bible merely a text to study, rather than a Text that studies us?

Even more than active inspiration and effective infallibility, the dynamic element of Scripture reaches into our personal lives through the living Christ teaching us in His word through His indwelling Spirit. For those who find the Bible dry and lifeless, no different than any textbook, I have good news. The Bible says that Christ came to open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, so that they can follow Christ who calls them, "Go forth" (cf. Isaiah 49:9). He is still the Shepherd who calls His sheep by name, and they follow His voice (John 10:16). In fact, though risen from the dead, and no longer inhabiting the earth, Christ still says, "Follow Me" (e.g. John 21:19, 22)—not "follow My example," but "follow *Me*." *How does He do this?* Christ calls us through His word, as the Spirit gives us understanding. If we lack understanding, as all by nature do, we must persistently ask Him for His Spirit, and He will give Him to us, so that we may know His word, and have His leading.

I am convinced that it is this dynamic element of illumination that is most missing from theological education today, and from the daily lives of many Christians. These individuals know that the Bible is completely true, so they study it religiously in order to ascertain how to live; but by not seeking the leading of the Spirit, they are missing the huge grace of the Spirit causing a verse to jump off the page at them—to pierce their conscience or to console their soul, as the situation demands. Divine illumination is an old teaching, seen often in the writings of Puritan John Owen and heard in the inauguration of Archibald Alexander to Princeton Seminary, but how often is it emphasized today? One wonders how we ever, as mere men, expect to understand *the mind of Christ* without the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14-16). According to the

apostles, divine inspiration demands divine illumination for proper interpretation (2 Peter 1:20-21). As the heavens exceed the earth in context, so mere men, caught in time, cannot understand a divine book “settled in heaven” forever (Psalm 119:89). Thankfully, the word of Christ and the Spirit of Christ are united in such a way that when the Spirit illumines the word for us today, we are led by the living Savior just as authentically as if He called us with an audible voice. Do we seek this blessing today, or is the word simply another static book?

Second, we need to recover the dynamic element involved in our forgiveness. It is the glory of the Reformation that through Martin Luther and others, the truth of justification was clearly brought home to the bleeding consciences of men. Praise God! “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). When any man, woman, boy, or girl is united to Jesus Christ through saving faith, the death of Jesus becomes their death, and the life of Jesus becomes their life. His cross absorbs all their guilt, and thus removes all legal hindrance for God to bless them freely with eternal life. Due to this union, God is said (in a remarkable phrase) to be “him that justifieth the ungodly” (Romans 4:5)—that is, to reckon righteous those who believe in the Righteous One, Jesus.

As with the Bible, so now with salvation, this objective fact of justification can easily be set aside as a done deal, losing any dynamic force in our daily living. Truly, it is a done deal—as done as death, for “he that is dead is freed [literally, justified] from sin” (Romans 6:7), or, as Paul testified, “I am crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20)—but just as static inspiration set up dynamic illumination, so the static nature of our justification enables something dynamic to occur. *How is our justification from sin experienced in our daily lives?*

To answer this question, consider what the consequences would have been if Jesus had only died for our sins, but had not also risen. In the inner theology of many Christians, it would make little difference. After all, our hope is based on the blood of Jesus paying our debt. With the debt paid, we no longer need to fear our Creditor sending us to “collections” in hell. Done deal. And though we recognize that Christ Himself deserved to live, and so must be risen from the dead for His sake, we often fail to see why it was necessary for the Captain of our Salvation to rise *for our sake*—yet this is exactly what the apostles stressed in their letters.

Consider two examples. In writing to the Romans, Paul asserted, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:9-10). Here it is clear that our ultimate salvation from God’s wrath depends not only on the death of Jesus, but also on His life—that is, His resurrected life. So also in the book of Hebrews, it is written of Jesus, that because He has “an unchangeable priesthood,” He is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:24-25). Here again, we see that our ultimate salvation hangs on Christ *living* forever, and not just on His once-for-all-time death. Indeed, we also see *why* it is necessary for Christ to live forever. We need a priest.

Christian, do you think often of your daily need for your Priest in heaven, Jesus Christ? Is it not tempting to think that because you were justified once at conversion, that somehow all that sin stuff is so settled, that to ask God for forgiveness would somehow insult Him and deny justification? Granted, it could. Those who think that they will go to heaven because they confess their sins and ask forgiveness are tragically mistaken. Not only will they fail to recount and confess all their sins, this action assumes that God can simply forgive sins by saying the word, without demanding a payment in His righteous regard for His name. The

beauty of justification is seen in the harmony of justice and mercy, in that God satisfies His justice in punishing Jesus and then expresses His mercy in pardoning us in Christ—a fact that Paul described so well in Romans 3:21-26. To the one simply confessing and asking God for forgiveness, Christ is missing—the necessary Sacrifice.

We, however, who hold to the sacrifice often forget the Priest. It is on the basis of this sacrifice that the living Priest now intercedes for us daily, praying for us and applying His blood to our every sin, so that every fresh stain is washed away, and nothing sticks. This is the language of the apostle John in his first letter. For all those who walk in the light, and confess their sins—not as conditions, but as identification marks—the blood of Jesus is said to “cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7, 9). In fact, it is a trait of God’s faithfulness and justice that He *must* forgive us, and He does (1:9). All this is based upon having “an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins” (2:1-2). In this section of Scripture, where three false marks are corrected with the truth of salvation, God’s faithful forgiveness and Christ’s continual cleansing are linked to His intercession in heaven for us as our Priest. In other words, the static elements of the Cross and justification are daily applied through the dynamic intercession of Jesus Christ, our Priest. As Jesus washed Peter’s feet, while yet testifying that Peter was already clean, so also today, Jesus daily intercedes for our forgiveness, even though we have been truly justified forever.

We see the same relationship between justification and intercession in Paul’s letter to the Romans. The rhetorical question is asked, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” The answer is given, “It is God that justifieth.” Then, due perhaps to the union of the Father and the Son in our salvation, a second question is asked, “Who is he that condemneth?” and the answer is given, “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:33-34). Here we see how harmoniously the Father’s one-time justification of us fits with the ongoing intercession of the Son. We are truly saved through Christ’s life, since He ever lives to press home in prayer the effectiveness of His death, even as we daily sin due to the ongoing presence of sin in our flesh.

In daily experience, I truly believe that it is right for us as Christians to ask God for forgiveness, whenever a sin comes to mind. Although not all would agree with me, perhaps out of zeal to uphold justification or to avoid the real risk of misunderstanding, asking for forgiveness is in keeping with our Lord’s directions on how to pray (Matthew 6:12), and we have been taught by the apostles to “observe all things” that He commanded (28:20). Granted, some have sorely misunderstood this model of prayer, and act as if going to heaven is on the basis of their prayers for forgiveness. No, let it be repeated, our status with God is secured through union with His Son, so that on the basis of His one-for-all-time death, we are once-for-all-time declared righteous. From that moment forward, Christ ever lives to intercede for us. He will forgive everything we ever do; therefore, to ask Him to forgive something is simply asking Him to do what He has already promised to do—something no different than pleading any of the absolute promises in prayer. To ask in faith honors God and applies comfort to our wounded conscience.

Inspiration and illumination, justification and intercession—both require the living Jesus to act on our behalf in leading and pleading. Instead of taking Christ for granted, as if the static Text were sufficient for direction and the static justification were sufficient for salvation—as if it would have been fine if Christ had remained dead—let us honor our Savior, seek His direction in prayer, and embrace His forgiveness in confession. “Hallelujah! What a Savior!”

May God grant us to continue to honor His gifts of written word and complete justification, while yet seeking His Spirit in illumination and His Son in intercession!

Chapter Nine

Perfection and Presentation

Two Goals of Biblical Ministry

“Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus...”

—Colossians 1:28

In his letter to the Colossian Christians, whom he had never met, Paul describes his ministry in terms of perfection and presentation. Paul labored hard to perfect every single Christian, so that he could present each one as such to the Lord Jesus Christ someday. This process—perfection and presentation—follows hand-in-hand with God’s own intentions. Just earlier, Paul wrote that God had reconciled these sinners in order that He might “present [them] holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight,” that is, perfect (Colossians 1:21-22). To attain this, these believers needed to “continue in the faith grounded and settle, and . . . not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:23). Therefore, in short compass, Paul described several doctrines—perseverance, perfection, and presentation—and defined his own ministry accordingly. Is this our ministry? In order to answer this, please consider the following points with care and patience.

First, perfection is not sinlessness, but blamelessness and fullness. Taking Paul’s writings as a whole, it is impossible to regard the word “perfect” as strict sinlessness (see the article “Already and Not-Yet”). Paul did not even regard himself as having apprehended the goal for which Christ apprehended him, even though two verses later he includes himself among those “perfect” (Philippians 3:13, 15). The Greek word *teleios*, translated “perfect,” literally means complete. With regard to things that grow, the word *teleios* can be rightly translated “mature,” as in Paul’s exhortation that the Corinthians “be not children in understanding,” but *teleios* (1 Corinthians 14:20; cf. 13:10-11; Ephesians 4:13-14). The goal of the Christian life is not simply birth, but maturity. Similarly, the goal of the Christian ministry is not simply to convert sinners, but to perfect saints.

In the context of Colossians, the idea of *teleios* presupposes a blameless character. Again, this idea also is not sinlessness, but the quality of being beyond reproach and of retaining what one has been given, like keeping unstained the robes cleansed by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 3:4; 7:13-14). Such a conduct is possible, for Paul not only described his ministry among the Thessalonians as “blameless,” he even described his self-righteousness before conversion using this term (1 Thessalonians 2:10; Philippians 3:6). In other words, when others looked at Paul’s conduct, they saw no area in which to fault him—even though God, of course, saw rebellion in Paul’s pre-conversion efforts to establish his own righteousness (Romans 10:3). Based on this word, there should be no gaping holes in a Christian’s life—areas that he refuses to deal with in the light of Scripture and the Spirit’s power (cf. Psalm 19:13). Granted, he will not be sinless in any area of life, but neither is he a slave to any particular sin, in that it dominates his life and defines his character. He strives for what the Puritans called “universal holiness,” even as Peter commanded, “Be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15).

In context, the idea of *teleios* is also closely related to the book’s theme of fullness.

For example, Paul wrote, “In him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him,” literally “made full” (Colossians 2:9-10a). In his opening prayer, Paul asks God to *fill* the Colossian believers with “the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” so that they would “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,” in universal fruitfulness, increasing knowledge of God, powerful perseverance, and joyful thankfulness (Colossians 1:9-12). Therefore, just as *teleios* can be defined negatively as blamelessness, so positively, it refers to a life filled with wisdom, fruit, power, joy, and gratitude—a life-conduct *worthy* of the Lord Himself.

Second, perfection is more than perseverance. In Reformed theology, perseverance is the main theological topic, not perfection. This neglect could be due to the categories of the Augustinian tradition, or to the emphasis placed upon causation in salvation, or to the emphasis placed upon the enduring sinfulness of the Christian—or to some combination of these and other factors. At any rate, this neglect has endured down to its present time, even in a most reduced form, in the Baptist rubric, “Once saved, always saved,” which adherents term “eternal security.” These are all doctrines that I believe, but Paul teaches much more than mere perseverance. In fact, mere perseverance is not salvation at all.

Please give careful consideration the following passage from Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians:

“We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.”

—2 Thessalonians 1:4-7

In this passage, Paul places the experience of the Thessalonians against the backdrop of the Second Coming. Specifically, he states that their present tribulation is a display (“manifest token”) of God’s “righteous judgment,” in that their present tribulation anticipates and prepares for the future pay-backs of judgment. First, it is right for God to repay with tribulation those who dish out tribulation. This we expect, for we often associate the idea of justice with punishment. Second, it is right for God to give rest, relaxation from stress, to those who experience tribulation. This also is a matter of justice. Through suffering, God was fitting them for heaven, so that they would be “counted worthy of the kingdom of God.” Later, Paul picks up the same idea and prays that “God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that . . . ye [may be glorified] in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12). Associating justice with entering heaven is not something that we are accustomed to do, yet this is the same apostle that taught us of salvation by grace. How are these ideas to be reconciled?

Contextually, the sufferings of these Christians are not said to confer salvation upon them, though they do add a fitness for being in Heaven someday. Due to present sufferings, receiving rest seems only fitting. Moreover, in the later prayer, the “calling” refers to their initial summons unto “the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:15; cf. Philippians 3:14). By implication, those not deemed worthy of this calling would not enter into

the glory of Christ; however, the same God who called them is the same God who is faithful to fill them with whatever fits them for heaven. As Paul told the Thessalonians in his previous letter, “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Therefore, there are conditions for a Christian entering Heaven, but the grace of God guarantees that those conditions will be met. All those who are called will be glorified (Romans 8:30).

Theologically, we must be careful not to draw a firm line between grace and justice, which seems to be the underlying premise of dispensationalism historically, and which is epitomized in the two judgments at the future coming of Christ—one for believers, pertaining to rewards only; and one for the world, pertaining to judgment. Though there is much good in dispensationalism, the Bible does not split the coming of Christ into two events. In the passage at hand, the righteous receive rest only when the wicked are troubled, namely, at the coming of Christ with fire and angels. Nor does the Bible take away the question of entrance into heaven from Christian consideration. The parables of Jesus to His own disciples are filled with examples of those who did not prepare for the coming of the King and were subsequently cast out into outer darkness. Similarly, the writer of Hebrews warns, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). Mere perseverance, that is, holding onto salvation for oneself, resembles the lazy servant who buried his talent and went to Hell. No, the Lord is looking for fruit, what we earlier termed the blamelessness and fullness of Christian maturity.

The burning question is: How do we keep these ideas from slipping into salvation by works? Admittedly, this is difficult to understand, but here are some insights from the apostle Paul. First, the defining moment of salvation is the moment we were united to Christ, who became to us everything that we need—wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). As Calvin so aptly noted, when you have Christ, you have all these graces. Second, entrance into Heaven is guaranteed by justification, which is conferred upon us the moment we are united to Christ through faith. At that moment, His death becomes our death, and we are justified from all guilt (Romans 6:5-7). Legally, we have entered once-for-all-time into a new status, for we are reckoned righteous in Christ, based on His atonement. There is no possible way that one reckoned righteous will not then subsequently obtain glory, for to fail here would violate God’s righteousness (Romans 5:1-2; 8:30). Third, salvation consists of both initial conversion and enduring creation (Ephesians 2:8-10). If we are truly saved by *grace*, we are truly *saved* by grace. Salvation is so real, we are a new creation, having good works already predestined for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Predicating entrance into heaven on these works is truly predicating it on something that God has already purposed to work out in our lives. As Augustine said (though I do not agree with his lack of forensic justification), God rewards His own grace. We may be said to bring about our own future salvation (which is the daring language of Philippians 2:12), but it is truly God who is effectually working in us to do exactly that (2:13). Even so, fourth, God’s act of *counting* us worthy to enter heaven is just that, another gracious reckoning. Both the foundation of justification and the added fitness of being-counted-worthy are acts of God’s gracious mental reckoning. Strictly speaking, no Christian *merits* glory, for the deeds of our body continual to merit damnation. If I remember correctly, Jonathan Edwards described this act as double justification, in that God forgives the evil aspects of our deeds and graciously rewards them as if done perfectly. Fifth, our fitness is often described passively, in terms of things done to us, not what we do. In the passage above, it was suffering, not activity, that prepared them for Heaven. We are conformed to the image of Christ, in that, just as He suffered and entered glory, we too suffer first and reign later (Romans 8:28-29).

Third, the goal of ministry is presentation. The ministry of Baptists today, and of most evangelicals, suffers from a very flat view of salvation. Salvation is reduced to a point in time, rather than a continuum of salvation past, present, and future, in accordance with Paul's own use of the term. Moreover, the promise given is almost strictly forgiveness, not justification, which is a term sorely neglected today and a reality much fuller than bare forgiveness. Even the promise of new life is often not presented as present power for holiness, but only as perpetual life in Heaven. Furthermore, the terms of salvation are often reduced to a mere decision, when the Bible says that it is faith alone that is the means of salvation, not a decision, even though all who truly do believe will call upon the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13-14; e.g. John 4:10). The result has been an inordinate number of recruits who exhibit none of the marks of regeneration. The barn is full of chaff waiting for the next wind of persecution to clear away. What should the ministry do in such a situation?

At the very least, we should hold to the Bible's theology, but give it the right emphasis. For example, due to the many who claim to be saved but are not, others are tempted to question eternal security itself. No, instead of questioning it, we should give it proper emphasis: "Once *saved*, always saved." Anyone the Son sets free is free indeed (John 3:36). Anyone lacking the fruit of a Christian will lose even what he *thinks* he has (Luke 8:18). In other words, he will lose a salvation he never really possessed in the first place! Beyond theology, we should view the goal of our ministry as presentation. Paul certainly did. He often saw himself presenting his converts to Christ (e.g. 2 Corinthians 11:2). They were his "crown of rejoicing . . . in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming," without which he would feel that he had "run in vain" and "laboured in vain" (1 Thessalonians 2:19; Philippians 2:16). Personally, I feel that this explains why some who build on the foundation of Christ with wood, hay, and stubble are said to "suffer loss" though they themselves are saved (1 Corinthians 3:15). Instead of laboring in the Spirit with the true word to produce living stones for the temple of God, these ministers only produced false converts, who perhaps made a decision but never had true faith or fruit, and so were burned up.

Specifically, what does a ministry for presentation involve? First, such a ministry strives for the stability of young converts. Paul's early concerns for the Thessalonians exhibit this trait of his ministry (1 Thessalonians 3:1-13). This is the concern of perseverance. Second, such a ministry strives for the maturity of all the saints. To do so, the marks of a true Christian should be stressed regularly. Two whole books of the New Testament address this issue: 2 Peter and 1 John. Peter, in particular, emphasizes the diligence required in making sure of one's "calling and election" (2 Peter 1:10; cf. Hebrews 6:11-12). In a careful manner, these marks of a true Christian should be stressed not merely as evidence of saving faith, but as *somehow* (in the grace of God alone and according to the idea of fitness and worthiness presented above) leading to "an entrance . . . into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11). Although it is tempting to describe these merely as evidences, and in situations involving misunderstanding it may be best to just drop the issue there, the apostles often talk of these things in stronger terms, as if there is some organic connection between sowing to the Spirit and reaping eternal life (Galatians 6:8). At any rate, it is all of grace, first to last, and guaranteed in the faithfulness of God who initially called us, and the death of Christ, who once-for-all-time justified us. To Him be all glory in the church and in our lives, both now and forevermore.

May the Lord Himself strengthen his ministers to have a fuller view of salvation, and to press His people on towards perfection in light of their future presentation to Christ Himself!

Chapter Ten

Universal and Local Cooperation and Independence in Church Polity

“In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

—Ephesians 2:21-22

The New Testament clearly affirms the existence of both the universal church and the local church. This claim is easily borne out by a quick survey of the New Testament’s use of the word “church” (Greek *ekklesia*). On the one hand, we read of the “churches . . . throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria” (Acts 9:31), which is a clear reference to local churches; on the other hand, we also read of “the church,” which is the bride of Christ, for whom He died (Ephesians 5:25). This latter reference cannot be a reference to a local assembly or even to one denomination without a high degree of arrogance. Indeed, it may seem strange that the word *ekklesia* is ever used of a group that can never meet here on earth, but (as southern theologian John L. Dagg once pointed out) the church will meet *someday*. In fact, whenever a local church draws near to the heavenly temple in true, spiritual worship, it can be rightly said of them, that even now, in this age, they have come “to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23). By means of the real-life union of the Spirit, who is shared equally by saints on earth and saints in heaven, there is still a communion of the saints that is rightly termed the universal church. In the reference given above, the two concepts of the church are neatly juxtaposed—first, the universal church; second, the local church—and both are true temples of the Lord.

Now what are the practical effects of this biblical distinction? If there is both a universal church and a local church, are there two sets of ministries and two sets of duties, or is there in some sense an overlapping of the two? Even though I do not wish to be absolutely dogmatic on the application of this doctrine, it does seem to me that there are indeed two sets of ministries and two sets of duties.

First, regarding the ministry, there are leaders in the local church and there are leaders in the universal church. In the local church, the Lord has instituted the two offices of elder and deacon (e.g. Philippians 1:1). Elders oversee the spiritual needs of the local flock, while deacons oversee the material needs. Both are leaders in a true sense in their respective realms. While elders are said to “rule” (1 Timothy 5:17), and it is thereby tempting to understand the meaning of “deacon” in its original sense (the Greek word *diakonos* means “servant”), the first deacons in history were men that were set “over” a work (Acts 6:3). They were in charge of the food distribution. Whether that meant that they distributed the food themselves, which is likely, or that they delegated this task to others while retaining accountability, in either case, they were in charge. They were leaders.

Elders, on the other hand, are clearly the spiritual leaders within the local church. They have the solemn task of shepherding the flock of God (Acts 20:28), which involves finding, binding, and collecting, as well as feeding, leading, and protecting (see Ezekiel 34). In this

capacity, the elders must be obeyed (within the guidelines of the New Testament), as those who will give an account for the souls in their care. To not obey the elders means that they will lead in grief, which does not profit those in their charge (Hebrews 13:17). This is a real authority, but it is a delegated authority. Elders exercise this authority beneath “the chief Shepherd,” who holds them accountable and rewards those who loved Him and faithfully fed His sheep (1 Peter 5:4). In a real sense, the elders themselves are still sheep and should not act as lord over the sheep, dishing out arbitrary rules that make men feel guilty unnecessarily, instead of passing along instructions from on high (1 Peter 5:3). Because elders are not to be lords, yet still rule, it is fitting to call them “servant-leaders,” just as Jesus said, “Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ,” and “ye are brethren” (Matthew 23:10, 8).

