

To Separate or Not to Separate

Chapter 6 from *The New Evangelicalism* (1963)
by Ronald H. Nash

Orthodoxy believes that its duty is to preach and defend the Gospel of Christ as it is revealed in Scripture. Thus, fundamentalists and evangelists are faced with a problem unknown by the liberal. For if *this* gospel be the true gospel, what common cause can the conservative have with those who preach another gospel? The complicated and thorny question which constantly faces the conservative is, "Should we separate?"

Since the argument of this chapter will be involved and take many turns, it might be good to indicate here something of the direction in which we are heading and the roads we shall take to get there. Our general objective is to notice the evangelical's dissatisfaction with the hyper-separatism so prevalent within fundamentalism and see what his proposals are for relating orthodoxy to the many types of liberalism. Our procedure will be first to examine the position of an orthodox theologian, J. Gresham Machen, whose views might be termed separatist. We believe that Machen has provided the most coherent and logical case for this position. Then we shall see what objections evangelicals have brought against separatism in general. Finally, we shall discuss the policies of evangelicalism in this regard.

It is necessary to justify our choice of Machen since it has been suggested many times that he was neither a fundamentalist (in the strict sense of the word) nor a separatist. I believe that Machen affords us an excellent example in our study of separatism for several reasons:

(1) After fighting for the cause of orthodoxy within the Presbyterian U.S.A. Church for several years, Machen finally withdrew from that denomination and from the faculty of its Princeton Seminary and helped organize the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (as it came to be called) and the Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. I am well aware of the history of Machen's struggles within the Presbyterian U.S.A. Church, and I know of Cornelius Van Til's claim that "Machen's position is not sectarian or separatist."¹ However, unless Van Til is using the word "separatist" in a sense different from its ordinary usage, I fail to see his point, for nothing can be clearer than that Machen did lead a group of Presbyterian pastors and students to separate themselves from his denomination. Trying to avoid the term "separatist" by claiming that the U.S.A. Church had become apostate seems to be irrelevant. We are not here involved in making any value judgments as to whether or not it is good or bad to be a separatist. The point is, was Machen in his preaching and practice a separatist? While we recognize that Machen's position is far removed from the extreme practices of contemporary hyper-separatists, and while we even concede that he may have had good cause to separate, the fact remains that Machen was a separatist.

(2) Unlike many hyper-separatists of this generation, Machen based his action and his attitudes upon premises which I am inclined to accept as true. This makes a consideration of his beliefs and practices more worthwhile than a study of some contemporary hyper-separatists who do little more than picket Billy Graham meetings and quote the sixth chapter of II Corinthians out of context. But while admitting that the premises of Machen's argument may have been *true*, we may yet have to find his argument *invalid*, i.e., perhaps his conclusion didn't necessarily follow

¹ Cornelius Van Til, *The New Evangelicalism*, (unpublished paper) Philadelphia, Westminster Theological Seminary, p. 11.

from those premises.

(3) We find Machen to be a good example because after he separated from the U.S.A. Church, a group of his own followers (led by Carl McIntyre) dissented from his leadership and split into still a new denomination, the Bible Presbyterian Church. This incident (together with its many parallels in other denominations) lends support to the evangelical contention that perhaps separatism *per se* has not been an intrinsic blessing to orthodoxy.

(4) Finally, we have chosen Machen because Edward John Carnell has subjected Machen and his views to an outspoken criticism in his book *The Case for Orthodox Theology*. However, the reader should understand that we do not intend simply to retrace the steps of Carnell's presentation. Indeed, we shall find good cause to criticize much of Carnell's argument in this book. Rather, we wish to examine Carnell's criticism for hints it may give us of the evangelical's reasons for dissenting from separatism.

We shall now proceed to our consideration of Machen's position. It is not our purpose to determine whether or not Machen's separation from the Presbyterian U.S.A. Church was justified. Among other things, this would call into question the existence of a denomination that we respect and admire, i.e., The Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

I. MACHEN'S PREMISES

Machen's chief arguments concerning the nature of Christianity are to be found in his classic exposition of orthodoxy, *What is Christianity?* He begins by noting that it does little good to study the Christian faith until we first of all determine what Christianity is, that is, we must find out what it is that we are to study. "Christianity" is a name applied to a variety of diverse and even contradictory beliefs. Is Catholicism Christianity, or is Protestantism? How is it that such widely divergent theological tendencies as neo-orthodoxy, fundamentalism, liberalism, unitarianism, and even the unscientific pantheism of Mary Baker Eddy have all claimed the title of "Christian"?

