

SATAN'S COUNTERFEIT OF TRUE RELIGION

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." – Proverbs 14:12.

IT MAY be a subject of some surprise to learn that Satan has a gospel, yet such would not be the case if all were familiar with the Satan of Scripture. Unfortunately for themselves the great majority today are not acquainted with the delineation of the Devil which God's Word supplies. They know little or nothing about his motives, his methods, his ministers, his machinery or his media. To them he is either a hideous monster with horns, hoofs and a tail, or else an abstract principle of evil – the absence of good, a negation. The words which Goethe put into the mouth of Mephistopheles in "Faust," "I am the spirit of Negation," is the popular definition of the Devil today. He is impersonal, immaterial, impossible. As one has quaintly put it, "They spell Devil without a 'd' as they spell God with two 'o's.'" Good and evil is their scheme. "All the Devil there is, is the devil within you," is the last word of modern theology.

Now, an intelligent enemy always keeps in the background, remains hidden, out of sight. It is an important factor to his success that his identity should be concealed. The assassin who plunges a knife into the back of his victim is generally hired for the purpose. The one who throws the bomb is merely a pawn, the master-mind that planned the deed is unseen and unsuspected. The police in some of our large cities know perfectly well that many of the most daring crimes are engineered by one who is too astute to show his hand. Those whom he employs to execute his plans may be caught, but the genius who "pulls the strings" is secure. Therefore it need not surprise us to find that the masses do not believe in the existence of a personal Devil. It would be strange were it otherwise. "Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise" is doubtless an axiom, of the

truth and value of which, in relation to humanity, the Devil is fully assured.

The Word of God does not leave us in any doubt as to the existence of a personal Devil. It furnishes us with a full-length portrait of him. It gives us a comprehensive description of his being, his emissaries and his aims. Personal names are ascribed to him and personal characteristics attributed to him. He is represented as being the originator and source of all evil in the Universe, and the implacable enemy of God and man. His power is so tremendous that we are informed, "Michael, the archangel, [R5847 : page 42] when contending with the Devil (he disputed about the body of Moses), durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." (Jude 9.) His dominion is so great and his impudence so audacious that he offered all the kingdoms of the world to the Son of God, on the one condition that He would fall down and worship him. And our Lord did not challenge his right to make such an offer, but upon a subsequent occasion acknowledged him to be the Prince of this world.

Moreover, the Word of God not only describes at length the person and power of the Devil, but it also acquaints us with his purposes, which may be summed up under two heads, namely: To deny the Word of God and to destroy the Work of Jesus Christ. It would be apart from our present purpose were we to turn aside and show at length how every available weapon was employed in the first centuries of the Christian Era to destroy the Bible, and how in these last days Satan is using the pens of the "higher critics" to destroy the authority of the Holy Scriptures. Suffice it to say that, from the day when he repudiated the words of Jehovah to Eve, until the moment when he is cast into the Abyss, his untiring energies will be devoted to the work of denying the Oracles of God.

Ever since the first Messianic prediction Satan has tried to destroy the Work of our Lord Jesus Christ. First, by way

of *anticipation* and secondly by a method [R5848 : page 42] of *imitation*. When Jehovah declared to the serpent that the Seed of the woman should bruise his head, it was not long before that old serpent, the Devil, tried to frustrate the purposes of God. Cain (who was of that wicked one) slew his brother Abel as the first attempt to destroy the woman's seed. Later on, God declared to Abraham that "in him should all the families of the earth be blessed," or, as the Holy Spirit's comment upon these words informs us, "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to *seeds*, as of many, but as *One*, And to thy Seed, which is Christ." (Galatians 3:16.) When in Egypt the descendants of Abraham began to wax numerous and it appeared that there was an immediate likelihood of this prophecy receiving its fulfilment, Satan tried to frustrate the prophecies of God and destroy the channel through which that Seed was to come by inciting Pharaoh to issue a command that the male children of the Hebrew women should be destroyed. (Exodus 1:16.) When at a still later date God made known to King David that the promised Messiah was to be born of the royal tribe of Judah, Satan made a still more persistent attack to thwart God, as may be witnessed during the time of the divided kingdom, when the ten tribes made an untiring and determined effort to exterminate the tribe of Judah.

