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**Doctrine of Church Purification and Preservation**

**JEFFREY KHOO**



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# **Biblical Separation**

Doctrine of Church Purification and Preservation

by

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Singapore

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To  
Quek Suan Yew





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## FOREWORD

“Separation in the light of Scripture is not an option but a command.” These words from the opening paragraph of Dr Jeffrey Khoo’s book on the subject express well the theme of his book. This book should be required study for every student preparing for any phase of the Lord’s work.

Dr Khoo quotes Spurgeon who said of the Reformers, “These men loved the faith and name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. ... It is so today as it was in the Reformer’s Day.” Spurgeon said these words in the late 1800s!

Dr Khoo has carefully and thoroughly analyzed the commands of separation in the three sections of the Old Testament, the commands of the Lord on separation in the Four Gospels, plus the exhortations on separation by the writers of the other New Testament books. He has also researched and given us valuable quotations from God’s servants through the centuries.

In this day, with growing dishonesty in the pulpit, every pastor needs the refresher course this book offers. Every Christian in the pew will be strengthened by reviewing what God has commanded and preserved for us for our day. Obedience is the test of orthodoxy. The great gulf between belief and unbelief is as great as the gulf between heaven and hell (Luke 16:26; John 3:18).

The following words of Dr Timothy Tow written in the foreword of another of Dr Khoo’s books apply well to this incisive study on Biblical Separation: “An unbiased student following that careful study, ‘precept upon precept, precept upon precept’ (Isa 28:19) cannot help but come to same conclusion as the author.”

Dr Arthur E Steele  
President Emeritus  
Clearwater Christian College  
Florida, USA

## PREFACE

Biblical separation (ie, the separation of the church and its members from unbelief, apostasy, and compromise) is a much neglected doctrine today. It is disturbing to note that most of the major or popular theology textbooks written in this century fail to discuss it systematically. Those that do discuss it either treat it superficially or view it negatively. A look at the Systematic Theologies currently available will bear this out. (If discussed, it is usually done under Ecclesiology, ie, Doctrine of the Church.)

**These Systematic Theologies do not deal with the doctrine of separation at all:** Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4<sup>th</sup> rev ed (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1941); William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, enlarged ed (Chicago: Moody Press, 1912); Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994); Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1982 [reprint]); Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966); Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev Vernon D Doerksen (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977); J Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: A Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988).

**These only contain a brief discussion:** Floyd Hays Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology* (Bible School Park: Practical Press, 1981), 301-3; James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols in 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 1:422-4, 2:226; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948); 7:287; Gordon R Lewis and Bruce A Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994); 3:292-4; Morton Smith, *Systematic Theology* (Greenville: Greenville Seminary Press, 1994), 600-1; Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols in 1 (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1907), 3:928-9.

**These three offer a substantive but by no means satisfactory treatment:** Millard J Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 3:1129-48; James Leo Garrett Jr, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, 2 vols (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1995), 2:617-26; and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 873-903. All three theologians are not separatists in the fundamentalist sense of the term. This can be clearly seen in their writings.

The absence of the doctrine of separation in most of the Systematic Theologies is unfortunate. The apostasy of mainline denominational churches today might be due to a lack of appreciation for this vital doctrine. This work thus seeks to study the neglected doctrine of separation from a biblical perspective by presenting and commenting on the texts that propound it from Genesis to Revelation.

A special word of appreciation is due to my teachers: Rev Dr Timothy Tow, founding pastor of the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore, and principal of the Far Eastern Bible College who exemplified what it truly means to believe the Bible and defend it; and Dr Arthur E Steele, President Emeritus of Clearwater Christian College, Florida, USA, for his lectures on Contemporary Theology at the Far Eastern Bible College in 1988. These two men of God have influenced, in no small way, my understanding of biblical separation. I wish also to thank Dr John C Whitcomb for kind permission to print his timely essay—"When Love Divorces Doctrine, and Unity Leaves Truth"—herein. May God receive all the glory and praise.

## INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of separation is not just a denominational distinctive, but an ecclesiastical principle that must be adopted by every Bible-believing Christian and church. Separation in the light of Scripture is not an option but a command.

In the Old Testament, God *commanded* the Israelites to keep themselves separate from the heathen nations. In Deut 7:1-11 we read, “When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land where thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; *thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give* unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. Thou shalt therefore

keep the *commandments*, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I *command* thee this day, to do them.”

Not only do the words “command” (*tsawah*) and “commandment” (*mitswah*) in verses 9 and 11 tell us that the instructions in this passage are imperatival; the imperfect tense with the negative *lo’* in verses 2 and 3 has the same imperatival force. The imperfect with *lo’* is used to express the definite expectation that something will not happen. It issues a very strong and emphatic command of prohibition—“Thou shalt not do it!”—with the strongest expectation of obedience (as compared to the simple warning of *’al* with the jussive—“do not that!”). When God desires to issue a command in the strongest possible terms, He usually uses the *lo’* with the imperfect (GKC, 317). The command of separation thus has the same imperatival force as that of the Decalogue—the Ten Commandments.

In the New Testament, the separation commandment is clearly given in 2 Cor 6:14, “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, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” There are several imperatives here: (1) “Be ye not unequally yoked” (*Me ginesthe heterozugontes*), (2) “Come out” (*hexelthate*), (3) “be ye separate” (*aphoristhete*), and (4) “touch not” (*me haptesthe*).

The doctrine of separation is a doctrine of preservation. Like white blood cells in our body that seek and destroy any invading virus or bacterium, separation keeps the Church pure and free from false teachers and heresies. Who is a fundamentalist? It is the Christian. Every Christian should be a fundamentalist. A true and faithful Christian believes in the fundamentals of the Faith and defends them. In order to defend the Christian Faith, the Christian must separate himself from all forms of unbelief and apostasy. A true fundamentalist is a true separatist.



## CHAPTER I

### THE DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The OT is an invaluable source of instruction for Christians; “all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition” (1 Cor 10:11). The doctrine of separation is taught in all three sections of the OT—the Law (Gen, Exod, Lev, Num, Deut), the Prophets (Josh, Judg, 1-2 Sam, 1-2 Kgs, Isa, Jer, Ezek, 12 minor prophets), and the Writings (Pss, Prov, Job, Cant, Ruth, Lam, Eccl, Esth, Dan, Ezr, Neh, 1-2 Chr).

#### **The Mandate of Separation in the Law**

The mandate of separation is found in the Torah (Law). There are many instances in the OT where the Torah is said to be “commanded,” to be “done,” or “kept” and “not transgressed.” Furthermore, words like “commandment,” “statute,” and “ordinance” are interchangeably used to refer to the Torah (Gen 26:5, Exod 16:28, Lev 26:46, Ps 105:45).

In the OT, we find the Torah to be foundational in the culture of the Israelites. The absolute importance of obeying the Torah is seen in the *Shema*, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and will all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou

filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not, when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people who are round about you (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth” (Deut 6:4-15).

The *Shema* is the Jewish confession of faith. In Hebrew liturgy, the *Shema* comprises Deut 6:4-9, 11:13-21, and Num 15:37-41. What is the purpose of the *Shema*? The *Shema* seeks to remind Israel of her monotheistic faith in Jehovah. The Jews were commanded by God to read the *Shema* twice daily (‘When thou liest down, and when thou risest up’). The Lord commanded the Israelites to separate themselves from the heathen nations and their false deities. Israel was constantly warned against idolatry.

### **Separation in Genesis**

It is dangerous to have intimate fellowship with unbelievers. Lot unwisely chose to dwell in the city of Sodom. The inhabitants of Sodom were very wicked and sinful (Gen 13:12-13). Lot was a believer. The NT called him “just Lot.” But Lot was “vexed with the filthy manner of life of the wicked (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)” (2 Pet 2:7-8).

The fact that Lot’s spiritual life was adversely affected because he lived in Sodom can be seen in his response to the men of the city who wanted to have sexual intercourse with the angels who visited him (Gen 19:5). Lot compromised his morals by offering his virgin daughters to satiate the wicked lusts of these sex maniacs (Gen 19:8). What a terrible thought! In his association with a wicked society, we see a gradual but certain moral breakdown in the character of Lot. The principle learnt from Lot’s example is this: that having intimate fellowship with unbelievers and their evil ways not only results in identification with them, but also an inevitable compromise of one’s moral standards.

## Separation in Exodus

In Exodus 19:5-6, we find the doctrine of separation stated in the Mosaic Covenant. God said, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a *peculiar treasure* unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”

Israel was to be “a peculiar treasure” unto Jehovah. The Hebrew word here—*segullah*—which means “personal property” (Holladay, *Lexicon*, 253) has the idea of something which is “select,” “precious,” “endeared,” “something exceedingly prized and sedulously preserved” (Wilson, *Word Studies*, 305). Israel’s privileged position before God required her to be a separated nation. Calvin said, “The privilege he sets before them in the word, *segullah*, which means all things most precious, whatever, in fact, is deposited in a treasury; ... it is plain from the immediate context, that it denotes *the separation of this people from all others*” (*Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, trans Charles William Bingham [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981], 318).

Moreover, Israel was also called “a kingdom of priests.” In Israel, God appointed the tribe of Levi to function as priests. However, “The fact that God vested priestly functions in one tribe did not release the rest of the nation from their original obligation.

“The Levites served in a representative character for the whole nation in the matter of honor, privilege, and obligation of priesthood. When the priests ministered, they did so as the representatives of God’s people. ... Furthermore, the priests in their separated condition symbolised the purity and holiness God required. They were a visible reminder of God’s righteous requirements. Moreover, as substitutes for the people they maintained the nation’s covenant relationship with God intact. The primary function of the Levitical priesthood, therefore, was to maintain and assure, as well as re-establish, the holiness of the chosen people of God (Exod 28:38, Lev 10:7, Num 18:1)” (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, sv “Priests and Levites,” by C L Feinberg). In other words, Israel functioned “as intermediaries between God and the heathen world to whom they were to be examples, instructors, prophets” (George Rawlinson, “Exodus,” in *The Pulpit Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, nd], 1:107).

Thirdly, they were called “an holy nation.” This does not mean that they were a sinless nation but that they were “set apart from others by God by special privilege” (Calvin, *Books of Moses*, 320). This privileged position ought to be maintained, not compromised. A compromise of this position would mean a loss of the testimony God meant His people to bear to the world.

In Exod 23:32-33, God instructed Israel on how she should regard the pagan inhabitants of Canaan. God commanded His people to “make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me; for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.”

God knew the nature of man’s wicked heart. Given the option, man would rather choose to rebel against God than to obey Him (Rom 3:10-11). Jer 17:9 says, “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Knowing that man would be easily tempted away from Him, God warned Israel in advance against making any kind of alliance with the inhabitants of the land. For an alliance would lead to compromise and ultimate capitulation to their idolatrous practices. This commandment against idolatry is reiterated in Exod 34:11-17, “Observe thou that which I command thee this day: Behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where thou goest, lest it be a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, and break their images, and cut down their idols. For thou shalt worship no other god; for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

The doctrine of God’s Covenant in the Old Testament is significant. That Israel was a covenant people of God meant that they were to be a separated people. They were to stand out among the heathen nations. It was to Israel that God revealed that He is the one living and true God. And Israel had the responsibility to declare this truth to the nations. For their witness to be effective, God demanded that they kept themselves holy and separate.

### **Separation in Leviticus**

The central theme of Leviticus is holiness. The word *qodesh* meaning “holiness” or “holy” has the idea of separation, withdrawal, or apartness (New BDB, 871). This word is used no less than 150 times in Leviticus.

Also, the command “Ye shall be holy, for I am holy” is repeatedly mentioned (Lev 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7,26). Most significant of which is Lev 20:26, “And ye shall be holy unto me; for I, the LORD, am holy, and have separated you from other people, that ye should be mine.” The word “separated” here is from the word *badal* which means “to divide,” “to separate,” “to set apart,” “to sever” (TWOT, 1:91; New BDB, 95). In the Levitical context, it has the idea of separation between clean and unclean. “This emphasis on the distinction between clean and unclean ... leads to the use of cleanness and holiness to express the nature of Israel in contrast to other nations (Ex. 19:6). Thus *bdl* is used several times to denote Israel’s separation from the heathen. In Ezra 6:21, those who have returned from exile were described as people who have separated themselves from the pollutions of the peoples (Neh 9:2; 10:29[28])” (TDOT, sv “*bdl*,” by Benedikt Otzen).

Separation is demanded of Israel because the God of Israel is a holy God. The command to separate applies to both individual and nation. Likewise, in the Church, separation must be practised not only at the personal, but also ecclesiastical level.

### **Separation in Numbers**

In Num 25:1-3, we see that non-separation incurs divine displeasure, “And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.”

This ungodly alliance was a result of Balaam’s Satanic doctrine. In Num 31:16, we read, “Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD.” What was this “counsel of Balaam?” According to Ernest Pickering, “the counsel of Balaam” was “an effort to corrupt true worship to intermingle the true with the false” (*Biblical Separation* [Illinois: Regular Baptist, 1979], 170). Balaam’s ecumenical heresy is thrice condemned in the NT (2 Pet 2:15,16; Jude 11; Rev 2:14). There are many Balaams today who are promoting such forbidden alliances between true and false churches. Divine judgement awaits these false prophets who promote unequal and unholy marriages between believers and unbelievers (Num 25:4-5).

## Separation in Deuteronomy

Deut 7:1-6 clearly teaches separation, “When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land where thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girghashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou, and when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; *thou shalt make no covenant with them*, nor show mercy unto them. *Neither shalt thou make marriages with them*; thy daughter thou shalt not give into his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods; so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them: ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their idols, and burn their carved images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God; the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people who are upon the face of the earth.” For an exposition, see “Introduction,” 13-14.

In Deut 22:9-10, the law of separation is applied to agriculture, “Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with various seeds, lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.” Why was there such a prohibition of mixing different types of seed or animal? Why cannot the ox be yoked together with the ass? One common explanation is that the ox being a stronger animal cannot work comfortably with the weaker ass. Another suggestion is that “the ass, from feeding on coarse and poisonous weeds, has a fetid breath, which its yoke-fellow seeks to avoid, not only as poisonous and offensive, but producing leanness, or, if long continued, death; and hence it has been observed always to hold away its head from the ass and to pull only with one shoulder” (Robert Jamieson et al, *A Commentary Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, 3 vols [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1973] 1:672-3). A D H Mayer suggests that this prohibition was meant to prevent the Israelites from employing the cultic practices of the Canaanites (*Deuteronomy*, NCBC [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1979], 307-8).

It is unlikely that Moses here was trying to teach the Israelites how to farm. The reason for these agricultural laws could be purely pedagogical.

It could be God's way of reminding the Israelites daily that they were to remain a separated people of God (Deut 7:1-6). Adam Clarke wrote, "it is very probable that the general design was to prevent improper alliance in *civil* and *religious* life. And to this St. Paul seems evidently to refer, 2 Cor. vi. 14: *Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers*, which is simply to be understood as prohibiting all intercourse between Christians and idolators in social, matrimonial, and religious life" (*Clarke's Commentary*, 3 vols [Nashville: Abingdon, nd], 1:795).

The doctrine of separation in the Old Testament is intrinsic to the covenant God made with Israel. The basic purpose for separation was to ensure holiness. Israel was to distinguish and separate herself from the heathen nations in order to bear witness to the truth that Jehovah alone is the living and true God, righteous and holy (Deut 6:4, 7:6).

### **The Proclamation of Separation in the Prophets**

The doctrine of separation is also found in the *Nabi'im* (Prophets). The word *nabi* means "spokesman," or "prophet." The prophet is God's messenger. He is a foreteller and a forthteller. He not only predicts the future but also declares, "Thus saith the LORD." The prophets were thus raised to direct or redirect the Israelites to obey the Law. Calvin commented, "the prophets, ... are interpreters of the law. And this is the sum of the Law, that God designs to rule by his own authority the people whom he has adopted. But the law has two parts,—a promise of salvation and eternal life, and a rule for a godly and holy living. To these is added a third part,—that men, not responding to their call, are to be restored to the fear of God by threatenings and reproofs. The Prophets do further teach what the law has commanded respecting the true and pure worship of God, respecting love; in short, they instruct the people in a holy and godly life, and then offer to them the favour of the Lord" (*Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans John Owen [Grand Rapids: Baker, nd], 36).

In this section, we have many prophetic warnings against apostasy, and will see the consequences of non-separation.

#### **Separation in Joshua**

The prophet Joshua (1 Kgs 16:34) before his death reminded the children of Israel to be faithful to God by remaining separate from the idolatrous nations. "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is

written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; that ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day. Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you” (Josh 23:6-8, 11-13).

Here is Calvin’s commentary on verse 7, “He distinctly admonishes them that it will be impossible rightly to discharge their duty if they be not carefully on their guard against all sources of corruption. This it was very necessary to enforce upon them. For they were surrounded on all sides by the snares of Satan, and we know how great their proneness to superstition was, or rather how headlong their eagerness for it. First, then, he warns them that intimate intercourse with the nations may involve them in fellowship in crime; for the term ‘mingling’ used in this passage is equivalent to what is termed by St. Paul, *being yoked* (2 Cor. 6:14). In short, he first removes the incitements or allurements of idolatry, and then declares his detestation of idolatry itself. It is to be observed, however, that he does not expressly mention either bending of the knee, or sacrifices, or other rites, but designates all perverse modes of worship by the term ‘naming’ them and ‘swearing’ by them. Hence we infer that God is defrauded of his honour whenever any particle, however small, of all the things which he claims for himself is transferred to idols. He accordingly concludes that they are to adhere to God alone; in other words, they are to be bound to him out and out” (*Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, trans Henry Beveridge [Grand Rapids: Baker, nd], 265-6).

We can infer from Josh 24:14-28 that the Israelites were already starting to be idolators. Joshua would have no part in it. He challenged them, “choose you this day whom ye will serve, ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh 24:15). The Israelites replied that they



will serve the LORD (Josh 24:16,21) but they were only paying lip service for they were keeping idols in their homes. Thus Joshua commanded, “Now, therefore, put away, ... the foreign gods which are among you” (Josh 24:23).

The lesson from Joshua is this: If there is going to be any genuine service to and worship of God, there must first of all be a separation from that which is idolatrous. If there is going to be any real witness to the world, we must do so “in sincerity and in truth.” God not only demands that our hearts be right when we serve Him but also to do so in His way prescribed in His Word.

### **Separation in Judges**

In the days of the Judges, the sin of forsaking God and compromising with the Canaanites became pronounced. We read of this problem early in the book of Judges, “and there arose another generation who knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. ... And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers ... and followed other gods, of the gods of the people who were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them and provoked the LORD to anger (Judg 2:10,12).

It is not because the second generation was not reminded of the law of separation that caused them to turn away from God. The covenant law demanded that parents teach their children the ways of the Lord (Deut 6:7). The parents then knew too well the injunction of the divine Angel, “ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of the land: ye shall throw down their altars” (Judg 2:2). But the new generation wilfully chose not to obey the Lord. “Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges, who delivered them out of the hand of those who spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed themselves unto them; they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so” (Judg 2:16-17). The failure to separate from the world meant not knowing God, forsaking God, and committing adultery against God.

The consequences of disobedience were equally serious. Take for example Samson. Samson was one of the judges of Israel. He undoubtedly is the most famous of the judges. In Judg 15 and 16, we find Samson filled with the Spirit of God repeatedly. The Lord used him mightily, granting him superhuman strength. He was consecrated as a

Nazirite—a vow which he took to be wholly separated unto God. But Judg 16:4 tells us, “It came to pass afterward that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.” John R Rice made an interesting comment, “Now here is a strange case which I do not undertake to explain. As far as we can tell, God did not forsake Samson primarily because of the sins of the flesh, though there were some shocking ones, but God forsook him because he sold out on his separation with an ungodly heathen woman. When he told her his secret, he somewhat put his vow as a Nazirite at her mercy.

“So on the matter of separation and bad company, God quit Samson. ‘And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.’—vs.20” (*These Bible Christians Fell Through Compromise* [Tennessee: Sword of the Lord, 1959], 8-9).

The sin of compromise is a sin of the spirit. According to Dr Chia Yu Ming, “the sins of the spirit are ten times worse than the sins of the flesh.”

### **Separation in 2 Samuel**

In 2 Sam 6:1-11 we find David doing the right thing in the wrong way. David wanted to bring the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. That was good. However, instead of getting the Kohathites to bear the ark on their shoulders as commanded in Num 7:9, he transported the ark by putting it on a wagon. That was how the pagans transported their deities (1 Sam 6:8). David’s error angered the Lord. Uzzah was struck dead when he tried to prevent the ark from toppling over from the cart. David’s and Uzzah’s good intentions in no way exonerated them from their disobedience to the clear instructions of God. Scofield wrote, “The story of David’s new cart and its result is a striking illustration of the spiritual truth that blessing does not follow even the best intentions in the service of God, except as that service is rendered in God’s way. It is a constant point of failure. ... The Church is full of Philistine ways of doing service to Christ” (*Scofield Reference Bible*, 361).

The lesson from here is clear enough. God will not tolerate anything less than absolute obedience from His people. Trying to do God’s work in man’s way will only lead to failure. Any attempt to mix truth with error angers the Lord. Good intentions do not make a thing right; only truth does. No matter how good one’s intentions may be, if it is not done according to the Truth, it will not bring blessing but judgement. It was only when the Israelites “bore” the ark of the Lord in 2 Sam 6:13 were

they successful in bringing the ark back to Jerusalem. God's work must be done God's way.

### **Separation in 1 Kings**

Solomon's failure to obey the commandment of separation led to his downfall. Solomon was blessed by God with wisdom and wealth. His wisdom and wealth made him great, but his lust for women caused him to fall. 1 Kgs 11:1-8 tells us, "But King Solomon loved many strange women; in addition to the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods."

