

The purpose of this tract is suggested by the title. It is written for the thoughtful consideration of those who are already convinced and concerned about certain things. It is written for those who are convinced that the World Council of Churches is unsound in doctrine, and dangerous in tendency. It is written for those who are members of denominations belonging to this organized apostasy from historic protestantism. It is written to deal with the great question that such sincere believers are forced to ask: "What shall I do in view of the fact that my Church is a part of this unbelieving movement?"

In one sense, of course, the answer is quite simple. For the evil thing about the World Council of Churches is that it intentionally yokes together those who do and those who do not believe the doctrines of the Bible. And the Bible says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It says, "come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." (II Cor. 6:14-18). And, make no mistake about it, these words cannot be set aside by vain arguments and excuses of men. These are the very words of God. Thy apply to every believer in every age and place. No believer can disregard them and be faithful to Jesus Christ. When unbelief — apostasy — error — holds sway in any visible Church, or organization of Churches, the command of Christ is clear: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). And we might add the warning words of Paul: "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them . . ." (Eph. 5:6-11). The believer must separate himself from the unequal yoke of co-operation with unbelievers.

Having said this, however, we must also recognize that separation from a particular Church is not a matter that can be taken lightly, or done in a rash manner. "That the soul be without knowledge, is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth." (Prov. 19:2). God requires us to separate from unbelief, but not without a clear knowledge of what the Bible means by separation, and of the proper manner of effecting it. We must prove all things, and then hold fast that which is good. (I Thess. 5:21). Let us therefore consider the following questions.

I. FROM WHAT SHALL WE SEPARATE?

We must begin by saying that the Bible does not teach believers to have absolutely no association with unbelievers. Some have held such a doctrine. They have taught that believers should be entirely removed from all contact with unbelievers. This is not separation, but segregation. Paul spake against this doctrine when he said, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world" (I Cor. 5:9, 10). Our Lord did not command his disciples to go out of the world so that they could be alone. Rather did he command his disciples to go into all the world in order to witness the gospel to every man. We should follow the example of our Lord himself, who ate and drank with the sinners of this world in order that he might minister unto them. Thus we see that when separation is motivated by a desire to shun all contact with unbelievers, it is not pious at all. It is rather a sinful type of segregation. The monastic movement grew out of this error. People thought that they would become holy if they secluded themselves in association with none but those who, like them, claimed to be pious. They wanted to keep the light for themselves only. Yet this very idea was not the will of the prince of light, but of the prince of darkness. Is it any wonder that such monastic societies often fell into deepest iniquity?

Protestants have generally recognized the unbiblical basis of monasticism. But sometimes they have acted just as unbiblically in separating from a particular Church. Protestants have sometimes separated from a particular Church because they have discovered that unbelievers have crept in unawares. They forget that the purest Church that ever existed had a Judas in membership. They forget that the Apostolic Church was troubled by sin, error, and unbelief (See Mt. 13:24-30, Jude 4, II Pet. 2:1, II Tim. 2:17 etc.). And unmindful of these things they leave an imperfect Church in the vain search for a perfect one. But since no Church or denomination on earth is, or ever has been perfectly free of hypocrites (those who say they believe, but do not) it is not our duty to separate from a Church the moment we discover an individual (or individuals) falsely professing faith in Jesus Christ.

The scripture does not teach us to separate from a particular Church because it is not entirely pure

in doctrine, worship and discipline. To see this we need only ask: what Church addressed by Paul (or the other Apostles) in scripture did not need correction at some point or other? But the apostles do not exhort believers to immediately abandon these Churches because of such recognized faults. Rather are they encouraged to seek the correction of these evils. And separation from a true (but imperfect) Church is forbidden. It is called the sin of schism. "There should be no schism in the body," says Paul, "but the members should have the same care one for another." (I Cor. 12:25). Recognized imperfections may well call for increased devotion to our particular Church rather than separation from it. As the Apostle expressed it: "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (I Cor. 12:26). It is a serious sin to forsake a true Church of Jesus Christ.

