# The APOSTASY OF CHRISTENDOM

by
A. J. POLLOCK

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## THE APOSTASY of CHRISTENDOM

WE had better begin by defining our terms. What is meant by Christendom, and how does Christendom differ from Christianity?

Christendom stands for those parts of the world where Christianity is the professed religion in contrast to heathen lands. In that profession there is a mixture of good and evil. In it is found much reality alongside of a vast amount of insincere profession with no reality behind it. The Word of God may be ministered in all its purity on the one hand, and that same Word of God neutralized on the other by traditions, superstitions, ritualistic practices, and doctrines far removed from the Word of God.

Christianity stands for pure Christian doctrine and practice. No person can have part in Christianity save those, who have sincerely accepted the Lord Jesus as a personal Saviour, and who are indwelt by the Spirit of God. It represents Christ's building, which is on the rock foundation of the confession of His name as "the Son of the living God." Against this building the Gates of Hades shall not prevail. Upon this rock foundation every true believer is built as an integral part of the Church of God.

#### WHAT IS MEANT BY APOSTASY?

A clear distinction must be made between apostasy and backsliding. Backsliding is a word which only occurs in the Old Testament, but, alas! we see many backsliding believers in the Christian profession to-day. Such are invariably dissatisfied and wretched in the secret of their own hearts. They deplore their folly and weakness, and cling tenaciously to the fact of their conversion.

Is restoration possible for a backsliding child of God? Surely it is. God says,

"Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding" (Jer. 3: 22).
"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from them" (Hosea 4: 4).

The Apostle Peter was a grievous backslider when he denied his Lord thrice with oaths and cursing. We love to read the story of his restoration, and how he was graciously recovered to his Lord and his service for the Lord.

But apostasy is a vastly different matter. For this there is no recovery. It is a fatal act. Apostasy is the total rejection of God, of Christ, of the Holy Scriptures, of Christian association and fellowship in every shape and form on the part of those, who profess to believe in the Christian faith. It is the deliberate stepping outside the circle of Christian profession into worse than the darkness of rank heathendom. In the case of the heathen, there may be many who are groping after the light, but in the case of the apostate, it is the deliberate turning away from and refusal of the light once professed.

An Old Testament Scripture puts it very strikingly:—

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psalm 2: 2, 3).

The final apostasy of Christendom, as we shall see, will take a national form. Christendom with no reality whatsoever in it, will find it easy to throw off all pretension of a Christian nature, for the true Christians, the Church of God, will have been caught up to glory at the second coming of our Lord, leaving only a hollow sham of mere profession behind.

The reason for this is clearly stated. They will feel the restraints of vital Christianity irksome. So the "bands" of restraint, the standard set by the Word of God, will be broken asunder. The "cords" of decent moral conduct will be cast away. The gratification of evil, unrestrained, fallen nature in its worst and vilest excesses will sweep the face of so-called Christian lands like a prairie fire. Do we not see very sinister and alarming signs in this direction in this vaunted twentieth century?

Apostasy will take the form of the absolute rejection of God and of Christ, the Saviour of mankind. For this there is no remedy, no recovery. Can we not see a fore-shadowing of what we have been describing in Germany of late years? Who would have thought that Germany, the land of the glorious Reformation, the country of Martin Luther, would have disavowed Christianity as it has done under the misrule of Hitler? The Scriptures were flouted, in their place a neo-paganism substituted, hundreds of pastors flung into all the ghastly horrors of vile concentration camps for the only crime of refusing to bow the knee to this godless régime. The stark misery and shame of this staggered humanity. It is but a faint picture of what will take place on a vastly wider scale in the last days.

#### A FEW EXPLANATORY REMARKS

Before we go any further it will be well to make a few explanatory remarks to enable the reader to follow intelligently the course of history in this connection. We must not imagine that there is nothing but declension and apostasy. On the contrary, God ever and anon gives a gracious, spiritual revival; a call to men to embrace the true light. Moreover in the darkest days there are always some who are faithful and true, and it is delightful to trace all this. In the end God will triumph, and His truth and counsels prevail. We must not be like Elijah, who cried out in despair, "I, even I only, am left" (I Kings 19: 14), yet all the time there were seven thousand, who bravely refused to bow the knee to Baal.

Our sketch must perforce be rapid and partial, and we therefore confine most of our remarks to the happenings in this country, for to notice the whole field would be an immense task, and outside the range of a pamphlet.

#### THE BEGINNINGS OF APOSTASY

We shall see how very definite signs of the Apostasy of Christendom appeared towards the end of the apostolic age. It is startling in this connection to read what the Apostle John wrote:—

"Little children, it is the last time: and as we 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" (I John 2: 18, 19).

The Apostle John links these early antichrists with the Antichrist, looking down the ages with prophetic eye, and showing the connection between them.