The Bible records example after example that disobedience to the divine injunction of separation leads invariably to spiritual downfall. Solomon's seemingly innocent political ploy in marrying the women of the surrounding pagan nations gradually led to a compromise of his faith and beliefs. He degenerated into an idol worshipper. Solomon finally saw his error. In Eccl 7:26 he confessed, "And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands; whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her but the sinner shall be taken by her." The Lord is not pleased when a Christian marries an unbeliever or an idolater.

The Bible has warned, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12). One should not be surprised that Solomon who knew intimately the living and true God could become an idolater. One should never underestimate the sinfulness of sin, the

depravity of the human heart. When one's heart is not fully resolved to keep clear of falsehood, the path one takes is quite certain; like Solomon, it would be a veering away from the truth.

### **Separation in 2 Kings**

After the reign of Solomon, Israel was divided into two. The Northern Kingdom of Ephraim led by Jeroboam, went deeper and deeper into sin. 2 Kgs 17:6-17 reveals to us that they fell into the sin of spiritual adultery. They “feared other gods,” “walked in the statutes of the nations,” secretly built “high places on all their cities,” set up “images and idols in every high hill,” “burned incense, served idols,” made two calves, “worshipped all the host of heaven,” “caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire,” and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD.”

What was God's response to Israel's apostasy? “Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them” (2 Kgs 17:13-15).

The seriousness of the sin is seen in the severity of the punishment for “the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight” (2 Kgs 17:18). The Assyrians conquered Ephraim in 722/1 BC, and Samaria today is still in ruins.

### **Separation in Isaiah**

In Isa 30, we find Judah befriending Egypt. The Jews wanted Egyptian protection from the Assyrians. This alliance with Egypt was a serious offence against God. The Jews were strictly commanded by God not to foster any personal, political, or military ties with the Egyptians (Exod 13:17, Deut 17:16). The Lord was very angry with them for disobeying Him. He called this sin of theirs the sin of rebellion. Such an unholy

alliance would result in the Jews being influenced by the pagan beliefs and practices of Egypt (Exod 23:22, 34:15, Deut 7:2), and forgetting their history of how the Lord had graciously delivered them from Egyptian bondage in that great Mosaic Exodus (Deut 6:12-25). God wanted the Jews to know that He alone was more than sufficient to ensure their safety. This alliance was a gross insult to Jehovah.

The example of Israel here speaks directly against the ecumenical Protestant Church in her efforts to return to the Roman Catholic fold. God brought His people out from the Roman yoke through His servants—Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox—in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation. The Church today is calling the Reformation a mistake. The Lord will say to the apostate Church as He said to apostate Israel, “This is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the LORD” (Isa 30:9).

Separation was something the Jews must constantly practise because they were God’s special witnesses on earth. God said in Isa 43:10-11, “Ye are my witnesses, ... and my servant whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and beside me there is no Saviour. In other words, the Israelites were Old Testament evangelists. What kind of Gospel would they bring if they were equally superstitious and idolatrous? The Gospel can only be effective if Israel kept herself away from the false beliefs and practices of the heathen nations. People needed to see clearly that Israel was different because of the God whom they worshipped—the only living God, Jehovah. When there is no separation, there is confusion.

### **Separation in Ezekiel**

God rebuked the priests of Judah in Ezek 22:26 with these words, “Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths and I am profaned among them.” The priests who were set apart to study and preserve the law from man’s corruptions distorted it themselves and used it for their own wicked ends.

The doctrine of separation requires the leaders of God’s people to clearly distinguish truth from error. Any confusion between the two—a mixture of truth and error—is tantamount to treating God and His Word with contempt.

## Separation in Hosea

Israel in the time of Hosea had already degenerated into an idolatrous nation no different from the heathen nations around her. The roots of corruption began with the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom built two golden calves and placed one in Bethel and the other in Dan. The Israelites worshipped Jehovah through the calves. This was a fundamental transgression of the law of the covenant. By adopting the idolatrous worship system of the heathens, Israel lost her distinct testimony as God's special nation. C F Keil commented, "The Jehovah worshipped under the symbol of an ox was no longer different from the Baals of the heathen, by whom Israel was surrounded; ... the heathen were accustomed to extend to the national Deity of Israel the recognition which they accorded to the different Baals, as various modes of revelation of one and the same Deity; the Israelites, in their turn, were also accustomed to grant toleration to the Baals" ("Minor Prophets," in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1977], 10:19).

Thus, in time, the Israelites came to call Jehovah "Baal" (Hos 2:16). This corruption of their religious life led to a breakdown in their ethical life. "Unfaithfulness towards God and His word begot unfaithfulness towards men. With the neglect to love God with all the heart, love to brethren also disappeared. And spiritual adultery had carnal adultery as its inevitable consequence, and that all the more because voluptuousness formed a leading trait in the character of idolatry of Hither Asia" (Ibid, 20). That was why Hosea complained, "there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood" (Hos 4:1-2).

Israel's spiritual and moral decay was vividly portrayed by Hosea's married life. Hosea's marriage to Gomer was an "acted prophetic ministry." Gomer who had committed adultery against her husband typified unfaithful Israel who had committed spiritual adultery against Jehovah.

Religious syncretism is the sin of spiritual adultery. The Lord will not tolerate such unfaithfulness. He threatened to disown Israel by declaring, "for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God" (Hos 1:9). The Church today has committed the same sin as Israel. The Lord pleads with

a backsliding Church, “Come, let us return unto the LORD; for he hath form, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up” (Hos 6:1).

The people of Israel had violated God’s commandment of separation. The consequences of compromise had been grievous. Samson suffered in the hands of the Philistines for his sinful relationship with Delilah. Uzzah was struck dead by God for David’s negligence. Solomon’s adultery and idolatry led to the division of the nation of Israel. And Ephraim’s rebellion against God led to her ultimate destruction by the Assyrians in 722/1 BC.

God sent his prophets repeatedly to warn His people against apostasy but all the warnings fell on deaf ears. Judgement came. Ephraim and Judah were not spared God’s anger. The warnings of the prophets are applicable to us today. The same punitive outcome awaits the disobedient church if she stubbornly rejects the divine command to separate from worldliness and unbelief.

## **The Expression of Separation in the Writings**

A large portion of the *Kethubim* (Writings) consists of poetry and wisdom literature. The writings reveal and teach the psychology and philosophy of Christian living. Practical instructions on how we can practise separation are found therein.

### **Separation in the Psalms**

Ps 1:1 reads, “Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” The word “Blessed” here interestingly is written in the Hebrew plural, while the word “man” is singular. This is purposely done to reveal “the richness of the variety of the blessings secured to the righteous” (William S Plumer, *Psalms* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1867], 27). The blessings will come only when the believer keeps himself from having fellowship with the wicked. The “counsel of the ungodly” refers to the anti-Biblical and anti-Christian philosophy of life of the wicked. The righteous must not walk, nor stand, not sit in their ways. We must have no part in their wicked deeds. We must avoid their companionship altogether. Spurgeon commented, “But the blessed man, the man to whom all the blessings of God belong, can hold no communion with such characters as these. He keeps himself pure from these lepers; he puts away evil things

from him as garment spotted by the flesh; he comes out from among the wicked, and goes without the camp, hearing the reproach of Christ. O for grace to be thus separate from sinners” (*Treasury of David* [Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1950], 1:2).

Calvin applied this psalm in this way, “he teaches us how impossible it is for any one to apply his mind to meditation upon God’s law, who has not first withdrawn and separated himself from the society of the ungodly. And if, in the time of the Psalmist, it was necessary for the devout worshippers of God to withdraw themselves from the company of the ungodly in order to frame their life right, how much more in the present day, when the world has become so much more corrupt, ought we carefully to avoid all dangerous society, that we may be kept unstained by impurities” (*Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans James Anderson [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 4).

### **Separation in Proverbs**

In Prov 4:14-15, we are advised, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of the evil man. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” This advice is given for the Christian’s own spiritual good. It is difficult to escape when caught in the web of temptation. To prevent oneself from being trapped in such situations, the Christian ought to stay absolutely clear from all ungodly company and worldly ventures.

### **Separation in 2 Chronicles**

In 2 Chr 17-19, we find a “neo-evangelical” in king Jehoshaphat. He started out as a good king. The Lord was with him “because he walked in the first ways of his father, David, and sought not Baalim, but sought the LORD God of his father, and not after the doings of Israel” (2 Chr 17:3-4). The Lord granted him great success. The nations of the land feared Judah and paid tribute to her.

However when he became rich and powerful, Jehoshaphat became self-confident and made decisions without consulting the Lord. In 2 Chr 18:1 we read, “Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.” Ahab was the notorious king of Israel whose wife was the wicked Jezebel. Ahab worshipped Baal and employed 450 of his prophets. With such an apostate, Jehoshaphat made an alliance, “And after certain years he went down to Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he



had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war” (2 Chr 18:2-3). Jehoshaphat agreed to join Ahab to fight the Syrians. Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab was a transgression of God’s commandment to be separate. Micaiah the prophet whom Ahab hated because “he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil” predicted the defeat of the Israel-Judah coalition in the war against the Syrians. Ahab was killed in battle, but the Lord spared Jehoshaphat when he cried for help.

Upon his return to Jerusalem, Jehu, the son of Hanani, the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, “Shouldest thou help the wicked, and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore, there is wrath upon thee from the LORD” (2 Chr 19:2). Jehoshaphat should never have made a pact with the ungodly. God strictly forbids His people to cooperate with unbelievers especially in ecclesiastical matters. This is because unbelievers cannot be expected to follow God’s laws. The believer will find himself in a position where it becomes difficult to avoid evil. Jehoshaphat should have followed the example of his father David. David said, “Do I not hate those who hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies” (Ps 139:21-22). Jehoshaphat’s ecumenical ties with Ahab only brought trouble to himself. He was nearly killed along with Ahab in that battle, but the Lord was merciful to him. Separation is a lesson one cannot miss when one studies the life of Jehoshaphat.

### **Separation in Ezra**

One of the main reasons that led to the downfall of Israel and Judah was the sin of non-separation. They mingled with the heathen nations and married foreign wives who influenced them to worship idols. In Ezra, we find the same problem surfacing. Some of the Jews had taken wives from among the heathen nations. It was reported by the elders of the community that some had “not separated themselves from the peoples of the land” (Ezr 9:1-2). Those who were guilty of this included the priests, Levites, princes, and rulers. This critical situation must be arrested quickly. Ezra immediately ordered the abandonment of mixed marriages, “And Ezra, the priest, stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed,

and have taken foreign wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now, therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure, and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the foreign wives” (Ezr 10:10-11). The people repented and put away all their foreign wives. They remembered how they suffered under the captivity and have learned the serious consequences of such a sin. From that time onwards, the Jews did not sin idolatrously again.

The *Kethubim* is not silent concerning separation. The Writings reiterate the Mosaic command to separate from ungodly people and ungodly ways. The classic example of Jehoshaphat is a clear warning of the danger and consequences of cooperating with unbelievers and false brethren in unbiblical alliances and unholy activities.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

God abhors all forms of syncretistic worship and ecumenical fellowship that mix truth with error. God had commanded Israel to be separate from the heathen nations in the OT. This principle of separation is found in the NT as well. The OT and the NT are an organic whole. They are intrinsically connected, and are inseparable. This fact is succinctly expressed by these two couplets: “The Old is by the New explained, the New is in the Old contained;” and “The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is by the New revealed.” Dr Whitcomb has well observed the link between the OT and NT on the doctrine of separation: “We have in the Old Testament a millennium-and-a-half of visual aids on the doctrine of separation from error as the necessary backdrop for New Testament revelation on the subject” (John C Whitcomb, “When Love Divorces Doctrine and Unity Leaves Truth!” *Separation and Obedience*, [London: Metropolitan Tabernacle, 1983], 14). Now that we have studied the doctrine of separation in the OT, it is now necessary for us to study it in the light of the NT. Formulation of any fundamental Christian doctrine must find basis on both Testaments.

#### **The Doctrine of Separation as Taught by Jesus in the Gospels**

##### **Separation in Matthew**

###### ***Salt and Light of the World (Matt 5:13-16)***

Jesus said in Matt 5:13-16, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Christians are called to be the salt of the earth. Salt is used in ancient times as it is today in at least three ways: (1) as a preservative, (2) as an antiseptic, and (3) for seasoning. Jesus says that we are like salt. Christians ought to live a holy life that results from a correct understanding and obedient application of God’s Word. When such a life is lived, Christians become holy influences in a sinful world.

Light dispels darkness. Light reveals sin, and exposes error. In the Bible, light often refers to Truth (1 John 1:5,7; 2:8,9,10), and to one’s personal conduct (Matt 5:16). Christians are called to be the light of the world. They are called to live in the light of God’s Truth.

### ***God or Mammon? (Matt 6:24)***

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt 6:24).

“Christ affirms that it is impossible for any man to obey God, and, at the same time, to obey his own flesh. This was, no doubt, a proverb in common use: *No man can serve two masters*. ...

“God ... hates a *double heart* (1 Chron. xii. 33; Ps. xii. 2). ... It is, no doubt, true, that believers themselves are never so perfectly devoted to obedience to God, as not to be withdrawn from it by the sinful desires of the flesh. But as they groan under this wretched bondage, and are dissatisfied with themselves, and give nothing more than an unwilling and reluctant service to the flesh, they are not said to serve two masters: for their desires and exertions are approved by the Lord, as if they rendered to him a perfect obedience. But this passage reproves the hypocrisy of those who flatter themselves in their vices, as if they could reconcile light and darkness” (John Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, trans William Pringle [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, nd], 1:337-8).

### ***Not Peace but Sword (Matt 10:34)***

Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt 10:34).

The Jews in the days of Jesus thought that their promised Messiah would come and dethrone Caesar, and then reign supreme. Yes, this Jesus would do at His second coming, but He came the first time to bring spiritual peace. This peace from God was not obtained without a price. Jesus had to atone for sin on the cross so that His people might be redeemed by His precious blood.

However, when a sinner has made peace with God, Jesus said he will not have peace in the world. The world is hostile towards Christ and His Church. Jesus expressed this through the words “sword” (Matt 10:34) and “division” (Luke 12:51). Calvin wrote, “if tumults arise at the commencement of the reign of Christ, let us not be alarmed at it, as if it were strange or unusual: for he compares his Gospel to a sword, and says that it is *diamerismos*, separation. ... Christ is here exhorting his disciples to perseverance, though a good part of the world should be at variance with them, and though their voice should be like a war-trumpet to call innumerable enemies to arms” (Ibid, 469).

Thus the Church can expect to find herself at odds with the unbelieving world. The Church will be hated because as the salt and light of the world she exposes evil and stands in the way of evil doers. The world does not like this and will do whatever it can to put the Church down. The Church must remain loyal to Christ. She must not compromise but stand separated from the world. A T Robertson said, “Christ does bring peace, not as the world gives, but it is not the force of compromise with evil, but of conquest over wrong, over Satan, the triumph of the cross. Meanwhile there will be inevitably division in families, in communities, in states. ... The Cross is Christ’s answer to the devil’s offer of compromise in world dominion” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament* [Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1930] 1:83-4).

It must be emphasised that the sword Jesus was speaking of was not a sword of violence, but of division. Jesus is advocating personal separation, not armed revolution (contra Liberation Theology).

***“Let them alone” (Matt 15:12-14)***

“Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt 15:12-14).

Here, “Jesus speaks of growths which his ‘heavenly Father’ ... has not planted. Such growths remind us of the tares which the devil planted (Matt 13:25,39). They were destined to be uprooted and thrown into the fire (13:30; cf. 3:10, 12; Luke 17:6; John 15:5; Jude 12). That is to happen at the time of the final judgment. Christ’s critics belong to this group. Those who place their confidence in them are going to be uprooted along with them. This explains Christ’s exhortation to the disciples, ‘Let them go,’ thus literally. One might render his command: ‘Ignore them,’ ‘Pay no attention to them,’ ‘disassociate yourselves completely from them.’” (William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NTC [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973], 617).

### ***Leaven of the Pharisees (Matt 16:6)***

“Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matt 16:6).

Leaven is yeast. It is often used in making bread. A pinch of yeast in a lump of dough will cause the whole lump to puff up. Leaven is used negatively here to refer to the false doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees. A little error will corrupt the whole truth. Truth may not be mixed with error, for then truth turns into a lie. We are to be careful of such leaven, “for it is customary with all apostates to contrive some mixture, for the purpose of establishing a new religion by which the former may be abolished” (John Calvin, *Evangelists*, 2:282). Calvin elaborated, “Thus in our own day we find that not only from Popish temples, and from the dens of sophists and monks, does Antichrist vomit out their impostures, but that there is a Theology of the Court, which lends its aid to prop up the throne of Antichrist, so that no stratagem is left untried. But as Christ opposed the evils which then prevailed, and as he aroused the minds of his followers to guard against those which were the most dangerous, let us learn from his example to make a prudent inquiry what are the abuses that may now do us injury. Sooner shall water mix with fire than any man shall succeed in reconciling the inventions of the Pope with the Gospel. Whoever desires to become honestly a disciple of Christ, must be careful to keep his mind pure from those leavens; and if he has already imbibed them, he must labour to purify himself till none of their polluting effects remain. There are restless men, on the other hand, who have endeavoured in various ways to corrupt sound doctrine,

and, in guarding also against such impostures, believers must maintain a strict watch” (Ibid).

## **Separation in Mark**

### ***Denying Oneself (Mark 8:34)***

“And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

The word “deny” (*aparneomai*) means “to turn someone off,” “to refuse association and companionship with him,” “to disown.” “The one to be disowned and denied is *heauton*, SELF, and that means self altogether, not merely some portion, some special habit or desire, some outward practice. The natural, sinful self is meant as it centers in the things of men and has no use for the things of God” (R C H Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946], 347-8).

### ***“Cut it Off,” “Pluck it Out” (Mark 9:43-50)***

“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another” (Mark 9:43-50).

“Hand, foot, and eye how we value them! Nevertheless, Jesus says that it is better to get rid of any one of them than with two hands, two feet, or two eyes to perish everlastingly. Hence, if any of these lures a person into sin he should immediately dispose of that organ. If it is a hand or a foot it must be cut off; if an eye, plucked out.

“As is true so often with respect to the sayings of Jesus, so also here: these words must not be taken literally. The lesson is this: sin, being a very destructive force, must not be pampered. It must be ‘put to death’ (Col. 3:5). Temptation should be flung aside immediately and *decisively*. Dillydallying is deadly. Halfway measures work havoc. *The surgery must be radical*.... In the struggle against sin the believer must fight hard. Shadow-boxing will never do (I Cor. 9:27)” (William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Mark* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975], 365).

On “have salt in yourselves,” Calvin commented that Jesus is teaching that “we ought to be holy, and purified from all profane follies and corruptions, and filled with spiritual grace, which edifies all who hear it, and diffuses over them its sweet odour. ... Christ is exhorting his own people to maintain the vigour of faith, which may serve also to purify others. ‘You must do your endeavour, not only to be salted within, but likewise to salt others’” (1:273).

## **Separation in Luke**

### ***The Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14:26)***

Jesus said, “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).

Jesus tells his disciples that “they must be willing to *quit* that which was *very dear*, and therefore must come to him thoroughly *weaned* from all their creature-comforts, and dead to them, so as cheerfully to part with them rather than quit their interest in Christ, ... A man cannot be Christ’s disciple, but he must *hate father, and mother, and his own life*. [He must] love Christ better than any thing in this world, and be willing to part with that which he may and must leave, either as a *sacrifice*, when Christ may be glorified by our parting with it, (so the martyrs, *who loved not their lives to death*,) or as a temptation, when by our parting with it we are put, into a better capacity of serving Christ. Thus Abraham parted with his own country, and Moses with Pharaoh’s court. ... Every good man loves *his relations*; and yet, if he be a disciple of Christ, he must *comparatively hate them*, must *love them less than Christ*, ... Not that their persons must be in any degree hated, but our comfort and satisfaction in them must be lost and swallowed up by our love to Christ, ... When our duty to our parents comes in competition with our evident duty to Christ, we must



give Christ the preference. If we must either deny Christ, or be *banished* from our families and relations, ... we must rather lose their society than his favour” (Matthew Henry, *Commentary* [Wilmington: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1845], 2:425).

### ***Purification of the Temple (Luke 19:45-46)***

“And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Luke 19:45-46).

“Christ Jesus is and remains the divine Purifier. For He is perfect in love as well as in righteousness and holiness. He cannot tolerate any deceit or unrighteousness. According as fuller control is given to Him over the life of a believer, of a church or of a nation, He continues to bring about an ever mightier change *by casting out everything that is false and unholy*. And where He is refused admission, He sooner or later—and at His second advent with finality—takes action as the Almighty Purifier by pronouncing the divine judgment upon those who persist in opposing Him in unbelief and disobedience” (Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, nd], 490, italics mine).

### **Separation in John**

Jesus’ high priestly prayer, “That they may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21), is used by the modernists and neo-evangelicals repeatedly as “proof text” for ecumenism. A false ecumenical agenda has thus been set by a subtle lifting of Jesus’ statement—“that they may be one”—out of its biblical and theological context.

The question thus raised is: What did Jesus really mean when He prayed, “That they may be one?” Could Jesus be praying for an Evangelical-Catholic unity? What kind of unity was Jesus really praying for?

It is significant to note that when Jesus prayed, “that they may be one,” it was a qualified oneness that He prayed for. Jesus did not just say, “that they may be one,” as if any kind of oneness was meant. In order that He would not be misunderstood, Jesus defined the oneness as that which

exists between God the Father and God the Son, “even as we are” (John 17:11). What then is this oneness between the Father and the Son?

The first time Jesus spoke of His oneness with God the Father is in John 10:30. There He said, “I and my Father are one.” The numeral “one” has the idea of singleness or oneness. Here, it is used in the sense of union or concord (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of the New Testament*, sv “One”). From the context, it is clear that Jesus was speaking of His oneness in essence with God the Father. He was claiming equal deity. That this was meant by Jesus is seen in the response of the Jews who said, “[you] being a man, maketh thyself God” (John 10:33).