When the fulness of the time was come and Immanuel was born at Bethlehem, Satan promptly made an effort to destroy the young child's life. Through Herod he slew all the children in Bethlehem from two years old and under. But his effort was in vain. For being warned of God in a dream Joseph had taken the young child and his mother and fled into Egypt. At the commencement of our Lord's ministry (in the Temptation), Satan tried to make Him throw Himself down from the Temple. On another occasion when, wearied out with the day's work, our Lord sought a few minutes' sleep in the bow of the boat, the Prince of the Power of the Air lashed the Sea of Galilee into a fury until the disciples feared that the little ship was

doomed. And it was not until the Creator of the sea commanded it to be still that the plot of the Devil was foiled.

Other instances could be cited in which the Devil sought to prevent our Lord offering Himself as a Sacrifice for sin. Perhaps the supreme occasion was while He was upon the cross itself. Weakened by His sufferings, tortured by His merciless enemies, hanging helpless between the earth and Heaven, Satan challenged Him to demonstrate His Deity by descending from the cross. "Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross." (Matthew 27:40.) But glory to His blessed Name He never faltered, He patiently and majestically bore His sufferings in silence until He cried in triumph, "It is finished!" and surrendered His spirit into the hands of the Father. But the Devil had still another card to play. His sacred body having been borne from the cross and laid in the sepulchre, Satan then made it his business to see that it was securely sealed and guarded by a company of Roman soldiers. Ah, Satan! if thou canst only succeed in keeping in the tomb that Body, thou hast triumphed. But no, again thou art defeated! The grave cannot retain its victim, Death cannot hold the Lord of Life. "Up from the grave He rose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foe – Hallelujah, Christ arose!" And today He lives and is alive forevermore!

Having been thwarted and defeated at every point, having failed to prevent the incarnation [His being "made flesh," John 1:14] of our blessed Lord, having failed to prevent His offering Himself as a Sacrifice for sin, having failed to keep His body in the confines of death, it behooves us to inquire, Has Satan given up in despair? Has he ceased in his efforts to destroy the Work of Christ? Has he changed his attitude toward the Son of God? or is he still perpetuating his hellish deeds? Is he still seeking to annul the effects of Christ's Work? Is he yet desirous of destroying the virtues of the cross? An answer to these questions is of the greatest importance.

Again we need to turn to the infallible Word if we would obtain a reliable answer. In the parable of the Tares our Lord has exposed Satan's methods during the time of His absence from this world. After the Son of Man had graciously condescended to scatter the Word of God, Satan likewise did some sowing and went and scattered broadcast his Tares among the Wheat. It is to be noted that he sowed neither thorns nor thistles, but something which so closely resembles the genuine grain that it is not until the time of the Harvest that the one can be distinguished from the other. Then it is seen that the Tares, though resembling the Wheat in every other respect, bear no fruit, produce no increase. In a word, then, just as Satan formerly sought to destroy the Work of Christ by way of *anticipation*, he is now engaged in the work of nullifying the virtues of the Death of Christ by a method of *imitation*. Consequently, as Christ has a Gospel, Satan must also have a gospel. And, in the nature of the case, it must be a gospel which so much resembles the Gospel of Christ that it is capable of deceiving the unwary and deluding the unsaved. It will be our business now, not to *expound* his gospel, but, with the Spirit's aid, to *expose* it.

