

# Present Truth

A magazine dedicated  
to the restoration  
of New Testament Christianity  
in this generation

*Sola Gratia*      Solely by Grace  
*Solo Christo*    Solely by Christ  
*Sola Fide*        Solely by Faith

APRIL 1975  
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## ANTICHRIST 1975

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# Present Truth

**Present Truth** is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith.

Editor: Robert D. Brinsmead  
Publishing Editor: Norman Jarnes

**Publishers:** A group of Christian scholars and businessmen without denominational sponsorship who have united to uphold the objective gospel amid the present deluge of religious subjectivism. Multitudes are being caught up in the popular and frantic effort to find satisfaction in some sort of religious experience. *Present Truth* is a voice in this barren wilderness of groveling internalism, a voice which boldly proclaims those great principles upon which the Reformation was founded—namely:

1. *Sola gratia.* God's saving activity outside of us in the person of Jesus Christ is the sole *ground* of our salvation.
2. *Solo Christo.* Christ's doing and dying on our behalf is the sole *basis* of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God.
3. *Sola fide.* The Holy Spirit's gift of faith through the hearing of this objective, historical gospel is the sole *means* whereby Christ's substitutionary life and death are imputed to us for justification unto life eternal. He who is thus justified by faith and filled with God's Spirit will glory only in Christ's cross and make God's saving work in Christ the central affirmation of his Christian witness. Though he will be careful to obey God and please Him in all things, he will continue to repent rather than glory in the feeble attainments of his own Spirit-filled life.
4. *Sola Scriptura.* The Bible and the Bible only is the Christian's objective and infallible rule of faith and practice, alone sufficient that he may "be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

*Present Truth* is not only committed to the task of upholding these founding principles of the Reformation, but it believes that we today must allow these principles to call all that we do and all that we teach into question. These principles call all traditions into question and all statements about the truth into question—even the ones set forth in this magazine. Our vision is a new Reformation that will recover what the Reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began.

**To Contributors:** Since truth is above the preferences and prejudices of any denomination, the editors welcome contributions from anyone and will judge them on their merit alone. If you wish a manuscript returned, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Identifying antichrist in 1975 is not a matter of throwing stones at Rome or the liberals.

# Letters

Address Letters to *Present Truth*,  
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California 92028.



## The Evangelical's Substitute

Sir / Geoffrey J. Paxton is playing a word game in his statements about new-birth centered preaching. In the November, 1974 issue he writes, "... the new birth is a necessity and a reality. . . . A man is not saved by being born again." — p. 8. If the new birth is not necessary to being saved, to what then is it necessary at all? Is a man saved if he is not born again?

Jesus' words to Nicodemus concerning His being lifted up subtract nothing from His first words to this Pharisee, "Ye must be born again." They simply clarify the provision made in Christ's death as the ground of faith for the new birth. Jesus simply explained to Nicodemus that, while His being lifted up was the ground of faith for the new birth, it is not the new birth itself, in which work of the Spirit a man is made a new creature. His meaning is clear. Because of His being lifted up on the cross, a man who believes in Him need not perish, but should have eternal life. *It is by the new birth that a man is saved, through the lifting up of Christ on the cross.* Christ's being lifted up was a historical event outside the believer, and the new birth is a work of regeneration inside the believer by the Holy Spirit. The weight of the new birth is on the cross, where Christ died. The work of the new birth is in the believer, where spiritual life is given.

Paxton, like all imputation-substitution advocates, endeavors to move the believer's salvation outside himself, centering it solely in the historical Christ, with no admission to the indwelling Christ. But regeneration, or the new birth, is one aspect of a believer's salvation which does not take place on Christ's cross. Christ was not regenerated for the believer or in place of a believer. Christ died for our sins, suffering the penalty for sin. He is the substitute Sufferer, and in this suffering He made provision on the cross for the believer's forgiveness and regeneration. The provision for regeneration was on the cross. The imparta-

tion of new life is in the believer.

Paxton says that "Let Jesus come into your heart" is not a biblical way of preaching. Christ's indwelling is declared not biblical! A mystery, certainly. But not biblical, never! "... God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Gal. 4:6. Nicodemus couldn't understand this either. He asked, "How can these things be?" Paxton seems to be asking the same. The indwelling Christ of eternal life is not a subject to be explained, but to be believed. If God says He will send the Spirit of His Son into a believer's heart, He will. Galatians 4:6 says He has! "Marvel not . . ." Jesus says.

New-birth centered preaching is Christ uplifting preaching. It touches man's need. It opens the pathways of the mind to the cross. That's what Jesus did with Nicodemus. He told him of his need to be born again, and then led him to the uplifted Christ. Thank you, Jesus, for the lesson in preaching technique!

M.D., Minister  
Michigan

Sir / In your November, 1974 issue you say, "What we do repudiate is that a man is saved by the new birth." — p. 8. How are we saved if not by the new birth? I realize that the new birth is just the door to the Christian life; it is only the beginning. But it is a start, and Paul does say, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Also, Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*Ye must be born again.*"

You also say, "Although the new birth is a necessity and a reality, the new birth does not save a man. A man is not saved by being born again. . . . A man is saved by the once-for-all coming of Jesus into the world. . ." — *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9. If a man is not saved by the new birth, then how is he saved? I believe that man must make a choice; otherwise the birth of Christ means nothing. Unless we avail ourselves of that birth and take it into our lives by

faith, then it means nothing. How can a man be born again unless he does accept Christ and then the Holy Spirit works in him from then on. In order to be new, we must be born anew, because we can't better ourselves. That is why Christ died for us—to come in and do for us what we could not do. I realize that we have to look to Jesus to be saved, but there is a taking Him into our lives.

R.C., Minister  
Virginia

## Antichrist

Sir / Do you think that there might be a tendency to see the age of Luther as "the golden age" in some ways, and to remain there in thought? I am familiar with much of Luther's teaching, and am aware that he came to see the Roman Church as "antichrist." I can accept this as a truly prophetic insight of Luther in his day, for so it was then to all appearances. But of course the message of the Revelation has an eternal message, and we have to ask, "What is now beast and antichrist"—and every generation sees some new expression of the unseen spiritual enemy. I think it is possible that Protestantism too could become antichrist, unless it is true to its own spirit of constant self-criticism and recognizes that it is an ambiguous church amidst all the other ambiguous churches in terms of its own holiness and infallibility.

R.S., Reformed Minister  
England

## Beware of Men

Sir / Recently I came upon a copy of *Present Truth* and was deeply impressed. I am trying to keep the "faith" and "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." We know that in these last days we have so many false teachings. I am not pleased with much I hear, see and read—even coming from some of our great leaders and scholars.

M.P., Minister  
Ohio



## Evangelical Focus

Sir / Thank you for your excellent articles in *Present Truth* magazine. I have found them very stimulating and well worth pondering. I was formerly on the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ, and have been very troubled by the content of much of the gospel witnessing tools that I have used and trained others to use. The emphasis was seldom on repentance and almost always subjective. I have felt for some time that the focus of our evangelism is the key issue facing evangelicals. It seems clear that the objective message of repentance, atonement and resurrection is the irreducible minimum for a true witness. This ought to be followed by a challenge to faith and trust in that message. Experiences, fulfillment, etc., must be understood as byproducts of faith, not the content of it. Your magazine has done much to encourage me to persevere in this emphasis in the face of much opposition.

G.K.  
Pennsylvania

## Eschatology

Sir / Your September, 1974 issue, "Justification by Faith and Eschatology," was outstanding. I have long wondered when a publication would come along refuting the wild speculation of some of the current millennial prophets. Your article, "Eschatology in the Light of the Gospel," was the clearest statement of the biblical perspective I have seen. It will take me some time to digest the other articles, but I thank you for the publication. While the proposition you state is clear to me, I find it takes almost volumes to explain and prove this position to men of the opposite persuasion, for they are so steeped in a literalizing of Old Testament prophecies that they cannot even see how New Testament teachers saw their fulfillment to the true Israel of God.

Your "Bibliography" was excellent and might well be expanded and widely published, for I find that most Christians in this country are of the opinion that there is only one view of the second coming, and that that is one of two second comings, i.e., a "rapture" and then the true coming of the Lord. Little is being said these days of things to transpire on the last day and the last hour.

W.L., Church of God Pastor  
Michigan

Sir / You did a great job in your September, 1974 issue on eschatology. You will get some flack from the Fundamentalists, but as a former premil, I think you handled the subject very well.

J.M., Minister  
Colorado

## Flack

Sir / As of now I am through with your publication and mission in the cause of truth. Your September, 1974 issue on eschatology is enough to turn any evangelical off. I am sorry to say that my confidence in your theology is a thing to be regretted, good as it is in many respects.

J.S.  
Florida

## Plausible Alternative

Sir / Congratulations on your special issue, "Justification by Faith and Eschatology" (Sept., 1974). I have never heard eschatology presented in a historical context before. It certainly offers a plausible alternative to the much publicized "futurist" approach that is presented virtually as orthodoxy today.

L.V.  
Wisconsin

## Good Spirit

Sir / Although I am a moderate dispensationalist and am solidly premil, and therefore do not always find myself in complete agreement with your doctrinal positions, I praise God that one of my prayers is being answered—that the people of God are being awakened to the evil of subjectivism which has for too long permeated the evangelical scene. May God continue to bless *Present Truth* as in concert you seek to redirect the church's attention away from man and toward God and all of His works.

B.W.  
North Dakota

## Helpful

Sir / Your material has proved to be both refreshing and stimulating. In the midst of so much easy-believism and experience-centered thinking, to come aside and read your material is a great joy. Particularly helpful at this time for me has been your recent September, 1974 issue on eschatology, which has helped me consolidate that which hitherto suffered from not having an overall unity. To write of any differ-

ences we might have is trivial in the light of the great truths which unite us in the gospel.

J.D., Church of England Minister  
England

## Awakened

Sir / For most of my Christian life I was hardly even aware that an evangelical alternative to dispensationalism's system of eschatology existed. Worse yet, as I felt that dispensationalism failed to appreciate the spiritual nature of the true Israel (Gal. 4:21-31; Rom. 4:13-17; Luke 3:8, 9) and the end of the Old Testament sacrificial system (Heb. 9:13), I found myself almost loathing any mention of our Lord's second advent.

Fortunately, I joined a Reformed Presbyterian Church, and in order to understand my new church home's doctrinal standpoint, I read a manual on the Westminster Confession, in which a discussion of various eschatological systems was included as commentary on the sections related to the last judgment. Although the discussions were brief and not very detailed, my being awakened as to the existence of nondispensational viewpoints provided me with a much broader perspective and a new appreciation of what the Lord's second coming involved. Your September, 1974 issue on eschatology has also served to—for the first time—awaken an interest in eschatology in me.

P.H., Student  
Missouri

## Views Changed

Sir / *Present Truth* has helped me to take my eyes off of my own inward experience and look to Christ's victorious life. My ideas on eschatology have been completely changed.

C.B.

Sir / Your September, 1974 eschatology special was really special. I will now need to completely rearrange my thinking about Bible doctrine. I thought it was Christ centered, but I see now that it must be much more so.

T.H.  
Tennessee

## Thinking

Sir / Your views on eschatology certainly merit the most serious consideration—of that I am persuaded—even though they may produce some fundamental alterations in my viewpoint. That is to say, their acceptance would

produce such alterations. I'm not fighting or balking. I just wish a bit of time and opportunity to look at this and think about it. My first reading of your September, 1974 eschatology issue has left me with some quite profound impressions.

E.L.  
Oklahoma

### The "Ordo Salutis"

Sir / After reading most of your article on "The *Ordo Salutis*" (*Present Truth*, Nov., 1974), I am completely dumfounded that you, of all people, would subscribe to the false doctrine of predestination. Could it be that you, while exposing the false doctrine of man's saving himself, have gone to the other extreme? God's election is based on His foreknowledge, not of Christ, but of man.

D.H., Student  
Texas

Sir / I find that there is something doctrinally incorrect with your article, "The *Ordo Salutis*," which appears in your November, 1974 issue. Your error comes at the end of the "Faith and Election" section (p. 21), where you say, "We have seen that God has elected one Man [Christ]." It is true that only those who receive Christ in faith are joined to Christ by faith, but this does not effect their election. Rather, their election has been made sure "from the foundation of the world." We are chosen, we are elected, before we are even born. We do not enter the elect once we believe. All of God's chosen will come to believe.

N.K., Presbyterian Minister  
New Jersey

Sir / I read and study your magazine with a great deal of interest and find that it has reflected the Reformed view in the past. I was disappointed in the article on "The *Ordo Salutis*," in the November, 1974 issue, in that the writer's view results in a circuitous distortion of the Reformed position on limited atonement.

D.K., Attorney  
Mississippi

Sir / I appreciate the emphasis of your magazine—the objective gospel. The November, 1974 issue was, in some respects, an affirmative answer to my prayerful desire that the magazine might take up, for a moment, the subject of the plan of salvation. I think that you have some real problems concerning your view of election. But

though I believe you have gone wrong on your view of election, your heart is right in trying to find the meaning of it in the cross of Him who bore our sins.

H.B.  
Oregon

Sir / Your magazine is a breath of fresh air! Having come the experience-centered route, I find it so helpful. I feel you may overreact at times to "subjective experience," for I am sure you have "experiences"—but the difference is that they are solidly based on "objective truth"! That is the issue I feel you bring out so well.

The November, 1974 issue was the best! "The *Ordo Salutis*" answered questions that I have had since seminary. It fired my spirit for the preaching of the gospel of grace. What a privilege to offer God's mercy to all men and to exhort them to repent. Keep up the good work.

J.A., Baptist Pastor  
Illinois

Sir / *Present Truth* puts forth great biblical truths, and I thank God for that. I'm also thankful for your battle against subjectivism. I am 16 years old, and I have seen so many of my Christian friends ruined because of their reliance on feelings. I hope many young people will come to see the objective Christ through your magazine.

