

# Ecclesiastical Separation

The matter of fellowship is a very important one for all Bible-believing Christians. There are kinds of fellowship that call forth the condemnation of the Lord (James 4:4; Judg. 2:2, 3). Therefore, in all our fellowship we must be careful to safeguard our fellowship with Christ. The enjoyment of that fellowship is clearly tied by the Word of God to separation from spiritual wickedness and error (II Cor. 6:17-18).

## NEED FOR SEPARATION

For years it was the practice of evangelical Christians to remain in denominations that were mostly nonevangelical, even liberal or Anglo-Catholic.

They gave expression to their evangelicalism mostly through interdenominational societies and movements. They felt they could distance themselves from the rationalism or Romanism prevalent in their denominations without actually separating from them. With the formation of the World Council of Churches, it became very much more difficult for Christians to justify this position, because by virtue of their membership in the major denominations they were part of the movement to create a one-world church under the leadership of the pope. The World Council of Churches, with no little help from Dr. Billy Graham, soon involved Evangelicals in its operation, with a consequent compromise of the faith they professed to uphold. Modern evangelicals in the ecumenical movement sound more and more like liberals, often questioning or denying parts of Scripture history and doctrine and involving themselves in the effort to produce union with Rome.

Thus ecumenism is a major reason for separation. It is not the only reason. Whether or not a church is in the World (or National) Council of Churches, if it denies the fundamentals of the faith, it should not be kept in the fellowship of God's people.

## THE DUTY OF SEPARATION

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). We are instructed to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). To a Christian, Liberalism, Modernism, Romanism, and World Council of Churches ecumenism are undoubtedly "works of darkness." The duty of separation is plain. Paul teaches this duty again in II Corinthians 6:14-18. John speaks of it in II John 10-11.

## CHRIST THE FOCUS OF SEPARATION

Separation is no mere negative reaction. It is thoroughly positive, because it is basically separation unto Christ. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. 13:13). Fellowship in any organization that denies Christ, repudiates His Word, or departs from His finished work of atonement and the gospel of justification through faith without works is a fellowship that leads away from Christ. Our fellowship with Him demands our separation from apostasy and fundamental error.

## SEPARATION, NOT ISOLATION

Our separation should not blind us to the duty of Christians to express their love one for another and their spiritual unity in Christ. The Free Presbyterian Church therefore seeks to stand with faithful men and churches around the world, even when they do not endorse all our positions on matters that, though important to us, are not fundamental to the gospel. Whitefield was a Calvinist, Wesley an Arminian. Yet Whitefield strove hard to ensure that they stood firmly together in the work of the gospel. Spurgeon endorsed and promoted Moody, much to the chagrin of some who thought that Moody, a confessed Calvinist, was not Calvinistic enough. We seek to express the fundamental oneness of God's people in any way we can without compromising the fundamentals of the faith. We are Biblical separatists, not isolationists.