



COVENANT

Bible-Presbyterian Church

Preaching Christ for His Glory and His Kingdom

Order of Worship — 6 November 2016

Theme for the Year: "What Would Jesus Say About Your Church?" (Rev 3:22)

Prelude	<i>The Lord Is in His Holy Temple</i>
Call to Worship	
*Opening Hymn	15 - <i>Brethren, We Have Met to Worship</i>
*Invocation & † <i>Gloria Patri</i>	
Scripture Reading	Romans 6:1-14
The Lord's Supper	
Hymn	TP 12:1-8
Hymn	TP 15:1-5
Tithes & Offering	
**† <i>Doxology</i> & Offertory Prayer	
Scripture Reading	Acts 2:42-47
Hymn	343 - <i>I Want a Principle Within</i>
Confession of Faith & Pastoral Prayer	
Sermon	"The Spirit-Controlled Church Learns"
*Closing Hymn	Insert - <i>Love for Thy Word</i>
*Benediction & <i>Threefold Amen</i>	
Silent Prayer & Postlude	
Announcements	<i>*Congregation standing</i>

†Glory be to the Father, and to the Son:
And to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning,
Is now and ever shall be:
World without end. Amen.

††Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Covenant Bible-Presbyterian Church meets every Sunday at 10:00 am
at 47 Davis Road, Attadale, Western Australia

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The Practice of Ecclesiastical Separation

The Bible-Presbyterian Church is historically a Fundamentalist church. And as such, it is a separatist church. We practice ecclesiastical separation.

This means that, as a church (ecclesia), we have no fellowship or cooperation with other religions or churches that deny the Gospel. It also means that we have no fellowship with those who disobey this teaching.

Although ecclesiastic separation is good and right, there have been many excesses. These excesses have caricatured separation into something that Scripture never commends but condemns.

This article aims to examine the practice of ecclesiastical separation by defining and defending it, by examining its corruption, and by offering a remedy.

Ecclesiastical Separation Defined and Defended

God commands us to separate from unbelief

Because God is holy, he commands that believers have no spiritual fellowship with unbelievers.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 commands, *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."*

This does not mean we cannot associate individually with unbelievers, only that there should be no spiritual fellowship.

But church wise this means that we can have no cooperation or unity with other religions. This is also true with "churches" who oppose the Gospel. They are false churches.

1 Timothy 6:3,5b commands, *"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness...from such withdraw thyself."*

The reason for separation is to protect church and Christian. Corruption spreads easily in the body of Christ, and hence needs to be removed. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump and therefore should be removed.

Since separation requires judgment, it includes identifying the subject of separation. Romans 6:17 says, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."*

Practically, this means that there can be no cooperation with Liberalism, Romanism, Mormonism, etc.

God commands us to separate from disobedient Christians

God also commands us to separate from disobedient Christians. This practice is commonly called "second-degree separation."

2 Thessalonians 3:6,14 gives these instructions - *"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...And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."*

Ecclesiastical separation from these erring brothers serves to discipline them. According to 2 Thessalonians 3:14, it is so that they might be ashamed. This

speaks of repentance and turning back to right and Godly behavior.

Its purpose is restorative. Its aim is not to condemn; but through chastisement, they would repent. Practically, we are to graciously but firmly decline fellowship with those who are disobedient.

The Westminster Confession of Faith XXX:3,4 says that *"Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition; suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season; and by excommunication from the Church; according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person."*

Now, if separation from unbelievers and from false believers is commanded, then those who disobey this commandment are disobedient. "Second-degree separation" also extends to those who would fellowship with God's enemies.

Ecclesiastical Separation Corrupted

What is good and right in the eyes of the Lord can be corrupted in the hands of man. Ecclesiastical separation, as a means of church purification, has unfortunately been corrupted.

Separation because of minute doctrinal differences

Sadly the battle where ecclesiastical separation is fought is not so much between unbelief and orthodoxy, but often between factions of orthodoxy. Christians end up separating from other Christians because of minute doctrinal differences or disagreements over preferences.