Your November, 1974 issue was great! I especially liked "The *Ordo Salutis*." It made me rethink my ideas on what a person has to "do" to be saved. The section on election made me very thankful to God. I would like to see more on the relationship of election and free will. Also, if you will, I think an issue on the sacraments would be a worthy, if daring, endeavor.

D.F.  
Maine

### Accepted in the Beloved

Sir / I am happy to see that you put the emphasis on God's Son and His work and experience, rather than the believer's. This biblical emphasis turns the believer's heart to look upon Christ, the all-sufficient One, and His accomplishments, rather than upon the believer and his insufficiency and lack. As Ephesians 1:6 declares, we are "accepted in the Beloved."

R.B.  
West Virginia

### On John Wesley

Sir / I recently received your reprint of "Protestant Revivalism, Pentecostalism and the Drift Back to Rome." Although I had earlier read the article in *Present Truth*, I enjoyed reading it again. I do enjoy the well-informed, scholarly writing which appears in this article and the many others which come from *Present Truth*.

I am an admirer of John Wesley and found your treatment of Wesleyanism to be interesting, and demonstrating a better understanding of Wesley himself than most "Wesleyans" today can claim. Your distinction between Wesley and Wesley's followers is an important and needed distinction, as many of Wesley's followers today are completely unaware of how far they have strayed from the beliefs and spirit of Wesley. There is now, at least in the Church of the Nazarene, a refreshing breeze of rediscovery of what Wesley has to say—an awakening to the fact that much Wesleyanism, including the "Nazarene variety," has fallen victim to many of the excesses to which you allude—losing sight of the all-sufficiency of justification by subordinating it to sanctification, and placing an undue premium on emotion.

While I am aware that the purpose of your article is to trace the drift toward Rome, which must be traced to some of Wesley's overly zealous followers, I am somewhat disappointed that you did not clearly point out that these errors resulted from a distortion of Wesley's message.

The single implication which most bothers me is the implication that Wesley himself subordinated justification to sanctification. The statement that Wesleyanism tended to do that, plus the brief quotation from Wesley that entire sanctification was "a still higher salvation," would tend to leave the impression with your readers that Wesley considered entire sanctification as one step higher than justification, and that since sanctification was Wesley's "long suit," he considered the doctrine of sanctification to be more important than the doctrine of justification.

If you are as familiar with Wesley as you seem to be, you are aware that Wesley encountered these same distortions of his doctrine during his own lifetime, and tried to correct them. Perhaps it would have been more fair to Wesley to point this out—that some of Wesley's followers, rather than Wesley, were the source of these errors.

As you point out, "Wesley believed in justification by faith and taught it

with power." It can never be justly said of Wesley that he ever preached justification by works, or justification as a result of sanctification. For Wesley, justification by faith always was man's only hope of being saved.

What then did Wesley mean when he called entire sanctification "a still higher salvation"? Was he referring to the objective? Was he saying that somehow the work of justification was incomplete and now needed to be completed? Of course not. What he was saying was that the sanctifying work (regeneration) which takes place at the moment of justification does not completely sanctify.

I am not willing to argue at this point for a "second blessing." I have suspended judgment until further study on the subject. I merely want to point out that Wesley's strong belief in sanctification, when properly understood, does *not* subordinate justification.

Of course, Wesley would not agree with your statement that justification is the whole truth of the gospel. Wesley would say that Christ's telling us to be "pure in heart," to "be perfect," Paul's urging to "perfect holiness," our "being changed into the same image from one degree of glory to the next," and the many, many other references to being made holy, made by Christ, Paul, and other writers in the New Testament—that these are a glorious part of God's good news just as justification by faith is. It is gospel. It is good news that God forgives our sins, justifying us. It is just as surely good news to be a new creature. It is good news to know that God not only saves us from the results of sin, but can actually do something about the sin problem here and now, empowering us to live without being controlled by sin's power.

Wesley says in his sermon, "Justification by Faith," "that, although some rare instances may be found, wherein the term 'justified' or 'justification' is used in so wide a sense as to include 'sanctification' also, yet in general use they are sufficiently distinguished from each other, both by St. Paul and the other inspired writers." If you stipulate that you are using "justification" in this wider sense, Wesley would have no quarrel with the statement that justification is the whole truth of the gospel. If you use it in the usual, narrower sense, Wesley would disagree, insisting that God's plan of salvation includes not only justifying us, but saving us from our sins, or sanctifying us. Can any informed person say that Paul did not say the same

thing many times?

I do not claim that today's "Wesleyans" maintain Wesley's perspective, but some are rediscovering it and finding that it liberates them from the damaging false ideas of holiness which were excesses of the American holiness movement.

My request is, first, that you not blame Wesley for the errors of his followers. Second, that you be aware of the danger of depreciating sanctification to demonstrate the all-sufficiency of justification. Both truths are gospel. Neither should suffer for the sake of the other, as God's will is that we be both justified and sanctified (not meaning here necessarily a "second blessing"). The doctrine of justification is strengthened, not weakened, by giving sanctification the place in our salvation which God intends.

I am probably almost as aware of the excesses of the holiness movement as your writers are, having grown up in it amidst legalism, and in an environment where emotion and spirituality were easily confused. I, too, have had a tendency to overcorrect by going to the other extreme from these errors.

You state, "Holiness-type books can generally be detected by titles that major on experience rather than on the gospel." What you seem to be saying is that books which deal primarily with sanctification rather than justification do not deal with gospel. But if Christ says to be holy, if Paul says to be holy, who are we to say that books about being holy are not gospel? Though, admittedly, many such books contain errors, can we say that a book about the *experience* of "walking in the Spirit" has no place? Of course not. When Christian experience has an important place in Scripture, it should have a place in my theology and in my reading. Experience is not a dirty word. The solution to the excesses of experience-oriented fanatics is not to discount God's sanctifying work in my life, but to restore justification and sanctification to a proper balance in our theology and practice.

E.H., Nazarene Youth Leader  
Missouri

## Trapping Mice

Sir / I am now in the process of reading carefully your brochure called "Protestant Revivalism, Pentecostalism and the Drift Back to Rome." I would like to know where you find support for the idea that Wesley confessed that he had never attained the "second blessing." Always you bite off more than you can chew and show that you are lacking in both your homework and understanding of what great men said and meant.

Your summary of Finney on page 12 defies all argument because it is so ignorant. Why must you be an expert on *everything*? Your narrow biases show so badly that it is difficult to accept the good that you do say.

Do you think that the *average* Lutheran church member is a New Testament Christian? The Lutheran presentation of justification by faith is damning millions of souls. It is not salvation of faith at all, but salvation by baptism and confirmation. Why not speak out against this lie from hell? You trap mice while lions devour in the streets.

D.D., Pastor  
South Dakota

## No Rancor

Sir / As a religious newswriter with a medium-sized daily, I have gained much insight into several issues through reading your magazines. Although you have maintained a strong stand against Catholicism, I find no rancor in your works. Professionally speaking, your scholarship has helped me to be a more objective writer and a more thorough reporter where the complex issues of the modern religious scene are concerned. Personally, I have come to grips with God's Word as never before.

I have been confused for some time over the many sincere "approaches" to Christ which I see in others. Some of these are broad enough to include behavior in violation of God's commands. Others are so narrow as to define a man's position before God on the basis of highly questionable tenets. Through reading your articles I have been humbled again and again to the point of realizing that, after all is said and done, I am but a creature of God whose wisdom is greater than I can possibly imagine. I submit to His rule as it is revealed in His Word. Your articles have been strong meat for me!

K.W., Religious Newswriter  
Michigan

## Editorial Introduction

# Beware of Men



"...beware of men..." Jesus warned His disciples. He did not say, "Beware of bad men." The warning might just as well include good men. In things divine, in things that concern the worship of God, "...beware of men..." Matt. 10:17. Luther remarked that religion was never more endangered than when it was in the company of reverend men.

### Idolatry

The Bible begins with the record of how the Creator made man in His own image (Gen. 1:27). But something went wrong in this Creator-creature relationship. Now we see the creature trying to conform God to his own image. Idolatry is simply man's attempt to make God in his own likeness. Man wants to worship the god of his own conception, which is really only an extension of himself. Says the Lord, "... thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself..." Ps. 50:21. Human nature takes the doctrines of the Bible and bends them or molds them to suit the image of the god which man has set up in his own mind. Man has an insatiable urge to project himself into the work of God and mold it according to his own idea.

Man's disposition to conform God, His doctrines and His work to his own image, is condemned by the second commandment. God is jealous for His own image. The work of God is not to bear the image and superscription of man. Therefore, "...beware of men..."

### The Conscience and Human Authority

When God spoke the law on Mount Sinai, the very mountain was fenced in from the people. No human hands were permitted to touch even the mount, much less the law itself. Uzzah was slain when he put his hand on the ark. There is a place for human

authority—whether it be church authority, parental authority or civil authority; but when it comes to binding and loosing the conscience with moral and spiritual law, only God can legislate. He declares, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” Deut. 4:2. The church is not called to be a legislator, but an ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20). An ambassador must not impose his own laws or even express his own opinion. He represents only the will of the government which sends him. So Jesus charged His disciples, “Whatever you forbid on earth, shall have already been forbidden in heaven. And whatever you permit on earth, shall have already been permitted in heaven.” Matt. 18:18, An Expanded Translation (Kenneth S. Wuest).

The passage does not mean that heaven will ratify anything men do down below in the name of church authority. The original verbs of the Greek text (as brought out in the preceding translation) make it clear that Christ charges His disciples that they must only forbid what has already been forbidden in heaven—nothing else. They are not to act out their own feelings or opinions. They are simply to declare what Christ has said. Thus the Lord’s prayer will be fulfilled, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Matt. 6:10.

Unto no man or body of men has Christ delegated authority to legislate on doctrine.<sup>1</sup> No authority other than God Himself should pass laws which can bind or loose the consciences of men. Said Christ,

<sup>1</sup> Replying to those who wanted to make the decrees and deeds of the church articles of faith which were binding on the conscience, Luther said:

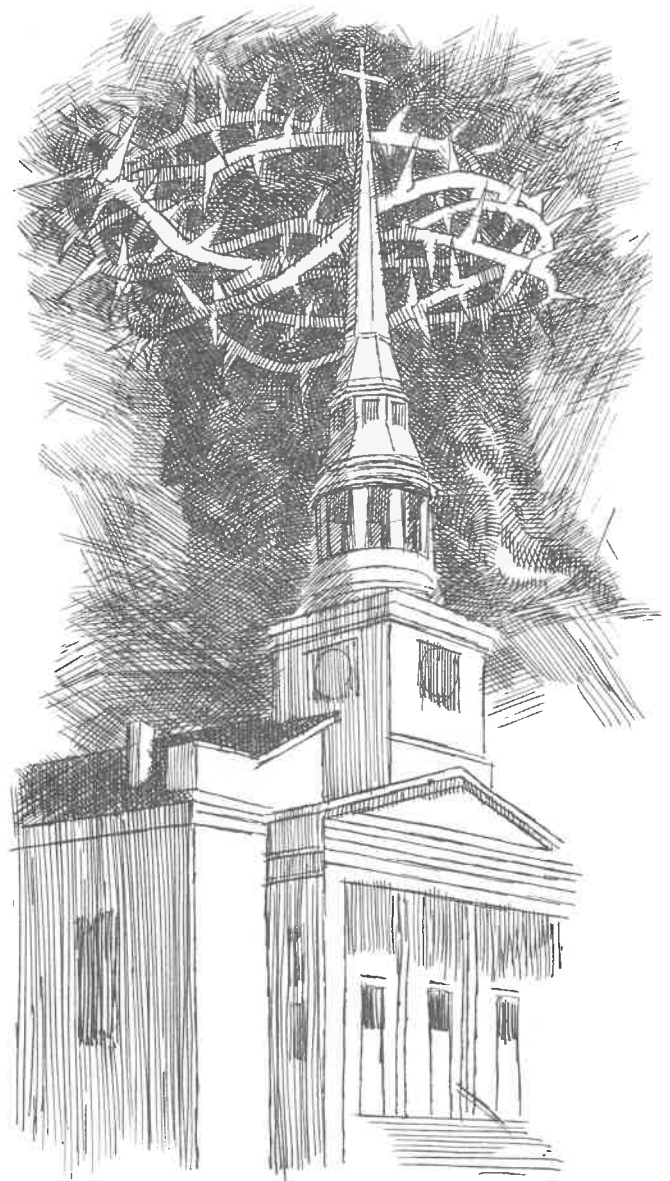
... no one should believe even the church itself when it acts or speaks without and beyond Christ’s words. In Christ’s words it is holy and certain, while beyond Christ’s words it is surely a poor, erring sinner, although undamned for Christ’s sake, in whom it believes.

I wanted to say this in rebuttal to those stiff-necked boasters who constantly chatter about the church, the church, the church, although they do not know what the church or its holiness is. They simply pass over that and make the church so holy that Christ has to become a liar on account of it, and his words are robbed of all their validity. Against this, we in turn must shout exultantly, “Say what you will about the church, let it be as holy as you please, still Christ cannot become a liar on that account.” In its teaching, praying, and believing the church confesses that it is a sinner before God and that it often errs and sins; but Christ is truth itself and can neither lie nor sin. Therefore, insofar as the church lives and speaks in the word and faith of Christ, it is holy and (as St. Paul says [1 Cor. 7:34]) righteous in spirit. And insofar as it acts and speaks without Christ’s word and faith, it errs and sins. But whoever makes an article of faith out of the sinful deed and word of the church defames both church and Christ as liars. — *Luther’s Works* (American ed.; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955- ), Vol. 34, p. 76.

“... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . .” Matt. 28:20.

The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught—that which He had spoken, not only in person, but through prophets and apostles, included. Human teaching is shut out. There is no place for tradition, for man’s theories and conclusions, or for church legislation. No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are included in the commission. None of these are Christ’s servants to teach.

When the Word of God is mixed with faith, it will profit the receiver. But when it is mixed with human opinions and decrees, it becomes like the bread which Ezekiel was commanded to eat. The Lord said unto the prophet:





Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches . . . and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread . . . — Ezek. 4:9, 12, 13.

