

The background of the entire image is a vibrant cosmic nebula. It features a central bright yellow and orange glow that fades into deep purples and blues towards the edges. Numerous small, bright stars are scattered throughout the scene, adding to the celestial atmosphere. The overall effect is one of vastness and divine light.

CHRIST AND ANTICHRIST

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1. Christ and Antichrist

Present Truth, August 10, 1893

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ANTICHRIST means opposed to Christ. The spirit of an-
tichrist is, therefore, the spirit that is opposed to the
Spirit of Christ. The apostle John says:

1 John 4

³ And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is
come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of an-
tichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and
even now already is it in the world.

There are many forms of it, for the same apostle says:

1 John 2

¹⁸ Even now there are many antichrists.

But no matter what the form or the disguise, the spirit of
antichrist is primarily the spirit of Satan, for his is...

Ephesians 2

² ...the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

The great opponent of Christ does not always carry on his
work of opposition openly.

2 Corinthians 11

¹⁴ [He] is transformed into an angel of light,

and...

Revelation 12

⁹ ...deceives the whole world.

Now no one can deceive unless he appears to tell the truth;

therefore it must be expected that Satan will in his work counterfeit the truth as nearly as he can. Christ warns us:

Matthew 24

²⁴ There shall arise false christs, and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

This being the case, no one need be surprised to find that Satan has carried and does still carry on his work under the guise of Christianity. It is only when people are quite fully given to his service, and there are few to challenge it, that he throws off his disguise.

If it were possible, he would deceive the very elect. And why is it not possible to deceive them? Christ gives the answer. He said of the shepherd of the sheep,

John 10

³ When He puts forth His own sheep, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him; for they know His voice.

⁴ And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.

And then He said,

¹⁴ I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

In becoming acquainted with Christ, therefore, and in that way only, can we escape the deceptions of the enemy.

The Spirit of Christ

It is therefore necessary that we first study briefly the spirit of Christ, so that we may know by contrast the spirit of antichrist. This is very clearly set forth by the apostle Paul, in his exhortation to us to have the same Spirit. He says:

Philippians 2 [RV]

¹ If there is therefore any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mer-

cies and compassions,

² Fulfill my joy, that you be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind;

³ Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting others better than himself;

⁴ Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.

⁵ Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God,

⁷ But emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men;

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

The characteristic of Christ is here seen to be humility. He says of Himself,

Matthew 11

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.

Note well that when He came to earth He took upon Himself only the form of a servant. That does not mean that He did not serve, for He also said that He...

Matthew 20

²⁸ ...came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

To His disciples He said on another occasion,

Luke 22

²⁷ I am among you as He that serves.

What is meant is that He had only to take the form of a servant, because He had the mind to serve before He came to the earth to give His life on the cross.

He was in the beginning with God, and He was God (*John* 1:1), yet He had the spirit of service. The mind that was in

Christ was the same when He was in heaven that it was when He came to earth. The mind that was shown in His service on earth, when He went about doing good, and which found its most natural expression in washing His disciples' feet, was the same mind that led Him to divest Himself of the glory and riches He had in heaven. He is the same "yesterday, and today, and for ever" (*Hebrews* 13:8).

And so He was the same before He came to earth, that He was on earth, and that He is now in heaven, and that He will be when the saints are all gathered with Him in glory; and of that time He says that He will make His followers sit down to meat, and will gird Himself, and will come forth and serve them. *Luke* 12:37. This is the mind and character of Christ.

Seeking Not His Own

But this does not show it all. When He was in the form of God, He "emptied Himself," because He did not count it a prize—a thing to be grasped—to be on an equality with God. "By inheritance" He had a more excellent name than the angels. *Hebrews* 1:4. He was the Son of God by birth, and so was by birth "heir of all things." *Hebrews* 1:2. Everything was His by right.

Colossians 1

¹⁶ All things were created by Him, and for Him.

His possession of them worked no injustice to any. And yet the mind that was in Him did not lead Him to grasp them and hold them fast.

2 Corinthians 8

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.

Romans 8

⁹ Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of

His.

Therefore since Christ did not seize upon and hold fast to that which was His by right, it is evident that those who are His must not be characterized by the spirit of self-seeking. Love, which is the bond of perfectness (*Colossians* 3:14), “seeks not her own.” *1 Corinthians* 13:5.

This is a far different spirit from what prevails among men. The highest virtue known among men is for a man not to seek that which is not his own. The common form of self-justification is,

“I want nothing but what is due me; I simply want my rights.”

But that desire was not in Christ. He gave up His own. He committed everything into the care of the Father, who “highly exalted Him” (*Philippians* 2:9), because of the mind that was in Him.

To be sure it looked very dark for the Son of God for a while. It seemed as though He were forgotten even by the Father.

Isaiah 53

³ He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But He trusted God, and God did not forsake Him. Therefore we are exhorted,

Romans 12

¹⁹ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.

The mind that was in Christ was the mind of God, for...

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁹ ...God was in Christ.

When Christ emptied Himself, it was that God might appear;

Colossians 2

⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The love that seeks not her own is the love of God, which is manifested toward us.

Psalms 103

¹⁰ He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

If men who stand so firmly on their rights, demanding that they shall be accorded everything that is due them, were consistent, and claimed the same thing from God, it would fare hard with them. God treats us better than we deserve, in order that we may learn how we ought to treat others.

Colossians 3

¹² Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

¹³ Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do you.

The Spirit of Antichrist

We have not more than begun to study of the Spirit of Christ, for that is an inexhaustible subject; but we have sufficient outline of it before us to form a sharp contrast with the spirit of antichrist.

Christ declared that His kingdom was not of this world, whereas Satan claims the whole world as his own. See *Luke* 4:5-6. Therefore he is called:

2 Corinthians 4

⁴ ...the God of this world,

and:

John 14

³⁰ ...the prince of this world.

It is for this reason that in the 28th chapter of *Ezekiel*, Satan is represented as the king of Tyre, while the nominal king is called the prince of Tyre. When wicked men ruled they are simply instruments in the hands of Satan, who is the real ruler. He is king, while they are only princes. The Scripture referred to is this:

Ezekiel 28

¹² Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; you seal up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

¹³ You have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of your tabrets and of your pipes was prepared in you in the day that you were created.

¹⁴ You are the anointed cherub that covers; and I have set you so; you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

¹⁵ You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

¹⁶ By the multitude of your merchandise they have filled the midst of you with violence, and you have sinned; therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

¹⁷ Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness; I will cast you to the ground, I will lay you before kings, that they may behold you.

The reading of this is sufficient to show that it does not ap-

ply to man. None but Satan, who “abode not in the truth” (*John* 8:44), can here be described. He lost his first estate because his heart was lifted up on account of his beauty.

This is the first indication of the spirit of antichrist,—thinking of self. Now we will learn to what extent Satan’s heart was lifted up, and what was the mind that was in him. Under the figure of the king of Babylon, he is thus addressed:

Isaiah 14

¹² How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations!

¹³ For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north;

¹⁴ I ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Note that Satan’s thought was all of self. The pronoun “I” is most on his tongue. He was going to be like the Most High. He would place his throne by the side of the throne of God. He was not content with being first among the angels; he must be God. He was sure that his talents and beauty deserved a far higher place than was granted him. Ambition caused his fall.

Mark the contrast between Christ and Satan. Christ had everything by right, being God by nature, yet He resigned all. He would not look out for His own interests, and let others look out for themselves; He emptied Himself, and thought only of others. Satan had nothing of his own, but only that which was given him, yet he designed to seize everything. He was a created being, yet he thought that he ought to be God, and that he could be. He would seize what his ambition craved, no matter what the consequences of others. This is the spirit of antichrist.

Remember that selfish ambition is never satisfied. The man who covets ten thousand pounds craves ten thousand more when he has that. The man who thinks that his happiness depends upon his getting the farm that joins his, still wants the land that joins his after he has obtained the first lot; and he keeps on wanting the land that joins his, as long as he lives. Alexander and Napoleon were never satisfied with conquest.

And so it would have been with Satan, if it had been possible for him to carry his mad ambition into effect, and become like God. He thought that this would satisfy him; but if he had got that, he would not have been content. Nothing would have done then but to put God out of the way, so that he could reign alone.

This is evident from what he really tried to do. When Christ was here on earth, representing God to men, Satan constantly tried to kill Him.

- It was at his instigation that the men of Nazareth tried to throw Jesus headlong down the precipice, and the Jews often took up stones to stone Him.
- It was he that put it into the heart of Judas to betray the Lord, and
- he it was that stirred up the rulers of the Jews to crucify Him.

What Satan tried to do on earth was just what he would have proceeded to do in heaven, and if he had been allowed to place his throne by the side of that of God. Indeed, he did not hesitate to lift up his hand against the Most High in heaven itself, for we read:

Revelation 12

⁷ And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

⁸ And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more

in heaven.

⁹ And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

The Children of Disobedience

Satan is called:

- “the prince of this world” (*John* 12:31),
- “the god of this world” (*2 Corinthians* 4:4),
- the ruler “of the darkness of this world” (*Ephesians* 6:12), and
- “the prince of the power of the air.” *Ephesians* 2:2.

The “course of this world” (*Ephesians* 2:2) is according to the guidance of Satan, and therefore he is called:

Ephesians 2

² The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

As soon as he was cast out of heaven, he set to work to deceive men, as he had deceived many of the angels of heaven. From the account of the way in which he deceived our first parents, we may learn how he deceived the angels, and how he still works. The record runs thus:

Genesis 3

¹ Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

² And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden;

³ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

⁴ And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die;

⁵ For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

The fifth verse is better rendered in the *Revised Version*, where we have “God,” instead of “gods.” Satan made the definite statement to Eve, that if they should eat from the forbidden tree, they should be like God. In this we see the same spirit working that caused his own fall. He said, “I will be like the Most High;” and when he fell he set about compassing the fall of man by instilling the same desire into him.