The Apostle John is the only inspired writer, who uses the word, "Antichrist." In the Book of Revelation he describes him as "The False Prophet" (Rev. 16: 13). He is described at length as "Another Beast" in Revelation 13: 11—17. The Apostle Paul describes this same personage as "That Man of Sin," "The Son of Perdition," "That wicked" (2 Thess. 2: 3, 8). In Daniel 11: 36 he is alluded to as "The King." Putting all these Scriptures together, we gather that the Antichrist will be an apostate Jew, who will reign at Jerusalem as a king, uniting with his kingly office religious functions as "The False Prophet;" indeed, these latter will be more characteristic of him than anything else. He will collaborate with the Beast, the Head of the Revived Roman Empire as prophesied in Revelation 13: 1—10.

The Apostle Paul tells us that in his day,

"The mystery of iniquity doth already work."
(2 Thess. 2: 7.)

It is a great consolation to have these things plainly pointed out in the unerring Word of Truth as beginning in the apostolic age. When we see the corruption of Christendom all around us to-day, we might be stumbled, and come to the conclusion that evil is getting the upper hand. We might even be inclined to question God's goodness and power, and ask the question petulantly, "Why does God allow this and that?" But the inspired narration of the beginnings of declension in apostolic times, and the plain prophecies in Scripture of the coming full-blown apostasy of Christendom, enable us to understand better what is going on around us. God is behind everything, we may rest assured, and is working out His own divine plan of the ages.

### THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Our Lord's parables of the Kingdom of Heaven, in Matthew 13, show the same downward tendency in relation to what is committed by God to man in responsibility. All is corrupted and debased.

The first thing we find in these parables is the masterstroke of Satan in introducing mere empty profession and worse among the ranks of the true believers. We find the enemy sowing tares among the wheat; in other words, "the children of the wicked one" are seen alongside "the children of the kingdom" (Matt. 13: 38).

This prepared the way for further declension as seen in the parable of the mustard seed. "The least of all seeds" becomes "the greatest among herbs," "a tree," an abortion, a monstrosity, "the birds of the air," symbolizing evil, lodging in the branches thereof (Matt. 13: 32).

This sets forth the aim of mere religionists desiring to be great in the earth where their professed Lord was rejected and cast out, the opposite of the kingdom of heaven, where "the meek shall inherit the earth." This pretension to earthly splendour and ecclesiastical and political power is seen in its fullest development in the Romish Church with its popes, cardinals, bishops, abbots, monks, prioresses, nuns, stretching its tentacles over the

countries of the world, seeking to be higher than the kings of the earth.

Lastly we have the parable of the woman hiding leaven in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. This sets forth the gradual introduction of evil doctrine undermining the teaching of the pure Word of God (Matt. 13: 33). Leaven in Scripture is always symbolic of evil, and here is no exception to the rule.

The sowing of the tares is bad.

The pretentiousness of the tree springing from "the least of all seeds" is **bad.** 

The introduction of leaven in the three measures of meal symbolizes what is **bad.** 

## THE ADDRESSES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA

On similar lines to what we have seen in the parables of the kingdom of heaven, we trace spiritual degeneration setting in as witnessed in the addresses to the seven assemblies in Asia (Rev. 2 and 3). There were seven actual assemblies in Asia at the time the Apostle John wrote, their condition answering to the description given of them. But whilst this is so, they also furnish a prophetic outline of Church history from the time the Apostle wrote up to the time of the second coming of our Lord to take His people from the earth to the glory, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (I Cor. 15: 52).

This is clearly indicated in the divinely inspired three-fold division of the book:—

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev. 1: 19).

"The things which thou hast seen" are described in Rev. I.

"The things which are" are found in Rev. 2 and 3, covering the addresses to the seven assemblies in Asia.

"The things which shall be hereafter" are narrated in Rev. 4: I to 22: 5.

These seven addresses begin with that to the Church, which is at Ephesus. There we get the secret of all spiritual declension.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2: 4).

The all-absorbing love for their Lord, which marked the early Church, may be illustrated by a newly-married couple. How deep and tender is their love one to the other. But if this "first love" wanes, how tragic the situation. Many a marriage has been wrecked for the lack of "first love." We see how gravely the Spirit of God viewed the situation. We read,

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen," and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. 2: 5),

as if the Church had fallen from some giddy height, and was lying prostrate and bruised at the foot of some mighty precipice.

The second address is to the Church at Smyrna, covering a period of terrible persecutions on the part of one after another of the Roman emperors. If Satan tried to overthrow the Christian faith by persecution, he soon found out his mistake. The vitality of true Christianity has ever stood such a test. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The Lord used the fiery trial of His saints for their purification and strengthening. So persecution was dropped, and the enemy tried patronage in its place, a subtle and dangerous move for the Church of God.

This is seen in the address to the Church at Pergamos. Even then there was some persecution, as seen in the martyrdom of Antipas, though not on the persistent and wholesale scale as seen in Smyrna. But we see what a downward step was taken when we read that the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Israel to sin in eating things sacrificed to idols, and committing fornication, was taking root

in their midst; and also the harbouring of the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, hated by the Lord.

Next in order comes the address to the Church at Thyatira. The Roman Catholic Church alone fits into the picture—Rome with its superstitions, ritualistic practices, her hierarchy, her persecution of any who dared to profess the name of Christ in a real way, and to possess a copy of the Holy Scriptures. It is here where the Church reaches the depths of spiritual corruption, evil and blasphemy.

