

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 might, to deny, entirely, the Lord, in

whose praise "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Ps. 19:2. **[R305 : page 5]**

A. – I fully agree with you. It would be much easier to turn the world to Atheism than to Idolatry, especially the worshiping of a man the tendency is the very reverse. 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 in 2 Thes. 2:3, 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 backward 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," by those in the church who sleep not as do others. We understand Paul to refer 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. She began to look to the world for the fulfillment of the precious promises of kingdom, glory and honor. 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 church 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 a woman; if this is the same which Paul wrote of, why did he term 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" – the one seed in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed, (Gal. 3:29), so in this case of Anti-Christ: They would be virgin (church) of Christ, became united to the world in unholy love – they twain became one – "The Man of Sin."

From little to much the hold of the church on the Roman Empire increased

– or rather they blended –

until Papacy (the name of the church kingdom system,) – "The Man of Sin" wielded the chief power and control of the world. It (He) claimed to be the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of the world. They claim that when the kingdoms of earth accepted Papacy's overruling authority the scripture (Rev. 11:15,) was fulfilled which says: The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ – (The Lord's anointed – the line of Popes).

They claimed the various titles and honors due to the true Christ. Surely that system – Papacy – being a usurper which sought and appropriated the titles and honors of the true anointed – the true Christ, is emphatically His opponent as signified by the name Anti – (against) Christ.

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

A. – Yes, as Paul said of some: "They profess that they know God but in works they deny him." Their words say that they are the

true and only kingdom of God; but their works show that they have always been in opposition to the real kingdom, of which it is but a base though skillful counterfeit, by attracting attention to the false as the kingdom already come. We refer to the Papal system, not to individual Roman Catholics.

If you are not familiar with

THE CLAIMS OF PAPACY

you cannot see how it exalts itself and opposes God. It claims that its representative the Pope is "King of Kings and Lord of Lord's" – "The **[R305 : page 6]** Prince of the Kings of the earth." As Christ's vicegerent he is the Pa-pa – Pope or Father of mankind, i.e., "The everlasting Father" – "The Prince of peace." – "The Mighty God" (or ruler). All these and every other title announced by the prophets relative to The Christ in glory during the Millennial reign, are considered proper and applicable to the Pope whom they claim to be Christ's vicar or instead of Christ.

Do the scriptures declare the reign of Christ over the nations for a thousand years, and that he must reign until he shall 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 kingdoms of earth. (Generally dated I believe from A.D. 792 to 1792. They claim that the Millennial reign of Christ and his saints, Rev. 20, there took place and that the period since the overthrow of Papacy's dominion (1798,) is the little season mentioned in verses 3,7 and 8 during which the "devil is loosed," viz: Protestantism and all infidelity to Papacy.

During her reign over earth's king's she did "rule with a rod of iron," claiming that it was the fulfillment of Psalm 2:6-12. [Read it.] Special emphasis was given to verses 10-12, "Be wise now therefore O ye kings....Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

To fulfill this, the kings of earth were obliged to kneel before the Pope and kiss his great toe to receive his blessing and their crowns. (On one occasion, to show the superiority of the Pope – that he was indeed "King of Kings," the crown after being placed on the head of the prostrate king by the Pope's hand, was kicked off with his foot, then lifted between his feet and thus put on the king.) For centuries no king reigned in Europe without this appointment and blessing of the Popes. To offend was to forfeit their titles and thrones.

Thus, by claiming God's honors and worship, Papacy exalted itself and opposed God. To illustrate the claims of Papacy let me quote a few of its "great swelling words."

It was the boast of Gregory II. 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 thus: "Thou art another God on earth."

Pope Martin said: "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 [co-equal, or on the same footing.]...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 change time and times, to alter and abrogate laws, to dispense with all things, yea with the precepts of Christ."

It is marvellous that any one can doubt, that the above was the blasphemous utterance of Anti-Christ.

B. – It would appear that in olden times the Popes had made great pretensions. I confess that I could not expect to ever find a greater or more blasphemous system to call the Man of Sin or Anti-Christ.

A. – Yes; and brother, though less outspoken, because they have less power and the people have more knowledge, they make the same claims still. 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 Pittsburgh 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."] What blasphemous assumption!

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 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 [R306 : page 6] 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. (2 Thes. 2:7). It increased more rapidly when the church's "candlestick" was removed, – when 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 in Rev. 12.

A. – This chapter is quite peculiar, and is generally thought to be a picture of the establishment of the true kingdom – some claiming that the "manchild" mentioned, is Jesus, others that it is the church at the time of translation. But the first view involves an absurdity; for then the woman must be the Jewish church: The last view is inconsistent because of the 1260 years mentioned. I shall be glad of a clearer understanding of this symbolic picture.

A. – For this reason it has been considered one of the most difficult chapters of this difficult book. Let us examine carefully: The picture begins prior to Papacy's development.