Let no one get the idea that it is wrong to desire to be like God. That is right, provided we wish to be like Him in His own way. To wish to be as wise and as powerful as God, is wrong, because that is virtually to wish to be God. The desire to be like God even in goodness becomes a source of evil, if the thought is to make ourselves like Him; for that implies a disposition to assume the power of God.

The evil lies in thinking of self, and seeking self. If we allow God to work in us that which is good, in His own way, He will make us like Himself in holiness; but this is far different from the motive that actuated Satan, and which he has put into mankind. That was a selfish ambition to make self equal with God.

Notice how Satan proceeded to work Eve up to this unlawful desire. Instead of the words, “Yea, has God said,” etc., the first verse is better rendered, as by Young, “Is it true that God has said,” etc. Even this does not fully convey the sense of the Hebrew, which implies a sneer. Satan would first induce them to believe that God was unjust in His requirements. This is what was involved in his question:

“Can it be possible that God would do so unjust a thing as to forbid you to eat of all the trees of the garden? I have heard so, but it is so monstrous, so tyrannical a requirement, that I can scarcely believe it.”

Thus with feigned words, under the cover of pretended interest in the good name of God, he sowed the seeds of distrust. Then when Eve replied that they were allowed to eat of every tree but the one, he said,

Genesis 3

⁴ You shall not surely die;

⁵ For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be like God.

He had instilled so much of his own spirit into her, that he could now openly charge God with gross injustice. He made her believe that they were really equal with God, but that God did not want them to know it, because He wanted to exalt Himself at their expense; that the forbidden fruit would open their eyes to their high estate, of which God was unjustly depriving them; that instead of being subject to God, they were entitled to rule equally with Him.

He flattered her till, like himself before his fall, her heart was lifted up because of her beauty, and she thought herself worthy of the highest dignity. In short, Satan led her to think of herself instead of God.

The Course of This World

We are now giving a simple outline of the subject, and cannot at this time follow out the details, that will be done later, but now we wish to go on to show how the spirit that was in Lucifer, which caused him to become the destroyer, and which, being instilled into the minds of our first parents, caused their fall, has been perpetuated through their descendants, so that the course of this world is according to the mind of Satan, the spirit that now works in the children of

disobedience.

In the 1st chapter of *Romans* we have a picture of the heathen world, and of the process by which they fell from the knowledge of God to their low estate. At present we care only for the story of their fall. Here it is:

Romans 1

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them.

²⁰ For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves;

²⁵ Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator.

Satan fell because his heart was lifted up on account of his beauty. He thought that nothing in the universe was above his merits, or beyond his capacity. Having fallen, he put the same spirit into the hearts of our first parents, inducing them to think that they were in themselves as good as God, and worthy of as high a place as He had. They reached out for everything, and lost everything.

The same spirit has continued in men until the present day, except where men have allowed the Spirit of Christ to expel it.

The heathen reached their low position because they professed themselves to be wise, and thus cut themselves off from God, the only source of wisdom.

In looking over these typical cases, it will not be difficult to see that love of self is the cause of all the trouble. Lucifer was perfect in heaven until iniquity was found in him, and that iniquity was all wrapped up in the first thought of self. It was his thinking of and admiring self, and his consequent seeking for the advancement of self, that made him the dragon,

Revelation 12

⁹ ...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan.

Therefore we are justified in saying that the spirit of antichrist is simply the spirit of self. Wherever self predominates, there Satan rules. The Spirit that works in the children of disobedience, is the spirit of self.

It cannot be too fully learned that self is of Satan. Every manifestation of self is nothing but the manifestation of the working of Satan in man. Every sin among men has sprung from selfishness; and the perilous times of the last days will be due to the fact that...

2 Timothy 3

² ...men shall be lovers of their own selves.

On the other hand,

Romans 15

⁸ Christ pleased not Himself.

Whoever will be His disciple must deny Himself. As Christ emptied Himself, and allowed God to appear in His fullness, so the disciples of Christ must allow Him to come into their hearts, driving away self by the same power by which He emptied Himself, that they may be...

Ephesians 3

¹⁹ ...filled with all the fullness of God.

We have now before us in outline the two spirits,—that of Christ, and that of antichrist. In the next paper, if the Lord will, we shall begin to consider some of the special lines in which the spirit of antichrist—self—has developed, in opposition to the Spirit of Christ.¹

¹ **Editor's note:** the article in the “next paper” that Waggoner refers to, either did not materialize, or is not included in the published periodical collections. The next article that mentioned antichrist was “Restoring the Erring”, which appeared 3 weeks later, and is included as Chapter 3 in this publication. As well, an article published 4 months later, which is included as Chapter 4 in this publication, “The Church: True and False” also somewhat answers to what Waggoner was describing, so it could be that these are the articles he was referring to, and perhaps he just didn't find time to finish writing them for the “next paper”.

2. Confessing Christ in the Flesh

Present Truth, March 8, 1894

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What Confession Is

1 John 4

² Hereby know you the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

³ And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.

CONFESSION means, speaking the same thing; acknowledging that which is said; agreeing together. The confession of sin is the acknowledgment of sin that has been pointed out. The Holy Spirit comes as a convicter of sin, and says, "You have sinned in this thing," and we confess our sin when we speak the same thing, and say, "Yes; that is true."

1 John 1

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

An instance of this is found in the case of David, who had slain Uriah in battle, and taken his wife. Nathan the prophet was sent to rebuke him, and by means of a parable he made

the enormity of the sin stand out vividly before the king. Then he said to him,

2 Samuel 12

⁷ You are the man.

¹³ And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.

There was confession. And there was faithfulness in forgiving, according to the promise; for immediately Nathan replied,

¹³ The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

David agreed with the Lord, speaking the same thing. That was true confession. Confession, therefore, means the acknowledging of what has been made known to us.

Christ in Human Flesh

1 John 4

³ Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.

It does not say that every spirit that openly denies it, but every spirit that does not confess it. Bearing in mind what is meant by confession, we learn from these verses in John's epistle that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a fact, whether we confess it or not.

John 1

¹⁴ The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.

Hebrews 2

¹⁶ For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.

¹⁷ Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconcilia-

tion for the sins of the people.

¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.

The Apostle Peter exhorts us by this fact:

1 Peter 4

¹ Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin;

² That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

He who arms himself with the same mind as Christ, will not, even while remaining in the flesh, live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of the flesh; because although Christ suffered in the flesh, being tempted in all points like as we are, yet it was without sin. He the Son of God, coming...

Romans 8

³ ...in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

Nature of the Flesh

We have here the statement of Scripture that Jesus Christ, the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and who was and is God,

John 1

¹⁴ ...was made flesh and dwelt among us [in us],...full of grace and truth.

In being made flesh, He took upon Him the same kind of flesh that we have, the flesh of man, which is sin, for Paul said on Mars Hill:

Acts 17

²⁶ [God] has made of one blood all nations of men.

The *Revised Version* has it that God has made us one, that is, one person, Adam, all persons, thus showing emphatically

that all human flesh is the same. The apostle also says that there is...

1 Corinthians 15

³⁹ ...one kind of flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes.

So that there is but one flesh of man; so that whether white or black, yellow or another-color, whether dwelling in Europe, Asia, or Africa, all men are of one flesh.

Galatians 5

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.

This is the description of human flesh. Whatever we may know of man and of the wickedness of men in the flesh, we may each one know this, that is the wickedness of our flesh. This is something which should ever keep down pride and self-exaltation in the human heart.

The cruelty and abominable deeds that startle us, are the natural works which spring spontaneously out of just such flesh as we all have. When we hear of deeds of savagery, whether among civilized or uncivilized people, all feel the indignation which we must all feel, we are reminded when our indignation begins to boil over into condemnation, that there is but one flesh of man.

So we have nothing to boast of over another. Boasting is excluded, and our indignation turns to shame, because such are we by nature.

Bearing Curse

And now we read that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, when He took upon Himself the nature of man; was made in

the likeness of sinful flesh,

Hebrews 2

¹⁷ ...in all things like unto His brethren;

And more than that, we read that even now He is:

Hebrews 4

¹⁵ ...touched with the feeling of our infirmities [our weaknesses].

He has not forgotten the temptation and suffering which He felt when upon the earth; but He knows and feels it still. Seven hundred years before Christ was manifested in the flesh, Isaiah said by the Spirit:

Isaiah 53

⁶ The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

1 Peter 1

²⁰ [Jesus Christ] was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13

⁸ [He is the] Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

It is by Him and in Him that we have lived and do “live, and move, and have our being.” *Acts* 17:28. He is the true light that...

John 1

⁹ ...lights every man that comes into the world;

—and that light is the life of men. *John* 1:4.

- It is only by the life which is given to men through the grace of God in Christ, that men have the power to commit the evil deeds which we see and know.
- It is the breath of life which God breathed into man's nostrils, and which He still continues to them, that men use in blaspheming the name of God.
- It is the power which not only comes from God, but is

the life of God, which men pervert in fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.

Perverting God's Life

When God in His mercy gave to sinful man a probation, and permitted him to live on this earth, so that he was not blotted out of existence in the very act of sinning, He simply continued to him for a time a portion of His own life, with which to live that probation.

He gave man His own life, so that he might show whether he would live that life to the glory of God, by allowing Christ to direct the life, and live it in him, or whether he would take it and still pervert it to his own base uses. In Him all men live and have their being, and so “the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Thus it is that the Lord says,

Isaiah 43

²³ You have made me to serve with your sins.

That life of Christ is in every man that comes into the world, the life by which he lives and moves, and it is that which every man uses and perverts in the commission of sin. So that every sin committed in the flesh since the fall of Adam is a sin charged up to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is laid on Him.