Indeed so flagrant had this become that the Lord broke up all claim to corporate testimony, that is the testimony of the Church as a whole. It is true that Thyatira goes on to the end of the history of the Church of God upon the earth, but a new thing here happens. Sardis steps into her place alongside Thyatira. Hitherto, viewing the Church prophetically as outlining Church history, we find one Church passing away to give place to another, but just here the order changes, and we find the four last phases of the Church going on together, as each Church comes into view.

So we come to that phase of the Church represented by Sardis, setting forth Protestantism, a wonderful recovery so far, but alas! soon to be described as having a name to live, but dead. This is exactly the description of the Lutheran Church in Germany given to the writer just before the beginning of the first Great World War.

The reader will remember the remark that was made, that alongside failure and declension we find God ever and anon coming in with restoring grace. We see this in Sardis, but alas! further declension into formality, and lifelessness, quickly set in.

Still God graciously works, and we have next the address to the Church in Philadelphia. The Word of the Lord is kept, His name not denied, the Word of His patience, that is the hope of the Lord's second coming, cherished. This does not seem to describe any clearly defined

religious system such as Roman Catholicism or Protestantism, but a moral movement in the Church's last days on earth. Connected with various religious bodies at the present time we find earnest consecrated men and women, spiritually beyond the systems they are connected with, who could be described in the terms of the address to the Church at Philadelphia. When our Lord shouts the summoning call at His second coming, those answering to this description, as well as all true believers, wherever they may be found, will be caught up.

Lastly we come to the address to the Church which is at Laodicea. If, in the address to the Church at Philadelphia, we get the greatest recovery to a condition similar to the bright and early days of the Church's history, in Laodicea we get the lowest phase of the Church's history on earth. If Thyatira is ecclesiastically the lowest phase that we have noticed, Laodicea is the lowest morally, for we believe that this sets forth a movement of steep decline, as Philadelphia sets forth a gracious movement of recovery in the last days.

We find Laodicea marked by the most terrible complacency. Hear their boasting, their loud assumption. They claim to be "rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3: 17). That is their opinion of themselves, but how utterly removed from the Lord's opinion of them, the Lord, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, with eyes like a flame of fire. How withering and devastating the truth:

"Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3: 17).

May this not set forth those, who abound in these last times, who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof—the Modernists, the Higher Critics, the Rationalists, the unconverted formalists, the adherents of these wild cults that deny the Godhead glory of our Lord, and refuse the true meaning of His atoning death on the cross, who have no part nor lot in the matter, such as Christian

Scientists, Millennial Dawnists, Christadelphians, and a long list of crank religions. Our Lord tells such their doom. They are to be spued out of His mouth, as being lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, nauseous. Surely this will take place at the second coming of our Lord, when all true believers will be caught up, and those answering to the Church at Laodicea, vain deceivers, empty professors, will be left behind for judgment. This will be the doom of corrupt Christendom.

#### THE COMING APOSTASY

This leads up to the prophesied "falling away" we are to consider.

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the day of the Lord, the day of judgment] shall not come, except there coming a falling away first [Greek, APOSTASIA, apostasy], and that man of sin [the Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2: 3).

Here we get the coming apostasy clearly foretold, the first signs of which were seen in the apostolic age. We have seen how the seven parables of the kingdom of heaven, and the seven addresses to the Church in Asia, are prophetic of the decline that sets in wherever man stands in responsibility to God.

We will now trace very cursorily how things have developed from that day to this present time, leading on to the full and final apostasy of Christendom, as foretold in the Scriptures.

#### A NOTABLE SCRIPTURE

We would ask our readers to take special notice of a very outstanding chapter. We refer to Colossians 2. The first part of the chapter warned the early Church against the mind of man trafficking in the things of God, men bringing their own carnal thoughts to the Word of God, making them the standard, or norm, of truth, instead of

getting their thoughts from the Word of God itself. To put it into present-day language the Spirit of God warns us against Rationalism, Modernism, Higher Criticism and the like.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2: 8).

The second part of the chapter warned the early Church against Ritualism, which exalts a certain class of men, called priests, surrounding them with a halo of supposed sanctity. We find this full blown in the Romish Church, and in a scarcely lesser degree in this country in Anglo-Catholic circles. We read:—

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come, but the body [the substance, the fulfilment] is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2: 16—18).

We shall see in course these two dangers—Rationalism and Ritualism—working all down the ages. We shall see it in the Romish system, and, when the Reformation came in, declension set in by the working of these self-same evils, producing the same sad results as in the Romish Church. We would ask the reader to keep this in mind as he reads on. These two evils appeal to the carnal mind—Rationalism to one order of mind, Ritualism to another.

Colossians 2 is indeed a notable chapter, a warning beacon for all time. Its warning sounds in every century, and is sorely needed in this vaunted twentieth century.

To these two evils we might add a third, as set forth in 2 Timothy 3: 1-5:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves.

covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away."