Most of these points appear on the surface of the New Testament. A stickier question involves the role of a pastor. Does the local church have one pastor or several pastors? In either case, what is the role of the pastor in relation to the role of an elder? Traditionally, Baptists have used “pastor” and “elder” interchangeably, and there is some warrant for this in the way that the nouns “elder” and “overseer” (Greek *episkopos*) intertwine in the New Testament with the verb “to shepherd” (Greek *poimaino*), from which we derive the noun “pastor,” meaning “shepherd.” As a result, a traditional Baptist church, even to this day, typically has one professional pastor, perhaps with a professional pastoral staff, and several lay deacons. More recently, some have advocated a plurality of elders, which lead the church as a team. Typically, the team is a mixture of lay elders and one or more professional pastors.

In response, there is truth on both sides. Yes, there is a plurality of elders; but there are also references to solitary leadership as well (e.g. James in Jerusalem, the so-called “angel” of each church in Revelation 2-3). Perhaps this solitary leader is simply a “greater among equals,” as Peter was among the Twelve; but there may be another dimension to his role. Perhaps he is a minister within the universal church, having a dual capacity for a season.

In my opinion (and it *is* opinion), elders are leaders in the local church, while pastors are leaders in the universal church. In the Scriptures, elders come from the local community, having been appointed “in every city” (Titus 1:5; cf. Acts 14:23). The office of “pastor,” however, is listed with apostles, prophets, and evangelists—offices that cannot be confined to one locale, but are mentioned in the context of the universal church (Ephesians 4:11). To some, this may sound too simplistic, but I truly believe that when a man is called to be a pastor, and is ordained to that function, he is a minister-at-large, having the responsibility to join with other pastors for the care of the universal church, not just one local church. From time-to-time, he will reside in one locale, serving with that church’s elder team as an ex-officio member (just as Peter describes himself in 1 Peter 5:1), but his responsibilities are larger than simply that one flock. Just as I am doing now, exhorting those far outside the bounds of where I serve locally, a pastor has the responsibility to care for all God’s sheep in tandem with other pastors worldwide.

It is my conviction that the church in America especially suffers from its lack of universal ministers. Not only are the ranks of evangelist dwindled, but the pastors themselves no longer move around. This was one of the great discoveries of the Great Awakening. George Whitefield was the Grand Itinerant. Then in the Second Great Awakening, pastors commonly stepped out of their local churches to serve in other locations. Abraham Marshall, for example, a pastor in Georgia, traveled thousands of miles in his lifetime when roads were horrendously worse than they are today. We need the return of a sound, mobile ministry. The church of Jesus Christ could really use some healthy cross-pollination. Moreover, this would elevate the office of lay elder to its rightful place. Truly, the lay elders are the rulers of the church, not the pastor.

He is there, serving like Timothy and Titus, to appoint, train, and oversee what goes on with the elders, but the elders themselves are to shepherd the flock and get remunerated for doing so—even double, if they rule well and work hard at preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Second, regarding duties, a local church has more than one obligation to the universal church. It is not enough for a local church to care for its own, and then to think that just because its flock is doing well, it has done the will of God. The New Testament gives examples of obligations outside the local church. Let me list the two main obligations.

The New Testament records two relief efforts for the Jerusalem church: first, providing food during a famine (Acts 12); second, Paul's collection from the Greek churches (2 Corinthians 8-9). These cases are remarkable, for they give New Testament sanction for the idea of international relief—not relief for all men, as in modern calls regarding world hunger, but in relieving the needs of Christians worldwide. We should do good to all men, as we have opportunity, but the priority remains on the church (Galatians 6:10). Indeed, given the fact that the Jerusalem church was known for its suffering at the hand of their own countrymen (1 Thessalonians 2:14), international relief should especially go towards the persecuted church worldwide. We owe it to them (Romans 13:8). If there are few prisoners and famished saints in America, the efforts of Paul compel us to look elsewhere. If the first-century church could do such an effort, how can we do less, given modern travel and communication? But it takes someone to spearhead the effort, and that is where the pastors of the universal church fulfill their calling, just as the apostles did in their day, with their helpers.

Moreover, regarding missions and traveling evangelists, the local church has the responsibility to show them hospitality (3 John 7-8; cf. Titus 3:14). Even pastors, serving in the capacity of a mobile teaching ministry, should be welcomed and housed. Regarding missionaries, those who serve in established areas may be rightly required to gain their support from those whom they serve with the Gospel or from nearby churches under the rule of hospitality (1 Corinthians 9:14), while those who engage in frontier missions may need the help of established churches elsewhere, even as the apostle Paul appreciated the voluntary help of the Philippian church (Philippians 3:10-19). To me, it is ironic that the American church gives so much of its missionary dollars to fields that already have established churches, when so many frontier fields need it more, let alone those Christians in persecuted countries, who are literally starving in their lack of food and support—and they are already brothers, not merely potential brothers, as in mission-work! At any rate, both missions and international relief fall rightly under the category of obligations to the universal church.

Before listing other areas, I should clarify that having gifted *men* in the universal church does not necessarily justify having parachurch organizations within the universal church. The New Testament gives no example of a standing organization outside of the local church. If this precedent should be treated as normative, it casts questions upon seminaries and mission agencies, as well as all parachurch organizations. To the extent, however, that such organizations are necessary for a gifted man to fulfill his calling, whether Bill Bright to campuses or Brother Andrew behind the Iron Curtain, it is still open to debate whether such institutions should outlive the man they helped. At any rate, just acknowledging the fact that such leaders in the universal church exists adds a breadth of legitimacy to many ministries that otherwise would have a hard time justifying themselves as local-church ministries. In light of Scripture, why should they?

Conversely, if we see a need beyond our local church, whether internationally or nationally, we should call on God to raise up workers for the task. Gifted men are the key. This is the insight Jesus left us when he looked upon the multitudes (Matthew 9:36-38), which also became the key insight that led J. Hudson Taylor to lay so much weight on prayer for the proper personnel (see Howard & Geraldine Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, page 110-11).

In conclusion, I want to add one last word of exhortation. If there is truly a universal church, then there may also be a local church larger than simply one congregation. When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, he addressed himself to “*all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints*” (Romans 1:7). According to the greetings at the end of the letter, these saints did not seem to all meet in one place (Romans 16:3-5, 15). Perhaps there was a Gentile and a Jewish contingent that needed to accept one another in the Lord (Romans 15:7). My point here is not to melt the differences, as other articles have shown and will show, but to stress that we should perhaps view the local church as truly defined by the *locale*. In other words, our specific congregation is part of the church of our town, which from time-to-time may, as in Corinth, gather together as “the whole church” (1 Corinthians 14:23). While this point may stretch the limits of semantics, the rule of international relief definitely applies locally by implication. If it is my obligation to help Christians on the other side of the world, it is certainly my obligation to help those on the other side of town—to know what they are experiencing and to lend aid as the Lord grants opportunity. Moreover, it my obligation as a local leader in the universal church to have fellowship with other such pastors, and thereby enable the local churches to feel through fellowship that they are part of a larger body, for indeed they are—as local churches, they are part of the body of Christ, the church universal.

May the Lord Himself raise up leaders in both the local church and the universal church, cause them to interact fruitfully in ministry, and thereby strengthen the good of the whole!

Chapter Eleven

Polemics and Irenics

The Art of Faithful Theological Discourse

“Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

—2 Thessalonians 3:15

Different audiences require different styles. Here, at the end of instructions about disciplining a lazy brother, Paul reminds the Thessalonian church not to treat the errant brother as an enemy, but to admonish him (to warn him) as a brother. There are enemies to the Gospel, and there are brothers. We should be able to identify who is who, and then address each accordingly. This distinction is at the heart of polemics and irenics—two extreme forms theological discourse.

Polemics involves a hostile debate with opponents to the faith. The term itself comes from the Greek work *polemos*, meaning “warlike.” In theology, there can be no true “dialogue” with opponents of the Gospel, in the sense of a give-and-take exchange for the sake of understanding alone, as if neither side had the truth. We are in the business of evangelizing and proselytizing. We have good news of truth and we are calling “all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30) and then enlist in Jesus’ school as a disciple (Matthew 28:19). Anyone who opposes this Gospel or promotes another so-called Gospel is an enemy to the truth, and needs to be confronted (e.g. Galatians 1-2).

Specifically, polemics is more than evangelism or even apologetics. In evangelism, the good news is presented with a call to repent and to believe (e.g. Acts 2). In apologetics, the false religions of a culture are exposed by means of the truth of revelation (e.g. Acts 17). Neither of these presentations necessarily involves hostility. Both presuppose an audience willing to listen, whether in the synagogue or in the Areopagus. However, when the Gospel is opposed, or another so-called Gospel is proposed, church leaders must engage in polemics and shut the mouths of those “who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not” (Titus 1:11). Those promoting false Gospels should be cursed (Galatians 1:8-9) and all polite exchange with them should cease (2 John 9-11). In addition, there may also need to be a public display of protest, where we shake the dust off our feet as a witness against them (e.g. Acts 14:51; cf. Matthew 10:14). Even true brothers in danger of falling over the edge into heresy should be confronted with true earnestness, as Paul withstood Peter “to the face” (Galatians 2:11ff).

Again, it is so important to stress that polemics does not apply to all confrontations with those outside the faith. Many, many souls at first resist the Gospel, who need to be gently corrected and led to Christ (cf. 2 Timothy 2:23). Our speech with outsiders should in the main be with grace, seasoned with salt. We should speak wisely and winsomely (Colossians 4:5-6). It is only when men start to oppose the Gospel or to subvert it with a false substitute that polemics begin. Just review the book of Acts and the letters of Paul to see when he used his harshest language. Is it not with the Jewish leaders who “spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming” (Acts 13:45)? Not every goat is a ravenous wolf.

Irenics involves a peaceful debate with opponents within the faith. The term, which I have borrowed from Thomas Oden (whose theology I do not endorse), comes from the Greek word *eirene*, meaning “peace.” Here is a skill that is desperately needed today, but sorely

lacking. In order for the church to grow up into a mature unity, it is necessary for leaders in the universal church to engage one another in peaceful confrontation, “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), so that we can “all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:13). Instead, when the church of Christ has heard the term *unity*, it has either meant the blasphemous organizational unity of the ecumenical movement, where the Gospel is jettisoned for some semblance of unity, or else the more appealing evangelical unity, where issues other than the Gospel are silenced for the sake of cooperative effort. In both cases, the truth is left unspoken and, according to Ephesians four, no mature unity is possible. We must learn the art of irenics. There must be a way where true Christians can “agree to disagree,” yet continue to communicate over Scripture on the differences between them.

In order to explain better the differences between these two extremes of theological discourse, let me employ the image of two concentric circles. The outside circle represents the line between orthodoxy and heresy, which Francis Schaeffer urged in the appendix to his small book, *The Church before the Watching World*. Since Jesus’ word is truth, and abiding in His word leads both to the knowledge of the truth and thus to freedom, there is a difference between those who know the truth and those who do not know the truth, between those who are free and those who are yet in their slavery to sin (cf. John 8:31-32; 1 Timothy 2:4). Somewhere there is a line between fundamental truth and enslaving error. It is the business of polemics to make the fundamentals of the faith clear in contradistinction to false religions, cults, and all apostate perversions of Christianity. Since old errors arise in new clothing, polemics will require a constantly active vigilance in exposing the wolves among us.

Irenics, on the other hand, concerns an inside circle that is often missed or easily dismissed in discussions about theological differences. All those within the outer circle are reckoned as believers, who know the truth; but not all those who serve as Christian teachers should be invited into a particular church or fellowship in order to instruct the saints about any point of doctrine. The inner circle represents agreement on secondary points of doctrine and practice that are necessary for healthy progress toward mature unity. Too often these differences are dismissed as hindrances to unity, when actually, conversation over them is Christ’s appointed men to achieving mature unity. That is the beautiful goal of irenics.

Three convictions support the wisdom of having two concentric circles while practicing irenics.

First, it is the duty of every Christian individual and fellowship to “walk by the same rule” that has been attained in pursuit of “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14, 16). According to the apostle Paul, we should hold to and live out our convictions, as God has granted us light, while simultaneously remaining patient with those brothers who are “otherwise minded,” knowing that God must reveal these things to them as well (Philippians 3:15). In essence, this is the genius of denominationalism. For example, no church can be built simultaneously on the basis of regenerate church membership and yet regularly practice infant baptism. The early New England Puritans tried this, but failed, having finally adopted the appropriately-named “half-way covenant.” So what is to be done with such a division over baptism? Should those who hold to paedobaptism be forced against their convictions to abide by credobaptist principles? No. Let separate fellowships coexist until the time God reveals more light to one or both groups. In the meantime, let them converse peaceably with each other from time to time over the differences until a “unity of the faith” is granted (Ephesians 4:13).

Second, it is my contention that every denomination or fellowship of Christians, if they are not strictly motivated by party pride, must have some germ of truth in their distinctive doctrines and practices that makes them adhere tenaciously to their position.

While they may not be able to distinguish between the antithesis and complement of the issue (and certainly none of us does completely), there is some truth there, and that truth should be shared with the greater body of Christians, who also need to adhere to it, spitting out the bones and swallowing the meat. For example, what can we learn about the lordship of Christ and psalm-singing from the Reformed Presbyterians? What can we learn about Christian perfection (a Pauline term!) from the Wesleyans? Or form issues from the Mennonites? Or the normative versus the regulative principle from the Lutherans? What is it about sacramentalism that keeps men bound to it? Similarly, what is it about covenantal-thinking that keeps Reformed preachers from embracing dispensational thought? If the particular advocate of any position is a believing man, then let him speak his peace. He belong to me, even though I am not of his camp, for according to the apostle to the Gentiles, “All things are your’s; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas” (1 Corinthians 3:21-22)—whether Luther, Calvin, or Wesley.

This exchange across denominational lines can be done on all levels. First, we should pursue it in private by reading or listening to the leaders of other denominations. Often there are key works that were either seminal to the denomination (e.g. the writings of John Wesley) or ones that summarize their position (e.g. creeds and summaries such as the Lutheran *Book of Concord*). Some of the four-view type books may also be helpful. Second, we should pursue exchange in private interpersonal interaction, by inviting a local pastor to coffee and asking him about his denomination’s beliefs. Third, we could host a public forum, where differences are discussed in the presence of a moderator and audience. In any case, it will become immediately apparent that we will be challenged on our own convictions and will need to turn often to prayer. Study alone will not yield the truth, nor will even Christian discussion. Our minds are insufficient to grasp the mind of Christ in the Scriptures without the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-16). Therefore, only exchanges bathed in prayer will enable us “to comprehend with all the saints” the dimensions of the love of Christ in redemption (Ephesians 3:14-19).

Third, there should be a secondary line for the safety of future generations. Even though secondary doctrines and practices do not directly impinge upon salvation, as if adherents of them could not be a Christian, these positions often can lead to heresies that corrode the fundamentals of the faith. In a sense, many secondary doctrines are middle doctrines—neither heresy nor healthy. For example, while a careful theologian can adhere to both infant baptism and salvation through personal faith, a future generation may not be able to make this distinction well. Similarly, history records of many genuine believers in the early missions movement of the 1800s who adhered to postmillennialism, even though this very fallacy in time fed into the social gospel of the early 1900s. Such doctrines have a Jehoshaphat-effect. Though Jehoshaphat himself could hob-knob with Ahab and still retain his righteous convictions, his son and grandson were not so capable, and all Judah suffered for it. Therefore, it does not do the universal church any favors for a local church to whittle down its convictions for the sake of temporary unity, and all at the expense of true unity—or even survival—someday.

By way of personal conviction, my inner circle is drawn tight around traditional Baptist beliefs. It is my conviction that Baptists emerged as the most mature expression of the Reformation, bringing many core principles of the Reformers to their logical end. However, that does not mean that I believe the Baptists have everything correct, nor that I have everything

correct. This past year, I was challenged by the doctrine of “perfection” in the letters of Paul, which is a doctrine that my training in Reformed-minded books had taught me little, but which is a doctrine that, had I grown up in Wesleyan circles, I may have found it unbelievable to miss (though I still do not hold to Wesleyan perfectionism). We all need each other, both for rebuttal and for rejoinder.

In conclusion, I would like to propose two practical means for facilitating polemics and irenics. First, perhaps there should be a scholarly journal or some sort of public forum specifically devoted to the careful articulation of the inner and outer circles. Such a conversation may best occur in print, for the differences may be too subtle and the prejudices too entrenched for normal bantering to overcome. Moreover, the moderators of these discussions should themselves have a grasp on a wide variety of theological issues—like theological cosmopolitans—in order to talk the language of both sides in an effort of interpretation, while yet retaining deep personal roots in the Scriptures, which alone give light and provide the touchstone for final arbitration. Second, it may be best for doctrinal confessions of faith to be rewritten with two sections: Fundamentals and Distinctives. Such a division would simultaneously demonstrate to the world the true unity between Bible-believing Christians as well as facilitate irenic discussions over the differences.

May the Lord Himself grant His church both polemics and irenics—to “contend for the faith” against those who have crept in unawares (Jude 3), while yet “speaking the truth in love” to one another (Ephesians 4:15)!

Chapter Twelve

Already and Not-Yet

Balanced Hope for the Christian and for the World

“But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; . . .”

—Hebrews 2:8b-9a

Out of all the tandem ideas presented so far, the “already and not-yet” principle is perhaps the most trendy. Scholars have been using it for some time now; and for all I know, the saying may first have originated from the pen of some liberal. Even so, God has ordained the sinner “to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God” (Ecclesiastes 2:26). A truth is a truth, even if it should come from the lips of Caiaphas himself. Therefore, regardless of its origin or present-day use, the “already and not-yet” principle is nonetheless a biblical principle, and one that is very helpful with regard to two areas of theology.

First, the renewal of the believer is “already and not-yet.” As in most areas of theology, in sanctification there are two extremes to avoid. On the one hand, there are those who advocate that the believer can have “entire sanctification” now, not simply in a qualitative sense (that every aspect of my being is preserved and made holy, as in 1 Thessalonians 5:23), but in a quantitative sense (that every remnant of sin can be purged from my life now). This error, perhaps made most famous by John Wesley and then by Charles Finney, definitely emphasizes the “already” aspect of salvation. In the early church, some Corinthians overemphasized the “already” aspect of salvation to the extreme that no resurrection was necessary nor were morality commands pertinent! On the other hand, and often in hopes of correcting superficial views of sin, there are those who emphasize the continual wretchedness of the believer. No prayer is a good prayer unless, like drones on Scottish bagpipes, the solemn note of man’s sinfulness drags on and on. This is one version of an emphasis on the “not-yet” aspect of salvation. Another version, often dubbed “easy-believism” by its foes, claims that a person making a true decision for Christ may not exhibit any marks of the Spirit for some time after conversion. This so-called “carnal Christian” also emphasizes the “not-yet” aspect of salvation. Where is the balance?

Thankfully, the balance is presented by the apostle Paul himself in the book of Romans. In chapter seven, Paul describes the frustrating situation of a man who does what he does not want to do, and does not do what he wants to do. “O wretched man that I am!” he exclaims, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:25). While good arguments can be made that this testimony describes the experience of an unbeliever striving to keep the Law, or even of a believer under the Old Covenant, before the coming of the Holy Spirit, I personally think this passage fits even a Christian’s experience, especially when he is not filled with the Holy Spirit. To me, it is significant that from verse fourteen onward, Paul speaks in the first person and in the present tense: “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Romans 7:14). Moreover, in this very passage, Paul describes himself as a basically good man. He himself delights in the Law of God, and he is (strangely) not the source of his sinful deeds. The real source is indwelling Sin. Rather than making some psychological statement about the source of human action, Paul here is making a profound theological statement that I will explain in a bit.

Finally, the verse that to me is most convincing is the last one—the conclusion to this passage: “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:25b). Amazing! He is a man, who is under dual slavery. On the one hand, he is a slave to God; on the other hand, he is a slave to sin. How can that be?

The key to understanding this passage, I believe, lies in Paul’s distinction between “mind” (the inner man) and “flesh” (the outer man). A real, *substantial* change (to borrow Francis Schaeffer’s term) has occurred within the heart of a true believer. Jesus called it being born again (John 3:3, 5-6). In truth, a believer deep-down has acquired a new set of affections that prevents him from truly enjoying sin anymore. Then why does he sin? Why is he yet so wretched? The answer is simple: Not all of him has been renewed. The inside is renewed, but not the flesh. There, the law of sin still resides, in the members of his body. There, “another law” is still bringing him into “captivity” (Romans 7:23). This captivity will not be fully broken by some experience on earth, call it what you will—higher life, deeper life, victorious Christian living, second work of grace, second blessing. Final deliverance only comes at death: “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24b). Until then, due to the flesh, every believer can truly say, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Romans 7:14b).