The Source of All Good

This serves to explain the good traits, the generous impulses, and the desires for righteousness, which are manifest to a greater or lesser extent in all men. Even the wickedest men show at times good traits, and have times of yielding to better influences. These good traits and impulses and occasional longings for righteousness, are the result of the Divine light—the life of Christ—which is given to every man. They are the strivings of the Spirit. The flesh itself is totally corrupt, and irreclaimable, so that every good thing must come from God.

Christ has not forgotten, and cannot forget the sufferings of the temptations incident to sinful flesh; because He still lives, and His life is still given to man, and will continue to be given to all men, even to sinners, as long as probation continues. All men still live by it, and therefore He is now identified with human flesh, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Inasmuch, therefore, as He suffered in the flesh for sin, and yielded up the life which had been perverted by men in sin,

Hebrews 7

²⁵ He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.

The Mystery of Godliness

When Christ was here on the earth in the flesh, it was God manifest in the flesh. He said,

John 14

¹⁰ Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?

God was in Him in the flesh which He voluntarily took,—the only begotten Son abode in the bosom of the Father, and therefore He knew no sin, although in sinful flesh. This is “the mystery of godliness.” *1 Timothy* 3:16.

So we have this glorious fact, the confession of which will lift the soul up to God, the fact that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, that all iniquity is laid upon Him and charged up to Him, and that He bears all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies of the flesh of man. He accepts it. And He still bears it, neither will He lay it off until He comes...

Hebrews 9

²⁸ ...the second time without sin unto salvation.

This being a fact by the word of God, whosoever confesses

the fact, whosoever “confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God,” and whosoever “confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.”

But it is a fact whether it is confessed or not. It is a glorious truth,—one with which one can go to the outcast and tempted,—that although Christ has...

1 Peter 3

²² ...gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him,

—yet He still abides with men. Before the first advent His life was the light of men, and upon Him was laid the iniquity of all. And when He came to earth revealed as a man, it was simply in the line of giving to us a larger manifestation of the fact, and showing to us what God in the flesh, unhindered and not denied, means.

Jesus Christ witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate. *1 Timothy* 6:13. And that confession, and that witness to the truth, He maintained throughout His life,—that He was the Son of God, and that the Father dwelt in Him. He confessed the Father’s name before the world. In *Psalms* 22 it is written:

Psalm 22

²² I will declare Your name unto my brethren.

And in *John* 17 Christ repeats it:

John 17

²⁶ I have declared unto them Your name.

Every moment of His life He was confessing and never denying that He came from God and went to God, always acknowledging that the Father was in Him. He confessed:

John 5

³⁰ I can of my own self do nothing.

John 14

¹⁰ The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwells in me, He does the works.

He confessed continually that God had come in His flesh, and showed to us what the life of God in human flesh means when it is always confessed, never denied, and never perverted.

Help for the Tempted

And now He “is come in the flesh.” You can go to the tempted and outcast with that, and assure them that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and that every sin that they have committed, and even the sinful nature which led them into those sins, He takes upon Himself, and identifies Himself with it, assuming all the responsibility for the sins committed with the life which has been perverted.

Oh, the blessedness of the fact that God has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. *2 Corinthians* 5:21. Tempted, and suffering as no man ever yet suffered in the flesh for sin, He knew no sin. Again and again He said of Himself He could do nothing, but He trusted God; and when we read that Jesus Christ came and took all the weaknesses of sinful flesh, we also read that these weaknesses never manifested themselves in His life.

Therefore when from the heart we confess the fact which the Scripture tells us, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh even now, and even in us, because we are in the flesh, the recognition of that brings also the other fact with it, that in Him was no sin while in the flesh; therefore His life, while we confess it, cleanses us from sin.

This is not a fact to be passed over once for all. It is not something to be experienced one moment, and then to be

looked back upon as an experience, as many regard conversion or the new birth. Present experience is what counts. He that “confesses”—is confessing—is of God. He that confesses it day by day, and hour by hour, and moment by moment, living continually in the recognition that Christ is in him, and that it is His life that he has,—He is of God.

1 Peter 3

¹⁸ For Christ also has suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

It was in order that we might abide in Him, and His life be perfectly manifested in us. That part of it Christ has performed. “I in them,” yes, in sinful flesh. Now He wants us to acknowledge that fact continually, that we may thus be in Him. He in us means that He has taken all of our sins and carried our sorrows,—that our burdens are upon Him, and that He feels them. We in Him means that we are made “the righteousness of God in Him,” and that all His righteousness which He had in the flesh is ours. All our sin is His, all His righteousness is ours. He in us to bear the sin, that we may bear the righteousness.

There is everlasting glory and life in that confession; for:

John 17

³ This is life eternal that we might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

This weakness of ours He feels; for Christ is come in the flesh. This sin He has borne. He knows all about it. Not only did He bear it then, but He bears it still, since it is His life that He has given us. He gave it to us, because He “tasted death for every man,” and it is His life that feels and meets the pressure of this sinful flesh of ours.

Those evil desires, that thirst for liquor, that craving of appetite, the longings of the flesh,—He has felt it all, and even now identifies Himself with us, and says,

“I know that. It touches Me. I am come in the flesh, have identified Myself with it, and every sin is laid on Me.”

Just as soon as we can know that, and while we continue to know it, the soul is filled with joy unspeakable. It makes known to us the fact that the One who feels that sin, who identifies Himself with us in it, is the glorious Son of God in whom is no sin, and therefore all His righteousness is ours, and we are in Him as He is in us. For the knowledge that He bears the sin, is the knowledge that we are freed from its guilt and power.

A Present Saviour

1 John 4

³ Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.

It is not every spirit that says that it is not a fact, not every spirit in whom it is not a fact; for it is a fact. But every spirit that does not confess that Christ is come—not *has come*, but *now is come*—is not of God. It is always *now*.

And when we confess this fact, that Jesus Christ identifies Himself with us in our sinfulness, He also confesses us before the Father in His righteousness, and we are one with Him. So the righteousness of faith speaks on this wise,

Romans 10

⁶ Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above!)

He is come down in the likeness of sinful flesh.

⁷ Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

He is risen.

⁸ But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach;

⁹ That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Confess what? That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. There is something in that which every man in this world may lay hold of and find in it a lifting up.

Christ's Life God's Life

We confess that His life is ours. Everything then is to be brought to the touchstone of the life of Christ. We confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and His righteousness is ours, because His life has no sin in it. Sin is “the transgression of the law” (*1 John* 3:4), and the law was in His heart (*Psalms* 40:8), and “out of the heart are the issues of life.” *Proverbs* 4:23. So the life of Christ is the law of God. He said,

John 15

¹⁰ I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.

Therefore when we confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, it means that the life we live is the life of Christ, —“Christ lives in me,”—and we cannot confess that unless we are letting Him live the life in His own way.

We must not be so presumptuous as to think that we can live the life of Christ ourselves. We have no power to do it. Therefore we shall find that to confess the life of Christ, to confess that He is come in the flesh, is to confess that while in the flesh He kept the commandments of God; and while we confess that, we confess allegiance to the law of God, that He may live it in us.

Let us see what is involved in the confession that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and that in the perfect example that He has set us in the flesh, He kept the Father's commandments. What will He live in us when we confess that He is

come in our flesh, and when we by continually confessing that fact, allow Him to live the life in His own way?

Believing Unto Righteousness

Exodus 20

³ You shall have no other gods before me.

The tempter showed to Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, and said,

Matthew 4

⁹ All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me.

But the Saviour said,

¹⁰ Get hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.

Therefore when the devil presents himself to us in any form, to bring something between our soul and God, if we confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, then He says in us and for us,

“You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.”

“Then the devil left Him,” and so he must leave us when Christ living in us commands him to depart.

Exodus 20

⁷ You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Christ said to the Father,

Psalms 22 [John 17:26]

²² I have declared Your name unto my brethren.

And not in vain did He do it, for Christ came not in vain; He did not suffer in vain. So we find wrought in us, the utmost reverence for the name of God.

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

There was once a time when the Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath day, as the disciples were allowed without rebuke to pluck the ears of corn, thrashing out the grain and eating it as they walked through the fields. But He said that the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath day; He had not broken it, because it was His day.

Then at another time a man was healed on the Sabbath day, and the Jews accused Him of breaking the Sabbath; but He told them that it is "lawful to do well on the Sabbath days." *Matthew* 12:12. It is one of the commandments of God of which He said, "I have kept my Father's commandments." He was not a breaker of the Sabbath commandment which says,

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall you labor and do all your work;

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates;

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

That is the day on which Christ said it was lawful to do well; not to do ill. It is the seventh day of the week, the last day, which the Jews professed to keep, but did not. Christ kept it, and He comes in our flesh for the purpose of keeping it in us.

So when we have confessed for years, it may be, that Christ is come in the flesh, that His life is in us, there comes to us at last the fact that He always kept the commandments, and it dawns upon us that the fourth is one of them, and that it enjoins the observance of the seventh day, the Sabbath.

But it will be inconvenient for us to keep it, and will cause the loss of friends, and possibly the loss of our very means of gaining a living. Suppose we say,

“We will still confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, but we cannot go so far as to keep the Sabbath of the Lord,—the seventh day.”

How will that do? “He that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God;” but all the time Jesus was in the flesh, the will of the Father was perfectly done in Him. It is not with the mouth alone that confession is made.

1 John 3

¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Of some it is written,

Titus 1

¹⁶ They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him.

It is from the heart that the true confession comes. “He that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.” But Jesus Christ in the flesh always did and does the will of God; therefore we confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,—our flesh,—when we yield to everything that the Scriptures reveal to us in His life. Whenever a new feature of His life appears, we are to say to Him,

“Live this in us also by Your own life. Keep the Sabbath in us, even as You did in the flesh in Judea and Galilee.”

Then again the Lord says,

Exodus 20

¹² Honor your father and your mother.

