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THE PRESENT APOSTASY.

I have never read 2 Thes. 2 without finding my thoughts led away to the Papal Apostasy; and still I believe the Holy Spirit refers, in this chapter, to Rome. But, as history, which some one has defined as a record of fulfilled prophecy given in detail, is said continually to repeat itself, I am now compelled by circumstances to believe that a special reference is made to "the falling away" of these last days, which, to my own mind, is far more startling, and is soon to become more vast in extent, and awful in result, than even was the relapse of the early Church into the follies of Romanism.

Numbers of men who are connected with Protestant churches, and who appear to the world as ministers of Christ, are rejecting the Scriptures with the greatest contempt, and branding the faith of those who build their hopes on the blood of Christ as "the religion of the shambles."

A very few years ago, of all the languishing "isms," Unitarianism appeared most sickly. To-day its adherents, open and secret, gathering in its own synagogues, or assembling in the churches of all denominations, are to be numbered by thousands. [R1186 : page 4]

I know this will seem incredible to many good folk; but if, the next time they receive a call from their popular minister, they will press home the question, "What think ye of Christ?" nor be content with a vaguely given answer – if they shall pointedly ask him whether the Scripture, as a whole, be the Word of God; and whether Christ's blood was shed as a propitiation for sin – some of these may possibly be startled to find that their own spiritual guide has been practically nothing more nor less than a Unitarian himself.

If ever there was a time when we should try the spirits to know whether they are of God, it is the present time. And this is a solemn duty we owe to God, ourselves and the Church; nor must the dread of being deemed uncharitable prevent us from discharging it. Toleration of error is injury to truth; charity dealt out to Antichrist is uncharitableness to Christ. We must not be deceived with high-sounding words; the emissaries of error deal largely in these, especially when speaking of "the exalted sentiments of Scripture," and the character of Christ. We must remember that either the Scriptures are the very Word of God, or they form a mass of misleading absurdities, self-contradictions, and glaring falsehoods; [R1186 : page 5] and the sacrifice of Christ must either have been for the sinner's salvation, or a useless parade of self-endurance. We have not here a matter of mere views and opinions, in which men who cannot agree may yet agree to differ. It is written that "*In none other is there salvation*; neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men wherein we must be saved." (R.V.) But what must be the fate of those who, while they profess to regard Him as a great teacher, and admire Him as a great pattern, refuse Him as the only Savior?

There is no more plainly expressed truth in the Word of God than, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." What, then, becomes of the sin of such as trample under foot the blood of Christ, and blasphemously make mention of it as savoring of the shambles? We constantly hear of men who are said to be good men, though "rather shaky" on the doctrine of the Atonement. But if "shaky" here, of what value to themselves or others is their soundness elsewhere? And yet when we question the right of such to minister in the Church of Christ, we are "uncharitable;" and *most uncharitable*, if we venture to expose their errors to the unwary souls they would fain beguile with their soul-destroying doctrine. Yet, if it is some one who confesses Him as Christ and Lord, and is contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, that may be the subject of conversation, no word shall be too severe

for such a one, because of his narrow-mindedness. A significant fact; but happy those who go forth to Jesus, outside the camp, *bearing his reproach!*

One thing with regard to the present apostasy must be specially noted – that many of those who now deny the Lord that bought them were once ultra-evangelicals both in views and doctrine. What does it mean? What, but this – that they refused to use the light God gave them, and have been given over to judicial darkness? It was said by one of these men, but a few months since: "My present belief can neither give joy to me, nor allow me to administer cheer to any one else." Yet the poor man remained bound, as it were, in chains of darkness. His pulpit work had become most bitter bondage, yet, like blinded Samson at the mill, he felt compelled still to "grind on." "Where are we?" asked another whose name had become famous through all the English speaking world, of a friend of mine who was standing by his dying bed. "All, to me, seems dark," he added. Yet there appeared no disposition to return to the light from which he had wilfully wandered. Nay, and here is the danger that threatens so many – loving darkness rather than light, we may choose the darkness rather than the light, and God may set his seal on our choice.

Then, as Whittier sings: –

Forever round the mercy seat,
The guiding lights of love might burn;
But still, if habit-bound, the feet
Would lack the will to turn.

JOHN E. LINNELL.

We are glad to recognize, here and there, a voice lifted in defense of this foundation truth of Christianity; but such defences of the faith once delivered to the saints are few; they are only isolated voices here and there. As the TOWER pointed out some

years ago, as indicated by the sure word of prophecy, the whole nominal church is rapidly plunging into the ditch of Infidelity. And no matter, if for a time they retain some of the superstructure, when the foundation is repudiated all that is left of the building is inevitably doomed.

Yet the picture is not so dark as this writer presumes; for few indeed have been fully enlightened and "have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers [advantages] of the age to come." But if any such fall away, there remaineth for them no more an offering for sin; but a certain, fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries who knowingly trample under foot the precious blood of Christ, counting it a common thing, and who do despite unto the spirit of favor exercised through Christ. – Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31.