The giving up of all restraint seems to be the feature of the last days, and the more declension appears in the Church of God, the more will there be conformation to the ways of the world. So these features of the last days will characterize the professing Church of God. Dr. Horatio Bonar, the author of the well-known hymn, I heard the voice of Jesus say, made a remark years ago too sadly true, and more than ever true to-day, that, if you want to see the Church, look in the world; and, if you want to see the world, look in the Church.

These three conditions, increasing in volume, in their down-grade movements as the end draws nigh, are preparing for the apostasy of the last days.

(1) Rationalism in the things of God.

(2) Ritualism, putting unscriptural and unholy power in the hands of the priesthood.

(3) Low moral condition in the world, finding its reflex in the professing Church of God.

#### RATIONALISM

It is a matter of history that, when the apostolic age ended, there began a whole series of attacks on the Person of our adorable Lord. If only attention had been focussed on the statement of our Lord, and it had been accepted in all its implications, that,

"All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and NO MAN KNOWETH THE SON, BUT THE FATHER" (Matt. 11: 27),

we should have been spared the spectacle of these unhappy disputes as to His holy Person.

The mysterious union of Godhead and Manhood in His

Person cannot be scrutinized and understood by the finite mind. It is utterly beyond the comprehension of the wisest and devoutest of God's children. We see in these attacks the subtility of Satan, seeking ever to destroy the Christian faith.

One of the first attacks came from a sect called Gnostics, their name derived from the Greek word, **Gnosis**, knowledge. They denied that the Lord had a true human body. They taught that He was an apparition, appearing in the likeness of a man, that He suffered on the cross in appearance only, and not in reality. They professed that they knew. Their attitude is described thus:—

"Gnosis is knowledge; in a special sense, an inner and deeper knowledge of the mystery of life, not accessible to the vulgar, and a source of pride to the initiated."

(A History of the Christian Church, Cheetham, p. 97.)

Such was the doctrine and attitude of Gnosticism. We see it reproduced in principle in all esoteric cults, whose adherents pride themselves upon being in the know, and despise and hold as of no account all outside their ranks. This spirit is their sufficient condemnation. The doctrines of the Christian faith are plainly set forth for all to know. It is written of the little children in the family of God,

"Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (r John 2: 20).

This does not look like a select few being only in the know.

As to the Gnostic denial of the true Manhood of our Lord, Scripture is abundantly plain. We read,

"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the MAN, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2: 5).

"Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a BODY hast Thou prepared Me" (Heb. 10: 5).

Our Lord as Man spoke of His spirit and His soul and His body: that is complete manhood.

When our Lord rose from the dead, and appeared in

the presence of His troubled disciples, and they thought they had seen a spirit, He said,

"Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have" (Luke 24: 39).

This heresy is well exposed, when we read that in our Lord

"Dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead BODILY" (Gol. 2: 9).

The Apostle John combatted the same evil teaching when he wrote,

"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 already is it in the world" (1 John 4: 3).

To deny the true Manhood of our Lord means the denial of His Virgin Birth, and of His real atoning death on the cross. It is subversive of Christianity.

## ATTACK ON THE TRUTH OF THE DEITY OF OUR LORD

If the Gnostics were unsound as to the true Manhood of our Lord, others were unsound as to His Deity. There were many heresies as to the Person of our Lord in the early centuries of the Church's history — Arianism, Apollinarianism, Ebionitism, Nestorianism, Sabellianism, Docetism, Monophysitism, and many others, like a crop of evil weeds—the human mind exercising itself over the unfathomable mystery of the Person of our Lord. To comment on all these would take up too much room and time, so we will content ourselves with describing Arianism, which above all heresies rent the early Church.

This heresy came to light in the fourth century, and took its name from Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, who first propounded it. We read:—

"In his view the Son of God is a **creature**, out of nothing but the will of God, the Father: a Divine being, created before the worlds, but still a **creature**. As a father must exist before his son, the Son of God is not co-eternal with the Father; there was a time when he was not. It was through him that God made the worlds, yet he is not in his own proper person, incapable of sin, though by the exertions of his own will he was preserved."

(A History of the Early Church, Cheetham, p. 256.)

Arius made a great mistake in reasoning from human nature and experience, that as a father must exist before his son, so therefore, as he falsely reasoned, the Father must have existed before the Son of God existed. We must get our thoughts as to this profound subject from the Scriptures. There is no other source of information.

We would have thought that the following well-known Scripture would have settled the matter once and for all:—

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was WITH God [a distinct Person in the unity of the Godhead], and the Word WAS God [as such existent from all eternity]. The Same was IN THE BEGINNING with God [the Word was distinct eternally] . . . The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth " (John 1: 1, 2, 14).

According to these Scriptures there ever was God, the Father. There ever was God, the Son, uncreated, self-sustained, ever One in thought, purpose and will with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Unity of the Godhead—Father, Son, Spirit, One God.

An old writer put the relation between Father and Son very tersely:—

"LIFE: The Father from all eternity giveth it, the Son from all eternity receiveth it."

