

Separation to God.

What it is. How it is effected.

How it may be maintained.

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Separation to God.

SEPARATION to God, and from the world, especially in its religion, is the way of the Lord. This He has in His Word commanded and called His people in all ages to obey.

Yet in nothing has full obedience been less known. The enemy has ever sought to blot out the line of demarcation between the saved and the unsaved, never more so than at the present time.

The death of the Lord Jesus had this object among others, to deliver His redeemed from the present evil world (Gal. i. 4), that they might be unto Himself a peculiar people (Titus ii. 14). Such was the purpose of His love. By His death upon the Cross they have been crucified unto the world and the world unto them (Gal. vi. 14). How will they act toward that world, while for a brief period they are left in it to shine as lights (Phil. ii. 12) amid its darkness? Will they be true to their Lord who was rejected and crucified by it, and who for a time has passed to yon throne, where in grace toward the world that rejected Him He waits, while from it a people given to Him by the Father, are being gathered out from the nations. Or, will they, deceived by plausible religious appearances, which the world for its own comfort chuses to adopt, not as in ancient times perhaps of its own inventing, but rather of its own corrupting, be decoyed thereby into unholy alliance with that world, which, however

religious it may appear outwardly, is the same world still. That this it has been, is, and shall be, the Word of God leaves us in no manner of doubt.

At the beginning of the world's course there were two seeds, to wit, those of the ungodly and those of the "sons of God" (Gen. vi. 1-3). These were separate, not only in their spirits, but as would appear from the narrative, locally also, the one hovering for a time on the outskirts of Eden, where were the cherubim and the Shechinah, while the other, even in Cain's time "went out from the presence of the Lord." But in process of time, as the two seeds multiplied, they approximated one to the other, until they became intermarried and thus the place of separation was abandoned, with the result that a race of "men of renown" came upon the scene, with such violence and breaking down all barriers, that judgment from God by a deluge followed.

From this first departure from the path of separation, much may be learned of the enemy's way in this our own time. Twice in the later Epistles—which have all special teaching for the last days—is this scene referred to (see 2 Peter ii. 4; Jude 6), where the "angels" are identical with the "sons of God." That both were *human* there is overwhelming evidence, which those who wish to blunt the point of the passage by making these "angels" celestial beings entirely ignore (see Matthew xxii. 30; also Matthew xxiv. 38). The call of Abram from his kindred and country to be a witness for God, his kinsman Lot's departure to Sodom to sit as a judge in its gates (Gen. xix.), with the frequent attempts of the enemy to allure the

pilgrim man of faith from the path of separation to God, tell how persistently the enemy seeks to waylay and seduce all who tread that path, and how the eye steadfastly fixed on God, and the heart set on heavenly things, can alone sustain the heaven-bound pilgrim in that path (Heb. xi. 13-16).

When Israel, the elect nation, was about to be brought out from Egypt to become Jehovah's witness against idolatry in the earth, Pharoah sought by strategy and craft, assisted by the sorcerers of Egypt, who imitated the miracles wrought by Moses in Jehovah's Name, to hinder the people from entire separation from Egypt, its people, and its gods (Exod. vii. 10). And again, in the wilderness, and with more success, Balaam, the false prophet, taught the Midianite King to set a snare before the separated people, for the purpose of causing them to amalgamate with the enemies of the Lord. How well that snare succeeded, and with what consequences, the history tells (Numb. xxv.)

And now that God is calling out for Himself a heavenly people, who are not of the world even as Christ is not of the world (John xvii. 16), the adversary's great aim is, to bring that people from their high estate down to the level of the world. In no way does he more frequently succeed in this than by getting the world to adopt the outward profession of Christianity, and then by co-mixing that which is of the world with that which bears the Name of Christ, to produce the thing called Christendom. The relation of the Christian to this world-church is clearly defined in the Word as that of separation—not in