It should also be noted that the word “one” refers not only to the divine essence but also to the divine mission. Meyer wrote, “The unity, therefore, is one of dynamic fellowship, ie, a unity of action for the realization of the divine decree of redemption; according to which, ... the Father acts in the things which are done by the Son, and yet is greater than the Son (xiv.28), because He has commissioned, consecrated and sent Him.” (H A W Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John* [Massachusetts: Hendriksen Publishers, 1883], 330). This unity of purpose and mission is elaborated on in John 17.

Jesus’ prayer for oneness is found in two verses in John 17, viz, verse 11, “that they may be one, as we are,” and verse 21, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”

The Father-Son unity in securing the eternal redemption of the elect may be seen in Jesus’ frequent use of two words in John 17, viz, *apostello* (“to send”), and *didomi* (“to give”). Throughout His prayer, the Lord repeatedly mentioned the fact that He was sent by the Father to accomplish the redemptive plan. It is significant that Jesus used the word *apostello* instead of *pempo*. Although both words may be used interchangeably, it is generally recognised that “when *pempein* is used in the New Testament the emphasis is on the sending as such, whereas when *apostellein* is used it rests on the commission linked with it” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, sv “*apostello*,” by K H Rengstorf). This is exactly what Christ meant when He used *apostello* seven times (John 17:3,8,18[2x],21,23,25). He wanted to indicate the fact that He did not act alone, but was absolutely obedient to His Father’s will as One specially commissioned by Him to fulfill His purpose.

The idea of a commission can also be seen in what Christ said was His mission, viz, He was to complete that which the Father had given Him. In this respect, the word *didomi* is used 15 times in John 17 (vv 2[3x],4,7,8[2x],9,11,12,14,22[2x],24) to refer not only to the Father’s commissioning of His Son but also to the imparting of eternal life to His disciples. The purpose of Christ’s first advent was to give eternal life. This is clearly stated in John 17:2, “[in order] that ... he might give them eternal life.” Eternal life is seen as a result of knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent (see also John 14:6).

It is thus obvious that Christ’s mission on earth when He first came was a spiritual one. He came as the Lamb of God—to suffer, to bleed, and to die for sinful humanity. In perfect obedience to God the Father, He successfully accomplished that mission when He conquered death by His resurrection from the grave on the third day. The mission Jesus committed to His disciples was the same as that which He had received from the Father—to preach the gospel of His death, burial, and resurrection, to a sinful world in order that those who believe might receive the forgiveness of sins, and have eternal life. The Christian mission is not a temporal one—to “contend for the truth that politics, law, and culture must be secured by moral truth”—as the ecumenists would have us believe. On the contrary, the primary duty of the Christian Church is a spiritual one—to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). This is because the present world system as predicted by the Holy Scriptures is not getting better, but from bad to worse, anticipating the fiery judgment when Christ returns, this time no more as a Lamb, but as the Davidic Lion—the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Christian duty of this century and in the third millennium if the Lord tarries is not to improve the world by the ecumenical power of an Evangelical-Catholic union, but to convert the world by the uncompromised preaching of an unadulterated gospel that only Jesus saves! The power of the Church lies not in its numbers, but in the gospel of Christ “for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16). It is significant to note that the Lord used only 12 faithful Apostles to turn the world “upside down” (Acts 17:6). The Lord has never relied on numbers to achieve His goals.

Not only must we know for what Jesus prayed, it is equally important to know for whom Jesus prayed if we are to understand what He meant

when He said, “that they may be one.” The people whom Jesus prayed for are described as having certain characteristics. What are they?

Firstly, they are described as people who know the only true God. Jesus explained that eternal life is a result of knowing the one true God, and Christ the Sent-one (v 3). What does “knowing” here mean? In the NT, the word *ginosko* “frequently indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known; in this respect, what is known is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of the New Testament*, sv “Know”). The word *ginosko* (“know”) is used four times in John 17 (vv 3,8,23,25) to mean just that. To know God is to have a personal relationship and a genuine communion with Him in Christ. The object of this knowledge is not any god, but “the only true God” (John 17:3). In the midst of many so-called gods, there is but one living and true God. Calvin translates this verse thus, “that they may know thee alone to be the true God” (John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, trans William Pringle [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981], 167). This knowledge of who the only true God is comes only through knowing Jesus Christ “whom thou hast sent” (v 3). The word “sent” here is again *apostello*. The word *apostello* is especially used with reference to ministry of the prophets and thus has the idea of a sending out in order to reveal (BAGD, sv “*apostello*”). So *apostello* not only has the idea of commission but also of revelation. All authority has been given to God the Son to reveal who God the Father is. Robertson said, “The knowledge of ‘the one true God’ is through Christ” (A T Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933], 5:275).

Secondly, they are a people who are obedient to the Word of God. Jesus in His ministry on earth had revealed to His disciples the identity of Jehovah—“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me ...” (v 6). The name of God was mysteriously given in the OT as “I AM THAT I AM” (Exod 3:14). In the NT Jesus Himself is the Exposition of Jehovah’s name in His seven “I am” statements: (1) “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35), (2) “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5), (3) “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7,9), (4) “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11,14), (5) “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), (6) “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6), and (7) “I am the true vine” (John 15:1,5).

These words of salvation were given to the disciples, and how did they respond to them? Jesus told the Father that His disciples “have kept thy word” (v 6). The term *logos* is used by John in his Gospel with reference to the Word personified (ie, Jesus Christ), and the Word inscripturated (ie, the Holy Bible). This *logos* they have kept. The word “kept” is the Greek *tereō* which means “to observe,” “to obey,” “to pay attention to,” or “to keep under guard.” It has the idea of a tenacious holding on to a precious entity so as to prevent its loss.

In John 17:8, Jesus said that He has “given them the words (*rhemata*) which thou gavest me.” Not only have they held tenaciously to the Word (*logos*), but also to the words (*rhemata*). The switch from *logos* (singular) to *rhemata* (plural) is significant. According to Robertson, the plural *rhemata* refers to every single word of God (John 3:34) and of Christ (John 5:47, 6:63,68), while the singular *logos* (John 17:6,14) refers to God’s message in its entirety (Ibid, 5:276).

This tells us that the disciples paid attention to every single detail of Jesus’ teachings, and obeyed them. They did not pick and choose what they wanted to believe and practice. The disciples’ total commitment to Jesus’ instructions is further emphasised by three parallel aorist clauses in verse 8, viz, “they have received (*elabon*)..., and have known (*egnosan*) ..., and they have believed (*episteusan*). ...” Lenski wrote that these constative aorists indicate the disciples’ *genuine* reception of, knowledge on, and belief in who Jesus was (R C H Lenski, *The Interpretation of St John’s Gospel* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943], 1132).

Thirdly, they are described as a people who are separated from the world. Although they are “in the world” (John 17:11), they are “not of the world” (John 17:14). Jesus acknowledged the fact that His disciples are physically present in the world. But what is their relationship to the world? Jesus said, “they are not of the world.” The phrase *ek tou kosmou* is found in verses 14-16. The preposition *ek* takes the genitive to mean “out of,” or “away from.” It has the idea of separation. So when Jesus said, “They are not of the world,” it means that His disciples are separated from the world. The world (*kosmos*) that Jesus speaks of here refers to the world’s present condition of alienation from and opposition to God (Ibid, sv “*kosmos*”). The disciples were a separated people. Separation from the present world system with all its ideologies, and vices is an essential component of Christian unity in Jesus’ understanding. The doctrine of

separation, not ecumenism, is central in Jesus' high priestly prayer (John 17:14-16).

Do those who propose an ecumenical Evangelical-Catholic union manifest the above characteristics? Here are some questions to help us with the answer: (1) Can the Roman Catholic Church be said to know the only true God, even Jesus, when they include Mary in the Godhead? The Roman Church has made Mary Goddess when she accords to her such titles of deity as "Redemptrix," "Mediatix," and "Mother of God." (2) Can the Roman Catholic Church be said to obey the Word of God which comprises only 66 books when they add to it spurious works like the apocrypha, and their papal traditions violating Jesus' command not to add to or subtract from His Word (Rev 22:18-19)? (3) Can the Evangelical Church be truly evangelical (ie, Gospel believing and Bible defending) when she repudiates the doctrine of separation by belittling the importance of Truth, and in yoking herself with the apostate church?

What did Jesus mean when He prayed, "that they may be one, as we are?" Jesus prayed this prayer of unity because the disciples were commissioned by Him to preach the gospel to the world just as He was commissioned by the Father. Jesus used the word *apostello* in verse 18 to refer to the disciples' commissioning. As Christ received His commission from the Father, the disciples received theirs from Christ. When Jesus completed His ministry on earth, He sent them out as Apostles (Mk 16:15-20, Acts 1:8). Inasmuch as Christ was one with the Father in the divine mission to save His people, Christ prayed that His disciples would be one in mind and spirit to do the same work. It is important to note that Jesus and the Apostles, in their gospel ministries, never cooperated with the unbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees, nor sought help from Herod or Caesar.

This unity in the gospel mission that Jesus prayed for is an exclusive one. He did not pray for a unity between the church and the world, or a unity between the true universal church and the false Catholic church, but a unity that is based on true evangelical faith (by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus alone), and true Biblical belief (in the Word of God alone consisting of just 66 canonical books).

True Christian ecumenism, in the light of Christ's high priestly prayer, can be had only when there is a clear separation by the Christian Church from all forms of unbelief and apostasy. As long as the Roman Catholic

Church presents another Jesus (ie, Jesus is not Mediator alone, since Mary is co-Mediatrix), preaches another gospel (ie, salvation is not only by faith but by good works also), and believes in another Bible (ie, the Holy Scriptures plus the apocrypha, plus papal traditions), any union with her invites God's wrath and judgment (Gal 1:8).

May the Church's Protestant sons never become Judases. Treachery is a sin most abhorrent. May Jesus' prayer be answered, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:14-17).

## **The Doctrine of Separation as Demonstrated by the Early Disciples in the Acts of the Apostles**

The Acts of the Apostles records for us the history of the early Church. Rev Dr Timothy Tow says that Acts is not only a historical record of, but also a pattern for the Church. Acts records for us the vibrant testimony of the apostolic church. The modern church would do well to follow the example set by the apostolic church (1 Cor 11:1).

The distinctive characteristic of the early Christian Church was its separatist stance. The Church separated herself from the philosophies of the Greeks, the culture of the Romans, and the legalism of the Jews.

### **Separation from Greek Philosophy**

That Christianity should be another kind of philosophic "ism" was furthest from the minds of the Apostolic band. The Christian religion engages not only the mind, but also the heart. It involves a personal relationship with God. Nevertheless, the influence of Greek philosophy was very real. Paul thus spared no effort in rebuking the Corinthian Church for mixing the Christian Gospel with Grecian philosophy. The Gospel stands alone. It is unique. And the Church which is founded upon the Gospel must present it in just that way; Paul said, "Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor 1:17-25).

Paul showed how a true knowledge of the Gospel should cause the heart to respond towards false religion. In Acts 17:16, Paul’s attitude towards idolatry was not one of indifference, nor compromise, but deep grief—“his spirit, was stirred in Him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” When confronted by the Epicureans and Stoics, he declared powerfully the UNKNOWN GOD, and persuasively argued that He is the one living and true God who cannot be represented by any man-made image. He challenged the Athenians to repent because God will one day judge the world. The Gospel demands a clear-cut decision from man. It is either one is for the truth or against it. There were those on Mar’s Hill who scoffed at the Christian doctrine of the resurrection but it is also recorded that some believed. There is no neutral stand. The Gospel has no syncretistic tendencies. The call of the Gospel is a call to separation (ie, separation from the world unto God).

### **Separation from Roman Culture**

The Romans were in the beginning animists but with the growth of the military state and the consequent influence of Greek civilisation, they began to identify their deities with the Greek pantheon. For example, Jupiter was identified with Zeus, Neptune with Poseidon, and Diana with Artemis. In Acts 19:17-41, we read of the many who were converted in Ephesus through the ministry of Paul. Once converted, they instinctively put away their past heathen practices like witchcraft and the worship of the goddess Diana. Their genuine conversion was revealed in their separation from that which they now realised to be false. The impact of their testimony was so great that the idol industry suffered a financial collapse.



The early Christians understood that it is all of Christ or none at all. They were able to distinguish the true from the false. There was no blurring of Christian distinctives. There was no compromise, but a clear-cut separation. Their separatistic faith can also be seen in their refusal to worship the Roman emperor. During the days of Augustus Caesar, the practice of emperor worship became prominent. The people began to call him “saviour,” “son of God,” and “divine father.” The Christians in those days would have nothing to do with emperor worship. This led to the persecution of the Church. Earle Cairns relates the trying situation in those days which resulted in the death of many believers, “The Church endured little persecution as long as it was looked upon by the authorities as part of Judaism, which was a *religio licita*, or legal sect. But as soon as Christianity was distinguished from Judaism as a separate sect ..., it came under the ban of the Roman state, which would brook no rival for the allegiance of its subjects. ...

“Religion could only be tolerated only as it contributed to the stability of the state. Since the rapidly growing Christian religion was exclusive in its claims on the moral and spirituality of those who accepted Christ, when a choice had to be made between loyalty to Christ and loyalty to Caesar, Caesar was bound to take second place. ... The exclusive sovereignty of Christ clashed with Caesar’s proud claims to exclusive sovereignty.

“ ... The Christians consistently refused to offer incense on the altars devoted to the genius of the Roman emperor, ... The Christians would not make such sacrifices and, consequently, it was thought that they were disloyal” (*Christianity Through the Centuries* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981], 77-8). Thus, the Christians for their separatist stand of loyalty towards God suffered persecution and martyrdom.

### **Separation from Jewish Legalism**

The apostolic Church not only separated herself from Grecian philosophy and Romish culture, but also Jewish legalism. Although Christianity has its roots in Judaism, the Church in the NT has entered a new period of divine administration. In the constitution of the New Covenant, ceremonial and judicial requirements of the Mosaic Law were abrogated. The Church was not required to keep the Jewish festivals and rituals. The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 issued a decree that the Church should not impose the rite of circumcision on Gentile converts. Those who insisted on circumcision, and that it was necessary for salvation were severely

rebuked by Paul in Gal 1:8, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Before the Sanhedrin—the highest religious body of the Jews—Peter declared, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). In another instance, when told not to preach Christ, Peter refused to compromise when he retorted, “We ought to obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29). In saying this, Peter displayed the separatist spirit. We are separated unto God to be living witnesses of the saving grace of the Gospel of Christ. A diluted Gospel is certainly out of the question.

The NT believers lived such outstanding lives in the Lord Jesus Christ that the people began to call them Christians (Acts 11:6). They were Christlike. Josephus, the Jewish historian, recorded this fact, “those [ie, the disciples] that loved him [ie, Jesus] at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named after him, are not extinct at this day” (William Whiston, trans, *The Works of Josephus* [Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1981], 379). Their changed lives made such an impact on society that they were said to “have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

## **The Doctrine of Separation as Expounded by the Apostles in the Epistles and in Revelation**

The two classic proof texts for Biblical separation are 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 and 2 Thess 3:6-15. The other texts are Rom 12:1-2; 16:17; Eph 5:11; 1 Thess 5:22; 1 Tim 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:16-21; Tit 3:10; 2 John 7-11; Jude 3; Rev 18:4.

### **2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**

“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, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 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 Cor 6:14-7:1)

### ***The requirement of separation (6:14-7:1)***

In view of the ecumenical activity and rampant apostasy that are happening in the Christian world today, this passage of separation is extremely relevant. Paul issues an unequivocal injunction here for the church and her members to be separate from all forms of unbelief, apostasy, and worldliness.

### ***The command of separation (6:14a[i])***

Paul’s imperatival injunction, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (*Me ginesthe heterozugountes apostoi*), categorically states the doctrine of separation. The word *heterozugountes* (“being unequally yoked”) is derived from the words *heteros* (“another”), and *zugos* (“a yoke”). In using this word Paul must have had in mind the OT agricultural legislation: “Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together.” (Lev 19:19, Deut 22:10). One reason suggested is that “the ass, from feeding on coarse and poisonous weeds, has a fetid breath, which its yoke-fellow seeks to avoid, not only as poisonous and offensive, but producing leanness, or, if long continued, death; and hence it has been observed always to hold away its head from the ass and to pull only with one shoulder” (Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, vol 1 [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1945], 672-3). But the actual intent of Deut 22:9-11 in prohibiting the mixing together different kinds of seed or animal was to instruct the Jews, by way of a visual aid, that they should not mix their religion with another religion.

The prohibition is expressed with a negative of will, wish, or doubt. The negative *me* with the present imperative seeks “to bring to an end a condition now existing” (BAGD, 518). The imperatival clause should therefore be translated, “do not go on (or “do not even think about”) becoming unequally yoked with unbelievers, as you are already doing” (Hughes, *Corinthians*, 245; parenthesis mine).

### ***The object of separation (6:14a[ii])***

The Corinthians were commanded to separate themselves from “unbelievers” (*apistoi*). An *apistos* is someone characterised by unbelief (-os endings in nouns may indicate “chief characteristic”). Hence an *apistos* is a man “completely given up to” unbelief (see William Douglas Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* [New York: The MacMillan Co., 1952], 13).

The contexts evidently point to two groups of people: (1) the unconverted heathen, and (2) the false teachers. Both groups apply since an *apistos* is one who does not believe the good news about Jesus Christ. Not only do these unbelievers reject the gospel, they also “corrupt the Word of God” (2 Cor 2:17, 4:2; 11:13). The Corinthians were to keep away from them.

### ***The reasons for separation (6:14b-16)***

#### *The incompatibility of good and evil (6:14b-16a)*

This section contains a series of 5 rhetorical questions. These rhetorical questions in parallel contrasts seek to indicate that there is nothing ecclesiastically and eucharistically common between a believer and an unbeliever. Note (1) the words of unity (fellowship, communion, concord, part, agreement), and the contrast between (2) the words of sanctity (righteousness, light, Christ, believer, temple) and (3) the words of iniquity (unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidel, idols).

The first rhetorical question is “what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness.” The word *metoche* (“fellowship”) means “partnership,” or “sharing.” It has the idea of “a relationship involving shared purposes and activity.” The verb form of the word has the following semantic ideas (1) to share in, (2) eat, drink, (3) belong to (see LN, 1:447). This word has a very strong religious and philosophical connotation. There are two theologically significant aspects to the word. It indicates (1) a mystical sharing, and (2) a philosophical participation. (NIDNTT, sv “Fellowship; *echo*” by J Eichler, 636).

The words “righteousness” and “unrighteousness” are in the dative case. They are properly classified under the instrumental dative of association. (“The word in the instrumental indicates the person(s) or thing(s) which accompany or take part in the action of the verb.” James A Brooks and Carlton Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* [Lanham: University Press of America, 1979], 43). The associative dilemma here involves the

internal dynamics of opposing ethical systems. There is nothing intrinsically common between the righteous and the lawless in their respective faith systems and philosophical worldviews.

The second rhetorical question—“what fellowship has light with darkness”—explains that light is in the opposite extreme to darkness. Paul in 2 Cor 4:6 spoke of light in terms of the Truth of Christ; it is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” Darkness, on the other hand, refers to all perversions of the Truth of Christ that are a result of “handling the Word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor 4:2). Light is light, darkness is darkness. There is a clear division between the two. Truth is truth, error is error. There should be no confusion between them.

The Greek *koinonia* occurs in the Pauline corpus 13 times, and is popularly translated “fellowship.” It has the idea of “close union and brotherly bond between men” (NIDNTT, sv “Fellowship, *koinonia*,” by J Schattenmann, 640-1. See also LN, 1:446-7). There can be no closeness or union between light and darkness. It is impossible to mix the two together. They are mutually exclusive.

The third rhetorical question reads, “what concord hath Christ with Belial?” The word “concord” (*sumphonesis*; English “symphony”) implies “a type of joint decision.” It has the idea of a contractual agreement between business partners (eg, Matt 20:2) (LN, 1:368). The word “Belial” refers to the devil. There is no agreement whatsoever between Christ and Satan. This can be seen in the Lord’s battle with Satan in the wilderness of temptation. Satan tried to make a deal with Christ: “Worship me and I will give you the world” (cf Matt 4:9). Can Christ agree to this? Jesus rebuffed the devil, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt 4:10).

The fourth rhetorical question—“what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”—contrasts the believer with the unbeliever. The word *meris* means “part,” “share,” or “portion.” (BAGD, 505). The Christian has nothing religiously or doctrinally in common with the reprobate to the slightest divisible or distinguishable part. Calvin says, “‘As there is an irreconcilable variance between Christ and Satan, so we also must keep aloof from partnership with the wicked.’ When, however, Paul says that a Christian has no participation with an unbeliever, he does not mean as to food, clothing, estates, the sun, the air, ... but as to those things that are

peculiar to unbelievers from which the Lord has separated us” (John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, trans John Pringle [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, nd], 259).

The final rhetorical question states, “what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” The word *sugkatathesis* means “joint agreement, joint arrangement, mutual agreement.” (LN, 1:368). It literally means, “a putting down or depositing along with one.” Hence, “of voting the same way with another, and so agreeing” (Marvin R Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol 3 [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908], 325). When Paul used the word *naos* here, he is speaking of the church (eg, Eph 2:21). The temple of God here refers to the “local church” (cf, 1 Cor 3:16-17). The word *eidolon* means “idols”—an idol is “an object which resembles a person, animal, god, etc. and which is an object of worship” (LN, 1:65, 143-4). Kent aptly remarks, “Although Greek and Roman pantheons had no difficulty in adding still another idol to their temple collections, such a concept is absolutely incongruous in the Judeo-Christian tradition” (Kent, *Heart*, 103-4).

