

## No Fellowship with Dishonour to Christ

### Section 5 of: **Musings on Scripture Vol. 3**

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I refuse the language used by brethren from whom we have seceded, that we have "excommunicated them." This is not a just expression; and it produces indignation, and immediate determination in the mind to have nothing to do with people or with principles of such a bearing. It is not excommunication. It is standing at the door of the house of God, and, if certain persons come to the door seeking entrance, we act as the spirit of the apostle lets us know we ought to act, and we forbid them entrance.

We do not enquire if they are saints of God or not: this we may know elsewhere. The apostle does not tell us to make any such enquiry. But we refuse to receive them coming up to the door of the house of God from the temple of an idol (1 Cor. 10). They have declared or admitted the declaration, without judging it (and this makes them partakers with it), that they receive at their table one who comes from a place where Christ is dishonoured, if he himself is sound in faith and morals, and has not imbibed the heterodoxy. And I say no more but just ask, Is a place where Christ is dishonoured other in our eyes than an idol's temple, where the cups of demons are drunk? We have no such custom, neither the churches of God. But we say, Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (or of those who dishonour the Lord Jesus). Judge in yourselves, judge the principle in the light of the word. To me it seems, self-evidencing light, and power, and virtue, and holiness are in it.

But now that I am on this subject with you, I will linger a little over it, though it be very painful, and has been so to me for many years; for I dearly loved those personally from whom I am separated congregationally.

There are three distinct elements — to use a phrase in much present use:- formalism, socialism, and divine holiness.

Formalism obtains in all the aged systems of Romanism and the parish church.

Socialism has made great inroads on it in this day of ours. To a great extent it is the favourite principle of the present generation; whether in or out of the church, we see it in activity. The men of the world are combining, and form their joint-stock companies, their confederacies, for the advance of present accommodation and international brotherhood. Such is the day. The saints are always tempted by the spirit of the age, and are now very much acting on this principle. They receive one another in an abstract way, not under the condition the word of God prescribes, as in 1 Cor. 10. And the social atmosphere is very grateful: they breathe it freely and encourage one another by no means to disturb it.

Divine holiness pauses in the light of everything, and challenges it, however precise, amiable, respectable, and widely accredited, by the light of the Lord, and forces it to give an account of itself to the word of God. It has its peculiarities, which it can never surrender either to socialism or to formalism. It is something more than the moral sense of man, or even than a "charity" that refuses to judge or distinguish things that differ. It is the mind of God dispensed in scripture in any given age, and walking in the light of His mind. This divine holiness is a separating principle, but not that of a Pharisee, all to the tradition of men, or assumed higher holiness in one's self, but that of obedience to God's peculiarities — the principles of His house revealed in His word.

It is easy nowadays to take the journey from formalism to socialism. There is much in the temper of the age to put a very large generation on that road, so that great countenance is given to those who are

travelling there. But to travel from socialism to divine holiness is another thing altogether. I add, and this only, that to us it is plain, that among the peculiarities, or attributes, of divine holiness is found that principle which I have already noticed — that if one come from an idol's temple, where the cup of demons had been drunk (though he be a saint of God), he is not to be received in the house of God. He may say, It is my liberty, and I may go where I please. Divine holiness replies, I cannot combine with such liberty.

Yours affectionately in the Lord,

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P.S. — I should like with you to look at the Book of Nehemiah, as illustrating formalism, socialism, and divine holiness. We are now called "Exclusives." If this title belongs to us, it belongs to the apostle who tells us to act upon the principle which has given us the title.