

The Antichrist.

2 THESS. 2.

B. – Good evening, brother A., I have wanted for some time to inquire your views of the "Man of Sin" – "The Antichrist." Who is he, what is he, and when will he come; or has he already come?

A. – I shall enjoy a conversation with you on this subject; it is one deserving of careful thought and is mentioned by Jesus himself, as well as by his apostles and prophets. I presume I need not make mention of the various theories held by bible students on the subject. Many believe that Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt soon, and that some literal man will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, will sit in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. (2 Thes. 2:4.) He is expected to be able to perform "signs and lying wonders" – to deceive all the world into the idea that HE is God, and to have them give homage and worship to him.

There are various conjectures as to who may be this "Man of Sin." It has been claimed for Napoleon Bonaparte and each of his successors to the title to the throne of France, and now for Prince Jerome Bonaparte. Others quite recently have given up expecting so much of a development of power from a broken down dynasty, and claim, with positiveness, that it is the present Pope.

B. – It would be a very remarkable thing to have occur in this nineteenth century. It might have been possible in some heathen land, hundreds of years ago, but I could not make myself believe that such things are even possible now. No, the tendency of the press and of science is to ignore God altogether, and in the face of the wonderful evidences of His creative power and might, to deny, entirely, the Lord,

in whose praise "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. Ps. 19:2.

A. – I fully agree with you. It would be much easier to turn the world to Atheism than to Idolatry. This is one reason why I could not look for a personal "Man of Sin." Paul had always exhorted the church to look and wait for "The day of the Lord, yet here (2 Thes. 2.) he tells them "That day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed." As I believe the word to teach that we are now living in "the day of the Lord," you see it is both natural and consistent in me to look back for the "Man of Sin," and to expect to be able to recognize him, for Paul says he must be revealed, or his real character shown and seen before the "day of the Lord." He referred to a false system which would develop in the church. As one error after another crept into the church, they gradually brought about the "falling away." The church fell from her position of trust in, and support on the promises of her absent Lord, and began to love the world and the things of the world.

The narrow path was too steep and rough; she coveted the world's ease and abundance, and the more bold element formed the plan of so arranging the customs and laws, that the world's affections were captured, and instead of persecuting, the Roman Empire embraced the church and seated her in power. Doubtless she thought to use the power and influence of her new friend – Rome – to the honor of the Lord to whom she was betrothed, but soon she began to "glorify herself and to live deliciously with the kings of the earth," and "her sins reached unto heaven." Rev. 18:5-7.

B. You speak of it as the woman, &c.; if this is the same referred to by Paul, why does he call it "The Man of Sin?"

A. It requires two to make one, as Adam and Eve became one and "God called their name Adam." And as Jesus and his bride are to become one and together be known as The Christ (anointed) – the one

seed, – so with this case: The virgin of Christ became untied to the World – They twain became one – "The Man of Sin." Since she pretended to be the true bride and heir with Jesus to the throne of kingdoms, so when united to the World, she claimed the union to be valid and lawful, that she sat a queen. She ruled over the empire of earth, claiming the various titles and honors due to the true Lord and his bride. And that system – Papacy – being a falsifier which sought to take the honor of the true anointed, is emphatically the opponent of the true Christ, or, as the name signifies, Antichrist.

B. But, can we say the Papacy denies God or Christ? Is the language – "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped," – applicable to that system?