For some, this news may come as a relief. False expectations often lead to false guilt. If I think that I should reach a place of complete mastery over my flesh, I will feel perpetual guilt and perhaps begin to wonder if I really am a Christian, or even whether Christianity itself is real. For example, theologian J. I. Packer confessed to approaching despair as a young Christian until God opened his eyes to the reality of indwelling sin through a book of that very title by Puritan John Owen. Personally, I have found it a source of comfort to know that God never intends to improve my flesh, or its tendencies. The cure for the flesh is resurrection alone, the “redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). Improvement now comes through some other aspect of my being, and that is the topic of Romans chapter eight.

In Romans eight, Paul balances off the gloomy picture of chapter seven. His language is quite bold. Just two verses after describing the dual slavery within us, Paul argues, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). Here is a true already-and-not-yet scenario. On the one hand, with my flesh, I am in slavery to the law of sin; on the other hand, with my spirit, I am free from the law of sin. In fact, if this second aspect is not evidenced in my life, I am not a Christian, for Paul later writes, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:13-14). Here it is very important to make careful distinctions.

First, Paul is not saying that killing off sin in my life makes me righteous. Paul earlier demolished such a notion through his doctrine of justification—being legally reckoned righteous by grace on the basis of the Cross alone (see Romans 3:21-5:21). Killing off sin is the evidence of being led by the Holy Spirit, which is the mark of being a true son of God. Do you see? Once I am justified, I am cleared from guilt; therefore, I should not be punished with death, but rewarded with life. This reward comes in installments: first, I receive the Spirit of adoption, by whom I pray and put to death the deeds of the flesh (Romans 8:13-15); then, at the return of Christ, I receive the full adoption, which is “the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). In a true sense, I am already adopted, and not yet adopted.

Second, Paul is saying that killing off sin is a necessary evidence of salvation. As John MacArthur once noted, the mark of a Christian is not perfection, but progress. Due to the flesh, sinless perfection will not occur this side of death or the rapture. Due to the Spirit,

progress in sanctification must occur and will occur. His leading is real. He gets me to where He wants me to be. This is the biblical doctrine of progressive sanctification. Therefore, by past justification, I am free from the penalty of sin; by present sanctification, I am free from the power of sin; and by future glorification, I will be free from even the presence of sin. Hallelujah! What a Savior! In a similar sense, it is proper to say that we are already saved, being saved, and will yet be saved (e.g. Romans 5:9).

Before leaving this point, let me make three points of application. First, though it is the power of the Spirit that produces progress in sanctification, it is nonetheless my responsibility in Christ to put sin to death. The language of the apostle is clear: “If ye . . . do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13). This is a real fight, and one that requires a spiritual knowledge of the love of Christ to accomplish (Ephesians 3:14-19). All rule-keeping and lists of taboos, without a thorough theological change in my thinking, stand useless against the power of the flesh (Colossians 2:20-23). Second, if indwelling sin remains in my flesh, I should never drop my guard against the possibility of lapsing back into old habits for a time. Erwin Lutzer, in his book on breaking bad habits, spoke of alcoholics relapsing after ten years due to the thought, “I can handle a drink now.” While salvation is real and progress assured, the flesh remains to tempt us until the grave. Therefore, we should always beware, even if we are “spiritual” (cf. Galatians 6:1). Third, if my life is dominated by a particular sin, to the point that it labels me, the New Testament is clear: I am not a Christian. On this point, Paul warns more than once not to be deceived (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:5-6). While the ongoing presence of sin remains, in that, due to the flesh, I will not stop sinning altogether, the ruling power of sin is broken, in that, due to the Spirit, I will make progress. There really must be fruit in my life, or I will not go to Heaven (Galatians 6:7-8).

Second, the renewal of the world is “already and not-yet.” According to Jesus, not only is an individual believer regenerated (i.e. born again), the world itself awaits its own “regeneration” (Matthew 19:28; cf. Romans 8:19-22). Moreover, just as individual renewal exhibits a dual slavery to God and to sin, so also the renewal of the world itself exhibits such a dual nature, especially in regard to the reign of Christ.

First, it is clear in the New Testament that Jesus is already (as the opening text states) “crowned with glory and honour” (Hebrews 2:9). “Of the increase of His government and peace,” Isaiah prophesied, “there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:7; cf. Psalm 2:7-9). Based on His authority, the church is assured that her divinely-given Great Commission will certainly succeed, for the all-authoritative Jesus promised, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore, Jesus said, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14). Before His throne someday, there shall be men from “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Revelation 7:9).

Based on these and similar promises, some have advocated that the church will someday dominate culture. According to this view, which is often called “postmillennialism,” the power of the Gospel alone will bring about this change. If we doubt it, according to advocates, then we doubt the power and authority of Jesus Christ Himself. This, however, commits the same fallacy as the advocates of sinless perfection in the life of a believer. Just because Jesus has the power to rid my life completely of sin now does not mean that He has determined to do so; similarly, yes, Jesus has the power to regenerate a sufficient number of people and hold sway over the rest to the point that a Grand Revival occurs, in which the cultures

of the world become at least nominally Christian. He could do this, but He has told us He will not. Such entire sanctification awaits the coming of Christ Himself.

In truth, I have some sympathy for those holding to postmillennialism, and used to hold to it once myself. It is disheartening to see either myself or other Christians act as if Jesus is not now sharing the throne on high, as if God is not now “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according”—not just to His power in general, but according—“to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20). What potential! But just because Jesus is reigning in this age, this does not mean that we will reign in this age. Here is the chief fallacy of postmillennialism. We follow in His footsteps. Just as He suffered and then entered His glory only after resurrection, so we too suffer and then inherit the kingdom only after we have been changed into immortality (Romans 8:17-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50). We do not reign now; we suffer. Now we are hated by all nations for His name’s sake (Matthew 24:9). We will not convert the societies of the world any more than Jesus succeeded in converting the society of the Jews. “If the world hate you,” Jesus said, “ye know that it hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

So, where is the victory? Where is the “already” aspect of this age? Missions. According to the book of Acts, the messengers may be martyred, but nothing can stop the message. The apostle may be in chains, but “the word of God is not bound” (2 Timothy 2:10; cf. Acts 28:31). No culture is sealed off from the word of the Christ. Disciples will come from all nations. In a sense, this is progressive sanctification on a world scale. The church resembles the inner man of the world, while the form of this world, which is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31), resembles the flesh. The flesh must perish, but the inner man is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

To some, different views on eschatology seem only theoretical, not practical. In truth, however, one’s view of the end determines the goals for the church today. Because postmillennialism expects to win not just individuals, but also the culture as a whole, its efforts often focus on education more than evangelism. In contrast, amillennialism and premillennialism share the same view on the role of the church in this age—to save a remnant from the nations for His name. Even then, American Christianity has often betrayed a latent postmillennialism, believing that a Grand Revival will somehow win our culture back. This is no accident, for historically it was postmillennial hopes that fueled revival fervor. Remember, realistic goals, whether about sanctification or evangelism, forestall disappointment and disillusionment. The credibility of Christianity does not depend on winning the culture war. Even if a revival did overcome our culture’s rebellion, it would only be for a season, for the end is decreed in the rise and downfall of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). Yes, as in progressive sanctification, let us seek to be as much salt and light as we can in this culture, and yes, may God grant another temporary improvement of health to the cultures of this world, but even so, let us never forget: Just as God has never determined to save our flesh, so He has never determined to save this world as it stands. We await the resurrection for both (Romans 8:18-23).

May the Lord Himself grant His church to labor in the confidence of a present salvation, while yet looking forward to the full salvation “ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5)!

Chapter Thirteen

Israel and the Church The Continuity of the People of God

“And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.”

—Romans 11:23

One of the hardest areas of theology involves the relationship of Israel and the Church. There are two traditional camps, neither of which precedes the Reformation. On the one hand, covenant theology stresses the continuity of the one people of God, bound eternally in the mind of God by the one covenant of grace. This covenant found expression historically in the covenant God made with Abraham and with his seed, that He would be their God and they would be His people. The covenant was reiterated in David, and again in Christ, with the sign of the covenant shifting from bloody circumcision to bloodless baptism. Typically, adherents to covenant theology baptize infants, and see the Church as having replaced Israel as the visible people of God. This camp can be traced back to the Reformed churches of Switzerland.

Dispensationalism, on the hand, has traditionally stressed the discontinuity in God’s redemptive program. The watchword here has been “rightly dividing the word of truth,” with divisions ranging from Law and Grace to Israel and the Church, as seen in the classic booklet of that name by C. I. Scofield. According to this camp, God has dealt with people in different ways, according to the administration of that particular dispensation. Though dispensationalists have often not agreed on the number of dispensations, the divisions are generally marked at Adam, the Flood, Abraham, Moses, Christ, and at various times in the future—the Rapture, the Second Coming, and the End of the Millennium. Typically, adherents to dispensationalism have been very literal in their Bible interpretation, and very independent in their church life. This camp can be traced back to the Plymouth Brethren of early 1800s England.

In dispensationalism, there are two peoples of God—the earthly people of God (Israel) and the heavenly people of God (the Church). The prophetic promises made to ethnic Israel must be fulfilled in ethnic Israel, including the multiplication of children and the possession of the land. According to this camp, it is futile to claim fulfillment by spiritualizing the promises, as if God does not have to be faithful to His word. The Church does not fulfill the promises given to Israel. In fact, according to traditional dispensationalism, the Church is not even foreseen at all by the Old Testament prophets, but is a “mystery” now revealed. Someday God will remove the Church in a secret Rapture and once again deal with His rebellious house of Jacob.

Even though there have been mediating positions lately, which try to incorporate the best of both sides, such as New Covenant Theology on the one hand and Progressive Dispensationalism on the other hand, the question still remains: *Are there two peoples of God or simply one?* Both sides agree on some amount of discontinuity, with even the covenant theologians speaking of the cross marking off the new dispensation from the old dispensation. All agree, for example, that blood sacrifices are removed. The main difference concerns the Church’s relationship to Israel and the promises of the Old Testament.

Thankfully, we are not left with apostolic direction on this question. The apostle Paul addressed this very issue in one whole section of his letter to the Romans (chapters 9-11). The

very fact that Paul thought it necessary to address the relationship of Israel and the Church shows its importance to the Gospel and to Christian living. Although some may regard this topic as tangential to personal salvation in Christ, as if it could be dispensed with altogether and no harm would be done to the faith, the Holy Spirit must think otherwise. Three chapters in Romans is a large percentage of the apostle's gospel! Specifically, the topic impacts our faith in two areas.

First, the topic dramatically impacts our view of God. If God can make promises to an entire nation and then fulfill them in some spiritual sense with another people, what makes us think that God must fulfill His promises to *little ol' me*? In what sense is He *faithful*? For example, how can God promise the Jews sonship and then bestow this "adoption" upon us, when *truly*, the adoption does belong to the Jews (cf. Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4, 26)? In these transactions, God's faithfulness is at stake (Romans 9:6). (Ironically, as John MacArthur once pointed out, it is the amillennialists who often stress the sovereignty of God in fulfilling His promises to the elect individuals, but apparently not to the elect nation.) Going deeper, we need to remember that the very nature of the Gospel as "good news" is the announcement that God is now fulfilling His promises in the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1-2; cf. 16:25-26). In other words, the context for understanding the Gospel is the Old Testament, with its multiple promises of future blessing. Part of those promises concern the salvation of Israel, which is why Paul included their salvation as part of his presentation of the Gospel. Someday, "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26).

Second, the topic also impacts our view of the Jews and of all ethnicities. Three times in Romans chapter eleven, the apostle to the Gentiles warns us, who are Gentiles, not to be "highminded" against the Jews (Romans 11:18, 20, 25). Apparently, this must be a strong temptation for Gentile believers—a temptation that has sadly been evidenced repeatedly in church history. In contrast, the Holy Spirit wants us to know that the Gospel is "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Somehow the Jew is primary. Certainly we see this primacy in the book of Acts, when Paul went to the synagogue first; but according to this same apostle, the primacy continues throughout the Christian era and finds its climax someday when the fullness of the Gentiles becomes the means of ending the partial blindness of the Jews and "so [lit. *in this way*] all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:25-26).

The truth of Jewish primacy came home to me several years ago at a conference for missions. The participants were arranged in order of cultural privilege with the female minorities on one end and the male whites on the other end. The goal here, of course, was to make the plight of the underprivileged more visible, and to that end it succeeded. In being biblical, however, it fell short—not that it is unbiblical to strive for fair treatment among humans (we should!), but that it failed to include a higher category, the Jew. In failing to include the Jew, this gathering of mission-minded Gentile Christians inadvertently fell into the trap that Paul three times warns about in Romans eleven. According to Paul, the salvation of the nations is not the ultimate, but the penultimate step in history. The nations are saved so that all Israel will be saved. In other words, fulfilling the Great Commission leads ultimately to the salvation of the Jews. Moreover, this story also shows the importance of identifying the church as a *new ethnicity*, a "holy nation" and a "people" (1 Peter 2:9), distinct not only from the unbelieving Jews and the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 10:32), but also from blacks, whites, Americans, East and West, and any other social distinction. To the extent that we are in the flesh, yes, we hold to the "Jew first" principle in evangelism and to male headship in leadership, neither of which is

negated by our spiritual unity in Christ (Galatians 3:28). However, when it comes to core identity, just as we no longer know Christ “after the flesh,” so now we no longer know any man “after the flesh” (2 Corinthians 5:16). What fundamentally matters now is the line between the old creation and the new creation in Christ (5:17). Therefore, for the sake of mature unity, we need to understand how Israel and the Church relate to each other. Such need for understanding and discernment is only heightened by our society’s increasing call for racial reconciliation.

So then, how do Israel and the Church relate? Are there two peoples of God or one? Again, thankfully, we are not left to theological guessing. Let us now consider the argument of Romans nine through eleven.

In Romans nine, Paul acknowledges that the issue is the faithfulness of God, in that it appears that God has failed to fulfill His word with regard to Israel. This appearance is not reality, however, because God never made the promise to all the ethnic descendants of Abraham, but only to those whom He would “call” or “name” as “seed.” As proof, Paul notes that only Isaac was born to Abraham out of a promise, and that God had said that “in Isaac” He would name the seed (Genesis 21:12). This fact of *designating* seed is highly instructive. In other words, mere physical descent did not qualify a Jew to be reckoned as “seed of Abraham.” In the words of Scripture, “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Romans 9:6). The same fact holds true for Jacob and Esau, which is Paul’s next example (9:10-13). Therefore, in assessing the faithfulness of God to His word, we need to be very careful to identify correctly the recipients of these promises. The recipients are ethnic Jews, but not *all* the ethnic Jews.

Going further, Paul next includes Gentile believers as part of those “called” (Romans 9:24). The root of predestination sprouts in both realms, with both Jews and Gentiles called (cf. Romans 8:30). In light of this reality, it is not surprising that Romans nine has been a favorite chapter among covenant theologians, not only for its strong statements on the sovereignty of God in salvation, but also for the leveling effect this sovereignty has on ethnicity. The election of individuals has no racial boundaries.

In Romans ten, which technically includes the end of chapter nine, the apostle marvels that the Gentiles unwittingly found what the Jews vainly sought—righteousness. The Jews stumbled over Christ, but the Gentiles had faith in Him unto righteousness. Boldly, the apostle asserts that the way of salvation is the same for all ethnicities—to believe in Christ and call out to Him as Lord for salvation. Because the Jews have largely refused Christ, they remain a “disobedient” people (Romans 10:21).

At this point, it is tempting to drop the Jews altogether. What future do they have? They have no guarantee of salvation in their genetic Jewishness, and they stubbornly refuse to come to Christ, so where is their future? Why should we not follow Calvin in interpreting “all Israel shall be saved” as a reference to the elect of God, with no reference to ethnicity? All is lost, or so it would appear. In confirmation of this apparent logic, it is instructive to note that Paul begins Romans eleven with a strong assertion that God has *not* “cast away” His people (Romans 11:2). Indeed, He cannot, because the “gifts and calling of God” are “irrevocable” (Romans 11:29, NASB). In some way, then, God is bound by promise to care for His ethnic people, and He will do so.

In some regards, Romans eleven favors dispensationalism as much as Romans nine favors covenant theology. In Romans nine, the elect individual is stressed; in Romans eleven, the elect nation is stressed. In both chapters, God is faithful! Given that both chapters came from one pen (even an inspired pen!), the two chapters must cohere into one vision. How?

Perhaps the best answer is found in Paul's analogy of the olive tree (Romans 11:16-24). The olive tree has *one* root, but *many* branches. The one root seems to be Abraham and the promises he received (cf. verse 28, "...for the fathers' sakes"). The branches are ethnic Jews, who remain on the tree *only if* they believe; otherwise, they are broken off. Even then, the situation is not permanent, because if these Jews were to believe, they would be grafted back in. As for Gentiles believers, Paul calls them branches from a "wild olive tree" that are grafted into the "good olive tree." In either case, branches remain in the olive tree through faith alone.

Here is my point: *There is only one good olive tree.* It is a Jewish tree. For any individual Gentile to be saved, he must be grafted into that one tree. Moreover, for any individual Jew to be saved, he must be grafted back into his own tree. In either case, salvation is dependent on union with the good olive tree. In other words, salvation is tied to membership within the family of Abraham, who constitutes the one people that God has promised to save. In the end, there is only one people of God, composed of true Jews and those Gentiles reckoned as Jews in Christ.

To put it another way, what truly makes someone a descendent of Abraham? The Scriptures are clear: Faith makes us a descendent of Abraham (Romans 4; Galatians 3). Faith is the chief characteristic of Abraham, whom Paul aptly designates "the believer" (Galatians 3:9, NASB); therefore, all those of faith are his descendents. Just as Jabal was the "father" of herdsmen, and Jubal was the "father" of musicians, even though neither man had sons that survived the flood, so also Abraham is the father of all believers, whether or not they are connected to him through bloodlines. Going further, the Scriptures are bold to declare that the promises were given to Abraham and to his *one* Seed, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16); therefore, if we belong to Christ, we then are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (3:29).

There is one program and it is a Jewish program. It began with Abraham, and is fulfilled in his Seed, Jesus Christ. All who are of faith in Christ belong to this program, and are reckoned as seed of Abraham. In this way, there are not two peoples of God, but one—the people of true Jews, who are Jews inwardly (cf. Romans 2:28-29). As for the Church, she is the body of Christ, whose members are the same as the branches on the good olive tree. She is the group of all those "called" out of the Jews and out of the Gentiles. Since she is the body of Christ, the Seed of Abraham, she should not be seen as a separate group, but as the group inheriting through faith the promises given to Abraham. And for what reason? Because every single Christian is reckoned a Jew in Christ.

In this way, the Church is the *fullness* of the Jewish program, and neither a parenthesis (as dispensationalists assert) nor a replacement (as covenant theologians assert). By analogy, just as marriage may be said to "replace" engagement only by fulfilling it, and just as adulthood puts an end to childhood in the same way, so also the church is Israel *fulfilled* in Christ (cf. Galatians 4:1-7). Truly, there is no discontinuity—a wedding does not *call off* an engagement—rather, there is continuity with fullness. Such fullness was not a complete mystery to the Jews. They called it "the kingdom of heaven." The mystery, however, involved the equal inclusion of the Gentiles into the full rights and privileges of God's people (Ephesians 3:4-6). When Gentiles believe, they are said to be "grafted in" and to "come in" (Romans 11:19, 25). Likewise, when the unbelieving Jews will someday believe in mass, perhaps through seeing the pierced Messiah (Zechariah 12:10), even as James and others apparently believed through seeing, they too are described as having been "grafted into their own olive tree" (Romans 11:24). Paul identifies this as "salvation," the object of his prayers and the hope of all who call on Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:1, 13; 11:26). Into what are all believers grafted? No better answer is given than *into Christ*,

who is the Tree coming from the root of Abraham.

To the Jew, the Bible warns against presumption. Natural descent will avail nothing without faith (Matthew 3:8-10). To the Gentile, the Bible warns against arrogance. Just as the Jews were cut off for unbelief, so you too stand by faith (Romans 11:18-21). Moreover, because it is *their* tree, keep in mind that even your salvation serves them, in making them jealous, so that they too will be saved someday. In this way, we Gentiles are put in our place. We have received a double grace. Both as Gentiles and as sinners, we do not deserve to be blessed. Therefore, let us show gratitude to God and love to the Jew, knowing that we are participants in a covenant for them. Moreover, let us also look to the future, and remember that our own salvation contributes to the “fullness of the Gentiles” that will ultimately bring the nation of the Jews to Christ. In light of His grace and His purpose, therefore, we have the motivation to render our bodies a living sacrifice to God, and to pray for the salvation of Israel.

Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus! And may we be found waiting expectantly! Amen.

Chapter Fourteen

The Father and the Son

The Role of the Trinity in the Worship and Future of the Church

“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee.”