spirit only, but in person. The solemn words of the Holy Ghost in 2 Cor. vi. 17, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, touch not the unclean and I will receive you," are plain and clear. Equally so are the words of 2 Timothy iii. 7, concerning those who have a "form of godliness," but deny the power thereof; "from such turn away." It has been objected that to separate from the flimsy Christianity of the world, and go forth unto a rejected Christ without the camp, is to lose influence with those who still abide in or form that camp. To this we might make reply by inquiring whether Abram who dwelt on the plain of Mamre in his tent, afar from Sodom, in the presence of God, or Lot who sat in its gate, had the most influence. Clearly Lot had little respect from his fellow-citizens, as their words concerning him show (see Gen. xix. 9), while his rescue from its final overthrow was due solely to the prayers of his pilgrim kinsmen (see Gen. xviii. 33), as his former deliverance from capture by the confederate Kings had been due to his efforts (Gen. xiv. 14-16). The man who walks with God, in the path of obedience to His will, he and he only has power with God and with men.

“A Special People unto Himself.”

ONE great object of the Most High in locating Israel in olden time in a cleansed land was, that they might be a witness for Him among the surrounding nations (Isa. xlv. 8). And in order to that national witness, it was absolutely necessary that “the people should dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations (Num. xxiii. 9). Whether in the wilderness, or whether afterwards in Canaan, still to separation was their distinctive calling. Ere yet they reached the promised land, very earnestly were they admonished to maintain that separation complete. The reason of this we have thus assigned: “For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people *unto Himself*” (Deut. vii. 6). If, therefore, in that promised land—a purged land—sacred and earthly things were much co-mingled, it should be remembered that *as a nation* they had been chosen. Then the government was, strictly speaking, in part at least, theocratic, administered by the Most High Himself, through the intervention of the high priest. And, seeing that the nation *as such* were called to be a peculiar people, and caused to dwell in a prepared or purged land, therefore were they to abstain from all affinity with other nations. Alliances on their part with any of the surrounding nations were peremptorily forbidden, because they themselves nationally were in covenant with Jehovah. On His help alone were they to depend. Some of their best kings, as Asa for instance, did truly indeed assay to act contrary to the divine mandate, but then God’s prophet denounced the wickedness (2 Chron. xvi. 7). When again

Jehoshaphat joined himself to Ahab for religious purposes, to Ahaz for commerce, and to Jehoram to increase his own military strength, then in each case his design was rendered abortive by the Most High. Hence, so entire was this separation to be preserved, that if some, even a majority, of the tribes of Israel wandered from God, then the remaining tribes were to keep themselves distinct from those also. Now, if this separation from others was so serious a matter, that when their best kings for a time ignored the principle, disaster quickly ensued, we may well understand how ruin was the inevitable consequence of that principle being utterly abandoned. First, vengeance overtook the ten tribes ; and presently after, the remaining two were carried in retributive judgment to Babylon.

There, the two tribes appear to have learnt somewhat of the difficult lesson, that their separation, if it had been their weakness, had it been maintained, so it would have ever constituted their strength. Whenever, weak and unaided, they had relied solely upon their God, then had they proved to be strong and invincible indeed. On the other hand, whenever they had leaned upon any arm of flesh, then were they shorn of their true strength, and became the scorn of their enemies. (See Isa. xxx., xxxi.) Accordingly, when these returned from their seventy years' captivity, as if clearly apprehending the cause of all their past woes, they perseveringly refused all connection and assistance even from the motley Samaritan nation. For then they replied to that people's proffer of help : “ Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto

our God" (Ezra iv. 3.) Noble, magnificent answer! Made, too, although that proffer had been joined with the specious pretext of their would-be partners: "We seek your God as ye do, and we sacrifice unto Him." And their refusal was all the more self-denying, since it appears from the sequel how laborious was the work to their own unaided hand. And seeing further, that that persistency in separation provoked the Samaritans to that degree, that they procured for awhile the compulsory cessation of their work. Still, by faith they stood to their resolve. And this principle of separation was not only resolutely adhered to by these men of faith, as regards defilement from without, but as touching like impurity in their own midst also. Sedulously did they endeavour to sever themselves from all those who were wrongly, yet by one means or another, found among them (Neh. ix. 1-2). This jealousy in their attention to this great duty, after their return from their captivity, can scarcely be accounted for otherwise than by the truth couched in our own familiar proverb: "A burnt child dreads the fire."