### *The sanctity of the Christian church (6:16b)*

Paul stresses his premise for separation with this climactic clause, “for ye are the temple of the living God.” The pronoun “ye” here is emphatic. Paul is reminding the Corinthians that they are indeed the people of God, both individually (1 Cor 6:19) and corporately (1 Cor 3:16). The word *naos* (“temple”) appears again in this verse to stress the fact that the church must keep herself from any sort of defilement. The word *naos*, as distinguished from *hieron*, is the inner sanctuary which encompasses the most holy place. The OT demands for the sanctity of this place cannot be stressed enough (see Lenski, *Interpretation*, 1084-5). The adjectival participle *zontos* (“living”) seeks to differentiate the true God of the Christian faith from the dead idols of heathen religions. The one living and true God has nothing whatsoever to do with the many false and inanimate gods of human invention.

To add support to his argument, Paul cites the OT for authority. He quotes a combination of Lev 26:11, and Ezek 37:27. God is dwelling and moving among His people. God’s actuality and activity in His church behooves a careful spiritual conduct from His people that will not compromise the holiness of His personality and sanctity of His temple. A true spiritual communion between God and man can exist only when personal and

ecclesial loyalty toward God is absolute (the Pauline exhortation here is couched with covenant terminology. See Martin, *Corinthians*, 204).

### ***The result of separation (6:17-7:1)***

This section is introduced by *dio* which is a relatively emphatic marker of result, normally denoting the fact that the inference is self-evident. It can be translated “therefore,” “for this reason,” “for this very reason,” “so then.” (LN, 1:783). The word usually introduces a purpose/result clause (Dana and Mantey, *Grammar*, 245).

#### *A restatement of the command (6:17a)*

Similar to the OT economy, covenant blessings in the NT are bestowed only when covenant stipulations are kept. (It must be noted that salvation is not the issue here. As in the old economy, covenant violation did not lead to covenant abrogation. The gift of salvation is unconditional but the rewards thereof are conditional upon faithful service [1 Cor 3:12-15]). The imperatival clause, “come out from among them, and be ye separate” is a restatement of the opening injunction, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” This citation is taken from parts of Isa 52:11 and Ezek 20:34,41.

The aorist imperative *exelthate* literally means “come out.” In this context, it has the idea of coming out in order to forsake (J H Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [New York: American Book Company, 1889], 223). The construction *ek mesou auton* (“from among them”) indicates the direction and source of departure. It is a moving away from out of their midst (“unbelievers” etc, v14ff).

The second aorist imperative in this verse is *aphoristhete* (“be ye separate”) which is from the root *horizo* meaning “to make a boundary,” or “to mark off from others by boundaries,” or “to limit, and to finally separate from others.” (Thayer, *Lexicon*, 90). The idea of separation is intrinsically tied to the word. Peter Masters comments, “Paul tells us that we are to be separated in the sense that a boundary is determined or set which we must never cross. The false teachers and their errors must be out of bounds to us; beyond the horizon. We must never have fellowship with false religionists at any level. The apostle uses the strongest available words to command us never to be in fellowship with any religious teachers or denominations which deny the Word of God and uphold false doctrine” (“The Command to Separate,” in *Separation and*

*Obedience*, A “Sword and Trowel” supplement by Peter Masters and John C Whitcomb [Elephant and Castle: The Metropolitan Tabernacle, 1983], 4). It is evidently an OT concept: “And ye shall be holy unto me, for I the Lord am holy, and I have severed you (*ho aphorisas humas*) from other people, that ye should be mine” (Lev 20:26).

The third imperative—“touch not”—in this section is the present tense *haptesthe* with the negative *me*. The construct denotes stopping an action already in progress. The Corinthians were already participating in things unclean. The word “unclean” (*akarthartos*) here has to do with the ceremonially or religiously unclean; in this case idolatry (LN, 1:537). Paul is thus commanding the Corinthians: “Stop right this moment your idolatrous practices!”

### *The rewards of the command (6:17b-18)*

Obedience to the command of separation results in the restoration of fellowship between God the Father and His children. First, the clause—“and I will receive you”—promises the restoration of friendship and companionship (cf, Ezek 20:41). The word *eisdexomai* literally means “to receive into” and has the idea of “to accept the presence of a person with friendliness—‘to welcome, to receive, to accept, to have as a guest’” (LN, 1:453). In the LXX, the word is the translation of the Hebrew *qabats*, “to gather.” It signifies the “reception of the rejected people into gracious fellowship with God” (TDNT, sv “*eisdechomai*,” by Walter Grundmann, 2:57). Our friendship with God must mean an enmity to the world. Conversely James said, “whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jas 4:4).

Second, the clause—“(I) will be a Father unto you,”—promises a paternal relationship (cf, 2 Sam 7:8,14). This second promise is closely tied to the next which is that of sonship (cf, Jer 31:9, Isa 43:6). Calvin’s commentary on this verse is worth noting: “... a recognition of the great honour to which God has exalted us, might be a motive to stir us up to a more ardent desire for holiness. For when God has restored his church which he has gathered from the profane nations, their redemption is attended with this fruit, that believers are seen to be his *sons and daughters*. It is no common honour that we are reckoned among the sons of God: it belongs to us in our turn to take care, that we do not show ourselves to be degenerate children to him. For what injury we do to God, if while we call him father, we defile ourselves with abominations of idols! Hence,



the thought of the high distinction to which he elevated us, ought to whet our desire for holiness and purity” (*Corinthians*, 262).

The promises of separation are tremendous. However, it must be realised that the rewards are, on no account, given because of personal merit. The promises of a restored relationship are totally by the grace of God. The bestowal of them is however conditional upon obedience.

### *A reiteration of the command (7:1)*

The final restatement of the law of separation contains a negative as well as a positive thrust. Negatively, Paul says, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” The word “cleanse” (*katharisomen*) is derived from the root *katharizo* which means “to make clean,” “purify,” or “heal.” (LN, 2:126). Here, it has the idea of cleansing from moral contamination or impurity. This is corroborated by the prepositional phrase, “from every filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (ie, an ethical-religious ablution). The word “filthiness” is “always used of the defilement which springs out of evil (and especially heathen) associations” (J H Bernard, *The Second Epistle of the Corinthians*, EGT, vol 3, ed W Robertson Nicoll [Grand Rapids; Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970], 80). The “flesh” represents that which is sensual, and the “spirit” represents that which is psychological (LN, 1:322-3). Compromise of any sort, in both physical and spiritual realms, is strictly forbidden.

Positively, there is the need for continual progress in personal and ecclesial holiness: “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” The present participle “perfecting” comes from the word *epiteleo* which means “to complete,” “finish,” or “succeed.” It is the same word used in Phil 1:6 where Paul says, “he which hath begun a good work in you will *perform* (*epiteleo*) it until the day of Jesus Christ” (*epiteleo* stresses the resulting purpose of the main verb [LN, 1:658]). The Corinthians were exhorted to do the work of purification so that they might be holy. The Lord has commanded: “And ye shall be holy unto me; for I, the LORD, am holy, and have separated you from other people, that ye should be mine” (Lev 20:26). The “fear of God” should be their motivation. Lenski has rightly said, “Love prompts one to do what pleases God; fear prompts one to refrain from what displeases God.” (Lenski, *Interpretation*, 1092).

## ***The Meaning of 2 Cor 6:14-7:1***

2 Cor 6:14-7:1 contains Paul's commands to the church and her members to be separated from all worldliness and falsehood. In this day of rampant apostasy, it is the duty of every church that loves the Lord to guard her purity in both faith and practice.

### **2 Thessalonians 3:6-15**

“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. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. 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. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess 3:6-15).

The *parousia* (ie, the second coming of Christ) is the theme of the Thessalonian epistles. Some of the Thessalonian Christians misapplied the doctrine of the return of Christ as taught by Paul in his first epistle to them, and became idlers and busybodies (vv10-11). They wrongly thought that since Christ was coming soon, there was no need for them to work. These idlers became a burden to the Church, living off the earnings of others. Concerning these errant believers, Paul commanded the congregation, “withdraw yourselves” (v6). The command “withdraw yourselves” is the Greek *stellesthai* which means “to avoid.” The word when used with the preposition *apo* means “to keep away from,” or “shun.” Whenever the preposition *apo* is used, it always has the idea of separation (William D Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1941], 134). The combination of the word *stellomai* with *apo* makes the word doubly

emphatic. So here Paul tells the people to totally cut themselves off from a brother (*adelphos*) or a fellow Christian who “walketh disorderly.”

We have been talking about separation from unbelievers, false teachers etc, but here we find that there is such a thing as separation from a believer—a disobedient one. The word “disorderly” is the Greek *ataktos*. It is a military term used of one who is “out of ranks” (Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:58). This person is not standing in line with the apostolic “tradition.” The word “tradition” here is *paradosin*. According to Robertson, *paradosin*, in Pauline usage, refers to the oral as well as the written teachings of the Apostles” (Ibid, 4:55). The Apostles were inerrant in their preaching (1 Thess 2:13), and in their writing (2 Tim 3:16) of God’s Word. Paul continued, “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” (v14).

Hence, any member who is not walking according to the Word of God faces the disciplinary measure of excommunication from the church. Paul told the church to “take note of” (*semeiousthe*) that erring individual and not “have dealings with” (*sunanamignusthai*) him. “Yet count him *not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*” The word “admonish” here, *noutheteo*, can also be translated as “instruct,” or “teach.” The *hina* clause in verse 14 tells us that the purpose of correcting him is so that he may be restored to the fellowship of the Church. The disciplinary act of separation is thus constructive and not destructive.

### **Romans 12:1-2**

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:1-2).

On Rom 12:2, William Hendriksen answers the question, “What should be shunned!” “The members of the Roman church were ‘saints,’ to be sure. But they had not as yet reached the pinnacle of sinlessness. They were saints but also still sinners, for on this side of heaven no mere human being ever attains to the condition of moral-spiritual perfection.

“There is one more fact that should be added: the members of that church were imitators. Aren’t we all to a certain extent? Or does this rule apply

only to children? In a sense does it not apply to everybody? It holds especially in the realm of sin and evil. 'Bad company corrupts good character' (1 Cor. 15:33), and in this present world it is well-nigh impossible completely to avoid 'bad company' or even to steer clear of the bad habits which are still clinging to what, on the whole, can be called 'good company.' Therefore, unless we are on our guard, we are in great danger of falling prey to 'the pattern of this evil age.'

"When Paul says, 'And stop allowing yourselves to be fashioned after the pattern of this (evil) age' (1 Cor. 2:6,8; Gal. 1:4), he is warning the membership then and now against yielding to the various manifestations of worldliness by which they are being constantly surrounded; such as the use of dirty or offensive language, the singing of scurrilous songs, the reading of filthy books, the wearing of tempting attire, engaging in questionable pastimes, associating, on intimate terms, with worldly companions, etc. There is hardly any end to the list.

"Take the matter of amusements. It is possible to be guilty in this respect even though there is nothing wrong with the recreation of one's choice; for example, if a person sets his heart on it, becomes absorbed in it, depriving him of time and energy for involvement in necessary and noble causes (family, Christian education, church, charity, missions, etc.).

"The main reason Paul warns against allowing oneself to be fashioned after the pattern of this (evil) age is that man's chief aim should never be to live only for himself. He should do everything to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31)" (*Romans*, NTC [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980], 1:404-5).

### **Romans 16:17**

In Rom 16:17, Paul commands the church in Rome, "mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them."

The word "mark" is the Greek *skopein* which means "to pay attention to," "to keep one's attention on," "to be concerned about," "to watch out (for)," "to be careful." It is written in the present infinitive. The infinitive here expresses purpose. Paul's purpose was to warn them of false teachers. The church was to watch out for them. The believers were to watch out for those who "cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." These false teachers were in the

business of producing divisions and offenses. They go about sowing seeds of strife by introducing new doctrines which are against those taught by the Apostles. The scandalous attacks of these false teachers are said to be “many” (plural “divisions” and “offenses”), but the Truth of Christ and the Apostles is one (singular “doctrine”). The Roman Christians have already learned the Truth, and are called to hold fast to it.

The danger posed by such false teachers was so real that Paul told the Roman church not only to be wary of them, but also to avoid them. The word for “avoid” is *ekklineo* which means “to turn away,” or “turn aside.” It is found in the present imperative, and thus speaks of *continual* avoidance. The church ought to have absolutely nothing to do with them, “definitely, decisively, once for all, incline away from them” (R C H Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* [Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1936], 916). The church was told to identify these people so that the believers would know whom to avoid.

Non-separatists argue that this verse can only be applied to those whom Paul refuted, namely, the Judaizers. They contend that Paul was telling his readers to “avoid only the Judaizers.” Against this absurd application, Lenski wrote, “His injunction is to keep away from believers who are errorists and teach falsely. Not only the exact duplicate of the errorists of Paul’s day are to be shunned, as though no new ones could arise, as though new ones do not divide, tear, and set traps, as though all errorists new and old, great and small are not related, all in the same class; but, according to Paul himself (15:4), ‘whatever things were written before, for our instruction were they written,’ his admonition is to be fully applied and not weakened or evaded” (Ibid, 917-8).

### **Ephesians 5:11**

Paul in Eph 5:11 commanded the Ephesian Church to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. ...” The negative injunction—*me sugkoinoneite*—tells us that no working partnership should be contracted between the believer and unbeliever. *Me* is the negative of will or wish (BAGD, 517). With the present imperative, *sugkoinoneite*, “to share together with,” it seeks to warn against any desire to partner an unbeliever in “unfruitful works of darkness” (ie, “unfruitful works sourced in darkness”).

Positively, the believer’s response towards “the unfruitful works of darkness” is to “reprove them.” The word *elegchete* (present imperative

of *elegcho*, “to rebuke,” or “to expose”) has the idea of convincing someone of his fault or error. Robertson says, “to convict by turning the light on darkness” (*Word Pictures*, 4:543). This exposure of error must be done whenever necessary. The whole purpose is to show the dangers of such works so that people might not get into trouble.

Separation as taught here is twofold: (1) “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” and (2) “reprove them.”

### **1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**

Paul instructed the Thessalonian Church to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess 5:21-22).

On the word “prove,” Hendriksen wrote, “When verses 19-22 are studied together, as a unit, it becomes apparent immediately that the rule ‘Test all things’ cannot mean ‘Try everything once,’ or ‘Enter every place of wickedness and find out for yourselves what it is.’ In the given context it simply means that, instead of despising each and every prophetic utterance, one should test whatever presents itself as such. The good should be accepted; every kind of evil (without any exception; hence whether it be evil advice—given by the false prophet—or any other form of evil) must be avoided” (Hendriksen, *Thessalonians*, 140-1).

When confronted with false teachers, these practical rules of separation must apply: (1) Test all doctrines and practices in the light of God’s Word, and then (2) “to the good hold on (*katachete*); from every form (or kind) of evil hold off (*apechesthe*).”

### **1 Timothy 6:3-5**

In 1 Tim 6:3-5, Paul paints a picture of the person from whom we should be separated. In verse 3, he defines the false teacher as one who gives “another teaching” (*heterodidaskalei*). The “another” (*heteros*) here is another of a *different sort*. He is one who teaches a *totally different* kind of doctrine. He teaches his own pet ideas and propounds his own personal opinions. Furthermore, he is one who does not come with “healthy words.” He is a person who has set his mind not to agree with what the Bible teaches, “even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.” In other words, he is not interested in looking into the source of all biblical doctrines which is found in the Word itself.

From verses 4-5, Paul describes what he is like. Such a person is “proud,” (or “swollen with pride,” “puffed up”), “knowing nothing,” (ie, “ignorant”), but “doting about questions” (ie, “to have a morbid craving for”) and “disputes of words” (lit, “word-fights”). According to Lenski, “Such a man will not even approach healthy words, ‘being sick with a morbidity’ for all kinds of investigations and disputes about things valueless, that lead to nothing but endless word-battles” (*Timothy*, 700) .

## 2 Timothy 2:16-21

“But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim 2:16-21).

Hymenaeus and Philetus were two apostates whom Paul instructed Timothy to “shun,” “depart,” and “purge.” There was a need for such drastic actions because their religious crimes were extremely severe. Hendriksen summarised the dangerous errors of the two as follows: (1) They were teachers of heresy. (2) Hymenaeus was probably the leader. (He is mentioned also in 1 Tim 1:19, 20). Philetus is only introduced here. (3) They were “the kind of” (*oitines*) people who had “wandered away from the truth,” ie, from the true doctrine of salvation in Christ. (4) They say that, “there is no resurrection.” According to Paul’s teaching, “denial of the bodily resurrection implies the complete overthrow of faith” (1 Cor 15:13, 14, 17). (5) They professed to be Christians (v19b); until their excommunication they had been members of the Church (1 Tim 1:20). (6) Their denial of the resurrection of the body probably stemmed from pagan dualism which taught that the body is evil. (7) They became self-righteous and conceited. (8) They were indifferent to sin and became more and more ungodly (vv16, 19). (9) They “blasphemed” at the true Gospel (1 Tim 1:20). (10) Their heresy was contagious. It was like cancer

that eats away healthy flesh. In the same way, this false teaching eats away the Christian faith (*Timothy*, 265-6).

Timothy was told to “shun” (*periistemi*, lit, “to stand around,” ie, “to turn your back from”). It has the idea of “showing contempt for” (Lenski, *Timothy*, 800). He was also told to “depart” (lit, “apostatise”). The word “apostasise” literally means “to stand away from.” It is here used in a good sense. It does not refer to a departure from the Truth, but a withdrawal from error.

Thirdly, Paul told Timothy in verse 21 to “purge himself from these,” (*ekkathare heauton apo touton*). The word *ekkathare* comes from 2 words, *ek*, “out of,” and *kathairo*, “to cleanse.” Literally it means “to cleanse out.” The “if” clause is a 3<sup>rd</sup> class condition indicating that the statement in the apodosis becomes a reality only when the condition stated in the protasis is met. Thus, Paul was trying to tell Timothy that if he wants the Lord to use him in the ministry, he must purge himself from all false doctrines, and disassociate himself from all false teachers.

### **Titus 3:10**

How should the church deal with heretics in their midst? Paul tells Titus, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.”

“What is a heretical person? The term *hairesitikos* is based on a root meaning ‘choice.’ In the literal and original sense, a heretic is one who makes a choice which pleases him, independent of other considerations. In the realm of doctrine, a heretic came to denote one who chose to follow doctrine contrary to that of the church. From this basis arose the meaning of one who caused dissension and division, gathering around himself others of like persuasion and thus causing schism in the church. This latter idea is clearly found in NT usage (1 Cor. 11:18-19). Hence Paul in the letter to Titus means by this term the person or persons whose actions are divisive because they are contrary to the teaching of God’s Word.

“How must we deal with the heretical person? The first obligation is to admonish the one at fault, pointing out the error of his action or of his doctrine. If one admonition is not effective, a second should be given. However, if the truth is clearly shown to him and the warnings are disregarded, further remonstrance is a waste of time and merely gives the offender undeserved publicity. The minister should then disdain



(*paraitou*), beg off, decline, or refuse to have further dealings with the heretical person. Paul, of course, is giving principles here, rather than legislating for every case. In some cases excommunication may be called for, if the doctrinal variance is basic to Christian faith. Each case must be separately considered” (Homer A Kent, Jr, *The Pastoral Epistles* [Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1982], 237-8).

## 2 John 7-11

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 7-11).

This passage contains a warning against false teachers. The exhortation in verses 4-6 to walk in obedience to the truth is necessary because there are many deceivers in the world who would want nothing more than to uproot the faith of as many Christians as they can lay their hands on. The aorist (*eiselthon*), translated “are entered” by the KJV (v 7) states a fact. There were actually charlatans of the faith at that time going about trying to deceive believers with their brand of unorthodox Christianity. The doctrinal distinctive of this particular group of false teachers was this: Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh (cf 1 John 4:2). They had a crooked Christology. The view that Jesus was not incarnate is called docetism (from Greek word *dokeo*—“to appear”). According to this heresy, Jesus did not actually come in the flesh, He merely *appeared* to be in the flesh. John calls an individual who propounds such a heresy, “a deceiver” (*ho planos*), and “an antichrist” (*ho antichristos*).

The word *planos* has the idea of “causing someone to be mistaken” (LN, 1:367). In other words, the motive behind a deceiver is to cause his victim to unlearn what he has already learned, and then to inject ideas which are contrary to the truth. The term *antichristos* means “one who is opposed to Christ” (LN, 1:543). It “appears to have become increasingly equivalent to a proper name as the personification of all that was opposed to and

contrary to the role and ministry of Christ” (Ibid). In other words, he is someone bent on dechristologising Christianity.

The dangers posed by these false teachers caused John to issue a stern warning: “You yourselves beware, in order that you might not lose that which we have worked for” (*Blepete heautous, hina me apolesete ha eirgasametha*). The verb *blepete* is written in the present imperative. It is a command. With the present tense, it is given a progressive force, “Be continually watchful!” The reflexive pronoun *heautous* when used with the active voice “emphasises the duty of personal effort” (A E Brooke, *The Johannine Epistles*, ICC [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1948], 176). So, an amplified translation may read like this: “You must take it upon yourselves to be continually watchful.”

For what purpose must they be watchful? The subsequent *hina* clause indicates a twofold purpose: (1) Negatively, “in order that you might not lose that which we have worked for,” and (2) positively, “but a full reward you might receive.” The former speaks of protecting the spiritual and doctrinal foundation painstakingly laid by the Apostles. The latter speaks of the reward we shall receive from the Lord on that day if we remain faithful to the truth.

In verse 9, John goes on to explain how one can distinguish between the true believer from the false one. The key, John says, is in his doctrine. In no uncertain terms, the Apostle writes, “everyone who transgresses and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God.” The phrase, “the doctrine of Christ” refers to the Christology which was infallibly passed down to the church by the Apostles. In order for a person to have a right relationship with the Lord, he must, among other things, first have a correct understanding of who Christ is.

