

**WHY**

**most INDEPENDENT BAPTIST  
CHURCHES will be**

**EMERGING  
IN 20 YEARS**

**DAVID W. CLOUD**

*Why Most Independent Baptist Churches  
Will Be Emerging Within 20 Years*

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*“I am convinced that, unless there is a dramatic change, most fundamental Baptist churches will be well down the New Evangelical-emerging path within 20 years.” (David Cloud, 2011)*

# The Emerging Church Is Coming

The thesis of this book is that most Independent Baptist Churches will be emerging within 20 years.

To understand what we mean by “emerging” see the free eBook *The Emerging Church Is Coming*, available from [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org). For a more extensive study see *What Is the Emerging Church?*, available in print and eBook editions from Way of Life.

# The Collapse of Separatism

“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3).

“Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Corinthians 5:6).

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

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We are witnessing a widespread collapse of biblical separatism. Over the past 50 years, fundamental Baptists have composed the largest part of the separatist movement, but fundamental Baptist churches today, in general, are radically different in character from what they were when I was saved in 1973.

What is happening now among fundamental Baptist churches is exactly what happened in evangelicalism in the 1950s. It is the rejection of “separatism.”

When I was saved in 1973, the major thing that distinguished fundamental Baptists from Southern Baptists was biblical separation, but that distinction is disappearing and there is a merging of philosophy. We live in a day of blending.

From its inception, the hallmark of New Evangelicalism was the rejection of separation. Harold Ockenga, who claimed to have coined the term “neo-evangelicalism” in 1948, defined it as “A REJECTION OF SEPARATISM” (foreword to Harold Lindsell’s *The Battle for the Bible*).

The New Evangelicalism aimed at a more positive and pragmatic philosophy as opposed to the “negativism and isolation” of fundamentalism.

In a speech at the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947, Ockenga said:

“We repudiate the ‘Come-outist’ movement which brands all denominations as apostate. We expect to be positive in our emphasis, except where error so exists that it is necessary for us to point it out in order to declare the truth” (Garth Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism*, 2008, p. 176).

Ockenga represented the changing mood of the sons of the old fundamentalists. They were tired of exposing error and separating from compromised denominations and churches. They were tired of fighting. That new generation of evangelicals determined to abandon a militant Bible stance. They wanted a more positive face on their Christianity.

New Evangelical philosophy has swept the globe. Today it is no exaggeration to say that those who call themselves evangelicals are New Evangelicals; the terms have become synonymous. Old-line evangelicals, with rare exceptions, either have aligned with out-and-out fundamentalist separatists or have adopted New Evangelicalism.

Ernest Pickering observed: “Part of the current confusion regarding New Evangelicalism stems from the fact that there is now little difference between evangelicalism and New Evangelicalism. The principles of the original New Evangelicalism have become so universally accepted by those who refer to themselves as evangelicals that any distinctions which might have been made years ago are all but lost. It is no doubt true to state that ‘Ockenga’s designation of the new movement as *New or Neo-Evangelical* was abbreviated to *Evangelical*. ... Thus today we speak of this branch of conservative Christianity simply as the Evangelical movement” (*The Tragedy of Compromise*, p. 96).

What happened to evangelical churches in the 1950s is happening to fundamental Baptist churches today.

The doctrine of biblical separatism is being rejected at breathtaking speed and the bridges that are subsequently built to the “broader church” are resulting in spiritual corruption.

### **General Association of Regular Baptists**

The General Association of Regular Baptists (GARBC) was a staunchly separatist entity when I was saved in 1973. The first church I joined was pastored by the dean of one of the GARBC colleges. They were very conservative and separatistic. They had high standards of separation from the world with a biblical emphasis on genuine holiness and following biblical principles rather than mere external conformity. They were dead set against New Evangelicalism. Some of the GARBC writings on separation, such as “A Limited Fellowship or a Limited Message” by David Nettleton, helped me greatly as a young Christian.

By the 1990s, though, the GARBC was well down the path of New Evangelicalism. Many GARBC preachers, such as Bill Rudd and Eric Strattan of Calvary Baptist Church, Muskegon, Michigan, participated enthusiastically in the ecumenical Promise Keepers, which yoked together with Roman Catholic priests. Rudd was chairman of the GARBC’s Council of Eighteen leadership committee.

The GARBC-approved Cornerstone College was partnering with New Evangelical and charismatic organizations in the 1990s through its Mission Network News. These organizations included Baptist World Alliance, Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network, Evangelism Explosion, the Jesus Film Project, Luis Palau Evangelistic Association, Lutheran Bible Translators, and Youth for Christ International, which had long worked with Roman Catholics.

Richard Christen, who was elected speaker of the GARBC in 1996, said that “instead of a wall around the GARBC, let’s build a picket fence.”

The gaps within the “picket fence approach” to separatism have grown ever wider over the years, and GARBC churches that have refused to go in the direction of compromise have abandoned the association.

### **Association of Baptists for World Evangelism**

The Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) moved in the New Evangelical direction in the 1980s. Dr. Ralph Colas and Dr. Ernest Pickering resigned from the board of ABWE in the late 1980s because of its compromise.

ABWE’s well-known work in Bangladesh, led by the medical doctor Viggo Olson, traded separatism for pragmatism and compromised a Biblicist position by yoking together with organizations such as Wheaton College and the apostate United Bible Societies.

In the 1990s Charles Ware, prominent ABWE board member, spoke at an ecumenical conference in Indianapolis with men representing Promise Keepers and Campus Crusade.

William Commons, ABWE Director of Enlistment, praised *Choices for Tomorrow’s Mission* by David Hesselgrave of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. This book endorsed Billy Graham-style ecumenical evangelism.

### **Baptist Bible Fellowship International (BBFI)**

The Baptist Bible Fellowship International was the first group of Independent Baptists to move in a contemporary, evangelical, emerging direction, and it began in the 1980s with Jerry Falwell, who was a prominent preacher in the BBFI.

It was in the 1980s that Falwell formed the Moral Majority political action group, which was eventually composed of at least 30% Roman Catholics. This disobedience to the Bible’s command to separate from false gospels corrupted Falwell’s thinking so that by 1987 he spoke in his autobiography of

Roman Catholics as “my Catholic brothers and sisters” (*Strength for the Journey*, p. 371). That year, Falwell took over the leadership of the sleazy, heretical PTL ministry, claiming, amazingly, that it was “certainly worth saving” (*Ibid.*, p. 442). In 1992, Falwell endorsed Chuck Colson’s book *The Body*, which urged evangelicals to join forces with Roman Catholics and charismatics and which considered the Roman Catholic Church as a part of the “body of Christ.” Not surprisingly, along the way Falwell capitulated to “Christian rock.” Speaking at Word of Life in New York in the 1980s Falwell said: “Other than Heavy Metal and vulgar lyrics, it’s all a matter of taste and has nothing to do with Christianity.”

As he descended into the depths of ecumenical thinking, one-world church affiliations, and rock & roll worldliness, Falwell continued to be supported by the Baptist Bible Fellowship International and continued speaking at their meetings. Very, very few BBFI preachers publicly decried Falwell and his heretical thinking and practice.

By the 1990s, the BBFI had capitulated entirely to the evangelical philosophy and many preachers with separatist convictions left the fellowship.

I first became aware of the rejection of separatism on the part of BBFI men when I wrote reports warning about Promise Keeper’s ecumenism and received scathing rebukes from some BBFI preachers. In 1996, for example, Billy Hamm, pastor of the Mountain States Baptist Temple, Denver, Colorado, spoke at a Promise Keepers seminar. Hamm had served five terms as treasurer of the Baptist Bible Fellowship, and in the late 1970s he had taught at BBFI-connected Pacific Coast Baptist Bible College. There were hardly any voices lifted publicly against Hamm’s great compromise in associating with an organization that sought to unite Catholics and non-Catholics.

The writing was on the wall by the 2002 BBFI annual conference, which was held at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Fairfax, Virginia. The music was led by a contemporary “worship team” composed of four women. Around that time Bethlehem Baptist dropped the “King James Only” clause from the by-laws, and the New Living Translation and other corrupt versions are now used from the pulpit. The pastor sent out a letter to members saying, “With regard to dress and modesty issues, we enforce NO RULE on our folks. ... apparel issues are really of no concern to us.” The church’s Skate Night, which was sponsored by secular skateboarding companies, featured “throbbing Christian rock.” The church’s youth pastor in 2002 had an earring and promoted the rock band P.O.D.

In 2003, the BBFI in the Philippines invited the country’s Roman Catholic president to speak at an evangelism conference.

This is the new non-separatist BBFI.

### **Trinity Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida**

Trinity Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida, came out of the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1960s and was an old-fashioned fundamentalist church through the 1990s. Under the leadership of Bob Gray, it became a large church, supporting missionaries worldwide and operating a rescue mission and Bible college. In 1992, Tom Messer became the senior pastor.

In 1996, Southwide Baptist Fellowship, meeting at Trinity Baptist under Tom Messer’s leadership, issued a clear warning AGAINST Promise Keepers and its “UNHOLY MUSIC.”

In 2006, Trinity Baptist hosted the Southwide conference and featured Jerry Falwell as keynote speaker.

The music was led by Mike Speck. His choral book *Everlasting Praise* featured many songs that are on the CCLI list of top 25 contemporary “praise and worship” songs in

America, including “Shout to the Lord” by the radical ecumenist and charismatic rocker/pastor Darlene Zschech.

Falwell represented Southwide’s and Trinity’s new direction and philosophy. In the late 1970s he formed the Moral Majority, and by February 1986 he told *Christianity Today* that Catholics made up the largest constituency (30%). In his autobiography *Strength for the Journey*, Falwell referred to the “Catholic brothers and sisters in the Moral Majority” (p. 371). Falwell was one of the speakers at the April 1980 “Washington for Jesus” Rally. Fellow speakers included Catholic priests John Bertolucci, John Randall, and Michael Scanlon, self-esteem guru Robert Schuller, and a host of radical Charismatics, including Jim Bakker of PTL, Pat Robertson of the 700 Club, and Demos Shakarian of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International. In an interview with the *National Catholic Register*, May 9, 1982, Falwell listed Pope John Paul II as one of the two “greatest men in my lifetime.” He did not give any warning about the pope’s false gospel that is cursed of God (Gal. 1:6-8). Falwell endorsed Chuck Colson’s 1992 book, *The Body*, which urged evangelicals to join forces with Roman Catholics and charismatics. Colson said, “... the body of Christ, in all its diversity, is created with Baptist feet, charismatic hands, and Catholic ears--all with their eyes on Jesus” (*World*, Nov. 14, 1992).

By 2005, Messer ignored his own warning from 1996 and Trinity was borrowing heavily from the “unholy music.” That year I received the following firsthand report from a friend in Florida, which I published in *Friday Church News Notes* on October 7.

“I wanted to share some sad information with you. As I visited the Trinity Baptist website, I found them doing what Dan Lucarini refers to as ‘blended’ song services. Bryant Shipton is referred to as the ‘worship pastor.’ The two songs that I heard were ‘Lord Reign in Me’ by

Brenton Brown of the Vineyard U.K. and ‘Call on Jesus’ by Nicole C. Mullen. Over the last two Sundays they have used ‘Rise Up and Praise Him’ by Paul Balouche, ‘I Am friend of God’ by the non-Trinitarian Philips, Craig and Dean, and ‘Shout to the Lord’ by the charismatic Darlene Zschech. When you see them using these radically ecumenical groups and musicians, it is obvious that they are headed away from their former position.”

Trinity was also messing around with shallow, ecumenical Southern Gospel groups such as Gold City.

The following is by Jeff Royal, January 29, 2010

“I visited Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville several weeks ago where Pastor Tom Messer is pastor. What concerned me was the music. They opened with a jazzed up version of ‘To God Be the Glory’ and I could not follow the worship leader Jason Cross although I tried. It was sung very fast and choppy and had a whole new chorus inserted in the song that supposedly made it more meaningful. They next led with the celebration choir and worship team in ‘Let the Worshipers Arise’ by the Pentecostal group Philips, Craig, and Dean. They followed that with ‘Lord, I Offer My Life to You’ by Don Moen of Integrity music. In my opinion, Trinity has succumbed to and completely bought into CCM as part of their worship services. Of course, this change has been going on for several years now. They just didn’t decide a few weeks ago to embrace CCM. The people in general are very friendly at Trinity. Something I’m sad to say is lacking at many fundamental IB churches today. Please pray for Pastor Messer and the leadership at Trinity Baptist. In my opinion, they are headed down a dangerous road. While introducing a choir performance, Jason Cross mentioned Lou Giglio in no less than glowing terms. Giglio in my opinion is from the ‘emerging’ church camp and Pastor Messer should know better even if his worship leader doesn’t. I’m reminded of the wise words of the late evangelist Gordon Sears

who said, ‘When the standard of music is lowered, then the standard of dress is also lowered. When the standard of dress is lowered, then the standard of conduct is also lowered. When the standard of conduct is lowered, then the sense of value in God’s truth is lowered’ (Songfest newsletter, April 2001).”

Trinity Baptist College’s annual Church Life Student Conference for 2011 featured a speaker who is passionate about Christian rock. On his web site, Tony Nolan says he is “an outspoken advocate of Contemporary Christian Music” and “partners regularly in concert and conferences with rockers such as Third Day, Reliant K, SuperTones, Pillar, Skillet, Delirious, and Toby Mac.

Another speaker at Trinity’s Church Life conference was Greg Locke, who also speaks at the Gospel Light Youth Conference in Walkertown, North Carolina. Gospel Light Baptist Church pastored by Bobby Roberson has a reputation of being an old-fashioned, sin-hating, separated Bible-believing Baptist church, but Locke’s association with Christian rockers is a spiritual disease that will spread if it is not dealt with.

I hope I am wrong, but have serious doubts that the necessary separation will happen, because Roberson preaches at Clarence Sexton’s Friendship Conferences and thus apparently shares Sexton’s wrong-headed philosophy that for the sake of evangelism, Independent Baptists should associate together regardless of the various “secondary” issues that divide them today, one of those issues being contemporary music.

By May 2011, Trinity published its own full-blown Christian rock album by the in-house praise & worship band ChurchLife.

By November 2012, hosting a Christian rock tour featuring Tenth Avenue North, Rend Collective Experiment, and Audrey Assad, all of whom have intimate ties with the

emerging church and all of whom are one-world church builders.

The REND COLLECTIVE EXPERIMENT, from northern Ireland, is hooked intimately into the emerging church via its close association with emergent leaders such as Tony Campolo, David Crowder, and Shane Claiborne (<http://rendcollective.com/bio>). Of the Rend Collective Experiment, Campolo says, “Here’s some music that will motivate Christians to participate in God’s revolution in the world.” He is referring to the heresy of building the kingdom of God in this present world. Campolo believes in evolution, rejects the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, believes that non-Christians will go to heaven, mocks the imminent return of Christ, supports the homosexual rights movement, and promotes Roman Catholic contemplative prayer practices. (For documentation see “Beware of Tony Campolo” at [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).) Claiborne has worked with the Roman Catholic Missionaries of Charity and praises Mother Teresa as a truly spiritual person, even though she held a false sacramental gospel that falls under the curse of Galatians 1 and worshipped the wafer of the Catholic mass as Christ. Further, she was a universalist and her “sisters” prepare Hindus to die by teaching them to pray to their false gods. (See the free Way of Life eBook *Was Mother Teresa a True Christian?* for extensive documentation, [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).) In January 2012, Crowder led worship for the send-off of Rob Bell at Mars Hill Bible Church in Grandville, Michigan (“Rob Bell Received a Tearful Farewell,” *Christian Post*, Jan. 9, 2012). Crowder thus put his blessing on Bell’s many rank heresies, including his rejection of the Bible’s infallible inspiration and his denial of the eternal judgment of hell. In his 2011 book *Love Wins*, Bell preaches near-universalism, as well as a false god, a false christ, a false gospel, a false heaven, and a false hell.

AUDREY ASSAD converted to the Roman Catholic Church in 2007. Like her fellow Roman Catholic musicians Matt Maher, Kathy Troccoli, and John Michael Talbot, Assad is an ecumenical bridge-builder. She says that “the response to her music from Protestants is just as positive as it is from Catholics,” and, “radio has influenced and grown my Protestant fan base, which used to be more Catholic, but now it’s about half-and-half” (“Audrey Assad: A convert whose spiritual walk is a melody,” Catholic Online, Nov. 10, 2010). In 2008, she developed a relationship with fellow Roman Catholic Matt Maher after they met during Gospel Music Week. She subsequently moved to Phoenix and attends Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Tempe, where she sings with the worship team. Her song “For Love of You” mentions the Roman Catholic Sacred Heart of Jesus. When asked how her Catholic faith inspires her music, she replies: “The way that I see the world has been radically changed. I can’t emphasize enough how the Sacramental union with God in the Eucharist has totally changed the way I see the world” (“Audrey Assad: A convert whose spiritual walk is a melody,” Catholic Online, Nov. 10, 2010). She loves C.S. Lewis, and one of her projects was to read all of his works chronologically. She observes that Lewis was “a great bridge between Protestants and Catholics.”