If very many now, as was also the case in those days, prefer to all this slow and painful effort, slothful continuance in Babylon, may those who have returned therefrom, with equal jealousy to that of those pious Jews, see to it that they keep themselves from all connection with the accursed thing. And albeit the lovers of Babylon's delights are to be left alone to the divine judgment and discrimination, let those who have escaped, continue for themselves, and for their testimony, the building of that wall which Babylon has, in abhorrence, so ruthlessly broken down. Let

them proceed with their work, even though they have to endure the derisive jeers of some, or the scornful pity of others, at the paucity of their material (for few indeed, comparatively speaking, are truly separated unto God), and at their slow and insignificant advance. Never mind. If the evidence of two be ever ample to establish the truth which is testified ; so where even two only are gathered together in the Name of Jesus alone, there, though unseen, is He. Is there lack of encouragement? The history of those times in type supplies it. Nehemiah's position, *after* he had left the royal court, and commenced the building of the wall, was the most exalted he could have. The humility observable in his requests to God proves this. "Remember me," he says, "O my God, for good" (Neh. xiii. 31). For what Christian is unaware that

"Nearest the throne shall ever be
The footstool of humility."

And again, when the course of witnessing in the divine account is completed, the inspired history is *finished*, and nothing remains but for Christ to come. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple," was then, and is again, the promise given. God keep us faithful ! God speed the time.

Without the Camp.

UNION with Christ in the coming glory involves present association with Him in His rejection, in His shame, and in His sufferings. This the Apostle teaches clearly in Heb. xiii. 11-13. The bodies of the beasts sacrificed were "burned *without* the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered *without* the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him *without* the camp, bearing His reproach." Great emphasis is here thrown upon the word "without," since it is repeated three times. The parallel between the slaughtered animals, the suffering Saviour, and obediently following Christians, is here made to rest mainly upon the same word. The allusion in verse 12, is to the fact that Calvary where Jesus suffered, was situated outside Jerusalem, the Holy City, the metropolis of religion. His rejection was not merely by the virtually infidel world, to wit, Herod, Pontius Pilate, and others, but also, and as completely, by the so-called religious world, even the chief priests and Pharisees. "Let us go forth *therefore* unto Him." In the case of the believing Hebrews, to whom the epistle was written, "the camp" would be the empty though self-righteous *Judahdom*. What is its pertinency to us? Is the world now-a-days so truly righteous and Christian, that this point of the injunction is void of all present application? Then out of what are we to come? Some explanation is afforded in the last clause, "bearing His reproach," as if to imply, that departure from the camp will, even to the end, as truly, if through Christendom's adoption of a defaced Christianity in

another manner, insure us His reproach. "The camp" in our day is the great world-church or church world—the great professing body which has allied itself to, and is itself incorporated with the world, Babylon,

The world is viewed as still the world that rejects Christ, even though that rejection is covered over with the guise of godliness. Its hostility to Christ is still the same by whatever cloak it may be covered over. What if *its* hatred be all the intenser, even *because* it is dissembled? What if its insult be all the more keen, because, Judas-like, it kisses to betray? All complicity with such a state of things is forbidden to the true Christian. If Christ's Cross does not teach him this plainly enough, surely His injunction will. And if some will shut their eyes and ears, then the duty of the individual is clear. "Neither be partaker of other men's sins; keep *thyself* pure" (1 Tim. v. 22). And this injunction, "Let us go forth," has a definite meaning which we may not miss or overlook. We suppose that we shall be informed this is nothing but a call to spirituality of mind. But what if we find that it is something more and other than spiritual-mindedness. It cannot be fully obeyed by the desire and the effort to be spiritually-minded, for spirituality without holiness, without conformity to and fellowship with Christ in His rejection, is sentimentalism. Alas! the unquiet conscience, that shrinks from plain duty because it is unpleasant, loves subterfuges however miserable they may be. Hence it strives to forget that holiness is separation from all contact with sin, and that all such separation is holiness. The words, "go