—John 17:1

The Trinity is the gold standard of unity. In Jesus’ final prayer, He patterns our unity in Him after His unity with the Father: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). To Francis Schaeffer, a Protestant evangelical, this prayer was a call for visible love among Christians. To Jacopo Sadoletto, the Catholic cardinal that sought to fetch Geneva back into the fold, this prayer was a call to return to Rome, the true church. Which is it? Is it either? On the one hand, the Schaeffer call for functional unity appeals to us as the ultimate apologetic: *they will know us by our love* (John 13:35). On the other hand, our organizational disunity appears to mock our ideals, while the ancient churches in the West and East increasingly appeal to younger evangelicals. *What are we missing?*

Regarding this beautiful and orderly “Lord’s Prayer,” we first need to note the irony of Rome wooing with these words. Jesus first prayed for Himself (vv. 1-5), then for His disciples (vv. 6-19)—and specifically *not* for the world on this occasion (v. 9)—and finally, “for them also which shall believe on me through their word” (v. 20), that is, *through the apostolic word*, a word that has just been guaranteed by the promise of the Holy Spirit, the second Advocate and authorized “vicar of Christ,” who will teach the apostles all things, guide them into all truth, bear witness with them, bring to remembrance the things Jesus said, and reveal to them things to come (John 14 -16). In other words, Jesus was praying for *true believers*, not all *professing Christians*. Here is proper fundamentalism. The true grounding of all faith in the apostolic word about Christ. Moreover, this unity is evangelical. It is focused on Christ, both in what the world will believe about Him (vv. 21-23) and also in how believers will see His glory and experience the Father’s love for Him (vv. 22-26). Finally, it is also a mature unity. While Jesus first prays “that they may all *be* one,” He next prays “that they may be made *perfect* in love” (vv. 21, 23). Apparently, there is both a foundational unity, fulfilled in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within every believer, even as Jesus’ prayers are always fulfilled (cf. John 11:42; 14:17); and there is also a functional unity, a *mature unity*, that reaches perfection or completion in time. In contrast, the Trinity has no *mature* unity, because the Trinity experience no change—ever.

No mystery of the Bible rivals the mystery of the Trinity, except the mystery of the Incarnation, when God became man—a mystery of which the apostle says, “Great is the mystery of godliness” (1 Timothy 3:16). And the Trinity too is a “great” mystery! Who can fathom the Three in One, and One in Three? The Father dwelling in the Son, and the Son dwelling in the Father? This is the “mutual indwelling,” as the theologians put it. Perhaps the best thoughts on the Trinity have come from the fourth century, when it was studied the most; yet even then, the brightest minds confessed their inability, and left us statements that point us again and again to a balanced center. For example, Gregory of Nazianzus said, “We cannot think on the One without being led to think on the Three, nor on the Three without thinking of the One.” To preserve the unity of this thought without letting speculation lead to error is one of the most delicate tasks of

theological thinking. May the Lord grant my little mind to reflect accurately this large truth!

Even with the balanced formulas of the One in Three and Three in One, there is nonetheless some kind of a hierarchy in the Trinity. As Jesus remarked, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Is this hierarchy due to the Incarnation, as man is less than God, or is there a higher reality signified? While wishing to walk worshipfully on this holy ground, let us consider some names of Christ as evidence of an eternal derivation from the Father. He is the *Son* of God, the *Word* of God, and the *Image* of God. In each name, the Father is prior—as Father, Speaker, and Model. By “prior,” I do not mean in *time*, for time itself is a creation and has no meaning for the Creator; rather, I refer to the mysterious derivation of *person* of the Son from the *person* of the Father *within* the one being God and *outside of time*. To borrow Nicene language, the Son is “eternally begotten.” As begotten, He is fully God—and all-that-is-God is in Him. As fully divine, the Son is equal in glory to the Father. Together, the Father and Son keep such united communion that their very Community apparently eternally generates the person of the Holy Spirit, who is said to be both the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son. *Father, Son, Holy Spirit*—the Three in One, and One in Three.

Again, let it be stressed that the three Persons exist outside of time and space as the one, eternal God. As the heaven of heavens cannot contain God in space, even as Solomon rightly prayed, so also the ages of ages cannot contain God in time. He is as immense in time as He is in space, making His eternity something more than everlastingness. Therefore, the relationship between the Three in One did not come about *historically*, as the heretical Modalists assert, claiming that the one Person, God, put on the three masks of Father, Son, and Spirit successively over time—no, the relationship exists outside of time, *eternally*. The Son is “genuine God from genuine God,” according to the Nicene Creed, putting together two statements from the apostle John (John 17:3 and 1 John 5:20). In fact, it is often said that the historical manifestation of the Three in time (the economic Trinity) echoes the eternal existence of the Three outside of time (the ontological Trinity). Even the terminology of *begetting* and *proceeding* comes from acts within time. Going further, all the works done outside of God in time are simultaneously the works of all three Persons, since there is only one God.

Admittedly, the concept is difficult, but the reality is undeniable. No one with an honest heart can read the four Gospels without a sense of plurality within God. At His baptism, for example, Jesus is not talking to Himself when He is praying towards heaven, nor does the voice from heaven hint of anything other than personal relationship in saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). The divine dove seals the picture of the Three-in-One, communing together in solemn joy at the onset of Christ’s ministry on earth. Later, the disciples become increasingly aware of this plurality, while still retaining their staunch monotheism (14:33; 16:16). Historically, belief in monotheism came first. Before God revealed His plurality, He first drove out the idolatry, in order to establish His people in their national creed of one God, the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4). Now that Christ has come, and the confession has been made based on divine revelation—“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”—there is no turning back. We believe in the Trinity. It is fundamental to our faith, and stands at the gateway of the church. At baptism, we are baptized into the name (singular) of “the Father” (definite article), “the Son” (definite article), and “the Spirit” (definite article) by the authority (or name) of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). Thankfully, we who live twenty centuries later have the advantage of the church’s reflection on these truths, whether from Augustine’s analogy of the triune nature of the soul to C. S. Lewis’ helpful echo of the church fathers in the fourth section of *Mere Christianity*.

Practically, the reality of the Trinity informs our worship in two grand ways.

First, we learn that the ground of existence is Community, not Egotism. God is Three in essence, not simply in roles or in function. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). How could He be “love” in eternal isolation? Nor is it surprising to hear that when the triune God made man in “*Our image*,” man was created male and female—to be two in one, and thereby produce others, even as love leads to life. Although these human beings each possess only one person, in contrast to the Three-in-One, the unity of love in humans echoes the Community of God in heaven. As those made in God’s image, we were never meant to live in isolation, but to thrive in community. The pursuit of mature unity is fully in line with what it means to be truly human. Indeed, mature unity is our destiny. Heaven itself is not a cabin for a hermit, but a city for a people—the City of Eden (Revelation 21-22)—or Jonathan Edwards called it, “a world of love.”

Going further, we should note that God is not egotistical. It is often said that God does everything *for His own glory*, and while that is true ontologically, it runs into difficulties on a personal level. How would such self-love be a glorious or beautiful model to emulate? Should I, then, do all things for my glory? The best reply comes from the triune reality of God. Glory is a personal attribute, even as shame, its antithesis, applies only to persons. In other words, the Father has glory, and the Son has glory. Each Person, however, does not seek His own glory, but the glory of the Other. This reality is amazing, as well as refreshing and freeing! Over and over in John’s Gospel, it is said that the Father will glorify the Son, so that the Son will then glorify the Father (John 12-17). Each seeks the glory of the Other. Later, in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, the same truth is told in different terms: God has exalted the Son and given Him a name above all names, so that all will confess Him as Lord, *to the glory of the Father* (Philippians 2:9-11). Again, both the love of the Father to the Son and the Son’s love to the Father demonstrate selfless, mutual honor.

Given the fact that we become what we worship—a fact made plain in the psalms and in daily experience (Psalms 115, 135)—it is necessary for us not to conceive of God as egotistical. What He forbids us to do, namely, to seek our own glory, He Himself does not do, even though it would be right for Him to honor divine glory above all other glories. The Father honors such glory in the person of His Son, and the Son honors the same glory in the person of the Father. Wow! *Should we not teach this example to our leaders in church and to our husbands and fathers at home?* Granted, it is true, according to Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, male leadership is determined by the twin principles of derivation and design, and as such, it is transcultural and permanent, rooted in the historical nature of things—a very important point in such an age confused about marriage—but it is leadership grounded in the Trinity: “The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (11:3). Just as the Son is equal in essence to the Father, but differs in function (as, for example, the Father sends the Son, and not vice versa), so also the woman is equal in essence to her husband and should be honored as his spiritual equal (1 Peter 3:7), while still remaining subordinate to his headship in function (Ephesians 5:21-24). In every Christian marriage, then, there should be a picture of not only Christ and the church, but also an echo of the Father and the Son seeking the glory of the other in perfect love.

Second, we learn from the Trinity about our future with God. In His prayer of intercession, Jesus made it very clear that we are to be One, even as the Father and the Son are

one. The oneness of the divine Persons has become the model of our oneness with one another, and with Christ Himself. Certainly, if God were only a Monad, with no trinity of Persons, the oneness could only be ontological, as if we were to somehow lose our being and become swallowed up in God, as in eastern pantheism. However, given the trinity of Persons within God, it is possible for us to think in terms of *retaining* our personality while simultaneously becoming more and more united to God. In fact, the climax of our union with Christ as a community will not only be the vision of His glory, which implies our transformation, but the infusion into us of God the Father's very love for His Son (John 17:20ff). Instead of each believer mainly resorting to his mystic basement, as A. W. Tozer often did, for a private experience of unity with God, we will also actively pursue His glory in the face of His Son and reflected by the faces of one another (cf. Psalm 34:5). As a result, fully conscious, fully willing, and with each member retaining full personality, we will nonetheless be freely united in love, and freely united to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Such language points to regions we have yet to see, and so exceeds our understanding as the heavens do the earth (Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Corinthians 2:9). Only now and then do we even *taste* such unity on earth, because God has gladly given us the earnest of His Spirit as down-payment of His inheritance. Oh, how we should not cash in our birthright of true unity for any pottage of mystic isolation and absorption!

Corporately, we also gain insight from the Trinity. While some churches emphasize God, almost in a generic sense, and some emphasize Jesus, almost to the exclusion of His divinity, the New Testament points to a united emphasis on "one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Corinthians 8:6). The Spirit remains within us, not seeking His own glory, but shining His beams from within our soul onto the Father and the Son in front of us. Taking our cues historically, in imitation of God Himself, we would do well to concentrate on making much of Christ—not in isolation from God the Father, but as the Gift of the Father, the Image of the Father, and the Way to the Father. Moreover, we would do well to move beyond the mere catalog of God's attributes, which constitutes His name, to the living manifestation of these attributes in action. Jesus said that He manifested the name of God to His disciples (John 17:6). Just as the Law declared God to be the "I Am" (Exodus 3:14), so Jesus now has supplied that phrase with many predicates—the Bread, the Light, the Way, the Truth, the Resurrection, and the Life—in short, "I Am All That You Need." Therefore, we do speculate what the attributes of God mean *for us*. Now that Jesus has come to (literally) *flesh out* these attributes to us in the context of our world, and with our very own humanity, we have God translated into human terms on our level: "He that hath seen me," Jesus declared, "hath seen the Father" (John 14:9; cf. 1:14, 18). In this way, the name of Jehovah blooms to life in the Apostle's Creed.

Someday, not only the churches, but all creation will witness the reality of the Trinity. In the final vision of the New Testament, the book of Revelation, the overall story-arc of history is found in the Lamb as King and Priest bringing to completion the recorded decrees of God. The context is worship, with the One on the Throne as the center of the universe, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne restoring order. The climax is a wedding, with the City of God marrying the Lamb of God, implying that the Throne of God is now *among men*. Heaven has come to earth, and glorified man finally sees the face of God and *lives* (Revelation 22:5). This picture of Grand Unity is ultimate reality, and worthy of our utmost devotion and ambition in Christ. Hallowed be His name!

May our hearts ever long for the day when every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father! Amen.

Appendix One

A Sample Statement of Faith for the Local Church

We maintain that every local church should strive to “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10); therefore, we have adopted the following three-tiered order of unity with respect to this statement of faith.

*First, we require all teaching **leaders** in the church to agree heartily with every statement.*

*Second, we require that **members** should agree with this statement in general and remain open on points of disagreement.*

*Third, we invite all church **attendees** to consider seriously whether this statement accords with the mind of Christ revealed in the Bible and whether He is calling them to join our local church.*

- God* We believe in one true and living God, revealed unto us Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, equal in power, volition, and eternity.
- Bible* We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inerrant word of God and the only rule of faith and practice.
- Creation* We believe that by His word God created the universe from nothing in six days, and that consequently, all created things are good, and God deserves all praise.
- Providence* We believe that God from all eternity appointed all things that come to pass, and that He marvelously preserves and governs all things and all events, yet so as not to destroy the will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.
- Original Sin* We believe that though man was created in the image of God, by voluntary transgression he fell from that state of uprightness, and that consequently, all men possess a sinful nature, which disables them from attaining the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Gospel* We believe in the fundamentals of the faith—in the eternal deity of our Lord, and in His historical incarnation, sufferings, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, current reign, and future return.
- Savior* We believe that Jesus is the only Mediator between God and men, and that His sacrificial death on the Cross is the only basis upon which men can be reconciled with a holy God.
- Conversion* We believe that a person must be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and that according to God’s election rebirth is mysteriously effected by the Word and Spirit of God on the heart, leading to conscious repentance toward God and faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

- Salvation* We believe that every child of God is justified by faith alone, sanctified progressively by the word and by the rod, and kept safe by God's power until glorification, yet so as not to remove the necessity of perseverance and good works, nor to give comfort to hypocrites and apostates.
- Church* We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers under Christ, and in the duty to join a local assembly of believers for worship and mutual edification.
- Gifts* We believe in an orderly ministry of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, but we deny that such miracles occur at human whim, usurp Scriptural authority, or signify saving faith or spirituality.
- Ordinances* We believe in believer baptism by immersion as a sign of rebirth and forgiveness, and in the Lord's Table as a visible memorial of Jesus' once-for-all-time death.
- Government* We believe that all human government has been instituted by God and so should be obeyed for conscience's sake in all instances not contrary to God's law. We also believe in the separation of church and state, but not in the separation of God's law from civil legislation.
- Family* We believe that God's pattern at creation determined the lawful family for all cultures in all times, and that deviations from this pattern such as abortion, homosexuality, divorce, and egalitarianism are sin, and yet are also forgivable through repentance and faith in Christ.
- End Times* We believe that the time of Jesus' return cannot be predicted and so demands constant readiness, and that the church is now called to suffer, but shall reign with Christ in the age to come.
- Eternity* We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead and in the general judgment—that the joys of the righteous and the torment of the wicked will be eternal.

We hold the mysteries of the faith in humility and reverence—especially the mysteries of the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, and the election of the saints. In each of these mysteries, we believe in the full integrity of both the divine and human aspects, the supremacy of the divine aspect, and the inseparable union of the one reality.

In no way do we intend for this statement of faith to condemn other Bible-believing and Christ-centered churches; rather, we cordially invite discussion and hope to unite formally with them someday on the Truth, as God grants light to both of us.

Appendix Two

A Sample Catechism for the Local Church

The Knowledge of God

What is your chief goal in life?

To know God and become proud of Him, as it is written:
Jeremiah 9:23-24

According to this prophet, how will you know God?

By studying His actions, not by speculating in philosophy.

How is it possible for all men at all times and in all places to know God?

Every day all men see God in action, as it is written:
Isaiah 6:3 (cf. Psalm 19:1-4a; 33:4-5; 107:43; Romans 1:18-20)

What does “glory” mean?

Personal excellence.

Why has this revelation failed to make men proud of God?

Sinners suppress this truth, even as it is written:
Romans 1:21 (cf. Romans 1:18-23,25,28,32; 2:14-15)

Are there really any atheists?

No. Atheists are only fools blinded by their own sin.
Psalm 14:1 (cf. Psalm 10:4; Romans 1:22)

What has God done to reveal His secret character?

God has been progressively revealed more and more of Himself in saving action:
Exodus 6:2

What is the name of “the LORD”?

The title stands for name “I-am-who-I-am”, which God explained to Moses as:
Exodus 34:6-7

How is God perfectly revealed?

Jesus reveals God, even as the Gospel says:
John 1:18

What does the name “Jesus” mean?

Jesus means “Savior”, even as the angel said:
Matthew 1:21

Who is Jesus?

Jesus is both God and man, as the Gospel begins:
John 1:1 and John 1:14

Where do we learn about Jesus?

By reading both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible:
John 5:39

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a collection of prophetic writings, even as Peter wrote:
2 Peter 1:21

How can you know that the Bible is the word of God?

Jesus promised me:
John 7:17

What role do miracles have in showing that the Bible is the word of God?

They confound the unbelieving and confirm the believing (cf. Jn. 10:37-38; Heb. 2:3-4).

Do you need anything else beyond the Bible in order to know God and live your life?

No, the Bible is sufficient for both faith and practice, as Paul wrote:
2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Actions of God

Where did everything come from?

Everything has been created by God, as the first verse in the Bible says:
Genesis 1:1

How does this truth affect your life?

I give thanks for all that God has made and seek to use everything properly:
1 Timothy 4:4-5

How did God create this universe?

By His word alone:
Hebrews 11:3

How does this truth affect your life now?

I trust in God's word and not in material causes, as Jesus told Satan:
Matthew 4:4

How long did it take God to create this universe?

God created everything in one literal week:
Exodus 20:8-11

Is man the product of a long chain of evolution from animals?

No. Jesus believed the Genesis record, even as He said:
Matthew 19:4-6

How is man unique among God's creation on earth?

Man is made in God's image, and so should act like God over the earth:
Genesis 1:26

How does this truth affect your life?

No matter how bad or how unnoticed, every person has some dignity:
Genesis 9:6

Can you give me an example of this?

Yes. Abortion is wrong.

If creation is so good, where did bad things come from?

Sin alone is the cause of bad things, as the apostle taught us:
Romans 5:12

Did this sin come from God?

No. Sin comes from man's heart:
James 1:13-15

Then did God make the first man defective?

No. The origin of evil is a mystery of man's free will.
Ecclesiastes 7:29

How does Adam's sin affect you?

In some mysterious way, we sinned in Adam and bear his guilt, just as God told Moses:
Exodus 20:4-6

When Adam's sons multiplied, what did we learn about our hearts?

We learned that unless we are born again, nothing good enters our hearts:
Genesis 6:5

After destroying the world with a flood, how did God curb the wickedness of men?

God first instituted human government:
Genesis 9:6

Then he created the nations to keep wicked men from working together:
Genesis 11:6-7

How did God determine to bless these nations?

God chose to bless all the nations through the Seed of one man named Abraham:
Genesis 12:1-3

What does the example of Abraham teach us?

A wicked man becomes right with God by faith and not by works:
Genesis 15:6 (cf. Romans 4:3-5)

How do you as Gentiles become an heir to Abraham's promise of blessing?

Only by faith, and not by becoming Jewish through circumcision:
Galatians 3:7 (cf. Romans 4:10-12)

What is faith in God?

Faith in God is the heart's confidence that God and His word are true.

What is the opposite of faith?

Pride in oneself, even as the prophet said:
Habakkuk 2:4

How do I receive this faith?

In the same way as Abraham:
Romans 10:17

What do the lives of Ishmael and Isaac teach us?

We cannot believe unless we are first born of the Spirit:
Galatians 4:28-29

Is this still true today?

Yes.
John 1:12-13

What do the lives of Jacob and Esau teach us?

Ultimately the secret election and calling of God determines who believes and is blessed:
Romans 9:7b and 9:13 (cf. Romans 9:11-13)

Is God then unfair?

No. This action is in accordance with His name:
Exodus 33:19

Does your participation in Abraham's blessing by faith ultimately depend on our freewill?

No. My salvation is ultimately caused by God's mercy on me, as it is written:
Romans 9:16

How should you respond to this mystery?

I should not break my neck in trying to peek around God's back.
Instead, I should busy myself with adding virtues to my faith, as God commands me:
2 Peter 1:10

What do the lives of Joseph and his brothers teach us?

God accomplishes His purposes through even the free actions of evil men:
Lamentations 3:37-38

How is God not an evildoer when He acts by means of wicked men?

The motives are different, even as Joseph told his brothers:
Genesis 50:20

What comfort do you derive from God's wondrous authority?

As my Father, I know that nothing can separate me from His love, as Paul said:
Romans 8:28

What did God command the people of Israel from Mount Sinai?

Exodus 20:1-17

What is Jesus' summary of this Law?

Matthew 22:37-39

Can anyone keep this Law and so become right with God?

Absolutely not. The Law actually increases our sinning:
Romans 3:20

What if someone claims to have kept the Ten Commandments?

He lies. Jesus taught us that murder and adultery are sins of the heart, not just the hands:
Matthew 5:22 and Matthew 5:28

Why then did God give this Law of Moses?

The Law leads men to Christ:
Galatians 3:24

Who is this Christ?

He is the "anointed" king and priest, whom God promised to His father David:
Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 110:4

When did this Christ come to fulfill these promises?

He came in the fullness of time, even as Jesus taught:
Mark 1:14-15

What does "the kingdom of God" mean?

The reign of God through David's greater Son.

What does it mean to "repent"?

To change one's fundamental mindset.

What does "gospel" mean?

Good news.

How did Jesus demonstrate the nearness of the kingdom of God?

By His teaching and His actions, even as Matthew summarized His work:
Matthew 9:35

Did the Jews repent and believe the gospel?

No. They were judged by God, even as the apostle John explained their behavior:
John 12:39-40

Did any of the Jews repent and believe the gospel?

Yes. God gave faith to a remnant of Jews led by Peter:
Matthew 16:15-17

Did this remnant follow Jesus to the end?

No; even as Jesus told them:
Matthew 26:31

Did this unbelief and stumbling frustrate God's purpose for the kingdom of God?

No. Jesus never intended to become king and priest before His death, even as He said:
Mark 10:45 (John 1:29)

Why did Jesus become a ransom to God?

Because no one obeyed perfectly, Jesus had to set His people free from the Law's curse:
Galatians 3:10,13-14

When did the kingdom of God begin?

