

Defilement and Wickedness:

ARE THEY EQUIVALENT?

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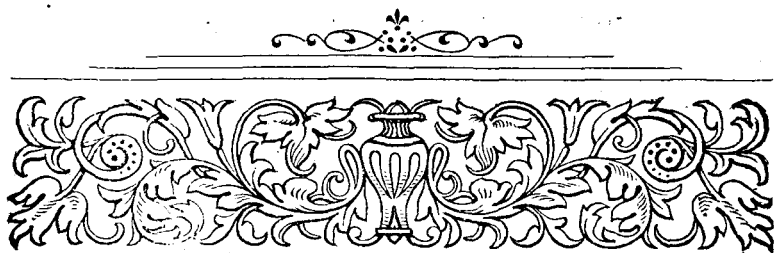
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DEFILEMENT AND WICKEDNESS: *ARE THEY EQUIVALENT?*

—
AN INQUIRY AS TO THE SCRIPTURAL ATTITUDE
TOWARDS EACH.
—

A PAMPHLET has recently been issued entitled:

“ASSOCIATION WITH EVIL: DOES IT DEFILE?”

The practical effect of its teachings; the sad havoc that has actually been made among a feeble remnant of the Lord's own sheep by these and similar views; the very great moral weight of the influential and gifted brethren who endorse them; the piety with which they are apparently connected; the solemn way in which they have been pressed—alike appear to forbid one who has any serious conviction of their error to keep absolute silence.

The title in itself, *Association with Evil: Does it Defile?* however, it is to be feared, is exceedingly well calculated to mislead the Lord's dear people, for it pre-supposes that those who differ from the writer in his deductions would contend that there is nothing defiling in association with evil. Would not, then, the heart that desires the Lord's glory instinctively draw off from those who would deny so clear a proposition? Thus, in fact, the very title tends to range saint against saint, and to continue a warfare that is to the shame of all. If our dear brother who wrote the tract knows many now gathering to His Name alone who would deny that association with evil defiles, his experience is certainly unhappy and unique. In the Episcopal Church, and it may be also in some other denominations, it used to be argued that no one had any responsibility as to association, that each was only responsible for his own condition; but now brethren, with strange inconsistency, admit to their fellowship, not carelessly (for they ever profess to maintain the holy character of the Lord's House), but freely, Christians connected with denominations in which these "evil principles" may be absolutely and plainly avowed, and reserve their opposition and antagonism to their brethren, who are as

convinced as themselves that *association with evil does defile*, and desire too, by God's grace, to walk consistently with such conviction. As another wrote not long ago, "How is it that, with us, those spiritually nearest akin to us are just those who, in the breaches that have taken place, are to be most religiously refused and turned away from?" Yes, *how is it?* Perhaps a consideration of our brother's paper may, in some measure, help us to answer this question.

There is much in the pamphlet, as there always is in such writings, that must be accepted heartily and with submission to the Word of God on which it is based; much, therefore, that is helpful, and some things that are at least suggestive. The difficulty and responsibility connected with it, as always in all these questions, is to prove all things and hold fast that which is good.

Now, THE WRITER FAILS, as I conceive,

TO DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN GOD'S HOLY AND
INFALLIBLE WORD

AND HIS OWN FALLIBLE AND VERY POSSIBLY
MISTAKEN INTERPRETATION

AND APPLICATION OF THAT WORD.

He presses the latter with all the force of its being quite equivalent to the former. He

regards any hesitation in accepting his own deductions as a practical rejection of the "Thus saith the Lord" to which every redeemed one should heartily desire to bow—a common mistake, that has to be pointed out in the spirit of meekness, knowing how prone one is to fall into it oneself.

Then as to his interpretation, I am convinced he fails, through not giving full weight to *every* truth. He takes up a certain line of truth which he finds in Scripture; presses that one line in an apparently logical way, until he is landed in deductions which are quite denied by another line of truth also in Scripture. This is, again, a danger common to us all. God has given us His Word *as a whole*, to be fed upon *as a whole*, and its truths run along in parallel, and what may be called "balancing" lines. How many controversies have resulted from an undue place being given to conclusions inferred from one set of texts, to the nullifying or belittling of another counterbalancing line of truth, whereas together they would keep us from danger on either hand.