forth," respects the point *from* which, and not the point to which, the progress is made. Motion to one place or person, cannot be made, without motion from another place at the same time. Thus if resident in the Metropolis we would go to Birmingham, we must *go out of* London. In spiritual things there is a coming up from the wilderness-world as well as, and by means of, our leaning upon the Beloved (Songs viii. 5). The advance out of the wilderness is constant, in proportion to our desecrating sin, where once we beheld it not, and to our faithfulness to the Lord. As our first coming to Jesus involves separation from sin, so greater nearness to Him there cannot be, without further departure therefrom, whilst the gain in the greater degree of proximity to the one is proportioned to, and corresponds with, the progress made in the other. The way in which the Lord allures His people to Himself is by sealing upon their hearts the truths of His sacred Word, and as each fresh revelation of His grace, and of the excellency of His power, reaches the heart, the conscience is at once exercised by some co-relative duty enjoining separation from all complicity with sin and connection with worldliness. Thus, for example, is it Christ's redeeming love that is the theme? Then we are told "He gave Himself for our sins that He might redeem out, out (there are two "outs" in the original) of this present evil world" (Gal. i. 4), which to all who glory in that Cross is thereby crucified to them and they to it (Gal. v. 16).

Is it the present enjoyment of a Father's love and care? Then "Come out from among them and be ye

separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*, and I will receive you, and be a Father to you ; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

And let us put away the chimerical fear of this plain duty of separation being too urgently insisted upon, as if some injurious extreme were possible. Are we not expressly forbidden even to “*touch*” the unclean thing? In God’s Word two-sided views of truth obtain constantly, and these, when combined, present the full truth, not either alone. Thus, with reference to a Christian’s deportment to the world, he is not to go out of the world—that would be monasticism. His presence in the world is according to the will of his Master (Mark v. 19). The Lord Himself left a holy heaven, to come and dwell for a time amongst a sinful people. Nor is it scarcely possible for His disciples to be too earnest, in going forth upon all occasions into the world in service for their Master. But, on the other hand, they are called to be like Him who was “*holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*” (Heb. vii. 26). Such is there part—entire compassion, no association. Nor must these two Scriptural principles be suffered either one to blunt the point and obscure the full force of the other. We must hold fast to both. “*Let us go forth unto Him.*” No other goal is possible. Separation from the world’s religion *unto* Christ. Nearer to Christ and closer to His people that have gone forth without the camp unto Him, the right hand of fellowship being extended unto *all*, and only all, “*that love one Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption*” (Eph. vi. 24, Greek).

Babylon.

IT is no uncommon thing to blunt and turn aside all the admonitions given by God to His people in regard to their separation from Babylon, by suggesting that the term refers alone to Popery. And so all the denunciations of impending woe on that huge system are handed over to Romanists, while a large part of professing Christendom, lulled by this as by a powerful soporific, continues slumbering, and in its dreams congratulating itself that all is right as it should be with it, seeing it is outside that system. Doubtless the deadliest power of Babylon's cup is to be found in the Papacy. But is there none elsewhere? According to the Lord's own definition in Revelation xvii., Babylon is the world's huge religions system of which it is so proud, and of which it boasts, the Church allied to the world, and the world to the Church, with all its evil fully matured and developed. This, He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, pronounces to be Babylon—"confusion," as He has designated the Roman Empire's last head—whom all men wonder at—"the Beast," for "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." If Babylon be as she is declared to be by the Omniscient, the "Mother of harlots," where are her daughters? Nor will her iniquity alone be judged, for "the cities of the nations," or the daughters of this harlot, to wit, the churches of the various nationalities, with all minor religious confederacies founded on compromising the truth of God to the will of man—all that bearing the name of Christ, is nevertheless of the world, man's tool and man's creature, *all* form part of this Great Babylon, and all will be judged. But, as