And Jesus said,

John 8

⁴⁹ I honor my Father.

And further we read in *Luke 2:51*, that as a child Jesus was subject unto His parents. So a child, as well as older people confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and, confessing that, they will have His obedience lived in them: Christ learned obedience, and will impart to them obedience.

Exodus 20

¹³ You shall not kill.

Christ said,

Luke 9

⁵⁶ The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

So far was He from taking men's lives, that He laid down His own life to save them. So then He who from the heart confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, will be ever careful of the welfare of others.

Exodus 20

¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.

Jesus is of purer eyes than to look upon evil. He was pure in heart. So, knowing that He felt the strivings of the lusts of the flesh, because He was tempted in all points as we are, but yet without sin; if when we are tempted, we confess that Jesus Christ is in our flesh, we know that by the power of the endless life which dwelt in Him and enabled Him to put down and condemn sin in the flesh, we also are made the righteousness of God in Him.

Exodus 20

¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness.

Jesus said,

John 18

³⁷ For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

John 14

⁶ I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

When we intelligently confess that He is in us, we shall allow Him to witness to the truth, in us.

Exodus 20

¹⁷ You shall not covet.

So far was Christ from coveting, that He would not even hold on to that which He had.

Philippians 2

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not to be a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God;

⁷ But emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men:

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

In Him was no grasping after the things of others, but all meekness and lowliness. And when day by day and hour by hour we confess that Jesus Christ is come in our flesh, all these graces He brings into us, identifying Himself with our sins, that we may be in Him identified with all His righteousness.

The Spirit of Antichrist

1 John 4

³ Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

The spirit of antichrist is described in:

2 Thessalonians 2

⁴ Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

This is that spirit of antichrist, confessing not that Jesus is come in the flesh to subdue and keep it under, but exhibiting the very lusts of the flesh, domineering and using force, building up self continually. We exhibit that spirit of antichrist when we would bring everything to our standard, and judge every man by ourselves. Jesus said,

John 8

¹⁵ I judge no man.

How wonderfully the principle of freedom and religious liberty is manifested in the life of Christ. We get that glorious liberty when we confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

Whose life were we prostituting all the years that we have lived in sin? It was the life of Christ. In Him all men live and have their being. He gave us His own life, all the while knowing that He was the standard of everlasting righteousness, and yet He did not compel or force us in any way. He simply drew us all the time by His everlasting love. Such wonderful freedom was never known among men.

Men say,

“There are many of us that believe thus and so. We as a people, as a church, as a nation, hold this to be truth. Those who do not believe as we do must be compelled to do so. If they cannot be compelled to believe, we will compel them to act as though they did, and to conform to our customs. It is an offense to us that men should thus act contrary to what we believe. It disturbs us, and they must be forced to stop.”

True Religious Liberty

But Jesus Christ lived with us all these years, while we were

sinning. Did it not disturb Him that we sinned, that we blasphemed His name, and perverted the life He gave in endless ways? Most surely it was a grievous offense to Him; yet He said,

John 12

⁴⁷ If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge Him not.

Revelation 3

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.

Not by one hair's breadth will He compel us to act contrary to our own will. That will He has set for ever free. He has besought us. Long and lovingly He has pleaded with us to accept Him; but never did He seek to compel. In Him we learn the perfection of religious liberty.

Now He says,

John 8

³¹ If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed;

³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

So if we have been bound down by the chains of the flesh, and the dominion of the flesh has asserted itself over us (and that dominion is only a manifestation of that same dominion that men in the flesh have asserted over others), we know that Christ was compassed with the infirmities of the flesh, and yet was free. He was the Word of God, and the word of God is not bound.

And when we confess Him in our flesh, we know that He steps in and takes that burden, and the burden of sin is ours no longer; it is His.

Isaiah 53

⁶ The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

The burden we have not known how to carry, the bondage of evil that will overshadow us, He will take upon Himself, and show us how to be free. He will show us what He can do with sin. That weakness is His; He will show us how His strength can be made perfect in weakness.

Whatever the difficulty and temptation, we confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and He accepts us and says we are in Him and He lives in us.

1 Timothy 1

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Yes, because He, the chief among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely, came down and suffered as the chief of sinners, because He bore the sins of all. The chief in heaven, He died the chief of malefactors. So we are the chief of sinners, that in us, as chief, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering and salvation. Oh, let everything that has breath praise the Lord, and let all say,

2 Corinthians 9

¹⁵ Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

Glorifying God

Tell it to the world, not to the people, to the devil himself when he comes to tempt us, "Jesus Christ lives in me."

Galatians 2

²⁰ I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

What will be the result of this confession? When Jesus wrought a wonderful miracle, the people glorified God who had given such power unto men. *Matthew 9:8*. He Himself was passed by, and God was glorified. The Apostle Paul said,

Galatians 1

¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace,

¹⁶ To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

And when to Paul it was revealed that the Son of God was in him, in order that he might confess Him before the world, the brethren heard that he now preached the faith which he once destroyed, and they glorified God in him. *Galatians* 1:21. When Christ is revealed in us, men will glorify God because of what is seen in us, even as they did in the cases of Jesus and Paul.

Christ is the light of the world, the light which lights every man which comes into the world; and so He says,

Matthew 5

¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works [the fruit of that light] and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

3. Restoring the Erring

Present Truth, August 31, 1893

Matthew 18

¹⁵ Moreover if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone, if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother.

SOME ancient authorities omit “against you,” in this text. That this course is to be pursued in all cases, and not simply where a personal offense has been committed, is shown by:

Galatians 6

¹ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.

Self is not to appear in the transaction. The man is not to go to his brother because he has been injured, but because his brother’s course is injuring himself. He is to go to save his brother, and not to seek reparation for himself.

Let it be remembered that as Christ “emptied Himself” (*Philippians 2:7*), so His followers are to allow Him to take self away, so that He may appear. Whatever is different from Christ, is antichrist; Christ “pleased not Himself” (*Romans 15:3*); therefore to be jealous for one’s own rights and feelings, is to manifest the spirit of antichrist.

Is it any worse for a man to lie about us than it is for him to lie about our neighbor? Is it any worse for him to steal from us than it is for him to steal from our neighbor? Is it any worse for him to use any kind of violence toward us than it would be to do the same to any other men? Evidently not, yet self prompts the reply,

“No; but it seems worse, because it hurts us worse.”

Ah, but if self were gone, and Christ were in its place, it would not hurt us worse.

Romans 5

⁹ God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

When Christ was reviled, and slandered, and rudely treated, His only thought was of the injury which His tormentors were doing themselves. So if a man does wrong, we are to be moved with compassion for his infirmity; and our feelings are not to be affected at all by the fact that his enmity is directed to us personally. Therefore when the brother is in a fault, we are to go to him with a one thought of restoring him.

A Real Revival

But who is to go? The answer is,

Galatians 6

¹ You which are spiritual.

All men are alike by nature. The sins which are committed by any person, are the outgrowth of the sinful nature that is common to all. Therefore when any sin comes to our notice, instead of producing disgust or contempt for the sinner, it should cause us to think,

“That is a specimen of what I am by nature.”

Therefore before we go to set that one right, we must be sure that we are spiritual, for if we are not, we are partakers with him in his sin, and cannot do him any good.

Thus we see that the perception of a fault in another throws us right back on ourselves. If there is any feeling in us save such a burning love for the sinner as Christ Himself had, then we may know that we are not spiritual, and that our first duty is to seek the Lord for ourselves. Perhaps by the time we have become spiritual, the offending brother will also be spiritual;

or we may find out that what we thought was sin in him was only the reflection of our own selves. But, it is asked:

“If I do not think that I am spiritual, ought I not to tell somebody else who is spiritual, the elders or a committee, for instance, so that he may be helped at once?”

The Lord says, “Go and tell him.” Tell whom? Tell the one who is in error. You dare not tell anybody else, for you have no warrant in Scripture to do so.

“But perhaps he may go so far as to be irreclaimable before I get in a position to help him.”

That is nothing to you; the Lord can take care of him without any of your unsanctified help. Everything that you do while not spiritual will only make the matter worse. Besides, if you fully realize that you are not spiritual, it need not take you an hour to become so; the Lord is not hard to find, since He is “not far from every one of us,” and He gives the Spirit freely to all who ask Him for it. *Acts 17:27; 1 Corinthians 2:12.*

“But,” and it is astonishing how many exceptions we may find to the word of God:

“If I know that some other person knows of the fault, may I not talk it over with him? Suppose everybody knows it; is it not then common property?”

What does the word say? “How do you read?”

Matthew 18

¹⁵ Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

That is definite, and should be sufficient. If all the members of the church were loyal to the word, and they would be if they were spiritual, and if one of the number committed a sin so that they all knew it, not one of them would speak to another about it, but each one would go to the offending one alone, and seek to reclaim him. And it would not be human

effort, but it would be Christ Himself working and speaking through them for the salvation of a soul in danger.

See how wonderfully God has provided for the purification of His church. If one commits a sin, and all know it, then each one is driven at once to seek the Lord for himself, and no one may rest until he knows that Christ dwells in him. So that if men followed the word of God, a revival would be the first thing that would follow the commission of a grievous sin by any member. Is it not a simple yet most effective means? God forgive His people that it has been so little used.

The Longsuffering of Christ

Matthew 18

¹⁶ But if he will not hear you, then take with yourself one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

We may not talk with them about the matter, but take them along to assist in restoring the offender. And all must go “in the spirit of meekness.” But if the word of God is followed it will not be often that matters will come to this step. The erring one will listen to the voice of Christ, if that is the only voice that he hears.

Remember also, that once going to him, not to upbraid, but to pray with him and strengthen him, is not sufficient. The Lord says,

Romans 10

²¹ All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

The longsuffering of God bore with men one hundred and twenty years in the days of Noah. *1 Peter* 3:20. Christ bears long with us, and does not upbraid us, and we ought to learn from Him how to be patient with the erring.