Our first task, Machen advises us, is to define Christianity. However, we must be careful not to arbitrarily define the faith as we please. Let us not beg the question and define Christianity so that it describes only our particular kind of religious practice. Let us see if there is some criterion that will enable us to find out what Christianity really is.

Machen tells us that Christianity "is a historical phenomenon like the State of Pennsylvania or the U.S.A. . . . and it must be investigated by historical means."² He asks, to what point in the "long history of Christianity should we turn in order to discover what it really is?" His answer is, "To the beginnings of the movement."

What is America? The answer to that is found in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Since America was founded, we recognize that teachings or practices in this country that are contrary to these basic documents are "un-American." This does not mean that we are dictating to other nations how they should run their internal affairs. Machen's argument is simply this: to deserve the name "American," we must act in accordance with those basic documents.

² J. Gresham Machen, *What is Christianity?* Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1951, p. 18.

Machen argues that this is also the case with Christianity. The only way to find out what constitutes Christianity is to go back to *its* original document. In the words of Gordon Clark, "Christianity, then, is simply what the Bible teaches."³ Machen is not arguing that the early founders of Christianity had a right to legislate for all subsequent generations. But they did have a right to legislate for all subsequent generations choosing to bear the name "Christian." He argues that if we change their program or beliefs, we should have the honesty to change the name. "It is misleading (and dishonest?) to use the old name to designate a new thing."

But this is the very thing which many varieties of theology in Christendom will not do. They want to claim that Christianity is properly understood to mean whatever "Christians" today believe and whatever "Christians" today practice. The reason, we are told, why these beliefs and practices, which may be so divergent from New Testament days, may still be called Christian is because of the historical and cultural tie that binds them to the early Christian Church.

Gordon Clark repudiates the appeal to historical continuity by contrasting the history of Christianity with the history of Platonism. Plato founded the Academy in Athens. The most important element of his philosophy was the doctrine of the forms, the belief that eternal, absolute and unchanging truth existed in a supersensible world. The Academy lasted for 900 years; but within a few centuries of Plato's death, it was no longer following its founder's emphasis on the absoluteness of truth and the importance of knowledge as opposed to opinion. Instead, the Academy had become a hotbed of skepticism. It insisted that it was impossible to attain any truth. Clark comments,

This skeptical Academy of the second and first centuries was undoubtedly the corporate successor to Plato and his pupils. There had been an unbroken continuity. But to call their skeptical views Platonism would empty the word of all meaning. . . . Platonism is a definite theory of Ideas. Wherever that theory is found, with or without institutional continuity, it is Platonism; and wherever it is not found, particularly wherever skepticism is professed, there is no Platonism, no matter how strict the apostolic succession.

Similarly, if the term Christianity is to have any definite meaning, if it is not to be applied to theories or to manners of life that are in direct opposition to each other, some criterion must be chosen other than the historical continuity of social groups.⁴

It might be good here to anticipate several possible misunderstandings of or objections to what has already been said. First, was Machen setting himself up as an authority or judge over all other Christians? Was he assuming the right to decide who was and who was not a Christian? I shall allow Machen to answer this himself:

We are not dealing with delicate personal questions; we are not presuming to say whether such and such an individual man is a Christian or not. God only can decide such questions; no man can say with assurance whether the attitude of certain individual "liberals" toward Christ is saving faith or not. But 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

3 Gordon Clark, *Christian View of Men and Things*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1951, p. 83.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

within the bounds of the same organization.⁵

Secondly, was Machen denying liberals the right to construct a modernistic religion? No! On the contrary, he admitted that they had a perfect right to construct any religion they chose. His point, however, was that they had no right to call that religion Christianity if it contradicted the "original documents" of the Faith. Machen believed that the liberal could not be honest, for to be so would mean that he, i.e., the liberal, would have to withdraw from the confessional churches and thus "sacrifice the opportunity . . . of so obtaining control of those confessional churches as to change their fundamental character . . ."⁶ Machen's forthright conclusion was that Christianity is the religion taught in the Bible and none other. Of course, he recognized that there are differences of interpretation of the Bible. But these differences will always be much less than the difficulties encountered by allowing the name of Christianity to be applied to every Tom-Dick-and-Harry theology that desires it.