As long as a Church continues in the task of (1) faithfully preaching the Bible, (2) administering Christ's ordinances in a scriptural way, and (3) exercising discipline against sin and unbelief, no believer ought to forsake it. It is only when a Church ceases to do any of these that it becomes necessary to separate from it. It then becomes necessary because there is then no way to avoid co-operation in and responsibility for the propagation of error and unbelief. It is this: co-operation with unbelievers in that which advances error and extends unbelief, that is absolutely forbidden by the word of God. A Church may faithfully preach the gospel in every single pulpit, and yet unbelievers may creep in. The same Church may administer the ordinances of Christ faithfully. Such a Church can, upon discovery of unbelief, exercise discipline and either correct those who are in error or else put them out of the fellowship of the Church. But when we find ourselves in a Church (or in such an organization as the World Council of Churches, by our denomination belonging to such) in which error and unbelief have a recognized and unchallenged place, we must separate. We must separate because there is no other way to put a stop to our co-operation with error and unbelief. For in such a Church every contribution, and even our very membership, helps to further the work of that Church in which error and unbelief have an undeniable place.

It should be obvious, from what has just been said, that the question of separation cannot be looked at only in terms of one's own local congregation. For just as the local congregation must be

judged as a whole, so must the denomination (and larger groups such as the World Council). If our own congregation is a part of a denomination in which many ministers are unfaithful to the Bible, in which training schools teach error, and denominational literature is unsound, then the duty to separate is quite as imperative as if the local congregation itself were unfaithful. Even if our particular minister believes the Bible the duty is not altered in the least. And the reason is that the situation envisioned still involves co-operation with unbelief (support of unbelieving denominational enterprises) which can be avoided only by separation from the denomination. Christ forbids us to bear the unequal yoke with unbelievers, whether it be in our local congregation or the denomination of which it is a part. Yes, he forbids it even if we find ourselves in a believing denomination yoked with unbelieving denominations in the World Council of Churches.

II. HOW SHALL WE SEPARATE?

The second matter for careful consideration must now be dealt with. For it is evident that many people come to realize that they must separate from co-operation with unbelief, who yet fail to separate in a scriptural manner.

One of the most common, unscriptural methods of separation from unbelief, is what we might call secret separation. It is also called inner separation. It is the view which would allow one to remain outwardly, and officially, a member of a Church, denomination, or Council, in which unbelief prevails, while yet personally, inwardly, secretly disavowing participation in everything in that organization that is evil. We once knew of a Roman Catholic woman who held this view. She attended mass faithfully. She contributed a minimum amount of money. But she secretly read the Bible, and—in her heart—disagreed with many errors of the Roman Church. She knew that the teaching of the Bible was right—the only safe belief for the life to come. But she was unwilling to risk the wrath of her family and the priest by open separation.

Now it should be obvious that if secret separation were really possible the scripture would not tell us to "come out from among them" in order to be "separate." This the scripture does command, however, and it does so because it is impossible to be publicly joined to and secretly separated from the same body at the same time. In fact our secret convictions mean nothing unless we are willing to

confess them before men. If I am a Presbyterian, and the Presbyterian denomination is teaching false doctrine in various pulpits, in the seminary, and in Church literature, then I cooperate in this by simply being a Presbyterian. When "one member suffer(s), all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). We cannot abstract ourselves from the corporate responsibility which belongs to us as members of a corporate body. That is why **the Lord commands, not secret, but open and public separation from unbelief.**

Another kind of separation that cannot be sanctioned is what we may call silent separation. This is not as great an evil as secret separation. But it cannot be condoned. By silent separation we mean the act of leaving a corrupt Church without witness or protest! And it goes without saying that it is much easier to remain silent, than to witness against unbelief. But the Bible says, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Unpleasant as it may be, a believer ought not to leave a Church in which unbelief flourishes, without first protesting against the apostasy. "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," says Paul, "but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." (II Tim. 1:8). There are two important reasons for doing so. (1) First, as Christians we ought to act openly, and courageously before men. This belongs to our heritage as Protestants. Our protesting fathers spoke out, first of all, because of their devotion to the truth. The glory and honour of God and His truth require this of us. (2) Secondly, as Christians we ought to seek to win others to the truth. We may see little hope that our protest will avail anything, but who are we to say that the Lord will not use our testimony? The Reformers protested before they left the Church of Rome. They desired, if possible to bring the Roman Church back to the truth. But even though this desire was not realized, God was pleased to use their protest to save multitudes from error with them.

