

Stay Away from Unsound Churches!

The Duty of Separation

by Arthur W. Pink

In view of the appalling conditions now existing in almost all of the “churches” what is the duty of the real child of God? Are you willing for Scripture to answer that question, my reader? If so, none need remain in any doubt as to the Divine will in the matter. “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exod. 23:2). “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14)...

We do not say that it is the duty of every Christian to “come out”, for we are not personally acquainted with every “church”. Yet this we do say, if there are any “churches” which are scriptural in their membership, in their maintenance of discipline, in their preaching, and in all that concerns their public services, we do not know where to find them. We have travelled completely around the world, and ministered the Word in many places but there is no church known to us where we could hold membership. But if you are a member of a church where Scripture is followed in all its arrangements, and its pastor and officers are God-fearing men and honour him by their daily walk, then praise him with all your heart, and do everything in your power to strengthen their hands. This article is not intended as an attack upon the true servants of God. Nor is it designed as a brief for those known as the “Plymouth Brethren”.¹

One may sit under what is termed a “sound” ministry, and through no fault of his own, derive no benefit from the same. There is a “dead orthodoxy” now widely prevalent, where the truth is preached, yet in an ununctionless manner, and if there be no life in the pulpit there is not likely to be much in the pew. Unless the message comes fresh from God, issues warmly and earnestly from the preacher’s heart, and is delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit, it will neither reach the heart of the hearer nor minister that which will cause him to grow in grace. There is many a place in Christendom where a living, refreshing, soul-edifying ministry once obtained, but the Spirit of God was grieved and quenched, and a visit there is like entering a morgue: everything is cold, cheerless, lifeless. The officers and members seem petrified, and to attend such services is to be chilled and become partaker of that deadening influence. A ministry which does not lift the soul Godwards, produce joy in the Lord, and stimulate to grateful obedience, casts the soul down and soon brings it into the slough of despond.

Only the Day to come will reveal how many a babe in Christ had his growth arrested through sitting under a ministry which supplied him not with the sincere milk of the Word. Only that Day will show how many a young believer, in the warmth and glow of his first love, was discouraged and dismayed by the coldness and deadness of the place where he went to worship. No wonder that God so rarely regenerates any under such a ministry: those places would not prove at all suitable as nurseries for his little ones. Many a spiritual decline is to be attributed to this very cause.

Then take heed, young Christian, where you attend. If you cannot find a place where Christ is magnified, where his presence is felt, where the Word is ministered in the power of the Spirit, where your soul is actually fed, where you do not come away as empty as when you went, – then far better to remain at home and spend the time on your knees, feeding directly from God’s Word, and reading that which you *do* find helpful unto your spiritual life.²

(Although Arthur Pink was absolutely correct in calling on Christians to depart from false “churches” and stay at home if they could not find a true Christian church to attend, he certainly knew the importance of church membership in a sound local church, and taught this duty very clearly: “Next to being saved, the writer deems it his greatest privilege of all to belong to one of Christ’s churches”;³ and, “[Despising the church of God] is done by God’s people who deem his

churches as of such little importance and value that they never join them.”⁴ He well knew that church membership is very important, *where possible*. But he saw that true churches of Christ were few and far between. The situation is even worse today. Those who, from a very faulty understanding of Heb. 10:25 – “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” – advocate that Christians “*must attend somewhere*”, even if they attend Arminian churches or churches where there is much worldliness and compromise, are in great error, and how greatly needed is Pink’s faithful teaching as given above: “If you cannot find a place where Christ is magnified, where his presence is felt, where the Word is ministered in the power of the Spirit, where your soul is actually fed, where you do not come away as empty as when you went, – then far better to remain at home and spend the time on your knees, feeding directly from God’s Word, and reading that which you *do* find helpful unto your spiritual life.” It makes for a lonely Christian walk, certainly; but it is the only faithful course open to those who, in God’s providence, do not find themselves within reach of a truly sound local church. Heb. 10:25 is speaking to *true Christians*, about *true Christian churches* – it is not telling Christians to attend virtually *anywhere* just so that they are attending *somewhere*! “Let us go forth therefore unto him without [outside] the camp, bearing his reproach” (Heb. 13:13). To do anything less is compromise and sin. – *Shaun Willcock, Ed.*)

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) was a minister of the Gospel and a prolific writer, who was virtually unknown at the time of his death but whose writings have, since then, been blessed to innumerable Christians throughout the world.

ENDNOTES:

1. *Studies in the Scriptures*, 1931, pgs. 46-7.
2. *Studies in the Scriptures*, 1945, pgs. 259-60.
3. *Studies in the Scriptures*, 1927, pg. 281.
4. *Studies in the Scriptures*, 1928, pg. 19.

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info@biblebasedministries.co.uk

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WORLDWIDE CONTACT FOR BIBLE BASED MINISTRIES:

Contending for the Faith Ministries

42055 Crestland Drive Lancaster, CA 93536 USA

BBMOrders@aol.com