Is it not similarly the scholarly thing to do to work out the detailed exposition of Christianity by a careful study of the text? The difficulties should not be minimized; but neither should the responsibility be shirked, for only by this method can the contradictions and confusions of contemporary statements be authoritatively evaluated.⁷

Such then was Machen's argument, and I take it that it was a good one. In fact, even Edward John Carnell agreed (in 1954) with Walter Lippman that "The liberals have yet to answer Dr. Machen."⁸ But the evangelical is concerned to ask several questions at this point:

(1) Does Machen's view concerning the nature of the Church necessarily imply the need of separation? Machen evidently believed that it did. As Machen's present day counsel for defense, Van Til, puts it:

If anything was clear to Machen, it was that schism is sin. But he also knew that there were those in the church of his youth who in effect denied the Christ on whom the church is founded. When the church no longer proclaimed the substitutionary death of Christ as central to its teaching, it was no longer the church of Christ.⁹

Perhaps this question should be put another way. Might it ever be the case that the Christian, while despairing of liberal tendencies within his denomination, would draw back from separation realizing that it could possibly do more harm in the long run than good? We are not suggesting that separation is never justified. Indeed, we believe that times have undoubtedly arisen when separation was definitely required. For those who wish an example, one need only point to Luther and the Reformation.

Even Van Til himself lends an unwitting support to our suggestion that Machen's premises may not always necessitate separation--for Van Til and other defenders of Machen repeatedly remind us that there is just as much reason to believe that the circumstances in which Machen found himself were more responsible for his final decision to leave his denomination than anything else.

5 J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1923, p. 160.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

7 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

8 E. J. Carnell, *Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1954, p. 24.

9 Van Til, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

In other words, had it not been for the unfortunate attempt to try Machen in a church court, he might not have been so quick to make his final break. I am suggesting, then, that in Machen's case his separation was based on more than doctrinal disagreements.

(2) Was there any possible connection between Machen's act of separation and the troubles that later plagued his denomination?--for Carl McIntyre and a small group of pastors and students separated themselves from Machen's fellowship and began the Bible Presbyterian Church and Faith Theological Seminary. The issue this time was not orthodoxy, but, among other things, dispensationalism and eschatology. Carnell believes that this was a fitting judgment on Machen's theories.

Machen . . . honored Reformed doctrine, but not the Reformed doctrine of the church. This inconsistency had at least two effects: First, it encouraged Machen's disciples to think that the conditions of Christian fellowship could be decided by subjective criteria; secondly, it planted the seeds of anarchy . . . The result was a subtle reversion to the age of the Judges: each man did what was right in his own eyes.¹⁰

However, the evangelical looks beyond the divisions that followed Machen's break to the multiple schisms and divisions that have rent orthodoxy since the 1930's. For when the fundamentalist found that he no longer had any more liberals to separate himself from, he began to find issues to dispute which he could use to justify his separation from conservative brethren. Evangelicals are beginning to wonder out loud whether there is any relationship between the spirit of separatism and the spirit of independency and censoriousness that presently plagues conservative Christianity.

II. CARNELL'S CRITICISM OF MACHEN

We remarked earlier that Carnell has criticized separatism in general and Machen in particular in his book *The Case for Orthodox Theology*. We now wish to examine some of the things he said. It is not our intent simply to reiterate his argument, for we believe that Carnell's position as he set it forth in his *Case* is inadequate for at least three reasons: First, he failed to make really clear just what it was that the evangelical was objecting to; secondly, he failed to state adequately the positive evangelical goals and methods; and thirdly, his remarks have consequently produced much misunderstanding of the evangelical position.

A. Carnell's Criticism of Machen Is Not Clear

Carnell succeeded in showing everyone that evangelicals are not as happy with separatism as they could be. But he did not adequately state why. Since we shall attempt to furnish these reasons later, we shall pass this by for now.

B. Carnell's Case for His Own Position Is Deficient

Near the end of his book, Carnell urged orthodoxy to "return to the classical view of the Church." However, it should be noted that in no sense of the word did Carnell tell us what that classical view of the church is. What he did do was lay down several principles for the Christian to follow:

¹⁰ Carnell, *Case*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

"First: All other things being equal, a Christian should remain in the fellowship that gave him spiritual birth."¹¹ Unfortunately, the qualification "all other things being equal" seems to be a subtle appeal to the same kind of subjective criteria for Christian fellowship that Carnell found so offensive in Machen's thought.

