

Ecclesiastical Separation

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

and

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“Long ago I ceased to count heads. Truth is usually in the minority in this evil world. I have faith in the Lord Jesus for myself, a faith burned into me as with a hot iron. I thank God, what I believe I shall believe, even if I believe it along.” (C.H.S., October 16, 1887, Sermons, 33, 575.)

“A chasm is opening between men who believe their Bibles and the men who are prepared for an advance upon Scripture. The house is being robbed, its very walls are being digged down, but the good people who are in bed are too fond of the warmth, and too much afraid of getting broken heads, to go down stairs and meet the burglars . . . Inspiration and speculation cannot long abide in peace. Compromise there can be none. We cannot hold the inspiration of the Word, and yet reject it; we cannot believe in the atonement and deny it; we cannot hold the doctrine of the fall and yet talk of the evolution of spiritual life from human nature; we cannot recognize the punishment of the impenitent and yet indulge the ‘larger hope’. One way or the other we must go. Decision is the virtue of the hour.” (C.H.S., September 1887, The Sword and the Trowel)

“Believers in Christ’s atonement are now in declared union with those who make light of it; believers in Holy Scripture are in confederacy with those who deny plenary inspiration; those who hold evangelical doctrine are in open alliance with those who call the fall a fable, who deny the personality of the Holy Ghost, who call justification by faith immoral, and hold that there is another probation after death . . . Yes, we have before us the wretched spectacle of professedly orthodox Christians publicly avowing their union with those who deny the faith, and scarcely concealing their contempt for those who cannot be guilty of such gross disloyalty to Christ. To be very plain, we are unable to call these things Christian Unions, they begin to look like Confederacies in Evil . . . It is our solemn conviction that where there can be no real spiritual communion there should be no pretense of fellowship. Fellowship with known and vital error is participation in sin.” (C.H.S., November 1887, The Sword and the Trowel.)

“It is a great grief to me that hitherto many of our most honored friends in the Baptist Union have, with strong determination, closed their eyes to serious divergencies from truth. I doubt not that their motive has been in a measure laudable, for they desire to preserve peace, and hoped that errors, which they were forced to see, would be removed as their friends advanced in years and knowledge. But at least even these will, I trust, discover that the new views are not the old truth in better dress, but deadly errors with which we can have no fellowship, I regard full-grown ‘modern thought’ as totally new cult, having no more relation to Christianity than the mist of the evening to the everlasting hills.”

“Let us see to it that we set forth out Lord Jesus Christ as the infallible Teacher, through His inspired Word. I do not understand that loyalty to Christ which is accompanied by indifference to His words. How can we reverence His person, if His own words and those of His apostles are treated with disrespect? Unless we receive Christ’s words, we cannot receive Christ; for John saith, ‘He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.’” (C.H.S., An All-Round Ministry, 373.)

“The day will come when those who think they can repair a house which has no foundations will see the wisdom of quitting it altogether. All along we have see that to come out from association with questionable doctrines is the only possible solution of a difficulty which, however it may be denied, is not to be trifled with by those who are conscious of its terrible reality.” (C.H.S., July 1889, The Sword and

the Trowel.)

“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 churches, and to remain in a denominational alignment which condones error is to support schism.” (C.H.S., *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, Murray, 164-165.)

“Separation from such as connive at fundamental error, or withhold the ‘Bread of life’ from perishing souls, is not schism, but only what truth, and conscience, and God require of all who would be found faithful.” (C.H.S., 1888, *The Sword and the Trowel*, 127.)

“That argument I have heard hundreds of times when people have been urged to come out of false positions and do the right. But what have you and I to do with maintaining our influence and position at the expense of truth? It is never right to do a little wrong to obtain the greatest possible good . . . Your duty is to do the right; consequences are with God.” (C.H.S., 1868, *Sermon at Metropolitan Tabernacle*. “Failure at a crucial moment may mar the entire outcome of a life. A man who has enjoyed special light is made bold to follow in the way of the Lord, and is anointed to guide others therein. He rises into a place of love and esteem among the godly, and this promotes his advancement among men. What then? The temptation comes to be careful of the position he has gained, and to do nothing to endanger it. The man, so lately a faithful man of God, compromises with worldlings, and to quiet his own conscience invents a theory by which such compromises are justified even commended. He receives the praises of the judicious; he has, in truth, gone over to the enemy. The whole force of his former life now tells upon the wrong side . . . To avoid such an end it becomes us ever to stand fast.” (C.H.S., 1888, *The Sword and the Trowel*).

“Ah, my dear brethren! There are many that are deceived by this method of reasoning. They remain where their conscience tells them they ought not to be, because, they say, they are more useful than they would be if they went ‘without the camp’. This is doing evil that good may come, and can never be tolerated by an enlightened conscience. If an act of sin would increase my usefulness tenfold, I have no right to do it; and if an act of righteousness would appear likely to destroy all my apparent usefulness, I am yet to do it. It is yours and mine to do the right though the heavens fall, and follow the command of Christ whatever the consequence may be. ‘That is strong meat,’ do you say? Be strong men, then, and fee thereon . . .” (C.H.S. *Sermons* 1891, 37, 426.)

“As soon as I saw, or thought I saw, that error had become firmly established, I did not deliberate, but quitted the body at once. Since then my counsel has been ‘Come out from among them’. I have felt that no pretext could be equal to that of separation.” (C.H.S., *The Sword and the Trowel*.)

“One thing is clear to us, we cannot be expected to meet in any union which comprehends those whose teachings on fundamental points is exactly the reverse of that which we hold dear. Cost what it may to separate ourselves from those who separate themselves from the truth of God is not alone our liberty but our duty.” (C.H.S., *The Sword and the Trowel*.)

“No lover of the Gospel can conceal from himself the fact that the days are evil. We are willing to make a large discount from our apprehensions on the score of natural timidity, the caution of age, and the weakness produced by pain; but yet seem to be, and are rapidly tending downward. Read those newspapers 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 to be the object of contempt?’ A new religion has been initiated, which is no more Christianity that 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 to an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into

fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren, and maintain a confederacy with them.” (C.H.S., Quoted by Russell H. Conwell, 1892 in “Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the World’s great Preacher.”)

“It now becomes a serious question how far those who abide by the faith once delivered to the saints should fraternize with those who have turned aside to another gospel. Christian love has its claims, and divisions are to be shunned as grievous sins; but how far are we justified in being in confederacy with those who are departing from the truth? It is a difficult question to answer so as to keep the balance of the duties. For the present it behooves believers to be cautious, lest they lend their support and countenance to the betrayers of the Lord. It is one thing to overleap all boundaries of denominational restriction for the truth’s sake; this we hope all godly men will do more. It is quite another policy which would urge us to subordinate the maintenance of truth to denominational prosperity and unity. Numbers of easy-minded people wink at error so long as it is committed by a clever man and a good-natured brother, who has so many fine points about him. Let each believer judge for himself; but, for our part, we have put on a few fresh bolts to our door, and we have given orders to keep the chain up; for, under color of begging the friendship of the servant, there are those about who aim at robbing THE MASTER. We fear it is hopeless ever to form a society which can keep out men base enough to profess one thing and believe another; but it might be possible to make an informal alliance among all who hold the Christianity of their fathers. Little as they might be able to do, they could at least protest, and as far as possible free themselves of that complicity which will be involved in a conspiracy of silence.”

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