When God raised His Son from the dead and gave Him authority over everything:
Matthew 28:18

How did this kingdom affect Jesus' followers?

Jesus' reign gave them the right to speak anywhere on earth, as Jesus commanded them:
Matthew 28:19-20

Why are we baptized in "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"?

Because believing in the Trinity is necessary for being a Christian.

What is the Trinity?

The one *being* God subsists in three *Persons*. This is a holy mystery.

What will occur after this mission is fulfilled?

The Jews will be saved:
Romans 11:25-26a

How did Jesus equip His followers to fulfill their mission?

Jesus gave them power by His Holy Spirit:
Acts 1:8

What was the result of this empowering?

Jesus built His church through them, even as He had promised:
Matthew 16:18-19

What did the apostles command people to do?

The same as Jesus did, to repent and believe:
Acts 2:38

How were people added to the local church?

Through believer baptism, as it is written:
Acts 2:41

What does “baptized” mean?

Immersed under water.

Does joining a church save an individual?

No. Only believing does, even as it is written:
Ephesians 2:8-9

What are the main activities of the church?

Acts 2:42

Why did the church regularly break bread?

To remember Jesus, even as He had commanded them:
1 Corinthians 11:23-26

What is Jesus doing now?

Jesus is ruling all things for the good of His church, to fulfill God’s promise:
Ephesians 1:22 (cf. Romans 8:28; Revelation 2:23)

What benefit do you receive from Jesus’ eternal priesthood?

Because Jesus is a priest forever,
Hebrews 7:25

What benefit do you receive from Jesus’ eternal reign?

Jesus will save me from all my enemies, even death itself:
1 Corinthians 15:25-26

Will Jesus always sit in heaven?

No. He will come to earth again, even as He promised:
John 14:2-3 (cf. Acts 1:11)

How will this occur?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

What will become of the unbelievers at that time?
 They will experience never-ending torment in hell:
 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 (cf. John 5:28-29)

In contrast to eternal destruction, what is eternal life?
 John 17:3

Can you summarize the gospel?
 Yes.
 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

What is the authority for the message?
 The Scriptures.

What is the confirmation of the message?
 The tomb and the eyewitnesses.

Can you summarize our response to the gospel?
 Romans 10:9-10

The Commands of God

A. Personal Assurance

What is the chief basis for any believer's hope in heaven?
 The love and faithfulness of Jesus Christ:
 John 6:40

What are the chief marks of genuine believers?
 The traits given by Jesus in the Beatitudes:
 Matthew 5:3-10

How does James summarize these traits?
 He calls them "wisdom", as it is written:
 James 3:17

What should you do if you lack these qualities?
 I should first ask God in faith, as it is written:
 James 1:5

Then I should learn the Bible, as Paul told Timothy:
 2 Timothy 3:15

How will God start to work in a person's life?
 Proverbs 1:7

What does this fear of God produce?

Fearing God gives me a hatred of pride and wrongdoing, as Proverbs says:
Proverbs 8:13

What else does fearing God produce?

Fearing God makes me tender to His voice, as Ecclesiastes states:
Ecclesiastes 12:13

What are the two fundamental commandments of God?

1 John 3:23

Why does John call Jesus' commandment of love both "old" and "new" (1 John 2:7-8)?

The standard for "love your neighbor" is no longer just self-love, but Jesus' love for me:
1 John 3:16 (cf. John 15:12)

Will love automatically follow faith in your life?

No. God expects me to to pursue love in faith:
2 Peter 1:5-7

What will this process produce in your life?

Hope, even as the apostle promised:
2 Peter 1:10-11

Why do faith and love produce hope?

Persevering faith and love are signs of the Spirit's work in me:
Romans 8:13-14

So how do you know you will enter the kingdom of God?

Mature love will confirm that I am indeed born of God:
1 John 4:18

B. Human Society

Who established hierarchy in society?

God did:
Romans 13:1

What is your duty then?

To fulfill my station by living in submission, and not rebellion (cf. 1 Peter 2:13a,17).

Does this hierarchy apply to all cultures?

Yes. Our parents received this in the Garden (Matt. 19:4-6) or after the Flood (Gen. 9:6).

Do human authorities have unlimited authority over you?

No. I obey them only "in the Lord", even as Peter told his rulers:
Acts 5:29 (cf. Matthew 5:18-19; 12:6-7; 23:23)

What is God's will for wives?

To beautify myself with quiet submission:
Colossians 3:18 (cf. Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:3-4)

What is God's will for husbands?

To imitate Christ by loving my wife:
Colossians 3:19 (cf. Ephesians 5:25; 1 Peter 3:7)

Do married couples have any right to divorce?

No. Jesus bases His prohibition on creation:
Matthew 19:8-9

What is God's will for children?

To obey my parents when young and honor my parents for life:
Ephesians 6:1 (cf. Matthew 19:5; Colossians 3:20)
Exodus 20:12 (cf. 1 Timothy 5:3-4)

What is God's will for fathers?

To make his children students of Christ:
Ephesians 6:4 (cf. Colossians 3:21)

What does it indicate if you neglect your family duties?

I am not a believer, just as Paul warned regarding the care of widowed mothers:
1 Timothy 5:8

What is God's will for employees?

Work for their boss as for Christ:
Colossians 3:22

What is God's will for employers?

Fair treatment under Christ:
Colossians 4:1

What is God's will for citizens?

To give them the honor they are entitled to under God, according to Jesus' wise answer:
Matthew 22:21

C. Church

What is the church?

The church is the spiritual "assembly" of born again believers, as the apostle taught us:
1 Corinthians 12:13

How does the church grow?

The key to church growth is not programs, but the voice of mature believers, as Paul said:
Ephesians 4:15

How did Jesus equip the church for growth?

He has given the church leaders with different gifts, as Paul said:
Ephesians 4:11-12

What types of officers do you have in your local church?

There are those who rule (“elders”) and those who serve (“deacons”):
Philippians 1:1

Should women be leaders or teachers over men?

No. Arguing from creation, Paul forbids this for all cultures and time:
1 Timothy 2:12-13

What should your church officers do for you?

They should primarily lead by example, just as Paul told the Corinthian church:
1 Corinthians 11:1 (cf. 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 5:2-3)

What should you do for your leaders?

Honor and obey them in the Lord:
Hebrews 13:17 (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

What should be the chief task of the church?

Prayer:
Colossians 4:2

How did Jesus teach us to pray like?

Matthew 6:9-13

How did Jesus teach you to handle a private sin done against you?

Matthew 18:15-17

How should we handle a public sin?

If the sinner refuses to repent, he should be excluded:
1 Corinthians 5:12-13

When is this judging sinful?

Only if we are hypocrites ourselves, as Jesus warned:
Matthew 7:1

Is it possible for a good thing to become an evil thing?

Yes. When I act against conscience or cause someone else to act against conscience:
Romans 14:14-15

How should we handle these differences?

We must act in faith (to give thanks) and love (to edify our brother):
Romans 14:22-23

What is the chief rule of conduct between brothers?

1 Peter 4:8 (cf. Romans 13:8-10)

Appendix Three

The Significance of Fundamentalism in the Doctrinal Development of the Universal Church

American Protestantism changed due to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s. Before the controversy, Protestant denominations often worked together. At times, they cooperated well, as in the united efforts of the Second Great Awakening. At other times, they cooperated poorly, as in the sectarian and sectional divisions before the Civil War. Overall, whether cooperating well or poorly, these denominations considered themselves to be united in core doctrine—in the Trinity and the Incarnation, in the final and sufficient authority of the Bible, and in the need for personal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

This unity was challenged when more and more German-trained theologians and preachers returned to America, armed with theological liberalism and claiming that the essence of Christianity did not include doctrine at all. By the twentieth century, the internal theological differences became so severe that most of the great Protestant denominations split. Because liberals often retained the denominational “furniture” of missions and education, traditional believers were forced to build new institutions from scratch, thereby creating a conglomerate eventually known as “evangelicalism.” Among the traditional believers were many *fundamentalists*, leaders who were willing to fight for the faith within the press and within denominational meetings. In time, this legacy of fighting became a movement in its own right, which separated from the so-called “new evangelicals” of the 1950s and formed an isolated church culture known as “fundamentalism.”

This article explores the significance of fundamentalism within the Christian tradition as a whole. Specifically, *what does fundamentalism contribute to the doctrinal development of the universal church?* To some theologians, the very idea of fundamentalism may seem opposed to any concept of doctrinal development; to others, the movement of fundamentalism itself may seem opposed to any concept of a universal church. Therefore, before proposing an answer to my question, let me first explain some premises pertaining to what I mean by a Christian tradition and how I hope to ascertain some of the significance of fundamentalism in particular. In doing so, let us first examine the very practical and biblical concept of *humble pride*.¹

Humble Pride and the Christian Tradition

As Christians, we are quite familiar with denominational labels, but how proper are they? Is it right to identify another Christian as “Lutheran” or “Wesleyan,” when such labels are absent from the Bible and carry the name of mere men? Going further, is it right to identify another Christian as “Evangelical” or “Fundamentalist,” when such labels can give the impression that somehow, we are not all on the same team? In other words, do labels do more harm than good?

Labels come from movements, and movements come from men; therefore, the question of labels is inextricably tied to the role of influential men in the Christian tradition. *How should*

¹ The following chapter presents the substance of a lecture I was asked to give on humility and love in pastoral leadership with respect to the history of fundamentalism. The lecture was given on 6 March 2007 in Simi Valley, California to a gathering of friends within fundamentalism. Because the gathering involved pastors actively overseeing fundamentalist churches, the lecture included both counsel and exhortation along with information. I have chosen to retain that brotherly feel by writing this chapter in the first and second person.

we feel towards these men that God used so mightily? If we are proud of them, are we thereby diminishing our worship of God? If we forget them, are we displaying our ingratitude? Even more, if we are ashamed of them, are we indicating a secret desire to start our own movement, to make a name for ourselves? We must have some attitude towards these men, especially those of our own denomination. What should our attitude be?

Thankfully, as in all matters of Christian spirituality, the apostles have supplied the principles we need. In correcting the unhealthy pride of the Corinthians, Paul left us the following three principles for the role of humble pride in maintaining the Christian tradition.

First, we should eschew all self-labels, but not necessarily all labels. In some sense, labels are unavoidable. The early Christians were called “Christians” presumably by outsiders, perhaps in much the same way that early adherents to believer-baptism in England were called “Anabaptists” or “Baptists” (cf. Acts 11:26). To the extent that such labels speak the truth, especially a theological truth, we should accept them without shame or a fuss. Peter counseled, “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:16).² For our discussion here, the pertinent question is: How do we internally and verbally label ourselves? That is our *self-label*.

The Corinthians were a divided church with many self-labels. Some were saying, “I am of Paul,” while others were claiming Apollos or Peter or even Christ, interestingly enough (1 Corinthians 1:12). In response, Paul challenged them, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1:13). There is only one Christ, and there is only one church; therefore, there should be no divisions in the church due to self-labels. After all, it was not a fundamentalist who died for us, nor were we baptized as a Baptist, but as a Christian. We are all Christians, and our boast should be in Christ alone (1:31).

Granted, the situation today varies somewhat from the situation then. For example, as R. C. Sproul once pointed out, our current labels often express substantial theological differences, in contrast to the doctrinal unity of the apostles. If we truly wish to remove all labels and to identify ourselves as simply Christian, then, *in order to be truthful*, we should strive to be better united in doctrine. It may be that some of the divisions in Corinth had stemmed from a misrepresentation of the various apostles’ doctrines, for Paul first told them to be of “the same mind” and “the same judgment,” statements that may refer to doctrine and not strictly to attitude (1:10). Even so, it is the *last* label that warns us that more than doctrine is involved here. *How could it be wrong to say, “I am of Christ”?* Obviously, if I put forth any other name, I deny the fundamental priority of Christ, and open myself up to a possible identification with another man’s sin (see Matthew 23:8-10, 29-31); but what is wrong with claiming Christ?

The problem is not with the words “of Christ,” but with the words “I am.” Instead of saying, “We are of Christ,” the singular pronoun distances other brothers, as if this *ego* has more spirituality than other egos. It is an ironic quirk of church history that groups separating themselves as being merely “Christian” end up becoming a new denomination. The solution to disunity will never be the self-assertion of a new label, even if that label is Christ Himself. We should accept the label that we have already received in the Christian tradition. We should not try to assert that we are *this* or that we are *not that*, in contradistinction to other Christian groups, for in so doing we become the “This” denomination or the “Not-That” denomination. All such self-assertions are foolish. Self-made titles are a quick road to pride (Matthew 23:8-12). In

² Unless otherwise specified, all biblical quotations are either from the Authorized Version or from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

contrast, if we accept the label we currently have, it will grow more and more invisible in time, as long as our good deeds keep pace with the glory of Christ's cause (1 Peter 2:12). Eventually, the label may fade away and be dropped altogether.

Second, we should recognize that all Christian leaders belong to us. In addressing the issue of disunity, Paul urged the Corinthians: "Let no one glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, of life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). In other words, Martin Luther belongs just as much to me as to the Lutherans; John Wesley belongs just as much to me as to the Wesleyans.

According to Paul, recognition of this universal ownership is necessary to counteract the wrongful boasting in men that leads to disunity. Instead of boasting in one man, in obvious rivalry to Christ and in contrast to the recognition of all Christians, we should embrace the entire Body of Christ as our own. Furthermore, instead of boasting in no man, which in essence means that we adhere to ourselves alone in blind pride, we should recognize that Christ gave men to us as gifts, refusing to furnish us with all the grace-gifts we need (Ephesians 4:7ff). In truth, we belong to them, and they belong to us. Unhealthy pride is eradicated through interdependence. It makes so much sense. How can there be a party spirit without exclusive ownership? A Christian teacher is no more the sole possession of one group than a community park is the sole property of one citizen.

In practical terms, preachers should regularly read outside their particular denominational tradition, and then express the greater unity of the church through quotations from that reading.³ Granted, theological differences should be noted; but if the teacher was a Christian, quote him as a brother. Furthermore, in today's context, fundamentalists should reckon evangelical leaders as their own, and evangelicals should reckon fundamentalist leaders as their own. The old should recognize the young, and the young should recognize the old. We are one in Christ, so let us glory in our mutual possession of diverse denominational traditions within the one Christian tradition.

Third, we should also recognize that there is a time to boast in Christian leaders. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul told them, "You have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus" (2 Corinthians 1:14). Paul was their boast, and he wrote to give them opportunity to glory in him in order to "answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart" (5:12). At first, this may appear to contradict Paul's first letter, for he had urged the Corinthians not to boast in men. It is only an appearance. In the first letter, Paul had attacked the personal pride that hid behind the self-labels; here in the second letter, Paul argued for taking pride in true Christian leaders as *symbols of Christ*. To be ashamed of a true Gospel preacher is parallel to being ashamed of the Gospel itself (2 Timothy 1:8; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20). Therefore, when a Christian leader is being attacked for the faith, we should stand with him and own his name, regardless of his denominational label; for in so doing, we boast in Christ Himself (e.g. 2 Timothy 1:16-17). This injunction is especially obligatory towards those who have led us, who have fathered us in the faith, even if we should

³ Habits in reading and quoting are often strong indicators of pride. For example, an absence of quotations may indicate a proud desire to originate ideas, just as Jesus said, "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory" (John 7:18). Even if we quote within a tradition, pride often ignores the father near us to boast in a distant grandfather. Whether due to pride or simply good judgment, American critic Russell Kirk exhibited a similar tendency: "Although Kirk almost always professed to honor his ancestors, he rarely professed honoring the generation immediately preceding his own" (Bradley J. Birzer, *Russell Kirk: American Conservative* [Lexington: University Press for Kentucky, 2015], 51).

now disagree with them on certain particulars (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:15).

This boasting is the *humble pride* God favors. It is pride, because we are boasting in Christ through unashamedly identifying with His servants. It is humble, because we are not boasting in ourselves nor in our denomination's leaders alone, but in all the servants of Christ and in Christ Himself, who alone gave them to us. With these three principles in mind, what does humble pride imply for those among us who are heirs of fundamentalism?

Ascertaining the Significance of Fundamentalism

The concept of humble pride helps us to ascertain the significance of fundamentalism within the Christian tradition. In particular, the three principles of humble pride give us the following guiding principles.

First, we should concentrate on the doctrine of fundamentalism more than the name or the movement of fundamentalism.⁴ The name “fundamentalism” is ultimately inconsequential and so is the movement, for we are already Christians and Jesus has guaranteed that our true movement—the universal church—will succeed despite the gates of hell (Matt 16:18). If we are to reform Christianity at all, it must be done *incognito*, not starting a movement with a new name, because Jesus told us to do our good deeds in secret (Matt 6:1). Consequently, the only thing left for us to do is to ascertain the *meaning* of fundamentalism as a concrete reality within the history of the church. If that meaning has validity, then it is valid for all Christians and should be adopted by all, regardless of whether they presently carry the name “Fundamentalist” or not. In a sense, this is similar to the baptistic groups, who hold to believer baptism by immersion but without the name “Baptist.” If our aim is strictly to obey Christ, then we will focus on a doctrine or a practice regardless of its name.

All Christians should know what fundamentalism is and why it arose, for controversies arise in the history of the church for her maturity. Ever since God has a people, He has been training them through various circumstances to realize the truth about His character. For instance, in the wilderness, God purposely afflicted His people with hunger and fed them with manna in order that they might know, “Man does not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD” (Deut 8:3). Similarly, in the New Testament, the circumcision controversy established the legitimacy of Gentile and Jew within the church once and for all time. Through His ministers, Christ was training His church. Although we no longer have apostles giving us an infallible interpretation of current events, we do have their example. I believe that Christ is still training His church through controversies to grasp more of the already-revealed faith and to show who is truly approved of Him (1 Cor. 11:19; cf. 1 Jn 2:19). Christ will sustain this training until the church is mature and united in “the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:11-13). This, I believe, is true doctrinal development.

This form of doctrinal development does not involve an expansion of the faith, of what we must believe. According to the New Testament, the faith has been “once for all [time] delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The Bible stands complete as our only infallible, sufficient, and final rule of faith and practice. The Bible does not change. Even so, our understanding of the

⁴ A similar point was made before a symposium at Beeson Divinity School by Kevin Bauder, president of Central Seminary in Plymouth, Minnesota: “The term *fundamentalism* does not merely denote the movements, or even the movement as a whole. Fundamentalism is not primarily a social phenomenon, but an *idea*” (Kevin T. Bauder, “What’s That You Smell? A Fundamentalist Response to *The Smell of Sawdust*,” in *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail: Evangelical Ecumenism and the Quest for Christian Identity*, ed. Timothy George, Beeson Divinity Series [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004], 58).

Bible does change. In other words, our *creed* is fixed, but our *confession* grows as the church experiences new theological environments. By analogy, just as a believer grows through trials, which provoke him to ask different questions of the Book he already believes, so also the church grows in corporate understanding as she faces new challenges to the faith. The Scripture says with good reason, “Solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14).⁵ Hence it is important for us to consider closely the controversies of the church. When an individual Christian learns something the hard way about what is true and what is right, he feels the importance of never forgetting what he has learned from the unchanging Book. Why should the church act differently? Just as a believer can grow dull and forget (Heb 5:11-12), so can the church. Specifically, why should we rethink the entire doctrine of the Trinity when the Arian controversy taught us so much? Why should we rethink the doctrine of justification when the Reformation did that so well? Similarly now, what are we to learn from the fact that fundamentalism arose in the church during the twentieth century? What does the doctrine of fundamentalism mean to us today?

Second, to understand the doctrine of fundamentalism, we should listen to the early fundamentalists themselves. While this approach may seem obvious, it has not always been done. For example, according to William Bell Riley, co-founder with A. C. Dixon of the interdenominational World’s Christian Fundamentals Association, the secular press often sought to explain fundamentalism without consulting a fundamentalist. In response, he claimed that fundamentalism concerned the Christian creed, the Christian character, and the Christian commission.⁶ According to another group, the Fundamental Fellowship of the Northern Baptist Convention, the “doubt, unbelief, and irreligion” of the day implied that Baptists should “reaffirm their faith in the great fundamentals.”⁷ Similarly, according to the “Call and Manifesto of the Baptist Bible Union of America,” many Baptists were departing from both the rule of the faith (the Bible) and from the faith itself; consequently, the Union’s chief aims were to “contend earnestly” for the Bible as God’s very word and to maintain “the Evangelical Faith, and especially...those essential and clearly [sic] revealed doctrines which, at the present time, are being assailed, questioned or ignored in certain circles.”⁸ According to this document, fundamentalism focused on the authority of Scripture and on what constitutes the essence of

⁵ The continuity between foundational understanding and mature discernment resembles the way that scientist sometimes speak of making progress in a fundamental science. For example, it is reported that chemist G. N. Lewis “felt that a chemistry department should both teach and advance fundamental chemistry” (John Kotz and Keith F. Purcell, *Chemistry and Chemical Reactivity* [Philadelphia: Saunders College Publishing, 1987], 299).

⁶ W. B. Riley, “What Is Fundamentalism?” *The Christian Fundamentalist*, July 1927. Riley’s coordination of creed and conduct is interesting in light of some fundamentalist’s concern today to maintain both orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Ten years earlier, when Riley was promoting the idea of an interdenominational confederacy, he also stressed that adherence to the “infallible Book” as the ultimate standard will demand both a correct creed and correct conduct. In his opinion, “The heresy of modern times is no more in theological thinking than it is in individual living!” (William B. Riley, *The Menace of Modernism* [New York: Christian Alliance Publishing, 1917]).