Such separation is often accompanied by anti-Christian behavior, where brethren decline to speak to one another, but rather denounce each other. Those that were bought by Christ, washed by His blood, and are supposed to be characterized by love and forgiveness; treat each other as enemies.

And ecclesiastical separation is alluded to in order to excuse such carnality. It is sad when Bible-believing Christians deal with one another in this fashion over minor points of disagreement. While 2 Thessalonians 3:15 exhorts that we deal with one another as brothers, yet in reality, there is great enmity.

We must pursue holiness, but we must also pursue peace. Hebrews 12:14 says, *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."*

Charles Spurgeon commented concerning this verse - *"Some who have aimed at holiness have made the great mistake of supposing it needful to be morose, contentious, faultfinding, and censorious with everybody else. Their holiness has consisted of negatives, protests, and oppositions for oppositions sake. Their religion mainly lies in contrarities and singularities; to them the text offers this wise counsel, follow holiness, but also follow peace. Courtesy is not inconsistent with faithfulness. It is not needful to be savage in order to be sanctified. A bitter spirit is a poor companion for a renewed heart. Let your determination principle be sweetened by tenderness towards your fellow-men. Be resolute for the right, but be also gentle, pitiful, courteous. Consider the meekness as well as the boldness of Jesus. Follow peace, but not at the expense of holiness. Follow holiness, but do not needlessly endanger peace."*

Separation because others are not separate enough

Because of second-degree separation, it is not wrong for Christians to separate from others who do not heed the call to separate from unbelief. It is right.

This, however, is easier said than done. What if a church fails to separate from a church who fails to separate from a church which unites with the enemies of Christ? To how many degrees will such separation go?

Because of a manic desire for consistency, some separatists separate themselves into isolation and oblivion, scrutinizing the separation of others.

And the fear of being labeled an inconsistent separatist or any other pejorative drives many to conform. Fear binds the conscience of Christians as it did Peter's conscience years ago when he separated himself from the Gentile believers for fear of the Jews.

Separation without going through due process

Much of the separation that occurs is done carnally. While such behavior is already unjustifiable, it becomes even sadder to realize that much of the separation achieved is not done according to due process.

In Matthew 18, Christ had laid down the principles of church discipline. There is a church court and there is a due process.

Unfortunately, this is not done in many cases of ecclesiastical separation. Many separatists are overly eager to name names, and warn others, without going through this due process. This is nothing more than gossip. Brethren are judged by nothing more than hearsay and condemned without the benefit of due process.

And the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation is alluded to, in order to justify such urgent and hasty dealings. How ironic when ecclesiastical separation is supposed to be an act of church discipline!

Article 6.6 of our constitution says, *"there has been a notable growth of autocratic domination on the part especially of modernistic leaders by whom the rightful powers of true*

churches are often usurped and are now being usurped."

This is sadly but ironically mirrored in Fundamentalist churches, where the rightful powers are often usurped by an autocratic group who practice unbiblical separation. If it is not biblical separation, then what is it? Unfortunately, what passes-off as separation may simply be plain old schism!

Ecclesiastical Separation Biblically Restored

How then are we to restore a biblical ecclesiastical separation?

Separation over clear biblical doctrine

The Bible is clear on many things, yet it is not always clear on others. One way that Christians down the ages have articulated these clear teachings of the Bible is through creeds and confessions.

Philip Schaff says that such standards are for the purposes of defining theological standards, guarding against false doctrines and practices, forming sound inter-church relationships, disciplining, nurturing, and teaching young Christians, and deepening our connection with the church in the past.

An additional use of creeds and confessions is that they promote mature and charitable liberty. Things which are not dealt with in these documents are considered peripheral and secondary.

It is because the Scriptures are not plain and clear on them. If that be the case, they are not central to the Gospel. And it is not justifiable to separate over them. How can Bible versions, hair length, and dressing be reasons for separation?!