In April 2014, Trinity Baptist again hosted the Rend Collective Experiment, mentioned above. This group is hooked intimately into the emerging church via its close association with emergent leaders such as Tony Campolo, David Crowder, and Shane Claiborne (<http://rendcollective.com/bio>).

Joining the Rend Collective Experiment at Trinity in April 2014 is charismatic Kari Jobe, who claims to have a “prophetic ministry.” Her rendition of “Revelation Song (by Jennie Lee Riddle)” “brought the song to the forefront rivaling Darlene Zschech’s ‘Shout to the Lord’ for songs most sung in

churches nationwide” (“Kari Jobe Talks Prophetic Ministry,” Examiner.com, March 16, 2012). Jobe is worship pastor at the Pentecostal Gateway Church in Dallas, Texas, a multi-campus megachurch. She describes growing up in a Pentecostal atmosphere as follows: “We would go places where people were giving prophetic words and I would receive prophetic ministry. Many of those prophetic words have come to pass or are coming to pass.”

Who would have prophesied in 1996, when Trinity Baptist hosted the Southwide Baptist Fellowship and issued a statement warning about ecumenical Promise Keepers and its “unholy music,” that Trinity would have been swimming in these frightfully apostate waters within 16 years?

And yet the seeds of compromise had already been sown, as we document in this book.

### **Highland Park Baptist Church**

Highland Park Baptist Church, home of Tennessee Temple University, which came out of the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1940s and was a prominent fundamental Baptist institution for half a century, was rocking out by the mid-2000s. In April of 2005 the church and school hosted a Christian rock concert featuring Bebo Norman, Fernando Ortega, and Sara Groves. It was held in Highland Park’s main auditorium. All three of these mainstream CCM musicians are enemies of biblical separatism. Ortega, for example, is an Episcopalian who has appeared at Billy Graham Crusades and Promise Keepers conferences. Bebo Norman has toured with Amy Grant.

The October 29, 2005, issue of the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* featured a picture of Tennessee Temple University students “worshipping” to contemporary rock music during a Wednesday evening service. TTU president Danny Lovett said, “Each generation has different styles of music, and what

churches have to realize is that we've got to meet those younger generations' needs."

In April 2006, the school's College Days, when prospective students visit the campus, featured two Christian rockers, Toddiefunk and the Electric Church and Warren Barfield. Toddiefunk is the bass player for Toby Mac, formerly with DC Talk. Electric Church's album *Ready or Not* featured "Holy Ghost Thang," "Dance Floor," "Naked," and "Crazy."

Tennessee Temple was one of the sponsors of the "Winter Jam Tour 2007," which featured Christian rockers such as Jeremy Camp, Steven Curtis Chapman, Sanctus Real, and Hawk Nelson. Sanctus Real lead guitarist Chris Rohman says: "On the tours we've been lucky to be part of, the kids are really into the rockin' songs ... every night on that tour kids were just screaming along to every word of every song." Can you imagine the apostle Paul promoting this type of worldly thing?

Matt Hammitt of Sanctus Real participated in the 2003 tour of the *!Hero* rock opera, which depicts Jesus as a cool black man. In *!Hero*, the Last Supper is a barbecue party and 'Jesus' is crucified on a city street sign. Sanctus Real and Steven Curtis Chapman played a concert in 2003 at St. Mary Seminary sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, Ohio. Retired Catholic bishop Anthony Pilla celebrated mass at the event. Chapman told the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* that it's "a good thing" that "the Catholic Church is showing a greater openness to contemporary Christian music" (*Plain Dealer*, Aug. 7, 2006).

By 2008, Highland Park Baptist Church had gone back into the Southern Baptist Convention.

A couple of years earlier Tennessee Temple had emerging church leader Dallas Willard for the Spring Lecture Series. Willard believes that "it is possible for someone who does not know Jesus to be saved" ("Apologetics in Action," *Cutting Edge* magazine, Winter 2001). He rejects the infallible

inspiration of Scripture, saying, “Jesus and his words have never belonged to the categories of dogma or law, and to read them as if they did is simply to miss the point” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. xiii). Willard is confused about salvation. He says, “Why is it that we look upon salvation as a moment that began our religious life instead of the daily life we receive from God” (*The Spirit of the Disciplines*). He rejects the traditional gospel of Christ’s blood atonement (*The Divine Conspiracy*, pp. 44, 49). In his book *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, which promotes Roman Catholic-style contemplative mysticism, Willard includes the endorsement of Sue Monk Kidd, a New Age “goddess.” (See “From Southern Baptist to Goddess Worship” at the Way of Life web site.) Willard promotes the Catholic-Buddhist Thomas Merton and an assortment of heresy-laden mystic “saints.” Willard claims that God is not concerned about doctrinal purity. In fact, he says that God loves theologians of all types.

In 2012, Highland Park Baptist Church became the Church of the Highlands to reflect a location change as well as its new generic contemporary philosophy. Jeremy Roberts, Highland Park’s 28-year-old Southern Baptist pastor, said, “It’ll be the funnest church around” (“Chattanooga’s Iconic Highland Park,” *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, Sept. 10, 2012). As we have seen, the church had been pursuing a “progressive” model for about a decade which has nearly killed it. Current attendance was around 300, down from the thousands that attended services in the 1970s.

In 2015, Tennessee Temple University closed its doors, merging with Piedmont International University of Winston-Salem, NC, thus reaching the end of the death spiral it had been on since the 1990s.

### **Southwide Baptist Fellowship**

Southwide Baptist Fellowship, founded by Lee Roberson of Highland Park Baptist Church and formerly one of the largest

Independent Baptist networks, was rocking out by the mid-2000s and had begun to capitulate to the New Evangelical philosophy.

Many of the speakers who preached at Southwide in October 2003 were from churches with contemporary rock worship services. Bo Moore, the moderator of Southwide that year, is the pastor of Heritage Baptist Church of Kentwood, Michigan, which advertised itself at that time as “a progressive Independent Baptist church” with a “High Impact” Sunday evening service consisting of “praise and worship choruses led by our worship leader, praise team and band.” Another Southwide speaker that year, Johnny Hunt, is pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Georgia, a rocking Southern Baptist congregation that decidedly rejects “separatism.” A man wrote to me in 2003 and testified, “I visited there [Hunt’s church] and got up and left because of the wild, party-like atmosphere in their ‘worship’ service.”

Jerry Falwell was slated to speak at the 51st Southwide Baptist Fellowship, October 22-25, 2006, at Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida. This is further evidence of Southwide’s deeply compromised direction and the fact that it has left its original moorings. The music at the 2006 Fellowship was led by Mike Speck. His choral book “Everlasting Praise” features many songs that are on the CCLI list of top 25 contemporary “praise and worship” songs in America, including “Shout to the Lord” by the radical ecumenist and charismatic Christian rocker Darlene Zschech. Jerry Falwell well represented Southwide’s new direction and philosophy. In the late 1970s he formed the Moral Majority, and by February 1986 he told *Christianity Today* that Catholics made up the largest constituency (30%). In his autobiography *Strength for the Journey*, Falwell referred to the “Catholic brothers and sisters in the Moral Majority” (p. 371). Falwell endorsed Chuck Colson’s 1992 book, *The Body*, which urges evangelicals to join forces with Catholics and

Charismatics. Colson said, "... the body of Christ, in all its diversity, is created with Baptist feet, charismatic hands, and Catholic ears--all with their eyes on Jesus" (*World*, Nov. 14, 1992).

By 2007, the number of Southern Baptist speakers at Southwide equaled the number of Independent Baptists, and two contemporary musicians provided music, including one who had appeared on the Crystal Cathedral television program with Robert Schuller (Don Boys, "Rise and Fall of Southwide," CSTNews.com, May 16, 2007).

In 2009, Southern Baptist Ed Stetzer was invited to speak at the Southwide Baptist Fellowship meeting. They even sent a plane to fly him from Nevada, but because of severe weather he was forced to land in Albuquerque and missed the meeting (Stetzer, "Wednesday: Southwide Baptist Fellowship and Independent Fundamental Baptists," 2009, [www.edstetzer.com](http://www.edstetzer.com)).

Stetzer, head of the SBC LifeWay research department, holds the "in non-essentials liberty" heresy, despises separatism, and associates with pretty much anybody and everybody. He is a bridge to the "broader church" that is filled to the brim today with ancient and end-times heresies (such as baptismal regeneration, popery, Mariolatry, sacramentalism, anti-Trinitarianism, universalism, Catholic mysticism, kingdom now reconstructionism, Charismaticism, theistic evolution, fallible inspiration of Scripture, panentheism, the non-judgmental "Shack" god, and "Christian homosexuality"). As far as I know, Stetzer, as a "conservative evangelical," doesn't hold to these heresies, but he is a bridge to the broader "evangelical church" where an individual can easily be influenced by any and all of these. (Most of these errors are represented in any LifeWay Bookstore.) Consider some of Stetzer's direct associations. He is closely affiliated with Mark Driscoll, who is "culturally liberal" (e.g., ushering in the New Year through champaign

dance parties), hates the doctrine of the pre-tribulational Rapture, and promotes Catholic contemplative mysticism, among other things. Stetzer is affiliated with fellow Southern Baptist Rick Warren, who in turn is closely affiliated with many New Agers and universalists (e.g., Tony Blair, Mehmet Oz, Daniel Amen, Mark Hyman, and Leonard Sweet) and promotes Catholic contemplative mysticism. Stetzer is non-critically affiliated with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, which in turn is affiliated with the papacy, praises the pope, and has turned thousands of “converts” over to the Catholic Church. Stetzer is also affiliated with the most liberal of emergents, who deny the infallible inspiration of Scripture, the substitutionary atonement, a literal hell, and many other fundamentals of the faith. Though Stetzer criticizes their heresies, he does so in gentle terms and refuses to disassociate from them. For example, Stetzer participates in Shapevine, an emerging church blog that features liberal emergents such as Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Sally Morgenthaler, Alan Hirsch, and Leonard Sweet. Shapevine is called “a global community of collaborators”; and “conservative Southern Baptists” like Stetzer are right in the middle of this unscriptural collaboration (Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 Timothy 3:5).

The 2009 Southwide Baptist Fellowship meeting was held at Marcus Pointe Baptist Temple in Pensacola, Florida. The pastor, Gordon Godfrey, also spoke at the Southwide meeting in 2006.

In 2009, Evangelist Tim Lee reported in his blog that the Southwide meeting “was awesome” and that Marcus Pointe is one of his supporting churches.

This “awesome” church has been on the slippery slope of spiritual compromise for many years, and the effect is obvious. In January 2016 the Marcus Pointe choir backed up entertainer Barry Manilow on his *One Last Time Tour*. The church’s choir accompanied Manilow in a worldly rock & roll

show that included Manilow's hit song "Copacabana." The lyrics begin like this: "Her name was Lola, she was a showgirl/ With yellow feathers in her hair and a dress cut down to there/ She would merengue and do the cha-cha/ And while she tried to be a star/ Tony always tended bar/ Across the crowded floor, they worked from 8 til 4/ They were young and they had each other/ Who could ask for more?" When a concerned brother in Christ communicated to one of the Marcus Pointe choir members that Manilow is a homosexual who "married" his long-time partner in 2015, the choir member knew about it but "didn't seem to care."

One day, it will be evident to such people that the true grace of God is not non-judgmental tolerance of sin and error. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit 2:11-12). "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph 5:11).

### **Cedarville University**

Cedarville University (which was Cedarville Baptist College prior to 2002) capitulated to the New Evangelical philosophy in the 1990s. In January 2001, the ecumenical charismatic Jim Cymbala of the Brooklyn Tabernacle was a featured speaker. When I warned about this in *O Timothy* magazine, I received a deluge of angry, mocking correspondence from Cedarville students. Many espoused the ecumenical doctrine. Consider a couple of examples. One student said, "I agree that the charismatic movement is wrong in some large doctrinal issues, but we are still responsible to be unified in the Body of Christ." Another said, "What all Christianity lacks today is UNITY. ... I believe that if people want to believe or not believe something that is their judgment. ... [signed] Proud to be a Cedarville student."

Many Cedarville students reproved me for speaking against Christian rock. For example, one student wrote,

“The fact that the choir at his church sings what you would call ‘contemporary and jazzy’ music proves my theory that you must be a narrow-minded, brain-washed backwoods Baptist. It ----- [here he used a profanity] me off whenever anybody condemns a style of music simply because it is anything other than 18th century hymns or classical. There is no such thing as bad ‘music.’”

Another wrote,

“You can spend your whole life debating over issues as such, but until you receive the gift of genuine love in your heart, you’ll never understand or gain anything.”

(The communications I received in 2011 from students at West Coast Baptist College in response to my warnings about that school’s adaptation of CCM reminded me of those I had received a decade earlier from Cedarville students.)

In 2002, Cedarville was approved for Southern Baptists. The Baptist Press (Jan. 3, 2002) said that “Cedarville is one of the top feeder schools for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.” Cedarville President Paul Dixon “voiced excitement” for a “growing a relationship with Southern Baptists.” Jack Kwok, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Ohio praised Cedarville and recommended the school to “all Southern Baptists,” observing that they “embrace our theology, our polity and our missiology.”

In October 2002, CCM musician Michael Card performed at Cedarville. Card has produced an album jointly with Roman Catholic John Michael Talbot, who prays to Mary and practices yoga. Card and Talbot perform ecumenical concerts together at Catholic and Protestant churches. Card led the “worship” for “an Evening of Friendship” with Mormons in Salt Lake City in March 2011. On that occasion he said that

he “doesn’t see Mormonism and evangelical Christianity as opposed to each other; they are more like the two ends of a long thread -- part of the same thing” (*Deseret Morning News*, Nov. 16, 2004). Card also said, “The older I get, I guess the more I want to integrate everything. I think it’s more important to be faithful than right.”

Michael Card represents the new non-separatist Cedarville.

### **Joyful Woman**

*Joyful Woman*, a magazine for women published by the daughters of the late fundamentalist evangelist John R. Rice, adopted the New Evangelical philosophy in the 1990s. The editor is Joy Rice Martin; two other Rice daughters, Jessie Sandberg and Joanna Rice, are contributing editors; and Elizabeth Rice Handford is the editorial consultant.

The July-August 1991 issue of *Joyful Woman* contained a full-page ad for Campus Crusade’s Here’s Life Publishers, including the offer of a book entitled *Freeing Your Mind from Memories That Bind*. Campus Crusade has been radically ecumenical since its inception and has had Roman Catholic staff members.

The Jan.-Feb. 1992 issue of *Joyful Woman* contained a full page ad for the radically ecumenical World Vision, as well as an advertisement for the New International Version. World Vision works closely with the Roman Catholic Church in many parts of the world and its leader signed the Evangelicals and Catholics Together statement.

The May-June 1994 issue of *Joyful Woman* featured James Dobson and his wife, Shirley, on the front cover. Fifteen years earlier, Focus on the Family’s vice president Rolf Zettersten said he and co-workers “cast their theological distinctives aside in order to achieve a common objective--to help families” (*Focus on the Family*, December 1989). Dobson has had a close and uncritical relationship with Roman

Catholicism. The November 1989 issue of Focus on the Family's *Clubhouse* magazine featured Mother Teresa and there was not a word of warning about her false gospel and universalism. In November 2000, Dobson participated in a conference in Rome hosted by the pope's Pontifical Council for the Family and by the Acton Institute, a Roman Catholic organization. Dobson met with Pope John Paul II. The September 1990 issue of *New Covenant*, a Catholic charismatic magazine, praised Focus on the Family and featured a smiling Dobson on the cover, while another of the articles promoted prayers to Mary.

The Joyful Woman Jubilee in October 1994 featured the radically ecumenical Elisabeth Elliot as a speaker. In July 1989, Elliot spoke at the Roman Catholic Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, a hotbed of Roman Catholic-Charismatic confusion. Franciscan University holds an annual conference to exalt the blasphemous Catholic dogmas that Mary is the immaculately conceived Queen of Heaven and advocate of God's people. In 1998, Elliot spoke at Notre Dame (Our Mother) University. When her brother converted to the Roman Catholic Church, Elliot said it is acceptable to be a Catholic and to celebrate the Catholic mass. She said this during a question-answer session at a gathering at the Wisconsin Expo Center on September 6, 1997, sponsored by WVCY radio in Milwaukee.

When Highland Park Baptist Church announced in September 2012 that it was changing its name to the Church of the Highlands in order to pursue a "more progressive, 21st century model of ministry, Joy Martin said that she supports the move and believes that Lee Roberson would be excited about it, as well ("Highland Park Baptist Selling," Nooga.com, Sept. 10, 2012).

## **Northland Baptist Bible College**

Northland Baptist Bible College became a Southern Baptist institution in October 2014 and closed its doors soon thereafter.

Northland had been moving in a compromised direction for some time. On October 22, 2002, we published a warning by Pastor Bobby Mitchell, Jr., of Maine that “Northland promotes John Piper’s materials to the student body and he is held in high esteem among the students.” Piper has influenced many Independent Baptists in a Calvinistic, New Evangelical direction. Dr. Sam Horn, a vice president at Northland, responded to Pastor Mitchell’s warning as follows: “I can’t begin to tell you the times we have publicly addressed the Piper issue on our campus and encouraged our guys to stay off him. ... We did not renew contracts with two teachers last year over the issue of Hyper-Calvinism and Hyper-Dispensationalism. We are constantly hitting the Piper and New Evangelical issue” (“More about Northland and John Piper,” Fundamental Baptist Information Service, Oct. 25, 2012).