we are plainly taught in Rev. xvii. 3, if we would behold Christendom's sin from heaven's point of view, we must ourselves be separate from it. It is not when we are in the midst of a darkened atmosphere, that we are most sensible of the impurities which we are inhaling, but when we are out from thence and looking upon the place in clearer light from a distance ; so they who would see Babylon in God's light, themselves must be in that light. Nor was this climax of wickedness reached in a day. It is the result of increasing departure from God, His Word and His ways, and a deeper sinking into the darkness. That which was once "the house of God" (1 Tim. iii. 16), becomes "a great house" (2 Tim. ii. 18), and she who claimed to be the spouse of Christ, has become "the great whore," corrupt herself, and corrupting all that have to do with her. And this, let it be remembered, is God's own representation of the attractive but spurious Christianity which is even now around us, and which will meet its doom at the hand of the Lord. O that God's own people may be taught by this awful picture of worldly religion, the evil of departing from God's Word, and of alliance with the world. Begin with God and His Word, and with these go on. Turn not aside to the right hand or to the left. Neither add to nor take away from that Word, nor depart one hair's-breadth from the precise instructions given by Him therein. No one can tell where such disobedience will end. Here we see that where departure from the revelation of God's written Word does not take place, and is unrepented of, the evil goes on increasing, and the apostasy becomes darker and darker,

until there is no remedy, save for judgment to sweep the scene. And this corrupt and false Christianity, instead of being a blessing to the nations, has been their greatest curse, and conduced in no small degree to the growing infidelity which will end in an open revolt against God, just before the Lord descends in judgment. Thus we learn what is in God's sight Babylon, and from what He calls His own, "Come out of her my people" (Rev. xviii. 4). Having learnt who this woman is, and who are her daughters, let us next enquire what the nature of her sin is, which calls down this unmitigated vengeance of heaven. It is not—as Protestant writers and commentators have busied themselves to show—the promulgation of the doctrines of Transubstantiation and Baptismal Regeneration, although these and other leavens may be, yea are, the inevitable consequences of her sin. Yet they are not branded upon her brow. The sin of Babylon is *fornication*, uncleanness of a spiritual sort, committed with rulers and their peoples. By State churches, kings are courted and dallied with, and royal and aristocratic favours sought, while with those religious confederacies not so favoured, the main desire is to please and stand in favour with the people. How all this appears in God's sight, let James iv. 4, with this exposure of her wantonness (Rev. xviii. 24) tell. In the cup which she bears in her hand (verse 4), she has something to offer all classes of society, by which they are attracted to her, and by which they are held and bewitched. This explains why so few are awake to her wickedness, or seek to escape from her influence. Apostate Christianity is a positive help to worldly

professors in their schemes. Her advocates "wax rich through the abundance of her delicacies," and so we need not wonder that many of her ministers are wont to represent that her exalted position in the world is due to her success in serving Christ. "*Kings* of the earth," and "*merchants* of the earth" are used in turn by her, for her own aggrandisement. If money only can be obtained to build churches and chapels, there is little more than a passing scruple as to the modes adopted to procure it. The end is made to sanctify the means. Bazaars, concerts, and a multitude of such agencies are unblushingly advertised, with all their accompanying forms of worldliness, with the ostensible design of aiding some religious cause. And all this is patronised, if not actually organised by the clergy, who thus incite the professing church to increased worldliness. The ungodly see through the corrupt motives of such performances, and scorn their pious pretensions. Need we wonder that at the end, kings and people alike repudiate and turn against her? In Rev. chapter xvii., Babylon is seen in all her worldly grandeur, in all her dazzling glitter, in all her moral torpitude, full of imaginary security, and boasted infallibility, just before Divine vengeance falls upon her. In chapter xviii. we see the same Babylon in all her desolation, after that blow has fallen. In the former chapter her destruction is seen to be at the hands of men—earth's king's; in the latter, it is ascribed to the "Lord God Almighty," for not only God, but men wearied of her pretences and hypocrisies will at last turn upon her as being the cause of all their sorrows and utterly reject her.

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