But whatever the issue, such questions need to be considered carefully by all those God has called and appointed to disseminate His truth and to guard his church. That is why due process is so important.

Separation by going through due process

The church is not the Wild West. There are no Indian chiefs and there are no

lone rangers. No one can make decisions independently and no decision can be made or pushed through without the consensus of the entire church government.

In making decisions about fraternal relationships, doctrinal controversies, and ecclesiastical separation, the church has a due process. Beyond the local church elders, there is Presbytery, and Synod. No individual or handful of individuals may make decisions concerning doctrine or separation.

WCF XXXI:3 states, *"It belongs to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his Church..."* No cowboys allowed.

Work Towards Biblical Unity

If independency is not scriptural, then there needs to be effort to work towards biblical unity.

Often the theme of unity is looked upon suspiciously in separatist churches. The topic of true visible Christian unity is never given the weight that it deserves. It is often classified as a by-the-way of Biblical Separation, rather than the opposite. But Christian unity is biblical and it should be something that even separatists should work towards.

One example of separatists working towards unity can be seen in the Reformation. Despite their justifiable separation from the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformers did strive for

unity amongst themselves. They did not always achieve it, but they certainly did try.

While great men like Luther and Zwingli disagreed bitterly on one point of doctrine, unity was furthered by their protégés - Melancthon and Bullinger.

Melancthon achieved doctrinal agreement with Calvin on many points. Likewise, Bullinger and Calvin succeeded in overcoming their differences to achieve a united Reformed witness.

Conclusion

Ecclesiastical separation is a biblical doctrine and practice. It must be obeyed and applied. Church purity must not be compromised. Just because there are excesses does not detract from the doctrine itself.

But knowledge of which doctrines to separate over and an understanding due process of discipline, regulated by many men from many churches, and putting to death the cowboy attitude are all safeguards against unbiblical separation. These also promote a unity that is pleasing in the sight of God.

The Bible-Presbyterian Church has gone through nearly 100 years of history. It has seen the hand of God protecting her from apostasy. But it has also seen many unbiblical schisms in her short history. May the Lord continue to preserve her and protect her, and may she remain true to the whole counsel of Scripture.

~ Pastor



Westminster Larger Catechism

Q. 106. What are we especially taught by these words (before me) in the first commandment?

A. These words (before me) or before my face, in the first commandment, teach us, that God, who seeth all things, taketh special notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other god: that so it may be an argument to dissuade from it, and to aggravate it as a most impudent provocation: as also to persuade us to do as in his sight, whatever we do in his service.

The Spirit-Controlled Church Learns

Acts 2:42-47

The Christian's experience is that of change - according to the Bible, when a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it will bring forth life and bear much fruit. In Christ we are a new creation - the old is gone, behold all things are become new. There is an obligation to live in the newness of life (Rom 6:3-4). One of the evidences of change and life is a devotion to the Word of God.

1. The Attitude Toward the Word
 - a. Devoted to learning
 - b. Hungry to grow
 - c. Devoted to teach
2. The Curriculum of the Word
 - a. Jesus' teachings
 - b. New Testament
 - c. Old Testament
 - d. Spiritually received
3. The Result of the Word
 - a. Obedience
 - b. Reverence for God
 - c. Practical love
 - d. Focus on the Church of God

Christ and his Word become the focal point of our new lives in the body of Christ - the remnant. A proof of new life is a hunger for the Word of God. The resurrected Christ instructs that we observe all things whatsoever he has commanded us.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Do you hunger for the Word for intellectual/academic satisfaction or for grow spiritually thereby? Do you think Christians often mistake growth in understanding with growth in character? Why do you think this is so?
2. Read James 1:22. Can a Christian grow by not obeying? Why do you think this is the case? What is the consequence of a Christian with a lot of knowledge but with little character? See 1 Corinthians 8:1b.

