

The Doctrine of Separation

We are nearing the end of our study concerning our doctrinal statement and a possible upgrade to it.

One doctrine that is very important to the philosophy of our church is the doctrine of Separation. We've covered the history in our recent study of Baptist History, but I think it is important to review a bit again here.

The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy

1. The controversy erupted among several denominations in the 1920s, including among the Northern Baptist Convention
2. The issue of the controversy was the heretical, Bible denying views of many seminary professors and missionaries.
3. In 1920, a group of Baptists met before the annual Northern Baptist Convention meeting to plan strategy and to begin attempts to oust liberals from the convention. This group was "the Fundamental Fellowship."
4. After many battles, which the Fundamentalist Baptists repeatedly lost in the Northern Convention, the Fundamentalists finally gave up and pulled out of the Convention.
 - a. An early group to pull out was the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) – 1923
 - b. The later group to pull out was the Conservative Baptist Association (CBA) – 1947

The New Evangelical Compromise

1. Beginning in the 1940s, a group of young leaders, uncomfortable with the separatism of the strong fundamentalists, made decisions to reopen the doors to cooperation with liberalism.
2. The effect of this change began to manifest itself in weakening doctrinal views of inspiration and inerrancy as well as increasing latitude in lifestyle choices.
3. The compromise led to a split in the CBA, with the "hard core" pulling away from the "soft core"
 - a. The hard core created its own mission board (now Baptist World Mission)
 - b. The CBA refused to recognize the new board
 - c. The hard core pulled out of the CBA fellowship, continuing to work together in the Fundamentalist Fellowship, now known as Foundations Baptist Fellowship International (FBFI)
4. Our church began as a church plant by pastor Don Johnson with the philosophy of BWM and the FBFI guiding his ministerial philosophy
 - a. After we began, pastor Don and Debby received appointment as BWM missionaries to aide our growth with the support of other churches
 - b. Eventually, the leadership of the FBFI asked pastor Don to serve on the board of the FBFI where he continues as editor of the FBFI blog, Proclaim & Defend

That is a brief summary of our background. The purpose is to show the historical connection of our church with the fundamentalist movement.

Our Statement	FBFI Statement	BWM Statement	Toronto Baptist Seminary
<p>Separation</p> <p>We believe that the Christian is obligated to stand separate and unspotted from the world, false teachers, and disobedient brethren for the purpose of maintaining the purity of Christ’s testimony, the edification and protection of fellow-believers, and the correction and help of those brethren who are in error.</p> <p>2 Corinthians 6.14-18, 1 John 2.15-17, Galatians 1.8-9, 2 John 9-11, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Timothy 3.1-5.</p>	<p>Section 8. Separation: We believe in the biblical doctrine of separation which encompasses. (1) separation of the local church from all affiliation and fellowship with false teachers who deny the verities of the Christian faith, and from those who are content to walk in fellowship with unbelief and inclusivism (from Christian individuals or organizations that affiliate with those who deny the faith or are content to walk with those who compromise the doctrine and practice of Scripture (2 Thess 3.6; 1 Cor 5.1-11; 1 Tim 1.18-20; Mt 18.15-17; (2) separation of the individual believer from all worldly practices (philosophies, goals, lifestyles, amusements, habits, and practices) that dishonor the Savior; and, (3) separation of church and state (2 Tim 3.1-5; Rm 12.1-2; 14.13; 1 Jn 2.15-17; 2 Jn 9-11; Mt 22.21).</p>	<p>7. Separation:</p> <p>We believe in the biblical doctrine of separation which encompasses: (1) separation of the local church from all affiliation and fellowship with those who deny the verities of the Christian faith and from those who are content to walk in fellowship with unbelief and inclusivism; (2) separation of the individual believer from all worldly practices dishonoring the Savior; and (3) separation of church and state (2 Tim. 3:1-5; Rom. 12:1-2; 14:13; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11; Matt. 22:21).</p>	<p><i>The Toronto Seminary is an evangelical institution. Its stand is on the other side of the New Evangelical compromise, so it has no separate statement concerning separation. However, it does have this statement in its doctrine of the church:</i></p> <p>(h) that it is scriptural for true churches to co-operate with each other in the furtherance of the gospel and in contending for the faith, and that every church is the sole and only judge of the measure and methods of its co-operation;</p>

Observations:

1. Our own statement is good, but both the FBFI are more explicit in defining what constitutes “disobedient brethren” and what separation from the world means.
2. Both the FBFI and BWM statements mention “separation of church and state,” but we would put that category under the Doctrine of The Church and Government as discussed last week.
3. The Toronto statement reflects evangelical priorities, but it is interesting to note that it recognizes that the local church must make judgements with respect to “the measure ... of its co-operation.” Evangelicals understand the concept of Biblical separation, but are unwilling to apply the principles completely.

Suggestion:

We believe that Christians are obligated to stand separate and unspotted from the world, false teachers, and disobedient brethren. Separation from the world means the separation of the individual believer from all worldly practices dishonoring the Saviour. Separation from false teachers means the separation of the local church from any connection with those who deny the verities of the Christian faith. Separation from disobedient brethren means separation of the local church from cooperation with true believers who nevertheless compromise the doctrine and practice of Scripture by walking in fellowship with unbelief and inclusivism. Our purpose is to maintain the purity of Christ’s testimony, the edification and protection of fellow-believers, and the correction and help of those brethren who are in error.

Matthew 18.15-17; Romans 12.1-2; 1 Corinthians 5.1-11; 2 Corinthians 6.14-18, Galatians 1.8-9, 2 Thessalonians 3.6; 1 Timothy 1.18-20; 2 Timothy 3.1-5; 1 John 2.15-17, 2 John 9-11