"Secondly: A Christian should judge the claims of a church by its official creed or confession, not by the lives of its members."¹² Here Carnell seems to oversimplify what is an exceedingly complicated situation. He seems, in fact, to be condoning a maxim of the nature "Don't do what I do, do what I say." It apparently didn't bother Carnell when he wrote these words if a church or members within a denomination did not believe its creed.¹³ Is the conservative supposed to bury his head in the sand and say, "Of course, we both know that you don't really believe this creed, but as long as you make a pretense of believing it I'll go along with you"? Carnell seems to think that the conservative should be satisfied if he is free to preach *his* gospel and free to protest against abuses. But the question goes deeper than this. Is the conservative only preaching *his* gospel or *the* gospel?

"Thirdly: Separation from an existing denomination is justifiable on only two criteria. (a) Eviction . . . (b) apostasy."¹⁴ The first criterion is scarcely worth noticing. It goes without saying that if a conservative is *evicted* from a denomination that he is *separated* from it. This is pure tautology. The more important criterion is apostasy, but Carnell disappoints us when he comes to explain what constitutes this apostasy. He writes, "If a denomination removes the gospel from its creed or confessions, or if it leaves the gospel (sic--what gospel?) but removes the believer's right to preach it, the believer may justly conclude that the denomination is apostate."¹⁵

C. Van Til's Criticism of Carnell

Many have found Carnell's remarks deficient and equivocal. Unfortunately, they have concluded that Carnell's statements in *The Case* are always representative of all evangelicals. This has led to numerous misunderstandings and a host of ungrounded objections.

If one takes Carnell's position to be what he implies in *The Case*, then Cornelius Van Til seems to be right when he says,

Carnell defines the church as "a fellowship of all who share in the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant." But those who deny the once-for-all character of the atonement wrought by him on whom all the promises of Abraham terminate can scarcely be said to share in the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant.¹⁶

Furthermore, Carnell did give the impression (although we shall notice that in a later writing he attempts to remove it) that the evangelical is apparently willing to overlook unbelief. Nothing could possibly be further from the true evangelical position, but nonetheless Carnell succeeded in convincing Van Til that the evangelical doctrine of the Church involves "doctrinal indifferentism." Van Til believes that Carnell no longer views the Church as--

11 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

13 But we shall suggest, shortly, that Carnell does seem to have changed his mind on this point.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 137.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

16 Van Til, *New Evangelicalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

composed of those who accept, *ex animo*, the Christ of the Scriptures. If the Reformers had held the view of the church as entertained by Carnell, there would have been no reformation. The church as constituted at the time of Luther and Calvin had not departed as far from the Christ of the Scriptures as did the church of Machen's time.¹⁷

We are suggesting then that Carnell's criticism of Machen and separatism as found in *The Case for Orthodox Theology* has created confusion both about his actual point of view and also about the position of evangelicalism. Our task in the remainder of this chapter, then, must be to clear up this confusion.

III. EVANGELICALISM AND SEPARATION

A. *Evangelical Objections to Separatism*

First, let it be said that evangelicalism is not opposed to separatism *per se*. There may be and undoubtedly have been times when separation from theological apostasy has been more than justified. But, the evangelical asks, has twentieth-century separatism done what it set out to do, namely, keep the Church of Christ pure? The evangelical thinks not and offers in support of his contention the following evidence:

(1) Twentieth-century separatism has tended to foster divisive attitudes within orthodoxy. No one objects to the conservative's right to disagree and even dissent from liberalism. The trouble comes when men fail to stop there and carry their divisive tendencies into their conduct toward other brethren. One of the prime "virtues" of the twentieth-century separatist is theological pugnaciousness. One can hear them speak proudly and boastfully of their "militant fundamentalism," "uncompromising fundamentalism," "fighting fundamentalism," and so on, *ad nauseam*. The trouble is that these men are often refusing to compromise on issues that are of secondary importance and the people they are fighting are often those who simply refuse to follow their acceptance of these minor issues. When there are no more liberals within range, they don't stop fighting. The issues simply change. So they now challenge all those who refuse to concur with their belief, for example, that the rapture takes place before the tribulation. Their mottos become "Holding forth the Word of Strife," or "Rightly dividing the Church of God." Vernon Grounds has described such men as fundamentalists with a "theological chip" on their shoulders. While the evangelical is as anxious to defend the great verities of the Christian faith as any fundamentalist, he believes that this can be done with a measure of Christian grace and courtesy.