Obviously they didn’t hit it hard enough, because by 2010, the die was cast. Northland’s chapel welcomed Rick Holland, executive pastor of John MacArthur’s Grace Community Church. Not only is Holland a “hyper” Calvinist, he also heads up the “Resolved” conferences which pollute the minds and hearts of young people with Christian rock and rap.

That year, Northland also invited Bruce Ware, Southern Baptist Seminary professor, to conduct a seminar for pastors.

Matt Olson, former president of Northland, pushed the “in essentials unity” philosophy to justify the changes. He said that issues such as “Bible translations, music, dress, methods of ministry, secondary associations” are non-essentials and such things should not be used as a basis for separation (“Pursuing Transparency with Change,” MatthewOlson.com, Apr. 18, 2013).

This is the Southern Baptist principle of “unity in diversity.” No wonder Northland joined the Convention before going defunct.

The downward slide was also evident in the school’s music. In the 1990s, Northland’s music was truly sacred by design. There was no hint of the world.

By 2010, things were changing, yet Matt Olson made the following statement about Northland’s music philosophy. “Philosophically, it is unchanged. Let me say it again... unchanged” (*An Open Letter from Dr. Matt Olson of Northland International University*, Nov. 24, 2010).

That year, Northland published the following position statement on music: “We avoid music classified as Contemporary Christian Music--sacred music which is written or performed in a popular or worldly style. These styles include rock, Blues, Jazz, big band, rap, New Age, and other styles normally associated with worldly entertainment or dancing. ... Because of our conservative stance regarding music and performance, we do not endorse Contemporary Christian artists who use worldly techniques in performing or recording their music. We view Christian Rock Music as a contradiction in terms and reject it as being Christian.”

This reminds us that churches and schools at the top of the compromise slide invariably claim that nothing has changed, and they attack those who point out the changes. This happened at Tennessee Temple in the 1990s and it happened at Northland.

Evidence was not long in coming that disproved Northland’s claim that they were not changing. In fact, the same year the new position statement claimed that they were avoiding CCM, Northland students and staff performed music from and danced to the Broadway play entitled *Wicked*. Lou Martuneac rightly commented, “One might assume that since this was Spirit Week on campus that this was done as a parody. Nevertheless, there is no justification

whatsoever for this presentation on the campus of a fundamental Christian college” (January 10, 2011, [indefenseofthegospel.blogspot.com](http://indefenseofthegospel.blogspot.com)).

In 2012, Northland’s communications department published a rap video that was recorded in the presence of three professors (Brock Miller, Lydia Stewart, and Rachel Trach). Northland student Facebook pages praised the “rapping and beatboxing skills.”

By 2013 the dramatic change in music philosophy was evident for all to see. Northland’s “Pizza and Praise” night featured “no holds barred” rock & roll performed by the school’s very own contemporary praise band, Redeemed. An advertisement for Redeemed was posted at the school’s web site. On April 4, 2013, Lou Martuneac described this advertisement as follows: “The singers are being recorded in the basement of the Jacquot Educational Building, which houses the library, several classrooms, and the recording studio. Merideth Sullivan is the daughter of Peter Sullivan, hired the fall of 2010. Also in the video are Pete and Lisa Wehrey (former Dean of women), Matt Olson, the Sullivans (Merideth’s parents), Mike and Sandy Glanzer (Admissions), Antone Goyak (VP for Academics), Kevin and Laurie Priest (Registrar; daughter of Ken Hay).”

In 2014, Northland became a Southern Baptist institution after the trustees voted to donate the school to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The decision to take Northland into the SBC was made under the leadership of the president, Daniel Patz, who is the grandson of the school’s founder Paul Patz. Al Mohler, Jr., president of Southern Seminary, said, “The fact that there will be a Boyce College and Southern Seminary campus located in Wisconsin on a campus of this stature is an enormous step forward for Southern Baptists. I can only imagine what the founders of the Southern Baptist Convention would think to know that the reach of the SBC and its mother seminary is now of this magnitude in the

upper Midwest” (“Southern Seminary trustees accept gift of Wisconsin university campus,” Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, news.sbts.edu, Oct. 15, 2014). Dennis Hansen, director of missions of the Bay Lakes Baptist Association in Appleton, Wisconsin, says, “I think the Southern Baptist work in the upper Midwest is really going to benefit from this.”

By 2015, Northland had closed its doors.

### **Other Examples**

**CENTRAL BAPTIST SEMINARY OF MINNESOTA AND CALVARY BAPTIST SEMINARY OF PENNSYLVANIA** are also moving into the evangelical orb. They have bought into the New Evangelical “in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty” philosophy.

Calvary Baptist Seminary invited Southern Baptist leader Mark Dever to speak at their National Leadership Conference.

Kevin Bauder of Central Baptist uses his blog to praise “conservative evangelicals” such as Southern Baptist Seminary head Al Mohler, John Piper, D.A. Carson, and R. C. Sproul.

Bauder claims that the “conservative evangelicals” aren’t New Evangelicals and he conveniently defines New Evangelicalism in a way that proves his point (whereas his predecessors at Central, Richard Clearwaters and Ernest Pickering, displayed greater wisdom in their understanding of New Evangelism). While there are many aspects of New Evangelicalism, the defining principle from its inception was a “repudiation of separatism.” That was the way that Harold Ockenga put it. That is Billy and Franklin Graham’s foundational working principle. And by that definition, every Southern Baptist conservative is a New Evangelical. That is evident by the simple fact that they remain in the SBC, which is an unholy organization that encompasses theological

Liberalism, Charismaticism, Masonism, Billy Graham ecumenical evangelism, modern textual criticism, amillennialism, the rock & roll emerging philosophy, female preachers, psychoheresy, Catholic mysticism, and other errors and evils. The Southern Baptist Convention is filled with men who have the same unscriptural philosophy as Ed Young Jr., with his non-judgmental, downplay doctrine philosophy and his close association with heretics such as Pentecostal Word-Faith preacher Brian Houston of Sydney, Australia. Brian's wife is his "co-pastor"; he preaches a prosperity gospel; he thinks vain muttering is "tongues speaking"; and his worship leader participates in Roman Catholic conferences. The "conservative" Southern Baptist Ed is fine with all that.

If you think I am wrong on this, send me a book or a preaching series by a "conservative evangelical" on biblical separation. Typically, the only thing they have to say about separation is ridicule for those who practice it. They refuse to be restrained by separation. They don't have a heart for it. They want a big tent, but God's Word doesn't allow it.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

Other examples could be given. In fact, this rejection of "separatism" is sweeping through fundamental Baptist churches like a hurricane.

We are living in a time of breathtaking change, a time of blending, and most Independent Baptist preachers and their churches are not in a position to stand. There was a time when a preacher could remain ignorant of important issues and drift along with the "herd" in a right direction, more or less, but that day is long past.

It's not a day for building big tent associations. It is a day to narrow down one's associations in order to protect oneself and one's family and friends and ministry and church from the contagious disease of compromise.

# Reasons for the Collapse

Many other examples could be given of the rapid collapse of separatism among fundamental Baptists, and I am convinced that unless there is a dramatic change most fundamental Baptist churches will be well down the New Evangelical-emerging path within 10-20 years.

Following are some of the reasons:

- Unholiness and Worldliness
- Biblical Shallowness
- Lack of Prayer
- The Maligning of Warning and Reproof
- Unquestioning Loyalty to Man
- Following the Crowd
- Pragmatism and Big-mindedness
- Ignorance about Important Issues
- Soft Separatism
- Lack of Serious Discipleship
- Carelessness about Music
- Quick Prayerism

## **Lukewarmness, Unholiness, Worldliness**

There is a shocking lack of passion for Christ, holiness, and separation from the world in a great many fundamental Baptist churches.

A large percentage of church members only give lip service to separation and holy living. Though they might “dress up” a bit for church services, in their daily lives, they look like the world, talk like the world, think like the world.

They are not cold; they are not hot; they are lukewarm; and we know what Christ thinks about lukewarm Christianity.

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art

lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16).

God’s purpose for man is that he love the Lord with all of his being. This is repeated three times in the law of Moses and three times by Christ. God must be first in man’s thinking and passion and deeds. Anything less is idolatry.

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment” (Mark 12:30).

The lukewarmness, unholiness, and worldliness is evident in the lives of many pastors. There is a lack of godly Christian character. Dishonesty, adultery, child molestation, even homosexuality are common in many Independent Baptist circles.

The lukewarmness, unholiness, and worldliness is evident in the emphasis on parties, games, fun, and entertainment. It is a Christianized version of modern society’s emphasis on entertainment. The average church’s calendar speaks volumes about its true heart and soul. Youth meetings are all about fun with a veneer of spirituality and a dab of Bible. The entertainment program might be interrupted for a few moments for a little Bible study, a short sermon, and a prayer, but soon it’s back to the “real program” of fun. The “senior citizens” program is little different from the youth’s.

The lukewarmness, unholiness, and worldliness is evident in the emphasis over the last couple of decades on “lightening up” and not being “too strict.” This is in direct disobedience to Scriptures such as the following:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Ephesians 5:11).

“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (James 4:4).

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness” (James 4:8-9).

“Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

The fundamental thing that is missing in so many church members' lives is a true passion for the Lord Jesus Christ. In far too many cases, it isn't that they have left their first love; it's that they have never had a first love.

It is impossible for an unholy church to stand against the hurricane force winds of apostasy in these days.

### **Biblical Shallowness**

There is a frightful lack of biblical knowledge among members of the average Independent Baptist church, in my experience. Many pastors have admitted to me that the majority of their people are not serious Bible students.

It is impossible to understand the Bible properly and grow in understanding of it effectively without training in such things as principles of interpretation, Bible history and geography, Bible culture, and theology or Bible doctrine, yet most members of Independent Baptist churches are grossly lacking in such things.

Most are like a church member I talked with recently who told me that his Bible reading is "hit and miss" and that he had no Bible dictionary, concordance, or commentary, had never learned to use such tools, and knew little to nothing about the principles of Bible interpretation. Another church member told me recently that his daily Bible study consists of reading a couple of verses chosen randomly.

It is not uncommon for church members not even to look at their Bibles during the preaching. Few come to the services to obtain serious Bible education and to capture practical truth they can use in their lives and ministries.

In many Independent Baptist churches, people can attend faithfully for years without learning the Bible well. The teachers are ineffective and not properly trained, the Sunday School lessons and preaching are biblically shallow, and the people are not taught to study the Bible for themselves.

No wonder so many churches change direction so easily when the pastor changes. They aren't properly grounded in Scripture. They are dependent on a man rather than the Spirit of God and the Word of God. They are man-centered rather than Christ-centered.

The problem begins with pastors who are not serious Bible students and not effectual in teaching.

In the Pastoral Epistles, we see that every preacher is to be a serious Bible student. Paul taught Timothy to be nourished up in good doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6), to give attendance to reading and to doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13), to take heed unto doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16). He taught Timothy that it is the elder who labors in the word and doctrine who is worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5:17). Too many pastors want the double honor of this verse without paying the price of laboring in the Word of God.

Paul reminded Timothy that he had been educated among many witnesses and exhorted him to pass this same biblical education along to others (2 Tim. 2:2). He exhorted him to study to show himself approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). He taught him to be "apt to teach," which requires much learning (2 Tim. 2:24). He taught him that the Scripture is for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16). He taught him to preach God's Word with doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2).

Paul showed Timothy the example of having a passion for study even when he was in prison and old and knew that he would soon face martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:13)!

Paul taught Timothy that the qualified pastor is a man who has "been taught" so well that he is capable of protecting the congregation from whatever error the devil throws at it (Titus 1:9-16). This requires a lot of teaching and a lot of study.

Christ instructed us not only to preach the gospel to every creature, but also to disciple the converts so thoroughly that we teach them to *observe all things* whatsoever He has taught us (Mat. 28:19-20). See also Acts 20:27, where Paul taught the

*whole counsel of God.* That refers to the complete canon of Scripture. That is a lot of Bible education. It requires the teaching of history and geography and prophecy and a thousand other things.

Many Independent Baptist preachers are not too far behind the Primitive Baptists described in *The Man Who Moved a Mountain*, a biography of Virginia preacher Robert Childress. They actually gloried in their ignorance. One preacher shouted, “Praises be to God that I am ignorant. I’d only praise him more if I were ignorant” (p. 22). Hearing such things as a child, Childress recalled thinking to himself, “Did God hate learning?” (p. 22).

One preacher described the situation at First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana, in its heyday under Jack Hyles, as follows:

“I attended Hyles-Anderson and I noticed very quickly that they had a huge emphasis on ministry (i.e. bus work, winning souls) but they REALLY lacked in the Bible department. I heard a lot of do’s and don’t’s, I heard a lot of ‘Dr Hyles says,’ but I rarely heard anybody explain from the Bible why. Why do we need to be separated, why the CCM churches are wrong, why dress modestly. Hyles people are very anemic when it comes to Bible. I once heard Jack Schaap (before he became pastor) in chapel say, ‘Some of you guys say you need to come back early from your bus route to study your Bible; don’t worry about learning your Bible; you are here for the ministry; you can learn your Bible when you graduate from here.’ Bro, they are Biblically ignorant; they are all practical and no doctrine.”

I have found that the most difficult place to sell serious Bible study books and associated materials is at the average Independent Baptist preachers’ meeting. There are exceptions, but I have found this to be the rule.

A pastor friend who has been in the ministry for many decades wrote the following to me in 2014:

“I asked a missionary what books he had read lately that were a blessing, and he replied that all he reads is a magazine on running. I fear that Independent Baptists may be the *illiterati* of the 20th and 21st centuries. And the present addiction to iPhones and social media only makes it worse. John Nordman, who worked with Hyles years ago at Hyles Anderson, led the Bible college in Brisbane for some years until the pastor’s son did a Schaap on some kids there and the wheels fell off. He sent me their college prospectus one year hoping to get some of our kids, and I wrote him back and asked him why there was not a course on theology. I later found out that Hyles Anderson never allowed theology to be taught because Jack Hyles thought it would turn their students into Calvinists. Some years ago I started asking preachers questions when we sat around talking or when we drove down the road. Questions on what doctrine was especially precious to them at that moment, or what book of the Bible they love the most this week, or what good book they are reading, or which one has helped them grow the most, or what authors are the most challenging to them spiritually, or what they think about this or that verse (and I pick the hardest ones to ask about). If they are driving, I take my Bible and read to them some passage I am meditating on and ask them to explain it to me. Most of them are out of their depth within ten seconds. Some stare at me with open mouth and shake their head. The Presbyterian pastors I know are the most adept at discussing solid Bible doctrine. Most of the Independent Baptist pastors have never read anything deeper than John Rice or Curtis Hutson. We had a missionary here this weekend who tells great stories, but doesn’t know ANY solid Bible doctrine.”

This preacher said further:

“There is abysmal ignorance concerning the doctrine of Christ, concerning the doctrines of justification, sanctification, and glorification. One of our major

problems is that expository preaching is not politically correct in fundamental churches. For a pastor to preach through a book of the Bible is a rare thing. Most of the men I know don't do that because it doesn't draw big crowds and they like fireworks in the pulpit or fairy tales."

**A major reason why so many Independent Baptist churches are biblically shallow is the shallow preaching.**

Shallow evangelism and carelessness about membership has produced churches that are mixed multitudes, and shallow preaching has kept the mixed multitudes biblically shallow.

I witnessed this at the largest, most influential Independent Baptist church in its heyday in the 1970s. In my three and a half years at Highland Park Baptist Church I heard the most acclaimed preachers of the Independent Baptist movement, and they were great speakers, great story tellers, great entertainers, great motivators, but for the most part they were shallow Bible preachers. Expository preaching was exceedingly rare.

Jack Hyles was the king of shallow biblical preaching, taking verses out of context and using a text as a pretext. He would read a verse, then say, "Now close your Bibles and listen to me."

Recently a friend described the sermon of a preacher who was visiting his church: "It was a typical 'Sword' sermon. Five points with all comments and no Scripture. There was literally a one verse 'text' and then reference to one other verse thru the whole sermon. Else it was just him telling us stuff and telling stories."

This type of preaching does not build up the people in God's Word. They remain babies by the definition of Hebrews 5:13-14 in that they are unskillful in the Word. They learn some basics about salvation and Christian living and some other doctrines, and they learn how to be busy doing those

things that will grow the congregation numerically, but for the most part they do not grow to become mature saints who really know God and really walk with him and have a strong knowledge of God's Word. They don't learn how to interpret Scripture; they don't learn the meaning of great doctrinal words; they don't learn how to interpret biblical difficulties; they don't learn how to understand figures of speech. They don't learn how to exercise their senses to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14). They don't even expect to be taught the Word of God in a serious way. This is evident in congregations that barely look at the Bible during preaching.

Churches that aren't serious Bible education institutions are building on the sand, and they won't stand for long in today's spiritual climate.