Suppose a case where all know of the sin, yet all are so

loyal to the word that no one will speak of it to any but to the sinner. If there are forty who know of it, and, after they have sought the Lord, each one goes alone to labor for the one in fault, as Christ would, who can imagine the effect upon his heart? It would be melted unless it had become exceedingly hard. Such cases there may be.

Matthew 18

¹⁷ And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglects to hear the church, let him be unto you as a heathen man and a publican.

One or several have been to him alone. Then three or four have gone together. And how have they gone? “In the spirit of meekness.” Whom have they represented? None but Christ. Whose words have been spoken? Only the words of the Lord. What has been the sole object? To restore the offender to Christ. As God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, so Christ has been in His servants reconciling the sinner to Himself.

2 Corinthians 5

²⁰ As though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be reconciled to God.

Then how is it when it comes before the church? Just the same. One alone tried to reclaim the sinner. Then several together labored for Him. And now the whole body is to seek to save him, only as Christ would.

It is impossible that he should be brought before the church for trial, as before a court, because a trial always implies a judge and a possible condemnation. But the church is for the purpose of representing Christ to the world, and God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world. Christ refused to judge when He was on earth, and is not yet sitting in judgment; therefore the church cannot sit as a court without accusing the Lord of neglect of duty.

All the church, then,—the body of Christ, “the fullness of Him that fills all in all,”—is aroused for the restoration of one diseased member. It is as though God Himself did beseech the erring one, for He does do it through His church. He who resists that appeal is not resisting men but God, because self has not appeared; only the word of God has spoken all the way through. What then?

Matthew 18

¹⁷ But if he neglects to hear the church, let him be unto you as a heathen man and a publican.

All has been done that can be done, and now “let him be.” The church has cleared itself from all complicity with the sin, and is pure, because their obstinate one in rejecting the word of the Lord, has rejected the Lord Himself, and consequently is no longer a member of His body. Yet he is not to be treated as an enemy, for the heathen and the publicans are to be loved and labored for.

Now we can see how it is that whatever shall be bound or loosed on earth shall likewise be bound or loosed in heaven. It is not because heaven has pledged itself to abide by every decision of man, but because the word that is settled in heaven, and which alone binds and looses, has been allowed free course on earth.

Other points in this same line will be noticed in other articles. But studying the Divine model, we know how to detect and avoid error. If we know what constitutes the true church of Christ, and how it acts, we shall know the characteristics of apostasy.

4. The Church: True and False

Present Truth, December 14, 1893

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THE Bible contains very little of what is known as “church history.” We find abundant testimony as to what the Church of Christ ought to be, and what it will be when He returns to receive it to Himself; but we find only enough of its history to enable us to see that such a church as the Bible requires is not an ideal affair, but that it did once actually exist; and thereby we may know that it will exist again.

There are numerous “Church Histories” in existence, but they are only the history of apostasy. People who study church history to find out what the church should be, are as those who go to a crippled to learn how to walk. Since the days of the apostles, the names and history of the members of the true church of Christ have been written only in the books in heaven.

We cannot at this time enter into a study in detail of what the church ought to be. Suffice it to say that the Church of Christ is the body of Christ, and that therefore it draws its life from Him.

1 John 2

⁶ He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.

Of Him it is said that He...

1 Peter 2

²² ...did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth;

²³ And who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously.

Although He was rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. *2 Corinthians 8:9*. And the church is exhorted thus:

Philippians 2

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;

⁶ Who...

⁷ ...made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.

To find out, therefore, what the church of Christ must be, we have only to study the life of Christ;

1 John 4

¹⁷ Because as He is, so are we in this world.

We may, however, quote a few words that Christ has spoken to His followers. By keeping them in mind, we shall easily be able to discern and be on our guard against the spirit of antichrist whenever we meet it.

Unselfishness and Humility

At one time two of the disciples made a request, through their mother, for the two highest places in Christ's kingdom. When the rest of the disciples heard of it, they were moved with indignation against the two. They thought that it was unfair for the two to steal a march on them in a place for preferment.

Matthew 20

²⁵ But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and

they that are great exercise authority upon them.

²⁶ But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

²⁷ And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant;

²⁸ Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

In the world men seek for place and power for themselves. But in the church of Christ the rule is,

Romans 12

¹⁰ In honor preferring one another.

Whenever a spirit of seeking a position for oneself, or a disposition to exercise authority over another, comes into the church, then it is the world, and not the church of Christ.

1 John 2

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

The true church is the body of Christ,

Ephesians 1

²³ ...the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

Therefore we find this exhortation:

Philippians 2

¹ If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

² Fulfill my joy, that you be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

³ Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.

⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be

equal with God;

⁷ But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.

It was the mind that Christ had when He was in heaven, that led Him to do that. In heaven He had the spirit to serve, and it only needed that He should take the form of a servant, for men could not look upon Him in His glory. In Him we see in what His church must be. He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), living among men as one that served. So it is said to us,

Galatians 5

¹³ By love serve one another.

This mind can be in men only as they yield themselves to the Word of God, for the word is spirit and life. The prophecy concerning Christ was:

Deuteronomy 18

¹⁸ I will put my words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him.

And when He came, He took as the rule of His life:

Matthew 4

⁴ It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Accordingly we find that the characteristics of the church at the time when the Spirit of God dwelt in it were humility and loyalty to the word of God.

Acts 2

¹ They were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 4

³² And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.

Their prayer was that with boldness they might speak the word. Verse 29. When they were dispersed from Jerusalem,

they...

Acts 8

⁴ ...went everywhere preaching the word.

The Beginning of Apostasy

But this state of things did not last long, and change all came through the disloyalty to the word of God. To the elders of the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul said,

Acts 20

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

³⁰ Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Notice that the “perverse things” spoken would have the effect of drawing disciples after the speakers, instead of to God.

John 3

³⁴ He whom God has sent speaks the words of God.

The effect of speaking the words of God, will ever be to draw men to Him; but he that speaks his own words, draws to himself. It was for this reason that the Apostle Paul through the Spirit gave the solemn charge to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4

¹ I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom;

² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Even in the days of the apostles, the seeds of this apostasy

were in the church. Paul wrote,

2 Thessalonians 2

⁷ The mystery of iniquity already works.

John says,

3 John

⁹ I wrote unto the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, receives us not.

¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and forbids them that would, and casts them out of the church.

He spoke perverse words, to draw away disciples after himself.

The Cause of Apostasy

It was not long before the fine gold had become dim, and a different voice than Christ's was heard in the church. Within a little more than a hundred years after John wrote, a "Theological Seminary" was in full operation at Alexandria, spreading the darkness of Egypt over the earth.

The two principal teachers at the school were Origen and Clement. To this school young men came from all parts of the world, to learn how to preach; and so great was its influence, that we are told that nearly all the servants of the day were taken either directly or indirectly from Origen. We have only to learn the sentiments of the teachers in that school, to know the kind of husks upon which the churches were fed.

Origen wrote a work on the principles of things, from which we quote:

Having spoken thus briefly on the subject of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, it is necessary to proceed to the consideration of the manner in which they are to be read and

understood, seeing numerous errors have been committed in consequence of the method in which the holy documents ought to be examined not having been discovered by the multitude.²

Clement also said:

For many reasons, then, the Scriptures hide the sense. First, that we may become inquisitive, and be ever on the watch for the discovery of the words of salvation. Then it was not suitable for all to understand, so that they might not receive harm in consequence of taking in another sense the things declared for salvation by the Holy Spirit.

Here we have a direct contradiction of the words of Christ, who said that the things of God were revealed unto babes, and that they who receive the kingdom of God must do so as little children, and not as philosophers. When Christ was on earth,

Mark 12

³⁷ The common people heard Him gladly

They could understand the deep things which the learned men found so difficult. But let us read further what these men said. Origen said,

With respect to Holy Scripture, our opinion is that the whole of it has a spiritual, but not the whole a bodily meaning, because the bodily meaning in many places proved to be impossible.

Again He said, in the same book:

The word of God has arranged that certain stumbling-blocks, as it were, and offenses, and impossibilities, should be introduced into the midst of the law and the history, in order that we may not, after being drawn away in all directions by the merely attractive nature of the language, either altogether fall away from the true doctrines, as learning nothing worthy of God, or, by not departing from the letter, come to the

² Origen, *De Principiis*, book 4, chap. 1, section 8.

knowledge of nothing more divine.

And this also we must know, that the principal aim being to announce the “spiritual” connection in those things that are done, and that ought to be done, where the word found that things done according to the history could be adapted to these mystical senses, He made use of them, concealing from the multitude the deeper meaning; but where, in the narrative of the development of super-sensual things, there did not follow the performance of those certain events, which was already indicated by the mystical meaning, the Scripture interwoven in the history the account of some event that did not take place, sometimes what could not have happened; sometimes what could, but did not. And sometimes a few words are interpolated, which are not true in their literal acceptance, and sometimes a larger number.

And a similar practice also is to be noticed in regard to the legislation, and which is often to be found what is useful in itself, and appropriate to the times of the legislation; and sometimes also what does not appear to be of utility; and at other times impossibilities are recorded for the sake of the inquisitive, in order that they may give themselves to the toil of investigating what is written, and thus attain to a becoming conviction of the manner in which a meaning worthy of God must be brought out in such subjects.³

And as though this was not enough, he proceeded to say:

Nor even do the law and the commandments wholly convey what is agreeable to reason. For who that has understanding will suppose that the first, and second, and third days, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun, and moon, and stars? and that the first day was, as it were, without a sky? And who is so foolish as to suppose that God, after the manner of a husbandman, planted a paradise in Eden, and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one tasting fruit by the bodily teeth obtained life? and again, that one was a partaker of good and evil by masticating what was taken from the tree? And if God is said to

³ Origen, *De Principiis*, book 4, chap. 1, section 15.

walk in the Paradise in the evening, and Adam to hide himself under a tree, I do not suppose that anyone doubts that these things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, the history having taken place in appearance, and not literally.⁴

Throwing the Bible Away

Before noting the necessary results of such teaching, let us see how diligently it has been transmitted to the present time. Many quotations might be given like the following, which is taken from an article by a clergymen, in one of the most prominent religious journals:

The infallibility of Scripture is on a par with the infallibility of the Pope, and the desire to lean on it is evidence of a like weakness.