Thus our brother, seeing clearly the truth that evil defiles, presses it so far that we find him putting in the place of a "wicked person" every saint who differs from him—not as to the truth, but as to his application of the truth, or his

deductions from it. He thus rejects those whom he is distinctly *commanded* to receive ; those whom Christ has received to the glory of God. He refuses thousands of saints as true as himself, and thus scatters the sheep whom their Good Shepherd would have together. He has gone too far, and has overlooked the balancing truth which, if he had let it shine on his scriptures, would have helped him much, and enabled him to help others to a truly right interpretation of those scriptures.

It will not be necessary to go over the whole book. It is consistent from beginning to end in the result at which it arrives, namely, *that all who may be unclean merit excision*. So we may take as an example of this his few summing-up lines as to Numbers xix. After admitting that there are "stages of discipline, and that for every cause people are not to be put away," he yet concludes that "all these cases in Numbers xix. refer to those who merit excision, because of links of *association* with those whose teaching or ways are so serious as to defile others."

Now, we may and must most reverently hearken to the Lord's Word in Numbers xix. We may and must hearken to what He would have us understand by these most precious details as to the Red Heifer. But we may yet

be permitted to question whether they really mean that all who to-day may answer to those who are unclean in that chapter, are to be "put away"—"merit excision."

We may further, with sincere subjection to God's Word, be permitted to question if a "dead body," or "grave," or "the bone of a man" typifies exactly that to which our author may apply them. Further, we may note his own very significant silence as to any clear interpretation of these, and also of the vessel which was covered, and was therefore not unclean, even in the tent which death had invaded. We may note his

SILENCE AS TO THE VARYING DEGREES
OF DEFILEMENT,

and as to the varying means of restoration—absolute silence—which is significant indeed, in view of his own positive conclusions. We may, and I firmly believe must, not only question but reject an interpretation that, by putting all these on one level as "meriting excision," actually obliterates the distinctive beauties of the Divine Word.

Let us carry out our brother's teachings, and for the sake of a clear understanding admit for a moment that "all these cases in Numbers xix. refer to those who merit excision." Now,

what are these cases? Who are those who are divinely declared "unclean" in that chapter, and therefore merit excision? We may, in a general way, tabulate them :

First—The priest Eleazer (verse 7).

Second—The one who burns the heifer (vs. 8).

Third—The clean man who gathers the ashes (verse 10).

Fourth—All who come in contact with that which speaks of the death of a man (verses 11-16).

Fifth—The clean person who sprinkles water of separation (verse 21).

Sixth—Whatever the unclean person (meaning evidently one who is unclean seven days) touches (verse 22); and

Seventh—The one who touches *him* (verse 22).

All these, then, according to our writer, are exactly on one level, not only as being unclean for the time being, which is true, but as *meriting excision*. So the priest, the burner of the heifer, the gatherer of the ashes and the sprinkler of water, all engaged in *simple and direct obedience to God's own Word, merit excision!* *They merit excision—the severest discipline known for doing what God tells them to do!* Surely there needs no argument as to this, yet *this* is the basis of all our brother's reasoning and application. One touch has destroyed the

foundation on which his whole structure rests, and it all falls to the ground. "The unclean one must be put away—merits excision," *he* says. God says the very reverse. The unclean is either to wash himself or be cleansed, and so *restored, and not be put away*. This mistaken exegesis is serious enough to account for those nearest akin to us being most religiously refused, as well as for the sin, sorrow, and shame of divisions that are still being effected.

It is, of course, possible that our writer may say that he intended to refer only to those cases in the chapter in which direct contact with some form of the death of man was specified. Nor would one wish, surely, to hold him responsible for the literalness of a form of words which conveyed, however distinctly, a thought other than he intended. But even this would not help him—the whole bearing of his argument is just simply that all who are unclean merit excision.

Thus he shows also the power of defilement connected with the "running issue." He deals in the same way with this, shows how far-reaching is the defilement, quotes constantly "shall be unclean," and yet, strangely enough, he invariably leaves out the words "until the evening." For instance, he quotes, "Whosoever

touches his bed shall be unclean"—the following words are "until the evening." Surely such a close limitation of the defilement should have been specified ; and does not the cutting off these words

PRACTICALLY AMOUNT TO A MISQUOTATION?