For more about this see *The Bible Knowledge Test*, which is available in print and as a free eBook download at

[https://www.wayoflife.org/free\\_ebooks/bible-knowledge-test.php](https://www.wayoflife.org/free_ebooks/bible-knowledge-test.php)

### **Lack of Prayer**

Prayer is the spiritual dynamo of a church, and the frightful lack of serious prayer is another reason why we are convinced that most Independent Baptist congregations will be emerging within 10-20 years.

I attended a mid-week prayer meeting recently at an Independent Baptist church that is all too typical. It consisted of about four minutes of silent prayer closed by a brother who prayed for about 30 seconds. That, plus the prayers at the beginning and end of the services and the prayers before the preaching, forms pretty much the sum total of this church's corporate prayer effort.

It used to be common for churches to have a series of prayer meetings preceding Bible conferences and "revivals," but that type of thing is exceedingly rare today. Too many churches are trusting the power of the speaker rather than

beseeking the power of God, and as a result there is very little life-changing power. It is all too evident in the lives of the young people.

A few churches are doing a little better. Some have short prayer meetings before the services for the members who will attend. And some have a more serious mid-week prayer meeting in which the members break up into twos and threes to spend some time in intercessory prayer.

But even in these cases, the prayer meetings are usually poorly attended and the prayer time is rushed.

Most members of Independent Baptist churches are *not* prayer warriors.

I have been trying to challenge churches to have some special prayer meetings for America, but I know of only one that has taken the challenge. Yet this is the only thing that could possibly bring significant change to the nation, and I, for one, believe that such prayer *would* change things.

We are fighting spiritual battles with fleshly weapons such as Tea Party politics and filling our minds with “conservative” talk radio and television (e.g., Fox News), and we have neglected the weapons that bring true spiritual power to bear.

### **Maligning Warning and Reproof**

“That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits” (Isaiah 30:9-10).

Another reason why I am convinced that most Independent Baptist churches will be emerging within 10-20 years is the maligning of biblical warning and reproof.

A friend in North Carolina wrote recently to give the following observation in regard to the Independent Baptist churches he has visited over the years. The all caps are in the original.

“I don’t think 98% of Independent Baptist churches have ANY type of warning ministry in their preaching and teaching. I wouldn’t be surprised if a large number of pastors have NEVER given a warning about anything or any person. I know that you know some preachers who give warnings. But out in the rest of the Baptist world there is NO warning. Very sad. I’m talking about SIMPLE statements of warning here, not a ministry of warning.”

Not only do most Independent Baptist preachers not give warnings, they believe that warnings are largely unnecessary and probably wrong.

The prevailing attitude was exemplified by a blog published by Pastor R.B. Ouellette in June 2011 entitled “Chasing Buzzard.” Though he began by saying that it is important to chase off the buzzards of compromise and error, he spent the largest percentage of his blog characterizing a “warning ministry” as wrong-headed, dangerous, unfruitful, and “secondary.”

It is typical among fundamental Baptist churches today for godly reproof to be treated as gossip, “throwing stones,” “hit pieces,” “divisive,” “hate speech,” “interfering with local church business,” “shooting the wounded,” “touching the Lord’s anointed,” and other such things.

Recently I received an email from a friend who described the frightful condition of his church in America’s “Bible Belt.” (There is no better one within driving distance.) The church showed a Hollywood movie filled with CCM and featuring tattooed “church members,” but when the pastor was approached in private about the matter, he sluffed it off and even preached soon afterward that those who didn’t like the movie could leave the church. The wife of a Sunday School teacher recommends and distributes copies of *The Shack*, and when the teacher was approached about the book’s false god and rank heresies, he laughed it off, saying it is no big deal and that it isn’t his business what his wife reads. The

young people love CCM, and no clear and effectual warnings are given. The children's church minister comes late to the Sunday morning service, just in time for the children's church, and doesn't attend the Sunday night and Wednesday evening services. A concerned member says, "The preacher just keeps letting things slide and hasn't stepped in to take care of any of these issues. I truly believe that if he tried to hammer down on things, they would turn on him and either vote him out or most would leave."

This is a very typical Independent Baptist church today.

**According to the prevailing thinking, it is OK to give private warnings, but it is wrong to "attack" a "man of God" publicly, regardless of how broad his influence is.**

This is a tactic that makes it impossible to effectively correct public error.

If a preacher has a wide influence beyond the "walls" of his own church through his books, conferences, college, music, blogs, twitters, etc., the only way to help those who are being influenced negatively is to deal with error and compromise *in the public arena*. This type of thing is not a Matthew 18 matter; it is a 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:15; 1 Peter 4:11; and Jude 3 matter. When we are commanded in Scripture to reprove error and to earnestly contend for the faith, we are nowhere told that we can do this only in private.

Churches that treat spiritual warnings as dangerous cannot deal effectively with the leaven of error and will therefore be corrupted. This is a law.

"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6).

Independent Baptist churches are encountering the hurricane force winds of apostasy in the form of the emerging church and all of its elements, such as the contemporary rock & roll philosophy ("cultural liberalism") that mocks strict holy standards of Christian living as legalism, modern textual

criticism, Purpose Drivenism, self-esteemism, kingdom now replacement theology, Third Wave charismaticism, reconstructionism, ecumenical evangelism, C.S. Lewisism, Christian counseling psychobabble, Neo-orthodoxy, contemplative prayer, John Piper's Christian hedonism, organic churchism, to name a few.

When warnings are given about something like the downgrade of music standards in certain influential churches and schools and how dangerous that is, or the error of building an Independent Baptist "friendship unity" on the basis of treating certain biblical issues as "non-essentials," those warnings are despised and the reprover is maligned.

That is a recipe for spiritual destruction. When Israel demanded that the prophets preach only smooth things, her downfall was already sealed (Isaiah 30:10).

Several pithy but wrongheaded sayings are used in some Independent Baptist circles to malign any warnings that are given in regard to the compromise and error of influential Baptist leaders.

### ***Shooting the Wounded***

I received the following e-mail that charged me with doing this in regard to an open exhortation I published about Clarence Sexton's Friendship Conferences ("An Open Letter to Clarence Sexton about the Friendship Conference," March 3, 2010).

"I am deeply upset at the private letter you posted on your website to Dr Sexton. Thanks for shooting your own and not calling Pastor Sexton personally to get all of the facts."

The fact is that I had sent that letter to Dr. Sexton via his own website months before I published it, and I received no reply. I found out later that he says that he doesn't use e-mail, and that is fine, but he could have dictated a reply to one of his many co-workers or secretaries.

Another example of the accusation of “shooting the wounded” is contained in the following e-mail that I received a few years ago:

“I grew up in Murfreesboro, TN and was and am still associated with the Sword of the Lord and the Bill Rice Ranch. I hated it then and still do when a Christian brother bashes another Christian brother over things instead of preaching and trying to win souls to Christ. It is said that the Christian Army is the only army that stabs its wounded and kills off its own. I have to say it is very true. I am also a Marine, and we were taught to pick up those who are wounded and even dead, not leave them to die or to be mutilated by the enemy. We as Christians do just the opposite many times.”

In my warnings and about compromise and error, I have never injured a wounded person or shot anyone in any sense whatsoever. To charge me with doing so is to confuse godly warning, reproof, and correction with carnal assault.

The leaders that I warn about are not wounded! They are willfully and steadfastly committed to error or compromise in spite of having been warned, and they are influencing others in a negative way that is going to bring ruin farther down the road.

By the way, these men don't mind “shooting” back!

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus Christ taught His people to beware of false prophets and to test their fruit (Mat. 7:15-20). In the Pastoral Epistles, the apostle Paul names the names of false teachers and compromisers 10 different times in his warnings (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17; 3:8; 4:10, 14).

All of the men that Paul warned about claimed to be Christians and it is likely that they felt that Paul was being unfair and mean-spirited in singling them out.

When Paul warned Timothy that Demas had abandoned him because he loved this present world (2 Tim. 4:10), Paul

was not shooting at a wounded man. Demas had been a minister of the gospel, a co-worker with Paul, but he made a willful choice to cast his lot toward the world. Doubtless he had been warned, but he remained steadfast in his compromise and was influencing others. Note that Paul didn't say that Demas had left Christianity; he had only left Paul. This might mean that Demas was compromising his ministry with the world after the fashion of the doctrine of Balaam (Rev. 2:14) and the teaching of Jezebel (Rev. 2:20). It appears that he was one of the early proponents of an "emerging church," arguing that Paul's Christianity was too strict, too separatistic, too ineffective, and that we need to adapt ourselves to the world "a bit" to reach people.

The Lord has instructed us to separate from brethren who are walking in disobedience (2 Thess. 3:6). Is that shooting the wounded?

It often happens that those who are disobedient mistake biblical correction for persecution and confuse biblical reproof with personal assault.

Paul rebuked sin in the churches in letters that were anything but private. His epistles to the individual churches were distributed among all the churches (Colossians 4:16). Therefore, when Paul told of how that Demas had left him, having loved this present world, it was a public matter. When he rebuked the believers at Corinth for their sin and compromise and error, it was a public matter. When he warned of Alexander the Coppersmith, it was a public warning.

Some matters are private and they should be dealt with privately, but other matters are public and should be dealt with publicly.

If a man has a public ministry that influences others, that ministry should be critiqued publicly.

Evangelist Chuck Cofty is a highly decorated United States Marine officer who survived shocking battlefield experiences.

Since he understands these matters, both from the side of the physical and of the spiritual, I asked him to reply to the accusation in the e-mail that I quoted earlier.

Following is his reply:

“Dear Brother Cloud: To my knowledge you have not struck anyone violently or injured them by striking. He no doubt is referring to the many truths that appear in your writings as well as the writings of others concerning contemporary theology that you quote. Some, perhaps even this man, are so timid that when truth is revealed they find it difficult to accept and wind up tolerating error or ignorance for fear of offending someone. When men are named, places identified and error revealed, it is upsetting to those that are ‘moderate’ in their position. Brother Cloud, it is true that marines never leave their dead on the field of battle and will on occasion render aid to a wounded enemy. This however is situational and conditional as we will not allow such aid to encumber us, slow us down, deter us from our mission or jeopardize our success. Our desire to serve our dear Lord must be the same. I personally think that this dear brother’s analogy is poor and his accusation unfounded.”

Pastor Wilbert Unger of Bethel Baptist Church, London, Ontario, observes:

“Was our Lord shooting the first century churches in Revelation 2 and 3 when He walked in their midst and exposed their sins and failures, and commanded them to repent? The kindest and most biblical thing a faithful servant of God can do is expose unscriptural conduct to lead to repentance, lest God step in and judge severely and chasten in a most severe matter. I think the worst chastening that we Independent Baptists could receive from the hand of God is if He would just leave us alone and let us go on in our compromise. We are so bent on exalting man and lightly esteeming the Word of God.

One day, we will be like Samson when it is said, 'he wist not that the Lord had departed from him' (Judges 16:20). May God be gracious and wake us up to listen to the rebuke of those who see the error in our faith and practice. No man is above rebuke. May we come to see the love and grace in those who would be so kind as to rebuke us."

### ***Matthew 18***

Whenever I publish a warning about an influential Baptist leader, I am asked by some if I followed the guidelines of Matthew 18.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:15-20).

For example, when I published an open challenge to Clarence Sexton about the Friendship Conferences, I received the following:

"I am deeply upset at the private letter you posted on your website to Dr Sexton. Thanks for shooting your own and not calling Pastor Sexton personally to get all of the facts. I guess you don't read Matthew 18 all that often."

The fact is that I did try to contact Pastor Sexton personally months before the publication of the article and received zero reply.

But as for Matthew 18, it has absolutely nothing to do with the issue.

Matthew 18 gives instructions for dealing with *personal problems* between Christians and particularly *between Christians who are members of the same church*. It does not address how to deal with public teachings and actions by Christian leaders.

Clarence Sexton or Paul Chappell, etc., have not trespassed against me personally, and it would be impossible to follow Matthew 18 in such situations.

I have no way to take this issue “unto the church.” I am not a member of these men’s churches. Their churches have no authority over me, and I have no business with them (and I am sure they would ignore any attempt I might make to charge these men with error). Similarly, these men are not members of my church, so they have no business with it and it has no authority over them. To attempt to follow Matthew 18 in such matters would be confusion.

When men publish materials and distribute them in the public forum, I have every right before God to examine those materials and to issue critiques in the same forum. Public material and ministry should be critiqued publicly.

Following are some of the Scriptures that give authority for this:

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11).

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:15).

“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).

Human nature does not like to be corrected, and the bigger a man’s ministry the more he tends to think himself as being beyond criticism.

### ***Touch Not the Lord’s Anointed***

A third argument that is used against the public reproof of influential Baptist preachers is “touch not the Lord’s anointed,” which is lifted from the situation in which David refused to touch King Saul.

“Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD’S anointed” (1 Samuel 24:10).

The context of this verse has to do with killing an anointed king of Israel. By applying this to themselves, apparently some independent Baptist preachers think they are kings! And they must also think, strangely, that someone who reproves them is trying to kill them.

Jack Hyles certainly acted like a king and put himself above reproof and discipline, and so did Jack Schaap and many others who are imitating this exceedingly unscriptural, ungodly type of pastoral model.

But even an Israelite king was not above reproof. David didn’t kill King Saul, but the prophet Samuel did not draw back from reproving him. The prophet Nathan did not draw back from reproving King David. Azariah the high priest,

joined by 80 other priests, confronted King Uzziah when he arrogantly usurped the priesthood by offering incense in the temple (2 Ch. 26:16-19).

A Baptist pastor is not an Israelite king, but even kings could be reproved by God's preachers.

So can Baptist pastors, and not only in private.

### ***Local Church Autonomy***

Another popular argument that is used against those who publicly reprove the compromise and error of influential Baptist preachers is *Local Church Autonomy*.

In other words, the affairs of a pastor and his church are no one's business outside of that congregation's membership.

I've heard this argument trotted out countless times over the years. It is persistently and consistently used when an outsider tries to point out sin and error in a congregation, and that congregation refuses to repent.

But to say that a pastor and a church can do whatever they will and not give account for their *influence* is contrary to sound reason and Scripture.

If a church's doctrine and practice remains its own business and it doesn't *influence* others, that is no business of mine. But if a church's doctrine and practice *influences* other churches, that ceases to be a matter of "local church autonomy" and becomes a public issue that can and must be dealt with in the public forum.

Take a church like Lancaster Baptist Church of Lancaster, California. It has massive influence on other churches through its Bible college, its conferences, its publications, and its web sites and blogs. By these means, the church's leaders aggressively seek to teach and influence people outside of their congregation.

It is nonsense to argue that the business of such a church is its own business and is off limits for others and that those

who critique it are somehow disobeying the biblical doctrine of church autonomy.

The same is true for smaller churches that have a smaller, though very real, influence. If a church has an influence in other churches in its area through its music programs, Bible conferences, youth activities, etc., that is no longer a “local church” affair. That is now a public affair.

If a pastor’s error and compromise influences other churches, those other churches have a very real obligation to reprove him and to warn about him in such a way that their own people are protected.

Paul dealt with the sins and errors of churches in public letters. The New Testament Epistles were not private letters that were intended for select eyes only. They were public letters that were intended for the use of all of the churches (Colossians 4:16), and in those letters Paul dealt with a wide variety of sins and errors. He even warned church members by name (e.g., Eudias and Syntyche, Philippians 4:2).

The same is true for Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus. Those were personal letters in one sense, but they were very public in another sense. They were never intended for the eyes of Timothy and Titus only. And in those letters, Paul warned about such things as Demas’s worldliness. Imagine if you were Demas in that day. He could have said, “Paul, you are wrong to make my business a public matter,” but Paul wasn’t wrong, because Demas’s compromise was not strictly a private matter.

These things are written for our example.

Every preacher is commanded to “reprove, rebuke, exhort.” This reproof is nowhere limited to his own congregation (2 Timothy 4:2).

Titus was instructed to “speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority” (Titus 2:15). Nowhere does Paul tell him that this ministry was limited to the members of one church.

Private business is private business, and private sin is private sin; but public sin and error is not private business.

### **Conclusion**

These are some of the catchy little sayings that are used to malign biblical warning and reproof among Independent Baptists, but the very fact that these wrongheaded, unscriptural sayings are so widely used is another of the reasons why I am convinced that most Independent Baptist churches will be emerging within 10-20 years.

### **Unquestioning Loyalty to Man**

Another reason why I am convinced that most fundamental Baptist churches will be well down the emerging path within 10-20 years is the unscriptural exaltation of and loyalty to men.

In light of what has happened over the past 20 years which I have documented at the beginning of this report--the collapse of so many formerly fundamentalist churches--you would think that a tremendous amount of heart searching and biblical examination would be going on to see what went wrong.

You would think that former leaders such as Lee Roberson, John R. Rice, Jack Hyles, Curtis Hutson and the leaders in the GARBC and the BBFI, etc.--men who had great influence and whose influence should have stemmed the tide but obviously didn't--would be under the microscope of biblical Berean discernment (Acts 17:11) to see if we could learn what they might have done that was wrong so we can avoid it.

But this is most definitely *not* what is happening. In fact, in my experience the average fundamental Baptist preacher doesn't want to hear anything "critical" or "negative" about such men. Let's build monuments to their memory, but let's not "judge them" and "throw rocks at them."

