

But is this to be a surprise to us? Are we to think that the steward of God in this age would have proved faithful, since every other steward of His, from the beginning hitherto, as we have already seen, had been judged and set aside? The church was to have been under her Lord, and in the Spirit, the light of the world, the pillar and ground of the truth. But she has become worse than darkness—a false beacon on the hill that has betrayed the traveller. But Adam the steward of Eden, at the beginning; then Noah, lord of the world that now is; and then Israel the husbandman of the vineyard in Judea, had already been found wanting. The king had failed ere this, the priest, the prophet—and now the candlestick. It is a tale told again and again: the unfaithfulness of man as responsible to God, the steward called to give in his account, and that ending in the stewardship being taken away from him. The house of prayer, so to speak, has always become a den of thieves.

But further, as to the course of dispensations. In each of them, while each was still subsisting, there has been separation after separation. See this in Israel,—Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, were, each of them, returned captives, a separated remnant who, with their companions, left Babylon. But the day came, the day of the prophet Malachi, when “they that feared the Lord” had to separate from the returned captives, and “speak often one to another,” as though they had been *another* remnant (Mal. iii).

So in Christendom. The Reformation, for instance, was a time of separation. But from the persistive, growing, and accredited corruption which still or again prevailed, further withdrawing or separation has again and again had to take