A. Yes; as Paul said of some: "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." I refer to the Papal system; not to individual Roman Catholics. If you are not familiar with

THE CLAIMS OF PAPACY,

you cannot so well understand how it exalts itself, and opposes God. Papacy claims that its representative, the Pope, is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," – "The Prince of the kings of the earth." As Christ's vice-gerent, he is the Pa-pa – Pope – Father, i.e., "The Everlasting Father," "The Prince of peace," "The Mighty God." All of these, and every other title announced by the Prophets, is considered as proper and applicable to the Pope, since he is Christ's vicar, or instead of Christ. Did the prophets declare the reign of Christ for a thousand years over the nations, and that he should reign until he should put all enemies under him? Papacy claims that when exalted to power, it did put down all enemies, and that for a thousand years it did reign over the kings of the earth. (Generally dated, I believe, from A.D. 792 to 1792.) And they claim that the millennial reign of Christ and his saints, of Rev. 20, took place, is now in the past, and that the period since the overthrow of Papacy's dominion (1798) is the "little season,"

mentioned in vs. 3,7 and 8, during which the "Devil is loosed." (Protestantism and all infidelity to the church.) During her reign over the earth's kings, she did "Rule with a rod of iron," and claimed Divine authority, and that it was the fulfilment of Psa. 2:6-12. Read it. To vs. 10-12 were given emphasis, especially "Kiss the SON." Actually the Kings of the earth did kneel down before the Pope, kiss his great toe, receive his blessing and their crowns from his hands. (Sometimes the crown was placed by the Pope's feet upon king's heads.) And for centuries no king reigned in Europe without this blessing and appointment of the Pope. To offend or disobey was to forfeit their titles and thrones. Thus, by claiming God's honor, Papacy exalted itself and opposed the true God. To illustrate the claims of Papacy let me quote a few of its "great swelling words." – Pope Martin: "The greatness of priesthood began in Melchisedec, was solemnized in Aaron, continued in the children of Aaron, perfectionated in Christ, represented in Peter, exalted in the universal jurisdiction, and manifested in the Pope. So that, through this pre-eminence of my priesthood, having all things subject to me, it may seem well verified in me, that was spoken of Christ, 'Thou hast subdued all things under his feet.'...I am all in all and above all, so that God Himself, and I, the vicar of God, have both one consistory. ...Wherefore, if those things that I do be said not to be done of man but of God: WHAT CAN YOU MAKE OF ME BUT GOD? Again, if prelates of the church be called and counted of Constantine for Gods, I then, being above all prelates, seem by this reason to be ABOVE ALL GODS. Wherefore, no marvel if it be in my power to **[R54 : page 2]** change time and times, to alter and abrogate laws, to dispense with all things, yea, with the precepts of Christ." Pope Gregory II. boasted that: "All the kings of the West reverence the Pope as a God on earth." An oft accepted title was, "Our Lord God the Pope." At the Lateran Council the Pope was addressed: "Thou art another God on earth."

B. It would appear that in olden times the Popes had made great pretensions.

A. Yes, brother; and you will remember that the late Pious IX. promulgated the dogma of his own Infallibility. And the present Pope, "Leo XIII. claims to be "The Lion of the tribe of Judah." This, like other titles belonging to the true Christ, is claimed by the Anti-Christ, as you will see by this extract from the Pittsburg Dispatch of June 14, 1879: "A rich American, now residing at Rome, desiring to possess the bust of Leo XIII., engaged the services of the celebrated sculptor, Tadolini. The latter, not content with the simple portrait of the Holy Father, went to the Vatican and asked permission of Leo XIII. to reproduce his features from the original. The Pope consented. When the work was finished, Leo congratulated the artist, who asked him to trace a word on the still fresh clay. His Holiness took the burin from the sculptor, and wrote with a smile, 'Leo de tribu juda.'" ["The Lion of the tribe of Judah."]

B. It does seem very clear when so put together; but how about the remainder of the verse, – "Who sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." How could Papacy fulfill this? The temple at Jerusalem had been destroyed hundreds of years before Papacy's rule.