Luther declared:

I want to have the pure unadulterated Scriptures in all their glory, undefiled by the comment of any man, even the saints, and not hashed up with any earthly seasonings. But you [the schoolmen] are the very people who have not avoided profane and vain babblings (to use Paul's words, 1 Tim. 6:20), and have wanted to cover these holy and divine delicacies with human glosses and pep them up with earthly spices. And like Ezekiel (Ezek. 4:12) my soul is nauseated at having to eat bread baked with human dung. Do you know what this means? . . . The word of man when added to the Word of God serves as a veil to the pure truth. Nay, worse, as I have said, it is the human dung with which the bread is baked, as the Lord figuratively expresses it in Ezekiel. — Martin Luther, *Answer to Latomus*, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), Vol. 16, pp. 344, 345.

The writer of Hebrews makes special mention of Moses for being faithful in all the affairs of God (see Heb. 3:5). It was his faithfulness to do exactly what the Lord commanded. When he built the tabernacle, it is repeatedly said that he did everything "as the Lord commanded Moses" (see Ex. 40). Moses added no specifications of his own. He did not do what was right in his own eyes, but exactly "as the Lord commanded Moses."

In his diligence to keep self out of sight and to make the will of God supreme in everything, Moses was a type of Jesus. In the garment of Christ's perfect character, there was not one thread of human devising. He did not do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. He was so fully emptied of self that the Father alone appeared in His life. Thus, Christ's work bore the image and superscription of God.

### The Image of a Man

In Daniel 2 history is presented under the figure of an image of a man. The kingdoms of this world were kingdoms of men. They were the result of man's genius, ambition and selfishness. The feet of the image were a mixture of iron and clay. Daniel declared, ". . . they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men . . ." Dan. 2:43. The Word of God is likened to seed—the good seed of the kingdom. The seed of men, by way of contrast, would embrace the



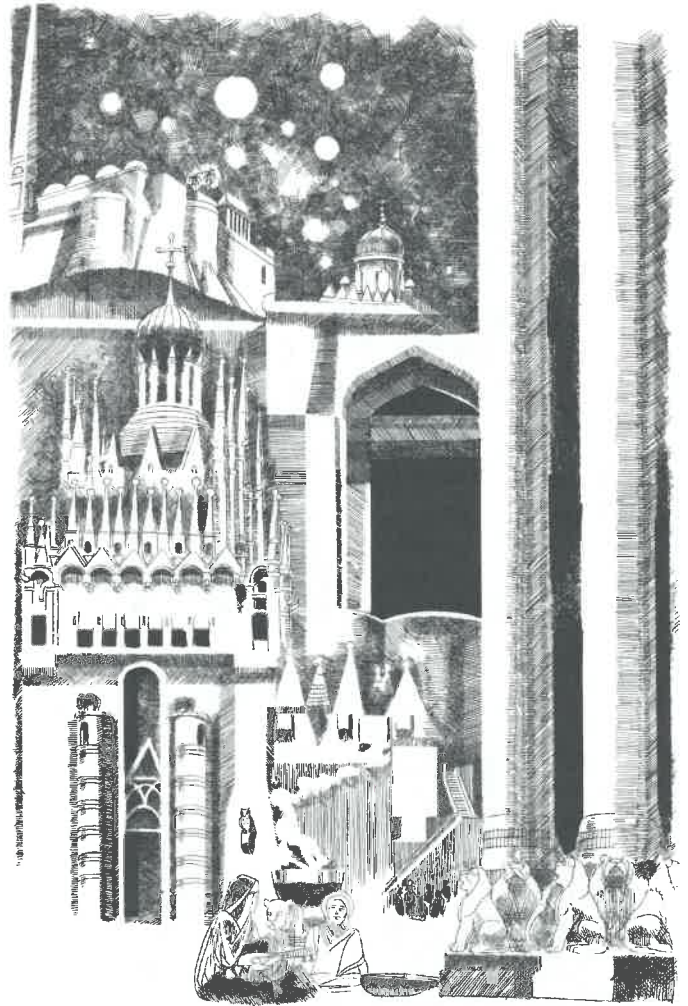
doctrines and opinions of men.

The "little horn" power of Daniel 7 is represented as having eyes "like the eyes of man." Dan. 7:8. This power was formed when members of the church of Christ began to do that which was right in their own human eyes. Christ established a pure church. It had a pure government and a pure faith. But when churchmen began to look at the problems of church government through the eyes of their own understanding, they gradually developed echelons of church office and a hierarchy of human authority that resulted in the papacy. When human scholarship and theology tried to explain the mystery of the incarnation and sinlessness of Jesus, the result was the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. When natural reason attempted to explain how an immature Christian who had not reached a state of sinlessness could enter heaven, it came up with the teaching of purgatory. There was a gradual, almost imperceptible substitution of human teaching for divine revelation. As were the "eyes" of the "little horn," so was its "mouth that spake very great things." Dan. 7:20. Its words—its dogmas and decrees—were the doctrines and commandments of men.

In Revelation 13 the same power is represented as a beast having the number of a man's name. Paul calls it the "man of sin." All this demonstrates that it is merely the product of human nature. It is actually the supreme revelation of human nature existing in a corporate capacity.

### The Danger of Good Men

The oppressive ecclesiastical system portrayed in Bible prophecy came into being because God's professed people did not give due heed to Jesus' warning, "... beware of men..." We will fail to learn the necessary lesson unless we realize that those who helped form this system were not all wicked, scheming men. Many good men helped form the papal system. For instance, Augustine (A.D. 350-430) was the greatest of the Latin fathers. After a riotous youth, he was converted to Christianity. He became a brilliant Christian scholar. When it came to upholding the Christian faith against Pelagius, Augustine was the man for the hour. On the nature of sin he was a clear Christian thinker. Church historians point out that he was the spiritual father of the Reformation. One has only to read the Reformers to recognize that Augustine was the quarry from whence they dug many of



the stones for the Reformation. Yet the astonishing thing is that this same Augustine was just as much the father of the Inquisition. He justified the use of force against the heretical Donatists, arguing that compulsory worship was implied by the Lord's command, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in..." Augustine's most famous work, *The City of God*, took him seventeen years to write. It presented a heady concept of the role of the church in the world. He saw the church as the great stone of Daniel 2, which would subdue the whole world to Christ. *The City of God* was the product of Augustine the saint at his best. In it his imagination of what the church could do for Christ soared to lofty heights. Yet the very genius of its human philosophy inspired the creation of the papacy. It was Augustine who conceived the idea of the church developing into a type of Jewish theocracy. He advanced the idea that the church was the custodian of an infallible system of doctrine, and that salvation was available only to those who would submit to its discipline. In the eyes of this great and good man, the



church would be greatly blessed and greatly honored if she fulfilled the role outlined in *The City of God*. But after Augustine died, it was his idea that lived on, playing a vital role in the creation of the most oppressive religious system.

Sacred history justifies the Master's warning, "... beware of men..." Some imagine that this only means, "Beware of evil men." But sacred history demonstrates that good men may be more dangerous than evil men. Even when a good man puts his mold on the work of God, nothing but evil will come of it. Good men are often the more dangerous because their influence in religious things is greater. Think of the great evil wrought by Gideon after God had used him mightily to deliver Israel from the Midianites. Instead of waiting for divine guidance, he began to plan for himself. The fact that he was a mighty man of valor, greatly favored of the Lord, made his departure from the truth the more dangerous. The people were led away from God by the very man who had once overthrown their idolatry.

Think of John Calvin, the pious theologian of the Reformation. No one can deny that he was a man of faith and prayer. That he accomplished great good in the service of God is a matter of history. Yet the same John Calvin was the spiritual father of some Puritan bigotry and intolerance. He was partly responsible for the martyrdom of Michael Servetus. Calvin's co-worker, the saintly William Farel, presided over the "holy rite" of burning the heretic. This earnest Christian minister could actually bow his head in sincere prayer, asking God's blessing upon the abominable act of burning a man who denied Reformed orthodoxy. Think of James and the other leaders at Jerusalem, who counseled Paul to go to the temple and participate in a ceremonial purification. The whole scheme was politically motivated. It was the product of human nature and brought great loss

to the early church.

"... beware of men..." The work of God is not to bear the image and superscription of men; it is not to be spoiled by human devising. Even when good men do what is right in their own eyes (which is the most natural thing to do), the work of God is molded to the image of the creature instead of to the image of God.

The second commandment forbids man to worship or honor God according to man's idea of how God ought to be honored. God must be worshiped according to His idea of how He ought to be worshiped. God's reaction to men's honor is reflected in David's response to man's idea of honor. When one claimed that he performed meritorious service for David by slaying king Saul, he incurred the fatal wrath of the king. On another occasion two men proudly brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David, thinking to win his congratulations. How surprised they must have been when he commanded them to be slain! So men bring their offerings to the Lord. If these offerings are the product of their own idea of worshiping God, they are no more acceptable to God than was Ish-bosheth's head acceptable to king David (see 2 Sam. 4)—or Cain's offering to God.

The antichrist beast of Revelation 13 is the man of sin. He has a name and the number of a man. The main thought we should get out of the word "beast" is that this is a creature which presents itself as an object of worship, whereas Revelation 14 commands men to worship the Creator. The antichrist may combine some of the most beautiful and brilliant ideas for human betterment. Yet this whole religious system bears the mark, or signature, of the creature. The number of man's name shows from whence it originates. It bears the image and superscription of man. "... beware of men..."

R.D.B.



# Antichrist 1975

The Australian Forum (G.J.P. & R.D.B.)

The actual word *antichrist* is used by only one Bible writer—by St. John in his first and second Epistles. However, it is generally recognized that the apostle Paul refers to the same figure in 2 Thessalonians 2, where he warns the church about the “man of sin,” or “mystery of lawlessness.”

Few figures have stirred the imagination and anxious forebodings as much as the mystery figure of antichrist. As different generations of Christians have scanned the horizon for signs of the end of the world, they have thought to have discovered the antichrist in such men as Nero, Constantine, Napoleon, Hitler or Stalin. Not to be discouraged by other precocious attempts at identification, some wild-eyed apocalyptic enthusiasts suggest that Dr. Henry Kissinger is the long looked for antichrist.

## Views of the Early Church

After the passing of the apostles, it was generally supposed that the great enemy of the church would appear on the scene after the downfall of the Roman Empire. Antichrist was thought of in terms of a grotesque, superhuman antagonist of the Christian faith who would make war on the church some time in the future. Thus, the view of the early church was futuristic, although the type of futurism then espoused was quite different from the futurism which is popular in the evangelical wing of the church today.

## Views of the Reformers

In the sixteenth century the church was awakened and shaken by an evangelical revival known as the *Reformation*. Although there were several branches

of the Reformation, and there were points of disagreement, there was complete unanimity on two things:

1. The Reformers came to a united understanding on the meaning of *justification by faith*. They unanimously upheld its primacy and centrality in the Christian theology.

2. The Reformers came to the united understanding that it was the work of antichrist to oppose and corrupt the glorious gospel truth of justification by faith. To the Reformers, justification by faith was the great truth upon which the church stood or fell. To take this away was to take away the very life of the church. No greater harm could be done than to rob the church of justification by faith. And since the religious establishment of their day opposed the great Reformation doctrine, the Reformers unitedly declared that that revered religious establishment was antichrist.

It is hard for us to appreciate the daring and very shocking stance of the Reformers. In their day there was only one church structure. Reverenced for centuries, it was seen to be the holy city on earth, the very gate of heaven. To call it antichrist was worse than pointing the incriminating finger at your own mother. Nor can we appreciate the Reformers' conviction on this matter (for it was a sincere theological conviction) unless we appreciate how strongly they felt about the importance of the subject of justification by faith.

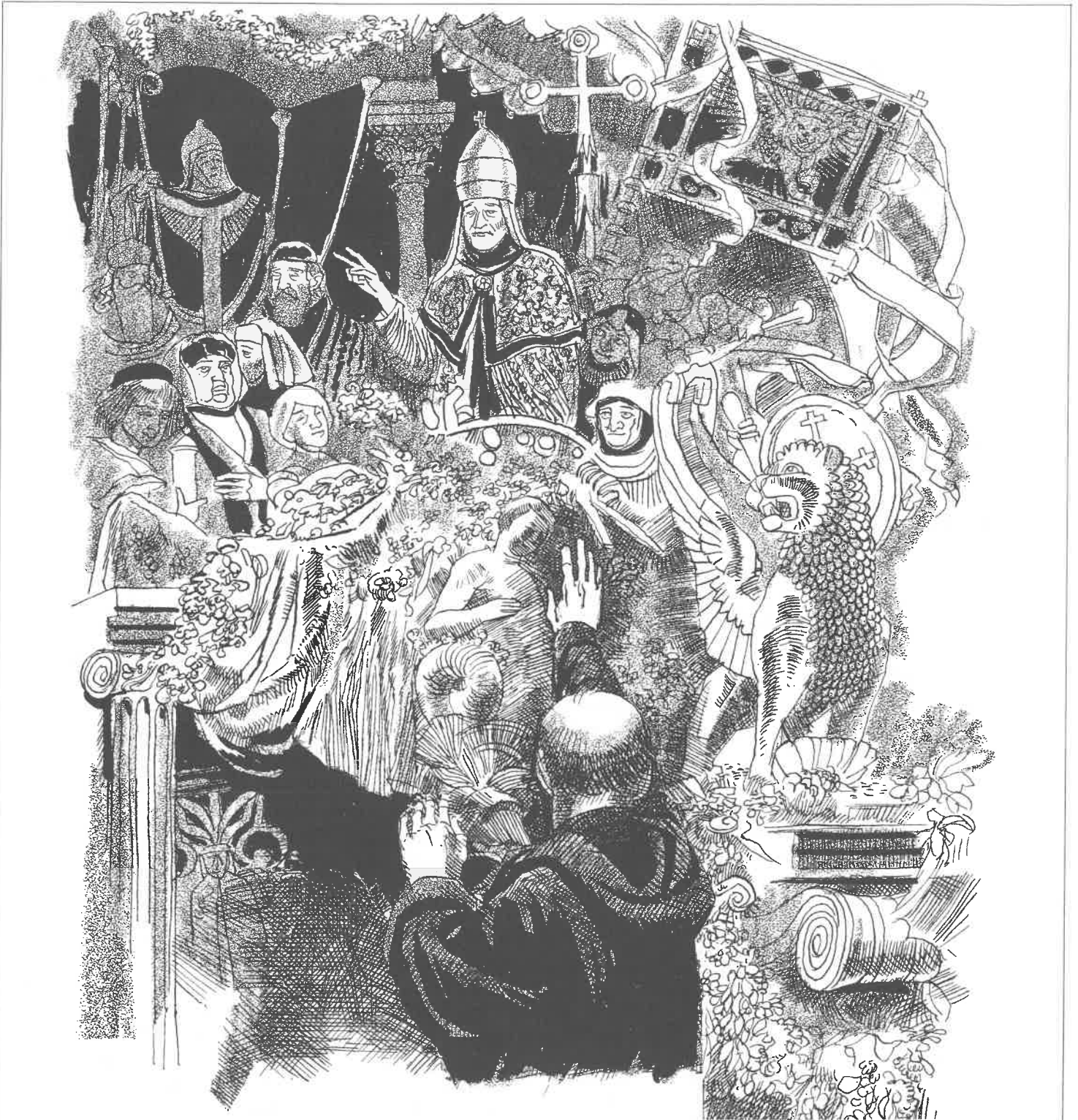
Whatever we may think today about the Reformers' views on antichrist, we have to acknowledge that they were so widely held by Protestants for 300 years that they became known as the “Protestant view” of prophetic interpretation.