"The woman clothed with the Sun" represents the Gospel church covered with the precious promises of God and the glorious light of truth. "The moon under her feet," is the reflection of the Sun's brightness: so "The Law" was a shadow or reflection of the Gospel light. It was light, but not the real – only reflected light. The woman was "not under the Law (Moon) but under Grace" (Sunlight); yet she was supported by the teachings of The Law and rested on the foundations of the apostles and prophets."

The diadem of twelve stars, represents the twelve apostles.

The great red dragon – represents the Pagan Roman Empire [The seven heads, representing Rome's successive and distinct forms of government, and the ten horns, the divisions of power – these being mentioned to identify it (Rome) as the same beast, or government described by Daniel, and elsewhere in Revelation.

"In heaven," symbolizes the place of control or rulership. Both woman and dragon are said to be in heaven – the woman, or church in spiritual control – the dragon, or empire in political control of the world.

If we locate it aright, the woman is seen in this vision about 308 A.D., and has been in the "Smyrna" stage as described in Rev. 2:8-10. It has just been passing through a long series of persecutions from the "dragon" (Roman Empire). The continued persecution causes some to relax their vigilance for the truth, and a spirit or desire to please and get into favor with the persecuting "dragon" comes over some of the bright ones in the church. So we read, the tail of the dragon drew the one third of the stars; they became his followers or servants which of course tended to degrade them. The long desired favor of Rome came

at last by the conversion of Constantine, A.D. 313, and there we believe the labor pangs of tribulation ceased and Papacy was born; i.e. there the blending of church and state commenced. It was not yet the "Man of Sin," in the same sense that a child is not a man; but it was the beginning, of what resulted in Papacy – "The Man of Sin," the man-child was born.

Roman favor was so sweet to the church after so many years of persecution, that they were ready to make religion any and everything to suit the views of their new half-pagan friend Constantine. With his favor, the open opposition of others measurably ceased. Thousands, yes millions were brought into the church from Paganism. But the change was mostly in name, for the pagan priests became christian priests and the pagan holidays came to be called by christian names – Christmas being one of these holidays kept sacred to the memory of a great Goddess – since called the celebration of Jesus' birth though actually nearly three months astray.

The church knew that the promise of her Lord was, that he would end her persecutions by delivering her and that she should be exalted to the control of all the kingdoms of the world. And some were so rejoiced at the favors of Rome, that no doubt they fancied that in this way God would give them the kingdoms of the world promised.

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." "And there was war in heaven;" 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 of the dragon or civil power, 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 gradual 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," (2 Thes. 2:4.) 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 to 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 [R306 : page 7] of the

Lamb, their lives and testimonies. They claim that their victory was the result of the firm stand of the ("Smyrna") church, which just previously had suffered so much persecution. "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 Millennial reign, 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 rulership, 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, [who joined not in the apostasy], which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus." ["The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."] Among those of the church who did not join, were some, whose descendants in after years were known as Waldenses, Huguenots, etc. These 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 **[R307 : page 7]** the day of the Lord. And they probably recognized Papacy in its true light as Antichrist.

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. (Verse 14.)

The Wilderness, symbolizes disrespect – outcast condition, while "City" represents the reverse viz: popularity, honor, respect, dominion, kingdom. The Lord Jesus left his church in the Wilderness condition, saying; "In the world ye shall have tribulation" – "Marvel not if the world hate you," etc., but promised that in due time he would come again, take her out of the ignoble condition, and exalt her to honor, respect, dominion in the kingdom with himself, i.e. he would take the church out of the Wilderness into the City condition. This city condition, is beautifully represented by a symbol of a glorious New Jerusalem City. (Rev. 21:2.)

It was not wrong for the church to long for the coming bliss of the New Jerusalem condition, but becoming impatient she left the Wilderness and wandered off toward the World's city and had joined with them. Thus leaving "her (our) place." She succeeded in getting a footing and in partly remodelling the city, but she merely made it a "Babylon" (confusion – mixture of church and world) city and of course could not make it a "New Jerusalem" government.

When the apostasy got under way some of the church realized it, as, but a Babylon condition and to such the "two wings" were given to help them back to their proper wilderness condition separate from the world and from Babylon – "Without the camp" (city).

The two wings we understand to be the same as the two witnesses elsewhere mentioned, viz: The Word of God – Old and New Testament Scriptures. The Scriptures showed them that the present is the time to suffer with Him, if we would (future) reign with Him – the real Bridegroom and King of nations.

She was nourished during the long reign of Papacy from A.D. 538 to 1798 or 1260 years, [three and a half times or years – symbolic time]. The true church though so much smaller – always a little flock – was scarcely worthy of the historian's notice as compared with Papacy, yet God knew all the true ones and fed them and they became so strong as to be willing to seal their faith with their blood – thousands, yes millions being put to death by Papacy – so that she is represented symbolically as being "drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus." (Rev. 17:6.)