A. The temple of God is the dwelling or abode of God. Once He dwelt in the Jewish temple, but at the death of Jesus the vail of the temple was rent in twain and the glory of the Lord departed, and from that time it ceased to be, really, the temple of God. For **[R55 : page 2]** fifty days there was no temple on earth; but, "When pentecost was fully come," the Lord descended by his spirit, and his glory and presence filled His New Temple, the gospel church. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21,22. There has been no other temple since, and there never will be another, for this one is an everlasting habitation. Any building which men may put up at

Jerusalem might be called a temple, but it would not be THE temple of God. The "Man of Sin," – Papacy – did take his seat in God's church (temple), and used in a blasphemous manner the titles and honors of the "King of Kings." Paul tells us that the errors which led to this falling away from the truth had begun to operate in the church even in his day. It increased more rapidly when the churches' "candlestick" was removed, – the special gifts of the Spirit in healing, discerning of spirits, etc., ceased. These let, or hindered the more rapid development of error in the Apostolic days. (Another hindrance was the pagan empire, and not until its decline could Papacy be exalted.)

B. It does seem to be a wonderful counterfeit of the true Kingdom of God, and I see some force in the Spirit's calling it (vs. 11) strong delusion that they should believe a lie.

A. We find a clearly drawn

Picture of the Counterfeit of God's Kingdom. (Rev. 12.)

B. This chapter is quite peculiar, and is generally thought to be a picture of the establishment of the true kingdom. However, this view involves a contradiction.

A. It does, and for this reason it has been considered one of the most difficult chapters of this difficult book. Let us examine carefully:

"The Woman, clothed with the Sun," is the Gospel church, covered with the precious promises of God and the glorious light of truth. The Moon is the reflection of the Sun's brightness, so the Law or Jewish age was a shadow of the Gospel. It was light, but not the real, only reflected light. The woman had the Moon under her feet. She had reached a higher plane, and yet she rested upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. The diadem of twelve stars, representing the Apostles (vs. 3). The Roman Empire having seven heads (Rome's seven successive and distinct forms of government), and ten horns (divisions of power). "The red dragon," Pagan Rome, persecuted the

church. "His tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth." "Stars of heaven," – the bright ones or ministers and teachers in the church. The dragon's tail draws them, i.e., these become followers of Pagan Rome in hopes of having favor with the empire and escaping persecution. As a result, they lose their position as stars in the true church, and are "cast to the earth." Persecuted and reviled, she was pained to be delivered, and longed for the completion of the promised "Seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head." Her anxiety and desire in this direction produced a pre-mature birth – "The Man of Sin" (the papal hierarchy) being the offspring. This "male child," at first a weak one (A.D. 314), was gradually "caught up unto God and to his throne," or exalted to the position and titles, homage and praise of the true "seed," so that "He as God sat in the temple (church) of God, showing himself that he is God." And within three hundred years he did "Rule the nations with a rod of iron."

Vs. 7: "And there was war in heaven;" – i.e., there was a conflict or controversy between the two elements – the church and the empire – when this son of the church attempted to take the ruling position. (This conflict and casting down continued for several hundred years, or until about A.D. 752, when "In the pontificate of Zachary, the German court decided that no Metropolitan could enter upon his functions without the approval of the pontiff." "In the same year, Pepin asked the sanction of the Pope to ascend the throne of France.") "Michael and his angels" – the papacy and its supporters – fought against the dragon – pagan rulers, etc., – and the great dragon was cast out of heaven. This conflict between Papal and Pagan power resulted, as we have seen, in the overthrow of the latter.

B. But does it not seem a forced construction to suppose Michael to symbolize the "Man of Sin?" Is not this the same Michael referred to in Dan. 12? If it is a symbol in one case, is it not in the other?

A. No; the account in Dan. 12 is a literal statement. The resurrection and other matters there mentioned are literal, but not so Rev. 12. The woman, dragon, tail, stars, horns, etc., are all symbols, and it would be out of order to have a real Michael fight a symbolic dragon. However, it seemed puzzling at first to know why this name should be given to Antichrist, but on turning to a dictionary we find that the meaning of the word Michael is – "Who as God." It is quite remarkable that the meaning should be in such close accord with Paul's description – "He as God sitteth in the temple of God," etc. When the dragon was cast out of heaven (out of the ruling position) it left this one ("Who as God,") in control, or in the heavens, and from him issues the "loud voice" (great proclamation) of verses 10,11 and 12; that is, Papacy claimed that when it assumed control "the kingdom of God and the power of his anointed," had come to the world. They claimed that they had overcome by the blood of the Lamb, their lives and testimonies. "Therefore, rejoice ye heavens." (Let Papacy and all connected therewith rejoice.) "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, etc." As the church had once been persecuted when Paganism reigned, so now when she reigns she makes the Pagans and heretics suffer. This, papacy claims as the millennium, during which it broke in pieces the kingdoms with the rod of iron.