This dreadful Arian heresy rent Christendom again and again over a long number of years. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, strongly opposed Arius. He was followed by a still more powerful champion of the truth, the famous

Athanasius, who subsequently became Bishop of Alexandria, and who for half a century strenuously opposed this heresy, and was driven into exile four or five times during that period. The Christian world to this day owes a very great debt to this great servant of Christ. At one time he was told that all the world was against him. His noble, unflinching reply was, "Then Athanasius is against the world." The humble individual, who stands up for the truth of God against all the forces of evil, relying only upon God, is ever in the majority.

The conflict raged round two words, which differed only in one letter, yet their meanings when applied to this matter were as far apart as the poles. In that single letter the whole of Christianity was at stake.

The Greek word, homoousian, meaning identity or sameness of substance, applying the term to the truth of the Persons of the Father and the Son, was the word Athanasius stood for, that the Son was in full and complete equality with the Father in the Unity of the Godhead.

The Greek word, homoiousian, meaning similar in substance, applying the term to the truth of the Persons of the Father and Son, as set forth by Arius and his sympathisers, is destructive of the truth of our Lord's adorable Person as the eternal Son of God.

Not similar in substance, but wholly one in substance, is the truth of Scripture, and around this raged the stormiest controversy Christendom has ever known.

In A.D. 325 the Emperor Constantine convened a great general council to consider the attitude of the Christian world to this teaching. Some three hundred bishops and presbyters from all parts of Christendom assembled at Nicea in Bithynia, Asia. That such a council was deemed necessary shows how widespread was the heresy and how strong were its roots.

At the same time we observe in the history of the Church of God upon this earth, that God all the time raises up a testimony to the truth, which, if paid heed to, would preserve it for succeeding generations. We shall find revivals making a great mark for the time being, and perhaps never quite losing their influence. Generally speaking we find a downgrade movement in things committed by God to men, though in His mercy there comes a check ever and anon.

In the goodness of God, the Nicean council stood for the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, condemned Arianism, and composed the Nicean creed, embodying the decisions arrived at.

The evil, however, was not wholly eradicated. A powerful minority still pressed the views of Arius. It may surprise the reader to know there are those in this country, who hold these heretical views to-day, notably Millennial Dawnists, or Jehovah's Witnesses.

Thus far we have seen how Rationalism asserted itself in the early Church. Now we shall see how that twin evil,

#### RITUALISM.

asserted itself at the same time. The fact that the Emperor Constantine convened the Nicean Council shows how worldly patronage had set in. The time had come when it paid to be a professed Christian. No longer persecution but patronage was the order of the day. A bishopric with its rich emoluments was a prize to be eagerly sought for by ambitious, unregenerate men. The clergy, as a distinct class in contrast to the laity, vastly increased in numbers, and not for the good of the Church. Bishops were distinguished by their mitres, gorgeous robes, croziers, episcopal rings. Vestments such as Stole, Maniple, Alb, Girdle, Tunicle, Biretta, Chasuble, Cope, etc., etc., came into use without any Bible warrant.

There is no doubt that the setting aside of a certain class as priests helped on the movement towards apostasy. The assumption of this class to carry out religious functions, refusing the laity the right to do so, is a denial of the priesthood of all true believers. Christians attending church or chapel, where a one-man ministry obtains, do so with no exercise as to taking part in the service. All is left to one man as a matter of course, whether he be in the Spirit or not, whether he be converted or not. Lip homage given to the truth of Scripture, that all believers are priests to God, the Father, if coupled with the priestly assumption of a special class, is pure hypocrisy. The Apostle Peter wrote:—

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder . . . feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock " (1 Peter 5: 1—3).

The elders or bishops (overseers) of the apostolic age were not a professional class, neither were they separated from the rest of the flock as priests versus laity. They were godly, elderly men, who, out of love for their Lord, cared for the flock of God, not for filthy lucre, nor as lords over God's heritage. In sad contrast to this, bishops in this country are called "lords spiritual," living in palaces with handsome emoluments. Well might Dean Alford write:—

 $^{\prime\prime}$  The episcopoi [bishops] of the New Testament have officially nothing in common with our bishops.  $^{\prime\prime}$ 

It is interesting to note that the Greek word for "heritage" is **kleros**, from which is derived the English word, **clergy**. With the Apostle Peter, God's clergy meant ALL God's people, and not a special sacerdotal class.

Again we read:-

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, AN HOLY PRIESTHOOD, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2: 5).

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and

PRIESTS UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen "(Rev. 1: 5, 6).

Scripture is plain in its teaching that ALL believers are equally priests to God, the Father.

Following the apostolic age things deteriorated rapidly. As time went on the clergy were largely unconverted, ignorant men, often leading shameless, dissolute lives, withholding from the so-called laity the fountain of truth and salvation, the Holy Scriptures.

