

Original Contributions.

Religion.

NUMBER II.

Proposition 2.—A. Separation from God.

Having seen that man in childhood is at union with God, we now proceed to speak of the separation which ensued, calling for religion, or reunion with God. If man was not separated from God he could not be bound again.

That sinners are separate from God is shown by the Savior in the following words, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28.

Again, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Clearly then there is a distance between man and God, for without a distance between, man cannot come to Christ. The distance is not physical but moral. The Lord and his Christ being altogether holy, and men being sinners, there is the distance between them that exists between sin and holiness. That difference is one of character. For them to come together in character the one or the other must change. But with God "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," Jas. i. 17. We may not then expect God to change for he does not vary or turn. He is forever and ever the same.

The whole history of man is one of change, indeed the very terms of the Gospel—believe, repent, and be baptized—are all indicative of change in man. He is taught to cease to sin and become as holy and pure "as a little child." God did not leave man but man left God, and it is but fair that the one who went away should return. Man like the Prodigal of whom we read, voluntarily went away from his father into a far country—a land of famine and death—and by his own doings has "fixed" a great gulf between himself and God, so broad and deep and wild that naught in the heavens above nor in the earth beneath can over-leap it and save the perishing, but the love of God.

Thank God his matchless love has thrown over that fearful breach the glittering arches of the bridge of Redemption, and illuminated it with his glorious word, saying to all his prodigal children "Come unto me and I will give you rest." Oh what an army of men were once, aye, and still are, beyond that gulf and away from God. "The whole

world lieth in wickedness." 1 Jno. v. 19. "There is none good, no not one." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "Wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat." Matt. vii. 13. When once a man passes in at the wide gate he is separated from his heavenly Father and in the way that leadeth to destruction, and if continued in, he will surely arrive at that fearful destination.

Remember too that they are not forced into the wide gate, but they voluntarily go in thereat, and if they never return but reach the dark regions of despair, they go there in spite of "all power in heaven and in earth" to save them.

This separation was brought about by leaving the purity of childhood and sinning. That this is as universal as the race, Paul tells us plainly. "If one died for all then were all dead." That one did die for us all the word of life plainly teaches. It takes death to bring the dead to life, or across the great gulf. Jesus said: "And I, if be lifted up (or crucified), will draw all men unto me." Jno. xii. 32. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter iii. 18.

Yes, the sufferings of Christ draws men to God, or causes them to leave off their wicked ways and draw near to God in character and life. Causes them to approach the innocence of their childhood again, as they once were, "little children." That this alienation from God still exists we only have to look around over the earth and see the carnage of ten thousand battle-fields and hear the cry of broken-hearted widows and the heart-rending wail of orphan children. Still closer home than this, within the musings of our own hearts, we see the scars of the conflict with sin, proving that if we are not now, we once were sold under sin and aliens from God. Job laments that in his day there was no daysman between man and God to lay his hand upon both and bring them together. Job ix. 33.

But now "there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." He then with one almighty arm lays hold of the throne of God and with the other, lays hold on the seed of Abraham and those that are afar off, and brings them together. May we all live so that when Jesus comes to

make up his jewels we may rise and sparkle in the light of eternal glory.

Yours in hope,

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Relation of Evangelists to Churches.

Bro. Srygley writing in the *Old Path Guide* gives some thoughts so valuable and withal so apposite upon the above subject that we give his article entire. It will set some good brethren to thinking, who are puzzled about these questions.

In Texas we have suffered much from unworthy preachers. Men who are lamentably wanting in that purity of life so essential to the acceptable preacher, are frequently found in the evangelistic field in Texas. And our struggling churches feel so deeply the need of evangelistic aid, that men of little or no character find it an easy matter to pass current as an evangelist of the true apostolic order. We are often puzzled to know how the church can best protect itself against such characters. Without presuming to fully settle this vexed question, we are disposed to offer a few suggestions which, we think, will do much good to improve the present state of affairs.

1. And first, we call attention to the scriptural relation of the evangelist to the church. It may be assumed, in the apostolic times, preachers, like all other Christians, held membership in some congregation when practicable. And if we are to take Paul and Barnabas as examples, the Holy Spirit had the church to send the evangelist out. They went out from the church, labored by the authority of the church, returned to the church and reported the success of their labors. So it would seem, the whole matter of evangelism was under the supervision of the church. The evangelists, it may be safely assumed, held membership in the church that sent them out during all their missionary travels and labors. But such is rarely the case now. Those preachers who remain with a church for several months or a few years in succession perhaps, always hold membership in it, but they are not the men of concern in this article. The self-styled evangelists—a class of transient preachers, in no small degree annoying to the brotherhood—are the men concerning whose church relations we are most deeply interested just now. And we give it as the result of some considerable investigation, that a large per cent. of these transient preachers have no church relation at all. No doubt it would astonish the reader if we could give the exact number of aimless, not to say worthless, evangelists who perambulate the country seeking a market for their sermons, and yet, who have no membership

in any church at all. This is all wrong. The local congregation is for preachers as well as others. And no man can rise superior to the church of divine appointment without at the same time showing irreverence for apostolic order. Every preacher should hold membership in some congregation.

2. The first point well established and we can see at once that no man without membership in some active congregation could impose himself upon unsuspecting brethren. The fact that a man, without membership in any church, starts out to evangelize the world in his own way and at his own pleasure, ought to be held as *prima facie* evidence of unworthiness. No man ought to be countenanced or encouraged in promiscuous evangelism unless he is under the authority and discipline of some local congregation. Preachers are as much in need of discipline as others. They are subject to temptation and liable to sin. They should be under the supervision of an efficient board of elders. And when one vows his independence of all local congregations, he should at once be denied the confidence, encouragement and cooperation of the brethren everywhere. If this point of apostolic order could be effectively enforced, many of the transient preachers of disreputable character would be at once set adrift in the world without power for evil to unsuspecting brethren. We are not unmindful of the fact that a few disreputable preachers succeed in blinding their admirers and maintaining membership in some kind of a church, but the great bulk of them, so far as we have investigated, are absolutely without any church relations.

3. If these points were enforced, the manner of dealing with unworthy preachers would be greatly simplified. When an evangelist comes into a community to build up the cause, he should be required to tell of what church he holds membership. And the church in which he holds membership should be held responsible for his deportment. In case he should conduct himself in a manner discreditable to his calling, he should be reported to the elders of his congregation, and they should call him to account just as though he were not a preacher at all. And if they should fail to deal with him according to his deserts, that congregation should be held as *particeps criminis* in the matter. We are not in favor of the license system, prohibiting all