Certainly it is hardly that reverent treatment of God's Holy Word to which our brother himself so rightly exhorts us ; and this one may say without any need to interpret the meaning of the phrase, although it must surely suggest itself at once to everyone that "until the evening" could not be a figure of absolute excision, which is the extreme form of Christian discipline.

In our brother's teachings on defilement connected with the "running issue" there is another example of an opposite character—an *addition* to the words of Scripture. He notes truly the defilement by contact, and adds, "By this we learn that defilement goes on and on." Now, the thought this gives is that defilement is interminable ; it "goes on and on." Has not this been practically acted upon, and resulted in our brethren putting aside as defiled thousands upon thousands of saints fully as free from defilement as themselves ? It is this that makes such teachings serious ;

nor is their danger decreased because they may be solemnly given forth, and endorsed too, with the best of motives and the most sincere piety. God's Word not only does not say "on and on," but, as has been elsewhere noted, distinctly shows that the power of defilement ever *decreases* in its effect as it gets away from its source. Here he that had the issue was unclean *till healed*, and even then needed ceremonial cleansing; he that touched him was unclean *till the evening*, and there, as far as this scripture goes, the power of defilement ceased. If our brother says this defilement "goes on and on," he must do so without the authority of Scripture; and this, surely, he would not wish.

In a similar way, dealing with *leprosy in a house*, he says: "We believe time has been lost, and fresh sorrow brought amongst us, through trying to get old material back in which leprosy has not been fully judged. Our sympathies are never to guide us in these things, but God's mind should be apprehended, and His Word followed." Undoubtedly; but must we not be correspondingly careful not to substitute our own thoughts or mind for that Word, and then press that substitution on others? Turning to Leviticus xiv. 40, we read, "Then the priests shall command that

they take away the stones in which the plague is, and they shall cast them into an unclean place, without the city ;” then in verse 42, “They shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones.” Our writer comments : “Time has been lost in trying to get old material back *in which leprosy has not been fully judged.*” Note the change of the wording. The Divine Word says, “*in which the plague is;*” our brother says, “*in which leprosy has not been fully judged.*” Now, this is, surely, a serious difference, and one can see a reason for it in

THE UNHAPPY DIVISIONS

that have so multiplied during the last few years. No one, with any pretention to truthfulness, would say that “leprous stones,” “stones in which the plague is,” have been on the one side of those divisions, and clean, undefiled Christians, scripturally separating from them, on the other. Quite the contrary; there has been an equal degree of piety, of devotion, of freedom from defilement ; and, alas ! perhaps an equal amount of defilement in fleshly feelings aroused on both sides. The affections of the Lord’s people, on either side, however, have often led them to care for one another, and to maintain a very large degree of fellowship with one another. But

this is considered dangerous, for leaders fear that if those affections be allowed, the barriers which they have conscientiously erected, and which, they are convinced, must be maintained, may tremble; hence the affections must be restrained. Thus the need of substituting another idea for the scriptural thought. It would never do to assert that all who differ from us have actually "the plague of leprosy *in them*"—*that* would carry its own refutation on its face—so it is said that they have not "fully judged leprosy." But is this treating reverently the Word of God, which, I am sure, our brother desires to do? Is it not, indeed, most dangerous treatment of it? We know well that *mere* natural affection is not to govern us when that which affects the person of our Lord Jesus Christ is clearly in question: "He that loveth father or mother *more than Me* is not worthy of Me." But there are affections connected with the new nature, sympathies connected with the new man, spiritual instincts which, under the control of the Spirit of God, often lead contrary to *human* order, but in conformity with God's Word, and which are thus often by no means bad guides. Many a simple saint is led aright by his divinely-given affections; and, lacking such affections, many a merely learned or clever saint goes wrong.