B. But it is the dragon that causes the woe, not the church.

A. Remember that the dragon represents Rome, and that the same dragon has various heads. (See Rev. 17.) Here it had fully taken on its fifth head – Papacy. It was the same Rome under a new ruler, or head, and the same power which had previously persecuted the church, – the Empire and its army. Under the new ruler it persecuted pagans and heretics. Remember, therefore, that hereafter the dragon represents the empire or military power, under the control of its ecclesiastical head. This military power must be made use of by its new head, and its force was directed against the woman and against

the remnant of her seed [not of the apostasy], which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus." ["The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."] These, Waldenses, &c., doubtless knew from the prophetic word, not only that the "same Jesus" would come again "to be glorified in his saints," but also that there should "first come a great falling away," and "That Man of Sin be revealed – the son of perdition," – before the day of the Lord.

Vs. 14. – To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness [lit., the place deserted] into her place. The two wings are probably the "two witnesses," – the word, – which now showed the true church from which papacy had sprung, her true condition – ON earth instead of, as at first, above the earth, with the moon under her feet.

These two witnesses assist her, not only to mount upward again, but to return to "the place deserted," i.e., to a condition of harmony with God, not with the world. She was nourished in this wilderness 1,260 years, or three and a half times, (from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798.)

Vs. 15. – "The dragon (Empire) cast a flood of waters (people – army) after the woman to destroy her, but the earth helped the woman, &c." The army was largely made use of in furnishing dissenters, and had it not been that frequent trouble from other sources otherwise occupied it, the army might have exterminated the true church.

Now, brother B., can you see the "Man of Sin?" Has he been revealed?"

B. Yes, yes! It seems very clear and plain. Now, how about his final end?"

A. Paul says: "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth." To consume is to waste gradually. The spirit of his mouth is his word. This consuming of Papacy has progressed for about three hundred years, or since God's word began to be published, (A.D. 1526)

and particularly since 1801, when it "the two (witnesses)" was exalted to heaven, or when it came to be revered.

Papacy has ever realized that "the word" would be its destroyer, [R55 : page 7] and has sought in every way to keep it from the people, and would to-day, as in past ages, burn every bible if it could.

B. Thank God for His Word. How we should prize it. It is the light which dispels errors and scatters the powers of darkness. Yet I often think that many of its strongest advocates are neglecters or careless readers of it. Would that all might remember that "it is the power of God unto salvation," and that in neglecting it they neglect him. (Mark 8:38.)

A. Your remarks are good. I have noticed of late that while the nominal Christian professor becomes the more skeptical, the more matured and most earnest children of God are searching as they never did before.

B. – Paul speaks of a destruction of Antichrist as well as of his consuming – "Whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Will this be when Christ is seen in glory in the sky?

A. – The words you quote would be more literally rendered: "Whom the Lord will make powerless by the appearing (manifesting) of his presence." Papacy has been losing its power gradually, (the "Roman Inquisition," the last of its kind, being [R56 : page 7] abolished in 1870.) This, too, is in harmony with our understanding of Christ's presence: that he is now present, separating, purifying and gathering the wheat; and when this is accomplished we (if gathered) "shall appear with Him." Oh, glorious hope! Let us "so run that we may obtain," really overcoming the real dragon by the blood of the Lamb and the word of His testimony, that we may have part with the real anointed Jesus, in the real kingdom. Good-bye; call again.
