

# *Christianity Astray: The Ecumenical Movement (II Cor. 11:13-15)*

*“... the many who wail about fragmentation in Protestantism...are the extreme pessimists. Let us point to the value of wholesome competition...the passion for truth and God’s will that engenders fragmentation instead of the indifference to truth that engenders union.”—Dr. Richard V. Clearwaters*

## I. Defining the Terms

### A. FUNDAMENTALIST—*Desires the praise of God*

1. Holds to the fundamental, basic doctrines of the orthodox Christian faith:
  - a. The inerrancy of the Scriptures
  - b. The deity of Christ
  - c. The virgin birth of Christ
  - d. The substitutionary atonement of Christ
  - e. The physical resurrection and future bodily return of Christ
2. Practices separation
  - a. Ecclesiastical—avoids entanglements with denominations and religious organizations who deny or question all or part of the fundamental doctrines.
  - b. Personal—avoids all forms of worldliness and seeks to live a life of holiness pleasing to the Lord.

### B. NEW EVANGELICAL—*Desires the praise of man*

1. Claims to hold to the fundamental doctrines but desires the approval and acceptance of more liberal “scholars.”
2. Characteristics of the New Evangelical
  - a. Toleration of a wide diversity of theological viewpoints
  - b. Friendliness toward or acceptance of evolutionary theories
  - c. Espousal of or toleration toward questionable views of Scripture
  - d. Emphasis upon the implications of the Gospel socially
  - e. Enthusiasm over cooperative evangelism
  - f. Emphasis upon the unity of the church in preference to its purity
  - g. Strong criticism of fundamentalism
  - h. Pleas for more political involvement
  - i. Unbiblical views regarding the place of women
3. The New Evangelical and Separation
  - a. Willingness to remain in corrupt/apostate organizations
  - b. Belief in broad ecumenical fellowship
  - c. Support of ecumenical missionary efforts
  - d. Little or no personal separation—tolerance/promotion of worldliness and carnality

- II. The Bible and Ecclesiastical Separation
- A. The *primary issue* is one of *authority*—What do we believe about the Bible? To what extent should we practice the principles of Scripture?
- B. The principle of separation from error and evil is grounded in the absolute holiness of God.
- C. Key New Testament Passages
1. Romans 16:17, 18—Those who teach doctrine contrary to the New Testament should be both marked and avoided.
    - a. To “mark” means to point out publicly.
    - b. To “avoid” means to separate from.
  2. II Corinthians 6:14-18—Paul expressly teaches that we are not to participate in a “yoke,” cooperative service, with unbelievers. Paul commands believers to separate (“come out”) from:
    - a. fellowship with unrighteousness (PARTNERSHIP)
    - b. communion with darkness (TO HOLD IN COMMON)
    - c. concord with Belial (TO SING TOGETHER; HARMONY)
    - d. part with infidelity (PARTICIPATION)
    - e. agreement with the temple of idols (ONE MINDED)
  3. Ephesians 5:11—Paul commands believers to forego fellowship with “works of darkness” as well as to “reprove them.”
  4. II Timothy 3:1-8—Paul instructs believers to “turn away” from those who profess religion but deny the truths of the Bible either in doctrine or practice.
  5. II John 10, 11—John insists that false teachers not be permitted in the homes of believers. Remember, early believers held church in their homes. Also, John equates one’s blessing upon a false teacher as being a “partaker of his evil deeds.”
- D. The Practice of Ecclesiastical Separation
1. Believers must not officially “yoke” themselves with unbelief and apostasy through membership in compromising organizations.
  2. Believers are best served by maintaining fellowship and cooperation with those of like faith and practice.
  3. History has proved non-denominationalism to be inherently weak and fraught with unnecessary compromise. Today many charismatic churches are “non-denominational.”
  4. Believers should avoid affiliation with new evangelicalism because the spirit of compromise and accommodation all too readily infects weak individuals and institutions.
  5. Christians should always maintain a kind, respectful approach to separation. Even in reproof, a Christian can maintain both gentlemanliness and decorum.