Let us consider one other point that our writer refers to. He says, when speaking of the leaven at Corinth: "During this time Apollos refused to go there, even to minister." Corinth, we are told, was a leavened lump, and, as such, as another brother writes, it was, "in every part of it, capable of communicating leaven." It was like the tent in which the dead man was—none were to go in—as Mr. B—— puts it. So Apollos, in accord with our brother's interpretation of Numb. xix., will not go there, "even to minister." How completely it all hangs together, does it not? It is distinctly all of one piece, and if one part be proved unsound and wrong, can the rest be *right* and unaffected by the wrong? Most surely not. Then why is our brother so strangely silent as to the Apostle Paul, who "earnestly desired" not merely Apollos but other brethren to go to Corinth? The Apostle Paul was, according to our brother's teachings, most unfaithful. If he acted upon such "loose" principles now, he, too, would "merit excision!" But why write thus? Our author is no foe, but a friend; no enemy of our Lord Jesus Christ, but a brother beloved. He may be governed by the most sincere desires for the Lord's glory (and for such motives we may honour him), and were it not that his blows are directed against saints

as true as himself, one would gladly hide rather than expose such mistakes. But it is by means of such misinterpretations of Scripture, such unjustifiable conclusions and inferences, such strainings of type and figure, that the grossest wrongs have been done.

THE MOST HUMILIATING SHAME HAS BEEN
BROUGHT ON THE NAME WE ALL LOVE,

and those, spiritually, nearest akin have been divided, till the very name of "Brethren" has become almost a laughing-stock. Surely, the simplest can see that our brother has erred in thus *inferring* that Apollos kept away from Corinth because it would have been disobedience, and like entering a dead man's tent, to go there. No amount of ingenuity can do away with the plain statement that overthrows this, and, with it, how much of our brother's reasonings and inferences.

The paper thus abounds in simple and really unscriptural deductions, which are presented, as we have said, with all the authority of God's own Word. But enough as to the pamphlet. It will be more refreshing to turn to that Word itself, in considering the theme of which the pamphlet speaks.

And here we will confine our consideration

to two points only. Do these Old Testament figures of defilement typify wilful wickedness? and does the treatment of them typify excision—the “putting away” of a wicked person? The second depends, of course, upon the first: If wickedness is typified by defilement, then excision must be typified by the method pursued with it, for it is clear that a wicked person must be put away (1 Cor. v.) If, then, it can be clearly, unmistakably shown, apart from all controversy, that the *treatment* is not excision, then it follows that defilement is quite distinct from wickedness.

First, then, how is defilement to be treated? There are at least three stages or degrees of treatment, corresponding to the degrees of seriousness in the uncleanness incurred. First, the uncleanness lasted “till the evening.” As the sun sank, the uncleanness passed with the setting sun, provided there had been a bathing of flesh and a washing of garments in water. Now, this is not difficult of clear interpretation—the flesh bathed in water is surely God’s holy Word applied to the person; a fresh subjection of the whole being to the blessed Word, with all its cleansing, restoring properties, leading to *confession and self-judgment*. The washing of garments as surely figures the cleansing of all our ways and habits by that same word. The sun going down, or “until the

evening," is, I think, the same idea, as we get in the words, "Be ye angry and sin not; *let not the sun go down* upon your wrath." The occasion for the anger passing, the anger must pass with it; or what may have been a divine emotion, quickly degenerates, in such poor, wretched creatures as we, into a fleshy indignation—a *sin*. Thus the occasion of the defilement passing, and no deep or lasting impression having been made, all that is needed is the washing of the flesh and garments and we are clean. For this first degree no outside intervention is needed. No clean person was called for to sprinkle water. It is possible that no one else might be even aware of the defilement; but, at least as to the priests (and are we not all priests?), no food of the sanctuary could be taken, no peace-offerings fed upon; *personal communion* with God could not be enjoyed. Could this, by any possible stretch of type or figure, point to the most severe form of assembly discipline known—the putting of a wicked person away from amongst yourselves, and putting him outside where God judgeth? Most surely not, or what would be left to answer to the *more serious* forms of defilement? There would be *nothing* left. And yet such an one is distinctly *defiled*, although it be only "till the evening;" and although in one case (Deut. xxiii. 10), the defilement is recognized as by chance, yet it is specifically said that he must even go outside the camp. It is surely clear, then, that this typifies personal communion marred, but not the awful dis-

cipline of "*excision*"—assuming that our brother means by that word "putting away."