For these citations and for many in this article, I am indebted to the facsimiles supplied by Dr. Kevin Bauder in his course on the History of Fundamentalism, given during a summer module in 1997 at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

⁷ This statement comes from the preamble to the Goodchild Confession, submitted by Frank Goodchild at the Des Moines, Iowa pre-convention meeting in 1921 (see William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. [Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969], 383).

⁸ Regarding Scripture, the Union’s first aim explicitly states, “To ‘contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints,’ and the presentation of united witness to the Bible as not only containing and conveying, but as being in itself the Word of GOD” (The Baptist Bible Union of America, “Call and Manifesto of the Baptist Bible Union of America”). Although I do not know the specific date of publication for this document, the Union convened for the first time on 10 May 1923 in Kansas City, Missouri (see David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* [Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986], 209-10). Lumpkin reports that the “Call and Manifesto” was issued in 1921 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 384).

Christianity. The echo of Jude 3 (“contend earnestly”) shows that the proposed militancy was rooted in Scripture itself.

Third, our aim should not be to return to some primitive or pristine Christianity of the past, but to grow as a church into greater maturity. In doctrine and practice, we should develop the Christian tradition through building on the right insights of our forefathers, while discarding their mistakes. In other words, let us strive for dynamic purity and healthy maturity in the ongoing spirit of reformation. Specifically, let us honor our elders by listening to them before speaking, even as Elihu refrained from comment until his elders proved unfit (Job 32:4ff). Let us imitate them where they imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:10; cf. Heb 13:7); but because “great men are not always wise” (Job 32:9), let us not imitate them slavishly or hold them as the ideal. Even if the fundamentalists had been perfect, they would have been flawless in a previous state of doctrinal development—that is, in a state falling short of today’s need of development. By analogy, a healthy child is still a child. They can be example to an adult of health, but the adult should strive for more development in thought and experience. In following this model, we are free to both honor our elders and to correct their mistakes.

In summary, we aim to grow in our own development through a careful consideration of the doctrinal meaning of the historic fundamentalist movement. We desire to use the apostles as our interpretive key, often letting the fundamentalists speak for themselves. We will also allow room for the critics of fundamentalism to speak, especially those critics who arose from within fundamentalism and still either claimed to be a fundamentalist or saw fundamentalism as an ally. These friendly critics may have already spotted some of the meaning we are seeking, so their comments are worth considering. Moreover, when we remember that humble pride recognizes that all Christian leaders belong to us in Christ, we want to learn from them all. To understand both fundamentalist and critic, let us consider briefly the beginnings of interdenominational fundamentalism before evaluating the meaning of the movement as a whole.

The Beginnings of American Fundamentalism and One Practical Lesson

Every child has a father, and organized American fundamentalism is no exception. In the summer of 1918, *William Bell Riley*, pastor of First Baptist Church in Minneapolis, met with other prophecy-conference leaders in the summer home of R. A. Torrey, dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, to discuss future plans. The group had just completed a successful “prophetic conference” in Philadelphia, where attendance far exceeded expectations; but instead of planning for another one in Philadelphia, Riley convinced the group to host a conference on the defense of the fundamentals of the faith. Such a confederation had been his desire for at least a year, as seen in his book *The Menace of Modernism* (1917); surely, he must have been excited to see this vision get some traction.⁹

During May 25 to June 1, 1919, over six thousand attended the first ever World Conference on the Fundamentals of the Faith. Riley gave the keynote address, comparing this nascent movement to the Protestant Reformation. Citing anti-modernism as a cause for the conference, Riley then mentioned the goal of “a new fellowship, a fellowship that is bringing into closer and closer union men from the various denominations who hold to the certain deity of

⁹ For the messages given at the prophecy conference, see *Light on Prophecy: A Coordinated, Constructive Teaching Being the Proceedings and Addresses at the Philadelphia Prophetic Conference, May 28-30, 1918* (New York: The Christian Herald Bible House, 1918).

Jesus Christ and to the utter authority of the Bible.”¹⁰

As a result of the conference, the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) emerged, representing the first “organizational structure capable of correlating the fundamentalist opposition to modernism.”¹¹ Riley served as president. One of his main goals was “to bring under the WCFA umbrella the just-emerging interdenominational network of fundamentalist Bible schools and publications.”¹² To correlate the work of these separate institutions, five standing committees were created:

- (1) On Bible Schools – to standardize curriculum and creeds
- (2) On Colleges and Seminaries – to create a list of doctrinally safe schools
- (3) On Religious Magazines and Periodicals – to promote WCFA and in turn receive articles and reports
- (4) On Missions – to withdraw support from unfaithful boards and to give it to approved boards
- (5) On Conferences – to bring the concerns to other cities

Of the five, only the fifth produced substantial results. Chaired by Riley, the committee “launched an extraordinarily ambitious cross-continent tour,” with speakers staggered out in a series, going on ahead without waiting for the others to finish speaking. The results were amazing. In six weeks, the tour reached eighteen cities, and “transformed the concerns of Riley and other conservative Protestant leaders into a national crusade.”¹³ Equally amazing, however, was how quickly this initial organized faded in importance. By 1922, the WCFA was already in decline. Commenting on this decline, Riley’s biographer noted, “Although Riley’s speaking tours and related activities heightened antimodernist sentiment, they were of minimal value in banding fundamentalists together in a tightly structured organization.”¹⁴ *What went wrong?*

Chief among the factors was a stiff independent spirit among the fundamentalist leaders. In the words of Riley’s second wife Marie, “Some personal incompatibilities, and a constant tendency towards independent leadership combined to retard the progress of what was intended to be an ‘all-inclusive fellowship’ in the Association itself.”¹⁵ This independent spirit seemed to include Riley himself, who probably chose unwisely to lead the surge that he had birthed. Yes, he himself lamented, and perhaps rightly so, that “some fundamentalists are laws unto themselves, and [that] even those who have no such disposition are not as yet in the close coordinated fellowship that would accomplish the best and most to be desired results;” but the fact also remains that he himself kept the coordinated effort under his supervision.¹⁶

¹⁰ *God Hath Spoken: Twenty-Five Addresses Delivered at the World Conference on Christian Fundamentals, May 25– June 1, 1919* (Philadelphia: Bible Conference Committee, 1918); reprint, *Fundamentalism in American Religion, 1880 - 1950*, ed. Joel E. Carpenter (NY: Garland Publishing, 1988), 45.

¹¹ Willard B. Gatewood, Jr. *Controversy in the Twenties: Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Evolution* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 18.

¹² William Vance Trollinger, Jr. *God’s Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 39.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

If there is one practical lesson to learn from the beginnings of American fundamentalism, it may be this lesson: *revival comes through brotherly unity* (cf. Ps 133). Disunity grieves the Spirit and dooms all effort to the resources of the flesh, which cannot succeed in building the temple of God (cf. Eph 4:30; Zech 4:6). Regarding the 1920s, more than one commentator has noted that fundamentalist “internecine battles, especially the power struggles among ambitious spokesmen, help to explain their organizational difficulties as well as their failure to achieve some of their stated goals.”¹⁷ As a result, the WCFA in particular failed to provide “an institutional alternative to the modernist-tainted denominations,” and eventually shifted its goal to antievolutionism, which was in essence almost an admission of defeat, though not as public a defeat as the ill-crafted Scopes Trial it later sponsored.¹⁸

While the WCFA represents the fate of organized, interdenominational fundamentalism, a similar story could be told for intradenominational groups within the Northern Baptist Convention or the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America. This brief recounting of the WCFA is helpful as background, but our focus here will be not less on practical lessons from the story of fundamentalism, but more on doctrinal lessons from the concept of fundamentalism as interpreted by the fundamentalists themselves and by their friendly critics.

Learning from the Fundamentalists

At first glance, the very concept of fundamentalism seems opposed to any idea of doctrinal development. After all, how can a movement focused on the fundamentals of the faith contribute to a developed understanding of the faith? As an example of this apparent disparity, consider the truncated confessions of fundamentalism. Compared to the classic confessions of post-Reformation Protestantism, these fundamentalist confessions appear as regress, not as progress. For example, in light of the historic grandeur of the Westminster Confession of Faith, used for centuries as the basis for the ordination in the Presbyterian church, the subsequent publication in 1910 of *five* fundamentals necessary for ordination appears unnecessary, even desperate. Even when allowance is made for loose subscription, earlier centuries did not need a truncated list of *five* fundamentals. Why was such a list necessary? Was such a list an admission of failure, a last-ditch attempt at retaining at least *some* standards? In light of this disparity and due to other differences as well, historian D. G. Hart contends that J. Gresham Machen, the famous apologist of the fundamentalist era, was not a fundamentalist, but a confessional Presbyterian.¹⁹ This distinction may be helpful. By merely comparing the size of Protestant confessions to fundamentalist statements, it would seem that doctrinal development occurs only within confessional Christianity. Fundamentalism appears to have been an emergency measure—not a development, but a tourniquet.

In response, it is interesting that early fundamentalist leaders recognized this truncation but saw it in a different light. Regarding a recent list of nine fundamentals, Riley wrote:

¹⁷ Gatewood, *Controversy in the Twenties*, 17-18; cf. Trollinger, *God's Empire*, 41-42.

¹⁸ Trollinger, *God's Empire*, 43, 44.

¹⁹ According to Hart, Machen should be known as a “conservative intellectual” and a “Presbyterian traditionalist” as well as a man to whom fundamentalists were attracted (D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in America* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994], ix; cf. *ibid.*, 68). As proof, Hart reports, “Unlike fundamentalist and modernist Protestants, Machen fully rejected the hope of building a Christian civilization in America and so found himself on the same side with other secular intellectuals in many of the cultural conflicts of the 1920s,” such as Prohibition (*ibid.*, x). Interestingly, Hart gave his Ph.D. dissertation on Machen the title “Doctor Fundamentalis.”

Fundamentalism undertakes to reaffirm the greater Christian doctrines. Mark this phrase, “the greater Christian doctrines.” It does not attempt to set forth every Christian doctrine. It has never known the elaboration that characterizes the great denominational confessions. But it did lay them side by side, and, out of their extensive statements, elect nine points upon which to rest its claims to Christian attention.²⁰

According to this interpretation, fundamentalism is a reaffirmation of the core of the historic confessions, rather than a replacement or a truncation. As proof, at least as it concerns Riley himself, when some fundamentalists within the Northern Baptist Convention sought to instate the traditional New Hampshire Confession of Faith, the Minneapolis pastor not only fully backed the measure, but allegedly wept when he read the confession at the 1922 pre-convention meeting in Indianapolis.²¹ Similar to Riley, the Baptist Bible Union asserted that its doctrinal basis was not “a Comprehensive Creed,” but rather “merely a statement of such truths as, in the present circumstances, it is important that Baptists should rehearse and emphasize, in view of their historic witness and of the flagrant ambiguities and omissions of fundamental and vital truths in, the DOCTRINAL BASES of the Modernists.”²² Again we see a reaffirmation of the essentials, rather than a comprehensive confession of faith. While the historic confessions defined the various Protestant denominations, the fundamentals of the faith defined Christianity itself.

Why was it necessary to reaffirm the essentials in the modern era? Answering this question leads right into the meaning of fundamentalism as a movement. According to William Jennings Bryan, three-time presidential candidate and a leading Presbyterian layman, the essentials needed reaffirmation because of clerical dishonesty:

A congregation has a right to *assume* that a preacher, if an honest man, would not accept a position [sic] unless his views were in agreement with the views of the church. Some preachers have tried to avoid a statement of their views by declaring non-essential the doctrines they reject,—hence it was necessary for the General Assembly to assert that these doctrines are *essential* as well as true.²³

Please note two things. First, the question of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy pertained not simply to what was *true*, but to what was *essential* to Christianity. The confessions told what the various Protestant denominations held as true, but not everything was essential to Christianity. The very idea of denominationalism reflects the fact that Protestants recognized each other as Christians under different names or “denominations.” As stated earlier, the long tradition of lax subscription among the Presbyterians shows that some doctrines were regarded as peripheral. Because the Westminster Confession did not differentiate between peripheral and essential doctrines, it was now necessary to confess essential doctrines, in light of the attack of the modernists on the core of the faith. Second, even though honesty was certainly a factor—and Machen brought this out forcefully in the conclusion to his classic book *Christianity and*

²⁰ Riley, “What Is Fundamentalism?” Similarly, the Fundamental Fellowship, feeling the need “for Baptists publicly to reaffirm their faith in the great fundamentals,” desired “to restate the foundation doctrines of our faith in [a] brief and simple confession which is but a reaffirmation of the substance of the historic Philadelphia and New Hampshire Confessions of faith” (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 383).

²¹ Kevin T. Bauder, “Conflict: 1920-1932” (classroom lecture notes, 524—*History of Fundamentalism*, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, MN, Summer 1997).

²² Baptist Bible Union of America, “Call and Manifesto.”

²³ William Jennings Bryan, “The Fundamentals” (*The Forum*, July 1923).

Liberalism—the dishonesty had hermeneutical roots that made it difficult to eradicate. It was simply not enough to quote an essential doctrine and then check whether a potential minister agreed with it or not. In the Auburn Affirmation of 1923, many moderate Presbyterian ministers affirmed the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, but then called them “theories.”²⁴ According to Machen, doctrines in the Westminster Confession was being affirmed as true in the seventeenth century but as inadequate for expressing the modern faith.²⁵ How could these modernists justify such behavior? The answer is hermeneutics.

The modernists added one step between the biblical texts and understanding those texts—a step called “interpretation.” For example, in 1883 liberal Congregationalist Theodore T. Munger compared the new theology to the old theology in terms of hermeneutics:

In brief, [the New Theology] reads the Scriptures as literature, yet with no derogation from their inspiration. It refuses to regard the writers as automatic organs of the Spirit,—“moved,” indeed, but not carried outside of themselves nor separated from their own ways and conceptions. It is thus that it regards the Bible as a *living* book; it is warm and vital with the life of a divine humanity, and thus it speaks to humanity. But as it was written by men in other ages and of other habits of speech, it needs to be interpreted: it is necessary to get back into the mind of the writer in order to get at the inspiration of his utterance; for before there is an inspired writing there is an inspired man, through whom only its meaning can be reached. This is a very different process from picking out texts here and there, and putting them together to form a doctrine....The Old Theology reads the Scriptures with a lexicon, and weighs words as men weigh iron; it sees no medium between the form of words and their first or preconceived meaning.²⁶

Thus, between the form of the words and their meaning stands a necessary process of interpretation. Similarly, Shailer Mathews, a liberal professor at the University of Chicago and (in many ways) the father of the Northern Baptist Convention, founded in 1907, asserted:

...ecclesiastical authority must be replaced by some intelligible method by which one would be able to distinguish between the form and the content of an inherited religious group belief, and then determine as to the truth of its content by such criteria as were applicable.²⁷

²⁴ The Auburn Affirmation began as a private document of an Auburn Theological Seminary professor named Robert Hastings Nichols, who was attempting to defend doctrinal liberty within evangelical bounds. The Affirmation’s final form resulted from the word of some New York pastors, who published it under the name, “An Affirmation Designed to Safeguard the Unity and Liberty of the Presbyterian Church of the United States” (see Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991], 77ff).

²⁵ J. Gresham Machen, *God Transcendent*, ed. Ned Barnard Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 163-65.

²⁶ Theodore T. Munger, “The New Theology,” in *Issues in American Protestantism: A Documentary History from the Puritans to the Present*, ed. Robert L. Ferm (New York: Anchor Books, 1969; reprint, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1983), 228. Similar to Munger, though not as radical, stands the Congregationalist Edwards Amasa Park, whom orthodox Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge took to task for presupposing a theology of feeling that is somehow independent of the words that express a theology of intellect (see Charles Hodge, “Theology of the Intellect and of the Feelings,” in *The Princeton Theology 1812-1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield*, ed. Mark A. Noll, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001], 185-207).

²⁷ Shailer Mathews, “Theology as Group Belief,” in Vergilius Ferm, *Contemporary American Theology: Theological Autobiographies*, Second Series (1933), 173, as quoted in Ferm, *Issues*, 223.

Mathews also testified that the “distinction...between the words of the Bible and the teaching of the Bible” located in “experience” is “the heart of the Modernist’s position regarding the Bible.”²⁸ In contrast to this practice, Machen confessed his reluctance even to use the word “interpretation,” for, as he told the inaugural class at Westminster Theological Seminary, that word “has been the custodian of more nonsense, perhaps, than any other word in the English language to-day. Every generation, it is said, must interpret the bible and the creeds of the church in its own way ‘to suit the modern mind.’”²⁹ In his own writings, Machen often stressed what he called the “facts.”

In contrast to the modernists, the fundamentalists took the Bible literally. In other words, while recognizing that the Bible contains figurative speech that must be interpreted, fundamentalists contended that the bulk of the Bible contains plain speech that essentially speaks for itself.³⁰ Riley strongly maintained:

Fundamentalism insists upon the plain intent of Scripture speech. The members of this movement have no sympathy whatever for that weasel method of sucking the meaning out of words and then presenting the empty shells with an attempt to palm them off, as giving the Christian faith a new and another interpretation.³¹

He later quoted the *New York Nation* in noting that liberalism “pretends to preach the higher criticism by interpreting the sacred writing as esoteric fables.”³² These observations are enlightening, for they reveal that some leaders in the fundamentalism era grasped that the problem involved not simply ethical honesty, but also hermeneutical sophistry. Amidst all the fundamentalists’ assertions about inerrancy, we should not lose sight of the main thing of fundamentalism, namely the reaffirmation of the fundamentals as essential to Christianity. Modernists were not merely denying the peripheral scientific and historical details of the Bible; they were denying its core under the guise of interpretation through a false division of form and meaning.

This hermeneutical bifurcation of form and meaning has persisted to this day, but in a different form. Whereas modernism placed the meaning in the mind of the author, postmodernism places it in the mind of the reader. Both modernism and postmodernism agree, however, that the meaning cannot be in the words themselves. In contrast, fundamentalism takes words literally. In doing so, fundamentalism adds a necessary element to evangelicalism’s emphasis on the experience of the new birth. By uniting Christians around an experience more than doctrine, evangelicalism inadvertently opens the door to liberalism, which, in the famous

²⁸ Shailer Mathews, “Modernism and the Bible,” in Ferm, *Issues*, 284. This quotation is taken from Mathew’s book, *The Faith of Modernism* (1924), which he published as a response to Machen’s *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923).

²⁹ J. Gresham Machen, *Education, Christianity, and the State*, ed. John W. Robbins (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1987), 147-48.

³⁰ Some of this tendency to take the Bible literally is related to the hermeneutics of dispensationalism. For example, Lewis Sperry Chafer explained, “While some prophecy is couched in symbolic language, those portions which trace the forward movements of the kingdom in the earth are largely free from problems presented by such symbolism, and that body of truth appears in language and terms the meaning of which cannot reasonably be questioned.” Therefore, he explained, “In tracing these passages scarcely a comment is necessary if the statements are taken in their plain and obvious meaning” (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *The Kingdom in History and Prophecy* [New York: Revell, 1915], 15).

For the relationship between fundamentalism and dispensationalism, see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 43-71.

³¹ Riley, “What Is Fundamentalism?”

³² *Ibid.*

formula of Adolph von Harnack, was all about “Life, not doctrine.” Machen saw this too and urged revivalist Christians not to knock down the foundation—the Bible—which brought them to that height of experience.³³ In reality, we need both doctrine and experience, both fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Without fundamentalism, I believe evangelicalism will continue to suffer from its current identity crisis and will remain vulnerable to fresh advances of liberalism.³⁴

Learning from Critics

Today fundamentalism is known more for the practice of separation than for a particular approach to hermeneutics. In fact, separation is the one item now upon which all fundamentalists agree.³⁵ In the beginning, fundamentalism as a movement lacked this association with separatism—not due to any lack of willingness (except in a few cases), but due to the fact that separation had rarely yet occurred.³⁶ In the midst of the controversy, it was yet to be determined who would win and control some of the large Protestant denominations. Granted, separation of liberalism from Christianity was, as Machen so aptly argued, “the crying need of the hour,”³⁷ but in the early 1920s it was still unclear whether this separation would occur by putting out the liberals or by the fundamentalists themselves coming out. Therefore, fundamentalists have always favored separation, but they were not yet identified by this practice nor were they in agreement on how or when to apply this practice.

While not yet known for separation, early fundamentalism was known for a certain attitude. Taking its cues from the language of Jude 3 (“contend earnestly”), early fundamentalism was defined both by its affirmation of the fundamentals of the faith and by its

³³ J. Gresham Machen, “History and Faith,” in Ferm, *Issues*, 275. This article was originally published in *The Princeton Theological Review* for July 1915.

³⁴ The crisis over evangelical identity and evangelicalism has been discussed on many occasions by many individuals. For a fundamentalist viewpoint, which largely agrees with the paragraph above, see Bauder, “Fundamentalist Response,” 64-65.