John was addressing the problem of incipient gnosticism in his day. The gnostics (from the Greek word *ginosko*—“to know”) claimed that their superior knowledge enabled them to advance or go beyond what the Christians have already learned from the Apostles. These people by their beliefs and practices reveal that they were not truly believing in Christ nor walking in His ways (cf John 15:1-27).

The Apostle then warns the church members against welcoming these false preachers into their homes. It was common in those days to extend hospitality to itinerant preachers who desire to stay in a Christian home instead of a local inn. However, this Christian privilege could be taken

advantage of by false traveling evangelists. Take note of this significant separatistic practice of the early church: “Lucian, the Greek writer, in his work called the *peregrinus*, draws a picture of a man who had found the easiest possible way of making a living without working. He was an itinerant charlatan who lived on the fat of the land by travelling around the various communities of the Christians, settling down wherever he liked and living luxuriously at their expense. *The Didache* clearly saw this danger and laid down definite regulations to meet it. ... ‘Whosoever, therefore shall come and teach you all these things aforesaid, receive him. But if the teacher himself turn and teach another doctrine to pervert, hear him not. But unto the increase of righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord. And as touching the apostles and prophets, according to the decree of the gospel, so do ye. But let every apostle that cometh unto you be received as the Lord. And he shall stay one day, and if need be, the next also, but if he stay three, he is a false prophet. And, when the apostle goeth forth, let him take nothing save bread, till he reach his lodging, but, if he ask money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet that speaketh in the Spirit ye shall not try nor judge: for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. But not everyone that speaketh in the Spirit is a prophet, but if he has the manners of the Lord. By their manners, therefore, shall the prophet and the false prophet be known. And no prophet who ordereth a table in the Spirit shall eat of it, else he is a false prophet. And every prophet that teacheth the truth, if he doeth not what he teacheth, is a false prophet. ... Whosoever shall say in the Spirit: Give me money, or any other thing, ye shall not hearken to him: but, if he bid you give others who are in need, let no man judge him.

“Let everyone that cometh in the name of the Lord be received, and then, when ye have proved him, ye shall know, for ye shall have understanding to distinguish between the right hand and the left. If he that cometh is a passer-by, succour him as far as you can; but he shall not stay with you longer than two or three days, unless there be necessity. But, if he be minded to settle among you, and be a craftsman, let him work and eat. But, if he hath no trade, according to your understanding, provide that he shall not live idle among you, being a Christian. But, if he will not do this, he is a Christmonger: of such men beware” (William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, rev ed [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976], 133-4). To make his point more emphatic, John says that a Christian who even gives a polite greeting to such a person becomes a

sharer of his evil deeds. The warning is clear: have nothing to do with false preachers!

### Jude 3

“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).

Jude shared with his readers what he felt when he began to write this epistle. He said that he “gave all diligence” (*spouden*). This word has the sense of making haste (cf, Mark 6:25, Acts 20:16). Jude felt an urgent need, and an intense burden to write about the “common salvation.” Jude thought it necessary to remind the believers of the salvation that all born again believers possess. The word used to describe the salvation is “common” (*koines*). Here, it refers to something that is shared by all. Qualitatively and quantitatively speaking, every Christian receives the same salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as different degrees of salvation; one is “more saved,” and another “less saved.”

Although, at first, Jude had intended to write on the doctrine of salvation (soteriology) in all its various aspects: justification, sanctification, glorification, etc, he later felt constrained by the Holy Spirit, in view of the potentially dangerous situation the Church was then facing, to *apply* the doctrine of salvation instead. The great salvation epistles of Paul, namely, Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, had already been written by this time. What was really needful then was not just to believe but also to defend the Faith. Jude thus changed his theme from the Principles of the Faith (ie, to know it), to the Protection of the Faith (ie, to defend it).

Jude says that he was duty bound (*anagken*) to write the Epistle in view of end-time dangers that surrounded the Church. He strongly urged (*parakalon*) the believers to “earnestly contend” for the faith. The word “earnestly contend” is significant. It is the Greek *epagonizesthai* which is a strong word for “struggle.” It is a call for one “to exert intense effort on behalf of something” (LN, 1:496).

Although *epagonizomai* is only found here in the NT, its root *agonizomai* occurs seven times in Luke 13:24, John 18:36, 1 Cor 9:25, Col 1:29, 4:12, 1 Tim 6:12, 2 Tim 4:7. It is a military word and is usually translated as

“fight.” For example, Paul told Timothy, “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12). In the Christian context, it has to do with spiritual warfare. It has nothing to do with rifles and grenades (cf, John 18:36). We are called to defend the faith against false teachers, heresies, worldliness, etc, by means of the Word of God which is the Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). We earnestly contend for the faith by our preaching, teaching, writing, and living.

This contention for the faith is going to be a long drawn affair. We need to earnestly contend for the faith day by day. Jude tells us to keep on contending for the faith. There should be no relaxing, but a constant, consistent, and continual struggle for the purity of the Church and her Message. It is agonising work. One should not expect to find overwhelming support from the masses. When a person believes in the Holy Bible and obeys it, he goes against the philosophy and praxis of a God-denying and Gospel-hating world. Persecution in the form of verbal abuse, discrimination, incarceration, etc, can be expected. The Christian contender is called to endure such trials, and remain faithful to His Lord.

And for what is the Christian to earnestly contend? It is for THE once-for-all-delivered-unto-the-saints FAITH. Faith may be understood in two ways: in the subjective sense of personal faith (ie, belief, trust, submission, surrender, etc), or in the objective sense of the Christian faith (ie, the Christian religion, the body of Truth on which Christianity is based). Jude here is referring to the latter. This Faith that Jude refers to is contrasted with other faiths in that it is *the only true faith* or *the only true religion*. True forgiveness of sin with its promise of eternal life is found *only in the Lord Jesus Christ* (John 14:6, 1 Tim 2:5). This fact of salvation, and content of faith cannot be altered. It is *the Truth*, and *this Truth is unchangeable*. Christian Theology is settled and inscripturated in the 66 books of the Bible. None is to add to or subtract from it (Rev 22:18-19). There is no such thing as “new” theology. C H Spurgeon was absolutely correct when he said, “There is nothing new in theology except that which is false.”

### **Revelation 18:4**

The Lord in Rev 18:4 commands His people, “Come out of her, my people that ye be not partakers of her sins, ...” But from whom is the Church commanded to come out? In chapters 17 and 18, we are introduced to “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER

OF HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev 17:5). Many of the early scholars have identified Babylon as the Roman Catholic Church. The Christian Church is told to come out of her. The injunction to “come out” is used with the preposition *ek* (“out of”) twice. The clause, *exelthate ho laos mou ex autes*, literally translated reads, “come out my people, out of her.” The call for separation is doubly emphatic. God’s people are commanded to be twice separated from the harlot church. The true church must not be a fellow partner (*sugkoinoneo*) of her sins.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION IN THEOLOGY

#### **The Doctrine of Separation and its Basis in the Doctrine of God**

In the Westminster Shorter Catechism Q4, “What is God?” The answer is “God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.” Vincent defines the holiness of God as “his essential property, whereby he is infinitely pure; loveth and delighteth in his own purity, and in all the resemblances of it which any of his creatures have; and is perfectly free from all impurity, and hateth it wherever he seeth it” (Thomas Vincent, *The Shorter Catechism of The Westminster Assembly Explained and Proved from Scripture* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1674], 31).

The Hebrew word for “holy,” or “holiness” is the word *qadash* or *qodesh*. The verb *qadash* “connotes the state of that which belongs to the sphere of the sacred” (TWOT, sv “*qdsh*,” by Thomas E McComiskey). The noun *qodesh* “connotes the concept of ‘holiness,’ ie, the essential nature of that which belongs to the sphere of the sacred and which is thus distinct from the common or profane” (Ibid). The etymology of the word is significant. Scholars have suggested that “the root *qdsh* is derived from an original bilateral *qd* (“cut”). ... The meaning ‘to separate’ is favored” (Ibid).

In the NT, the parallel words for *qadash* and *qodesh* are the Greek *hagiazō* and *hagiasmos* respectively. It signifies “separation to God” and “the conduct befitting those so separated” (Vine, *Dictionary*, 565).

The essential element of holiness is that of separation. Separation is intrinsic to the doctrine of holiness. We separate from all forms of unbelief and apostasy because it is God’s nature to separate from such. The God of the Bible is a God who is holy. Being holy, He demands the

same from His people. God said in both the OT and NT, “Ye shall be holy, for I the LORD your God, am holy” (Lev 19:1, 1 Pet 1:16). Buswell said that our code of Christian conduct is, “ultimately derived from the holy character of God Himself. Right is right and wrong is wrong, ultimately because God is holy. We have knowledge of what is right and what is wrong because God’s holy character has been revealed by His holy will” (J O Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962], 1:67). That is why as Christians, being identified with the holy God, we are called saints. The word “saint” is the Greek *hagios* which means “holy one.” The “os” ending of the adjective denotes the idea of possession (Chamberlain, *Grammar*, 13). In other words, a *hagios* is one who is characterised by holiness.

It must be clarified that when we say a Christian is characterised by holiness, we do not mean he is sinlessly perfect. What we do mean is that as saints, we have been declared righteous, and are positionally sanctified. It does not mean that the sin nature has been totally eradicated. The sinful nature is very much a part of us as long as we are in our mortal bodies. We constantly experience the struggle between the law of God and the law of sin within us (Rom 7:21-25). But victory is ours when we walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom 8:1-4).

Therefore, as we progress in our Christian pilgrimage on earth, we should grow more and more Christlike, and be separated from the world and her evil ways.

## **The Doctrine of Separation and its Application in the Doctrine of the Church**

The Westminster Confession of Faith defines the Church in this way, “The Catholick or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

“The visible church, which is also catholick or universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and



family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” (XXV.1,2).

Our concern in this section is not so much the invisible church, but the visible church—the church here and now seen in the world. The invisible church is perfect. Every true believer, predestined by God, belongs to the invisible church. The church visible, on the other hand, is imperfect. It consists of a “mixed multitude” consisting of both genuine and professing believers. Professing believers are those who claim to be Christians, but actually still unregenerate. The Westminster Confession states, “The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth to worship God, according to his will” (XXV.5).

There is no such thing as a perpetually perfect visible church. It is true that the NT church in the very beginning manifested perfection for “all that believed were together, and had all things common ... continuing daily with one accord.” However, this was but a brief spell for soon there came “a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected.” Later, we read of certain practical problems introduced by false believers which led the Jerusalem Council to decree that the Gentile Christians need not be circumcised (Acts 2:44; 6:1; 15:1-29).

As we read the Epistles, we notice that the Apostles had to address problems within the church. There was not one church that was absolutely free from problems. There was tremendous difficulty in maintaining the unity and purity of the church. False teachers had crept in unawares and brought in damnable heresies (Jude 4, 2 Pet 2:1). This led some churches to move away from the doctrines taught by the Apostles (Gal 1:6, Rev 2-3).

Although the church is marked by imperfections, it does not mean that we adopt an indifferent attitude and allow such shortcomings to persist. As much as every Christian seeks daily to be more Christlike, so must the church strive to be pure. By virtue of the fact that the church is called *ekklesia* (lit, “called out”), it is required of her to remain separate. She must be careful to purge herself from all impurities, and keep herself chaste for her Husband—the Lord Jesus Christ. Any wrongful association or unholy yoke is tantamount to adultery.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PRACTICE OF SEPARATION

#### What the Practice of Separation is Not

##### **It is Not Isolation**

Biblical separation is not ascetism. J Oliver Buswell wrote, “The ‘separation’ of the church from sin and false religion is by no means the separation of ascetism or monasticism. Nowhere does the Scripture teach that Christians as individuals or as churches are to withdraw from ordinary secular responsibilities and live in the desert apart from the affairs of men” (*Theology*, 1:423-4).

There are fundamentalists who go to an extreme in practising separation. They separate not only from liberal institutions, but also fundamental. The usual remark we hear from these extremists is, “they are not separate enough.” They exist very much on their own. Usually, the separation is due to some minor doctrinal differences like the mode of water baptism; should more or less water be used? We have to be very careful where we draw the line, lest instead of being separatists, we become isolationists.

##### **It is Not Infiltration**

Ecclesiastical infiltration is a neo-evangelical distinctive. Neo-evangelicals have no qualms associating and cooperating with modernists, Roman Catholics, and charismatics in evangelistic campaigns. They say that as long as the gospel is preached and people get saved, it is alright to have joint political and religious activities. In other words, the end justifies the means. They do not believe that God’s work must be done God’s way.

Infiltration was popularised by Fuller Theological Seminary as the method to win over those outside the evangelical camp. But infiltration has never been God’s way of convicting the world of sin, and convincing

unbelievers of the truth. Having taken this slippery slope of infiltration, it is no surprise that Fuller today is modernistic, ecumenical, and charismatic.

The neo-evangelicals use Jude 22-23 as their proof text for infiltration: “And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” Jude must have had Amos 4:11 in mind when he wrote this verse. In Amos 4:11, we read, “I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were like a firebrand plucked out of the burning.” The historical context of Amos 4:11 is found in Gen 19:1-29 where Lot and his family were delivered from the destruction of those two wicked cities.

In light of this, the immediate and the historical contexts of Jude 23 reveal two significant points. First, it concerns “who?” Who were the people that were pulled out of the fire? Did Jude mean the reprobates? The answer is “No.” Jude in verses 4-19 warned the church against these ungodly men and declared that God has reserved them for a fiery punishment on that day of judgment. From verses 20-25, Jude addressed the Christians calling them “beloved.” So, those whom Jude said are to be saved, pulling them out of the fire must refer to believers. Calvin commented that in verses 22-23, Jude was “shewing how the faithful ought to act in reproving their brethren, in order to restore them to the Lord” (John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans and ed by John Owen [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984], 448). Moreover, it was not the unbelievers in Sodom and Gomorrah who were delivered but Lot the “just” (2 Pet 2:7). Jude is thus telling Christians to pull fellow-believers out of apostate churches. Therefore, verses 22-23 refer to rescuing believers, and not unbelievers.

Second, it concerns “how?” How should we go about pulling believers out of the fire? In Gen 19, we notice that the two angels sent to rescue Lot did not stay in the city longer than was necessary. They arrived in the evening, and left in the morning (Gen 19:1,15). This indicates that it was with a great sense of urgency that they pulled Lot out. We read in Gen 19:15-16, “And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the

hand of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him outside the city.”

The angels did not mingle with the Sodomites. They did not even speak to them. What we do read is that they struck the people of the city with blindness (Gen 19:11). They could not wait to get out of the city with Lot. Lot was literally “plucked out of the fire.” We are to do likewise. We are not told to befriend Christ-deniers, shake their hands, and pat them on the back. We are told to waste no time in warning fellow-believers and persuading them to leave false churches immediately.

Non-separatists contend that in order to pull them out, one must first go in. This is a case of reading into the text. The text does not say, “Go in!” The instruction given is “Get out!” The stress is in the word “out.” We are to pull them out from without, and not from within. In any case, the thing foremost in the mind of a fireman when he is in a rescue operation is BE QUICK AND BE OUT! He wants to accomplish the rescue speedily, and be completely out of danger.

Jude 22-23 does not teach infiltration. Rather it supports separation, and is consistent with the general tenor of this doctrine taught throughout Scripture.

## **What the Practice of Separation Is**

### **It Involves Excommunication**

The practice of separation invariably involves taking disciplinary measures against disobedient brethren or errant churches. The Westminster Confession states, “Church censures are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for deterring of others from like offences; for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and holy profession of the gospel; and for presenting the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should allow 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” (XXX.3,4).

Church discipline is one practice which is sorely lacking in much of the visible church today. The usual excuse for not practising church discipline is that Christians ought not to be judgmental. Admittedly, church discipline is something difficult to mete out and unpleasant to enforce; but we should realise that it is the Lord who had commanded His church to do so, and that it is for the general good of the Christian community. As stated in the Westminster Confession, church discipline is needed and is done for the good of the church and her members. It is not done so that people might be condemned, but that they might be instructed. It is a means of grace whereby the errant party can be restored to the fellowship of the church when he realises his sin and repents.

How do we go about exercising church discipline? Church discipline can be exercised at two levels: the individual and the ecclesiastical.

First, church discipline at the individual level. Jesus had laid down the steps the Christian should progressively take in disciplining a disobedient brother in Matt 18:15-20.

The first step to be taken is to approach him personally and privately and tell him frankly and gently what he has done wrong (v15). If he sees his error and resolves to correct himself, then one has won him to the Lord.

However, if after this private admonishment, he still insists that he is not wrong, the next step is to get one or two brothers to confirm that he is indeed in error. Note that these witnesses have to be independent, objective witnesses. There should be no conspiracy.

If he still refuses to listen, the final step is to bring the matter publicly to the church. The “church” here refers primarily to the spiritual leaders—the pastor and the session (consisting of elders and deacons). And if he refuses even to listen to the church, Jesus said, “Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a tax collector” (v17). In other words, have nothing to do with him.

The Apostle Paul himself excommunicated the Corinthian Christian who committed incest (1 Cor 5:13). This severe disciplinary action did a lot of good for that individual for we read in Paul’s next epistle to the Corinthians that he was extremely sorry for his sin. Paul told the church to forgive him and welcome him back to the fellowship of church (2 Cor 2:5-8). Church discipline, therefore, is an act of love and concern. The purpose of which is to rescue the erring believer from falling any further into sin.

Second, church discipline at the ecclesiastical level. Today, we are seeing many churches veering away from the historic Christian faith. Paul had already warned, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim 4:1). In another place, he cautioned, “Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first” (2 Thess 2:3).

Christendom today is experiencing rampant apostasy and unbelief. What should be the response of Bible-believing churches? The only right course of action is “to earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3) and “come out from among them and be ye separate” (2 Cor 6:17). “The question is: how do we know that a church has reached the ‘point of no return’? When must the believer come out of her and be separate, declaring her apostate? This is a solemn question and one that must be answered with care. The Belgic Confession (Art. xxix) is of some assistance. ‘The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if it maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin; in short, if all things are managed according to the pure word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church. Hereby the true Church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself. The article further states that ‘the false church ... ascribes more power and authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit itself to the yoke of Christ.’ Clearly, there are churches that manifest the requisite fidelity to the Bible so plainly that there can be no doubt, and others quite obviously fail to do so, and of these there is no doubt either. No church is perfectly pure. But some have sufficient purity of Word, sacraments, and discipline that there can be no legitimate question that they are true visible churches. Again, there is probably no church in which there is not some faint element of these things remaining, and yet the lack of fidelity to the Bible is so plain that there can be no reasonable question that such are not true visible churches. However, no church is without imperfection, and every church is (humanly speaking) liable to apostasy. If a believer were to separate from a church because of any and every imperfection he could belong to no visible church at all. But there may come a time when the departure of a visible church from the truth is such as to either require or justify

separation. And we believe that the precise ‘point of no return’ comes when such a church imposes upon its members the unavoidable necessity of participation in sin. When this point is reached, the Scripture is clear: ‘Come out of her, my people, and ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues’ (Rev. 18:3,4).

“It is sometimes argued that one should never leave a particular denomination (or visible church) as long as it is possible to remain in it. We would rather say that one should never leave a particular denomination as long as it is possible to remain without compromising obedience to Christ. The conditions necessary to such uncompromised obedience are these: (1) the denomination as a whole must still profess the true religion in its essential integrity, (2) there must be an unrestricted right to contend for the truth against such errors as are present, and (3) there must be an active engagement to defend the truth and to seek the purity of the Church. There are those who have remained in false churches on the grounds that they are in a ‘conservative’ congregation or presbytery, while admitting that the denomination as a whole is apostate. This violates the biblical doctrine of the unity of the churches and the scriptural concept of corporate responsibility (I Cor. 11:14-27). Others have remained in false churches on the grounds that ‘they still have the right to preach the fundamentals of the faith.’ They admit that they are not any longer permitted to preach the whole counsel of God, especially not the condemnation of the particular errors that prevail in their church. This contradicts the scriptural duty to preach the whole counsel of God, and the special duty to expose error, and therefore sinful (II Tim. 2:25,25, 4:2-5, etc). Finally, there are those who remain in a false church because they hope someday to reform it. But they never actually do anything because they realise that such efforts have not been, and will not be, tolerated. This is the least excusable of all. In conclusion, we believe that in a case of uncertain diagnosis, where there is opportunity to become a member of a church concerning which there is no doubt that it is a true church, a believer should separate with a clear statement of the reasons which have made him doubt that the church he is leaving is a true church” (G I Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964], 190-2).

## **It Involves Identification**

The practice of separation entails identifying those who are propagating error and exposing their wrong teachings. In the Bible, we find the Apostle setting such a precedent. In Rom 16:17, Paul said, “mark them who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” And in 2 Tim 2:17-18, he practised this by identifying 2 heretics by name, Hymenaeus and Philetus. In another place, he mentioned Demas who had forsaken him (2 Tim 4:10).

In identifying and exposing errorists, one must be very sure that one has just grounds to do so. There is no place for assumptions. Dr Arthur Steele in his lectures on “Contemporary Theology” at FEBC in 1988, advised students to firstly get the evidence and then back it up with Scripture before publicly exposing error. One ought not to rely on “hearsay” but have reliable proof before any allegation is made against false teachers.

## **It is an Act of Love**

The often sounded ecumenical slogan is “Love unites, doctrine divides.” Edward J Carnell, former professor of Fuller Seminary said, “While we must be solicitous about doctrine, Scripture says that our primary business is love (*The Case for Orthodox Theology*, quoted in Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation*, 198). Carnell claims “Scripture says” but where? On the contrary, we find that the Bible says that love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (1 Cor 13:6) .