Again,

I have been surprised that so little stress has been laid hitherto, except by Dr. Clifford, upon the grave popular mischief that is worked by this doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. It is the Communist stumbling-block to young disciples, and the stoutest weapon of the ignorant unbelievers....If common man held a reasonable Christian doctrine of Scripture, four out of every five secularist arguments would have no point left.

So Origen thought, and he proceeded to take the point out of secularist objections to the Bible, by throwing the Bible overboard. It was thus that some of the ministers of America proceeded to answer Ingersoll several years ago. When the infidel carped at the flood, and at other things mentioned in the Old Testament, they met it by saying that those things were not believed by educated Christians. That is, they met his objections, by agreeing with him.

Bearing in mind the fact that the same thing that Origen

⁴ Origen, *De Principiis*, book 4, chap. 1, section 16.

taught nearly seventeen hundred years ago, is in the church today, let us see what is involved in it.

In the first place it is evident that it is the spirit of antichrist, because it directly contradicts the words of Christ, who said that the things of God are revealed unto babes.

Then it puts man above God, inasmuch as it claims that God is not able to make Himself understood by common people, without the help of men who have been trained in philosophy. It puts man in the place of God, and really makes man God, since the man who is able to tell when God means what He says, and when He does not, and who is able to find out by his own wisdom “a meaning worthy of God,” must have a mind even greater than that of God.

Anyone can see, also, that the result of such teaching must be the same as to take the Bible away from the common people by force. For once get the common people to believe that the Bible is a book that they cannot understand, and that it needs special interpreters, and they will certainly not trouble themselves with reading it.

Thus it appears that the result of teaching that the Bible has errors, and that people who read it for themselves, and who believe just what they read, will fall into dangerous errors, is to place all religious teaching in the hands of a few self-constituted interpreters. Thus are fulfilled the words of the Apostle Paul, that men should arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Of course with the Bible practically out of the hands of the people, there was no manner of false doctrines that their teachers could not palm off upon them.

Clement’s teaching was that:

Before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive

to piety; being a kind of preparatory training for those who attain to faith through demonstration.⁵

Therefore it followed that in course of time only those who had taken a course in “philosophy,” especially that of Plato, were thought fit to teach the Scriptures; just as in these days a man cannot be counted a “theologian” unless he has taken a thorough course in the heathen classics. The study of heathen writers is considered one of the prime essentials in the preparation of a minister of the Gospel.

The result of this philosophical training for the ministry in the early days of the Christian era, was that it led the teachers of religion,

...to involve in philosophical obscurities many parts of our religion, which were in themselves plain and easy to be understood; and to add to the precepts of the Saviour not a few things of which not a word can be found in the Holy Scriptures.⁶

Not only so, but the greater part of the Platonists, imbibing the idea that Christianity was only another system of philosophy,

...were led to imagine that nothing could be more easy than a transition from the one to the other, and, to the great detriment of the Christian cause, were induced to embrace Christianity without feeling it necessary to abandon scarcely any of their former principles.⁷

And thus, as a result of departing from the plain word of God, and being turned to fables, the church was utterly corrupted, so that it came to pass that the greatest “heretics” were those who believed the Bible. Everything was perverted. In process of time it happened that even the teachers them-

⁵ Clement, *Stromata*, Book 1, chap. 5.

⁶ Mosheim.

⁷ Ibid.

selves lost all the knowledge of the Bible that they ever had; for since all that they taught they drew from their own heads, using the name of the Bible to give weight to their opinions, it soon became unnecessary to so much as refer to the Bible. When the priests spoke, the people were led to believe that it was the same as if God Himself had spoken.

True Pastors, or Bishops

In the primitive church, which is the only model for the church in all ages, there were no officers but elders and deacons. Each church had not simply one elder, but several. Thus Paul and Barnabas ordained “elders in every church.” *Acts* 14:23. Paul wrote to Titus saying,

Titus 1

⁵ For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that were wanting, and ordained elders in every city.

The office of elder was identical with that of bishop. Thus when Paul wrote to Titus as above, that he should ordain elders in every city, he proceeded to state the qualifications of the elders,—“if any be blameless,” etc.—“for,” said he, “a bishop must be blameless.” *Titus* 1:6-7. “Elder” and “bishop,” therefore, are but two terms for the same person and office.

The word bishop is *episkopos*, from which we have the word “episcopal.” The literal meaning of the word is one who looks over or oversees. Accordingly we find Paul addressing the elders of Ephesus thus:

Acts 20

²⁸ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.

But although elders are bishops or overseers, they are not

to be lords or drivers. They are to feed the flock. To feed a flock is the duty of a shepherd; and so we read the following exhortation:

1 Peter 5

¹ The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed;

² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

³ Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

One who feeds a flock is a shepherd; therefore the elders are called shepherds, feeding the church under the direction of Christ, the Chief Shepherd. Shepherd is the same as pastor, the latter being the Latin word for shepherd. As shepherds, the elders are to have the oversight of the flock, thus exercising the office of bishop, still under the direction of Christ, who is Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. *1 Peter 2:25.*

In the above text, therefore, we find that elders, pastors, shepherds and bishops, are all one and the same thing. The church of Christ knows no higher office than that of the elders, or presbyters, which is simply and Anglicized form of a Greek word for elder. Peter declared himself to be an elder.

These elders were not to exercise lordship over the church. They were to be esteemed very highly in love, for their works' sakes; but they were not to assume any airs, nor to claim any respect as "superior" officers. The church of Christ knows no such thing as rank. So the Apostle Peter continues his exhortation,

1 Peter 5

⁵ Likewise you younger submit yourselves to the elder; yea,

all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.

Remember the words of Christ,

Matthew 20

²⁷ He that will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

Exaltation of the Bishops

As already intimated, the exaltation of the bishops grew out of and was parallel with the withdrawing of the Bible from the people. The idea that the Bible needed to be “interpreted,” naturally led to what Neander describes as “the formation of a false sacerdotal caste in the Christian church.”

The body of bishops regarded themselves as far above the common people, whence arose the terms, “clergy,” and “laity.” The word “clergy” is from the Greek word *klaros*, meaning a lot, or an inheritance,—a heritage,—and the application of this term to themselves by the bishops, show that they regarded themselves as the heritage of God, while all the rest were simply the “laity,” that is, the people. It was the old heathen Roman distinction of patricians and plebeians. On this point we read the following from Hase’s *Church History*:

It seemed desirable to increase the generation which necessarily attends the virtues and a faithful performance of official duties in the church, by mysterious forms of ordination, by connecting them through various associations with the Old Testament priesthood, and by external tokens of peculiar sanctity. The result was that even in the second century the priests were represented as the official mediators between Christ and the congregation. To speak in the church, and to administer holy rites, were conceded to be the special prerogatives of the clergy, although learned laymen were sometimes heard in the public assembly, with the consent of the bishop.

But this was not enough. Ambition is never satisfied, but

only grows with each successive step in its gratification. The bishops were not content with being as a body above the people, but they must strive for supremacy, one over another.

Accordingly one of the elders in the church assumed and was granted the sole right to be called "Bishop," while all the others retained the simple title, "presbyters." Thus the two names for the one office were made to indicate two different offices. The deacons were an order below the presbyters, and still below these were added, in course of time, several other orders; because the introduction of new orders among the "clergy," raised the rank of those already existing.

Another step in the exaltation of the bishops was the distinction that was made between the bishops residing in the city and those over country churches. The churches in the villages and the country round the city, were considered as territory to the larger body, and the bishops as under the bishop of the city church. They were considered as above the presbyters, but beneath the chief bishop.

Councils

Still another step was the holding of Councils.

For by then, in the first place, the ancient rites and privileges of the people were very much abridged; and on the other hand, the influence and authority of the bishops were not a little augmented. At first the bishops did not deny that they were merely the representatives of their churches, and that they acted in the name of the people; but by little and little, they made higher pretensions, and maintained that power was given them by Christ Himself, to dictate rules of faith and conduct to the people.

In the next place, the perfect equality and parity of all bishops, which existed in the early times, these councils gradually subverted. For it was necessary that one of the confederated bishops of a province should in those conventions be intrusted with some authority and power over the other; and

hence originated the prerogatives of Metropolitans.

And lastly, when the custom of holding these councils had extended over the Christian world, and the universal church had acquired the form of a vast republic composed of many lesser ones, certain head men were to be placed over it in different parts of the world, a central point in their respective countries. Hence came the Patriarchs; and ultimately a Prince of Patriarchs, the Roman pontiff.⁸

All this would have been avoided if the Bible had been held. Truth does not depend upon majorities, nor on great men, the Bible is the truth, and it makes no difference how unlearned and despised a man is who states truth in the language of the Bible; it is just as true, and has as much authority as though it were stated by a council of Doctors of Divinity.

The Church Paganized

The limits of this article do not allow the statement of all the errors that crept into the professed church. It is sufficient to say that they were all the abominations of heathenism, gilded over with the appearance of Christianity. This was inevitable, for when it came to be a settled thing that the study of heathen philosophy was the necessary preparation for the teaching of religion, it could not be otherwise than that the religion taught after that preparation had been gained, should be the religion of heathenism.