But now as to the third form of dealing with defilement, as evidenced in the case of the persons with the running issue and the leper. Both were placed outside the camp until they were not merely ceremonially cleansed by water and sacrifice, but *healed*. As long as they were subject to the defiling disease, so long was restoration not even possible. No "clean person" could help them; no water of separation cleanse them. We may well recognise our own very limited powers of interpreting these things, and speak with what alone becomes us—lowliness of mind. I venture to suggest, rather than assert, that we have here the effects of sin evidenced as completely possessing the soul as the disease did the body—*such an one is under the power of the old corrupt nature*, sapping the very life and evidencing itself in hideous marks of spiritual death ever working. But even these are not quite on one level, for *priestly judgment* (is this not a figure of assembly judgment, so called?) was passed in one case, but not in the other. My space, however, forbids my following this attractive theme just now. Here, then, are some of whom we do not say they are not Israelites, but that they are permanently defiled, and defiling, till healed. We do not say the man under the power of the flesh is *not* a child of God, far less dare we assert that he *is* a child of God—it is not the question. He evidences in his life

marks of corruption working and *controlling* him, and he is thus a wicked person, to be put away. But, let us note well, *no mere contact, no mere touch, no mere outward association, no mere external link ever put any one in this place.* Not outward contact, but *inward evil* was manifested.

Still more severe was actually “cutting off,” which was at times identified apparently with stoning (Lev. xx. 2, 3, &c.). But this stoning is *never*—let us again mark it clearly, *never* for mere defilement, never for anything less than *wilful, presumptuous sin.* The will intelligently rushes against God—refuses the clearest evidences of truth. It is, in its most serious form, sinning wilfully after coming to a knowledge of the truth, for which there is no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment—awful case! For it is exactly to this the apostle refers when he said, “He that *despised* Moses’ law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” Awful case of extreme, wilful, and hopeless apostasy!

But between these two comes in an intermediate degree—a period of *seven* days’ separation from the privileges of the camp, God’s dwelling-place. Much more serious is this than the passing defilement until the evening. In

this case the defiled is dependent upon another, —at least in the case of touching anything that spoke of the death of man—for restoration. He could not merely bathe himself with simple water; *another* must sprinkle him, even with the holy water of separation. Let us, then, ask, what would the Lord teach us by defilement resulting from contact with a dead body, or, indeed, with anything that spoke of the death of a *man*? Surely no tent was free from this. No tribe, be its tents ever so near the sanctuary, could shut out death. All-pervasive it was, even in those “goodly tents” of Israel. What, then, does it figure? Nothing but God’s own clear Word as recorded in the New Testament is safe light for us upon any of these Old Testament figures. Now, the apostle Paul, in the 7th Romans, used words so closely approximating to those in Numb. xix. as at least to arrest our attention to them. There he utters that despairing groan: “Oh, wretched man that I am,” inasmuch as not only does he “*touch*,” but finds himself, in one sense, *to be* a “dead body.” Evidently it is “the flesh” that he means, for he says, “in me (that is in *my flesh*) there dwelleth no good thing.” He adds, that he does the thing that he hates, but cannot do what he would. To will is present with him, but he is powerless to carry out his will. It is the old, corrupt, evil nature that is identified with the first man, and which as yet tyrannizes over him, and as to which he says, “Who shall deliver me from the *body of this death*?”

But if this—the flesh—the evil nature of the first man, is the antitype of a dead body, does it equally answer to the “bone of a man” or a “grave” where he is buried, for these are equally defiling in Numbers xix.? I believe God’s Word says “yes,” too, in answer to this. Listen to that terrible arraignment by the Lord Jesus of the pretentious children of the first man, in Matthew xxiii. Outwardly fair as whited *sepulchres*, but within full of *dead men’s bones* and all uncleanness. “So ye,” he adds, “are full of hypocrisy and iniquity;” that is, the “dead men’s bones” are the equivalent of “corruption and violence,” the two old characteristics of evil in man after the flesh, that remain unchanging forever. These He saw in the days of old, before the deluge (Gen. vi. 12-13). These He sees now, and no other fruit will ever be found on *that* tree till Time’s end.