In contrast to this solution, some Protestants would argue that confessionalism is the answer, that is, a return to the historic confessions of the Protestant denominations. In the 1990s, the Alliance for Confessing Evangelicals argued for such a position. More recently, Carl Trueman has warned that without a return to confessional Protestantism, evangelicalism will likely succumb to the cultural forces represented by homosexuality (see *the Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* [Chicago: Moody, 2011]). For a discussion led by a confessional Protestant, see Michael Horton, “The Battles over the Label ‘Evangelical,’” *Modern Reformation*, March/April 2001, 15-21, and the other contributors to that issue of the magazine.

While I respect the historic confessions in particular and denominationalism in general, an overemphasis on confessions risks turning them into authoritative creeds and isolating denominations that should be working together in evangelical unity. Perhaps if the creeds were rewritten with core doctrines differentiated from secondary doctrines, denominations could more easily work together and contend for the fundamentals of the faith.

³⁵ At the Beeson symposium, Kevin Bauder asserted, “Separation is the heart of fundamentalism. Whatever else they may quarrel about, all fundamentalists agree that no Christian fellowship or union is possible with those who deny the gospel by denying fundamental doctrines” (Bauder, “Fundamentalist Response,” 63; see also George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 3, 73).

³⁶ One example of a reticence towards separation is J. C. Masee, pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle in Brooklyn and the first president of the Fundamental Fellowship within the Northern Baptist Convention. At the inaugural meeting held in Buffalo, New York during May 1920, Masee announced, “We will not go [into the convention] with swords sharpened to conflict, but with spirits prayerfully called to unity” (Beale, *Pursuit*, 193). Masee later resigned from the Fellowship in 1925 (*ibid.*, 227).

³⁷ In *Christianity and Liberalism*, the argument for ecclesiastical separation forms the climax of the book and is based squarely on the definition of Christianity itself: “One thing is perfectly plain—whether or not liberals are Christians, it is at any rate perfectly clear that liberalism is not Christianity. And that being the case, it is highly undesirable that liberalism and Christianity should continue to be propagated within the bounds of the same organization. A separation between the two parties is the crying need of the hour” (J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* [New York: Macmillan, 1923; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 160). According to Bauder, Machen “captured the core of the fundamentalist idea: the belief that Christian unity and fellowship are possible only with other Christians” (Bauder, “Fundamentalist Response,” 62-63).

attitude of militancy in defending the faith. In fact, the very name “fundamentalist” was coined by a Baptist editor identifying with the new movement. In the summer of 1920, editor Curtis Lee Laws proposed, “We suggest that those who still cling to the great fundamentals and who mean to do battle royal for the fundamentals shall be called ‘Fundamentalists.’”³⁸ Consequently, it is possible (as Bauder and others do) to define fundamentalism as a species of the genus evangelicalism, in that a fundamentalist not only affirms the evangel (as an evangelical traditionally would) but affirms the evangel with a militant attitude.³⁹ Fundamentalist historian George Dollar went one step further when he asserted, “Historic fundamentalism is the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes.”⁴⁰ Linguistically, militancy has become such a defining element to fundamentalism that in secular usage, any militant religious group is now identified as a “fundamentalist.”⁴¹ For our purposes, it is important to note that from the beginning of the movement fundamentalists defined themselves in terms of militancy.

Separation became a hallmark of fundamentalism in the second generation of the movement, after a coterie of young fundamentalists defected and sought to win both the culture and the old denominations as “new evangelicals.” These young fundamentalists, mainly scholars, affirmed the fundamentals of the faith, but unlike their elders, they sought to defend the faith with a smile. They also sought to reunite social service with evangelization—a union common to evangelical Protestants throughout the nineteenth century.⁴² When Billy Graham became their national representative and started involving liberal ministers in his crusades, starting with the 1957 Madison Square Garden crusade in New York city, the fundamentalists not only frowned upon his lack of separation, they separated from him! Ever since then, fundamentalism has had two forms of separation: separating from liberals and separating from evangelicals who do not separate from liberals (a practice called “secondary separation”). As a result, two controversies define contemporary fundamentalism: first, in opposition to the modernists, fundamentalists regard certain doctrines as essential to the faith and worthy of militant defense; second, in opposition to the new evangelicals, fundamentalists regard separation as a necessary corollary to the militant defense of the fundamentals of the faith.

Before introducing two friendly critics of fundamentalism, we should remind ourselves of

³⁸ Curtis Lee Laws, “Convention Side-Lights” *Watchman-Examiner*, 1 July 1920, 834.

³⁹ Kevin T. Bauder, “Ecclesiastical Separation: the Questions We Must Ask” (lecture given at the Great Lakes Sunday School Convention, Troy, MI, 11 March 2006; cf. Bauder, “Defining Fundamentalism” [classroom lecture notes, 524—*History of Fundamentalism*, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, MN, Summer 1997]). The language of my paragraph (“affirmations” and “attitude”) owes its origin mainly to Bauder, who pointed out the other sources as well.

⁴⁰ George Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1973), xv. Later, Dollar qualifies his definition, noting that in Canada, the term fundamentalism is “synonymous with orthodox or evangelical and refers to, or includes, any person who rejects the tenets of the Modernists or the Liberals” (*ibid.*, 108). This tendency to fight over all doctrines has become a caricature of fundamentalism (e.g. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity,” *Southern Seminary Magazine*, Summer 2006, 3).

⁴¹ Marsden notes that by extension the term “fundamentalist” is now applied to any militant religious group. He calls fundamentalists “militant evangelicals” (a species within a genus) and claims, “. . . fundamentalists are a subtype of evangelical and militancy is crucial to their outlook.” He also identifies World War I as a primary contributing factor to this attitude initially (*Understanding Fundamentalism*, 1, 50ff).

It is important to stress that this connotation of militancy is not essential to the denotation of the word “fundamental,” which refers to that which is necessarily basic for a body of thought or a group of people. It should also be noted that Islamic fundamentalism differs radically from Christian fundamentalism in its outward expression (a literal sword versus a spiritual sword) and yet these forms of religion resemble each other in taking the founder and original tenets of their respective religions seriously and literally in the face of modernity and its relativism.

⁴² For one statement of the agenda of the new evangelicals, see Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

the danger of the self-labels “militant” and “separatist.” Both of these labels are negative. If a fundamentalist were asked, “Are you a good fundamentalist?” he would now have to defend himself by pointing out his militancy and his separatism. By analogy, this resembles asking a parent, “Are you a good parent?” with the response, “Oh, yes, I spank my children regularly.” While spanking is necessary for good parenting, a better answer would be, “Yes, I love my children, which involves training them through both education and corrective discipline” (cf. Eph 6:4; Prov 3:11-12; 13:24).⁴³ In contrast, Jesus said that Christians will be identified by something positive—something they have and do—by their love (John 13:35).

With the militant and separatist traits of fundamentalism in mind, let us now consider the two friendly critics: Carl F. H. Henry and Francis A. Schaeffer. Both men were troubled in the postwar era by what fundamentalism lacked, especially in positive traits. They differed, however, regarding what they perceived was lacking.

Carl F. H. Henry and Social Activism

Carl F. H. Henry may have been the most significant Baptist theologian in America during the twentieth century. As the inaugural editor of *Christianity Today* (1956) and the author of a monumental work on biblical revelation, the multivolume *God, Revelation and Authority*, Henry set a standard for evangelical scholarship that is still influencing men today, including R. Albert Mohler and young men trained by him, such as Russell Moore and Gregory Alan Thornbury. As a young scholar, Henry published a movement-defining critique of fundamentalism entitled *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. In it, Henry shares his “uneasy conscience” over fundamentalism’s cultural retreat and lack of social activism: “Fundamentalism is the modern priest and Levite, by-passing suffering humanity.”⁴⁴ Instead of constructively applying the “genius of our position...to those problems which press most for solution in a social way,” fundamentalism was more concerned “to parade secondary aspects of our position as necessary frontal phases of our view.”⁴⁵ As a result, Henry feared that fundamentalism would soon “become a cult or a despised sect,” thereby losing hope for “another world hearing for the Gospel” and missing the opportunity to “lift our jaded culture to a level that gives significance again to human life.”⁴⁶ If to some of his contemporaries this sounded like a rebirth of the social gospel with its postmillennial hopes of a Christian culture, Henry reasoned:

The futility of trying to win all does not mean that it is futile to win some areas of influence and life. An evangelical world program has its timeliest opportunity at the present hour.⁴⁷

As in personal evangelism, where the prospect of hard-hearted rejection is cheered with the

⁴³ By further analogy, while it may be necessary to amputate a limb in order to save a body, amputation should not define health (cf. 2 Tim 2:16-17). Similarly, if six apostles had refused to shake the dust off their feet when rejected, should the other six have called themselves the Dust-Shakers (cf. Matt 10:14)? In general, should we define ourselves by comparing ourselves with others (cf. 2 Cor 10:12)? Or by what we do not touch?

⁴⁴ Henry, *Uneasy Conscience*, 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xv-xvii.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

hopeful reminder of a sovereign God potentially doing a miracle through His living word, so now the church should address the hardened West with all the hopeful expectancy that God may yet again grant national repentance. We should remember that the word of Jesus still raises the dead when and where He wishes!

In one sense, Henry was saying nothing new. His call for “united effort” echoed the evangelical movement of the early republic, which also saw Christianity as the only hope for a stable culture.⁴⁸ Moreover, his vision of a reasoned Christianity gaining a cultural hearing strongly resembles the personal manifesto of Machen as a young man.⁴⁹ However, where Machen focused on the universal church and stressed intellectual answers to the modernist objections, Henry’s little book focused on the culture and called for intellectual answers to social problems. This focus was shared by Henry’s pastor, Harold J. Ockenga, who wrote in the preface to Henry’s book, “The church needs a progressive Fundamentalism with a social message.” Again, if this sounded like the social gospel, Ockenga saw such fears as a false dilemma, because “the higher morality of redemption does not invalidate moral consistency.”⁵⁰

Three aspects of Henry’s agenda concern me. First, it is very cerebral, as if philosophical thought will win the day. Second, I am cautious about the inclusion of humanitarian effort within the church’s mission. Not only has this proven to be a recipe for apostasy in America, as seen in the history of nineteenth-century evangelicalism, it is also contrary to the example of Jesus, who came to preach the gospel and then die for our sins (Mark 1:38; 10:45).⁵¹ True, Jesus healed the sick, but He healed the sick because He felt compassion for them (e.g. Mark 1:41; 8:2), not because healing was His goal in visiting village upon village. In a sense, preaching was Jesus’ day-to-day mission and healing was His significant interruption. Third, I am also concerned about using humanitarian effort as a means for the gospel. True, our good works should shine and invite men and women to faith in Christ (e.g. Matt 5:16; 1 Pet 2:12ff), but we need to also do our works in secret, just as Jesus often charged others not to tell what He had done (e.g. Mark 7:36). Truly, I share Henry’s vision for a theological solution to social problems and for Christians to maintain organized benevolent ministries in addition to isolated acts of compassion; however, I remain hesitant about making this part of the church’s mission *as the church*. Like Jesus Himself, the church has been called to preach and suffer for the gospel.

Francis Schaeffer and a Crisis of Faith

Regardless of the merits or demerits of Henry’s agenda for the church, the image of fundamentalism as a modern priest bypassing suffering humanity, if *true*, points to a lack of compassion within Bible-believing Christianity in America. This lack of spiritual vitality in the 1940s was noticed by other commentators as well, including the evangelical mystic and preacher A. W. Tozer, who bluntly claimed, “We have reached a low place of sand and burnt wire

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xviii. For evangelicalism in the early republic, see Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960); Fred J. Hood, *Reformed America: The Middle and Southern States, 1783-1837* (University: The University of Alabama Press, 1980).

⁴⁹ J. Gresham Machen, “Christianity and Culture,” *The Princeton Theological Review* 11 (1913): 1-15.

⁵⁰ Henry, *Uneasy Conscience*, xx-xxi.

⁵¹ For the connection between early nineteenth-century evangelicalism and late nineteenth-century advocates of the social gospel, see Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957; reprint, with new afterword, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

grass.”⁵² The results, he claimed, were widespread and apparent:

Shallow lives, hollow religious philosophies, the preponderance of the element of fun in gospel meetings, the glorification of men, trust in religious externalities, quasi-religious fellowships, salesmanship methods, the mistaking of dynamic personality for the power of the Spirit. These and such as these are the symptoms of an evil disease, a deep and serious malady of the soul.⁵³

As a cure, Tozer called believers back to their inner Holy of Holies, where the presence of God was pursued with such passion that possessing nothing but Him was considered blessed and the veils of the hyphenated-self, such as self-esteem and self-interest, were renounced and removed.

Francis Schaeffer shared with Henry and Tozer their estimation of American Christianity in the late 1940s, but with one difference—he condemned himself as well. Backed with a stellar fundamentalist pedigree, especially as a student under Machen and then as the first to receive ordination in the newly-formed Bible Presbyterian Church, Schaeffer served three churches in the United States as pastor, lasting ten years, before going to Switzerland as a missionary to children.⁵⁴ There, during the winter months of 1950 and early 1951, Schaeffer experienced a severe crisis of faith, because he did not see spiritual reality in himself or in the spiritual leaders of “the movement.” He later confessed, “I realized that in honesty I had to go back and rethink my whole position. I had to go all the way back to my agnosticism.”⁵⁵ Consequently, he spent many days pondering the faith, as he either walked in the mountains or paced on rainy days in the attic of a nearby barn. Finally, the night began to break and the devotion of poetry filled his heart. Having rethought the entire Christian position, Schaeffer then published his views on spirituality in the *Sunday School Times*—views that he later developed and published in his classic book *True Spirituality*.⁵⁶ As a result of his crisis, Schaeffer often taught on the inseparability of truth and love for true spirituality. Specifically, a Christian should never separate in heart from another Christian, even a disobedient one. The true mark of a Christian is love.⁵⁷ The stress on love and unity stood in sharp contrast to the fundamentalist ideals of militancy and separatism.

Even with his criticism of fundamentalism in his day, Schaeffer did not repudiate his fundamentalist ordination nor sever his ties with his mission agency. In later print, he continued to defend the ideas of fundamentalism, including both the idea of a core of essential doctrines, within which a Christian must remain, as well as the need for Christians to avoid the spiritual adultery of apostasy—a need he recognized, although he lamented the criticism that the early

⁵² A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, Tozer Legacy Edition (reprint, Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1982 [1948])

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵⁴ For the life story of Francis Schaeffer, see the account written by his wife as he was dying of cancer: Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry: The Life and Times of Francis and Edith Schaeffer* (1984). Conspicuously absent from this record is Carl McIntyre, the infamous Presbyterian fundamentalist who fomented the break from Machen’s Orthodox Presbyterian Church and caused later divisions as well in the ACCS.

⁵⁵ Francis A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1971, 2001), xxix. The introduction to this edition, written by Schaeffer’s disciple Jerram Barrs, describes both the spiritual crisis and how it led to the writing of this book.

⁵⁶ See Francis A. Schaeffer, “The Secret of Power and Enjoyment of the Lord,” *The Sunday School Times*, 16 June 1951, 3-4; 23 June 1951, 3-4.

⁵⁷ See Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Mark of a Christian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1970, 2006).

come-outers heaped upon those fundamentalists who stayed within the denominations longer.⁵⁸ In private, Schaeffer warned one individual not to let “cold fundamentalism” lead him to regard liberalism as “less of hell than it is.”⁵⁹ In public, Schaeffer warned the 1966 World Congress on Evangelism, “If we do not make clear by word and practice our position for truth as truth and against false doctrine, we are building a wall between the next generation and the gospel.”⁶⁰ Again, at the 1974 congress on world evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, Schaeffer warned evangelicals:

We must practice the truth we say we say [sic] we maintain. We must practice this truth in the area of religious cooperation where it is costly...If we say that Christianity is truth, yet for any reason, including evangelism, we blur the line between liberal theology and biblical Christianity in the area of religious cooperation, we lose credibility.⁶¹

It has also been reported to me that at this same congress, it was due to Schaeffer’s insistence that inerrancy was included in the Lausanne Covenant; otherwise, he had refused to sign it.⁶² To the end, Schaeffer retained a fundamentalist criticism of evangelicalism, as witnessed by his final book *The Great Evangelical Disaster*.⁶³

Truly, this life is significant and worthy of consideration. It was no accident that Schaeffer went through a spiritual crisis. As confirmed by two or three witnesses, the fundamentalism of the late 1940s was cold and lifeless, perhaps not unlike the church at Smyrna, which Jesus Himself describes as having “a name that you are alive, but you are dead” (Rev 3:1). In large part, fundamentalism itself was the cause behind Schaeffer’s spiritual crisis. Therefore, just as J. Gresham Machen may be the chief proponent of fundamentalism’s core ideas, Francis Schaeffer may be the chief opponent to fundamentalism’s negative spirituality. Jesus raised up both men; and both men belong to us. Let us embrace them both in humble pride.

Please, do not misunderstand me. I praise God for early fundamentalism and its stand against the modernists. False teachers had crept into the church “unnoticed” (Jude 4); therefore, it was right to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all [time] delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). In quoting this famous passage from Jude, early fundamentalists may have missed the fact that Jude did not regard this approach as normal or ideal, but as necessary. Originally, he had set his mind on writing about “our common salvation” (Jude 3), but the presence of false teachers forced him to call for a fight. *Do you see?* The core identity of Christianity is salvation, not militancy, just as the core nature of God is love, not hatred. Even though it is true that God does “hate all workers of iniquity” and will eventually punish them in hell (Ps 5:5; 6:8; Matt 7:23), it would not be right to say, “God is hate.” His fundamental

⁵⁸ See Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church before the Watching World: A Practical Ecclesiology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1971).

⁵⁹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Letters of Francis Schaeffer*, ed. Lane T. Dennis (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1985), 72, as cited in Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2000), 77, n. 1.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, 77.

⁶¹ Reported in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 361-62, as quoted in Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, 50, n. 5.

⁶² It should be noted that Schaeffer apparently did sign the Covenant, even though it did not adopt his ideas on evangelistic cooperation. All these matters need further verification.

⁶³ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1984).

identity is “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). In like fashion, a Christian leader must fight falsehood, but he should be wary of defining himself as a fighter, for as the apostle Paul notes, the “servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition” (2 Tim 2:24-25; cf. 1 Tim 3:3; 4:6).

Certainly, not all fundamentalist leaders assumed a primarily militant identity. Among the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, fundamentalist leader Robert T. Ketcham wrote a manual of spirituality.⁶⁴ Similarly, early fundamentalist leader W. B. Riley continued to stress the need for consistent creed and conduct, even in the face of criticism by fellow fundamentalists for not leaving the Northern Baptist Convention right away. In response to leaders who quoted the apostle, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14), Riley replied:

...the passage in II Cor. 6 cuts in more ways than one. We are not only [not] to be “*unequally yoked together with unbelievers,*” but we are to regard the fact that “*righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness,*” and unfortunately, some of our “Come-Out” movements have been cursed with “*unrighteousness*” in conduct; and fundamentalism, in whose name these “*unrighteous*” courses were conducted, has suffered in consequence.

We are absolutely in line with those who say, “NO COMPROMISE,” but we insist that that should apply at the point of both creed and conduct.⁶⁵

As this testimony shows, fundamentalism was already suffering from a negative reputation in the 1930s. One of Riley’s worse critics was Canadian Baptist T. T. Shields, the first president of the Baptist Bible Union and a preacher formerly known as the “Canadian Spurgeon.” When a youthful Martyn Lloyd-Jones visited with him in the summer of 1932, he found a preacher who would pump himself up to preach on Sunday mornings by reading liberals. As a result, it is not surprising to hear that Shields was “spoiling his ministry by his unceasing diatribes against liberals and Roman Catholics.”⁶⁶ Truly, as Jesus said, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt 12:34).

Beware! A church can easily lose its grip on love through constant militancy. It is very possible for a church to remain doctrinally faithful and yet to lose its previous love for Christians. It is this not what happened at Ephesus? The solution there was not to abandon their hatred and opposition to heresy, which Jesus also hated, but to return to their first love by doing the deeds they did at first. If the church failed to repent, their greatest threat was not from false teachers but from Jesus Himself, who threatened to remove their lampstand (Rev 2:1-7).

Lessons for Doctrinal Development

In humble pride, we thank our Lord Jesus Christ for our forefathers and seek to build upon what they have given to us. In light of the development of Christianity, we must recognize

⁶⁴ Robert T. Ketcham, *God’s Provision for Normal Christian Living* (Chicago: Moody, 1960).

⁶⁵ W. B. Riley, “The Come-Outers,” *The Christian Fundamentalist*, August 1931, 46.

⁶⁶ Bethan Lloyd-Jones, *Memories of Sandfields* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1983), 51. For Lloyd-Jones and Shields, see Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 271ff.

at least three lessons from fundamentalism: one core idea, three unions for defense, and one necessary corollary.

The Core Idea of Fundamentalism

In its very name, fundamentalism carries its core idea: certain doctrines are fundamental to Christianity and must be believed. Consequently, a knowledgeable and resolute denial of any fundamental doctrine disqualifies a man from the status of “Christian” and from heaven—unless he repents and believes. While the church has operated according to this idea for centuries, the church has never had to defend it on a large scale until the modern era.