What is the truth? The articular *aletheia* in 1 Cor 13:6 speaks especially of the content of Christianity as the absolute truth (BAGD, 35). In other words, it is the Holy Bible—the Word of Truth (Eph 1:13, Col 1:5, 2 Tim 2:15, Jas 1:18). What is done against or contrary to this “Word of truth” is not love, but hatred. The act of separation is not incompatible with Christian love. Pickering says, “It is possible to love those with whom I cannot have practical fellowship because of a disagreement over doctrine and practice. The Lord Jesus strongly denounced the scribes and pharisees of His day, yet one would hesitate to state that the Lord did not love them. Love has muscle. Love expresses itself in loyalty to God and His Word. God is love, but He is also a ‘consuming fire’ (Heb. 12:29). He has both aspects to His character, and they are held in perfect balance” (*Separation*, 198).



The practice of separation is an act of love because it seeks not to destroy but to restore. It is also an act of divine chastening. Jesus said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent” (Rev 3:19).

## **The Practice of Separation in Ecclesiastical History**

### **Separation in the United States: The Example of J Gresham Machen**

John Gresham Machen (1881-1937) remains one of the key figures in the history of the Christian Church this century. He is known especially for his high level of biblical scholarship and undying zeal in defending the Christian faith. A number of his books are invariably polemic in nature, namely, his first, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (1921), the highly acclaimed, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923), and the classic, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (1930).

Machen lived in a time when modernism was at its height. He could not but react against the modernists who attacked the Bible and his Lord. Machen, for the sake of the purity of the gospel, took upon himself the responsibility of chief spokesman for conservative evangelical Christianity. He wrote convincingly against modernism in *Christianity and Liberalism*. Stonehouse described the effects of this book, “Defining the issue of the day more incisively than any other publication, it made a profound impression on all sections of the religious world. Thousands of copies were sold within a year. While the book on Paul established Machen’s reputation as a scholarly defender of historic Christianity, this smaller volume catapulted him into the area of ecclesiastical and religious life where the broader controversy between Christianity and modernism was being fought” (Ned B Stonehouse, *J Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977], 335).

Machen was so vehement in his attack on modernism that he was charged with bitterness, intolerance, and bigotry. Stonehouse said, “It is perhaps, inevitable that such charges should be leveled against any one so valiant and uncompromising in his defense of the faith and exposure of current error” (Ibid, 338). Indeed, Machen regarded modernism “as another gospel, not really a gospel at all. But if its advocates had merely associated themselves in organizations committed to their own liberal

views, he would not have been profoundly disturbed. It was, however, their presence in churches constitutionally committed to the very historic Christianity which they were repudiating which compelled Machen to conclude that a most fundamental issue of the controversy was that of dishonesty” (Ibid). Such hypocrisy and deception Machen could not tolerate. He made it a point to expose them so that the church might be alerted to the dangers of their double-talk. In the 1924 “Auburn Affirmation,” 1,274 Presbyterian ministers declared that it was not necessary to believe as fact the inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement, the miracles and the resurrection of Christ. These five fundamentals of the Christian faith, they declared, were “theories” (Ibid, 365). Upon reading the “Affirmation,” Machen wasted no time in denouncing it as a thing most deplorable.

Machen was not a man to let such a serious attack on the historic Christian faith pass without being challenged. He wrote a formal letter of protest. Section III of his Counter-Affirmation states, “In Section IV of the Affirmation, the five points covered the pronouncement of the General Assembly of 1923 are declared to be ‘theories.’ This means that the Scriptures allow the Virgin Birth, for example, and the bodily resurrection of our Lord to be regarded as facts and not as facts. We protest against any such opinion. The redemptive events mentioned in the pronouncement of the Assembly are not theories but facts upon which Christianity is based, and without which Christianity would fall” (Ibid, 367).

Machen’s separation from the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA) was inevitable. Machen, in his article, “The Parting of the Ways,” which appeared shortly after the “Affirmation” said, “The Presbyterian Church of the United States of America has apparently come to the parting of the ways. It may stand for Christ, or it may stand against him, but it can hardly halt between two opinions. ... We do not wish to split the church; on the contrary we are working for the unity of the church with all our might. But in order that there should be sharp separation of the church from the world, the carrying out of that separation is a prime duty of the hour” (Ibid, 368).

The modernist versus fundamentalist controversy in the PCUSA invariably affected Princeton Theological Seminary. The modernists became increasingly influential in the Seminary and soon gained the upperhand in the Board and Faculty. Machen, in a letter to F E Robinson,

President of the Bryan University Memorial Association, wrote of the distressing situation at Princeton, “Princeton Theological Seminary for a hundred years, and never more successful than now, has been defending and propagating the gospel of Christ. It is now passing through a great crisis.... If the proposed abrogation of the whole constitution of the Seminary and the proposed dissolution of the present Board of Directors is finally carried out, if in other words, the control of the Seminary passes into entirely different hands—then Princeton Theological Seminary as it has been so long and so honorably known, will be dead, and we shall have at Princeton a new institution of a radically different type” (Ibid, 427).

Machen fought untiringly to save Princeton, but the situation was hopeless. When the old Board of Directors was being replaced by a new modernistic one, he resigned from the Seminary, and founded Westminster Theological Seminary.

We must pay tribute to Machen who was called “Mr Valiant-for-Truth” by his contemporaries. The Reverend T H Lipscomb testified, “We recall, as we think of him, Bunyan’s Jr Valiant for Truth, ... and having heard many of the ablest scholars of Europe and America, we affirmed frankly and sincerely that we know of no man in any church so eminently qualified to fill a chair of ‘Apologetics and Christian Ethics,’ provided you want the chair filled, the Christian faith really defended, and Christian ethics elucidated and lived. For, let me add that Dr. Machen is a humble saint, as well as a rare scholar, not a ‘saint of the world,’ who stands for nothing and against nothing, but a saint of God who loves truth, seeks truth, finds truth, and upholds truth against all adversaries, however mighty. ...” (Ibid, 409-10).

His godly mother was especially proud of him. She said, “I feel that ‘life with all it has of joy and pain’ is well worth while to have a son who is a Defender of the Faith!” (Ibid, 342). May the church today be able to say this of her sons.

### **Separation in England: The Example of Charles H Spurgeon**

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born in 1834 and died in 1892. He lived in a period of time when Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) was published. Darwin’s theory of evolution directly contradicted the Holy Scriptures, and challenged the very fact of God’s existence. Also, German higher criticism was finding a foothold in the universities and seminaries in

England. Higher criticism attempted to explain away the miracles of the Bible, and reduce the Holy Bible to a mere human book. By 1880, much of secular England had embraced evolutionism, and religious England had endorsed modernism.

In the midst of such blatant unbelief in both the secular and religious fronts, Spurgeon arose to defend the faith. He would not tolerate any ridicule of his Lord, and criticism of his faith. When the Baptist Union, in which he belonged, was not keen to take a stand against unbelief and apostasy, Spurgeon wrote, “No lover of the gospel can conceal from himself the fact that the days are evil ... yet our solemn conviction is that things are much worse in many churches than they seem to be, and are rapidly tending downward. Read those papers which represent the Broad School of Dissent, and ask yourself, How much further could they go? What doctrine remains to be abandoned? What other truth is to be the object of contempt? A new religion has been originated which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese; and this religion, being destitute of moral honesty, palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea usurps pulpits which were erected for gospel preaching. The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Ghost is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection of Christ into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren and maintain a confederacy with them!” (Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984], 206).

Since the Union did not want to take the stand of separation, Spurgeon could not but separate himself from it. He said, “One thing is clear to us: we cannot expect to meet in any union which comprehends those whose teaching upon the fundamental points is exactly the reverse of that which we hold dear. ... With deep regret we abstain from assembling with those whom we dearly love and heartily respect, since it would involve us in a confederacy with those with whom we can have no fellowship with the Lord” (Ibid, 207). Spurgeon personally believed that, “For Christians to be linked in association with ministers who do not preach the gospel of Christ is to incur moral guilt. A Union which can continue irrespective of whether its member churches belong to a common faith is not fulfilling any scriptural function. The preservation of a denominational association when it is powerless to discipline heretics cannot be justified on the grounds of the preservation of ‘Christian unity.’ It is error which breaks

the unity of the churches, and to remain in a denominational alignment which condones error is to support schism” (G Archer Weniger, comp, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Ecclesiastical Separation,” *Australian Beacon* [Jan 1989]).

Spurgeon contended for the faith right through into his evening years. Even though he was poor in health, he never retreated but persisted to the very end in his faithfulness to God and His Word. When the Lord took him home on Jan 31, 1892, he could confidently say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7).

### **Separation in China: The Example of Wang Ming Tao**

Wang Ming Tao (1900-1991) was one of China’s greatest saints. During the early years of his ministry at the Christian Tabernacle, Wang Ming Tao was already extremely unhappy over the spiritual state of the Chinese churches. He said, “ I became ... aware of the darkness and corruption in the churches. I felt strongly that the church needed a revolution and that the mission to bring about a revolution was entrusted to me” (Wang Ming Tao, *A Stone Made Smooth*, trans Arthur Reynolds [Hants: Mayflower Christian Books, 1991], 40). Wang Ming Tao, thus, spared no effort and minced no words in denouncing the hypocrisy of many so-called pastors “who simply regarded preaching as a means of earning a living. He labelled them as ‘regard-piety-as-the-path-to-profit’ preachers” (Ibid, 115). He further said, “To talk to people like this about reforming the church was like ‘asking a tiger for his skin’ (Ibid). Many an unconverted pastor filled the pulpit. They ruin the faith of the people by teaching heresies. His ministry of warning was met with much opposition. He was extremely disliked by these false pastors. But Wang Ming Tao rather pleased God than man. He said, “I prefer to be attacked by men than to call forth the wrath of God” (Ibid, 90).

Wang Ming Tao took an uncompromising stand when he refused to join the churches who sought Japanese help when the British and American missionary societies withdrew their support during World War II. He said, “By seeking help from the Japanese, the churches gave the Japanese an opportunity to use them. They (the leaders of the churches) should have looked only to God and not seek help from the Japanese” (Ibid, 215). More importantly, “God had forbidden me to be yoked together with unbelievers. Many of the members of those churches had not yet truly repented and believed; moreover there were even pastors who had never

repented and believed. God would not allow me to be yoked together with them” (Ibid, 216).

Neither would Wang Ming Tao link himself with the “Three-Self Patriotic Movement” spearheaded by the Chinese Communists. He said, “I have strongly maintained that the church could not allow its activities to merge with worldly customs and that God’s workers cannot cooperate with false prophets and false teachers. I have always maintained that churches which stand for the truth ... cannot be affiliated with associations or groups that do not believe these truths” (Ibid, 221). For refusing to sign the communist Manifesto which contained a clause demanding that the church give unquestioning loyalty to the government, and render absolute obedience to the communist party, he was imprisoned for 23 years.

He remained strong in spirit though weak in body during his final years. He did not budge an inch in his conviction that the church must remain separate from all forms of unbelief and apostasy. One evidence of his separatist stand was his refusal to entertain Billy Graham when he was in China. Graham’s visit to China was hosted by the communist-controlled China Christian Council (CCC). The American evangelist’s visit to Wang Ming Tao, according to analysts, “made the evangelist acceptable in the eyes of many house-church leaders and could cast the evangelist as a bridge-builder between the CCC and the independents” (“Billy Graham in China: Building Bridges,” *Christianity Today* [June 17, 1988], 52).

What has Wang Ming Tao to say to this? How did he regard Graham’s visit? Did he compromise? Rev Pang Kok Hiong—a Far Eastern Bible College graduate and Bible-Presbyterian pastor—who visited Wang Ming Tao and his wife in Shanghai in December 1988 asked him concerning Graham’s visit. The following is a translation of the interview:

Rev Pang: Recently, Billy Graham visited you. Did you invite him to come?

Pastor Wang: He wanted to see me, but I did not want to see him.

Rev Pang: Why?

Pastor Wang: Because if he comes, he would probably come as a guest of the “Three-Self” churches. That is why I was not willing to have any discussion with him. But one day, he came himself.

Rev Pang: You did not invite him to come?

Pastor Wang: I said I did not want him to come. This is because even if I did agree to see him, it would be very difficult to talk. He was invited by the “Three-Self” churches; that is why the situation was very difficult. But one day, he suddenly came with an interpreter.

Rev Pang: So, you do not support them?

Mrs Wang: That’s right. Because of their visit, we were put into a very difficult position. At that time, we not only told them once or twice but three times not to come because ... those pastors, those who are close to him, are those who have betrayed the Lord.

Before Billy Graham left, Wang Ming Tao admonished him with this verse from Rev 2:20, “be thou faithful unto death.” Clearly, Wang Ming Tao wanted no part in Billy Graham’s ecumenism. Leslie Lyall remarked that Wang Ming Tao spared no effort in warning Christians against the dangers of theological modernism in every form (*Three of China’s Mighty Men* [Singapore: Agape Books, 1974]). Wang Ming Tao was a true fundamentalist right till the very end. He was “faithful unto death” (Rev 2:10).

## CHAPTER V

### THE NEED FOR SEPARATION

#### The Inroads Made by False ‘Isms’ Today

##### Modernism

Theological liberalism or modernism is depraved humanity’s insidious attempt to dethrone the one living and true God, and to undermine the authenticity and truthfulness of His divinely inspired, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative Revelation in the Holy Scriptures. J Gresham Machen himself observed, “the great redemptive religion which has always been known as Christianity is battling against a totally diverse type of religious belief, which is only the more destructive of the Christian faith because it makes use of traditional Christian terminology. This modern non-redemptive religion is called ‘modernism’ or ‘liberalism’” (*Christianity and Liberalism* [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1923], 2).

In the Edenic Garden, Satan tempted Eve by questioning God’s Word, “Yea hath God said?” (Gen 3:1). This is followed by an outright denial of God’s Word. God said, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). But Satan twisted God’s Word around by saying, “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen 3:4).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is the father of theological modernism. According to Kant, “Religion is essentially belief in God as a good will realizing itself in nature and history, evinced by neither prophecy nor miracle, but by the same good will in ourselves—its object to develop and confirm the will of good in us. The sovereign test of the Bible is our own morality” (*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, sv “Kant, Immanuel,” by C A Beckwith).

George Hegel (1770-1831) adopted Kant’s philosophy and created the idea that “progress is inherent in change.” Building on Kant’s moral



rationalism, Hegel viewed all reality as cosmic reason which realises itself in specific processes. He “taught an idealism which encompassed everything and operated by a dialectical process in which the infinite becomes finite and the finite becomes infinite. ... For Hegel, life is not static, but ever-evolving through this dialectical evolution of the Infinite Spirit. God, therefore, is not to be thought of as personal, but as a process. The Absolute Spirit is the identity of God with humanity, the unity of the infinite with the finite” (*New Dictionary of Theology*, sv “Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich,” by H Harris).

Modernistic “Bible scholars” began to interpret the Scriptures on the basis of the Hegelian dialectical method. Graf and Wellhausen, influenced by Hegel’s evolutionism, introduced the JEDP theory which propounds that the God of the Jews evolved from a primitive Jehovah to an advanced Elohim. Not only are the first five books of the OT being torn apart by such scholars, the first three books of the NT—the Synoptic Gospels—are said to be inventions of the Church; the gospel accounts are not factual. By way of source, form, and redaction criticisms, the Jesus Seminar—a group of 74 unregenerate scholars—claim that Jesus did not say 82% of the words attributed to Him. The followers of Jesus were the ones who put words in His mouth. John D Crossan said that the deification of Christ is the result of “a mixture of myth, propaganda, and social convention” (Richard N Ostling, “Jesus Christ, Plain and Simple” *TIME* [January 10, 1994]: 34-5). What blasphemy!

The threat of modernism today comes not from without but within, from among our own. In our local situation, theological students who have gone abroad for training in modernistic colleges and seminaries have more often than not returned doctrinally diseased. These sickly pastors in turn infect their flock. Jesus had warned, “beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt 7:15). The Apostle Paul cautioned the Ephesian Church that after his departure, “shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).

### **Ecumenism**

Ecumenism is the satanically inspired attempt to bring about a unity between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, and eventually between Christianity and all other religions. “In its beginnings, the modern

ecumenical movement was largely the work of Christians in Protestant churches, Reformation and Free, who were committed, in the words of John R Mott around the turn of the century, to ‘evangelization of the world in this generation’. Then, and increasingly, the Orthodox churches began to play a significant part, ... After initial suspicions, and then cautious beginnings after the second world war, the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council recognised that other Christians, by baptism and faith in Christ, enjoy a certain, though, imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church’, and that their churches and ecclesial communities are ‘not without significance in the mystery of salvation’—so that finally the way was open for Orthodox Protestants on their side to take the Roman Catholic Church seriously as a partner” (Nicholas Lossky et al, eds, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* [Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991], Introduction).

The World Council of Churches (WCC) spearheaded the ecumenical movement since 1948. Inter-ecclesiastical and inter-faith dialogues have been the WCC strategem in promoting ecumenical unity. A local example of such an effort can be found in the joint Protestant-Catholic consultation on “Living and working together with Sisters and Brothers of other Faiths in Asia” organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference (FABC) in 1987. In this meeting, it was affirmed that “life is a pilgrimage and that neighbours of other religious traditions are fellow pilgrims in the way. In humanity’s shared pilgrimage, the delegates felt that the Church is called to be an effective sign and symbol of the kingdom of God. In this context, dialogue offers opportunities for Christian witness when Christians are attentive to the insights of sisters and brothers of other religious traditions as they share insights from their own faith” (*Methodist Message*, September 1987).

This inclusivistic worldview is getting increasingly pervasive. Lorna Khoo’s “ecumenical village” is a case in point. Lorna Khoo, an ordained minister of the Methodist Church, in allegorical style, described her dream of an ecumenical village where “peace ... washed over the whole village. ... the whole village had come out into the open. Grandfather whose name was Roman Catholicism, Grandfather’s brother, Orthodoxy of the next mansion, the sons and daughters whose names were Anglicanism, Lutheranism, Reformed and the grandchildren—Methodists, Baptists, great grandchildren—Salvation Army, Assemblies

of God, Bible Presbyterians were all out in the open. The ancient barriers were down. There was nothing which separated them from each other” (“Christian Unity,” *Methodist Message* (January 1993): 2-3). Lorna Khoo makes it clear that this unity should be based on a love that is outside of truth.

The ecumenical movement’s success in bringing about a false Christian unity can be clearly seen in the ground-breaking “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (ECT) document of March 29, 1994. Among the 37 Evangelical and Catholic signatories of this ecumenical document were Bill Bright (Campus Crusade), Charles Colson (Prison Fellowship), Os Guinness (Trinity Forum), Larry Lewis (Southern Baptist Convention), Jesse Miranda (Assemblies of God), Mark Noll (Wheaton College), Brian O’Connell (World Evangelical Fellowship), J I Packer (Regent College), Pat Robertson (Regent University), and John White (National Association of Evangelicals). In the ECT document, they declare, “We together, Evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples.” They go on to affirm, “All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior are brothers and sisters in Christ. Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.” In other words, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Evangelicals are all “Christians.” The ECT paper absolutely disregards the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation under Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Ulrich Zwingli, and others. These “evangelical” ECT endorsers have betrayed the Reformation.

The impact of ECT is already felt in Singapore. An evangelical magazine published here made an unbiblical call for Protestants “to repent” of their non-engagement with Catholics (see Glenn Myers, “Meeting the Catholics,” *Impact* 19 [Mar-Apr 1995]: 17. My letter in response to that issue is published in *Impact* 19 [Apr-May 1995]: 7-9). *Impact* magazine later invited me to write an essay on “Roman Catholics: Are they Safe?” for their Feb-Mar ’99 issue. I wrote from an exclusivist viewpoint citing evidences from officially sanctioned Roman Catholic documents that the papacy still preaches another gospel and another Jesus, and that Catholics still need to be evangelised with the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. A counter article by inclusivist David Packer of the International Baptist Church clearly reveals the compromising spirit that is so prevalent today. He said in no uncertain terms that “The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) should ... be afforded the right hand of Christian fellowship by Protestant Christians in spite of our differences.” He went on to conclude that in

having fellowship with the Catholic Church, “We are merely recognising the greater family unity. We have more in common than we do differences” (*Impact* 23 [Feb-Mar 1999]: 28-30). “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess 2:11-12).

The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (ACE) and the Trinity Foundation in the United States have done well to denounce the ECT as a treacherous act against the historic Christian faith. ACE’s Cambridge Declaration of 1996 reaffirmed the “solas” of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation, viz, *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), *Solus Christus* (Christ alone), *Sola Gratia* (Grace alone), *Sola Fide* (Faith alone), and *Soli Deo Gloria* (For the glory of God alone). Go to <http://www.alliancenet.org> for the full transcript. The Trinity Foundation in its Reformation Day Statement of 1998 described the ECT documents of ’94 and ’97 as “unbiblical concordats,” and called on all Christians to “stand boldly against those today who are not being ‘straightforward about the truth of the gospel’ (Gal 2:14).” See <http://www.trinityfoundation.org>.

May we be reminded that the way to heaven is a narrow way, for *only* Jesus saves. The Lord had said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the

winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matt 7:13-27).

### **Neo-evangelicalism**

Neo-evangelicalism is an attitude or spirit of compromise popularised by Harold J Ockenga in 1948. Ockenga positioned neo-evangelicalism in between modernism to the left and fundamentalism to the right. He said, “Neo-evangelicalism differed from modernism in its acceptance of the supernatural and its emphasis upon the written Word as inerrant, ... It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life.

“Neo-evangelicals emphasised the restatement of Christian theology in accordance with the needs of the times, and reengagement in the theological debate, the recapture of the denominational leadership, and the reexamination of theological problems such as the antiquity of man, the universality of the Flood, God’s method of creation, and others” (Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976], Foreword).

Fuller Theological Seminary, established in 1947, became the school to train a whole new generation of ministers with this new compromising mindset and spirit. The one who founded it was the famous radio evangelist—Charles E Fuller—of the “Old Fashioned Revival Hour.” The best and most abled theologians in those days were employed to teach in the Seminary. There was also the world-famous evangelist—Billy Graham—who gave tremendous support to Fuller.