Proper separation from unbelief, then, is by way of open protest. It is an act of unashamed obedience to God and His Word, in which His truth is vindicated against those who have disregarded it. It is neither secret nor silent: it is both public and vocal. We not only separate from a Church in which unbelief is reigning, but we clearly state before the officers and members of the church the reasons

for our separation. Then shall we be disciples of the one who said, "I spake openly to the world . . . and in secret have I said nothing." (John 18:20).

III. WHEN SHALL WE SEPARATE?

Our last question may seem the most difficult. But, strange as it may seem, if the first two questions are answered faithfully according to scripture, we believe that this last question will answer itself! This is so, because one of two things is bound to happen when we have answered the first two questions faithfully.

(1) **It may be that our protest against unbelief will set in motion a reform movement** whereby others join with us in casting off the unequal yoke. This is not so unlikely as we may think. As a matter of fact, it has happened within our own day. It happened in the Baptist Union of Scotland. Christians in that denomination became convinced that the World Council of Churches was dominated by unbelief. It was realized that membership in the World Council of Churches involved co-operation with error and unbelief. Baptist believers became aroused and protested, but it was not necessary for them to leave the Baptist Union because the whole Baptist Union became aroused and voted to withdraw from the World Council of Churches. God almighty blessed the faithful protest of some so that it became the protest of many—and a whole denomination was delivered from fellowship with unbelief. (2) Of course this does not always happen. **It may be that our protest against unbelief will only stir up a greater manifestation of unbelief and opposition to the truth.** This is usually what happens when unbelief has become widespread in our own particular denomination. In such a case we will find ourselves excluded (like Luther) by the will of unbelievers. Protest against unbelief will not be tolerated where unbelief has become strongly entrenched.

In either case it may be some time before the outcome is certain. We cannot predict, in any general way, **when separation may become necessary.** But the time will make itself clear on the basis of this simple principle: we must at last separate, when there is no alternative—we must separate when there is no further means of getting rid of the unequal yoke. **If our protest is to no avail, then we can do nothing else: we must separate.** When we have faithfully protested, we will thus find the issue (and the time) settled for us. And so the really

important matter is this: the time to press for separation is now. There is never any justification for inaction when we once discover that we are involved in co-operation with unbelief. Provided we are certain of this evil, we must act at once. We must begin immediately to protest: to demand that our Church rid itself of the unequal yoke. And we must press the issue until it is settled. Circumstances do not determine duty, rather, duty determines circumstances. The great evil of our day is that many believers know very well that they are yoked together with unbelief, and yet they wait for a more convenient season to force a separation between the two. This is tragic because unbelief will never force the issue. It is to the advantage of unbelief if it is able to work in co-operation with compromising believers. God knows this. His command is therefore not to wait for a more convenient season, but to simply separate from fellowship with unbelief. And this means that **the time to make the protest which will force the issue is now.**

It is, as we stated at the beginning, our conviction that membership in a Church (or denomination) which belongs to the World Council of Churches (or the National Council of Churches, which is similar to it) bears the unequal yoke. For any who may be in doubt we would suggest a careful study of this organization. But the message of this tract is primarily for those who already know the facts, and have wondered what they ought to do. We have spoken because the scripture speaks. We call upon you to begin now, where you are, to renounce the evil yoke of co-operation with unbelievers. Hard as this task may be, it is little enough to do for our Lord.

A final word: perhaps you are a member of a Church that is not under the unequal yoke. If so, you too have a responsibility. However much we may disapprove of other believers who yet cooperate with unbelief, we still have a responsibility to them. It is our responsibility to warn them against the unequal yoke, and encourage them to cast it off. Part of the problem is that we have not been sufficiently concerned. (May we invite you, therefore, to speak to others and to pass along to them such tracts as this in order that they may be warned and encouraged?).