Thus it is that the Catholic Church is simply the continuation of ancient heathenism under the name of Christianity. Not but that there are thousands of people in that church who are as sincere as men can be, and who have the spirit of loyalty to the truth, as far as they know it; but the church itself is paganism. This may be seen in the fact that the clergy of the church gladly accepted all the homage that had previously been paid to the heathen priests. Caesar gave the following

⁸ Mosheim.

account of the priests of Gaul in Britain:

The Druids are in great honor among them; for they determine almost all controversies, public and private; and if any crime is perpetrated, if a murder is committed, if there is a contest about an inheritance or territories, they decide and determine the rewards or punishments. If any one, whether a private or public character, will not submit to their decision, they debar him from the sacrifices.

The Druids are not accustomed to be present in battle, and neither do they pay tribute, like the other citizens; but are exempt from military service, and from all of their burdens. Allured by such privileges, and from inclination, many embraced their discipline, and are sent to it by their parents and friends.

In a note to Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Schlegel shows how naturally this homage paid to the Druids came to be transferred to the bishops of the church. He says:

That these pagan nations had been accustomed to treat their idolatrous priests with an extraordinary reverence, is a fact well known. When they became Christians, they supposed they might show the same respect to the Christian priests. Of course they honored their bishops and clergy as they had before honored their Druids; and this reverence disposed them to bear patiently with their vices. Every Druid was accounted a very great character, and was feared by everyone; but the chief Druid was actually worshiped.

When these people became Christians, they supposed that the Bishop of Rome was such a Chief Druid, and that he must be honored accordingly. And this was one cause why the Roman Pontiff obtained in process of time such an ascendancy in the Western countries. The patriarch of Constantinople rose indeed to a great elevation; but he never attained the high rank and authority of the Roman patriarch. The reason was that the people of the East had not the same ideas of the

dignity of Chief Priest as the people of the West had.⁹

When the reader remembers that heathen philosophy had taken the place of the Bible, and that great numbers of learned heathen had been led to accept this paganized Christianity, thinking, as was true, that it was only another form of paganism, and that they did not think it necessary to change any of their practices and principles, it will not be difficult to see how the Papacy became so firmly established.

Taking the Place of God

But the “Fathers” of the church had prepared the way for this long before. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, had written:

The church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the church is controlled by the same rulers.¹⁰

Again he wrote in his 68th epistle:

They are the church, who are a people united to the priest, and a flock which adheres to its pastor. Once you ought to know that a bishop is in the church, and the church in the bishop; and if anyone be not with the bishop, that he is not in the church.

And yet again he made the following blasphemous claim, putting the bishops on a level with God:

But deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose apostles, that is, bishops and overseers; while apostles appointed for themselves deacons after the ascent of the Lord into heaven, as ministers of their episcopacy and of the church. But if we may dare anything against God who makes bishops, deacons may also dare anything against us by whom they are made.¹¹

⁹ Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History*, Cent. part 2, chap. 2, section 7.

¹⁰ Cyprian, Epistle xxvi.

¹¹ Cyprian, Epistle lxiv.

But let it not be thought that the fault lay wholly with the bishops. They grasped for power, but they could not have gained the power that they did, if the people had not given it to them. If the people had held fast to the Bible, no ambitious priests could ever have brought paganism into the church.

But the truth is, that the majority of people desire a pope fully as much as anybody desires to be one. Just as we read of antichrist, and then read that there are “many antichrists in the world,” so we may know that although there is one who is universally known as the Pope, there are many popes in the world.

So strong is the pope-making spirit in the world, that the truest minister of the Gospel must needs exercise all the grace that God gives him, in order to keep from being made a pope against his will. Let us see how this is done.

Making Popes

Instead of believing the promise of God, that He will give the Holy Spirit to everyone who asks, and that the Spirit will make known the words of God, people prefer to go to their minister, to find out his opinion. In short, they put the minister in the place of the Spirit of God.

Now while it is his duty to open the word of God, and to hold forth the word of life to the people, he is not to hold forth himself. He is to give them only the word of God, and not the word of man. But the people find it much easier to let somebody else do their thinking for them, and so, attaching themselves to some minister in whom they have confidence, they take his words as the words of God.

Of course this reverence and deference is very pleasing to the natural man. It is very soothing to have one’s opinions received, without question, as the settlement of all controversies, and therefore the man who is not on his guard will, with-

out realizing it, be pope to as great an extent as his influence extends. Most people are bound to have a pope.

Instead of studying the word of God for themselves, they will beseech a minister to tell them what this or that means, to give his opinion upon this text of Scripture, and to tell them what they ought to do in this or that matter. Many a good man, therefore, who can scarcely find language strong enough to condemn the Papacy, are themselves popes without being conscious of it.

We need not expend all our indignation on the Pope of Rome. The man who puts his trust in man instead of in God's word, is as culpable as the Pope, inasmuch as they who make popes are as guilty as those who consent to be made popes. A Protestant Papacy is no better than a Roman Catholic Papacy. The evil of the Papacy does not consist in the special errors that are held by it, but in the fact that man is put into the place of God. All the errors spring from that. Therefore repudiating some false doctrines of the Papacy, does not necessarily mean a repudiation of the Papacy itself. A man may cry out against all the false doctrines of the Papacy, and still be in reality a part of that false system. For whenever there is the spirit of exaltation of self, or the trust in man, there is the Papacy.

The word of God is the only safeguard.

Psalm 19

¹¹ Your word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against You.

Psalm 17

⁴ Concerning the works of man, by the word of Your lips I have kept me from the path of the destroyer.

Of the righteous it is said:

Psalm 37

³¹ The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Therefore the only work of the minister of the Gospel is to hold forth the word. He is to resist every attempt to make him a pope, by teaching the people that the man who puts his trust in man is cursed. *Jeremiah* 17:5. It makes no difference if the fact which they get from man is the truth. He who accepts any truth on the authority of man, has not the truth on that point; for he has not received it as God would give it to him.

Moreover he who receives a truth on the authority of man, will just as readily receive an error on the same authority. And there is no man in the world who is infallible. Therefore the people are to be taught that no man's opinion is of any value whatever, in religious matters. Not only is a man to refrain from giving his opinions about the Bible to other people, but he is as strictly to refrain from giving his own opinions to himself. He is not to put his opinions into or upon the sacred word. He who approaches the Bible with any opinion of his own, will learn only from himself, and not from God. Such are walking in sparks of their own kindling (*Isaiah* 50:11), and not in the light of God.

Let everyone understand, then, that the Papacy is all contained in deviation from the word of God; in putting man in the place of God. Let them know that Protestantism does not consist in denunciations of the Pope of Rome, nor is it simply anti-Catholicism. True Protestantism is positive, not negative. It consists in perfect loyalty to the word of God.

1 John 2

⁵ Whoso keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby we know that we are in Him.

5. True and False Spirits

Present Truth, April 19, 1894

1 John 4

¹ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

THIS Scripture has just as true an application to the present day as it had to the time of John. Today, there are many false spirits gone out into the world.

Not that there are in the world some strange and singular personages whom we may designate as false prophets, and whom we are to avoid; the spirits do not usually manifest themselves in that way. The manifestation of the evil spirit is most commonly simply the teaching of false doctrine, by the human agents whom the spirit employs.

It may be a popular doctrine, and advocated by men of learning and culture, and yet emanate from a spirit not of God. The spirits must be tried before being believed, and the test to be applied is not the determination of the number or reputation of those who believe the spirit, after the wisdom of this world. It is a test provided by God Himself.

What this test is we are told in the two verses following the one we have quoted.

1 John 4

² Hereby know you the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

³ And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Every spirit that is of God, then, will confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. That this test is a plain and simple

one will be evident when we consider the meaning of the phrase, “come in the flesh.” In this simple expression is contained the whole Gospel. The very essence of the plan of redemption is the coming of Christ in the flesh. It is seen in the meaning of His name, “Immanuel”—God with us.

1 Timothy 2

⁵ There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus.

Without Christ in the flesh—“the man Christ Jesus”—there could be no Mediator for man. All that Christ is to us, as sinners, He is by virtue of the fact that He has come in the flesh. All that He does for us, He does by virtue of this fact.

Christ is the ladder of Jacob’s dream, with one hand resting upon the earth, and the other reaching to the highest heavens, thus symbolizing united God and man; while the angels, those “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (*Hebrews* 1:14), descended and ascended upon it. Thus the whole work of God for the redemption of fallen man centers in the one mighty fact of the union of Jesus Christ with human flesh.

To confess, therefore, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is to exalt Christ as the Saviour of men; since He is their Saviour only by virtue of this fact. So we may read the text in *1 John* 4 in this way:

Every spirit that exalts Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men is of God; and every spirit that exalts not Jesus Christ as the Saviour of man is not of God. And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Here is the test which God has given us. The true prophets, and the true teaching, will exalt Jesus Christ; all the false will not exalt Him, but will aim, either by open denial or by subtle insinuation, to turn the attention of men away from Christ to

something else.

The devil will never exalt the Son of God. His rebellion in heaven, which caused his fall and made him the devil, was due to his jealousy of Jesus, because the latter was exalted above himself. And his whole aim since that time—the object for which all his energies have been bent—is the pulling down of Christ and the exaltation of himself.

This he aims to do, and very largely has done, in the minds of men, by false teaching. By means of false doctrines he has turned the eyes of the vast majority of men away from the only Saviour, Jesus Christ, to something else; and always, in that something else, either openly manifested or disguised, is himself. He can appear as a demon, or as an angel of light (2 *Corinthians* 11:14), and he adapts his work to the intellectual and moral conditions of the different races and peoples of the earth.

1 Corinthians 10

²⁰ The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God.

And all men, insofar as they depart from God, are worshipers of the devil; for it is the devil who causes them to look away from Christ, in order that they may look to and worship him. Satan has no difficulty in deceiving people so that they look to him, if only he can get them, through the reception of some false doctrines, to look away from Christ.