The clergy built up for themselves extraordinary powers, based on perversion of the Scriptures, and propagated by guile. For instance, there is the evil doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, claiming that an infant, baptised by a priest, becomes thereby "a member of Christ, the child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." This is a blow at the very foundations of the Christian faith, for it substitutes a dogma of the Church, based on the perversion of Scripture, for the plain teaching of Scripture that salvation can come alone through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord upon the cross of Calvary, and received by the sinner through faith in Christ as his own personal Saviour. This doctrine puts into the hands of the priest a dominating power, which is not of God, and very evil in its consequences. A prominent clergyman said:—

 $^{\prime\prime}$  There is no heresy, which has done more harm than the heresy of Baptismal Regeneration.  $^{\prime\prime}$ 

Alongside this evil came the doctrine of transubstantiation; that is, the notion that when the priest blesses the elements of the Lord's Supper, the bread and wine cease to be bread and wine, but become the very flesh and blood of our Lord, though they continue to look, smell, and taste like bread and wine. This supposed miracle goes by the name of the Mass in Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic circles.

This evil teaching puts great power into the hands of the priest, where this supposed miracle is believed. The withholding of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper means to such eternal damnation. It is surprising how such superstitions can control the human mind.

It may be mentioned incidentally that the consecrated bread, when reserved for any length of time, begins to grow mouldy and corrupt. This does not look like being the very body and flesh of our Lord, for we are plainly told that His body should see no corruption. The Apostle Peter on the great day of Pentecost, quoted David's Psalm (Psalm 16: 10):—

"He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell [Greek, **Hades**], NEITHER DID HIS FLESH SEE CORRUPTION" (Acts 2: 31).

To obviate the difficulty of the bread growing mouldy, nature's exposure of the deceitfulness of this supposed miracle, biscuit or wafer was substituted for bread.

The practice of confession further fastened on the laity more fully the power of the priest. By it the priest became the depository of the innermost secrets of the penitent. The priest was instructed to ask the most searching questions, the tendency of which was to corrupt the mind of the penitent, informing them of sexual and other sins, the nature of which was unknown to many. It can be amply proved that the confessional has helped multitudes to spiritual ruin.

At the end of confession the priest professes to give absolution, or the forgiveness of sins, daringly and blasphemously taking the place of God Himself, who alone can forgive sin. So daring was this claim that Richard Wilkins, a Roman Catholic priest, wrote:—

"As has been well and truly said by one not long ago gone to his rest: The man who confesses to God may be forgiven; he who confesses to a priest must be forgiven."

(Six Plain Sermons.)

The priest decides what penance he puts on the penitent, often taking the form of the most senseless and degrading tasks, or the payment of money.

To crown all this there was the evil doctrine of purgatory, a purely imaginary state between heaven and hell. Those, who do not die in mortal sin, according to this fabulous deceit, go to the flames of purgatory, there to be purified of their sins before passing into the bliss of heaven. Thus we see where Ritualism landed its dupes.

These four evils—Baptismal Regeneration, the Mass, the Confessional, and Purgatory—were inventions of evil men; chains binding the power of the priesthood upon the deluded so-called laity, blinding them to the truth of the Scriptures, which alone could emancipate them from their chains. No wonder that the Roman Catholics stand in fear of the free circulation of the Scriptures.

Verily we see in all this corruption of Christendom as seen in Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Clergy, the development springing from neglect of the warnings of Colossians 2 against Rationalism and Ritualism. Thus came into existence the corrupt power of Roman Catholicism. Surely we have here very plain and alarming signs of the coming apostasy. In the last days a revival of this hateful system is prophesied in Scripture, only eventually to be destroyed root and branch. But this is anticipating.

It is happy to read in Scripture,

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa. 59: 19).

When this evil system, we have been describing briefly, seemed to be having it all its own way, the Lord lifted up a standard against it. The very scandals of Christendom brought about a reaction through the Spirit of God working in the hearts of His true people.

## "THE MORNING STAR OF THE REFORMATION"

In England John Wycliffe (1360), one of the very earliest of Reformers, called, "The Morning Star of the Reformation," raised a powerful protest against the

worldliness, superstitions and corruptions of the Romish system. Had not God raised up for him powerful and influential friends, such as John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, he would have been swallowed up by his enemies. The Spirit of God was at work. Men's minds were enquiring into spiritual matters, and seeking a true foundation for their faith.

John Huss in Bohemia, Jerome in Prague, Savonarola in Italy, Erasmus in Holland, Luther and Melanchthon in Germany, Zwingle in Switzerland,, Calvin and Farel in France, Tyndale, Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer in England, John Knox and Wishart in Scotland, and many others in different lands, were raised up of God to make a stand for the truth of the Gospel of God.

This movement was strongly marked by the appearance of translations of the Holy Scriptures into the language of the common people. It was the power of an open Bible that broke so largely the power of Rome. The invention of printing by type in the 15th century paved the way in the mercy of God for the printing of the Word of God. There were in this country,

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Tyndale's New Testament (1525—1530).
Coverdale's Bible (1535).
Cranmer's Great Bible (1539).
Archbishop Parker's Bible (1568).
King James's Bible—our present Authorized Bible (1611).
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and others. King Henry VIII ordered a copy of Coverdale's Bible to be placed in every parish Church, "for every man that will to look and read therein."

The shameful sale of indulgences by a coarse German monk, Tetzel by name, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins, committed, or intended to be committed, promising deliverance for a monetary consideration from the flames of an imaginary purgatory, stirred Martin Luther to nail his famous theses on the Church door at Wittenberg, and in defiance of Rome to publicly burn the Pope's Bull.