## Views of the Counter Reformation and Modern Futurism

Naturally, the established church was not going to appreciate the damning appellation of antichrist.

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The material in this article is also available on cassette tape: GS-7, “Antichrist Today” (suggested donation, \$2.00). This is the last tape in a set of seven cassettes reproduced from the Australian Forum's “Gospel Substitutes” Seminar (Winter 1974). The entire set of seven cassettes is now available (suggested donation, \$14.00). Order from *Present Truth*.



Being challenged to present a plausible alternative interpretation of Bible prophecy, Jesuit scholarship rallied to the Roman cause and presented what became known as the *futurist* system of interpretation. In this, antichrist was said to be still future and therefore could not be the papal church. Three hundred years later, these same futurist views took root on English Protestant soil; and today they are so widespread among evangelicals that they are almost a

test of evangelical orthodoxy in some circles.<sup>1</sup>

## The Biblical Perspective

Whether we subscribe to the Reformers' view that Rome is antichrist or to the popular evangelical views

<sup>1</sup> A full presentation and documentation of the Reformers' views and futurism was presented in the September, 1974 issue of *Present Truth*, "Justification by Faith and Eschatology."

of today which declare that antichrist is yet to come, we are still in danger of missing the vital biblical message about antichrist. If we content ourselves with the thought that the Reformers were correct in their identification, we are in danger of blinding ourselves to the biblical warnings with a sort of Pharisaical complacency or Protestant self-righteousness. If we gaze off into the future, especially looking to events among the Jews in the Middle East, we will also fail to be aroused by the biblical warnings about antichrist. For what the Bible has to say about antichrist is not given as mere information, and certainly not information to gratify or titillate idle curiosity about the future. What the Bible says about antichrist is to warn and activate the Christian congregation.

The Bible presents four outstanding features of antichrist:

### 1. The Religious Character of Antichrist

The Greek prefix *anti* means *in the place of*, or *in the stead of*. It may also contain the idea of *substitution*. For instance, when Paul says that Christ "gave Himself a *ransom* for all" (1 Tim. 2:6), he does not use the ordinary word meaning *ransom* (Greek—*lutron*), but he uses the prefix *anti* (Greek—*anti-lutron*). Girdlestone, as well as other linguists, points out that the word literally means *substitutionary ransom*.

Antichrist therefore refers to some figure who puts himself in the place of Jesus Christ. He is a *substitute* Christ. Standing in the room of Jesus Christ, he tries to carry on the work of Christ. Yet his gospel is really "another gospel." Says G.C. Berkouwer:

This "religious" character of the opposition preoccupied the Reformers. Theirs was not just the bitter tone of antipapism. They were predominantly concerned and anxious about the well-being of the church. . . . For the Reformers the antichrist was all the more dangerous because he donned this religious cloak. . . . During the Reformation, this theme of the antichrist's taking his seat in the temple of God [2 Thess. 2:4] was taken very seriously. The temple was not in Jerusalem, but the church, and the antichrist strategy was primarily to drive the true God out of this temple and replace Him. — G.C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 268, 269.

### 2. The Present Reality of Antichrist

John's antichrist was not merely a future identity. He was a present reality.

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. — 1 John 2:18, 19.

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. — 2 John 7.

. . . and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now is it in the world. — 1 John 4:3.

The apostle Paul also declared, ". . . the mystery of iniquity doth already work . . ." 2 Thess. 2:7. So antichrist must always be seen as a present reality—in A.D. 65, in 1517, or in 1975. Antichrist's appearance belongs to the "last days," and according to St. John, the spirit of antichrist manifested in the false teachers was a harbinger of the end time. The church is an eschatological community which has in the gift of the Holy Spirit the "down payment" of the inheritance (Eph. 1:14); and as God's people wait for Christ to return, they must realize that they live in the hour of the working of antichrist.

We must not deny that antichrist will have a future and final manifestation. But the trouble with a thorough-going futurism is that it is blind to the present reality of antichrist. If we do not discern the work and forms of antichrist from New Testament times, especially the great papal antichrist, how can we discern the work and form that he will assume in his final eschatological manifestation? The Biblical warnings do not merely tell us that "the hour is coming," but they declare that "the hour is coming, and now is."

When the early church lost the clear Biblical truth of justification by faith, it also lost its clear eschatological vision. The "last day" became an event in the far distant future, and the church's mentality was decidedly "futuristic." With the rediscovery of justification by faith in the sixteenth century, eschatological hope revived, and the church again saw itself living in the end time. G.C. Berkouwer says:

Luther felt himself surrounded by great eschatological tensions, and part of this for him included the role played by the antichrist. For Luther the antichrist was not a remote figure of some future "end-time", but a threatening and dangerous possibility each and every day. . . . The main point was that the danger was *present*, not relegated to the future.





Clearly, the actuality of the antichrist as portrayed by John accords with the entire eschatological proclamation of the New Testament. Althaus correctly observed that the New Testament proclamation of the antichrist is not an irrelevant prediction of some remote future, but an alarm signal. "The Church must always look for the antichrist as a reality present among it or as an immediately threatening future possibility. . . . The recognition of the antichrist is a deadly serious matter; all other talk about antichrist is idle and irresponsible play." — *Ibid.*, pp. 263-268.

As history moves on, the church is challenged to see the configurations of antichrist in his most current form of opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The antichrist beast of the Revelation has seven heads, which symbolize the different forms he has assumed in his opposition to God's truth from one age to another.

It is not good enough to see the guise of antichrist in A.D. 65 when John confronted the gnostic heresy, or in 1517 when Luther nailed his protest on the door of the religious establishment. Antichrist is a present reality. We must see how he is working in 1975.

### 3. The Internal Danger of Antichrist

To look for antichrist as a foe external to the church is to miss a vital part of the Biblical warning. Antichrist is not merely an enemy at the gate; he has infiltrated the city. He is a wolf in sheep's clothing among the flock. He looks like a lamb, but speaks as a dragon. He is, as his name suggests, a masquerader of Christ, and his message is a substitute gospel. The warnings of John and Paul make it very clear that he proceeds from the church itself. "Because the danger comes from within, the church has added reason to beware in her own existence." — *Ibid.*, p. 269.

### 4. The Human Form of Antichrist

Finally, it is a mistake to look for antichrist in the form of the bizarre, the fantastic, the superhuman or the grotesque. The Bible stresses his very human configuration. He is called the "man of sin." 2 Thess. 2:3. He has a human number (Rev. 13:18). He has eyes like the eyes of man (Dan. 7:8). Certainly he has donned the religious cloak, but we must remember that, as Luther so clearly perceived, the chief human sin is the religious sin.

What is clear in the New Testament references to "the antichrist" is that this is not a supernatural or superhuman concept, but takes place and manifests itself on a human level. Behind the antichristian powers the shadow of the "demonic" may fall, but with the concept of "the antichrist" we find ourselves not on some remote evil terrain, but on the well-known terrain of our daily human existence. Indeed, the human level of the antichrist is one of the most compelling messages of the New Testament. It is a human force—a human "anti"—that elevates itself and disintegrates through the victory of the Lamb. — *Ibid.*, p. 278.

## Conclusions

Let us conclude by saying that the real force of the Biblical picture means that antichrist is religious and not irreligious, present and not just future, internal and not external, and familiarly human and not grotesquely superhuman. This means that we cannot afford to gaze back to the remote past or forward into the distant future. Identifying antichrist in 1975 is not a matter of throwing stones at Rome or the liberals. It is a matter of searching our own house and hearts, and allowing the Biblical message of grace alone, Christ alone and faith alone to call all that we do or teach into question. What are the gospel substitutes of this decade of the 70's? What have we evangelicals put in the place of the glorious work of God in Jesus Christ? That with which we are all too familiar, that which we have baptized and revered, that which has become part of our own sacred tradition—maybe it is here that antichrist is at work in 1975. One thing is certain: Unless by divine enlightenment we can discern the work of antichrist today, we have no assurance that we will discern his manifestation tomorrow.

## Antichrist at Work Today

Before we identify the work of antichrist in the 1970's, we must be reminded of one more thing. Since antichrist's chief work is a diabolical *substitution* for Christ and His gospel, we can identify antichrist only as we keep looking at the gospel. The only truly successful way to detect a counterfeit dollar bill is to be thoroughly acquainted with a genuine one.



## The Gospel

The gospel is the good news about the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the second Adam. In the whole stream of human history there are only two men who have universal significance—Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam was not merely the biological father of the race. He was the first representative of the whole human race. He acted for all. His sin involved all. “. . . by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners . . .” Rom. 5:19. Consequently, the whole stream of human history has been corrupted by human sinfulness, and all stand under the judgment of the law. None of that history can satisfy the demand of holiness, for even the lives of the best saints fall short of the glory of God.

Into this sinful stream of human history, God sent forth His Son to be our “everlasting Father” (Is. 9:6), our second Adam, our new Representative. His name was *Immanuel*—“God with us.” In Jesus Christ we see God with us in poverty and humiliation, God with us in trial and sorrow, and finally, God with us in suffering and death. More than that, Jesus was “God . . . for us.” Rom. 8:31. What He did in all His glorious acts of goodness was done for us—it was done in our name and on our behalf, for He was our Representative who acted for us before the bar of eternal justice. By sinless living He fulfilled the precepts of the law for us, and by His dying He satisfied the penalty of the law for us. On our behalf He strove with sin and annihilated its power. In His human nature He engaged the devil in hand-to-hand combat and destroyed his power. He tasted death and abolished it.

. . . Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it over His own head on the cross. And then, having drawn the sting of all the powers ranged against us, He exposed them, shattered, empty and defeated, in His final glorious triumphant act! — Col. 2:14, 15, Phillips.

All that Christ did is ours to be claimed by faith. His victory is ours. So the apostle says, “. . . by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” Rom. 5:18.

There are three things we need to say about this good news of Jesus Christ:

1. The gospel is about a *historical* event. It is about Jesus Christ coming into the world and not about Jesus Christ coming into our hearts. It is something which has happened in space and time. It is histori-

cally objective. Christianity is the only truly historical religion. It alone proclaims a salvation based on a concrete outside-of-me event. Of course, the gospel has subjective benefits. It has effects and fruits in the hearts of all who believe it. But in the gospel itself there is not one subjective—element. It happened completely outside of you and me.

The gospel brings to view a new holy history—the thirty-three years which Jesus Christ lived on earth. In the death of Jesus Christ, God rejected and punished our sinful history; and having buried it with Jesus Christ, He brought forth that new history. Now He proclaims to us that He accepts us as righteous solely on the basis that He has accepted His Son and our Representative, Jesus Christ. The gospel is the good news that the saving deeds have taken place, the redemptive transaction has been sealed by Christ’s blood and attested to by His resurrection from the dead. God’s liberating act has been carried out, and humanity is cleansed, accepted and restored in the Person of Jesus Christ. *The gospel is historical.*

2. The gospel is about a *unique* history. There is no other event, and can be no other event, like the Christ event. His holy history is unique. In the whole stream of human history, Christ alone is without sin. We must never compromise the unique sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Only One is absolutely righteous in reality and fact. The saints can be absolutely righteous only by the merciful reckoning of Christ’s life by faith alone. No one but Christ, the slain Lamb, is able to open the book and look thereon (Rev. 5:1-5).

3. The gospel is about an *unrepeatable* history. This is the great emphasis given by the writer to the Hebrews. The offering of Christ was once and for all:

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. — Heb. 10:10-14.

We are never called upon to initiate another redemptive event. Nothing needs to be added to what Christ has already done. Nothing can be added to it. God Himself cannot add to it. We say it reverently but decidedly: There is one thing that God could not do again—the giving of and offering of His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that with Him God gave us “all things.” Rom. 8:32. To suggest that God could do this again is to imply that God did not really give



everything the first time. But He did. He emptied all heaven in one Gift. He poured out all the accumulated love of eternity. He kept nothing back, but gave all He had to give. The Christ event is an unrepeatable history.

This unique, unrepeatable event, this holy history of Jesus Christ, is the focal point of Biblical proclamation. This invasion by God into human history, these mighty deeds of incarnate God, this awesome, infinite act of atonement, is the one great preoccupation of the apostolic message. Gospel preaching is the constant exposition of this historical Christ event and the unfolding of its significance for men and women everywhere. All who believe are justified, not on the grounds of their faith, but on the grounds of the saving acts of God already done in Jesus Christ.