Through the papal system of religion, the devil has turned the eyes of men away from Jesus Christ to the priest, the Pope, and the virgin Mary.

Through Spiritualism, and through the doctrine upon which it rests,—the consciousness of the dead—He turns men's eyes away from Christ to the supposed spirits of the departed.

And while professing to look to these agents for salvation

and help, men are really looking to Satan and paying to him their homage; for the exaltation of man (the Pope and the priest and the virgin Mary and the “saints”) in the place of God, which is the central idea of the Papacy, is really but the exaltation of Satan in the place of God; for Satan is the originator of self-exaltation, and the one who, in men, prompts them to seek to be exalted in the place of God. And he is the one who, with his fallen angels, impersonates the spirits of the departed and holds intercourse with deceived men.

By the doctrine of the Sunday Sabbath, also, he has turned the eyes of vast multitudes of professed Christians away from the Author of the true Sabbath, the seventh day; for in looking to a day upon which Jesus Christ, as Creator, did not rest, and away from the day which He sanctified and blessed, people must inevitably look away from Him as their Saviour.

This will be evident when we consider that Christ is the Saviour of men through His power as Creator, redemption being but a work of creation,—making men new in Christ. *Ephesians* 2:10; *2 Corinthians* 5:17.

We may apply this test to any and every doctrine that comes before us. Whatsoever teaching does not exalt Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men, or which detracts in any degree therefrom, is not of God; and that teaching which does exalt Him as the Saviour of men, is of God.

But remember that Christ can be exalted as the Saviour of sinners only by virtue of the fact that He has come in the flesh. Not what men may imagine to be an exaltation of Christ, but what God in His word has pointed out as the true exaltation—that which makes manifest His power to save—must be our guide in applying this test for detecting the true and false.

6. The Spirit of Antichrist

Present Truth, November 20, 1902

1 John 2

²² Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ?

THAT question carries its own answer: If all lying is summed up in the denial that Jesus is the Christ: then there is no untruth, no form of error, that is not a denial of the Lord. That is a very comprehensive statement, showing that there are more infidels than people are aware of, and that many who would be shocked to hear it intimated that they are denying that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, are really doing so.

This can easily be made to appear.

1 John 4

³ Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is the spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now is it in the world.

“Christ is come in the flesh,” in human flesh, even now.

John 1

⁹ [He is the] light that lights every man that comes into the world.

Every good deed, every kindly thought, proceeds from the Lord; and whenever any good thing is attributed to a man's own nature, and Christ is not recognized in it, because the man is not a Christian, Christ is denied.

On the contrary, if it be recognized that Christ is the Source of everything good, even in the basest men, by the men themselves, and His Spirit working in them is yielded to, those souls are born of God, and will be made complete in Christ.

But intimately connected with this there is still another

way of denying the Lord,—a way that is sadly common among Christians. It is the sigh and cry of doubt, the declaration that there is some evil in one's character that cannot be overcome.

This is the same as either to deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, which is plainly stated to be the spirit of antichrist,—or to claim that, although there, He is not able to do all things; and this is to give Him the lie to His face, since He says that He has all power in heaven and earth—“power over all flesh.” *Matthew* 28:18; *John* 17:2.

How is it with you? do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, having the words of eternal life, or are you possessed by the spirit of antichrist? It is easy to determine.

7. A Present Salvation

Present Truth, May 18, 1893

AS GOD inhabits eternity, so that all time is present with Him, so all His promises and blessings for men are in the present tense. There can be no future or past time to Him.

This makes Him “a very present help in trouble” (*Psalm* 46:1), for we can live only in the present. We cannot live one moment in the future. We expect things in the future, and have hope of things to come, but the present is all that we can ever have, for when the things hoped for come, they will be present.

Indeed, the things which we have reason to hope for in the future, will be only the continuation of the things which we have now. All things are in Christ, and His promise is,

Matthew 28

²⁰ Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

The apostle Paul blessed God because:

Ephesians 1

³ [He] has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus.

The promises of God for the future must be present realities to us, if we ever receive any benefit from them.

2 Corinthians 1

²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

It is by these...

2 Peter 1

⁴ ...exceeding great and precious promises [that we are] made partakers of the Divine nature.

The glories of the world to come will be but the revealing of

that which we have now in the personal presence within us of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only hope of glory is Christ in us.

Hebrews 13

⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

1 Peter 1

²³ The word of God...lives and abides for ever.

We do not have to deal with a dead word, which was spoken so long ago that there is no more force in it, but with a word which has the same life as though it were just spoken. Indeed it is of benefit to us only when we receive it as spoken directly and personally to us.

1 Thessalonians 2

¹³ When you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe.

2 Timothy 3

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.

It is all in the present. For this reason we can never outgrow the Scriptures. There is not a single text in the Bible that has become obsolete. There is none that the Christian of the longest experience has outgrown, so that he has no need of it. There is none that can be laid aside.

The text which brings a man to the Saviour, is the text which is ever needed to keep him there. And this, too, although his mind has expanded, and his spiritual sight has been greatly strengthened; and the reason is that every word of God is of infinite depth, so that as the Christian's mind expands the word means more to him than it did in the beginning.

The universe appears much greater to the astronomer than

it does to the man who has never looked through a telescope. We look at the stars with the naked eye, and they seem very far off. Then we look at them through a powerful telescope, and, although we can see so much farther with it, the distance to the stars seems to be very much greater than it did with our limited vision.

So the more one becomes acquainted with the word of God, the greater does it become. The promises of God, which seemed so exceeding great when they first appeared to us, become much more exceeding great the more we consider them and apply them.

The word of God is a light shining in a dark place.

2 Peter 1

¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.

It is the revelation of Christ, who is the Light of the world, therefore it is a lamp.

Psalms 119

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Proverbs 6

²³ For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.

We have all heard of the young sailor who was left in charge of the helm, with instructions to hold the ship's head straight toward a certain star, which was pointed out to him, and who, in a few hours called the captain and said that he wanted another star to steer by, as he had sailed past the first one given him. What was the trouble? He had turned the ship round, and was sailing away from the star. So it is with those who say that they have outgrown certain portions of the

Bible. The trouble is that they have turned their backs upon it.

What is the Gospel?

Romans 1

¹⁶ It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

It is present power applied to the salvation of the one who has present faith. From what does the power of God save men? Jesus is the power of God, and of Him it was said,

Matthew 1

²¹ You shall call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.

1 Timothy 1

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

The Gospel is the power of God to save men from sin. But it is present power, for sin is ever present. Its power is applied only while one is believing.

Romans 1

¹⁷ The just shall live by faith.

The moment a man ceases to believe, then he is a sinner, just the same as though he had never believed. Yesterday's faith will not answer for today, any more than the breathing of the man yesterday will keep him alive today.

The message of the Lord to the church in the days immediately preceding His coming is,

Revelation 3

¹⁹ You say I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.

Who is there that has outgrown this text? Not one. The blessing comes to the one who acknowledges the truth of the

Lord's charge; for to him the Lord will enter, with a supply for all his need. It is the man who says,

Luke 18

¹³ Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner,

—that goes down to his house justified. And it is only as the man continues to utter that prayer, that he is justified.

Luke 18

¹⁴ For every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.

The apostle says:

1 Timothy 1

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Note that he does not say, “Of whom I *was* chief;” but “of whom I *am* chief.” And it was when he acknowledged himself to be the chief of sinners, that in him as chief was exhibited the mercy and longsuffering of God.

Some have wondered whether a Christian ought to sing these lines in Wesley's blessed hymn:

Just and holy is Your name,
I am all unrighteousness;
Vile and full of sin I am;
You are full of truth and grace.

The man who thinks that he has outgrown those lines is in a pitiable condition, for he is shutting himself off from the source of righteousness.

Matthew 19

¹⁷ There is none good, but one; that is, God.

Therefore whatever righteousness is ever exhibited in any soul must be only the righteousness of God. It is only the soul

that acknowledges his own sinfulness, that will lay hold on the righteousness of God that is by the faith of Christ. It is only by the obedience of one that many are made righteous.

Romans 5

¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

And that one is Christ.

1 John 2

² And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

The Christian of forty years' experience is just as much in need of the righteousness which comes through Christ, as is the sinner who is now for the first time coming to the Lord. So we read again,

1 John 1

⁷ If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

The most that anyone can say is that Christ is without sin, and that Christ has given Himself for us.

1 Corinthians 1

³⁰ [He] of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

But note that cleansing is a present process. We may know that the blood of Christ did cleanse us from sin at some time in the past; but that will do us no good. That life is continually needed, in order that the cleansing may go on continually.

Romans 5

¹⁰ [We are] saved by His life.

For Christ is our life.

Colossians 3

⁴ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory.

So it is that:

1 John 4

² Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God;

³ And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.

Note again the present tense. It is not enough to confess that Jesus Christ *did come* in the flesh; that will bring no salvation to anybody. We must confess from positive knowledge, that Jesus *is just now come* in the flesh, and then we are of God.

Christ came in the flesh eighteen hundred years ago, just for the purpose of demonstrating the possibility. That which He did once, He is able to do again. He who denies the possibility of His coming in the flesh of men *now*, thereby denies the possibility of His having ever come in the flesh.

So our part is with humbleness of mind to confess that we are sinners; that in us is no good thing. If we do not, then the truth is not in us; but if we do, then Christ, who came into the world for the express purpose of saving sinners, will come and take up His abode with us, and then the truth will indeed be in us.

Then there will be perfection manifested in the midst of imperfection. There will be completeness in the midst of weakness. For,

Colossians 2

¹⁰ [We] are complete in Him.

He has created all things by the word of His power, and

therefore can take men who are but nothing, and can make them...

Ephesians 1

⁶ To the praise of the glory of His grace.

Romans 11

³⁶ For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