There was seen for the first time in the history of the Church, side by side with the old superstitions and pomps of the Roman religion, a gracious revival of the truth of God in simplicity, and the emancipating power of the Holy Scriptures, made accessible to the common people in their own tongue. Rome persecuted. Rome did its fiendish best to crush out this movement of the Spirit of God. The Inquisition was at work with its unspeakable torments. Victims were burned at the stake. But persecution only fanned the revolt against spiritual tyranny into a flame. Germany, England, Scotland and other lands were visited by this remarkable movement of the Spirit of God.

It is beyond the compass of this pamphlet to follow the history of this gracious movement in detail in all lands it affected. For our purpose we will content ourselves in tracing very briefly the history of Protestant England and Scotland.

In following these details we shall see the same twin evils—Rationalism and Ritualism—asserting themselves, as they did in days following the apostolic age, resulting in all the evil of Roman Catholicism. It is startling to see how Colossians 2 puts its warning finger upon this unvarying strategy of Satan, whereby he ever seeks to destroy the work of God in souls.

#### DOWNGRADE SWIFTLY SET IN

The first thing we have to notice is, that in the Prayer Book of the Reformed Church of England, which was so largely purified of Romish superstitions and tradition in the reign of the youthful King, Edward VI., one sad trace of Romish tradition was allowed to remain. We refer to the very evil and unscriptural doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration whereby an infant, baptised by a priest, is falsely claimed to be made "a member of Christ, the child of God, an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." This was pure Romanism, and utterly opposed to the teaching of Scripture.

This delusion, Satan taking advantage of it to prepare the way for worse things to follow, reminds us of the dykes of Holland. How carefully they are guarded. Any tiny trickle seen to be filtering its way through the dyke is repaired with the greatest promptitude and thoroughness. Were the trickle neglected, unseen it would grow stronger and stronger, until the wild waves of the ocean would sweep away all barriers, flooding whole provinces of that wonderful little country, so largely reclaimed from the sea.

This little trickle of evil doctrine has not to this day been eliminated from the Prayer Book, and alas! is followed by a veritable flood of evil Romish doctrines; in short, undoing the work of the glorious Reformation, as we shall now see.

Many of the clergy seized upon this Romish doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration as giving them power over a credulous laity, akin to that which was acquired by the Romish priests. Multitudes have been lulled into a false peace by it, a peace as cruel as it is false, leading souls down to perdition. Even in the Old Testament there is the warning against the priest dealing falsely, saying,

"Peace, peace: when there is no peace" (Jer. 8: 11).

Once the power, we have described, was tasted, it created the craving for more. Political and military ambition have wrought much evil in the world, but religious ambition is worse than all, so much so, that Gibbon, the author of **The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire**, declared that the history of the Church was the annals of hell. When one reads the disgraceful history of the Church in the dark Middle Ages, of ambitious, worldly popes, some leading openly dissolute lives, one wonders that Christianity survived at all. One rises from the study of Church history at that time with the profound conviction that Christianity is heaven-born, that it is divine in its origin, and that, in our Lord's own prophetic words,

"The gates of hell [Greek, Hades] shall not prevail against it " (Matt. 16: 18).

But for this the professing Church must have perished in its own corruption.

#### THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

The downgrade that has marked Protestantism in this country received a great impetus from a movement that began a little over a century ago. We refer to what is called **The Oxford Movement**, or alternatively **The Tractarian Movement**, taking its name from the tracts that were published from time to time to propagate the views of those, who inaugurated it. It was, as we shall see, a subtle effort to undo the work of the Reformation, and fasten the chains of Rome upon the people afresh.

Its advocates at first to a large extent used secret and underhand methods to propagate their views. Protestantism a hundred years ago was still strong in the land, and it would not have done then to have openly given currency to Romish views, so gradually by stealth and deceit it was sought to familiarize and educate the public with these innovations.

The Rev. John Henry Newman, who flagrantly practised deceit and equivocation in the propagation of his views, kept July 14th, 1833 as the birthday of the movement. Scores of clergy went over to Rome as the result of this propaganda, notably the Rev. J. H. Newman and Archdeacon Manning, both being rewarded for their treachery by being made Cardinals. Many in full sympathy with the movement stayed in outward fellowship with the Reformed Church of England, the better to propagate their views inside by stealth.

The most damning exposure of these secret underhand methods, whereby the Church of England was to be drawn back to Rome, is found in Walter Walsh's monumental book, The Secret History of the Oxford Movement. The copy we have before us is the 6th Edition, 42nd thousand.

It describes the underground propaganda of Newman, Faber, Keble, Pusey, Manning, Ward, Mozley, Froude and others. It was not long before the doctrine of Transubstantiation was introduced; that is, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, it is blasphemously affirmed, that

when the officiating priest pronounces certain words the bread and wine cease to be bread and wine, though in sight, taste and touch they appear to be such, and become the very flesh and blood of the Lord. This is called in Romish and Anglo-Catholic circles the Celebration of the Mass.