### The Substitute Gospel

It is the work of antichrist to substitute "another gospel" for the gospel. He causes men to focus on other events and experiences rather than on the unique Christ event and unrepeatable representative experience of Jesus Christ.

This masterly substitution does not consist in the enemy's putting something *bad* in the place of something good. (This would not be deception.) But he works by putting something which is good in its right place in the very room of the glory of God.

For instance, personal righteousness is a good thing. Believers should live righteously, soberly and godly in this world (Titus 2:12). And the Holy Spirit is given to empower them to do this, for it is only by His indwelling that they can live righteously (1 John 3:7). But in the theology of the medieval church, this personal righteousness of the believer was put in the room of the vicarious righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Reformers cried out against this as the doctrine of antichrist, not because they were against personal righteousness (as they were charged by Rome), but because they were against putting even this good thing in the room of Christ's righteousness. In his masterly volume on *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, Dr. James Buchanan points out that the heart of Rome's error was to put the new birth of the believer in the room of the *imputed* righteousness of Jesus Christ—for this means putting something subjective and existential in the room of Christ's objective and historical saving acts.

What is so plausible about the work of antichrist is that he uses that which is holy to effect his clever



substitute gospel. And what is more holy than the work of the Holy Spirit? Under the guise of honoring the Third Person of the blessed Trinity, antichrist brings in another gospel, for he substitutes the gracious work of the Spirit *in us* for the vicarious work of Christ *for us* as the ground of our justification unto life eternal.

The work of the Holy Spirit *in us* is a great and glorious work (2 Cor. 3:18). But it is not to be put in the place of the gospel. We must not confuse the work of the Second and Third Persons of the blessed Trinity. Christ's work was substitutionary. It was done for us—without our participation. We had no part in that righteousness. Furthermore, that work, being complete, is the only grounds of our acceptance with God. The same thing cannot be said about the work of the Holy Spirit. His is not a substitutionary work. Being a work within us, we do have a vital part in the life of new obedience which He inspires us to live. Furthermore, His work is not yet complete, and for some it has not even started. It can never be a ground of our acceptance with God.

What Christ has done, therefore, is the gospel. And what is more, it is the "full gospel."

We earnestly believe that, were Luther alive today, he would level the same basic criticism at the evangelical church as he did at the Roman church nearly 500 years ago. While evangelicalism does not advocate a bald justification by personal righteousness, it cannot be denied that the doctrine of justification through the vicarious righteousness of Jesus Christ has slipped out of sight in most evangelical circles. The fact is that evangelicalism today

stands much closer to the Roman Catholic tradition than to the Reformers.<sup>2</sup>

In the first place, the question of justification before a holy God is not the burning question of the current evangelical scene. (Let us thank God for the exceptions.) We take it for granted that God is gracious and that He forgives sins and accepts us. The healthy, biblical fear of God is conspicuous by its absence. What we want to know is not, "How can I please God?" but, "How can God please me, make my life radiantly happy, and give me a bundle of fulfilled contentment?" We are not asking theocentric questions anymore, but anthropocentric questions. Man and his happiness are the center, not God and His righteousness. And things will not improve unless the holy law of God is proclaimed as that which must be satisfied and acknowledged.

In the second place, even where the gospel is acknowledged, it has really ceased to hold first place. We have seen that the gospel is historical. It has no subjective element. Yet it has existential implications. It bears subjective fruit. When proclaimed and believed, it changes lives—producing love, joy, peace, goodness, temperance and humility in the hearts of men and women. The experience it brings to believers is real and vital. But we must ever remember that the biblical order and perspective is the historical over the existential—i.e.:

## Historical Existential

This means that the *for us* aspect of grace must always stand above the *in us* aspect. This is not a matter of crying down the necessity of genuine Christian experience. It merely affirms that experience can only be truly possessed and enjoyed when it is where it should be. Jesus warned the disciples of this when they returned from a successful missionary excursion. They were rejoicing in the fact that they had had a glorious experience working in Christ's name—preaching, casting out demons, healing, etc. But Jesus said, "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:20, R.S.V.

But the history of the church has demonstrated that the cursed tendency of human nature is to reverse the order until the *existential* is elevated

above the *historical*. (Or to say it another way, the *in you* is elevated above the *for you*.) When the *historical* element of Christianity is eclipsed, the essential genius of the Christian message is lost, and Christianity is reduced to everything else in the world that offers you a glorious experience. And when religious experience itself is preached as the gospel, it is the very antichrist itself. For when the *existential* is placed above the *historical*, the divine order is reversed. This really means that man is placed above God.

It is an interesting (and alarming) fact that the elevation of the *existential* above the *historical* has taken place in both the liberal and conservative wings of the current religious scene. In the liberal wing man and his experience are elevated to an unbiblical prominence via such teachings as "encounter theology" (Brunner), "demythologizing" (Bultmann), and the denial of "propositional revelation" (Barth and others). All this means is that man and his experience (insight, hunch, intuition) are placed above God, His Word and His gospel. Instead of man being the creature to be molded into God's image, man assumes the role of molding God and His Word into his image.

But when we look into the conservative wing of the church—into conservative Romanism, Pentecostalism or evangelicalism—we see that in principle the same thing has taken place. Here the dominating motif is the centrality of religious experience.<sup>3</sup> In classical Romanism this is seen in the doctrine of *gratia infusa*—the concept of justification by infused grace (i.e., the changed life). In Pentecostalism it is seen in preoccupation with the Holy Spirit and the inner experience of Spirit possession. In much evangelicalism it is seen in salvation by the inward experience of new birth, the "gospel of the changed life," the witness to the Spirit-filled life of the believer, or the glories and wonders of self-crucifixion.<sup>4</sup> There is in all this a "believer centeredness" that is contrary to the Bible. It is the same old error of placing the *existential* over the *historical*, and in the final analysis it means that man stands in the place of God. That this man is a religious man does not alter the crime, for after all, man's chief sin is in the religious sin.

### Many Antichrists

The apostle John says that there are many anti-

<sup>2</sup> See our brochures, *The Protestant Era at an End!* and *Protestant Revivalism, Pentecostalism and the Drift Back to Rome*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Present Truth*, Feb., 1974, "The Current Religious Scene."  
<sup>4</sup> See Geoffrey J. Paxton, "The Evangelical's Substitute," *Present Truth*, Nov., 1974, pp. 6-12.



christ (1 John 2:18). That is, there are many ways of substituting man and his experience in the place of Christ and His unique saving experience. We will list some of these antichrist substitutions:

The regeneration of the believer in the place of the imputed righteousness of Christ.

The work of the Third Person of the Trinity in the place of the Second Person.

Sanctification in the place of justification.

The personal righteousness of the believer in the place of the vicarious righteousness of Christ.

Faith in the place of the meritorious obedience of Christ.

Our self-crucifixion in the place of His crucifixion.

Our new life in the place of His sinless life.  
Our experience in the center in the place of His.  
Our love for God in the place of His love for us.  
Our surrender instead of Christ's.  
Our victorious life in the place of His.  
Our attainment instead of His atonement.  
Our baptism in water in the place of His baptism in blood.

Our fellowship with Christ as the ground of hope instead of God's fellowship with Christ.

Our faith union with Him as the basis of salvation instead of His union with the Father on our behalf.

Our election in the place of His election.

The church (the body) in the place of Christ (the Head).

We say again, The diabolical trick of antichrist is not to place the bad in the room of the good, but the good in the room of the glorious work of Jesus Christ. For none could deny that new birth, changed life, self-crucifixion, etc., are good—and so necessary that no one will be saved without such experiences. But when these things are preached as the gospel or hold the place in our thinking and witnessing that should belong to the gospel alone, then we have prostituted Christian experience. We have used God's gifts to rob Him of His glory. A candle may be of some use to give light in a dark room, but before the sun we put that candle away. Its light will only cause a shadow when put up before the light of the sun.

Putting experience in the room of the gospel is not like stealing a few gems from the royal crown. He who does this is guilty of stealing the crown itself and placing it upon his own head. This is the deed and work of antichrist. It is the sin of religious man. Unless we take the biblical warnings with radical seriousness and examine our own hearts and house, we too will be found to be part of antichrist's conspiracy. Unless this generation of the evangelical church takes part in a great gospel renaissance, we shall fulfill prophecy by becoming "an image to the beast" (Rev. 13:11-15). "He that has ears to hear, let him hear."



# The Fallibility of Ministers

J.C. Ryle



*Editor's Note:* Since this issue of *Present Truth* is dealing with the sin of antichrist, which is man in the place of God, we thought it would be profitable to include the following material by J.C. Ryle. Bishop Ryle was one of the stalwart champions of Christianity in the Church of England during the mid nineteenth century. "The Fallibility of Ministers" is a chapter from his book entitled *Warnings to the Churches*, now published by The Banner of Truth Trust, P.O. Box 652, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013. Our Lutheran readers will not like his remark on Luther and the Supper, and others of different persuasions may not agree on some other points he uses in illustrating the fallibility of man. But we submit that the principle which Ryle tries to illustrate is valid. Whether or not we agree with all of his theology is beside the point. Of course, Luther was fallible like all other great teachers of the church! Whether his view of the Supper illustrates his fallibility is not the point of issue in this edition of *Present Truth*.

*'But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

*'For before that certain came from James, he did eat*

*with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*

*'And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.*

*'But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

*'We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,*

*'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified' (Gal. 2:11-16).*

Have we ever considered what the apostle Peter once did at Antioch? It is a question that deserves serious consideration.

What the Apostle Peter did at Rome we are often told, although we have hardly a jot of authentic

Reprinted from J.C. Ryle, *Warnings to the Churches* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust), pp. 93-121. Used by permission.

information about it. Roman Catholic writers furnish us with many stories about this. Legends, traditions, and fables abound on the subject. But unhappily for these writers, Scripture is utterly silent upon the point. There is nothing in Scripture to show that the Apostle Peter ever was at Rome at all!

But what did the Apostle Peter do *at Antioch*? This is the point to which I want to direct attention. This is the subject from the passage from the Epistle to the Galatians, which heads this paper. On this point, at any rate, the Scripture speaks clearly and unmistakably.

The six verses of the passages before us are striking on many accounts. They are striking, if we consider the *event which* they describe: here is one Apostle rebuking another!—They are striking, when we consider who the two *men* are: Paul, the younger, rebukes Peter the elder!—They are striking, when we remark the *occasion*: this was no glaring fault, no flagrant sin, at first sight, that Peter had committed! Yet the Apostle Paul says, ‘I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.’ He does more than this:—he reproveth Peter publicly for his error before all the Church at Antioch. He goes even further:—he writes an account of the matter, which is now read in two hundred languages all over the world.

It is my firm conviction that the Holy Ghost means us to take particular notice of this passage of Scripture. If Christianity had been an invention of man, these things would never have been recorded. An imposter, like Mahomet, would have hushed up the difference between two Apostles. The Spirit of truth has caused these verses to be written for our learning, and we shall do well to take heed to their contents.

There are three great lessons from Antioch, which I think we ought to learn from this passage.

I. The *first* lesson is, that *great ministers may make great mistakes*.

II. The *second* is, that *to keep the truth of Christ in His Church is even more important than to keep peace*.

III. The *third* is, that *there is no doctrine about which we ought to be so jealous as justification by faith without the deeds of the law*.

I. The first great lesson we learn from Antioch is, that *great ministers may make great mistakes*.

What clearer proof can we have than that which is set before us in this place? Peter, without doubt, was one of the greatest in the company of the Apostles.

**Rank and dignity  
will not  
confer  
infallibility.**

He was an old disciple. He was a disciple who had had peculiar advantages and privileges. He had been a constant companion of the Lord Jesus. He had heard the Lord preach, seen the Lord work miracles, enjoyed the benefit of the Lord’s private teaching, been numbered among the Lord’s intimate friends, and gone out and come in with Him all the time He ministered upon earth. He was the Apostle to whom the keys of the kingdom were given, and by whose hand those keys were first used. He was the first who opened the door of faith to the Jews, by preaching to them on the day of Pentecost. He was the first who opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, by going to the house of Cornelius, and receiving him into the Church. He was the first to rise up in the Council of the fifteenth of Acts, and say, ‘Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?’ And yet here this very Peter, this same Apostle, plainly falls into a great mistake. The Apostle Paul tells us, ‘I withstood him to the face.’ He tells us ‘that he was to be blamed.’ He says ‘he feared them of the circumcision.’ He says of him and his companions, that ‘they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel.’ He speaks of their ‘dissimulation.’ He tells us that by this dissimulation even Barnabas, his old companion in missionary labours, ‘was carried away.’

What a striking fact this is. This is Simon Peter! This is the third great error of his, which the Holy



Ghost has thought fit to record! Once we find him trying to keep back our Lord, as far as he could, from the great work of the cross, and severely rebuked. Then we find him denying the Lord three times, and with an oath. Here again we find him endangering the leading truth of Christ's Gospel. Surely we may say, 'Lord, what is man?' The Church of Rome boasts that the Apostle Peter is her founder and first Bishop. Be it so: grant it for a moment. Let us only remember, that of all the Apostles there is not one, excepting, of course, Judas Iscariot, of whom we have so many proofs that he was a *fallible* man. Upon her own showing the Church of Rome was founded by the most fallible of the Apostles.\*

But it is all meant to teach us that even the Apostles themselves, when not writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, were at times liable to err. It is meant to teach us that the best men are weak and fallible so long as they are in the body. Unless the grace of God holds them up, any one of them may go astray at any time. It is very humbling, but it is very

\* It is curious to observe the shifts to which some writers have been reduced, in order to explain away the plain meaning of the verses which head this paper. Some have maintained that Paul did not really rebuke Peter, but only feignedly, for show and appearance sake! Others have maintained that it was not Peter the Apostle who was rebuked, but another Peter, one of the seventy! Such interpretations need no remark. They are simply absurd. The truth is that the plain honest meaning of the verses strikes a heavy blow at the favourite Roman Catholic doctrine of the primacy and superiority of Peter over the rest of the Apostles.

true. True Christians are converted, justified, and sanctified. They are living members of Christ, beloved children of God, and heirs of eternal life. They are elect, chosen, called, and kept unto salvation. They have the Spirit. But they are *not infallible*.