The gospel of Satan is not a system of revolutionary principles, nor yet a programme of anarchy. It does not inspire wars and strife, but peace and security. It does not set the mother against her daughter and the father against his son, but promotes the fraternal spirit whereby the race is regarded as one great Brotherhood. It does not seek to drag down and degrade the natural man, but to improve and uplift him. To use a popular phrase, **[R5848 : page 43]** it appeals to "the best, all that is good within us." It aims to make this world such a comfortable and congenial habitat that the absence of Christ will not be felt and God will not be needed. It endeavors to make men so satisfied with this life that they shall be totally indifferent to the life hereafter. It propagates the principles of self-sacrifice, mercy, charity and benevolence, teaching men to live for the good of others and to be kind to all. For those who observe its conditions and obey its commands, it promises the development of certain

inherent occult powers, the solution of the more recondite problems of man's constitution and the accumulation of esoteric knowledge which is withheld from the multitude. In short, it declares that all who will eat of the forbidden fruit shall "be as gods."

In contradistinction to the Gospel of Christ, the gospel of Satan is one of *works*. Its fundamental principles are: salvation by good deeds, redemption by human merits and regeneration by reformation. Its sacramental phrase is: "Be good and do good." Its motto is: "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." Its various ramifications and organizations are manifold. Temperance reform movements, Christian Socialist Leagues, ethical culture societies, "Peace" Congresses and various other organizations are all employed (perhaps unconsciously) in proclaiming this gospel of Satan – justification by works. The pledge card is substituted for Christ; social purity, rather than individual regeneration, is the idol of the hour; the cultivation of the flesh is considered more practical than the "birth" (begetting) of the Spirit; while universal peace is looked for without the interposition of the Prince of Peace.

The apostles of Satan are not saloon-keepers and white-slave traffickers, but for the most part "ordained" ministers. Thousands of those who occupy our modern pulpits are not engaged in presenting the fundamentals of the Christian faith, but have turned aside from the Truth and given heed unto fables. Instead of magnifying the enormity of sin and setting forth its eternal consequences, they minimize it by declaring that sin is merely ignorance, the absence of good. Instead of warning their hearers "to flee from the wrath to come," they call God a liar by declaring that He is too loving to destroy His own children and too merciful to send one of His own creatures to eternal damnation [*krisis*, condemnation]. Instead of preaching that "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22), they merely hold up Christ as the great Exemplar and exhort their hearers to "follow in His steps." "For they being

ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (Romans 10:3.) "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into [imitating] the Apostles of Christ. And *no marvel*; for Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of Light. Therefore it is no great thing [not to be wondered at] if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works." – 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

Added to the fact that hundreds of churches are without a leader who will faithfully declare the whole counsel of God and present *His way* of salvation, we also have to remember and take into consideration the lamentable and ominous fact that the majority in these congregations are in no way to learn, and have very little possibility of learning the Truth for themselves. The family altar, where portion of God's Word was wont to be read daily, is now – even in the homes of nominal Christians – a thing of the past. The Bible is not expounded in the pulpit and is not read in the pew. The demands of this rushing Age are so many that the multitudes have little time and still less desire to meditate upon the things of God. Hence the majority who are too indolent to search for themselves are left at the mercy of those whom they pay to search for them – those who betray their trust by studying economic and social problems instead of the Scriptures of Truth. [R5849 : page 43]

In the Scripture which we have taken as the basis of these remarks the gospel of Satan – the Devil's Delusion – is described as "a way *which seemeth* Right unto a man." That is to say, it is presented in such plausible language that it appeals to the emotions; it is set forth in such a subtle manner that it commends itself to the intelligence of its hearers. The success of an illegitimate coiner depends upon how much the counterfeit resembles the genuine article. A lie is not so much the absolute denial as the perversion of the truth. Hence half a lie is always more dangerous in its effects

than the total of the truth. Consequently, when the Father of Lies enters the pulpit, he does not flatly deny the great doctrines of Christianity, but he rather tacitly acknowledges them and then proceeds to give an erroneous interpretation and a false application. For example, he would not be so foolish as to boldly announce his disbelief in a personal God – he takes His existence for granted and then gives a false description of His character. He announces that God is the Father of all men, when the Scriptures plainly tell us we are "the children of God *by* faith in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26.) Again, Satan would not make so flagrant a blunder as to ignore the central figure of human history; namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, He is acknowledged to be the most perfect person who ever lived. Attention is drawn to His deeds of compassion and acts of mercy, the beauty of His character and the tenderness of His teaching. His *life* is eulogized, but His *Death* is ignored, the all-important atoning work upon the Cross is never mentioned. It is a bloodless Gospel, and a crossless life and, in regard to His Person, He is merely considered as the Ideal *Man*.