(2) Twentieth-century separatism has exalted minor doctrines unduly and made them tests of fellowship. Carl Henry tells us that this "spirit of independency" has continued to incorporate "secondary doctrines into its creed with an absoluteness that is incredible." He adds that as separatism "moves in the direction of Pharisaism, man-made appendages to the Gospel become all-important, constituting a test for fellowship. Not one's belief in Christ as God and Savior, but whether one sits in the right millennial pew and properly dots every 'i' and crosses every 't' according to the approved subsidiary requirements is determinative."¹⁸

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Carl Henry, "The Perils of Independency," *Christianity Today*, Nov. 12, 1956, pp. 20, 22.

Edward John Carnell (in a book written after his *Case*) notes that the separatist ignores the scriptural basis for fellowship and exalts his own:

Jesus himself was the rallying point for fellowship, doctrine, and form: *fellowship* because the mourners were bound by cords of love; *doctrine* because the teaching of the Lord was normative; and *form* because the will of the Lord became the will of the group . . . The believers knew that if they failed to love one another, their profession in doctrine and form would profit nothing.¹⁹

Carnell then goes on to show how the fundamentalist is only following in the footsteps of others in the history of the Church who have ignored the scriptural basis of Christian fellowship and elevated their own. Whenever this happened, the Church became afflicted with divisions. For example, Roman Catholicism exalted the *form* of the Church over fellowship and doctrine so that even if an individual (like Luther) believed the Scriptures and trusted in Christ, he fell short of *Catholic standards*. But then Luther exalted his form of communion over fellowship and doctrine so that even though, for example, an Anabaptist believed the Scriptures and received Jesus as Lord and Savior, he still fell short of *Luther's standards*. John Calvin elevated doctrine (that of election) over fellowship so that an Arminian could believe the Scriptures and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior and still fall short of *Calvin's standards*. The Anglicans exalted the established church over fellowship so that regenerated non-conformists fell short of *Anglican standards*. And such, too, was the case with the Scotch Presbyterians, the Puritans, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists. And such is the case with the twentieth-century separatists. The evangelical is protesting, then, against those who today split the Church of Christ and separate themselves from believers who will not measure up to *their standards!*

(3) Twentieth-century separatism has failed or refused to communicate with those theologians with whom it disagrees. This has not only resulted in a common attitude of rudeness and censoriousness on the part of many fundamentalists, but has also helped contribute to many of liberalism's misunderstandings of just what it is that orthodoxy believes. A case in point would be the widespread ignorance of the orthodox view of inspiration that we pointed out in an earlier chapter.

Recently a storm of protest was raised because a certain evangelical seminary invited a liberal to speak to its students. A group of fundamentalists objected, accused the seminary of becoming liberal, and urged Christians to withdraw their support of this school. We think that this action illustrates one of the worst characteristics of contemporary fundamentalism. Certainly such a practice does not necessarily honor the man invited to speak, and the seminary made it very clear in public announcements that its action was in no way an endorsement of the man's theological position. If one of the protesting fundamentalists should ever be invited to speak at a liberal seminary, we would hope that he would have enough sense not to be deceived into thinking that *that* seminary had suddenly become conservative and was therefore endorsing his fundamentalism! Sound education demands a fair presentation of contending views. This writer is only too familiar with many so-called "liberal" schools where the orthodox viewpoint is dismissed without a fair hearing, whereas numerous evangelical institutions, while careful to point out the weaknesses, make an earnest effort to present as objectively as possible the liberal position. Evangelicals are concerned to avoid both the bias of many liberal schools and the obscurantism of many fundamentalist institutions, while at the same time presenting and

19 E. J. Carnell, *The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans (c. 1960), p. 110.

defending the truth of God as they see it.

(4) Twentieth-century separatism has undoubtedly contributed to the individualism and self-seeking that seems to characterize some fundamentalist leaders. Carnell has obviously met some of these men whom he caricaturizes as saying,

Things are in terrible shape; errorists are everywhere. The true faith is being threatened; my own life is in danger. Something must be done; some courageous person must volunteer. I'm free; I'm ready; I'm willing . . . Oh, yes, you may subscribe to my paper and keep up with the *real* truth. Three dollars will enroll you in my movement, and for \$5.00 you may have a copy of my latest book.²⁰

As one disheartened conservative recently put it, fundamentalism and separatism have reached the place where they have too many chiefs and too few Indians.