Will not rank and dignity confer infallibility? No: they will not! It matters nothing what a man is called. He may be a Czar, an Emperor, a King, a Prince. He may be a Pope or a Cardinal, an Archbishop or a Bishop, a Dean or an Archdeacon, a Priest or Deacon. He is still a *fallible man*. Neither the crown, nor the diadem, nor the anointing oil, nor the mitre, nor the imposition of hands, can prevent a man making mistakes.

Will not numbers confer infallibility? No: they will not! You may gather together princes by the score, and bishops by the hundred; but, when gathered together, they are still liable to err. You may call them a council, or a synod, or an assembly, or a conference, or what you please. It matters nothing. Their conclusions are still the conclusions of *fallible men*. Their collective wisdom is still capable of making enormous mistakes. Well says the twenty-first Article of the Church of England, 'General councils may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God.'

The example of the Apostle Peter at Antioch is one that does not stand alone. It is only a parallel of many a case that we find written for our learning in



holy Scripture. Do we not remember Abraham, the father of the faithful, following the advice of Sarah, and taking Hagar for a wife? Do we not remember Aaron, the first high priest, listening to the children of Israel, and making a golden calf? Do we not remember Nathan the prophet telling David to build a temple? Do we not remember Solomon, the wisest of men, allowing his wives to build their high places? Do we not remember Asa, the good king of Judah, seeking not to the Lord, but to the physicians? Do we not remember Jehosaphat, the good king, going down to help wicked Ahab? Do we not remember Hezekiah, the good king, receiving the ambassadors of Babylon? Do we not remember Josiah, the last of Judah's good kings, going forth to fight with Pharaoh? Do we not remember James and John, wanting fire to come down from heaven? These things deserve to be remembered. They were not written without cause. They cry aloud, *No infallibility!*

And who does not see, when he reads the history of the Church of Christ, repeated proofs that the best of men can err? The early fathers were zealous according to their knowledge, and ready to die for Christ. But many of them countenanced monkery, and nearly all sowed the seeds of many superstitions.—The Reformers were honoured instruments in the hand of God for reviving the cause of truth on earth. Yet hardly one of them can be named who did not make some great mistake. Martin Luther held pertinaciously the doctrine of consubstantiation. Melancthon was often timid and undecided. Calvin permitted Servetus to be burned. Cranmer recanted and fell away for a time from his first faith. Jewell subscribed to Popish doctrines for fear of death. Hooper disturbed the Church of England by over scrupulosity about vestments. The Puritans, in after times, denounced toleration as Abaddon and Apollyon. Wesley and Toplady, last century, abused each other in most shameful language. Irving, in our own day, gave way to the delusion of speaking in unknown tongues. All these things speak with a loud voice. They all lift up a beacon to the Church of Christ. They all say, 'Cease ye from man;'—'Call no man master;'—'Call no man father upon earth;'—'Let no man glory in man;'—'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' They all cry, *No infallibility!*

The lesson is one that we all need. We are all naturally inclined to lean upon man whom we can see, rather than upon God whom we cannot see. We naturally love to lean upon the ministers of the visible Church, rather than upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the

great Shepherd and Bishop and High Priest, who is invisible. We need to be continually warned and set upon our guard.

I see this tendency to lean on man everywhere. I know no branch of the Protestant Church of Christ which does not require to be cautioned upon the point. It is a snare, for example, to the English Episcopalian to make idols of Bishop Pearson and 'the Judicious Hooker.' It is a snare to the Scotch Presbyterian to pin his faith on John Knox, the Covenanters, and Dr. Chalmers. It is a snare to the Methodists in our day to worship the memory of John Wesley. It is a snare to the Independent to see no fault in any opinion of Owen and Dodderidge. It is a snare to the Baptist to exaggerate the wisdom of Gill, and Fuller, and Robert Hall. All these are snares, and into these snares how many fall!

We all naturally love to have a pope of our own. We are far too ready to think, that because some great minister or some learned man says a thing,—or because our own minister, whom we love, says a thing,—it must be right, without examining whether it is in Scripture or not. Most men dislike the trouble of thinking for themselves. They like following a leader. They are like sheep,—when one goes over the gap all the rest follow. Here at Antioch even Barnabas was carried away. We can well fancy that good man saying, 'An old Apostle, like Peter, surely cannot be wrong. Following him, I cannot err.'

And now let us see what practical lessons we may learn from this part of our subject.

(a) For one thing, let us learn not to put implicit confidence in any man's opinion, merely *because he lived many hundred years ago*. Peter was a man who lived in the time of Christ Himself, and yet he could err.

There are many who talk much in the present day about 'the voice of the primitive Church.' They would have us believe that those who lived nearest the time of the Apostles, must of course know more about truth than we can. There is no foundation for any such opinion. It is a fact, that the most ancient writers in the Church of Christ are often at variance with one another. It is a fact that they often changed their own minds, and retracted their own former opinions. It is a fact that they often wrote foolish and weak things, and often showed great ignorance in their explanations of Scripture. It is vain to expect to find them free from mistakes. *Infallibility is not to be found in the early fathers, but in the Bible.*

(b) For another thing, let us learn not to put implicit confidence in any man's opinion, *merely*



*because of his office as a minister.* Peter was one of the very chiefest Apostles, and yet he could err.

This is a point on which men have continually gone astray. It is the rock on which the early Church struck. Men soon took up the saying, 'Do nothing contrary to the mind of the Bishop.' But what are bishops, priests, and deacons? What are the best of ministers but men,—dust, ashes, and clay,—men of like passions with ourselves, men exposed to temptations, men liable to weaknesses, and infirmities? What saith the Scripture, 'Who is Paul and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?' (1 Cor. 3:5.) Bishops have often driven the truth into the wilderness, and decreed that to be true which was false. The greatest errors have been begun by ministers. Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of the High-priest, made religion to be abhorred by the children of Israel. Annas and Caiaphas, though in the direct line of descent from Aaron, crucified the Lord. Arius, that great heresiarch, was a minister. It is absurd to suppose that ordained men cannot go wrong. We should follow them so far as they teach according to the Bible, but no further. We should believe them so long as they can say, 'Thus it is written,'—'thus saith the Lord;' but further than this we are not to go. *Infallibility is not to be found in*

*ordained men, but in the Bible.*

(c) For another thing, let us learn not to place implicit confidence in any man's opinion, *merely because of his learning.* Peter was a man who had miraculous gifts, and could speak with tongues, and yet he could err.

This is a point again on which many go wrong. This is the rock on which men struck in the middle ages. Men looked on Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, and Peter Lombard, and many of their companions, as almost inspired. They gave epithets to some of them in token of their admiration. They talked of 'the irrefragable' doctor, 'the seraphic' doctor, 'the incomparable' doctor,—and seemed to think that whatever these doctors said must be true! But what is the most learned of men, if he be not taught by the Holy Ghost? What is the most learned of all divines but a mere fallible child of Adam at his very best? Vast knowledge of books and great ignorance of God's truth may go side by side. They have done so, they may do so, and they will do so in all times. I will engage to say that the two volumes of Robert M'Cheyne's Memoirs and Sermons, have done more positive good to the souls of men, than any one folio that Origen or Cyprian ever wrote. I doubt not that the one volume of 'Pilgrim's Progress,'—written by a man who knew hardly any book but his Bible, and was ignorant of Greek and Latin,—will prove in the last day to have done more for the benefit of the world, than all the works of the schoolmen put together. Learning is a gift that ought not to be despised. It is an evil day when books are not valued in the Church. But it is amazing to observe how vast a man's intellectual attainments may be, and yet how little he may know of the grace of God. I have no doubt the Authorities of Oxford in the last century, knew more of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, than Wesley, Whitefield, Berridge, or Venn. But they knew little of the Gospel of Christ. *Infallibility is not to be found among learned men, but in the Bible.*

(d) For another thing, let us take care that we do not place implicit confidence *on our own minister's opinion*, however godly he may be. Peter was a man of mighty grace, and yet he could err.

Your minister may be a man of God indeed, and worthy of all honour for his preaching and practice; but do not make a pope of him. Do not place his word side by side with the Word of God. Do not spoil him by flattery. Do not let him suppose he can make no mistakes. Do not lean your whole weight on his opinion, or you may find to your cost that he can err.

It is written of Joash, King of Judah, that he 'did

that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.' (2 Chron. 24:2.) Jehoiada died, and then died the religion of Joash. Just so your minister may die, and then your religion may die too;—may change, and your religion may change;—may go away, and your religion may go. Oh, be not satisfied with a religion built upon man! Be not content with saying, 'I have hope, because my own minister has told me such and such things.' Seek to be able to say, 'I have hope, because I find it thus and thus written in the Word of God.' If your peace is to be solid, you must go yourself to the fountain of all truth. If your comforts are to be lasting, you must visit the well of life yourself, and draw fresh water for your own soul. Ministers may depart from the faith. The visible Church may be broken up. But he who has the Word of God written in his heart, has a foundation beneath his feet which will never fail him. Honour your minister as a faithful ambassador of Christ. Esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. But never forget that *infallibility is not to be found in godly ministers, but in the Bible.*

The things I have mentioned are worth remembering. Let us bear them in mind, and we shall have learned one lesson from Antioch.

II. I now pass on to the second lesson that we learn from Antioch. That lesson is, *that to keep Gospel truth in the Church is of even greater importance than to keep peace.*

I suppose no man knew better the value of peace and unity than the Apostle Paul. He was the Apostle who wrote to the Corinthians about charity. He was the Apostle who said, 'Be of the same mind one toward another;'—'Be at peace among yourselves;'—'Mind the same things;'—'The servant of God must not strive;'—'There is one body and there is one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.' He was the Apostle who said, 'I become all things to all men, that by all means I may save some.' (Rom. 12:16; 1 Thess. 5:13; Phil. 3:16; Eph. 4:5; 1 Cor. 9:22.) Yet see how he acts here! He withstands Peter to the face. He publicly rebukes him. He runs the risk of all the consequences that might follow. He takes the chance of everything that might be said by the enemies of the Church at Antioch. Above all, he writes it down for a perpetual memorial, that it never might be forgotten,—that, wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world, this public rebuke of an erring Apostle might be known and read of all men.

Now, why did he do this? Because he dreaded false doctrine,—because he knew that a little leaven leav-



eneth the whole lump,—because he would teach us that we ought to contend for the truth jealously, and to fear the loss of truth more than the loss of peace.

St. Paul's example is one we shall do well to remember in the present day. Many people will put up with anything in religion, if they may only have a quiet life. They have a morbid dread of what they call 'controversy.' They are filled with a morbid fear of what they style, in a vague way, 'party spirit,' though they never define clearly what party spirit is. They are possessed with a morbid desire to keep the peace, and make all things smooth and pleasant, even though it be at the expense of truth. So long as they have outward calm, smoothness, stillness, and order, they seem content to give up everything else. I believe they would have thought with Ahab that Elijah was a troubler of Israel, and would have helped the princes of Judah when they put Jeremiah in prison, to stop his mouth. I have no doubt that many of these men of whom I speak, would have thought that Paul at Antioch was a very imprudent man, and that he went too far!

I believe this is all wrong. We have no right to expect anything but the pure Gospel of Christ, unmixed and unadulterated,—the same Gospel that was taught by the Apostles,—to do good to the souls of men. I believe that to maintain this pure truth in the Church men should be ready to make any sacrifice, to hazard peace, to risk dissension, to run the chance of division. *They should no more tolerate false doctrine than they should tolerate sin.* They should withstand any adding to or taking away from the simple message of the Gospel of Christ.

For the truth's sake, our Lord Jesus Christ denounced the Pharisees, though they sat in Moses' seat, and were the appointed and authorized teachers of men. 'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,' He says, eight times over, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. And who shall dare to breathe a suspicion that our Lord was wrong?

For the truth's sake, Paul withstood and blamed Peter, though a brother. Where was the use of unity when pure doctrine was gone? And who shall dare to say he was wrong?



For the truth's sake, Athanasius stood out against the world to maintain the pure doctrine about the divinity of Christ, and waged a controversy with the great majority of the professing Church. And who shall dare to say he was wrong?

For the truth's sake, Luther broke the unity of the Church in which he was born, denounced the Pope and all his ways, and laid the foundation of a new teaching. And who shall dare to say that Luther was wrong?

For the truth's sake, Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, the English Reformers, counselled Henry VIII, and Edward VI, to separate from Rome, and to risk the consequences of division. And who shall dare to say that they were wrong?

For the truth's sake, Whitefield and Wesley, a hundred years ago, denounced the mere barren moral preaching of the clergy of their day, and went out into the highways and byways to save souls, knowing well that they would be cast out from the Church's communion. And who shall dare to say that they were wrong?

Yes! peace without truth is a false peace; it is the very peace of the devil. Unity without the Gospel is a worthless unity; it is the very unity of hell. Let us never be ensnared by those who speak kindly of it. Let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Think not that I came to send peace upon earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword.' (Matt. 10:34.) Let us remember the praise He gives to one of the Churches in the Revelation: 'Thou canst not bear them who are evil. Thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.' (Rev. 2:2.) Let us remember the blame He casts upon another: 'Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel to teach.' (Rev. 2:20.) Never let us be guilty of sacrificing any portion of truth upon the altar of peace. Let us rather be like the Jews, who, if they found any manuscript copy of the Old Testament Scriptures incorrect in a single letter, burned the whole copy, rather than run the risk of losing one jot or tittle of the Word of God. Let us be content with nothing short of the whole Gospel of Christ.

In what way are we to make practical use of the general principles which I have just laid down? I will give my readers one simple piece of advice. I believe it is advice which deserves serious consideration.