This is not only unscriptural; it is foolish. It has been said that if we don't learn from the past, we are doomed to repeat it.

We are commanded by God to "prove ALL things" (1 Th. 5:21).

None of our former or present leaders are exempt from examination. Isn't the Bible supposed to be the Baptist's SOLE authority for faith and practice? Aren't we commanded to "prove ALL things"?

### **Following the Crowd**

It is human nature to follow the crowd. We do this as children. We do it as teens. We do it as adults. We even do it as preachers. A major motive in this phenomenon is the fear of man, which is so often and so forcibly condemned in Scripture.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

"And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, BUT SECRETLY FOR FEAR OF THE JEWS..." (John 19:38).

"For before that certain came from James, he [Peter] did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, FEARING THEM WHICH WERE OF THE CIRCUMCISION" (Galatians 2:12).

If Joseph of Arimathaea and Peter were susceptible to the fear of man and were inclined to be crowd followers, it is obvious that there is no preacher who cannot be tempted with this sin.

And it is a sin, because the believer is not supposed to follow a crowd. He is supposed to follow Christ as defined in the Holy Scripture, the sole authority for faith and practice. It

is idolatrous to fear man more than God, and we are warned to keep ourselves from idols (1 John 5:21).

To a man, fundamental Baptist preachers *claim* to follow Christ and His Word alone, but after more than 40 years of experience in these circles I am convinced that most follow a crowd instead (e.g., one's associates in some fellowship or mission board or some other organization, one's fellow graduates of a certain school, some "good old boy's network" of Bible conference speakers, one's fellow admirers of some influential pastor).

When this is the case, the crowd determines the preacher's position on "non-essential" doctrines and practices (falsely so called).

This explains the reason behind so much inconsistency and so much change. The "convictions" are only as deep as the crowd allows. The crowd followers can stand only as firm as the brethren allow.

If the crowd still says it believes in "dress standards," but in reality it no longer cares about the matter, then that will be the crowd follower's position. He might still mention "modesty" in his preaching, but he won't *define* modesty and draw the same clear lines he once drew, because that is no longer acceptable to his crowd.

In that context, though the man says he "believes in dress standards," he will not promote a good book on the subject. In fact, it is more likely that he will mark such a book as "legalistic," even though the book is only teaching what his own crowd taught not that long ago.

If the crowd is truly opposed to CCM, then the crowd follower will be opposed to CCM. But when the mood changes and the crowd only *SAYS* it is "opposed to CCM," but *REALLY ISN'T* opposed to it any longer and instead is more zealous to justify the "adaptation" of CCM than to identify CCM and separate from it, the crowd follower can no longer be consistent in his stand (assuming he ever had one). He,

too, must be “opposed to CCM” only as window dressing while in practice he has to justify its use. And he will be irritated with men who try to oppose CCM consistently and who point out his inconsistencies.

In this context, the crowd follower won’t educate his people properly on an issue even though he professes to believe in and care about it. He might preach against something like contemporary music, but it will be more in generalities and will not get so specific as to reprove the type of thing that his crowd is doing.

Regardless of his personal convictions, the crowd follower cannot take a stand that would be unpopular to his associates.

When one’s stand is determined by one’s associations, the stand changes as the mood within the association changes.

Fifteen years ago the vast majority of Independent Baptists condemned CCM in no uncertain terms. Back then, the BJU and Lancaster and Pensacola crowds weren’t borrowing from CCM, so there was no problem in speaking out boldly against CCM within those circles and letting the “chips fall where they may.”

Now that the climate has changed and it has become popular to “adapt” CCM for use in the churches, the crowd followers are having to soft peddle and ignore some things they preached and wrote a decade ago.

To continue to preach and write what they did in the past, when the climate was different, the crowd follower would either have to move away from the crowd of his own free will or he would continue to speak out and the crowd would move away from him. Either alternative is just too frightful for the crowd follower to bear.

The fact that so many fundamental Baptist preachers are crowd followers is yet another reason why most Independent Baptist churches will be emerging within 10-20 years.

## **Pragmatism and Big-mindedness**

Another reason why we are convinced that most Independent Baptist churches will be emerging within 20 years is rampant pragmatism and big-mindedness.

Pragmatism is to focus on the practicality of a decision rather than a principle.

Pragmatism is “a reasonable and logical way of doing things or of thinking about problems that is based on dealing with specific situations instead of on ideas and theories” (Merriam-Webster).

A preacher friend commented about church pragmatism along this line: “It is to do something on a practical level without diligently considering the theological implication. It is when the practice *overtakes* the theological principle. It is to do whatever it takes to get a good result even if it violates biblical principles or undermines divine power.”

The pragmatic preacher makes decisions about the church and ministry based on what “works” to produce a desired goal as opposed to making decisions based *strictly* on Bible truth, though he will give lip service to the latter.

The pragmatic preacher will not be faithful to the whole counsel of God because he has other objectives that are more prominent and pressing.

**The goal might be getting big numbers and building a big church.**

Years ago I was driving through a city with a pastor friend, and as we passed by a large church facility he expressed a strong desire to have that type of thing. I was amazed and puzzled, because personally I have never thought in those terms, and I didn’t realize that he harbored such aspirations.

For many decades, the sin of “big-itis” has run rampant among Independent Baptists.

It started back in the 1930s with J. Frank Norris. He wanted to have the biggest Sunday School and the biggest youth

ministry and the largest membership. By 1949, the combined membership of the two churches he pastored (First Baptist of Fort Worth and Temple Baptist of Detroit) was 25,000. To have a church that size, you have to cut a lot of corners, such as watering down membership standards and neglecting discipline.

The frenzy to have the fastest growing church and the largest Sunday School was promoted heavily by *The Sword of the Lord* in the 1970s and 1980s.

Big-itis is the motive behind the practice of “Quick Prayerism.” What other motive could there be to adopt a method of soul winning that produces so many empty professions? What else other than “big-mindedness” could motivate a pastor or missionary to report 100 “salvations” when only a few show any evidence of the new birth?

Many Independent Baptist preachers would be more impressed with rich Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-17) than with little Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-10).

Having a big church or ministry should *not* be a pastor’s objective. Having a church that is pleasing to the Lord and faithful to God’s Word in *ALL* aspects should be the *SOLE* objective, and in this day and age it is exceedingly rare that the two objectives will harmonize.

The goal of the pragmatic preacher might be not to offend prominent people in his church or even not to offend the women in his church.

**The goal might be not to offend some prominent preacher or his own circle of preacher friends.**

A brother wrote to me recently about a pastor he had talked to regarding the danger of being a soft separatist and not drawing the lines against West Coast Baptist College (in particular) and its influence. This pastor told him that “he didn’t agree with the music at West Coast and wouldn’t attend their pastors conference as a result, but saw some good fruit come from the school.” But when he has Bible conferences,

this pastor invites men who are strong supporters of West Coast. The man who had talked to the pastor made this observation: "I can see that the implications to this pastor, of taking a Biblical stand, are great. To take a stand against West Coast/Lancaster would send waves through the network of Pastors/Churches in our area and bring isolation."

**The goal of the pragmatic preacher might be to keep his preaching engagements open.**

For example, a Bible conference speaker or evangelist who is a pragmatist will weigh his preaching and the stance he takes by whether or not it would close doors. He learns how to preach in generalities enough to "keep his options open." Recently an evangelist published his stand on separation, but though he made some good biblical points, the position was so vague and shallow (being based on only one Scripture passage as opposed to the whole counsel of God and not being practically applied in a clear manner) that it was almost useless. It appears that his objective was to be thought of as a separatist while not really separating in a practical sense and not closing doors of ministry.

The goal of the pragmatist might be to get students for a school or to get subscriptions for a paper or orders for his books.

The pragmatic will give lip service to separatism and to being faithful to the whole counsel of God, and he might speak strongly for it in private.

A few years ago I met the editor of a prominent Independent Baptist publication for a lunch that was arranged by a pastor friend. As soon as we met at the restaurant, this editor asked me to keep the discussion "off the record." He then proceeded to agree with me about many issues, including my concerns about Quick Prayerism. I was greatly puzzled, because his publication has long promoted the men and churches most responsible for inventing and

spreading these practices and has never warned of them, to my knowledge.

Then I realized that this man is a pragmatist, and the pragmatist isn't at liberty to speak out on all matters, because he has a publication and a ministry to think about.

A pragmatist is a religious politician, and I believe this is a stench in God's nostrils.

God's Word calls upon preachers to renounce pragmatism and to be faithful in all matters.

The apostle Paul was not a pragmatist. He had only one objective, and that was to be faithful to Christ his Master. He called himself a "doulos" or bondservant. He had been purchased by Christ from the slave market of sin and did not own himself. His objective was to be faithful to God's truth. Period. He had no other objective. He would not have dreamed of having another objective. The non-pragmatist Paul testified,

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

Paul didn't weigh his message by practical considerations, as to whether it would offend someone he wanted to impress or close doors of ministry or reduce the size of his crowd or the number of book sales. Every time he spoke or wrote, he did so with complete faithfulness to God's Word.

Paul even solemnly commissioned Timothy to keep the New Testament commandments "without spot," which refers to the "small" things (1 Timothy 6:13-14).

Every preacher is commanded to preach the Word, all of the Word, in season and out of season, no matter what happens, no matter how popular or unpopular it is, no matter who is offended or what doors it closes, humanly speaking.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Faithfulness to this divine command is the opposite of religious pragmatism, and may the Lord give every Bible-believing preacher the spiritual conviction and backbone and passionate love for Christ that will drive away every pragmatic concern.

The churches desperately need courageous, faithful preachers, not pragmatic politicians.

If a preacher is not willing to narrow his associations in these days and to walk a more lonely path with Christ in solid truth, he will definitely compromise and the effect of that compromise will be evident in his church in this present generation and even more in the next.

May each preacher pray, “Lord God, help me not be a pragmatist or a politician. Help me be faithful to you and to your holy Word. While multitudes have been willing to rot in prison cells, to be torn asunder, and to be burned, woe unto me if I am not willing to bear whatever offense or cost comes for being faithful to the truth in an evil age and a compromising hour.”

### **Ignorance about Important Issues**

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6).

Another reason why a large percentage of fundamental Baptist churches will be well down the emerging path in 20 years is that there is widespread ignorance about important issues such as contemporary music, New Evangelicalism, the Southern Baptist Convention, Reformed theology, reconstructionism, charismaticism, Neo-orthodoxy, Darwinian and theistic evolution, contemplative mysticism, and the emerging church.

I recall a veteran Independent Baptist missionary who looked around for a few minutes in my 6,000-volume library. He had no questions and showed zero interest and the only comment he made was negative, because he looked upon

serious research as more of a hindrance and a sidetrack than a blessing. The only comment he made was that “we will be held accountable for our time,” and I couldn’t agree more, but time spent in serious Bible study and ministry-related research is time well spent for now and eternity!

The mindset of this missionary is the mindset that has already destroyed a great many Independent Baptist churches both here and around the world, and it is going to destroy a great many more in coming years. And this is a missionary who has started churches and raised a godly family, but even godly people can be destroyed by ignorance and wrong principles.

Thousands of churches have been established around the world by fundamental Baptist missionaries, but what is their character? How solid is their spiritual foundation? Are they well-grounded, properly-taught congregations, or are they shallow and largely ignorant of important issues facing God’s people today? Are the parents properly educated by the church so they can train, disciple, and protect their children? What is happening to the second and third generations in these churches?

With the aforementioned mindset, the preacher doesn’t carefully ground his people in such a way that they can deal effectively and intelligently with the issues of the day. He teaches them how to be faithful church members and to do “Romans Road” evangelism and hopefully encourages them to love their wives and discipline their kids, and these are good things (apart from shallow evangelism methodology), but this isn’t enough to protect churches from the onslaught of end-time apostasy and the subtle compromise of the hour.

Most Southwide Baptist Fellowship and BBFI churches taught these things, but they have fallen like dominoes to New Evangelicalism and the contemporary philosophy.

About 15 years ago my pastor rented a table at the Southwide Baptist Fellowship annual conference for two or

three years running. He offered solid Bible study books such as the *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity* and *Things Hard to Be Understood* and seriously-researched books on issues such as music and New Evangelicalism. Though the books were deeply discounted, there was little interest by the hundreds of preachers in attendance.

I see a direct connection between this and the spiritual downfall of a great many of these very churches, including the host church, Highland Park Baptist Church, which turned into a rock & roll, Southern Baptist congregation before going defunct.

A couple of decades ago, those same churches would have said that they rejected New Evangelicalism, but even the pastors had only a vague idea of New Evangelicalism's history and principles, were uneducated about contemporary music, etc., and they weren't interested in studying such issues. And for the most part the people were more ignorant by far than the preachers.

In light of the fact that every Independent Baptist church is inundated with New Evangelical philosophy from every direction (e.g., Christian bookstores, Christian radio, Internet, friends, neighbors, relatives, graduates of compromising schools), it is no surprise that churches that were not properly educated and spiritually fortified against error are either in the New Evangelical contemporary camp today or are heading in that direction.

I think of the "Burlington Revival," a tent revival that was held in Burlington, North Carolina, in 2016. The leaders of the revival introduced members of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and invited BGEA vice president Tom Phillips to the platform to give the opening prayer. The Burlington Revival evangelist, C.T. Townend, announced on Facebook, "What an honor to have the Vice President and other members of the Billy Graham Association under the tent with us last night."

This is clear evidence that Townsend and his associates are grossly lacking in a proper education about modern compromise and in the spiritual discernment that is needed in a Christian leader today.

If the leaders of most Independent Baptist churches are so ignorant of important issues, what does this say about the future?

A preacher friend told the following sad testimony about the condition of many Independent Baptist preachers:

“Some years ago I started asking preachers questions when we sat around talking or when we drove down the road. Questions such as what doctrine was especially precious to them at that moment, or what book of the Bible they love the most this week, or what good book they are reading, or which one has helped them grow the most, or what authors are the most challenging to them spiritually, or what they think about this or that verse (and I pick the hardest ones to ask about). If they are driving, I take my Bible and read to them some passage I am meditating on and ask them to explain them to me. Most of them are out of their depth within ten seconds. Some of them stare at me with open mouth and shake their head. Most of the IB pastors have never read anything deeper than Rice or Hutson.”

In the 1990s, I had a book table set up at a Bible conference, and a missionary proclaimed during his sermon, “We don’t need more books; we need more preaching.”

I love preaching. I am a preacher. I have preached thousands of sermons in more than 550 churches, on university campuses, in our missionary church planting work, in jails, etc. I believe in preaching. But I love good books. I need good books. Good books help me preach more effectually.

Paul was a preacher, but he said to Timothy,

“The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments” (2 Timothy 4:13).

This downplaying of the importance of godly education didn't characterize preachers of the past. Consider two examples:

“What has exceedingly hurt you in time past, nay, and I fear to this day, is want of reading. I scarce ever knew a preacher who read so little. And perhaps by neglecting it you have lost the taste for it. Hence your talent in preaching does not increase. It is just the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively, but not deep: there is little variety; there is no compass of thought. Reading only can supply this, with meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this. You can never be a deep preacher without it any more than a thorough Christian. O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not; what is tedious at first will afterwards be pleasant. Whether you like it or no; read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days, and a petty, superficial prayer” (John Wesley to John Trembeth, August 1760).

“Only Heaven will determine which was the most important in my earthly ministry--my preaching or the distributing of books.” (Peter Cartwright, circuit riding preacher).

Countless times I have witnessed pastors, missionaries, and evangelists walk by the book table, take a cursory look, and walk away.

They don't walk away because they are already well educated in the issues facing the churches and already know the things we publish. For the most part, they don't walk away because they have no money. We find a way to purchase the things we want and the things we hold valuable. Charles

Spurgeon counseled his Bible college students to “sell your shirt and buy books.” No, these preachers walk away because they have no passion for godly education. They think a little three point sermon outline (marked at appropriate places with “weak point, shout loudly here”) backed by some shallow illustrations, many of which are pure fantasy, is enough.

“Just preach,” they say.

Yes, preach by all means, but the preaching should have enough substance and content that it can build up the Lord’s people in God’s Word and protect them from error. Our preaching is to be characterized by reproof, rebuke, exhortation, AND DOCTRINE (2 Tim. 4:2).

The “just preach” (without serious study, without much doctrinal content) philosophy hasn’t protected multitudes of churches that were once sound and are now traveling the contemporary road of compromise toward total apostasy.

Some church members put their own pastors to shame. I was told recently about a woman in a church who works six days a week but she has gone through the entire 20 titles in our *Advanced Bible Studies Series* (totaling more than 6,000 pages). I know of several church members who have read the entire *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity*. Many people in the congregations educate themselves with materials such as *O Timothy* magazine even though their own pastors are largely ignorant of such things and have no interest in educating themselves.

There are exceptions, praise the Lord, but the fundamental Baptist congregation that has an interest in anything more substantive than a little pamphlet is the exception and not the rule, and most of the church members don’t even take the time to read pamphlets.

The people aren’t encouraged to read substantive publications that would enable them to keep abreast of issues they are facing.

The members of the average church walk into a Christian bookstore or listen to Christian radio or surf the Internet and are unequipped to distinguish between sound and unsound authors and are thus in great danger of being influenced in a wrong direction.