(5) Evangelism accuses twentieth-century separatism of departing from the New Testament doctrine of the Church, particularly its teaching of the organic and spiritual unity of the Body of Christ.

(6) Twentieth-century separatism must take much of the blame for orthodoxy's surrender of many large areas of Christendom to liberalism. The separatists left whole denominations, together with their seminaries, churches and agencies, in the hands of the liberals. We are not denying that at the time of withdrawal the liberals were in control of these things. But does that mean that every time that the balance of power swings away from us that we should cease being a minority voice? Does this warrant our surrender of the *whole* every time the liberals are in the majority? Now, thirty years later, orthodoxy has little voice within many of these influential areas of the Church.

B. Evangelical Goals and Methods

Evangelicals have come to believe that orthodoxy has retreated enough. Each time that liberalism came in, conservatives fought a few skirmish battles. Then they headed for the hills and attempted to set up their own strongholds. Evangelicals believe that conservatives as a whole must adopt new attitudes.

Harold John Ockenga has made it clear that one of the primary objectives of evangelicalism is the recapture of "denominational leadership from within the denominations rather than abandoning these denominations to modernism."²¹ The strategy or method that Ockenga recommends is "infiltration." He points out that this was the very means the liberals used to gain control of the major religious bodies in the first place. He urges, "It is time for firm evangelicals to seize their opportunity to minister in and influence the modernist groups. Why is it incredible that the evangelicals should be able to infiltrate the denominations and strengthen the things that remain, and possibly resume control of such denominations?"²²

Certainly there is something to be said for any honest method that might win back denominational control for orthodoxy and thus increase its spiritual impact upon our nation and

20 Carnell, *Case*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

21 Harold John Ockenga, "Resurgent Evangelical Leadership," *Christianity Today*, Oct. 10, 1960, p. 14.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

its culture. We have had over thirty years of separatism, and honesty forces us to admit that its results have not been altogether successful nor honoring to Christ.

But are Machen and the evangelicals really at odds? Machen's arguments dealt with the nature of true Christianity. The evangelical's arguments concern methods that will once again win the day for orthodoxy rather than continue the present day retreat of the separatists. Perhaps the controversy between the separatists and evangelicals is due to their different perspectives. Machen was confronted by the sorry sight of theological liberalism in the Church. Evangelicals are confronted by the equally sorry sight of ethical indifference in fundamentalism which can be seen in its sectarianism, separatism and total ignoring of the law of love. The evangelical is not afraid or hesitant to fight for his faith, but he wants to make certain that those whom he's fighting are the enemies of the faith, and he wants to be sure that what he's fighting about is a truly essential element of the faith and not some man-made appendage.

But the separatist continues to view the evangelical with suspicion. The fundamentalist is convinced that the evangelical is compromising the faith. We believe, however, that we have offered evidence in this chapter and in this book that this charge cannot be substantiated. The evangelical is as convinced of the veracity of the fundamentals of the faith as ever. The evangelical believes that true Christianity is what the Bible teaches. The evangelical is as against liberalism in its many forms as ever. But he is also unhappy with the extremes of separatism, and his efforts should be viewed as an attempt (albeit an admittedly difficult attempt) to maintain a fidelity to the doctrinal verities of the faith without the unfortunate excesses now so common in separatism.

One final word is necessary. We feel it is most necessary to stress the fact that evangelicals are not advocating any kind of "theological indifferentism." Carnell himself has sought to correct this wrong impression in one of his latest books:

Once we become indifferent to right doctrine, it will not be long before we shall also become indifferent to fit fellowship, for the two go together. Saving faith does not take place in a vacuum. It is an act that grows out of a vital response to the gospel, and the gospel is based on specific redemptive events. If we disparage these events, we surrender the normative elements in the Christian religion.²³

This is not a matter for which there are any easy solutions. Each case has to be examined for its own peculiar problems. But evangelicals are suggesting that serious consideration ought to be given before any step is taken toward separation. The problem is complicated by the separatists' viewing of such efforts with suspicion and their prompt withdrawal from the fellowship of such "compromisers." Perhaps the day will come when God will give to His Church not only a love for the truth but a love for other believers as well. Until that day comes, the question of "to separate or not to separate" is going to become an increasingly more serious source of division within orthodoxy.

23 Carnell, *Kingdom of Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.