Fuller Seminary wanted to be known as a school of high “scholarship.” Fuller’s neo-evangelicals wanted to impress the modernists, and win their admiration. The Seminary was thus doomed to fail right from the start. Its approach to biblical defence was faulty. These neo-evangelicals wanted to go about converting the neo-orthodox, modernists, agnostics, and atheists by way of infiltration instead of separation. Thus, Fuller Seminary stood in rivalry with Faith Seminary which was founded by Machen’s

disciple—Carl McIntire. McIntire was a biblical fundamentalist with a no-nonsense separatist stand. McIntire and Ockenga had been friends but by that time were becoming enemies. The situation worsened when Ockenga tried to rope Allan MacRae of Faith Seminary into taking up the Old Testament chair at Fuller. MacRae turned down the offer and remained loyal to Faith. So, McIntire founded many separatist organisations while Ockenga started inclusivistic ones (George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* [Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1987], 28).

Fuller Seminary's policy of infiltration instead of separation was the cause of its doctrinal downfall. In order to engage the modernists in terms of so-called "scholarship," they started to recruit men without carefully examining their doctrinal beliefs. Thus, within the faculty, there were those who did not believe in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible. Even when they were found out, no attempt was made to dismiss them. So, those who held to "limited inerrancy" (ie, the Bible is inerrant only when it touches on salvation, but not history, geography, or science) continued to teach.

According to Lindsell, history has shown that "any weakness regarding inerrancy would leave an opening through which liberalism would inevitably rush in. ... Down the road, whether it takes five or fifty years, any institution that departs from belief in an inerrant Scripture will likewise depart from other fundamentals of the faith and at least cease to be evangelical in the historical meaning of that term" (*Battle*, 214). It is thus no surprise that Fuller Seminary today is modernistic, ecumenical, and charismatic.

As a matter of fact, the downfall of Fuller did not really begin with its denial of biblical inerrancy, but with its repudiation of biblical fundamentalism. Fuller is a classic example of how a non-separatist position can eventually lead one down the road of apostasy and unbelief. How does this come about? Francis Schaeffer—the late neo-evangelical turned fundamentalist—wrote, "There is only one word for this—namely *accommodation*: the evangelical church has accommodated to the world spirit of the age. First, there has been accommodation on Scripture, so that, many who call themselves evangelicals hold a weakened view of the Bible and no longer affirm the truth of all the Bible teaches—truth not only in religious matters but in areas of science and history and morality. As part of this, many evangelicals are now accepting the higher critical

methods in the study of the Bible. Remember, it was these same methods which destroyed the authority of the Bible for the Protestant church in Germany in the last century, and which have destroyed the Bible ... in our own country from the beginning of this century” (*The Great Evangelical Disaster* [Illinois: Crossway Books, 1984], 25-26).

Many today say they believe the Bible but as Schaeffer noted, “it must be the Bible as the Word of God in everything that it teaches—in matters of salvation, but just as much as where it speaks of history and science and morality. If it is compromised in any of these areas, as is unhappily happening today among many who call themselves evangelicals, we destroy the power of the Word and put ourselves in the hands of the enemy” (Ibid). Schaeffer concluded, “Here is the great evangelical disaster—the failure of the evangelical world to stand for truth as truth” (Ibid, 37).

The rapid slide of neo-evangelicalism towards apostasy can be clearly seen in the case of Billy Graham. J A Johnson called Billy Graham, “The Jehoshaphat of Our Generation.” This is due to Graham’s compromise with modern-day Ahabs. “Dr Billy Graham maintains close and cordial associations with the ecumenical movement. The ecumenical movement is spearheaded by men who deny the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith. The Billy Graham Crusades are sponsored largely by such individuals and churches. The Crusades are in actual fact promoting ‘Ecumenical Evangelism’ on a world-wide basis” (“Bible-Presbyterian Church Statement on Billy Graham,” *Banner* [November-December 1978], special supplement). Graham had no qualms about speaking well of the Pope and the RCC. In fact, he willingly accepted an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters (DHL) from the Roman Catholic Belmont Abbey in 1967. *The Gastonia Gazette* reported that Graham noted the significance of the occasion by saying that it is “a time when Protestants and Catholics could meet together and greet each other as brothers, whereas 10 years ago they could not.” Darrell Turner reported that Graham, in his 1991 New York Crusade, “as in all his crusades, ... is working with liberal Protestants, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians in preparation and follow-up for his Central Park rally” (*Christian News* [September 23, 1991]). Graham’s neo-evangelicalism and ecumenism have done injury to Christ and His Church in no small way.

Jehoshaphat, after years of disobedience and compromise, finally repented of his sins. Later on, he refused to make an alliance with Ahab's son—Ahaziah (1 Kgs 22:49). We wish this were true also of Graham, but with his latest public denial that salvation is in Christ alone, we are left to conclude that Graham is not Jehoshaphat but Ahab! Consider what he said in his interview with Robert Schuller of Crystal Cathedral. When asked about the future of Christianity, Graham commented, "I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, *whether they're conscious of it or not*, they're members of the Body of Christ. ... He's calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they've been called by God. *They may not even know the name of Jesus* but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think that they are saved, and that they're going to be with us in heaven."

At this juncture, Schuller sought a clarification on what Graham meant by those who do not know the name of Christ and yet are part of the body of Christ. Graham explained, "... I've met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations, that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible, and never heard of Jesus, but they've believed in their hearts that there was a God, and they've tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived." Thus, according to the gospel of Billy Graham, a person need not know the name of Jesus; as long as he loves God (whoever this God is), and tries to live a life that is quite apart from the surrounding community (ie, a morally clean and good life), he is part of God's family, and on his way to heaven. [For a full transcript of this interview, see Robert E Kofahl, "Graham Believes Men Can Be Saved Apart from Name of Christ," *O Timothy* 14 (1997): 15-17; also cited in Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, *A Theology For Every Christian: Book I—Knowing God and His Word* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 1998), 11-15.] What does the Bible have to say about the Name of Jesus in regard to salvation? Acts 4:12 in no uncertain terms states, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby men must be saved."

Billy Graham's apostasy is documented in the following books: Ian Paisley, *Billy Graham and the Church of Rome: A Startling Exposure* (Greenville: BJU Press, 1972); Ian Brown, *Billy Graham: Custodian of*



*the Faith or Figure of Compromise* (Londonderry: Self-published, 1991); Wilson Ewin, *The Assimilation of Evangelist Billy Graham into the Roman Catholic Church* (Compton: Quebec Baptist Missions, 1992); Brad K Gsell, *The Legacy of Billy Graham: The Accommodation of Truth to Error in the Evangelical Church*, rev ed (Charlotte: Fundamental Presbyterian Publications, 1998).

### **Charismatism**

The charismatic movement has divided many a church and has caused confusion within Christian circles. Today, one can find charismatics in Anglican, Methodist, Brethren, Baptist, and Roman Catholic churches.

Is the charismatic movement of God? The charismatic movement cannot be of God because it is the ecumenical matchmaker between the Protestant Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Michael Harper says that the Charismatic movement functions uniquely as a “bridge-builder.” This is because “it has penetrated the Roman Catholics and Protestant worlds to about the same extent, it has bridge-building potential of importance to the ecumenical future of the church” (*Three Sisters* [Illinois: Tyndale, 1979], 34). Harper went on to say, “Roman Catholics and Protestants have found each other ‘in the Holy Spirit’ and ‘in Jesus Christ.’ They have met each other, not at the point of strength, but that of shared human weakness. They have come together in liturgical freedom and joy. In singing together they have melted into a new oneness, which is hard to separate out again” (Ibid, 104). A case in point would be the charismatic “North American Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization” held in July, 1987 in New Orleans, Louisiana where out of the estimated 40,000 participants, half were Roman Catholics. The rest were made up of Non-denominational, Episcopalian, and Lutheran groups. Billy Graham gave his blessings at the opening night of the Congress via a video clip which was enthusiastically received by the conference participants.

In the local scene, we have the Anglican bishop of Singapore—Moses Tay—who admitted, “In many instances the Charismatic Movement has brought a fresh and deeper unity between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, and has broken down denominational, social, cultural and other barriers” (“The Charismatic Movement: A Way or The Way of Renewal,” *The Courier* [Jan 1988]: 7). Former Roman Catholic priest, Bartholomew F Brewer commented, “the charismatic movement is being used

worldwide by the leaders of the ecumenical movement for what are questionable purposes, to say the least. The two movements have been channeled into the same furrow. Why? Because many charismatics and ecumenical leaders claim that through the Holy Spirit the differences between denominations disappear and become meaningless. The present ecumenical movement toward a super one-world church is gaining tremendous momentum from the charismatic movement. And ... the so-called inspired teachings of the charismatics are being cited as ‘revelations from God’ to support the super one-world church” (Bartholomew F Brewer, and Alfred W Furrell, *Pilgrimage from Rome* [South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1982], 111).

The 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation was a work of God when Luther, Calvin, Knox, Zwingli and others were raised to deliver the Church out of Roman bondage. If we say that the Charismatic movement is from God; are we not also saying that God had made a mistake in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation? Please note that God does not and cannot contradict Himself. The Charismatic movement which tries to bring both the Protestant Church and the Roman Catholic Church together cannot be of God.

## **A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Reformation Movement**

There is a need for a 21<sup>st</sup> century Reformation in the spirit of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers and in the steps of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Reformation movement. I do not think that a true Christian would ever doubt that the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation was a providential work of God. The 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation has brought us out of pontifical darkness into evangelical light. What Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and John Knox had passed down to us must be tenaciously guarded for “we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (2 Cor 13:8). *Sola Scriptura, Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Soli Deo Gloria* must all the more be adopted and declared by the Protestant Church in opposition to the ecclesiastical apostasy of today.

Just as the Lord had raised His servants during the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation to contend for the faith, He has raised in this century Dr Carl McIntire and others to lead in the Protestant cause. McIntire started the “New Reformation” or the “Twentieth Century Reformation.” The purpose of this movement is to call “all of God’s people to stand together on the platform of the historic Christian faith against the widespread

apostasy in the church today” (Carl McIntire, *Twentieth Century Reformation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> and rev ed [Collingswood: Christian Beacon Press, 1946], ix). “The Twentieth Century Reformation is a reformation in Protestantism, and it will do to the Protestant church what the Reformation in the sixteenth century did to the Roman church. In fact, it brings the Protestant church back to the position that it took in the Reformation, the position of the Bible” (Ibid, xi). The International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) was thus formed in 1948 to oppose the ecumenical World Council of Churches (WCC) .

This Reformation torch, by the grace of God, has been passed on to the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore (BPCS). “From the 1930s many of the denominational missionaries were theologically quite liberal. As in the mission schools, they also had considerable influence in Trinity Theological College. But from the 1950s, the growing national spirit has been reflected in more freedom among national Christians to question and reject this theology. Liberal western missionaries have gradually been replaced by nationals who are, in the main, theologically more conservative. ... In 1950, Timothy Tow, influenced by the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC), broke from the Presbyterian Church to form the new and rapidly growing Bible Presbyterian denomination. ... Dean Kelley, in his research on American churches, also discovered that churches which were clear in their beliefs, strict in their membership requirements, rather isolationist and actively evangelistic, grew much faster than those with a social message, ecumenical associations and easy membership terms (Keith Hinton, *Growing Churches Singapore Style* [Singapore: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1985], 27).

Hinton attributed the rapid growth of the BPCS to the capable leadership of Dr Timothy Tow and Rev Quek Kiok Chiang, its founders. Hinton said, “Their strong drive, convictions on doctrine and separation, mission and evangelism, have enabled them from their position of executive power, to build, direct and discipline a denomination that in 32 years has grown to a membership of 4,105, with 27 congregations. It also has a Bible College, a home for the elderly, a book shop and an extensive missionary outreach” (Ibid, 128). As of 1995, it has established no less than 150 churches and parachurches in Singapore and beyond (Timothy Tow, *The Singapore B-P Church Story* [Singapore: Life Book Centre, 1995], 55).

The reception of the Reformation spirit can be traced back to the first, fifth, sixth, and seventh roots of the “Seven Roots” of the BPCS. Rev Timothy Tow relates, “The B-P Church of Singapore is first of all a Protestant Church. That brings us back immediately to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation when our spiritual forefathers broke the shackles of Rome to return to the apostolic faith. To the faith of an open Bible, liberated from all erroneous and tyrannical traditions of a man-made system. Insofar as the B-P Church is concerned, we trace out roots to that branch of Protestantism known as the Reformed Faith on the European continent, and as Presbyterianism in the British Isles.

“John Calvin, a French theologian and pastor, was the leader of the Reformed Faith, so we have first of all a French Root! The beauty and perfection of Reformed Theology is seen in Calvin’s ‘Institutes of the Christian Religion’ ... (In ‘codified’ form under the English dress there is the Westminster Confession of Faith with its Larger and Shorter Catechisms which are the standards of the B-P Church as well as of many other Bible-believing Presbyterian Churches around the world). ...

“... In 1935, Singapore was visited with a Pentecost whereby 1,500 nominal Christians were soundly converted (born again) through the ministry of Dr John Sung, PhD, a mighty revivalist God had raised for China and Southeast Asia. Under his ministry the founding fathers of the B-P Church of Singapore were not only saved but also called to full-time service. From Dr John Sung our founding fathers were first introduced to the doctrine of the Premillennial Return of Christ, and alerted against the social gospel of the liberals and modernists, the evangelist himself having tasted the poisons thereof and delivered from their pernicious ways. From Dr John Sung the founding fathers of our B-P Church were fired with a zeal for evangelism, and have set the pace for the extension of God’s Kingdom through the B-P Church movement to this day. In Dr John Sung we have a Chinese Root.

“When the founding pastor of our B-P Church was called to prepare himself for his life’s calling, he first learned under Dr Chia Yu Ming, doyen Presbyterian theologian of China, and thereafter from Faith Theological Seminary, USA. Being an independent Seminary, nevertheless established by leaders of the Bible Presbyterian Church, USA (Reformed and Premillennial), in the old Princeton tradition, its other more outstanding distinctive was its separatist position vis-a-vis the rising Ecumenical Movement under the liberal and modernist leadership.

Dr Carl McIntire, president of the Seminary Board, was particularly articulate in speaking out against Protestantism's sliding back to Rome, so he sounded a clarion call for a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation, which became organised as the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) in Amsterdam in 1948, the same year the Ecumenical Movement was established in the same city as the World Council of Churches. Today the WCC has not only moved closer to Rome but also the main human religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam. Today, the WCC is all but a spent force. The new United Religions Initiative (URI) will take over the WCC by the year 2000 to spearhead the ecumenical agenda into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

“When the challenge to join the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation was presented by Dr McIntire to Faith Seminary students, the founding pastor of the B-P Church, then a student felt God's call to join the movement. Fired with a crusading zeal to defend the faith, he wrote to Elder Quek Kiok Chiang, then of the Teochew-speaking mother church (*Say Mia Tng*) at Prinsep Street to join the ICCC. Like David and Jonathan, the two leaders of the B-P Church in embryo began to impart the spirit of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation to the congregation that gathered after them, ... Thus, in our stand for the Faith, we can trace it to Dr McIntire, president of the ICCC, who must be acknowledged as our American Root.

“As our little church grew from October 1950, with the blessings of God so that we have over fifty congregations in Singapore and double the number spread out in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, Philippines, China, Saipan, Australia, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Kenya, Ivory Coast, USA, England, Canada, etc. We have other founding members rising to the occasion to bear the torch of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation movement. One who took a firm stand with us from the beginning to this day, but who is now migrated to the United States, is Rev Silas C T Hsu. Dr Tow Siang Hwa is a younger member who has arisen since the coming of Dr Billy Graham, foremost ecumenical evangelist, to Singapore in 1978. Seeing through the deadlier leaven of neo-evangelical ‘co-operative’ evangelism and neo-evangelical ‘scholarship,’ Dr Tow has added his voice to the older founding fathers by publishing the *B-P Banner* which is adopted the official organ of the B-P Church of Singapore. For speaking fearlessly against error in high places in Christendom, the renewal of its publishing licence was refused on December 27, 1994.

“Though our founding fathers belong to the migrant generation, having come to make their home in Singapore in the 1920s and ’30s, they are nevertheless citizens of a new Singapore, like sons of the soil, having been domiciled here almost all their life. They may be called a ‘bridge’ generation, with cultural roots plucked out from the Chinese mainland, but now they are firmly transplanted here. They are loyal and patriotic citizens of the new Singapore (independent from British rule since 1965), but even more fervent in the service of God’s Kingdom worldwide. These are our Singapore Roots” (Timothy Tow, “The B-P Singapore Tree Has Seven Roots,” *Vision* [1986-7]: 129-31; updated in *The Singapore B-P Church Story*, 9-18).

Surely, the BPCS has a very rich Christian heritage, and on the whole, has been diligent in guarding this precious heritage. In spite of this, she has not been spared from the pernicious influence of neo-evangelicalism. As a matter of fact, the alarm was sounded in 1985 through the *B-P Banner* in a front-page article, “Will The B-P Church Repeat History?” The article reported that some B-P ministers and elders have “imbibed doses of neo-evangelical and neo-liberal theology, and have forged links with the leaders in churches with such leanings. By friendship and association with these, our separatist stand has been blurred and even become burdensome to some.

“Unless our younger leaders will awake to the perils of such association (which eventually will lead to compromise and capitulation) the future for our B-P Church is bleak. Within a matter of five or ten years, a new leadership will arise to take over the reins from our aging elder pastors. Then all that we have built up in forty years may well be overturned and destroyed. The present trend in some quarters is ominous. Continuing collaboration with neo-evangelicals, linkage with neo-evangelical theological schools, sending our young people to Fuller Seminary, and Regent College, for example, are red light signals which we ignore to our own peril.

“Will the Bible-Presbyterian Church repeat history? The answer rests with the upcoming generation of new guards. Will they cherish the heritage now being handed down by our founding fathers? Or will they tire of it and forsake our fundamentalist separatist stand? ... “Hear the word of the Lord, young men and women: Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye

shall find rest for your souls (Jer 6:16)” (*Bible-Presbyterian Banner* [Jul-Sep 85]:1).

As a result of incipient neo-evangelicalism, the BPCS was not in one accord against the Charismatic movement. The debate over this issue at the 1987 B-P Pastors’ Conference at Cameron Highlands concluded with an impasse. There was a group who insisted that tongues-speaking still existed in the form of “meaningful ecstatic utterances.” The debate was brought back to Singapore but the situation remained in a deadlock until it came to the point when “dissolution became the only solution.” The B-P Synod was finally dissolved on the eve of Reformation Day, October 30, 1988. Does this mark the end of the B-P reformation movement? Certainly not! The reformation begins afresh. With the excision of those who have shunted from the original B-P position on biblical separation, the movement can now progress without hindrance.

There is therefore an urgent need for this generation to catch the spirit of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Reformers in obedience to the Lord’s injunction to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). As we enter the next millennium, there is a need for a 21<sup>st</sup> century Reformation movement in the spirit of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

There are those today who are contented to pay lip service to the defence of the faith. To such Spurgeon chides, “It is very pretty, is it not, to read of Luther and his brave deeds? Of course, everybody admires Luther! Yes, yes, but you do not want anyone else to do the same today. When you go to the Zoological Gardens you all admire the bear, but how would you like a bear at home, or a bear wandering loose about the street? You tell me it would be unbearable and no doubt you are right. So we admire a man who is firm in the Faith, say four hundred years ago; the past ages are a sort of bear-pit or iron cage for him; but such a man today is a nuisance, and must be put down. Call him a narrow-minded bigot, or give him a worse name if you can think of one. Yet imagine in those ages past, Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, and their compeers had said, ‘The world is out of order; but if you try to set it right we shall only go to our chambers, put on our night caps, and sleep over the bad times and perhaps when we wake up things will have grown better.’ Such conduct upon their part would have entailed upon us a heritage of error. Age after age would have gone down into the infernal deeps, and the pestiferous bogs of error would have swallowed all. These men loved the faith and the name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. Note what we owe them, and let

us pay our sons the debt we owe to our fathers. It is today as it was in the Reformer's days. Decision is needed!" ("Spurgeon on Defending the Faith," *Far Eastern Beacon* [Jan 1972]: 4).



## CONCLUSION

Biblical Separation is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, and not merely a denominational distinctive. The Old and New Testaments are replete with teachings on separation.

Biblical separation is not an option, but a command. Failure to obey this command will result in our churches being hurt and eventually destroyed. It will also bring dishonour to the name of Christ. Do we love the Lord? When Christ our Saviour is reviled, do we sit down and pretend nothing has happened? It is quite unnatural for a son not to defend or protect his parents when they are attacked. Are we not God's children? Have we been filial?

Biblical separation is one aspect of Christian theology that the church today cannot afford to ignore. The inroads made by false theologies and movements have practically affected every Protestant denomination. Even the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore which takes a strong separatist stand has not been spared. Churches or denominations which take a declared position against false "isms," by the grace of God, are more able to withstand the onslaughts. History has shown, however, that churches which do not take the stand of separation, and remain indifferent towards the perilous ecclesiastical situation in these last days are most vulnerable to the many direct and subtle attacks of the devil.

We owe it to the Lord who redeemed us by His precious blood to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints." We not only owe it to Him, but also to ourselves and our children and our children's children to ensure that they too will receive the gospel in all its purity and fullness. Amen.

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## APPENDIX

### WHEN LOVE DIVORCES DOCTRINE AND UNITY LEAVES TRUTH

John C Whitcomb

It is evident that leading neo-evangelical writers in the evangelical world believe that our main goal must be to eliminate doctrinal distinctives and to emphasise unity among those who claim to be Christians. There must be, in their opinion, a minimising of doctrinal distinctives to give Christians a united front which will impress the world and thus secure a listening ear.