A pastor once accompanied me to a LifeWay bookstore, and as I walked through the store and pointed out various authors and the spiritual/doctrinal danger they represent he exclaimed, “I don’t know anything about any of these men.” But he should know something, because his people are in danger of being influenced by them, either by book or via the Internet.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” (Hosea 4:6).

I try my best to help pastors and to provide information for them. I do research that the average pastor doesn’t have time to do, and I provide a large amount of well-documented information on hundreds of topics, much of it for free, but I can’t help a man who isn’t willing to take the time and effort to study.

We have published reports such as “Dangers in Christian Bookstores” and “Dangers on Christian Radio,” which list popular authors and speakers and document their errors, but such materials accomplish nothing if they aren’t used by pastors who are eager for such education and who then provide the education to their people. We have published digests such as the *Directory of Contemporary Worship Musicians*, a 600-page book that documents the position of most of the popular CCM artists, and we have published it as a free eBook at the Way of Life web site. All a preacher has to do is download it and use it, but few are interested.

I frequently meet preachers who say, “I don’t know anything about Darlene Zscheck or Hillsong or the Gettys or these other people.” There is no excuse for this in a day when these very people are influencing members of Independent

Baptist churches throughout the world. Many of these same pastors know a lot about professional sports and conservative politics. It's a matter of priorities.

I thank the Lord for the fundamental Baptist churches that are engaged in training their people properly and educating them in the issues they must face. Consider a couple of examples among many that I could give:

In 2011, I preached for five days at Grace Baptist Church, Oxford Pennsylvania, pastored at the time by Steven Rogers, on the theme of compromise and biblical separation. I preached on Contemporary Christian Music, Bible Prophecy, the Emerging Church, the Charismatic Movement, and New Evangelicalism. The response was enthusiastic and encouraging. Most of the members were there for every service, which is always a sign of a spiritually healthy church. The book table, which was packed with titles providing the education that church members need today, was well used.

Pembina Valley Baptist Church in Winkler, Manitoba, is a large, evangelistic church that operates a full-time Bible college. While it is typical for Independent Baptist Bible colleges to tone down the message of separation for the sake of drawing from a larger number of congregations, Pembina Valley, under the leadership of Mike Sullivant, is not afraid to fly the flag of separation. In the church and school the leaders educate and warn, not only about spiritual and doctrinal dangers "without," but also about dangers within Independent Baptist "circles." Their bookstore carries titles on separation. I have preached at Pembina Valley on the dangers of contemporary worship music, New Evangelicalism, and the emerging church, among other things.

I could describe many churches like this. Though they are now in the extreme minority, I thank the Lord that such churches still exist. They are laying a proper biblical and spiritual foundation against the onslaught of end-time apostasy.

The church being the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), it is essential for the cause of truth that we establish Christ-exalting, biblically-sound, spiritually-healthy, properly-disciplined, discipline-practicing, well-educated churches for the glory of Christ and the blessing of the people.

The home and church are divinely-ordained institutions, each of which has its own ministry, responsibility, and influence. We need godly families, but godly families should be the pillars of sound churches, and the churches should build godly families.

In this day of “soft fundamentalism,” it is refreshing to be associated with men who are willing to fly the flag of godly biblical separation high, men who will speak the truth even if it means marking their own brethren as compromisers, men who don’t buy into the New Evangelical “in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty” heresy, and who do not hesitate to educate their people properly in the face of rapidly-increasing compromise and apostasy.

### **Soft Separatism**

Another reason why I am convinced that the average fundamental Baptist church will be well down the emerging path within 10-20 years is the prevalence of “soft separatism.”

Soft separatism is separatism that is ineffective to protect the Lord’s people from spiritual dangers. It is characterized by professing to believe in separation but doing things that make the separation ineffective, such as focusing on positive truth and avoiding “negativism and criticism”; avoiding dealing with “personalities”; refusing to distance oneself properly from those who are headed in a wrong direction in order to cut off the leaven of compromise from one’s personal life and family and church; and messing with dangerous things such as compromised authors.

Soft separatists are more concerned about the danger of “fragmentation” and are more desirous of “unity” and getting along with the brethren than about standing for the truth, if such a stand proves to be divisive.

“Soft separatist” Independent Baptist preachers such as the extremely influential Lee Roberson, of recent memory, pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and those today who are leading large segments of the Independent Baptist movement in the same soft direction, allow bridges to be built between Independent Baptists and the evangelical, Southern Baptist, and contemporary Christian music worlds. They have a “keep it positive” philosophy whereby they don’t typically reprove error plainly or name the names of compromisers. They might name the name of a Billy Graham or a Robert Schuller or perhaps even a Rick Warren, but they will never name the name of a compromising fundamental Baptist leader. They don’t effectively expose the conservative evangelical bridge builders such as an Ed Stetzer or a John Piper, and they don’t reprove and disassociate from Independent Baptist preachers who are affiliating with the Southern Baptist Convention and evangelicalism at large.

Even if they do disassociate to some extent, they do it “quietly” and no one knows what is happening and the leaven of compromise is not therefore stopped.

Lee Roberson, pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church for 40 years and founder of Tennessee Temple University, was the king of “soft separatism” in the fundamental Baptist movement. Everything was kept on a positive, upbeat note. Dr. Roberson’s official biographer observes:

“Roberson developed a focus that controlled his ministry. ‘I kept my mind and ministry settled -- winning people to Christ, getting people to grow in grace,’ he said. ‘Stay out of controversy in the pulpit-- stay out of it and stay on the main line. I think that

helped me a lot. I tried to avoid personalities and stay on the main line: preaching the gospel, emphasis on winning people to Christ, emphasis on developing the spiritual life, dying to self, the fullness of the Spirit, the second coming--kept on the positive side, kept negatives away from the people.' ... Negativism and criticism simply were not a part of Lee Roberson's life" (James Wigton, *Lee Roberson--Always about His Father's Business*, pp. 78, 243).

As a 1970s graduate of Tennessee Temple, I can testify that this is an accurate description of Dr. Roberson's ministry.

It was characterized by soft preaching. Any warnings were given in generalities. Leading compromisers such as Jerry Falwell or James Dobson or Bill Bright or Charles Swindoll were not identified by name from the pulpit and their error was not detailed and highlighted so that the people could get a proper grasp of the danger they represented and where their compromise would lead.

"Later when Billy Graham's ecumenical cooperation became a controversial issue among fundamentalists, Lee Roberson quietly backed out of such cooperation. 'Dr. Roberson NEVER SAID A CRITICAL WORD ABOUT IT,' said Faulkner. 'If he had anything to say, it was always positive. That was his position on all issues. HE JUST NEVER HAD A CRITICAL WORD ABOUT ANYTHING. ... He won't talk about the brethren. YOU NEVER HEARD HIM IN THE PULPIT HERE CALL ANYONE NAMES.' ... Ed Johnson, always loyal to Dr. Roberson said, 'HE AVOIDED CONTROVERSY. We were not exposed to the rise of the neo-evangelicalism in my days at Temple. Doc stayed away from that controversy.' ...

"When it became common for some Independent Baptists to criticize independent Baptist leaders such as Jerry Falwell or evangelist Tim Lee for preaching for Southern Baptists or other non-independent Baptists

ministries, Roberson never wavered in his support of such men. He felt that men like Falwell and Lee had a heart for the Lord and for souls, and that was all that mattered to him” (Wigton, *Lee Roberson*, pp. 240, 241).

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT NO POSITION CAN BE MAINTAINED WITHOUT A CAMPAIGN, AND I AM CONVINCED THAT LACK OF CAMPAIGNING IS ONE OF THE CHIEF REASONS WHY HIGHLAND PARK BAPTIST CHURCH BECAME A SOUTHERN BAPTIST ROCK & ROLL INSTITUTION BEFORE GOING DEFUNCT.

I wrote an open letter to Clarence Sexton in 2010 about his Independent Baptist Friends Conference (after writing to him personally and having received no reply), and I concluded with this challenge:

“What I would urge you to do is draw the lines for Independent Baptist Friends conference more consistently and strictly and follow it up by an Independent Baptist STANDS conference that would plainly expose compromise and error among Independent Baptists and would identify those who are leading God’s people astray.”

The fact that the biggest, most influential Independent Baptist pastors would not dream of having a STANDS conference that would expose compromise and error among Independent Baptists and identify those who are leading God’s people astray is a loud witness to their own compromise.

Lack of campaigning for separation is a chief reason why most Independent Baptists will be New Evangelical contemporary rock & rollers within 10-20 years.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Highland Park claimed to be fundamentalist and professed *not* to be New Evangelical, but there was no real campaigning *for* separatism and *against* compromised evangelicalism.

They were Independent Baptist and not denominational Baptist, but there was no real campaigning *against* the Southern Baptist Convention and little or no clear exposure of the deep compromise there. Further, the bridges to the Convention were not properly burned. Biblical separation requires tearing down bridges rather than maintaining them, but soft separatists are not bridge burners.

As a student at Temple in the 1970s, I learned many good things and I thank the Lord for it. What I learned and experienced there has been a tremendous help in my Christian life and ministry, but the problem was more in what I *didn't* learn. This is the heart of New Evangelical error. The fundamental problem is not the heresy that is taught; it is the truth that is neglected. It is not characterized by a complete lack of Biblical stance but by the softness of that stance.

At Highland Park in the 1970s and 1980s it was not uncommon for pot shots to be taken against real separatists and those men who did issue plain warnings.

“Positivism” is death in the pot of any church or school that wants to maintain a biblical position, because the Bible contains a lot of very “negative” material, and the plainest warning against sin, error, and compromise is a major characteristic of New Testament writings.

Paul often named names, and he said, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Philippians 3:17). In the Pastoral Epistles, he named the names of false teachers and compromisers many times: Hymenaeus and Alexander, Phygellus and Hermogenes, Hymenaeus and Philetus, Alexander the Coppersmith, Demas. These epistles were used among the churches to train preachers in that day. Paul’s “criticism” of these men was a matter of public record, which is how it must be.

How can it be reasonable to allow compromisers to influence people without PUBLICLY reproofing them? Private reproof doesn't help those being influenced by them.

Because of Dr. Roberson's soft separatism, bridges were maintained with the Southern Baptist Convention and the broader evangelical world. They "messed around" with evangelicalism rather than plainly separating from it. They invited prominent evangelicals such as Warren Wiersbe to speak.

"Roberson never fought against Southern Baptists, nor did he openly criticize them" (Wigton, *Lee Roberson*, pp. 227, 228, 232, 242).

The soft stance on separatism and the wrong associations and lack of clear teaching and warning about error were the reason why the church's deacons were not properly prepared to choose a pastor to replace Dr. Roberson. They were not properly educated about many important issues pertaining to the "isms" and schisms of our day, and the association with New Evangelicals and Southern Baptists was already established. So it is no surprise that the deacons chose an even softer fundamentalist followed by an out-and-out New Evangelical to replace Dr. Roberson.

When churches and schools "mess around" with evangelicalism, they are in great danger, for the Word of God twice repeats the warning that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

I witnessed this on a recent preaching trip to the States. I preached two Bible conferences in Pennsylvania; and while visiting relatives in other states I attended a couple of Independent Baptist churches, and I was deeply disturbed by what I saw. One church was using a book by Randy Alcorn for Sunday School. Alcorn is a deeply compromised evangelical who glowingly recommended the writings of Mark Driscoll of Seattle, where they had champagne dance parties and rock & roll "worship" in a darkened building and

the usherettes and church members wore mini-skirts and tights and where Catholic contemplative mysticism was promoted. This Independent Baptist church had books by other evangelicals for sale in its bookstore with no warning.

If a Bible-believing church does use materials by evangelicals, such as those by Answers in Genesis, the people must be educated about the compromise that exists in these ministries. Typically, though, in churches that are messing around with evangelicalism, the members aren't properly educated, because the pastor himself either is ill-informed or is enamored by what he finds among "conservative evangelicals" or is afraid of offending his congregation.

When a fundamentalist preacher begins to give up on separation, he still claims to believe in it, but he doesn't love it, and the softness of evangelicalism resonates with his own spirit.

Another way that soft separatism is seen is the way that many pastors and schools use and recommend dangerous authors.

I recall a visit to Northland Baptist College back in the 1990s, and I was concerned then that the bookstore was filled with the writings of popular evangelicals such as John Piper. It is no surprise that the school went Southern Baptist and then went defunct.

Consider Paul Chappell of Lancaster Baptist Church of Lancaster, California, one of the most prominent and influential Independent Baptist preachers.

Pastor Chappell's "soft separatism" was on display when he brought in Michael Redd, a Christian NBA player, to speak to a youth rally at Lancaster Baptist Church ("A Great Weekend of Ministry," Oct. 11, 2010, PaulChappell.com). Redd is a rock & roll Pentecostal, and though we do not doubt his faith in Christ or his sincerity in Christian service, he is not someone who should be speaking at a fundamental Baptist church, because of his doctrinal errors and the fact that his life

preaches a rejection of biblical separatism. God forbids this type of ecumenical joint ministry, because it is a compromise of sound doctrine and results in spiritual confusion and weakness. Redd helped purchase a building for the Philadelphia Deliverance Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio, pastored by his father, and in an interview he stated that he did so not merely out of family affection but out of personal conviction that what that church is doing is right and important (“NBA Star Says Some Players ‘Church-Hurt,’” *The Washington Post*, April 4, 2008). A web search shows that the church that Redd funds and supports is a rock & roll Pentecostal congregation filled with the doctrinal errors relating to the Pentecostal apostolic denomination. His mother is one of the preachers. Some of “Sister Haji Redd’s” sermons are on YouTube.

Pastor Chappell’s soft separatism was on display when he published a glowing recommendation of a book by Rick Warren’s associate Lance Witt (Chappell’s blog, November 28, 2012). The book review begins, “If you are in Christian ministry and are looking for a refreshing (yet convicting and challenging) book--and especially if you are a senior pastor--I suggest *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul* by Lance Witt. When I read this book on my Kindle recently, I had eighty-two highlights that filled over eight pages. There were so many truths the Lord used from it to speak to my soul.”

Chappell’s review does not contain even a hint of warning about Witt. I can’t imagine a more dangerous and spiritually ignorant recommendation for a fundamental Baptist pastor to publish. Witt is the executive pastor at Saddleback Church, and more dangerous spiritual waters do not exist anywhere. Warren is closely and warmly affiliated with New Agers and universalists (e.g., Tony Blair, Mehmet Oz, Daniel Amen, Mark Hyman, and Leonard Sweet) and promotes Catholic contemplative mysticism. (See the “Rick Warren” section of the Article Library at [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org)). Witt personally

promotes contemplative mysticism and even recommends Richard Foster and Buddhist-Catholic Thomas Merton in his book *Enjoying Thoughts in Solitude*. It was via the path of Foster and Merton that Sue Monk Kidd traveled from being a Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher to a goddess worshipper. And yet Paul Chappell has the audacity to think that Witt is promoting healthy waters from which fundamental Baptist pastors should drink. (See “From Southern Baptist to Goddess Worship: Sue Monk Kidd” and “Richard Foster: Evangelical’s Mystical Spark Plug,” and “Thomas Merton: The Catholic Buddhist Mystic” under the Contemplative Prayer section of the Article Database at [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org)).

Chappell’s soft separation is further evident in his Ministry 127 blog’s recommendation of a number of unsound authors, including John Maxwell and Donald Whitney. This is a very disturbing and dangerous practice. The reviewer of Whitney’s *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* is Cary Schmidt, who until recently was the Associate Pastor at Lancaster Baptist Church. He writes, “Every page was intensely scriptural, very articulate, and powerfully inspiring regarding the healthy Christian life.” What Schmidt fails to say is that Donald Whitney, a New Evangelical Southern Baptist Calvinist, is a bridge to some extremely dangerous things. Whitney has some sound and helpful things to say, like any prominent evangelical, but the truth is mixed with error, and he has no proper boundaries, having rejected “separatism.”

By this glaring omission and by recommending Whitney so highly, Schmidt and Lancaster Baptist are helping people to cross the bridges that Whitney has built. Lancaster is doing the same thing with literature that they are doing with music. They are messing around with the wrong stuff. It is the same “soft separatism” that destroyed Highland Park Baptist Church.