"The dragon (Empire, under its Papal head) cast out a flood of waters (people – army) after the woman to destroy her, but the "earth (the world in general) helped the woman" by absorbing the waters (army). The army formerly used in conquest was used in hunting down "dissenters" and "heretics" and had it not been that frequent troubles from other sources, (earth) demanded attention, the army might have exterminated the true church.

Now, brother B., can you see the Man of Sin?

B. – Yes, yes! It seems very clear and plain now. But what does Paul mean by saying "Then shall that wicked (system) be revealed." (2 Thes. 2:8)

A. – The Greek word here translated "revealed" is apo-calupto and signifies to uncover, to remove a disguise. Papacy had deceived the whole world into the belief that it was the kingdom of God; and the counterfeit was so perfect that only the few in the wilderness knew its real (Anti-Christ) character: but by and by the Lord raised up Luther and others of his time, who pulled off the mask – uncovered – "revealed" Papacy in its true light as The Anti-Christ – the "Man of Sin" a base counterfeit of the real kingdom and reign of the true Christ. This was the point and edge of Luther's and in fact of all the preaching of the Reformation times, and resulted in the "taking away of his

(Papacy's) dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end." (Dan. 7:25-27.)

The most of the church, have again left the wilderness condition since 1798, and are mingling with the world and therefore find less fault with Papacy than heretofore. Such must get out of Babylon themselves into the separate or wilderness condition before they can get a good view of the harlot or her daughters. (Rev. 17:3,5.)

B. – Now as to the final end of this deceiving system of Anti-Christ; it will come to a sudden end, will it not?

A. – No, Paul says: "Whom the Lord will consume with the Spirit of His mouth." To consume is to waste gradually. The Spirit of His mouth is His Word – the truth. This agency for the 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 (God's Word – the "two witnesses") was exalted to heaven – the place of esteem or reverence: about which time also, the "dominion" or temporal power began to be taken away. Papacy has ever realized that "The Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God" would be its destroyer 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.

Its civil power has long been wasting or consuming, but ecclesiastically it still lives and must yet, with Protestantism and the kingdoms of earth, play an important part in the opposing of the establishment of the real Kingdom of God: But it shall be destroyed, and Paul tells us it will be during the presence of the Lord – "Whom the Lord shall...destroy by the Epiphania [light revealing] of the parousia [presence] of himself."

B. – Your view then is that Papacy will be destroyed by the increase of light and truth during the presence of the Lord – "the day of the Lord" in which we are now living.

A. – Yes; Papacy has been losing its power gradually: The Spanish Inquisition – the last of its kind was abolished in 1870. We understand from Scripture that the Lord is now present gathering or separating from the nominal mass of christians, the Bride – some from the sleeping and some from the living generation of the church. These will soon all be associated with him in kingdom work, the first part of which will be the overthrow of all injustice, oppression, and error and consequently the overthrow of all the systems and institutions which uphold these.

The setting up of this kingdom will of course, involve the overthrow of all the kingdoms of earth, as they are all – even the best of them – founded on injustice and unequal rights and the oppression of many and favor of the few – as we read: "It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever.

This will involve the various sectarian churches (Babylon) for all are bound and committed to the support of these kingdoms upon which they lean; and which they have claimed to be – "Christian governments" and have recognized as of divine appointment, instead of as Beastly governments permitted of God only until Christ's time for taking his great power and exercising the control of earth – the fifth universal Empire. (Dan. 7:17,18,23,27.)

The marshalling of the Lord's army, is even now (in his presence) in progress. The light shining from his presence is not only preparing the living of the "little flock" for joint heirship in the kingdom, but it is awakening and gathering other classes totally different in character, hopes and aims – the Lord's great army for the destruction of wrong and oppression, viz: The Communists, Nihilists, etc., now organizing for the overthrow of despotism. Light – knowledge – is the agency used to enlist these, and it will continue to shine out until every dark and wicked system is shown in its true light. Thus will mankind be prepared for the reign of righteousness when "a

king (Christ) shall reign in righteousness and Princes (the Saints) shall execute judgment (justice) in the earth." (Isa. 32:1.)

B. – Thank God for His Word. How we should prize it. It is the light which dispels error and scatters the power of darkness. 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.

Ours is indeed a glorious hope and it behooves us to "so run that we may obtain" the prize of our high calling; overcoming the world ("dragon") by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of His testimony, that it may be ours to share in the real kingdom of the real Christ, of which Papacy has been an abominable counterfeit – Anti-Christ.

A. – Yes, and brother we have now two, far more subtle enemies than the "dragon" (world) to overcome they are mentioned in the succeeding chapter, Rev. 13, viz: "The Beast and His Image" – both, of course symbols. Should you desire, we will sometime again examine that chapter of symbols together.

B. – Let us have that at our next meeting. I notice that in Rev. 20:4, we are told that those who will have part in the kingdom of Christ and its Millennial reign "did not worship the Beast or his Image, or receive his mark or the number of his name."

We should understand the Beast and Image symbols to be able to appreciate this message.