I warn then every one who loves his soul, *to be very jealous as to the preaching he regularly hears, and the place of worship he regularly attends.* He who deliberately settles down under any ministry which is positively unsound is a very unwise man. I will never

hesitate to speak my mind on this point. I know well that many think it a shocking thing for a man to forsake his parish church. I cannot see with the eyes of such people. I draw a wide distinction between teaching which is *defective* and teaching which is thoroughly *false*,—between teaching which errs on the negative side and teaching which is positively unscriptural. But I do believe, if false doctrine is unmistakably preached in a parish church, a parishioner who loves his soul is quite right in not going to that parish church. To hear unscriptural teaching fifty-two Sundays in every year is a serious thing. It is a continual dropping of slow poison into the mind. I think it almost impossible for a man wilfully to submit himself to it, and not take harm. I see in the New Testament we are plainly told to 'prove all things,' and 'hold fast that which is good.' (1 Thess. 5:21.) I see in the Book of Proverbs that we are commanded to 'cease to hear instruction which causeth to err from the paths of knowledge.' (Prov. 19:27.) If these words do not justify a man in ceasing to worship at a church, if positively false doctrine is preached in it, I know not what words can.

Does any man mean to tell us that to attend the parish church is absolutely needful to an Englishman's salvation?\* If there is such an one, let him speak out, and give us his name.—Does any one mean to tell us that going to the parish church will save any man's soul, if he dies unconverted and ignorant of Christ? If there is such an one, let him speak out, and give us his name.—Does any one mean to tell us that going to the parish church will teach a man anything about Christ, or conversion, or faith, or repentance, if these subjects are hardly ever named in the parish church, and never properly explained? If there is such an one, let him speak out, and give us his name.—Does anyone mean to say that a man who repents, believes in Christ, is converted and holy, will lose his soul, because he has forsaken his parish church and learned his religion elsewhere? If there is such an one, let him speak out, and give us his name.—For my part I abhor such monstrous and extravagant ideas. I see not a jot of foundation for them in the Word of God. I trust that the number of those who deliberately hold them is exceedingly small.

There are not a few parishes in England where the religious teaching is little better than Popery. Ought the laity of such parishes to sit still, be

\* The next few pages have immediate reference to a Church of England context. The principle Ryle expounds, however, may profitably be applied to Nonconformists, namely that denominational loyalty must never take precedence over loyalty to the truth. [Footnote inserted by The Banner of Truth Trust.]

content, and take it quietly? They ought not. And why? Because, like St. Paul, they ought to prefer truth to peace.

There are not a few parishes in England where the religious teaching is little better than morality. The distinctive doctrines of Christianity are never clearly proclaimed. Plato, or Seneca, or Confucius, or Socinus, could have taught almost as much. Ought the laity in such parishes to sit still, be content, and take it quietly? They ought not, And why? Because, like St. Paul, they ought to prefer truth to peace.

I am using strong language in dealing with this part of my subject: I know it.—I am trenching on delicate ground: I know it.—I am handling matters which are generally let alone, and passed over in silence: I know it.—I say what I say from a sense of duty to the Church of which I am a minister. I believe the state of the times, and the position of the laity in some parts of England, require plain speaking. Souls are perishing, in many parishes, in ignorance. Honest members of the Church of England, in many districts, are disgusted and perplexed. This is no time for smooth words. I am not ignorant of those magic expressions, 'the parochial system, order, division, schism, unity, controversy,' and the like. I know the cramping, silencing influence which they seem to exercise on some minds. I too have considered those expressions calmly and deliberately, and on each of them I am prepared to speak my mind.

(a) The *parochial system* of England is an admirable thing in theory. Let it only be well administered, and worked by truly spiritual ministers, and it is calculated to confer the greatest blessings on the nation. But it is useless to expect attachment to the parish church, when the minister of the parish is ignorant of the Gospel or a lover of the world. In such a case we must never be surprised if men forsake their parish church, and seek truth wherever truth is to be found. If the parochial minister does not preach the Gospel and live the Gospel, the conditions on which he claims the attention of his parishioners are *virtually violated*, and his claim to be heard is at an end. It is absurd to expect the head of a family to endanger the souls of his children, as well as his own, for the sake of 'parochial order.' There is no mention of parishes in the Bible, and we have no right to require men to live and die in ignorance, in order that they may be able to say at last, 'I always attended my parish church.'

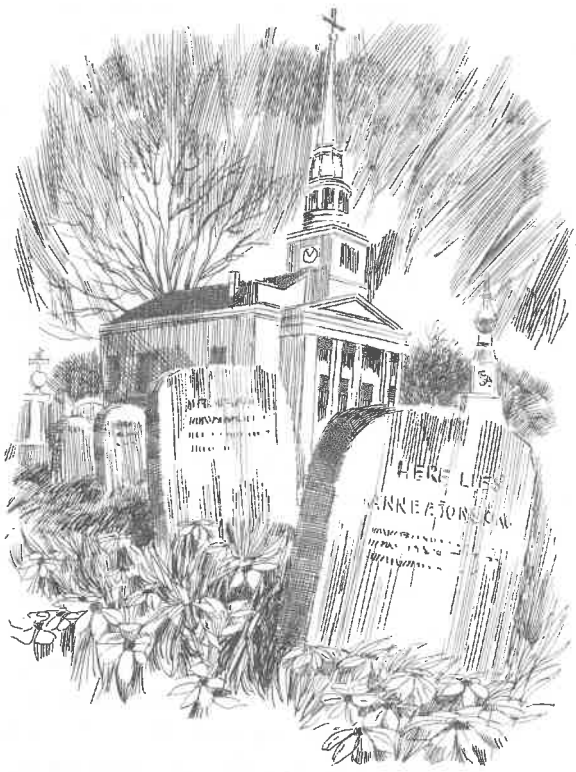
(b) *Divisions and separations* are most objectionable in religion. They weaken the cause of true Christianity. They give occasion to the enemies of all

godliness to blaspheme. But before we blame people for them, we must be careful that we lay the blame *where it is deserved*. False doctrine and heresy are even worse than schism. If people separate themselves from teaching which is positively false and unscriptural, they ought to be praised rather than reproved. In such cases separation is a virtue and not a sin. It is easy to make sneering remarks about 'itching ears,' and 'love of excitement;' but it is not so easy to convince a plain reader of the Bible that it is his duty to hear false doctrine every Sunday, when by a little exertion he can hear truth. The old saying must never be forgotten, 'He is the schismatic who causes the schism.'

(c) *Unity, quiet, and order* among professing Christians are mighty blessings. They give strength, beauty, and efficiency to the cause of Christ. But even gold may be bought too dear. Unity which is obtained by the sacrifice of truth is worth nothing. It is not the unity which pleases God. The Church of Rome boasts loudly of a unity which does not deserve the name. It is unity which is obtained by taking away the Bible from the people, by gagging private judgment, by encouraging ignorance, by forbidding men to think for themselves. Like the exterminating warriors of old, the Church of Rome 'makes a solitude and calls it peace.' There is quiet and stillness enough in the grave, but it is not the quiet of health, but of death. It was the false prophets who cried 'Peace,' when there was no peace.

(d) *Controversy* in religion is a hateful thing. It is hard enough to fight the devil, the world and the flesh, without private differences in our own camp. But there is one thing which is even worse than controversy, and that is false doctrine tolerated, allowed, and permitted without protest or molestation. It was controversy that won the battle of Protestant Reformation. If the views that some men hold were correct, it is plain we never ought to have had any Reformation at all! For the sake of peace, we ought to have gone on worshipping the Virgin, and bowing down to images and relics to this very day! Away with such trifling! There are times when controversy is not only a duty but a benefit. Give me the mighty thunderstorm rather than the pestilential malaria. The one walks in darkness and poisons us in silence, and we are never safe. The other frightens and alarms for a little season. But it is soon over, and it clears the air. It is a plain Scriptural duty to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.' (Jude 3.)

I am quite aware that the things I have said are



exceedingly distasteful to many minds. I believe many are content with teaching which is not the whole truth, and fancy it will be 'all the same' in the end. I am sorry for them. I am convinced that nothing but *the whole truth* is likely, as a general rule, to do good to souls. I am satisfied that those who wilfully put up with anything short of the whole truth will find at last that their souls have received much damage. Three things there are which men never ought to trifle with,—a little poison, a little false doctrine, and a little sin.

I am quite aware that when a man expresses such opinions as those I have just brought forward, there are many ready to say, 'He is no Churchman.' I hear such accusations unmoved. The day of judgment will show who were the true friends of the Church of England and who were not. I have learned in the last thirty-two years that if a clergyman leads a quiet life, lets alone the unconverted part of the world, and preaches so as to offend none and edify none, he will be called by many 'a good Churchman.' And I have also learned that if a man studies the Articles and Homilies, labours continually for the conversion of souls, adheres closely to the great principles of the Reformation, bears a faithful testimony against Popery, and preaches as Jewell and Latimer used to preach, he will probably be thought a firebrand and 'troubler of Israel,' and called no Churchman at all! But I can see plainly that they are not the best

Churchmen who talk most loudly about Churchmanship. I remember that none cried 'Treason' so loudly as Athaliah. (2 Kings 11:14.) Yet she was a traitor herself. I have observed that many who once talked most about Churchmanship have ended by forsaking the Church of England, and going over to Rome. Let men say what they will. *They are the truest friends of the Church of England who labour most for the preservation of truth.*

I lay these things before the readers of this paper, and invite their serious attention to them. I charge them never to forget that truth is of more importance to a Church than peace. I ask them to be ready to carry out the principles I have laid down, and to contend zealously, if needs be, for the truth. If we do this, we shall have learned something from Antioch.

III. But I pass on to the third lesson from Antioch. That lesson is, that *there is no doctrine about which we ought to be so jealous as justification by faith without the deeds of the law.*

The proof of this lesson stands out most prominently in the passage of Scripture which heads this paper. What one article of faith had the Apostle Peter denied at Antioch? None.—What doctrine had he publicly preached which was false? None.—What, then, had he done? He had done this. After once keeping company with the believing Gentiles as 'fellow-heirs and partakers of the promise of Christ in the Gospel' (Eph. 3:6), he suddenly became shy of them and withdrew himself. He seemed to think they were less holy and acceptable to God than the circumcised Jews. He seemed to imply, that the believing Gentiles were in a lower state than they who had kept the ceremonies of the law of Moses. He seemed, in a word, to add something to simple *faith* as needful to give man an interest in Jesus Christ. He seemed to reply to the question, 'What shall I do to be saved?' not merely 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,' but 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, *and be circumcised*, and keep the ceremonies of the law.'

Such conduct as this the Apostle Paul would not endure for a moment. Nothing so moved him as the idea of adding anything to the Gospel of Christ. 'I withstood him,' he says, 'to the face.' He not only rebuked him, but he recorded the whole transaction fully, when by inspiration of the Spirit he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians.

I invite special attention to this point. I ask men to observe the remarkable jealousy which the Apostle Paul shows about this doctrine, and to consider the point about which such a stir was made. Let us mark



in this passage of Scripture the immense importance of justification by faith without the deeds of the law. Let us learn here what mighty reasons the Reformers of the Church of England had for calling it, in our eleventh Article, 'a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort.'

(a) This is the doctrine which is *essentially necessary to our own personal comfort*. No man on earth is a real child of God, and a saved soul, till he sees and receives salvation by faith in Christ Jesus. No man will ever have solid peace and true assurance, until he embraces with all his heart the doctrine that 'we are accounted righteous before God for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works and deservings.' One reason, I believe, why so many professors in this day are tossed to and fro, enjoy little comfort, and feel little peace, is their ignorance on this point. They do not see clearly justification by faith without the deeds of the law.

(b) This is the doctrine which *the great enemy of souls hates, and labours to overthrow*. He knows that it turned the world upside down at the first beginning of the Gospel, in the days of the Apostles. He knows that it turned the world upside down again at the time of the Reformation. He is therefore always tempting men to reject it. He is always trying to seduce Churches and ministers to deny or obscure its truth. No wonder that the Council of Trent directed its chief attack against this doctrine, and pronounced it accursed and heretical. No wonder that many who think themselves learned in these days denounce the doctrine as theological jargon, and say that all 'earnest-minded people' are justified by Christ, whether they have faith or not! The plain truth is that the doctrine is all gall and wormwood to unconverted hearts. It just meets the wants of the awakened soul. But the proud unhumiliated man who knows not his own sin, and sees not his own weakness, cannot receive its truth.

(c) This is the doctrine, the *absence of which accounts for half the errors of the Roman Catholic Church*. The beginning of half the unscriptural doctrines of Popery may be traced up to rejection of justification by faith. No Romish teacher, if he is faithful to his Church, can say to an anxious sinner, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' He cannot do it without additions and explanations, which completely destroy the good news. He dare not give the Gospel medicine, without adding something which destroys its efficacy, and neutralizes its power. Purgatory, penance, priestly absolution, the intercession of saints, the worship of

the Virgin, and many other man-made services of popery, all spring from this source. They are all rotten props to support weary consciences. But they are rendered necessary by the denial of justification by faith.

(d) This is the doctrine which is *absolutely essential to a minister's success among his people*. Obscurity on this point spoils all. Absence of clear statements about justification will prevent the utmost zeal doing good. There may be much that is pleasing and nice in a minister's sermons, much about Christ and sacramental union with Him,—much about self-denial,—much about humility,—much about charity. But all this will profit little, if his trumpet gives an uncertain sound about justification by faith without the deeds of the law.

(e) This is the doctrine which is *absolutely essential to the prosperity of a Church*. No Church is really in a healthy state, in which this doctrine is not prominently brought forward. A Church may have good forms and regularly ordained ministers, and the Sacraments properly administered, but a Church will not see conversion of souls going on under its pulpits, when this doctrine is not plainly preached. Its schools may be found in every parish. Its ecclesiastical buildings may strike the eye all over the land. But there will be no blessing from God on that Church, unless justification by faith is proclaimed from its pulpits. Sooner or later its candlestick will be taken away.