*First, Whitney is a bridge to contemplative mysticism, and these are the most spiritually treacherous waters that exist. What Whitney touches on lightly in *Ten Questions*, he covers in some detail in *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Though Whitney emphasizes the supremacy and authority of Scripture, he recommends unscriptural mystical practices and favorably and repeatedly quotes radical mystics Richard Foster and Dallas Willard. Whitney praises Foster for his “great contribution” (*Spiritual Disciplines*, p. 22) and recommends the practices of “the medieval mystics” (p. 65), referring to the Catholic monks who invented contemplative mysticism in their benighted monasteries. It is unconscionable that Whitney doesn’t warn his readers that these mystics venerated Mary and were committed to Rome’s damnable sacramental gospel. Whitney promotes the practices of silence, journaling, and spiritual direction, and the “silence” recommended by Whitney is not merely to get alone with God and His Word in a quiet place. It is maintaining silence “inwardly so that God’s voice can be heard more clearly” and “does not always require words [or] sounds” (p. 184). This is blind and dangerous mysticism. To be alone with God in a quiet place and to meditate on His Word is NOT the same as sitting in silence and trying to hear God’s voice internally. One is scriptural and profitable; the other is mystical and dangerous.*

*Second, Whitney is a bridge to Reformed Theology, with its error pertaining to God’s election and its Augustinian allegoricalism and replacement theology which confuses Israel with the church. Whitney continually quotes the “Puritans” and recommends meditating on their writings as a devotional practice (“Do You Thirst for God?” 2001, p. 9), which is a recipe for being captured by the heresy of Reformed theology--something that is happening to many students in IFB Bible colleges. Whitney recommends John Piper in the most enthusiastic manner.*

*Third, Whitney is a bridge to the very dangerous world of New Evangelicalism.* He quotes from New Evangelical writers continually and in the most favorable manner, such as William Barclay, Elisabeth Elliot, Philip Yancey, and Jerry Bridges. He even cites Billy Graham, the Prince of New Evangelicalism, as an example of true godliness and the wise practice of spiritual disciplines (*Spiritual Disciplines*, p. 191).

In some ways, “conservative evangelicals” like Donald Whitney and Ed Stetzer are more dangerous than the Richard Fosters and Dallas Willards and Rick Warrens, because they are considered to be “safer,” yet they are bridges to the treacherous spiritual waters represented by the latter names.

Independent Baptists who are careless about separating from “conservative” evangelicals are building bridges to the bridge-builders.

Another way that soft separatism is evident is in the widespread habit among Independent Baptists of messing around with shallow, heavy-backbeat, ecumenical Southern Gospel groups that influence the church members with their worldliness and carelessness in associations. Few men have done more to tear down the walls of biblical separation than Bill Gaither, and he has spread his unholy ecumenical philosophy through the popular *Homecoming* specials. (See the free eBook *Southern Gospel Music* and the free eVideo download on Southern Gospel at [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

The fruit of soft separation is now evident for all to see.

The church Dr. Roberson pastored for 40 years is Southern Baptist today. His funeral was preached by a man who led his college into the Southern Baptist Convention (Paul Dixon, president of Cedarville University). Roberson’s authorized biography was written by a rock & roll Southern Baptist pastor.

All of this is the fruit of soft separatism and a weak stance toward the great spiritual/doctrinal/moral compromise within evangelicalism today.

Highland Park Baptist Church and Tennessee Temple University were drowned in treacherous spiritual waters, because the separation that was practiced by the former leader was too soft. He was much more a bridge builder than a bridge destroyer.

Dr. Roberson has had a massive influence in the Independent Baptist movement and many preachers are following in his footsteps and committed to his principles.

They are more concerned about avoiding “fragmentation” and building unity and “friendship” among Independent Baptists than standing against error. They will “talk a good talk” about separation privately, but there is no campaigning for it in their public ministries. They aren’t careful enough about their associations. They say they are opposed to the Southern Baptist Convention, but they make no serious effort to expose the Convention’s errors and they do not effectively reprove and disassociate from preacher friends who are building unwise bridges. They speak highly of men like Lee Roberson who built bridges to Southern Baptists and beyond that many have traveled. They mention such men in their lists of heroes and build monuments to them, and *any* criticism of such men is extremely low-key and vague. More often the criticism is non-existent *and not even allowed*, and those who issue such “criticism” are considered enemies of the truth and fair game for cheap mockery.

Soft separatism is a path to the emerging church.

The following questions can help identify whether or not a church is going soft on separation:

Do clear warnings go out from the pulpit?

Are the people who sit under the church’s ministry well educated about influential compromisers and heretics?

Does the church invite strong separatist preachers to blow the trumpet against compromise in a plain way?

Does the church warn more about disunity and “fragmentation” than it does about compromise?

Does the church dislike men who give plain public warnings about compromise?

Does the church ever host a conference on separation and give clear warning on issues?

Does the church publicly and unhesitatingly identify itself with forthright separatists?

Does the church recommend literature on separation to its members? What is in the bookstore?

Is separation something that was once preached, talked about, and practiced but now left out of the agenda?

Is the church affiliating with those who are careless in their affiliations?

Is the church warming up to “conservative evangelicals”?

Does the church routinely recommend books by New Evangelicals?

Is the church affiliating with those who use CCM and contemporary Southern Gospel and perhaps moving toward adopting this music itself? CCM is not just music; it is a philosophy of Christianity that is diametrically opposed to separatism and CCM and a separatist stance cannot and will not live in harmony for long.

### **Lack of Serious Discipleship**

Another reason why I am convinced that the average fundamental Baptist church will be well down the emerging path within 20 years is the lack of serious discipleship.

Typically, new converts aren't being seriously discipled. Young people aren't being seriously discipled. Even the parents aren't being seriously discipled.

We have dealt with this extensively in the books *Keeping the Kids* and *The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church*.

More time and effort is devoted to sports and entertainment than to serious biblical discipleship. The

church calendar is filled with fun and games with a thin veneer of spirituality. The demand to give up all for Christ either isn't being given or it is being blunted in its force by the church's lifestyle and habits.

As a result, the churches typically aren't producing disciples. They are producing soft Christians who love a Christianized version of the world. A one-week "missions trip," which could more properly be called a tourism lark, is about as much real discipleship as these Christians can take.

The average fundamental Baptist church is not producing church planters and missionaries who put the plow to the ground and don't look back and don't quit.

Such weak churches are prime candidates for a collapse of whatever little separatist stance that remains, if not under the present pastor then under the next.

### **Carelessness about Music**

Another major reason why I am convinced that most Independent Baptists will be emerging within 10-20 years is the widespread carelessness about music and the fact that so many are messing around with contemporary music and are thus building bridges to that extremely dangerous world.

The attitude in regard to music that is proliferating among fundamental Baptists is that it is a personal, local church matter rather than a biblical matter.

This attitude was expressed to me recently by a pastor who said that "as far as music is concerned, I see it as a local church issue, not a 'way of life' issue." He was saying that he doesn't accept my warnings about the danger of contemporary Christian music, that it is really none of my business, and I should not publish articles about it via *Way of Life Literature*.

It is ever more common among fundamental Baptist churches to malign the preachers who are still warning about the dangers of CCM and who are trying to help the churches

draw godly lines between sacred and contemporary music. Each time I have warned about the drift toward CCM that is happening in a fundamental Baptist college, I have been deluged with angry communications from students and graduates who defend the compromise.

This careless attitude was not widespread until recently. Not that long ago, CCM was almost universally condemned among fundamental Baptists. That is no longer the case.

Even many of those who still profess to be opposed to “Christian rock” hold an inconsistent, hypocritical position in that they do not make an issue of “soft rock” and in that they are adapting and toning down Contemporary Christian Worship music (CCW) and contemporary Southern Gospel.

This carelessness about music is unscriptural and extremely dangerous. Few forces in church and society today are more powerful than music. Preachers who are taking the position that music is not a major issue and that it is largely a matter of personal taste are playing with fire, and not only will they and their own families be burned, but their church members will be burned as well.

AND THIS WILL BE EVEN MORE EVIDENT IN THE UPCOMING GENERATION.

Contemporary worship music is sensual, addictive, and feeds the flesh; and it is a powerful bridge both to secular rock as well as to the “broader church” with all of its heresies and compromises.

Many Independent Baptist churches are “adapting” contemporary worship music by toning down the rhythm (trying to take the rock out of Christian rock), but this is very dangerous. Typically, what they end up with is a soft rock ballad style that has the same sensual, addictive nature as harder rock.

The people in these churches are becoming addicted to the contemporary sound and feel. Pastor Graham West of Tamworth Bible Baptist Church of NSW, Australia,

commented to me as follows about a song published by an Independent Baptist singer:

“I could hear the beat anticipation in the first song long before I even opened the written score. People are becoming more and more desensitized to the sensual sounds of both the vocals and the rhythm. This is indeed indicative of the general trend of the contemporary church and fundamental Baptists sadly want this as well.”

The CCM movers and shakers know that their music is addictive and transformative. In an interview with *Christianity Today*, Don Moen of Integrity Music said:

“I’ve discovered that worship [music] is transdenominational, transcultural. IT BRIDGES ANY DENOMINATION. Twenty years ago there were many huge divisions between denominations. Today I think the walls are coming down. In any concert that I do, I will have 30-50 different churches represented.”

In fact, they are actively targeting “old-fashioned” churches to move them into the “broader church.”

There are TRANSITION SONGS and BRIDGE SONGS designed to move “traditional” churches along the contemporary path toward Christian rock. From the perspective of the CCM artists involved in this, they aren’t doing anything sinister. They are simply trying to “feed” the “broader church.” But from a fundamentalist, Bible-believing position, the effect is to draw “old-fashioned” Bible churches into the contemporary orb, and that is most sinister.

Bridge songs include “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” by Stuart Townend and “In Christ Alone” by Townend and Keith Getty.

These songs are doctrinally sound and more hymn-like (folk or soft rock ballad style as opposed to out-and-out rock & roll), so they are considered “safe” by unsuspecting traditional churches.

But by using this music a church is brought into association with the contemporary world that Townend/Getty represent and that has the potential to bring Independent Baptist church members into treacherous waters.

For more on this see the following free materials:

*The Satanic Attack on Sacred Music* (free video) - [www.wayoflife.org/free\\_evideo/](http://www.wayoflife.org/free_evideo/)

*The Transformational Power of Contemporary Praise Music* (free video) - [www.wayoflife.org/free\\_evideo/](http://www.wayoflife.org/free_evideo/)

*The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music* (free video) [www.wayoflife.org/free\\_evideo/](http://www.wayoflife.org/free_evideo/)

*The Directory of Contemporary Worship Musicians* (book) [www.wayoflife.org/dcwm/](http://www.wayoflife.org/dcwm/)

These materials are also available for download and in printed book editions from Way of Life Literature.

Stewart Townend is an out-and-out Christian rocker. He is charismatic in theology and radically ecumenical in philosophy, supporting the Alpha program which bridges charismatic, Protestant, and Roman Catholic churches. He is a member of the Church of Christ the King in Brighton, U.K. and supports the “extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit,” which refers to the demonic/fleshly charismatic mysticism such as nonsensical tongues, spirit slaying, holy laughter, and shaking.

Townend is holding hands with the “broader church” in all of its facets and heresies and end-time apostasies, and Townend’s objective in writing “hymn-like” contemporary songs is ecumenism. He is doubtless sincere in this, but he is sincerely and decidedly *wrong*. Townend is a rock & roller, pure and simple. In his blog he says that he doesn’t go home and put on a hymns album, because this is not “where I’m at musically at all.” He simply wants to use the soft CCM to bring together the “broader church.”

When “traditional” churches borrow Townend’s “soft” CCM “hymns,” the contemporary churches are in no danger of being “traditionalized,” but the traditional churches are most definitely in danger of being contemporarized and led into the treacherous waters of modern evangelicalism.

Contemporary Southern Gospel is probably as dangerous as Contemporary Worship Music, and its popularity is growing by leaps and bounds among fundamental Baptists. My warnings about Bill Gaither and his crowd have, for the most part, either fallen on deaf ears or stirred up anger and rejection of my ministry.

(See “Bill Gaither’s Disobedience” and “Southern Gospel Music” at the Way of Life web site. There is also a segment on Southern Gospel in the video series “Music for Good or Evil,” which is available on DVD or eVideo downloads from the Way of Life web site -- [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

Contemporary Southern Gospel tends to bring the same type of broadminded tolerance and ecumenical thinking and rejection of “strict separatism” as contemporary worship music brings to a church.

A church will not long maintain a biblical separatist stance if it embraces either contemporary Southern Gospel or Contemporary Worship Music.

Within a decade or so such churches will have adopted a different stance, a New Evangelical-emerging-contemporary one.

I am convinced that CCM is one of the most dangerous things facing Independent Baptists and other fundamentalist Bible-believing churches.

The late Gordon Sears, who had an evangelistic music ministry for many years and ministered with Rudy Atwood, was saddened before his death by the dramatic change that was occurring in many fundamental Baptist churches. He warned:

“When the standard of music is lowered, then the standard of dress is also lowered. When the standard of dress is lowered, then the standard of conduct is also lowered. When the standard of conduct is lowered, then the sense of value in God’s truth is lowered” (Sears, *Songfest Newsletter*, April 2001).

Dr. Frank Garlock of Majesty Music warned:

“If a church starts using CCM it will eventually lose all other standards” (Bob Jones University, chapel, March 12, 2001).

The late fundamentalist leader Dr. Ernest Pickering gave a similar warning:

“Perhaps nothing precipitates a slide toward New Evangelicalism more than the introduction of Contemporary Christian Music. This inevitably leads toward a gradual slide in other areas as well until the entire church is infiltrated by ideas and programs alien to the original position of the church” (Pickering, *The Tragedy of Compromise: The Origin and Impact of the New Evangelicalism*, Bob Jones University Press, 1994).

Victor Sears called Contemporary Christian Music “the Trojan Horse of the ecumenical movement.”

“Good fundamental Baptists and others that refuse the teachings of the charismatic crowd concerning tongues, signs, miracles, and so forth are now singing their music in our churches and preparing our people for the world, the flesh and the devil. It is the new Trojan Horse move ... to deaden our churches to spiritual truth” (Sears, *Baptist Bible Tribune*, 1981).

We can see this happening on every hand today.

The reason is that contemporary worship music is not just music. Even when its lyrics are biblical and its rock rhythm is toned down, it represents a philosophy of Christianity that is opposed to what Biblicist churches stand for. It is a

philosophy that is opposed to a staunch, unwavering doctrinal stance, opposed to separation from the world, opposed to ecclesiastical separation.

The writers of the old hymns, though they were not all Baptist in theology, did not represent a movement that was brashly opposed to old-fashioned, Biblicist, separatist Christianity, whereas the contemporary worship crowd most definitely does represent such a movement.

Dan Lucarini, author of *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement: Confessions of a Former Worship Leader*, says:

“NO ONE SHOULD DENY THE POWER OF MUSIC TO PROSELYTIZE! Pastors in particular must defend their flocks from false teaching, heresies and ‘ear ticklers’ who bring worldly sensuality into the congregation; you are right to point out how easily this comes into a church through worship music. IT SEEMS WISER TO DECLINE THE USE OF WHAT SEEMS TO BE A PERFECTLY GOOD SONG, RATHER THAN TO GIVE ANY HONOR AND HINT OF ENDORSEMENT TO THE COMPOSER AND HIS/HER MISSION” (e-mail, May 24, 2009).

Churches that neglect the subject of music and consider it a “non-essential” issue do so to their spiritual detriment.

### **Quick Prayerism**

The widespread practice of Quick Prayerism is another thing that will destroy the spiritual, separatist stance of fundamental Baptist churches.

We could have started our list with this one, since salvation is THE fundamental issue in a Bible-believing church.

Quick prayerism is an evangelistic methodology that is quick to get people to pray a sinner’s prayer after a very shallow gospel presentation and usually without any hint of the necessity of repentance. It is quick to pronounce people

saved and to give them “assurance” and to try to baptize them even if they barely show any interest in the presentation and even if they give no evidence whatsoever of having been born again.

Frequently, Quick Prayerism incorporates psychological salesmanship manipulation techniques. In Quick Prayerism, an empty “sinner’s prayer” often replaces Holy Spirit conviction and miraculous regeneration.

Quick Prayerism is characterized by soul winning reports that are grossly exaggerated, since the number of real conversions are minute compared to the overall statistics.

For example, on Sunday morning, December 9, 2012, the preacher at First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana, said that some college girls chaperoned by one church member had “won 25,000 souls to Christ.” I looked around at the congregation and wondered where those 25,000 souls were.

I call it “prayerism” because it focuses on a prayer. I call it “quick prayerism” because it specializes in quick presentations and quick decisions and an overall lack of spiritual and biblical depth.

An example of this was communicated to me some time back by a friend who had the following experience at a prominent Independent Baptist church that operates a large Bible college in California. The soul winner in question is a veteran Independent Baptist missionary to Japan, a man with significant influence in the Independent Baptist movement.

“We went out with their staff on Saturday morning for soul winning. We were immediately partnered up with some of the veterans. The first door we went to, we spoke to a friendly Catholic guy and to my surprise, the guy got ‘saved’ before my very eyes as ----- took him from a few scripture passages to the sinner’s prayer so smoothly that I was caught off guard. I caught myself and while ----- was recording this man’s contact details and writing it down, I asked the man whether (1) he

believed that he was a good person and (2) that it is possible to go to heaven by being a good person. This man who had just got 'saved' told me 'YES.' I looked around and the other two men beside me said nothing and did nothing. We went to a few more places and eventually reached a home with a Roman Catholic young lady who came to the door. She said she was a professing Christian. Even though she said that all churches were the same ----- gave her assurance of salvation by quoting 1 John 5:13."

This is Quick Prayerism, and this is a church and school that claims to believe in repentance and claims to be serious about proper soul winning!

Quick Prayerism destroys the spiritual character and biblical stance of a church for many reasons.

For one, it tends to produce a mixed multitude because many of the members have prayed a prayer but haven't been supernaturally converted. They have been gotten down the aisle and baptized, but their Christianity is an external conformity rather than an internal reality.