In 2 Cor. 4:3,4 we have a Scripture which sheds an abundance of light upon our present subject. There we are told: "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are lost. In whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, *lest* the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them." He blinds the *minds* of unbelievers by hiding the light of the Gospel of Christ in presenting his own version of the *Truth*. Appropriately is he designated "the Devil and Satan *which deceiveth the whole world.*" (Revelation 12:9.) In merely appealing to "the best that is within man," and in merely exhorting him "to lead a nobler life," there is afforded a general platform for all shades of opinion and every shade of philosophic speculation. Atheists, Pantheists, Unitarians, and all other Sectarians can unite to proclaim this common message.

Again we quote our foundation passage: "There is a way which *seemeth right* unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The Devil's Delusion is that we can be saved by our own works, and justified by our own deeds. Whereas God tells us, "By

grace are ye saved through *faith,...not of works*, lest any man should boast." And again, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5.

Perhaps at this point an illustration from personal experience may be pardoned. Some two years ago the [R5849 : page 44] writer became acquainted with one who was a lay preacher and an enthusiastic Christian worker. For over seven years he had been engaged in public preaching and religious activities. But from certain expressions and phrases he used, the writer was not satisfied in his own heart that his friend was really a "born [begotten] again" man. When he began to question him he found that he was only very imperfectly acquainted with the Scriptures and had only the vaguest conception of Christ's work for sinners. For a while the writer sought to present the Plan of Salvation in a simple and impersonal way, in the hope that if he were still unsaved God would be pleased to reveal unto him the Savior for sinners. One night to his joy the one who had been preaching the Gospel(?) for seven years confessed that he had found Christ only the previous night. He confessed (to use his own words) that he had been presenting "the Christ ideal," but not the Christ of the Cross. He had been trying to know Christ as the "Truth" before he knew Him as the "Way."

The writer believes there are thousands like this preacher, who have been brought up in Sunday Schools, taught about the birth, life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who believe in the historicity of His Person, and who think that is all that is necessary for their salvation. When they reach manhood and go out into the world they encounter the attacks of atheists and infidels who declare that such a person as Jesus of Nazareth never lived. But the impressions of their early days cannot easily be erased and they remain steadfast in their declaration that they *believe in Jesus Christ*. Yet when you examine their faith, too often you will find that though they believe *about* Jesus Christ they do not believe *in* Him! They believe with the *head* that such a person lived (and because they believe this, imagine they are saved), but they

do not believe with the *heart* that this Person died to save them from their sins. A merely intellectual assent to the *reality* of Christ's Person *and which goes no further* is another phase of the Way "*which seemeth right unto a man,*" but the end thereof "are the ways of death!"

Lack of space prevents our doing more than just pointing out other ends of this Way which "seemeth right." Those who are trusting to an outward form of godliness, those who are *religious* because it is considered a mark of respectability, those who attend the House of God because it is fashionable to do so, and those who join some Church because they imagine that such a step will enable them *to become* Christians, all such are in the Way which ends in death – death spiritual and eternal.

And now, my reader, where do you stand? Are you in the Way which "seemeth right," but which leadeth to death, or are you in the *Narrow Way* which leadeth to life eternal? Are you trusting in yourself or in Christ? are you relying upon your own works, or are you reposing upon the finished work of Christ? A pious life, a self-sacrificing spirit, attractive manners, a charitable disposition, regular attendance at religious services, saying prayers and even reading the Bible, none of these things – nay, all of them together – *without faith in the Blood of Christ* can obtain for you a passport to Heaven. If any of the above virtues could ever save a single soul, where was the necessity for the awful death of Jesus Christ? No, eternal life is neither a wage nor a reward, but the free Gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. However pure your motives, however noble your intentions, however well-meaning your purposes, God cannot accept you as a son, until you accept His Son.

By Arthur Pink.

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