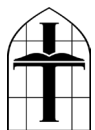


Christian hearts, in love united,
seek alone in Jesus rest;
has He not your love excited?
Then let love inspire each breast.
Members on our Head depending,
lights reflecting Him, our Sun,
Christians, His commands attending,
we in Him, our Lord, are one.

Come, then, come, O flock of Jesus,
covenant with Him anew;
unto Him who conquered for us,
pledge we love and service true;
and should our love's union holy
firmly linked no more remain,
wait ye at His footstool lowly,
till He draw it close again.

Grant, Lord, that with Thy direction
"Love each other," we comply.
Aiming with unfeigned affection
Thy love to exemplify,
let our mutual love be glowing,
so that all will plainly see
that we, as on one stem growing,
living branches are in Thee.

O that such may be our union
as Thine with the Father is,
and not one of our communion
e'er forsake the path of bliss;
may our light shine forth with brightness,
from Thy light reflected, shine;
thus the world will bear us witness,
that we, Lord, are truly Thine.



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centralseminary.edu | info@centralseminary.edu
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Roger Olson on Fundamentalism: Part Two

Kevin T. Bauder

Roger Olson asserts that the difference between fundamentalism and other forms of evangelicalism is secondary separation. I agree. But what does he mean by secondary separation? And does his understanding do justice to the idea of fundamentalism?

Olson summarizes secondary separation in these terms: "There arose 'secondary separation' in which many, perhaps most, true fundamentalists decided they could not cooperate with or have Christian fellowship with even fellow conservative Protestants who were not sufficiently separated from liberal theology (and Catholicism!)." In other words, Olson thinks that secondary separation is separation over separation, or more accurately the lack thereof. So fundamentalism has to be defined by, "separation from liberal theology and the organizations and institutions that were considered too lenient in terms of including and/or cooperating with Christians not sufficiently separated from liberal theology."

Now, I want to make certain allowances in reading Olson. He is writing informally. We should not demand the level of precision in a blog post that we might expect in, say, a chapter in a volume about *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*. Having said that, I wish that he had offered a more robust and nuanced understanding of secondary separation. As he describes it, secondary separation is simply separation over the lack of separation, and it precludes all Christian fellowship.

To be fair, many fundamentalists hold an understanding of separation that is not much more articulate than Olson's. Their one attempt at furthering the discussion is to suggest that secondary separation involves separation from "disobedient brethren." I find their articulation even less helpful than Olson's. How many of our Christian brothers obey all of Scripture all the time, affirming all and only the truth that Scripture teaches, performing all and only those duties that Scripture requires, displaying all and only those attitudes that Scripture affirms, thinking all and only those thoughts that Scripture endorses? The answer is that *all* of our brothers are disobedient, as are we ourselves. If we were simply to separate from disobedient brethren without qualification, we would exclude everyone. But that would not be

enough, given that we ourselves are often disobedient. How does one separate from oneself?

Some fundamentalists have tried to solve the problem by denying that any separation could ever be secondary. This attitude characterized Bob Jones University during the 1970s and 1980s, and it came to be embodied in George Dollar's definition of fundamentalism: "Historic fundamentalism is the literal interpretation of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-biblical affirmations and attitudes." This definition was published in bold, block letters on a separate, unnumbered page at the beginning of Dollar's *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, which was published by Bob Jones University in 1973. The problem is that no one, not even the most rigorous fundamentalist, separates over "all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible." Dollar's definition does not fit fundamentalism so much as everythingism.

The "disobedient brother" approach won't work because not all disobedience counts the same. The "all the affirmations and attitudes" approach won't work because not all affirmations and attitudes bear equal weight. Olson's "separate over separation" approach won't work because not all separation is the same.

Olson cites two paradigmatic examples of fundamentalists practicing secondary separation. The first involves Billy Graham.

Graham came to the fore as a leader among "the new evangelicals" and he did not practice separation sufficiently for the fundamentalists among whom he was raised and spiritually nurtured. Fundamentalist Protestants rejected Billy Graham and his ministries, not because they were not Christian, but because they were "tainted" by the inclusion in and cooperation with allegedly liberal Christians.

I shall have more to say about Billy Graham and cooperative evangelism in my next article. For the moment, it is worth noting that refusal to participate in the Graham crusades after 1956 was *not* secondary separation. It was separation from the apostate churchmen whom Graham recruited to participate in his crusades. Whether Graham should have personally been the object of secondary separation is another question, and one that I intend to address, but one did not have to believe in secondary separation to refuse participation in Graham's crusades.

Olson's second exemplar of secondary separation comes up in the comment string appended to his original post. There he discusses the relationship between Richard V. Clearwaters and the Conservative Baptist Association.

[W]hen the Conservative Baptist Association of Churches split away from the Northern Baptist Convention fundamentalist leader Clearwaters of Fourth Baptist Church in Minneapolis (I don't recall if he was

GARBC or something else) wrote a book I have read called "The Great Conservative Baptist Compromise." It was a harsh attack on the CBA for not practicing secondary separation and not requiring belief in young earth creationism, etc. The CBA is a truly conservative evangelical denomination and in some cases I would say even "fundamentalish." Why did Clearwaters feel it necessary to attack fellow evangelical Christians that way?

Of course, I ought to know something about R. V. Clearwaters. For the past twenty-five years I have been a member of the same Fourth Baptist Church that Clearwaters pastored. For twenty-five years I have taught in the seminary that he founded. I was president of that seminary for eight years. I have served on the board of the Minnesota Baptist Association, which Clearwaters helped to separate from the Northern Baptist Convention. I believe that I may be able to offer a word of explanation that will set *The Great Conservative Baptist Compromise* in context. Even if my explanation does not justify Clearwaters's book (and I think it largely will), it should at least help Olson to understand why the book was written and what it aimed to accomplish.

Clarifying Clearwaters's position, however, is subsidiary to a much more important concern. That concern is to show how secondary separation, rightly understood, is (1) coherent, (2) necessary and inescapable, and (3) biblical. I intend to pursue that task in the next *In the Nick of Time* by turning for help to a source that some may find surprising: an essay by John Piper.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and 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.