Why have the Churches of Africa and the East fallen to their present state?—Had they not bishops? They had.—Had they not forms and liturgies? They had.—Had they not synods and councils? They had.—But they cast away the doctrine of justification by faith. They lost sight of that mighty truth, and so fell.

Why did our own Church do so little in the last century, and why did the Independents, and Methodists, and Baptists do so much more?—was it that their system was better than ours? No.—Was it that our Church was not so well adapted to meet the wants of lost souls? No.—But their ministers preached justification by faith, and our ministers, in too many cases, did not preach the doctrine at all.

Why do so many English people go to dissenting chapels in the present day? Why do we so often see a splendid Gothic parish church as empty of worshippers as a barn in July, and a little plain brick building, called a Meeting House, filled to suffocation? Is it that people in general have any abstract dislike to Episcopacy, the Prayer-book, the surplice, and the

establishment? Not at all! The simple reason is, in the vast majority of cases, that people do not like preaching in which justification by faith is not fully proclaimed. When they cannot hear it in the parish church they will seek it elsewhere. No doubt there are exceptions. No doubt there are places where a long course of neglect has thoroughly disgusted people with the Church of England, so that they will not even hear truth from its ministers. But I believe, as a general rule, when the parish church is empty and the meeting-house full, it will be found on inquiry that *there is a cause*.

If these things be so, the Apostle Paul might well be jealous for the truth, and withstand Peter to the face. He might well maintain that anything ought to be sacrificed, rather than endanger the doctrine of justification in the Church of Christ. He saw with a prophetic eye coming things. He left us all an example that we should do well to follow. Whatever we tolerate, let us never allow any injury to be done to that blessed doctrine,—that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Let us always beware of any teaching which either directly or indirectly obscures justification by faith. All religious systems which put anything between the heavy-laden sinner and Jesus Christ the Saviour, except simple faith, are dangerous and unscriptural. All systems which make out faith to be anything complicated, anything but a simple, childlike dependence,—the hand which receives the soul's medicine from the physician,—are unsafe and poisonous systems. All systems which cast discredit on the simple Protestant doctrine which broke the power of Rome, carry about with them a plague-spot, and are dangerous to souls.

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by Christ Himself, and to be used with reverence and respect by all professing Christians. When it is used rightly, worthily and with faith, it is capable of being the instrument of mighty blessings to the soul. But when people are taught that *all* who are baptized are as a matter of course born again, and that *all* baptized persons should be addressed as 'children of God,' I believe their souls are in great danger. Such teaching about baptism appears to me to overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith. They only are children of God who have faith in Christ Jesus. And all men have not faith.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament ordained by Christ Himself, and intended for the edification and refreshment of true believers. But when the people are taught that all persons ought to come to the Lord's

table, whether they have faith or not; and that all alike receive Christ's body and blood who receive the bread and wine, I believe their souls are in great danger. Such teaching appears to me to darken the doctrine of justification by faith. No man eats Christ's body and drinks Christ's blood except the justified man. And none are justified until they believe.

Membership of the Church of England is a great privilege. No visible Church on earth, in my opinion, offers so many advantages to its members, when rightly administered. But when people are taught that because they are members of the Church, they are as a matter of course members of Christ, I believe their souls are in great danger. Such teaching appears to me to overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith. They only are joined to Christ who believe. And all men do not believe.

Whenever we hear teaching which obscures or contradicts justification by faith, we may be sure there is a screw loose somewhere. We should watch against such teaching, and be upon our guard. Once let a man get wrong about justification, and he will bid a long farewell to comfort, to peace, to lively hope, to anything like assurance in his Christianity. An error here is a worm at the root.

(1) In conclusion, let me first of all ask every one who reads this paper, to arm himself with a thorough *knowledge of the written Word of God*. Unless we do this we are at the mercy of any false teacher. We shall not see through the mistakes of an erring Peter. We shall not be able to imitate the faithfulness of a courageous Paul. An ignorant laity will always be the bane of a Church. A Bible-reading laity may save a Church from ruin. Let us read the Bible regularly, daily, and with fervent prayer, and become familiar with its contents. Let us receive nothing, believe nothing, follow nothing, which is not in the Bible, nor can be proved by the Bible. Let our rule of faith, our touchstone of all teaching, be the written Word of God.

(2) In the next place, let me recommend every member of the Church of England to make himself acquainted with *the Thirty-nine Articles of his own Church*. They are to be found at the end of most Prayer-books. They will abundantly repay an attentive reading. They are the true standard by which Churchmanship is to be tried, next to the Bible. They are the test by which Churchmen should prove the teaching of their ministers, if they want to know whether it is 'Church teaching' or not. I deeply



lament the ignorance of systematic Christianity which prevails among many who attend the services of the Church of England. It would be well if such books as Archbishop Usher's 'Body of Divinity' were more known and studied than they are. If Dean Nowell's Catechism had ever been formally accredited as a formulary of the Church of England, many of the heresies of the last twenty years could never have lived for a day.\* But unhappily many persons really know no more about the true doctrines of their own communion, than the heathen or Mahometans. It is useless to expect the laity of the Church of England to be zealous for the maintenance of true doctrine, unless they know what their own Church has defined true doctrine to be.

(3) In the next place, let me entreat all who read this paper to be always *ready to contend for the faith of Christ*, if needful. I recommend no one to foster a controversial spirit. I want no man to be like Goliath, going up and down, saying, 'Give me a man to fight

with.' Always feeding upon controversy is poor work indeed. It is like feeding upon bones. But I do say that no love of false peace should prevent us striving jealously against false doctrine, and seeking to promote true doctrine wherever we possibly can. True Gospel in the pulpit, true Gospel in every Religious Society we support, true Gospel in the books we read, true Gospel in the friends we keep company with,—let this be our aim, and never let us be ashamed to let men see that it is so.

(4) In the next place, let me entreat all who read this paper to *keep a jealous watch over their own hearts* in these controversial times. There is much need of this caution. In the heat of the battle we are apt to forget our own inner man. Victory in argument is not always victory over the world or victory over the devil. Let the meekness of St. Peter in taking a reproof, be as much our example as the boldness of St. Paul in reproof. Happy is the Christian who can call the person who rebukes him faithfully, a 'beloved brother.' (2 Peter 3:15.) Let us strive to be holy in all manner of conversation, and not least in our tempers. Let us labour to maintain an uninterrupted communion with the Father and with the Son, and to keep up constant habits of private prayer and Bible-reading. Thus we shall be armed for the battle of life, and have the sword of the Spirit well fitted to our hand when the day of temptation comes.

(5) In the last place, let me entreat all members of the Church of England who know what real praying is, to *pray daily for the Church to which they belong*. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may be poured out upon it, and that its candlestick may not be taken away. Let us pray for those parishes in which the Gospel is now not preached, that the darkness may pass away, and the true light shine in them. Let us pray for those ministers who now neither know nor preach the truth, that God may take away the veil from their hearts, and show them a more excellent way. Nothing is impossible. The Apostle Paul was once a persecuting Pharisee; Luther was once an unenlightened monk; Bishop Latimer was once a bigoted Papist; Thomas Scott was once thoroughly opposed to evangelical truth. Nothing, I repeat, is impossible. The Spirit can make clergymen preach that Gospel which they now labour to destroy. Let us therefore be instant in prayer.

I commend the matters contained in this paper to serious attention. Let us ponder them well in our hearts. Let us carry them out in our daily practice. Let us do this, and we shall have learned something from the story of St. Peter at Antioch.

\* Dean Nowell was Prolocutor of the Convocation which drew up the Thirty-nine Articles in the form in which we now have them, in the year 1562. His Catechism was approved and allowed by Convocation.

# Protestant Sacerdotalism

Thomas F. Torrance

*Editor's Note:* The following statement is taken from Dr. Torrance's brilliant essay on "Justification," which was printed in *Christianity Divided*.

Nowhere does Justification by Christ alone have more radical consequences than in regard to the pastoral ministry. Justification by Christ is grounded upon His mighty Act in which He took our place, substituting Himself for us under the divine judgment, and substituting Himself for us in the obedient response He rendered to God in worship and thanksgiving and praise. In Himself He has opened up a way to the Father, so that we may approach God solely through Him and on the ground of what He has done and is—therefore we pray in His Name, and whatever we do, we do in His Name before God. Thus the whole of our worship and ministry reposes upon the substitutionary work of Christ. Now the radical nature of this is apparent from the fact that through substituting Himself in our place there takes place a displacement of our humanity by the humanity of Christ—that is why Jesus insists that we can only follow Him by denying ourselves, by letting Him displace us from a place of centrality, and by letting Him take our place.

At the Reformation this doctrine had immediate effect in the overthrow of Roman sacerdotalism—Jesus Christ is our sole Priest. He is the one and only Man who can mediate between us and God, so that we approach God solely through the mediation of the Humanity of Jesus, through His incarnate Priesthood. When the Humanity of Christ is depreciated or whenever it is obscured by the sheer majesty of His Deity, then the need for some other human mediation creeps in—hence in the Dark and Middle Ages arose the need for a human priesthood to mediate

between sinful humanity and the exalted Christ, the majestic Judge and King. There was of course no denial of the Deity of Christ by the Reformers—on the contrary, they restored the purity of faith in Christ as God through overthrowing the accretions that compromised it; but they also restored the place occupied in the New Testament and the Early Church by the Humanity of Christ, as He who took our human nature in order to be our Priest, as He who takes our side and is our Advocate before the judgment of God, and who once and for all has wrought out atonement for us in His sacrifice on the Cross, and therefore as He who eternally stands in for us as our heavenly Mediator and High Priest.

The Church on earth lives and acts only as it is directed by its heavenly Lord, and only in such a way that His Ministry is reflected in the midst of its ministry and worship. Therefore from first to last the worship and ministry of the Church on earth must be governed by the fact that Christ substitutes Himself in our place, and that our humanity with its own acts of worship, is displaced by His, so that we appear before God not in our own name, not in our own significance, not in virtue of our own acts of confession, contrition, worship, and thanksgiving, but solely in the name of Christ and solely in virtue of what He has done in our name and on our behalf, and in our stead. Justification by Christ alone means that from first to last in the worship of God and in the ministry of the Gospel Christ Himself is central, and that we draw near in worship and service only through letting Him take our place. He only is Priest. He only represents humanity. He only has an offering with which to appear before God and with which God is well pleased. He only presents our prayers before God, and He only is our praise and thanksgiving and worship as we appear before the face of the Father. Nothing in our hands we bring—simply to His Cross we cling.

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But what has happened in Protestant worship and ministry? Is it not too often the case that the whole life and worship of the congregation revolves round the personality of the minister? He is the one who is in the center; he offers the prayers of the congregation; he it is who mediates "truth" through his personality, and he it is who mediates between the people and God through conducting the worship entirely on his own. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of the popular minister where everything centers on him, and the whole life of the congregation is built round him. What is that but *Protestant sacerdotalism*, sacerdotalism which involves the displacement of the Humanity of Christ by the humanity of the minister, and the obscuring of the Person of Christ by the personality of the minister? How extraordinary that Protestantism should thus develop a new sacerdotalism, to be sure a psychological rather than a sacramental sacerdotalism, but a sacerdotalism nonetheless, in which it is the personality of the minister which both mediates the Word of God to man and mediates the worship of man to God! Protestant Churches are full of these "psychological priests" and more and more they evolve a psychological cult and develop a form of psychological counselling which displaces the truly pastoral ministry of Christ. How frequently, for example, the minister's prayers are so crammed with his own personality (with all its boring idiosyncrasies!) that the worshipper cannot get past him in order to worship God in the name of Christ—but is forced to worship God in the name of the minister! How frequently the sermon is not an exposition of the Word of God but an exposition of the minister's own views on this or that subject! And how frequently the whole life of the congregation is so built up on the personality of the minister that when he goes the congregation all but collapses or dwindles away!

There can be no doubt that the whole concept of the ministry and of worship in our Reformed Churches needs to be brought back to the criticism of the Word of God in order that we may learn again the meaning of Justification by Christ alone in the midst of the Church's life and work. Jesus Christ must be given His rightful place by being set right in the center, as Head and Lord of the Church, as its sole Prophet and Priest and King, and that means in the midst of our preaching, in the basic notion of the ministerial office, in the fundamental mode of worship, and in the whole life of the congregation as the Body of *Christ alone*.

## John Robinson's Charge to the Pilgrim Fathers



*Editor's Note:* Pastor John Robinson bade farewell to the Pilgrims on their historic departure from Holland to the New World with the following words.

Brethren, we are now erelong to part asunder, and the Lord knoweth whether I shall live ever to see your faces more; but whether the Lord hath appointed that or not, I charge you before God and His blessed angels to follow me no farther than I have followed Christ. If God should reveal anything to you by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as you ever were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am very confident that the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of His Holy Word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go any farther than what Luther saw, and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their time, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light as that which they first received.

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The Australian Forum's recent U.S.A. seminar, "The Forgotten New Testament Gospel Against the Substitutes of the 70's," is now available on cassettes. Challenging lectures deal with redemption and renewal, Christian ethics, and eschatology. Speakers Robert D. Brinsmead and Geoffrey J. Paxton show that the great Reformation principle of justification by faith has radical consequences for the church today.

Many ordered these tapes well in advance of their availability. We believe that our readers will wish to take advantage of this opportunity to hear these dynamic presentations. The "Gospel Substitutes" Seminar includes seven cassette tapes. Suggested donation: \$14.00 per set. Order from *Present Truth*. An order form is enclosed for your convenience.

## "Justification by Faith — Law and Gospel"

We are again offering the March, 1973 *Present Truth*, entitled "Justification by Faith—Law and Gospel." This popular back issue, containing a vigorous treatment of both legalism and antinomianism, has recently been reprinted in response to continuing demands. Many of our readers have never had a chance to read this important material. To receive your free copy, simply mark the appropriate space in the enclosed order form and mail it to *Present Truth*. If you wish to order a larger supply, you can now do so.

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