If this, then, be the light God would give us from His Word on “the dead body of a man, or a grave, or a bone,” we shall surely find the defilement of death *within* as well as *without*. Nor is God’s Word silent on this point either. “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man,” and in explanation the blessed Lord adds, “Whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught, but those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and *they* defile a man, for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,

murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man." The external things no longer defile. It is the *outpouring* of the evil from within, which is the awful characteristic of the flesh, that defiles.

How is it, then, that in the Old Testament it was always contact with that which was *outside* that defiled? I venture to suggest that the thing outside was exactly similar to that within; in figure, death outside found communion with a corresponding and more awful death *within*. Outward defilement pointed to what was *within a man*, as the clear light of the New Testament teaches us. So he who burnt the heifer, even the priest Eleazar, before whom she was slain, was unclean until the evening, simply because he could not come in contact with the death which speaks of sin without feeling its effect, which had to be acknowledged.

We are in a scene where the effect of sin is all-pervading, as was physical death itself in the camp of Israel. *Who can possibly* escape defilement in this world when we have another similar moral death pervading the world within?

Well, One, at least, did pass through it undefiled. Look at Him touching "the dead body of a man" again and again, and was *He defiled*? Perish the blasphemous thought! In Him *good* overcomes evil—*life* overcomes death. Here alone, then, do I find any hope of escape. For unless we, too, can overcome

evil with good, aye, *death with life*, we must be overcome and defiled. Who is sufficient for these things? *One* again, who said: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "Abide in Me," for "who is he that overcometh the world, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." As we value communion with Him, as we fear defilement, O let us, beloved readers, "*abide in Him*."

Not far did the Israelites of old have to look for evidence of death, as we have said. Not far have you and I to look for its antitype. Surely, not in my brethren at all, but in myself, and in the old-creation scene through which I walk, but to which I, through grace, do *not* belong.

The touch of death within, however, puts me again into that old creation with which my flesh has communion. The slightest walking in the flesh brings about the "touch."

Resurrection in that case must tell once more its glorious, triumphant story by the water of separation sprinkled on the third or resurrection day. And mark the beautiful suggestiveness of this: for as surely as the third day speaks of the perfect Sacrifice in *resurrection*, so surely do we come to the death of the holy Offering by going back to the *first* day. That is, the day—the very day—that saw my defilement by the touch of death, saw the provision made for it by the death of the Holy One. Once more now may we hear with opened ears the words, "*If any man sin* we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the

Righteous." Thus on the third day is the water of separation sprinkled. In the power of the perfectly finished work, perfectly accepted, the judgment that long ago passed upon another is applied to the conscience of the defiled one, by one in undisturbed communion (a clean person) in the spirit of lowly self-judgment (hyssop). He is left still to meditate on this—to let it do its work. Not lightly is he to account of defilement, but must let what it has cost to cleanse him, even from a "touch," sink deeply into his heart. It is not only a perfect work *without*, but a perfect work *within*, that God does with such a soul, as, indeed, is figured by His work in the old creation, in which at last He saw everything "very good." Neither does He pause nor rest until He can again say *that*. So seven days must pass, and again on the seventh day, by a second sprinkling of the water of separation, it is recognised that the complete work *in Him* is the effect of the same wondrous work of the Cross. Now perfectly restored in soul, he is on a level with the burner of the heifer, with the gatherer of the ashes, with the one who has just sprinkled him; and by washing the person and garments—not again in the water of separation, but simply in water—he is clean "at evening," and restored to his holy, happy place in the new-creation scene where death is never suffered to intrude.

Thus have I ventured to skim the surface of a few verses in this precious chapter. I long to go into it more deeply with my brethren,

but it is enough now to note that the external application in the case we have been considering is not one of judgment, but *mercy*, not of *putting away*, but of *restoring*. The hand that comes on the third and seventh day has not a stone in it, but the lowly hyssop and the holy water of separation. The whole action speaks both of the depth of the defilement and of the holiness of the grace that restores. "Outside the camp," seven days are passed in company with the leper and him that hath the issue on a level with them in one sense, but on a very different level in another sense.

How clear, simple, and evident this distinction really is in every-day life. A father does not turn a child out of the house because he has soiled hands or face—is defiled—but tells him that full provision is made for the uncleanness; indeed, if very slight it is removed then and there, or he is sent to wash himself.