At least two falsehoods call for a defense of the very idea of having nonnegotiable fundamentals of the faith. On the one hand, an exaggerated liberty of conscience has made disciplining an errant member appear cruel. In 1923, William Jennings Bryan commented on this inordinate emphasis on “freedom of thought”:

As an *individual*, anyone is free to believe anything he likes or to refuse to believe... That is the very essence of freedom of conscience. But freedom of conscience belongs to *individuals* only. No man has a right to substitute his conscience for the conscience of a church or the conscience of a congregation.⁶⁷

On the other hand, an exaggerated change in circumstances has made “truth” into whatever works pragmatically for people in a given era. For example, in 1912, as part of his campaign for the presidency, Woodrow Wilson interpreted the Constitution according to Darwinian principles and called the Declaration of Independence “an eminently practical document... not a theory of government, but a program of action.” As such, it remained irrelevant to modern times, unless the modern generation could “translate it into the questions of our own day.”⁶⁸ Therefore, it is now necessary not only to confess what a church or a Christian believes, but also to assert that some of those beliefs are necessary for Christianity and that truth itself does not change. Pressure from within and without the church will force her to defend this fundamentalist position and to act in accordance with it.

Three Unions for the Defense of Fundamentalism

For most of the twentieth century, the church sought to defend fundamentalism on the basis of inerrancy. This doctrine has often been the first doctrine mentioned in fundamentalist confessions of faith.⁶⁹ Now that postmodernism has come, defense of inerrancy seems less

⁶⁷ William Jennings Bryan, “The Fundamentals,” *The Forum*, July 1923. Later in the century, this exaggerated liberty of conscience became a huge debate among moderates and conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention.

⁶⁸ Ronald J. Pestritto and William J. Atto, eds., *American Progressivism: A Reader* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, Lexington Books, 2008), 51. Although Wilson was correct in asserting that the Declaration of Independence was primarily a practical document (hence, a *declaration* of a fact), its opening paragraphs certainly contained “a theory of government.” For more information of how America changed its view on this occasional document, see Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1997).

⁶⁹ For example, in 1910, the northern Presbyterian General Assembly affirmed as its first fundamental: “It is essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide and move the writers of Holy Scripture as to keep them free from error” (quoted in Bryan, “Fundamentals”). Among the Baptists, article one (“Of the Scriptures”) of the statement of faith published by the Baptist Bible Union explained that inspiration implies the sacred writings were “free from error” (“Articles of Faith Put Forth by the Baptist Bible

relevant, for what is the use of defending the truthfulness of the Bible when even language itself is under attack? As seen earlier, this hermeneutical separation of words and meaning actually lay beneath the modernist position; therefore, fundamentalist at heart was a defense of not only the Bible, but also of taking the Bible literally. To defend this position well, three unions seem necessary.

First, learning and piety should be reunited.⁷⁰ The division of head and heart has a long history within evangelicalism, but it is a dangerous legacy if doctrine and experience are separated. Jesus kept these two together: “The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). By “truth,” Jesus meant knowledge gained through continued adherence to His verbal message (John 8:31). Life comes from the Holy Spirit through doctrine (John 6:63). Therefore, it is very dangerous to seek Christian growth and transformation apart from the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2). Genuine Christian doctrine is “good and profitable to men” towards a life of good deeds (Titus 3:8).

Within Protestant church history, the distinction between heart and head may begin with Martin Luther himself. Based on Hebrews 11:1, Luther defined faith as a feeling of assurance.⁷¹ This definition made its way into the first edition of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but by the second edition, Calvin had begun to classify faith as a form of knowledge—a firm knowledge given by the Spirit through enlightened eyes and the certainty of the heart.⁷² Given this difference in the definition of faith, it seems fitting that liberalism sprang out of Lutheranism and not from Reformed Christianity. In the early 1800s, Friedrich Schleiermacher defined faith as feeling of dependence, largely divorced from doctrine. Later in the century, liberal historian Adolph von Harnack revealed in Luther’s piety as the genuine kernel beneath the husks of dogma.⁷³ Unfortunately, evangelicalism has followed this same bifurcation and has thereby emphasized ecclesiastical unity around the experience of rebirth rather than around a core of doctrine.⁷⁴ Moreover, redefining “believe in Jesus” as “trust Jesus” sounds a lot like the old liberal piety, especially if it is divorced from knowledge of the real, historical Jesus revealed in the inspired words of the Bible. Therefore, Machen was right in calling the church to reunite piety and learning, as well as history and faith.⁷⁵

Union of America,” as cited in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 385). This emphasis on inerrancy continued into new evangelical movement, even becoming the sole doctrine in the initial statement of faith the Evangelical Theological Society.

⁷⁰ Early in the twentieth century, Machen pleaded for the union of “knowledge and piety,” which to him meant the “consecration” of the arts and sciences to “the service of our God” (“Christianity and Culture,” 3, 5).

⁷¹ According to Reformation scholar Marvin Anderson, Luther made his breakthrough discovery in lecturing on Hebrews (1517-18), when he came to Hebrews 11:1 and defined faith as confidence and assurance—an existential entity (Marvin Anderson, “Luther’s Theology of the Cross” [classroom lecture, 84200—*Martin Luther*, Fall 1999]).

⁷² For Calvin’s definition of faith, see *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics, no. 20-21 [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960], 3.2.7, 14. For Calvin’s shift in 1539 from defining faith as “confidence and hope” (following Luther’s *Enchiridion*) to knowledge, see François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Developments of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (reprint of the 1963 translation of the original 1950 edition, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 240-41. It should be noted that due to the nature of supernatural things and the weakness of human ability, Calvin concluded, “The knowledge of faith consists in assurance rather than in comprehension” (Calvin, *Institutes*, trans. 3.2.14).

⁷³ For the views of F. E. D. Schleiermacher, see his book *Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799), as reported in Noll, *Princeton Theology*, 188, n. 6. For the views of Adolf von Harnack, see his *History of Dogma*, 7 vols. 3rd ed., trans. Neil Buchanan (London: Williams & Norgate, 1905). His views on Luther are found in the final volume.

⁷⁴ For example, see the report of Edward J. Carnell in Bauder, “Fundamentalist Response,” 64.

⁷⁵ For Machen’s union of piety and learning, see J. Gresham Machen, “Christianity and Culture,” in *Education, Christianity, and the State*, 45-59. For his union of history and faith, see idem, “History and Faith,” in Ferm, *Issues*, 262-76.

Second, both evangelical and fundamentalist Christians should recognize “the conserving power of the doctrines of grace,” as defined by traditional Reformed doctrine.⁷⁶ Over a century ago, conservative Presbyterians A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield pointed out that similar reasoning about the relationship between God’s sovereignty and human action stands behind both the doctrine of inspiration and the doctrine of providence.⁷⁷ This same reasoning can carry over into the relationship between divine illumination and human comprehension. Supraterrestrial things can only be appreciated through a Supraterrestrial Being—the Holy Spirit—sharing His experience with us (cf. 1 Cor 2:9-16). Thus both modernism’s emphasis on the writer and postmodernism’s emphasis on the reader will find their best answer in the doctrine of concurrence found within the Reformed tradition.⁷⁸

Third, there should be a reunion in form and meaning in all areas of church life, not just in the realm of words. This point may be the greatest potential doctrinal legacy of fundamentalism. For example, take the realm of formal worship. Historian D. G. Hart, the living authority on J. Gresham Machen, points out the similarity between many evangelical worship services and a liberal approach to doctrine. Separating the form and the content in worship, as if anything goes as long as it is presented sincerely, strongly resembles liberalism’s aim at separating the kernel from the husk in doctrine.⁷⁹ The similarity is due to more than coincidence, for both ideas have their roots in Lutheran pietism, which sought initially to have a church within a church, that is, a formless church that was alive within a formal church that was growing devoid of spiritual life. While pietism may lead to short-term renewal, it cannot lead to long-term reformation, which requires the discipline of form. Similarly, just as we are embodied souls, we need both the body and soul of biblical church life. Again, this is also another example of the conserving power of Reformed Christianity with its regulative principles of worship, to offer to God only what He has prescribed.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Tom Nettles, “The Conserving Power of the Doctrines of Grace,” *Founders Journal* (1997?): 20-24.

⁷⁷ Hodge and Warfield wrote, “It is also evident that our conception of revelation and its methods must be conditioned upon our general views of God’s relation to the world, and his methods of influencing the souls of men.” Astutely, they observed, “The *whole* genius of Christianity, *all of its essential and most characteristic doctrines*, presuppose the immanence of God in all his creatures, and his concurrence with them in all of their spontaneous activities” (Archibald A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, *Inspiration* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, n. d.], 9, italics added).

⁷⁸ Examples of interdenominational coalitions of Reformed evangelicals include the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (ACE), the Fellowship of Independent Reformed Evangelicals (FIRE), the Gospel Coalition, and Together for the Gospel (T4G).

⁷⁹ According to Hart, in seeking to find the lowest common denominator for the sake of union, evangelicalism has often avoided discussions about polity, creed, and liturgy. Consequently, evangelicalism has lacked the “discipline and rigor of the church,” which explains why “evangelicalism has deconstructed.” Evangelicalism failed because it was built upon “a fundamentally liberal maneuver” of trying “to separate the kernel from the husk of the Bible.” Therefore, Hart advises, “For mere Christianity to survive, wise and constant diligence needs to be directed to a complete reflection on biblical truth as possible. In other words, to preserve the minimum, you need to defend the maximum” (D. G. Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004], 30-31).

As I mention below, this all-or-nothing feel should be resisted. Just because a minimalistic approach to Christian unity is insufficient for preserving Christianity, a maximalistic approach tends towards the common criticism about contemporary fundamentalism, that all doctrines are alike defended as fundamental. Somehow, discernment should differentiate between that which is essential and that where differences are allowable (traditionally called “adiaphora”). In Romans 14, after describing what is nonnegotiable in doctrine and in morals, Paul then urges Christians to accept our differences—even when there is a true, right answer (such as all foods are clean)—as long as we hold these truths in faith towards God and love towards the brothers.

⁸⁰ Writing to the emperor upon the request of other Reformed leaders, John Calvin once described the worship of God and the gospel of Christ as comprehending “the whole substance of Christianity,” whereas the sacraments and government of the church were “instituted for the preservation of these branches of doctrine.” As an illustration, Calvin pointed to the union of body and soul: “Rule in the Church, the pastoral office, and all other matters of order resemble the body, whereas the doctrine which regulates the due worship of God, and points out the ground on which the consciences of men must rest their hope of salvation, is the soul which animates the body” (*The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, trans. Henry Beveridge [reprint, Audubon, NJ: Old Paths Publications, 1994 [1544, 1844], 4-5).

While I stand in debt to Hart's analysis of evangelicalism in terms of polity, creed, and liturgy, I disagree with the conclusion that resisting pietism implies a return to traditional forms of Christianity, whether high-church formalism, which Hart implies, or low-church legalism, which Hart does not imply. Regarding the latter, an attention to form does not mean a slavish adherence to manmade rules on externals, such as the length of hair or hem—rules that often lack in practice the connection between form and meaning. Such rules have become the stereotype of fundamentalism today, which is unfortunate, because these things could be done in an atmosphere of individual freedom as an expression of truths regarding gender or modesty. Regarding the former, I am in agreement with the Baptists that a simplified service without scripted prayers can still have a meaningful form, in which *how* things are done expresses fittingly *what* things are said from the word of God through the leading of the Spirit. According to 1 Corinthians 14, there is no dichotomy between the leading of the Spirit and formal rules of order. Nothing in Scripture would necessitate the use of a traditional liturgy nor would anything forbid its use. We have freedom in Christ to use it, improve it, or improvise—all within the parameter of form expressing meaning.⁸¹

As far as application, the need for adequate forms to express meaning helps to explain two debates within evangelicalism—contemporary worship music and the role of women in the church. Both debates concern the legitimacy of separating the form from the content, as if the form has no bearing on the overall message presented. For example, why should we fuss about the form of music if the lyrics are biblical? Likewise, who cares if a woman or a man is preaching as long as the doctrine is sound? In both instances, we are tempted to forget that the medium (the form) is a metaphor (to borrow Neil Postman's twist on Marshall McLuhan's maxim on forms of communication).⁸² The medium of communication limits what the speaker may say and also inclines the hearer to receive the message in a certain way. In some instances, the message is limited by the form; in other instances, the message is distorted by the form. For example, can any static, visible, dead image represent the dynamic, invisible, living God? Can a medium of levity convey a message of gravity? If all of life is a joke, would we not be tempted to regard the warning to escape as lightly as the sons-in-law of Lot? In all honesty, I do believe that the pietistic root must be uprooted before we will resolve both the doctrinal crisis of words or the practical crises of music in worship or women in church leadership.

A word of caution is in order. In our zeal to reclaim form, we may become preoccupied with lesser things and inadvertently drift towards formalism or legalism. Let us remember that it is possible to have "a form of godliness" without "its power" (2 Tim 3:5). If Jews could be called "uncircumcised in the heart" (Jer 9:26), then certainly it is possible for Baptists to be "unbaptized" in heart. Conversely, in our zeal for major things, we may unnecessarily and wrongly neglect minor things, contrary to Jesus' command and evaluation (Matt 23:23; 5:19). After all, the Great Commission instructs us to observe and teach "all things" commanded by Jesus (Matt 28:20). Therefore, may God give us the wisdom and the courage to major on the majors and to minor on the minors! His wisdom is often felt in the liberty that a right form yields for worship and obedience.

⁸¹ Interestingly, just as the Methodists represent well the pietistic option in American church history, with their lack of requirements in baptismal form, the Baptists represent the Reformed (or Puritan) option with their emphasis on believer baptism by immersion. Together these two denominations epitomize two poles within contemporary evangelicalism—those who disregard form (except as a tool of manipulation) and those who value form.

⁸² Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 13.

Therefore, the long-term defense of the idea of fundamentalism will require the union of head and heart (along with faith and history), the union of Christian leaders on the doctrines of divine grace, and the union of form and meaning (that is, the rejection of pietism).

One Necessary Corollary to Fundamentalism

Because fundamentalism means that certain doctrines are fundamental to the faith and that the knowledgeable and resolute denial of any one of these doctrines forfeits the right to be considered a Christian, there are clear lines between who could be reckoned a Christian and who should not, especially with regard to Christian teachers. As a necessary corollary to fundamentalism, but *not as a defining identity*, it will be necessary for us to separate from false teachers—hopefully by forcing them out of our Christian fellowships through anathemas, before they gain a following; but if that fails, by coming out ourselves and forming new Christian fellowships. If we are tempted to ignore this corollary, we should take a hard look at Jehoshaphat’s foolish alliance with wicked King Ahab and see what happened to Jehoshaphat’s household. God forbid that the same things should happen to Christ’s churches! We should also consider the sorry state of Billy Graham’s confession of faith after decades of cooperating with liberal and of speaking softly about them in public.⁸³ Anyone who has heard and loved how fiery and truly strong Graham was in his early crusades must lament what happened to him in later years. Therefore, while truth and love must be our defining preoccupations in Christ, militancy and separation will at times be necessary (as in Jude)—not in order to be a card-carrying member of some fundamentalist movement, but in obedience to the commandments of Christ (2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Gal 1:8-9; 2 Tim 2:14-21; 2 John 10-11; Jude 3-4).

Conclusion

In some regards, much of Christianity in America resembles a two-lane highway that has a fading double-yellow line. On the left are conservative evangelicals, who are outspokenly against the worldliness and doctrinal deviations leading many evangelicals into the leftist, liberal ditch of the Sadducees. On the right are many “liberal” fundamentalists, who are disturbed by the oppressive militancy of overzealous fundamentalists who are preoccupied with artificial rules on music and with keeping their women in subjection—leaders heading for the Pharisaical ditch on the right. The right lane has emphasized truth and the left lane has emphasized love. Perhaps in Schaeffer’s day, it was necessary to leave the country in order to propose a union of truth and love; today, however, conservative evangelicals and “liberal” fundamentalists are erasing the yellow line in order to unite. In doing so, here are some proposals to consider.

First, let each group recognize the fundamental necessity of truth. Perhaps this recognition will mean a readjustment to the definition of faith or to the understanding of how regeneration occurs.⁸⁴ Perhaps it will mean a revision of the historic confessions of faith, separating the essential fundamental doctrines from the denominational distinctives, thereby allowing the fundamental doctrinal basis for the *evangelical unity* of true Christians to be more easily seen. At any rate, consider the exciting prospect, that the basic idea of fundamentalism—

⁸³ On Graham’s decline in orthodoxy, see Iain H. Murray, *The Unresolved Controversy: Unity with Non-Evangelicals* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2001).

⁸⁴ In John’s gospel, believing God (i.e. His word) is inseparable from believing in His Son (John 6:68-69; cf. John 3:36 and 5:24). Moreover, it is “the truth” that sets a man free in regeneration (John 8:32; cf. 3:36).

that certain doctrines are necessary to the faith and unchanging—could become the great catalyst for interdenominational unity, because we all hold these truths in common. Let us regain the wonder that we all believe these supernatural doctrines!

Second, once the groundwork of truth is laid, let each group also recognize the matching necessity of love. For example, if a brother is experiencing a fundamentalist-modernist controversy within his church or denomination, let us pray for him and seek to encourage him. If a brother is preaching Christ out of party spirit, let us recognize the difference between matter and motive, and rejoice that Christ is preached (Phil 1:18).⁸⁵ If a brother preaches Christ outside of our particular denominational arena, let us resist the temptation to sidestep our differences and instead seek unity through speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:11-16). One former liberal called this form of discussion “irenics” in contrast to “polemics.”⁸⁶ If we cannot cooperate with a brother who refuses to separate from apostasy, then let us do so with grief, regarding him not as an enemy but as a brother (cf. 2 Thess 3:15). Let us recognize that beyond our love for the Lord Himself, the emphasis of the New Testament epistles is *one another*, not the culture—whether winning the culture (evangelicalism) or shunning the culture (fundamentalism). We can only have one preoccupation, so let us hit the mark. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” and “These things I command you, that you love one another” (John 14:15; 15:17). The solution begins locally, prayerfully, with one phone call, one lunch appointment.

Finally, regarding evangelicalism’s current identity crisis, it was reported to me that Harold Lindsell, in his follow-up to *Battle for the Bible*, apparently suggested a return to the name “fundamentalist”—at least that term had meaning.⁸⁷ If Lindsell’s opinion was plausible in the 1970s, long after the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s, it may still be plausible today. Given our culture’s attack on absolute truth and even on language itself, evangelicals may need to accept that dreaded *nomen* “fundamentalist” as the reproach of Christ in our generation. While we may want to accept it as an adjective only—“I am a *fundamentalist* Christian”—keeping in mind our earlier discussion about self-labels, there may be no better term for communicating to our culture our firm stand on truth and its significance. Can you think of a better word to confess our faith?

As historical precedence for a return to earlier terminology, consider the wisdom of Athanasius, defender of the deity of Christ in the fourth century. In company with other bishops, Athanasius succeeded in uniting two orthodox parties who agreed in substance but differed in terminology about the Trinity. After confirming the agreement, he called them back to the language of the Nicene Creed, issued forty years earlier—to the dreaded *homoousios* term of the creed that the Arians hated.⁸⁸ Could the Lord Jesus be calling His church back to the original terminology of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy? Is there a better term than “fundamentalism” for expressing the idea of changeless doctrine necessary for genuine Christianity and for making genuine Christians? Indeed, fundamentalism may need the

⁸⁵ The application of this verse came home to me while listening to John C. Whitcomb give a lecture series at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in the late 1990s. From Paul’s example, I infer that it is better to be in a fellowship with a proud, party-spirited fundamentalist preacher who has the right message than in a fellowship with a kindly evangelical who fails to preach the message faithfully. See John C. Whitcomb, *Biblical Fundamentalism* (Orange Park, FL: The Christian Workman Institute, n. d.), 10.

⁸⁶ Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity...What? Agenda for Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Academic Books, 1990), 172-73.

⁸⁷ Harold Lindsell, *The Bible in the Balance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979). (I apologize for the lack of reference. I seem to recall having followed up on this report, but I cannot find any notes for it now.)

⁸⁸ Athanasius, *Tomus ad Antiochenos*, trans. Archibald Robertson, in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, ed. Archibald Robertson, American ed. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, vol. 4 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1891; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 484-85.

evangelical emphasis on love, but evangelicalism needs fundamentalism's emphasis on essential doctrine—the *fundamentals* of the faith. In slowly forgetting these fundamentals, evangelicalism is slowly forgetting what it means to be a Christian. Loss of memory leads to loss of identity.

In short, we should adopt the idea of fundamentalism as the Christian position, along with its corollary of separating from false teachers. We should continue to identify ourselves as “Christians,” but we should not shrink from being labeled by the world as “fundamentalists.” Because we take the Bible literally and seriously, because we hold gospel truth to be necessary for salvation and essential for Christianity, let us not be ashamed of the label “fundamentalist,” but in that label glorify God, whose truth has set us free. In doing so, let us hold in humble pride all past and current leaders in the gospel—happy to claim them as our own in Christ, and eager to imitate them whenever they imitated Christ in truth and love. May it be, Lord! Amen.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ In advocating this union of truth and love, I owe a personal debt to several individuals: to Dean Johnson, a former district superintendent in the Evangelical Free Church of America, who in a private conversation in the early 1990s pointed out this concept to me from John 1:14; to my parents, whose criticism God used to open my eyes to the wisdom of Schaeffer's spirituality; and to my friend Joel Tetreau, who showed me this union of truth and love from 2 John, and who graciously invited me to speak at the Friends Conference in California. (Thanks, Joel!) Most of all, we all owe an infinite gratitude to the One who dispenses wisdom “liberally and without reproach” (Jas 1:5) and to His Son, in whom “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3), to whom belongs glory and dominion, both now and forevermore. Amen.