

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

I

Comrades and Friends, — There is a great deal in the Bible that describes the love of the world as being directly opposed in spirit and practice to the love of God.

The Apostle James says: 'Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God;' that is, hatred to the character, and opposition to the purposes of God. John says: 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'

Paul counts the fashions, recreations, and influence of the world so dangerous, that he calls upon the followers of Christ to come out and be separate from them, in the following language: 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and My daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'

These are strong words; and, seeing that Salvationists have such close relationships with the world, it is important that we should know what they mean.

Let me say, that the 'world' spoken of here is not the natural world in which we live. The hills and the valleys, the seas and the rivers, and the plains and the forests, were pronounced on the day of their creation by God to be 'very good.' They were good then, and they are good still. It is the spirit of the people in the world which is referred to, and from this we are to separate ourselves.

I. — What, then, does separation from the world mean?

Let me first point out to you what it does not mean.



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1. It does not mean coming out from the world bodily, after the fashion of monks and nuns; nor going away from it to live in desert solitudes, like hermits. Many have done that, but they have too often carried the spirit of the world with them.

To this kind of separation you are not called. You are to be, as Jesus Christ said, 'in the world, and yet not of the world,' because you are needed in the world. You are, as He told His disciples, 'the salt of the earth;' and how can your example and teaching benefit it, if you are taken out of it? You are called to fight, and suffer, and, perhaps, die for its Salvation. That must mean living and dying in the very heart of it. How else can the world be salted?

2. Nor does separation from the world mean refusing to take part in the business of the world, so far as you can do so lawfully. You cannot earn your bread and support your families without doing this, and there is nothing wrong in honestly and honourably working for their benefit. God is working for the welfare of the world in making the sun to shine, the rain to descend, and all the other processes of nature to operate.

II. – Separation from the world means: —

1. Severance from all the evil practices of the world – from its drunkenness, its whoredoms, its cheatings, its falsehoods, and its dishonesties.

You cannot enjoy the love of God, or realize His favour, or have a satisfying title to Heaven, unless you have said good-bye to these things.

2. Separation from the ruling spirit of the world.

The ruling spirit of the world is the spirit of selfishness. The spirit of true religion is the spirit of Jesus Christ – the spirit that seeks the happiness and well being of others, even though it involves self-denial and sacrifice, and the spirit of Jesus Christ is the very opposite to the self-seeking spirit of the world, which always, and under all circumstances, keeps its eye on Number One.

3. Separation from the pride, the vain shows, and the ambitions of the world. How a Salvationist can wear the livery of the world in the shape of fashionable dress and the life, I could never understand.



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4. The renouncement of the honours of the world, except in so far as they can be made helpful to the promotion and extension of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

5. Separation from the amusements and recreations of the world. These things may be innocent in themselves, but how can the Salvationist join with men and women who are living in rebellion against his Lord, trampling under their feet His proffered mercy, and journeying all the time to destruction?

6. Separation from the mammon worship that so generally prevails.

The Apostle Paul says that 'the love of money is the root of all evil.' How can men and women love God, deny themselves, and live for souls while they worship the golden calf, and make gain, not godliness, the great purpose of their lives?

7. Separation from the politics of the world, so far as they are selfish in character, and are followed and cultivated without regard to the glory of God, the keeping of His laws, and the extension of His Kingdom.

III. – You must see, my friends, that this separation is unavoidable.

Nay, more – it is absolutely necessary. The difference between the nature of the Salvationist who has been born of the Spirit and that of the worldling who is still governed by the selfish earthly spirit, compels it. 'How can two walk together except they be agreed?' The ruling passion of the world, and the spirit by which the Salvationist should be controlled, are directly opposed to one another.

The worldling is all for himself; that is, he is engaged in seeking that which seems likely to profit or is calculated to please him; while the true Salvationist is for those objects which will honour his God, and promote the Salvation of the souls of men.

Nay, not only has the Salvationist little or no interest in the objects that charm and control the world, but its riches and pleasures and whatever is the object or end of life have lost their power to charm him.



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IV. – The preservation of the Salvationist’s own religion compels this separation.

The Salvationist knows that he cannot take fire into his bosom without being burned, and therefore avoid, as far as possible, all those associations and companionships that savour of the world and which are, he knows, antagonistic to that holiness of heart and life on which his heart is set. So he sings:

Begone, vain world! Thou has no charms for me!
My captive soul has long been held by thee;
I listened long to thy vain song,
And thought they music sweet;
And this my soul lay groveling at thy feet.

What are thy charms? Could I command the whole,
Thy mingled sweets could never feed a soul.
A nobler prize attracts mine eyes,
Where trees immortal grow,
A fruitful Land, where milk and honey flow.

Where are you, my Comrades, on this important question? Do any of you belong to the foolish people who are trying to gain and keep the favour of God while still holding on to godless companions and worldly way? Let me assure you once more that you cannot serve God and mammon.

You complain sometimes that God seems to stay away from your heart. You say you are troubled with doubts about the safety of your soul, and that you are filled with fears lest He should leave you to struggle with the dark waters of Death’s cold river alone.

Perhaps the reason you have so little revelation of God in your souls is that you have not yet shut out the world. You fail in the fight with your enemies, because you are still in treaty with your Master’s sworn foe.

When you renounce all friendly relations with this enemy, and turn your backs on the world for ever, the Holy Spirit will come to you, in fuller measure than before. He will fill you with love and



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power and joy, and make you conquerors over sin and Hell. Why not make the sacrifice now?
What do you say?

Your affectionate General,
William Booth.