Love for Thy Word



1. Love for Thy Word, O Lord Love for Thy Word
2. Love for Thy Word, O Lord Love for Thy Word
3. Love for Thy Word, O Lord Love for Thy Word



Thine own dear breath, O Lord Within Thy Word!
Life - giving streams afford From all Thy Word!
Make my soul cleave, O Lord Un - to Thy Word



Fill me with zeal to find In each and ev 'ry line
Let all Thy glo - ry shine Forth, from Thy Book Divine
Give to my heart this day This blessed - ness, I pray



Ri - ches of Truth so fine: Gems from Thy Word!
In - to this heart of mine Life from Thy Word!
Both to hear and obey All of Thy Word!



Worship Service Roster

Service	This Week (6.11.16)	Next Week (13.11.16)
Speaker	Mark Chen	Mark Chen
Worship Leader	Mark Chen	Jimmy Orchard
Pianist	Evelyn Lee	Nancy Lim
Welcomers	Ian & Merrill Read	Kim & Jessalyn Leow
Offering Stewards	John E Tan*, Terence Lee* Micah Chiang, Rex Sriharan	Steven Lim*, Chris Budiman* Ken Chong, Kim Leow
Usher	Wendy Gong, Angela Yap	Eva Ng, Josephine Austin
Kitchen Duties	Lydia Orchard*, Helen Wong, Grace Wang, Vincent Chiu	Jackie Hong*, August Ng, Angela Yap
<i>Prayer Meeting</i>	<i>11 November 2016</i>	<i>18 November 2016</i>
Facilitator	Mark Chen	Mark Chen
Pianist	Eugene Lim	Jerome Ng

Announcements

1. A warm welcome to all worshipers. May God richly bless you. Please stay behind after the service for fellowship and tea.
2. We are celebrating the Lord's Supper today. First time visitors wishing to partake the Lord's Supper should see an elder before the service.
3. Next week's message: "The Spirit-Controlled Church Fellowships" (Acts 2:42-47).
4. Next week's Junior Worship message - "Biblical Mummification" (Colossians 3:12-17). Speaker - Jacob Woo.
5. Men's Bible Study. Saturday 12 November 2016, 7:30 pm at the residence of Edward Lim. For information, please contact Vincent Chiu at 0417 929 149.
6. Combined Youth Camp. The camp has been postponed to 14-15 July 2017.
7. CBI will be starting a new 10 lesson course on "Luther and the Reformation" by Dr RC Sproul on Friday, 11 November 2016. Please contact Pastor to register.

Appointments for the Week	Last Lord's Day Tithes & Offering, & Attendance
WED 10:00 am Craft Group FRI 7:45 pm CBI & Prayer Meeting SAT 4:30 pm JF & TF 7:30 pm Men's Bible Study SUN 9:00 am Sunday School 10:00 am Worship Service	<i>General Fund</i> - \$3,419.00 (#633 - \$400.00). <i>Missions Fund</i> - \$250.00 (#676 - \$70.00). <i>Building Fund</i> - \$105.00 (#399 - \$105.00). <i>Total Tithes & Offering</i> - \$3,774.00. Attendance - 159.

Building Fund to Date		
Available Building Fund	\$72,515.39	Building Fund Account:
Outstanding Pledges	\$0.00	
Last Week's Collection	\$105.00	Covenant Bible-Presbyterian Church
Total	\$72,620.39	(Westpac Bank, Applecross)
<i>Outstanding Loan</i>	- \$416,000.00	BSB: 036-031 Acct: 316969
<i>Amount Still Needed</i>	\$343,379.61	SWIFT: WPACAU2S

Elders: **Mark Chen (Pastor)** 6114 4242, 0415 932 373. **Jimmy Orchard** 0413 274 407.
 Deacons: **Ken Chong** 0402 553 313. **LH Chua** 0435 601 373. **Johnson Lim** 0402 145 682. **Jacob Woo** 0421 212 206.