Recently John Stevenson shared with me the following reminiscence from his days at Highland Park Baptist Church in the 1970s.

"I remember Dr. Fred Brown, staff evangelist in Highland Park Baptist Church, telling us decades ago that in his ministry to small churches, he surmised that the majority of people had no real conversion experience with Christ. It's a sad reality, but it's true."

Children who grow up in a Quick Prayerism environment typically "pray the prayer" at a young age, receive assurance and even in many cases a "spiritual birth certificate," and their salvation is not questioned thereafter even if they live like the devil and show no real interest in the things of Christ beyond conforming externally to the church's minimum requirements.

With each generation the church becomes spiritually weaker because it is a mixed multitude and the percentage of nominal Christians increases until it outnumbered that of true ones. The church can't practice discipline because too many of its members would need to be disciplined! It can't effectively disciple the people because so many are unregenerate and thus unresponsive. The spiritual program has to be kept on a very low level.

Unsaved people don't have spiritual discernment and don't love the truth and therefore can't be expected to support biblical separatism.

The redefinition of repentance by Jack Hyles and Curtis Hutson and the corruption of biblical evangelism that is so widespread among Independent Baptists is a *fundamental* issue that lies at the very heart of salvation and church life and missionary work. A building established on such a corrupt foundation is destined to collapse, even if a lot of other things are right.

(For more about this see the free eBook *Fundamental Baptists and Quick Prayerism* at [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

## Conclusion

In light of what we have witnessed in a mere two decades, every fundamental Baptist preacher needs to ask himself some questions. What is to keep my church from going the same direction as GARBC, BBFI, Southwide, Highland Park? What am I doing that these churches did not do? What am I *not* doing that these churches did do?

If ever there was a time to learn from recent history and to batten down the hatches, it is now.

Pastor, is your church doing everything that is necessary to hold the line against the onslaught of end-time apostasy?

I, for one, believe in separation. I am convinced that the “renunciation of separatism” is the renunciation of biblical Christianity. Separation is biblical. It is even an “essential” and a “fundamental” doctrine. Separation is not the gospel, but it is a divinely-ordained wall of spiritual protection against apostasy and the world. To reject “separatism” is to tear down this important wall so that God’s people are no longer kept from the “good words and fair speeches” whereby heretics deceive the hearts of the simple (Romans 16:17-18) and no longer protected from the siren call of the world.

I was not raised a separatist. I don’t hold to separation as some form of tradition from my fathers. I was raised Southern Baptist and learned nothing about separation in my youth. I became a separatist by conviction after I was born again as a young man and began studying the Bible for myself.

As a new Christian I wasn’t attracted to separatism because of my background or personal inclination. I am a converted hippy. After I was discharged from the Army as a Vietnam vet, I grew my hair long, sold drugs, hitchhiked across America, went to jail, and otherwise lived the rock & roll lifestyle to the hilt. Any natural inclination I had as a new

Christian was to *keep* my long hair, hold on to rock music, and remain friends with the Pentecostal movement. God's Word didn't allow that, and it was learning to separate from the world and from false teaching that kept me on the right track in the Lord's will.

Separation is necessary for true discipleship.

Knowing the importance of separation, I am deeply concerned about the next generation, if Jesus "tarries." I am concerned about my kids and grandkids and as yet unborn great grandkids. There are fewer and fewer churches that give more than lip service to separation. Will such churches still exist in 20-30 years so that God's people can find the spiritual protection they will need even more urgently than we do now?

By God's grace, there will be such churches if I have anything to do with it, and I pray that many preachers will join me in that determination.

When I find a preacher who is playing games about biblical separation and who is showing signs of rejecting it, I refuse to have anything to do with him as far as ministry goes. I am not going to join his church. I'm not going to preach in his church. I am not going to preach with him on the same platform in meetings. I am not going to invite him to preach in my church. And I am not going to preach in churches that would have him!

Yes, that is narrow and strict, but I believe it is necessary to cut off the effect of compromise. Compromise is a communicable disease!

The old backslidden prophet in 1 Kings 13 taught the young prophet to disobey God by taking His commandments lightly. God told the young prophet to preach against the idolatrous altar at Bethel and then to leave and not even to eat there. The prophet obeyed for a while. He ran a good race for a distance. He proclaimed God's message against the altar boldly, refusing the king's offer of a reward, then headed away

from Bethel. But instead of continuing to get away from there as fast as his donkey could carry him, he decided to take a rest under an oak tree. There an old compromised prophet, who had become comfortable in Bethel, met him and encouraged him that he didn't need to take God's commandments so strictly, that he could go to his house and enjoy a meal before leaving the idolatrous city. That sounded reasonable, didn't it? Surely God would understand. The "little bit" of compromise didn't work out for him, though. As a result of his association with an old backslidden prophet, the foolish young prophet was killed. By the way, we see in this account that backslidden preachers lie!

There are a lot of compromised preachers in Independent Baptist churches who are saying it is OK to lighten up on separation. They say that music is more an issue of taste, that teaching the biblical principles of modest dress is legalism, that it is fine to take the youth group to Dollywood and initiate them into Hollywood. They leave separation up to the people. Their theme song is "lighten up, don't be so strict and narrow. Let's be separatists but let's not go overboard with it. Let's not be fanatics. Surely, it can't hurt to read the 'conservative' evangelicals and use their materials and follow their blogs. If we don't lighten up, we'll lose the kids."

This spirit of compromise on separation which is permeating Independent Baptists was described to me in the following recent communication from a young preacher:

"I have been GREATLY encouraged by your writings because I had been struggling with the idea of holding to and preaching Christian standards when so many of the 'good' independent Baptist churches and pastors no longer do. I was getting to the place where I felt alone in desiring to preach and teach holiness from the pulpit, for I had asked many (at least 10) preachers if adapting CCM was ok and if we should preach hard on modesty and music and they ALL told me that if we love people and show them the love of the Lord they will eventually

come around to creating their own standards. I was so discouraged because I had been convicted about the music/dress that I was listening to and allowing in my own life and family and was desiring to find a man who would say, 'YES! TAKE A STAND!' So thank you for doing right no matter the cost. I have been the youth pastor at an independent Baptist church, but I have been asked to leave by the pastor because he feels I am 'too conservative/fundamental' for his ministry (our church is adapting CCM praise music and giving up modesty for the sake of 'keeping the unsaved in church')."

Observe that all of the preachers that this young man consulted counseled him not to preach and teach holiness and separation from the pulpit, to leave it up to the people to make their own decisions. Observe that he was dismissed from an Independent Baptist church for being too conservative. This is happening everywhere.

I don't want anything to do with that crowd! I believe that if you "lighten up" on biblical separation you will definitely lose the kids. You will lose them to the world, and you will lose them to the contemporary emerging philosophy. I am convinced that this thinking is wrong, that it is compromise, and I don't want to be affected by it.

Even if I could associate with such men without being personally affected, which is probably not possible, what about those who observe my example? I don't want to risk having our church members and Bible college students influenced by an association with compromising preachers and churches.

Biblical separation cannot be maintained without a campaign. A separatist stance will only be maintained on purpose and at a cost, but it is worth it.

Separation is not the gospel and it is not the work of the ministry, but it is a divinely-ordained wall of spiritual protection against apostasy and the world. To reject "separatism" is to tear down this wall so that God's people are

no longer kept from the “good words and fair speeches” whereby heretics deceive the hearts of the simple (Romans 16:17-18) and no longer distanced from the siren call of the world (2 Timothy 2:22).

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Th. 3:6).

# Good Churches Ruined by Bad Associations

The following is an enlarged edition of a report published via the Fundamental Baptist Information Service, September 4, 2012.

After studying the emerging church for the past five years, including attending one of the largest emerging church conferences with media credentials, reading several dozen of their books, and interviewing some prominent emerging leaders--and at the same time observing what is happening among fundamental Baptists--in 2011 I issued a warning that most Independent Baptist churches will be well down the contemporary/emerging path within a generation.

I am more convinced of this with each passing month.

In this book I list the following nine reasons for my prediction:

- Biblical Shallowness
- Rejection of warning and reproof in regard to certain heroes
- Unquestioning loyalty to man
- Following the crowd
- Ignorance about important issues
- Soft separatism
- Lack of serious discipleship
- Carelessness about music
- Quick Prayerism

More recently I have realized that a church doesn't have to be guilty of all of these things to be a candidate for becoming emerging. All it has to do is be guilty of two of them: SOFT SEPARATISM, because soft separatism builds bridges to the wrong churches and the wrong preachers that act as conduits

for other areas of compromise to enter the congregation, and the REJECTION OF WARNING AND REPROOF in regard to certain Independent Fundamental Baptist heroes, which makes it impossible to fully and properly educate about and separate a church from the compromise that is spreading so quickly among Independent Baptists. (A pastor that is unwilling to listen to warnings and reproof about his heroes and unwilling to let his congregation entertain such warnings is guilty of giving unquestioning loyalty to man, so these matters are intimately associated.)

I can think of several pretty strong churches pastored by men who are not guilty of most of the previous eight things. They are not careless about music in the services, at least for the moment. (Yet because of the influence of weaker Independent Fundamental Baptist (IFB) preachers with whom they are associated, contemporary worship and contemporary Southern Gospel music is spreading rapidly through their congregations.) They don't promote quick prayerism; they believe in the necessity of repentance for salvation and aren't hasty to proclaim people saved when there is no evidence thereof. Their goal is conversions rather than mere numbers of professions. (Though, again, because of their non-critical association with men who are guilty of these things, some of their church members practice the heresy of Quick Prayerism.) They are trying to disciple the people and educate them biblically. The pulpit ministry is not shallow. These pastors aren't proud men and they urge the people to prove their teaching by God's Word. There are many solid, biblical things in place in these churches. They have a vision of world evangelism. They have high moral standards and the preaching gets down to where the people live.

For the moment, these churches are capable of building healthy Christian lives and homes and discipling young people.

But my warning is about the future. My warning is not about big errors but about a “little leaven.” It is about how that certain “little leavens” that IFB churches are commonly guilty of, that we have learned by popular tradition from our forefathers, will eventually leaven the whole lump.

The problem with many otherwise good IFB churches is their associations. The problem lies in the matter of with whom the pastors of these churches associate and who they invite in to speak and whose books they recommend and what schools they promote and what conferences they attend and who they refuse to warn about.

If a church is not guilty of the eight areas of compromise that I document in this book (*Why Most Independent Baptist Churches Will Be Emerging*), yet if that church affiliates with men who *are* guilty of these things, that church will be corrupted by its affiliation just as assuredly as if it were guilty of all eight things.

Those who don’t narrow their associations significantly in these days will all go down the drain together, the good with the bad, because there is a rapidly growing number of IFB preachers who are *not* men of keen spiritual discernment and who are committed to a path of compromise (though, typically, they deny this accusation).

The Word of God warns, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

In light of what is happening and the widespread compromise and rapid change that is evident throughout IFB churches, it is time for a “come out from among them” movement much more than a broad Independent Baptist friends movement.

The emerging church hasn’t targeted strong preachers. They have targeted our children and our grandchildren. They have targeted the next generation. (See the book *What Is the Emerging Church?* and/or the video presentation *The*

*Emerging Church Is Coming* for documentation, both of which are available from Way of Life Literature.)

The question is whether or not the next generation is being prepared. The question is whether or not we are allowing bridges to be built to the wrong things, bridges that the next generation will cross.

Our young people will not only be influenced by us; they will be influenced by those with whom we associate.

By the way, where did we get the idea that no warnings should be given in regard to “good” men and churches? That is one of the vain and unscriptural traditions that IFBaptists have inherited from their forefathers.

Jesus reproved the good church at Ephesus, for the very reason that He loved it and wanted to see it prosper and not be destroyed.

Paul reproved the good preacher Peter because he loved Christ and the truth and didn’t want to see hypocrisy destroy the work of God.

The prophet Jehu reproved the good king Jehoshaphat for his compromise because God commanded him to do so and the prophet feared God more than man.

Take a man like Shelton Smith of *The Sword of the Lord*. He spoke in September 2012 at Tom Neal’s church in Florida, and Neal is the greatest Jack Hyles worshiper alive. Neal published a paper (*Independent Baptist Contender*) devoted to “perpetuating and protecting the principles and philosophies of Dr. Jack Hyles.” In a letter he wrote to explain his absence from the 2001 Pastor’s School at First Baptist Church of Hammond--after Hyles’ death in February of that year--Neal said:

“It has been said of me, and I consider it a great compliment, that Tom Neal is all about Jack Hyles. My agenda was to please him. ... every success I have, I owe to Pastor’s School and Dr. Hyles. ... It is my desire that Jesus and Bro. Hyles be proud of me” (March 29, 2001,

reproduced at <http://jackhammer.wordpress.com/2007/10/19/kneeling-tom-neal/>).

The November-December 2002 issue of Neal's *Independent Baptist Contender* mentioned Hyles at least 95 times by name and featured an article entitled "The Mind of Dr. Jack Hyles."

Whereas true Christians and Biblicists seek the mind of Christ, cultists seek the mind of their human leader.

This is wickedness. It is heresy. It is idolatry. It is not biblical Christianity. It is cultish. If we should not separate from the Jack Hyles and the Jack Schaaps and the Tom Neals, we should not separate from anyone.

(Since I first wrote this, Schaap landed in prison for committing adultery with a teenage girl and transporting her across state lines to facilitate his sin, but no one should have needed to wait until Schaap was in jail to know that he was someone to separate from.)

Yet Shelton Smith is part of this man-centered crowd. Instead of reproving them, he joins them. This is part of a wide-ranging, good-old boys, mutual back-scratching network, and men who care about the truth and care about the next generation and care about their churches need to come apart from it.

Preachers who continue to associate with this crowd are building bridges whereby this influence will enter their churches and eventually leaven them, regardless of what else they do right in their personal ministries.

The same is true in regard to the music issue. There are IFB pastors who use only sacred music and who truly care about this issue, but they associate at a ministry level with men who are careless about music, men who are playing with the fire of contemporary worship music and who are justifying it, even while deceptively pretending that they are against CCM. Such associations are compromise and they are going to hurt these pastors' churches in the long run.

Consider the following real life example:

“There are teens in our church considering college, and we had the West Coast Baptist College summer tour group in. My wife and I sampled their CDs, and ... it was [mostly] the modern style, as was their singing in church. Then we had a group from Grace Baptist College in Michigan. They were fully in line with worldly singing styles and ‘toned down’ CCM songs (some of them I can recognize by the emphasis on self and feelings). The pastor’s teaching and preaching is just WONDERFUL after many years of being in a Jack Hyles-type of cultic church that preached the pastor’s opinions and ‘how-to’ messages instead of the Scripture. But the music thing bothers me. Our own church music is almost entirely out of the hymnal and has had no hint of the CCM stuff. But, when nothing is said about these tour groups, I am afraid that it is just a matter of time.”

This church is already on the path toward the emerging church for the simple reason that the pastor will not tear down bridges to compromise. There are families in his church who are being influenced by West Coast’s compromise, and it is his fault.

Consider another example:

“Recently a West Coast college trio sang at our large IFB church. Our church promotes West Coast and defends it. Recently our pastor preached an uncomfortable message seemingly aimed at you [David Cloud] with only one or two Bible verses. He is -normally an excellent expositor of the Word of God. The last time a West Coast group was in our church, some, I believe, godly music was included. This time, it was straight CCM, loud, and the auditorium erupted in clapping.”

All of the elements are in place for the spiritual downfall of this church.

First, the pastor gives nearly unquestioning loyalty to Paul Chappell and West Coast, refusing to entertain godly reproof of what they are doing and attacking those who issue the

reproof. Thus the church members are cut off from every source of information and education that could help them avoid the compromise that is permeating IFB churches.

Second, the pastor is not being careful about music but rather is justifying the “adaptation” of CCM. Thus, the people are being given a taste for pop syncopation sounds such as beat anticipation, which Pastor Graham West of Australia has warned about. This will result in the congregation becoming addicted to the contemporary sound so that eventually they will not be satisfied by the “light” stuff. This is especially true for young people who are being influenced by this church’s compromise in music. Further, by allowing the use of “adapted” contemporary worship music, bridges are being built to that very, very dangerous world, as we have documented in the video presentations “The Transformative Power of Contemporary Worship Music” and “The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music.” (These are available as free eVideo downloads from [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

This church is on the slippery slope of the compromise that always accompanies contemporary Christian music, and it has rejected the very voices of warning that could help it to turn around before it is too late. One of the wisest things this pastor could do would be to show the aforementioned video presentations to his congregation, but his unscriptural loyalty to a man will not allow this to happen, since these presentations warn about what Paul Chappell is doing.

I predict that this church will be emerging within two decades, probably sooner. Today it is a church where God’s people can attend and be fed and strengthened and discipled and where they can find God’s will and raise their children for Christ. Such churches are rare today, but the seeds of destruction are being sown so that they will be far rarer in a few years.

Because of the compromise and the - and the undue exaltation of man, because of the foolish bridges that are

being built to the world of contemporary Christian music through the influence of one of the pastor's IFB heroes, the church will eventually not be a sound place to raise godly children who are separated from the world.

This is why I will continue to lift a voice even though I have been ostracized by men who should be my best friends in the battle for truth.

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25).