This position, however outwardly attractive or impressive to the superficial observer, is a disaster when viewed in the light of Scripture. In total contradiction of the philosophy of ecumenical evangelism, the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ has a very different emphasis. The great commission does not say, "Make disciples of all nations by whatever means or methods may come to your mind." Our Lord was much more specific on *how* His work should be done in this world. The great commission also contains the command to bring the converts immediately into a teaching programme. Notice how definitely this is stressed in the words of the Lord Jesus, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." In other words the *entire Scripture* is the basis of this instruction, and this must be the supreme emphasis of the great commission in terms of priorities. It is a lifelong assignment for the pastor-teacher, under the Spirit of God, to bring a new convert into the *whole counsel* of God's revealed Truth.

#### God's Commission Minimised

It is this great task which, in modern ecumenical evangelism, is minimised to the point of vanishing away entirely. The new goal is to

bring the person to Christ and then to turn him loose to “pick the church of his choice” (or no church if he pleases). The “convert” is left to the Holy Spirit to take care of. The neo-evangelical has done his job in evangelising the world by the streamlined techniques of twentieth century methodology. One of the basic ideas of today’s philosophy of ecumenical evangelism is that *love* is really more important than *doctrine*. Neo-evangelical authors tell us that doctrine divides, whereas love unifies.

What does the Bible say about this? Is it really true that in the New Testament love is more important than doctrine, or Truth? In the so-called “love” chapter of 1 Corinthians 13, we are told, “Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love (*agape*).” Some say, “That settles it; love is supreme!” But when we examine that chapter more carefully we discover that *Truth* is also mentioned in the chapter. In verse 6 we are told that, love “rejoices in the truth.” In other words, faith, hope and love are *virtues* but Truth has an altogether different status. It is the *frame of reference*, the *foundation*, the *atmosphere* without which virtues such as love cannot exist at all.

*Love rejoices in the Truth.* Why? Because without Truth to define it, to interpret it, to protect it, to guide it, to channel it—love can become a total disaster. We dare not place Truth on the same level as virtues. Virtues would shrivel up and die if it were not for Truth. We cannot imagine life on this planet without water. Water is absolutely essential for life, as long as it stays within proper channels, within its canals, aqueducts and pipes. But when water gets out of control, it is the second greatest catastrophe that can happen to this planet, second only to fire. On the one hand it is an absolutely essential blessing, but on the other hand, it may become a near-total disaster. So it is also with love.

## **God’s Definition of Love**

Love without divine definition (God’s revealed channels within which it must flow) becomes the most horrible thing on earth. It can destroy human beings by the million, and can be reduced to satanic sentimentalism.

Observe what happens within a home when mother or father exhibits love toward a child by refusing to discipline it. In the name of love, the child is destroyed, as the *Book of Proverbs* makes so clear. Love, as defined by

God, is doing for a person that which is best for him in the light of eternity, no matter what the cost may be. That is how it is defined by God.

### **Love Obeys the Truth**

Somehow when it comes to world evangelism many people have forgotten God's definitions and have fallen into sentimentalism. We must consider some key Scriptures to illustrate the distinction between love and Truth. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31). The Lord Jesus Christ said that ultimate freedom may only be achieved by total submission, unconditional surrender to Truth. There is nothing here about love.

There are many who speak glowingly of their love for Jesus Christ and for lost men. Listen to our Lord's very blunt statement in John 14:15, 21, 23, and 24 as He stresses that obedience to Truth is the best form of love, "If ye love me, keep my commandments . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings."

This is what we may call the acid test of love: Does a man obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ? It really makes no difference how much we talk about our love if we are not obeying Christ. Is this not a tragedy within homes, where children will occasionally say to a mother or father, "I love you," and write these words on a card at birthday time or Christmas? But many a parent grieves because all the year long, or at least for long periods of time, there is very little obedience or respect, and those sentimental words therefore mean next to nothing. It is obedience that counts, not words. Obedience without love is theoretically possible, but love without obedience is impossible. It is a satanic substitute for God's plan.

### **Love Teaches the Truth**

John 21 gives an example of one who said much about his love for Jesus but when it came to obedience it was not there. His name, of course, was Peter. He insisted, that he would never waver in loyalty saying, "Even

though all the disciples betray you, I will not. You can count on me.” But when the pressure came his resolution collapsed, he denied his Lord, and as Jesus looked at him in that courtyard, he went out and wept.

After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Sea of Galilee, the Lord confronted Peter very lovingly, but in truth, and said, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? [Do you really love Me more than these other disciples?] He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs . . . Feed my sheep . . . Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). How do we express love to the Lord Jesus according to the lesson of this confrontation? By feeding His sheep, as He also commanded in the great commission—by teaching His people and training them in the whole counsel of God, “teaching them whatsoever I have commanded you.”

Acts 20 provides a good example of an apostle who obeyed the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although he says nothing about love for the Ephesian people in this passage, he exhibited the supreme love of any disciple toward the Ephesians. What did he do for them? Did he say, “I love you, I love you, I love you?” Acts 20:26 and 27 gives the answer, “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Paul had preached for three months and when some had spoken against his message he had separated the disciples to meet in the hall of Tyrannus. Here, for two years, he instructed that group in the whole counsel of God. Imagine the prolonged, in-depth, intensive training those Ephesian elders must have experienced through Paul.

The result was “that all they which dwelt in Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord Jesus.” Everyone in the province heard the true message about Christ because the apostle based his evangelism on the clear, sound doctrinal instruction of that pioneer band. That is God’s key for world evangelism.

Modern ecumenical-style evangelism would have arrived in the city of Ephesus, proclaimed an absurdly simplified, non-controversial, streamlined message, and then rushed off to another city.

## **Love Leaves Nothing Out**

It was not easy for Paul to preach the doctrinal material which he taught those men at Ephesus. He dealt with doctrines which were controversial,

offensive, and divisive, which is why he said, “I *shunned not* to declare unto you . . . .” Remember the words of Galatians 1:6, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Why be so blunt and perhaps jeopardise the loving relationship which he enjoyed with that church? It was necessary to risk becoming their enemy, as Paul tells us in Galatians 4, in order to *tell them the Truth*.

A passage in Ephesians 4 tells us how to achieve the perfect balance. Notice the gifts that God has given to the true Church, the body of Christ, for service and ministry in this age. “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11). Every one of these gifts in the form of a person is a *doctrinal* person. They are all totally involved in *Truth*. All were totally involved in preaching, teaching and disciplining in the light of revealed Truth. There is no teaching whatsoever in the New Testament suggesting that love is more important than doctrine or Truth. Love is referred to in this passage by verse 15 when we read of “speaking the truth in love.” Love is the manner and method of speaking Truth. Love is the servant of Truth. It makes it easier to receive, absorb and digest. But it must never be allowed to eclipse or set aside Truth.

God’s Truth can never change, but God’s Truth in the hands of human messengers is a very delicate and fragile thing. It is either vigorously proclaimed and defended or it tends to evaporate within one generation. Truth cannot be perpetuated through compromise, and compromise cannot be avoided without separation. This basic principle has been illustrated over and over again in the history of church groups, Christian institutions of higher learning, missionary societies and so forth, down the centuries. We can name group after group, organisation after organisation, that began with a deep desire to honour Jesus Christ and His precious Word. But within one, two or at the most three generations they collapsed as instruments of the Holy Spirit because there was no determination or courage to implement the *biblical separation* from elements that poisoned, contaminated and destroyed the essential testimony.



## Love Resists Poisons

There is no living system known to science that can survive without an intricate, elaborate and *constantly-used* system to purify that living system from poisons. And this is true in God's Church, in the understanding and perpetuating of God's Truth. It is impossible for any organisation to survive unless it has a system to purify itself from poisonous influences. We need to remember that we are in a highly poisoned environment or atmosphere. We are immersed in Satan's world, and he has constant access to every servant of God through his fallen nature.

Some feel, however, that the goal of winning people to Christ is more important than holding faithfully to all the teachings of the Bible. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7).

The whole question of success in the Christian ministry needs to be constantly re-examined. How can the relative success of a Christian ministry be evaluated apart from God's infallible, inerrant Word? Who is to determine what success means? Was the Cross of Christ a success? The world apparently does not think so. What we consider success in the ministry of a fellow-Christian may turn out to be an awful failure at the Judgement Seat of Christ.

## Love Keeps God's Rules

Judgement will begin with the Church and when that day comes we will discover that a man will not be crowned except he has contended lawfully (2 Tim 2:5). Those who run the Christian race must run according to His rules if they expect to receive a prize. And so the issue is not *speed* and *noise* but humble, dedicated obedience to His Word. Says Paul, "So run that ye may obtain" (1 Cor 9:24).

We are not suggesting for one moment that biblical separation ought to lead to extremes of isolation which are often drawn as a caricature of the separatist position. God cannot be honoured by either compromise or isolation. The Lord Jesus Christ gave us the perfect example in His relationship with terribly sinful people. He showed us how to be totally separate from their sin at all times, and yet involved with such people so that they could hear His message.

Separation dominates God's dealings with Israel even before Moses, at the call of Abraham. We could study the elaborate visual aids of the Tabernacle, Temple and Priesthood, the courts and the curtains, and note the awful penalties which fell upon people who in any way compromised or contaminated the precious, infinitely delicate repository of God's revealed Truth. We have in the Old Testament a millennium-and-a-half of visual aids on the doctrine of separation from error as the necessary backdrop for New Testament revelation on the subject.

May I introduce the greatest of the Old Testament style preachers, John the Baptist. What form of compromise can we detect in John the Baptist? "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance . . . The axe is laid unto the root of the trees" (Matt 3:7, 8 and 10). John the Baptist gave his hearers two alternatives. Either they must be baptised with the Holy Ghost, or with fire. Either they must be immersed in the Spirit of God through faith in the Messiah, or they must be immersed in the fire of an eternal hell.

How do we know that hell fire is referred to here? Because the very next verse says that He "will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." In this preaching there is not one inch of compromise, accommodation, negotiation, or sharing of religious insights with those religious apostates.

Was this a loving approach exhibited by John the Baptist? It was the *only possible* approach. How else could true love be expressed in the case of people who were on the brink of eternal hell and could only be saved by being shocked into a recognition of their depravity and God's imminent judgement? And in my personal opinion it was on the basis of this preaching that we read in the book of Acts that many of the Pharisees believed. With the warning of John the Baptist ringing in their ears they understood their position in the sight of a holy God.

## **Love Protects the Flock**

Did the Lord Jesus encourage His disciples to listen sympathetically to other religious leaders of that time? Did He suggest that they needed to have exposure to different religious viewpoints to broaden their understanding of the options available? The answer is given in Matthew 7:15 where the Lord says, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you

in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." The Lord Jesus also said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees . . ." (Matt 16:6). In other words, "Do not dare submit yourself to their teaching, for their contaminating, poisonous influence is absolutely deadly." And yet we are told today by neo-evangelicals that we should both teach and study in liberal (or semi-liberal) universities and colleges of theology.

But now listen to Matthew 10:34 where the Saviour says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth." There is one thing worse than division and that is *peace with compromise*. Truth is infinitely more important than unity. "I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foe shall be they of his own household" (Matt 10:24-36).

### **Love Corrects Error**

Why? Because for the sake of Truth, even families (the closest-knit unit on earth) will be split with hostility and enmity so that at least someone within that unit can perpetuate God's Truth. How will the Lord Jesus Christ build His church? It is through separation from error. Consider Matthew 18:15-17, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go 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."

This means that error, either moral or doctrinal, must be eliminated from the body, or the church cannot grow in the way which alone can honour God. In Romans 16:17 the apostle Paul says, "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." We are to be markers, watchers and observers. If we honour and love the Lord Jesus, we will watch for anything which may destroy His Truth. We will avoid such people, and we will turn from them.

It is very significant that the *size* of the company in error, or the majority or minority balance is not discussed here. Martin Luther was able to mark or discern those that caused divisions and offences contrary to the

doctrine which he had learned from Holy Scripture, and he avoided them. Thus he excommunicated *the entire Roman Catholic Church*. He said to the whole vast majority of Christendom in Western Europe—*anathema!* Praise God for that decision, which involved enormous courage.

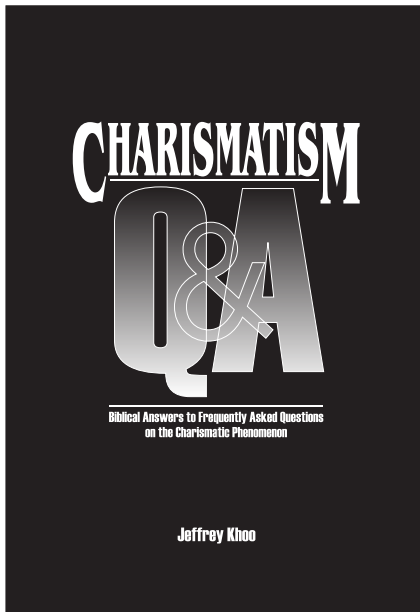
Dealing with the Corinthians who had failed to excommunicate a moral apostate in their midst, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:9-12, “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?”

Notice this amazing statement of biblical separation. We do not separate from immoral people who are not Christians. We are to associate with publicans and sinners who are the potential recipients of the Holy Spirit’s convicting, converting work, through our witness. But the one group we are to separate from are Christians who are immoral, or who are *doctrinal heretics*. These are the people we must excommunicate, or separate from. We are not even to eat with them. Why not? Because if a worldling or a young, untaught Christian watches you having fellowship (which is what I understand “eating with” to mean) they could interpret the outward form of fellowship to be an endorsement of the heresy or moral misdemeanour.

## **Result of Compromise**

The apostle Paul states the reason. It is that the testimony of Truth might at all costs be protected from misunderstanding on the part of untrained or unenlightened observers. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 the apostle declares, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” A good way of life, or good doctrine, is always contaminated by a bad environment or bad associations, whereas a mere association of the good with the bad will never make the bad thing better. The good gets worse; the bad does not improve. It is the same with a rotten apple in a barrel. The bad one never gets better, but the good ones go rotten.

Is it right for doctrinal purity to be blatantly submerged for the sake of outward ecclesiastical unity? Surely this is a total denial of the Holy Spirit’s Word through the Scriptures. Ω

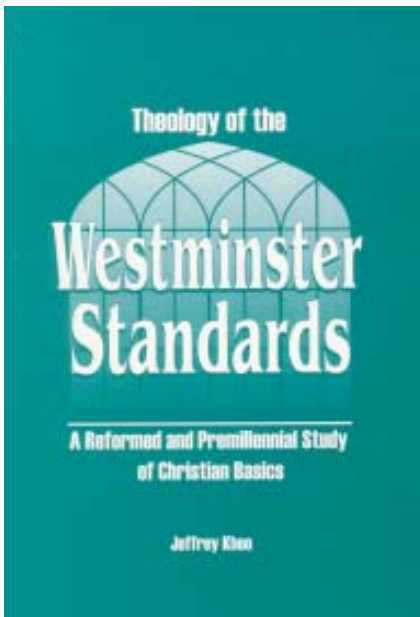


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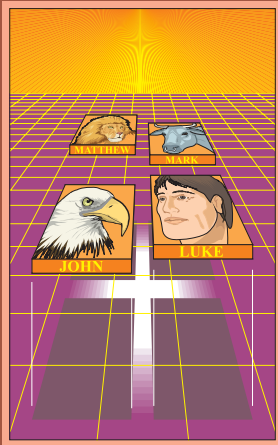
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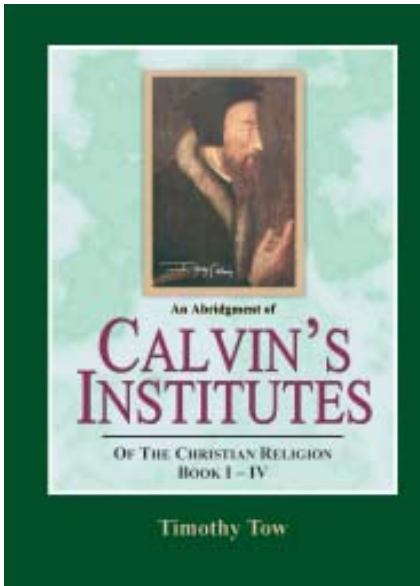
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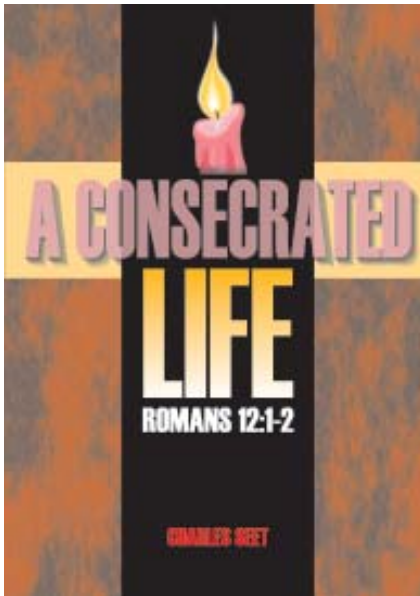


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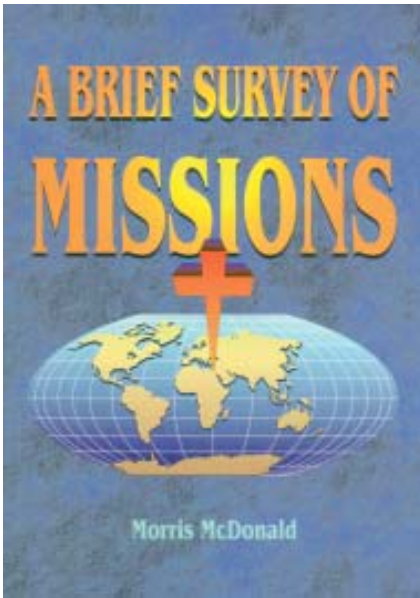
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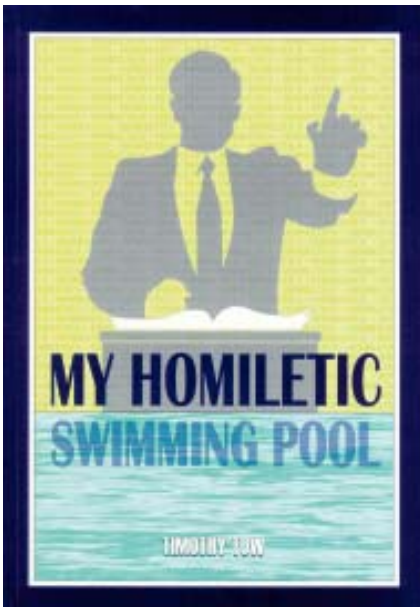


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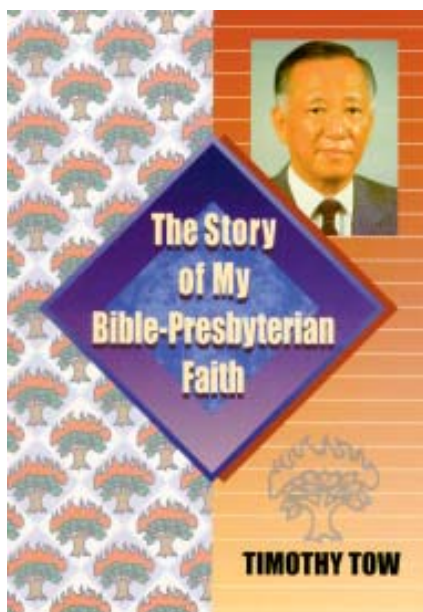
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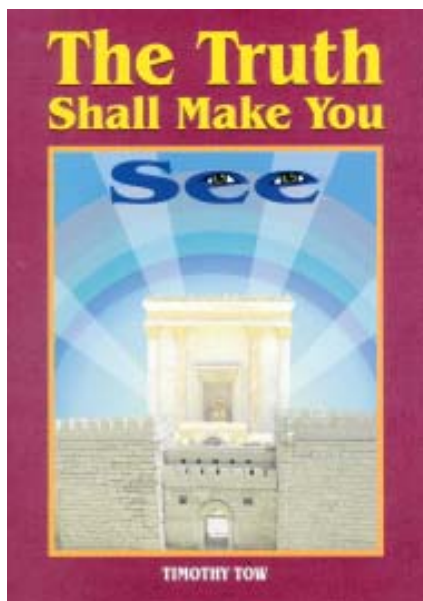


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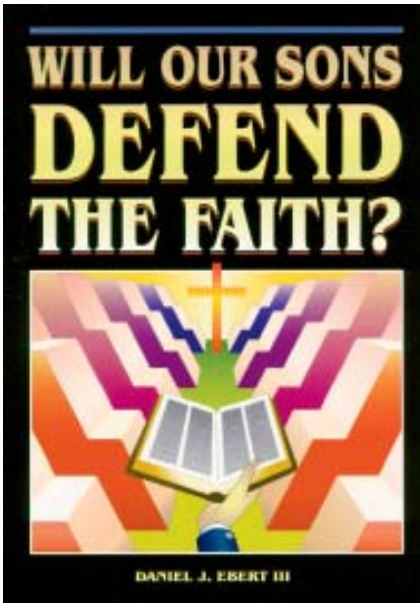
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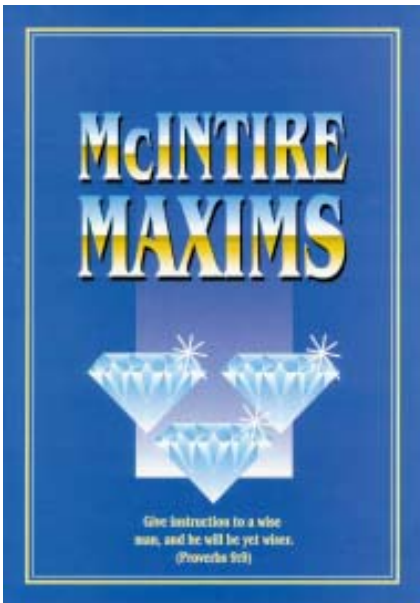


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