

**Psalm 66***Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*

Sing, all ye nations to the Lord,  
Sing with a joyful noise;  
With melody of sound record  
His honors and your joys.

Say to the Pow'r that shakes the sky,  
"How terrible art Thou!  
Sinners before Thy presence fly,  
Or at Thy feet they bow."

O bless our God, and never cease,  
Ye saints, fulfil His praise;  
He keeps our life, maintains our peace,  
And guides our doubtful ways.

Lord, thou hast prov'd our suff'ring souls  
To make our graces shine;  
So silver bears the burning coals,  
The metal to refine.

Thro' wat'ry deeps, and fiery ways  
We march at Thy command;  
Led to possess the promis'd place  
By Thine unerring hand.

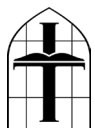
**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***A Response to Criticisms: The Gospel***Kevin T. Bauder*

The American Council of Christian Churches published its whitepaper entitled *The Biblical Doctrine of Separation* in 2014. This work was motivated by a desire to restate the biblical principles behind ecclesiastical separation in view of a shift that was taking place within fundamentalism. Some younger fundamentalists were abandoning these ideals for involvement in conservative evangelical organizations such as The Gospel Coalition and Together for the Gospel. Others were attempting to keep one foot in both camps. The ACCC rightly perceived a difference between itself and conservative evangelicalism, and it sought to articulate that difference.

This whitepaper is a helpful contribution that wrestles with the question of drawing boundaries in ecclesiastical fellowship and separation. It is not what opponents of fundamentalism might expect. It is not angry, it is not a diatribe, and it does not misrepresent its opponents. I would commend the publication to readers who wish to see an example of historic, mainstream, balanced fundamentalism.

This publication, however, singles me out by name for disagreement, and I believe that I ought to reply for several reasons. First, I don't think there really is a disagreement, or, if there is, it is much smaller than the authors of the whitepaper appear to believe. Second, the assumption that we disagree is based at least partly on the authors' misreading of my argument in *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, and I would like to correct that misreading. Third, whatever disagreement might actually exist can be traced to the ACCC authors' too-glib usage of one biblical passage, and study of that passage may well eliminate all potential for difference. The heart of the argument in the whitepaper, and the nub of the authors' supposed disagreement with me, is expressed in the following paragraph:

Some have emphasized the gospel as the touchstone of orthodoxy. One author used this emphasis in a recent defense of fundamentalism, "The thing that is held in common by all Christians—the thing that constitutes the church as one church—is the gospel itself." None would deny the importance of the gospel to this question [ecclesiastical separation from false teachers], but the gospel is only one-third of the concerns raised by the apostle Paul in Corinth: "For if he that cometh preacheth



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another Jesus, who we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him" (2 Cor. 11:4).

The citation in the middle of this paragraph is footnoted under my name to the volume *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*. I should note that the ACCC erroneously lists me as an editor for that volume. I was merely a contributor, and a kind of outside voice at that. The whitepaper continues,

So where many fundamentalists today are focused on a single category of theology, soteriology, the apostle Paul was focused on at least three: Christology, revelation, and soteriology. Consequently, the gospel-centric approach to ecclesiastical separation is an inadequate summary of the Bible doctrine.

As I say, I wish to respond to these statements. My response will consist of three parts. First, I describe the structure of 2 Corinthians 11:4, upon which the ACCC has based its case. Second, I will address the question of how the purported three issues (another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel) are related. Third, I will deal with the significance specifically of Paul's words, "another spirit," in the structure of 2 Corinthians 11:4. The question on this last point is raised by the author of the whitepaper (the names of the author or authors never appear), who assumes that the mention of "another spirit" was meant to raise the issue of revelation. I want to consider whether that is the most likely assumption.

First, however, an introductory word is in order. Paul's feelings are closer to the surface in 2 Corinthians than in any of his other writings. Perhaps that is because he was dealing with personal rejection to a greater degree than he encountered elsewhere. Not only was the church at Corinth profoundly carnal (as can be seen in 1 Corinthians), but a cadre of false teachers had come into the church. They were apparently good-looking men, well-schooled, and highly articulate. They presented letters of commendation from important individuals. In attacking Paul, they seem to have derided his personal appearance, his lack of rhetorical polish, his menial employment, his physical disability, and his frequent imprisonments. The danger was that some Corinthians would turn away from the truth because they were turning away from Paul. Consequently, the whole epistle becomes a double exercise for Paul: he wishes to defend the gospel while at the same time defending his own apostleship—all while trying not to appear arrogant or self-important.

One of Paul's tools in offering this double-defense is a refined sense of irony. Paul comes closer to full-blown sarcasm more frequently in 2 Corinthians than in any of his other writings. He also engages in considerable self-deprecation, especially when defending his apostleship. His approach can be paraphrased as "Only fools talk about themselves, and I'm talking about

myself, so I'm acting like a fool, but in my defense, you're making me do it." Both the irony and the self-deprecation are punctuated by protestations of Paul's intense love for the members of the church at Corinth. He makes it clear that his hard words are not meant to be dismissive. Rather, he speaks as he does because he cares about them so deeply.

All of these features of Paul's argument are on display in the opening verses of 2 Corinthians 11. He asks the readers to bear with him in his foolishness. He expresses his deep concern that they are being led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. Then in verse 4 he unleashes biting sarcasm: "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*." It is to this verse that we shall turn in the next issue of *In the Nick of Time*.



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This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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