If it be *very* serious, a brother may even go with him to cleanse him; he is *not* cast out, nor is it suggested that he "*merits excision*." But if he rebel and refuse to be cleansed (as is suggested by Num. xix. 20) then an entirely different element comes into the question—an evil will is at work, and far more serious measures are necessarily resorted to.

Defilement may keep him from the family circle for a time—*personal communion* is necessarily interfered with from the very nature of the case—but the great effort and desire of all—if the affections of the family be in healthy activity—is *restoration*, not excision; such an

one is not dealt with as a stone "in which the plague is." *That* is reserved as the very last resource—an awful end, involving the deepest grief to all.

In the same way nothing can be clearer than that there is the same divine distinction made, both in type and antitype, between *defilement*, which might be quite accidental, as men speak—although sin is at the root of every defilement and must be so recognised—and wilful *wickedness*. What dishonour to Christ's name, what sorrows, what shame, what loss has been occasioned by overlooking this distinction—by putting all on one dead level of wickedness, and thus making all to "*merit excision*"!

Before closing, let us turn to one other most significant scripture—Lev. xxi. 1 to 3. Here the priests, the sons of Aaron, are actually *permitted* to be defiled. "For his kin that is near unto him, for his mother . . . *he may be defiled.*" If defilement were the equivalent of wickedness, if the defiled one were the type of a wicked person, if "outside the camp" were the figure of "excision"—putting without "where God judgeth"—would the infinitely holy God have said to His priest that he might do that which would necessarily bring him under *His judgment*? Surely this were impossible. But He *might* say, in perfect consistency with His own holy and gracious character, that His priest may let the death of one near and dear to him have such an effect as to make him need the

provision which His own tender grace had already made for restoring him. Outside the camp the bereaved and defiled priest must go. There is no word of exception in Numbers v. "*Whosoever* is defiled by the dead" includes the priest as well as the poorest man of the tribes; and in that place which tells of Him who suffered "without the gate" all the gracious means of restoration are used; there he learns experimentally all that Jehovah has provided for his cleansing, and infinitely precious and eternally valuable lessons are there learned. But sure it is—and it is the only point for which the scripture is here quoted—that defilement is not the equivalent of wickedness, nor does a defiled one merit the excision of a wicked one; on the contrary, he proves the gracious, faithful restoration of him "who is spiritual," and who, as led of the Spirit, follows the example of Him who washed, and does wash—O what grace and condescension infinite!—the defiled feet of His disciples, as they journeyed through a world filled with defiling death on every side. Happy indeed is that man! (see Jno. xiii.)

Let those, and only those, who desire to maintain mere party strife, say that in thus seeking to discern between things that differ, we are "pleading for defilement." Far, far be it. Defilement means loss, and, for the time being, uselessness, and often the bitter weeping as of poor Peter. He, too, who most truly knows the costly provision that divine grace has made for uncleanness, will loathe it most and be the

last to say anything approaching to "let us continue in sin that grace may abound." He who says *that*, is not a defiled, but a *wicked* person.

The whole tenor of God's Word as to defilement shows most clearly its all-pervasive character throughout the old creation. It is everywhere—within, without. Not in one place or in a few spots of earth only—where some heinous wickedness, as noted in 1 Cor. v. or 2 John, is pointed out—but as widespread as "death" of old. Great is the danger of mistake as to this—of reckoning that if I am apart from this evil person, or that wicked doctrine, I am *therefore* free from the danger of defilement. Far from it. If foolish thought be permitted, a "dead, creeping thing" has touched me. If I share in the covetous spirit of the world, in business, or in daily work, I have communion with that which is "dead," and am defiled. Defilement is therefore more far-reaching—more deeply-cutting—than our dear brother's pamphlet would teach. But, on the other hand, never are we to separate from or put away from us, in discipline, an evidently true saint who is simply defiled. It is an utter mistake. We shall *never end* in separating from one another on such a principle. Never shall we be together consistently with it. Defilement is between God and the soul—the soul's communion is marred, and needs immediate restoration. If it be so serious as to be evidenced to others, and need another's

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