The writer well remembers an exposition of these views on board a large liner in the Indian Ocean. Three clergymen of the Church of England, one dressed like a monk with a knotted cord round his waist, boldly taught transubstantiation. One of the clergymen said with a good deal of asperity of tone, "Why do not the Protestants believe the very words of our Lord, 'This is MY body... this is MY blood'?"

We might have asked him, if he really believed that the Lord was a Door, because He said, "I am the Door"; or that he was a Vine with leaves and clusters of grapes, because He said, "I am the true Vine"; or when He said, "I am Alpha and Omega" did he believe that our Lord was the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet? Did that clergyman not know that a good deal in the Bible is couched in vivid, rich, symbolic language? Did he not know that our Lord AFTER He had blessed the bread and wine, when He instituted the Lord's Supper on the night of His betrayal, said—and these are the Saviour's own words—

"I will not drink henceforth of THIS fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26: 29).

For the fact that the bread and wine remained bread and wine AFTER He had blessed them, we have the authority of His OWN words.

The clergy of the Reformed Church of England are required to subscribe to the well-known Thirty-nine Articles, as found in the Prayer Book to-day. Therein we read:—

"Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of bread and wine) in the supper of the Lord, cannot

be proved by Holy Writ: but it is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions."

In spite of subscribing to this plain declaration, there are hundreds, nay thousands, of clergy, who are false to their vows, and who practise this particularly evil and blasphemous deceit of the Church of Rome. Is it any wonder that apostasy is coming in like a flood, when men can swear to uphold the doctrines of the Reformed Church of England, and yet secretly or openly are working for Rome? Can the blessing of God rest on trucebreakers, carrying on their work by dishonourable means? Alas! the leaven of all this has worked to such an extent that what was done by stealth a century ago is done without blushing in full daylight and gloried in to-day.

The late Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. William Temple, assisted by two Bishops, shortly before his death, celebrated Solemn High Mass in a Church in Cardiff. Such an audacious act would have been impossible a century ago. That it could happen to-day without a great outburst of popular indignation shows how far we have travelled on the road to apostasy. The Archbishop's celebration was commented upon in leading newspapers throughout the land, accompanied by pictures of the Archbishop and Bishops in mitres and gorgeous robes, copied from Rome, and very far removed from the simplicity of the Scriptures.

Shortly after this Celebration of Solemn High Mass Archbishop Temple died, a comparatively young man. One wondered if the Lord from Heaven, taking note of the religious head of the English Church committing this flagrant act of idolatry in the sight of the nation, breaking his solemn vows, did not remove him from the scene of his evil example. We do not know, but we wondered.

Along with Transubstantiation goes Confession, Purgatory, Penance, and everything Roman, save the primacy of the Pope, and even that is being prepared for little by little. To show how things are developing the wrong way, we append a list that tells its own tale. It is taken from The Tourist's Church Guide of the English Church Union for 1901-2.

		1007	1901
Ritualistic Churches	 	2,581	 8,669
Daily Holy Eucharist	 	123	 674
Eucharistic Vestments	 	336	 2,158
Incense	 	9	 393
Altar Lights	 	581	 4,765
Mixed Chalice	 		 4,730
Eastward Position	 	1,662	 7,397

Doubtless these figures, shameful as they are, are much larger to-day. The latest flagrant example of Archbishop Temple of the Reformed Church of England celebrating Solemn High Mass, is a sinister sight indeed.

All this evil doctrine and practice is leavening the nation, reviving the tyranny of the priest over the so-called laity, enslaving the minds of men, substituting Romish tradition and superstition for the emancipating power of an open Bible; in short—the undoing of the glorious Reformation, and with the design of reviving all the horrors of the Romish religion, and fastening the fetters of superstition upon the nation.

#### WHAT RITUALISTS TEACH

A few extracts of what Anglo-Catholics teach will be sadly illuminating, and show how the leaven of full-blown apostasy is working. How true is the parable of our Lord of the woman hiding leaven in the three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.

"In discussing the doctrine of equivocation, as to how far it is lawful on occasion, he maintained, as against those who admit the lawfulness of words literally true but misleading, that the more straightforward principle is that when principles conflict, another duty may be more imperative than the duty of truthfulness. But he expressed it thus: 'Make yourself clear that you are justified in deception, and then LIE LIKE A TROOPER."

(William George Ward and the Oxford Movement, 1st Edition, p. 30.)

This book was written by the Revd. W. G. Ward's son, the "he" in the extract referring to his father, one of the early leaders of the Oxford Movement.

The Rev. Baring-Gould, author of the well-known hymn, Onward Christian Soldiers, writes:—

"The recollection of these events should suffice to prove the mistake of supposing that the Sacred Scriptures, without note or comment, are a sufficient guide to truth; the Bible thus used is not useless only, but dangerous to morality and truth"

(Golden Gate, Part I, p. 177.)

Does not this extract smack of Rome, which withholds the Bible from the common people?

" A faith appealing to the Bible only can find no firm resting place."

(On the Use and Abuse of the Bible, Rev. Thomas Robinson, M.A., p. 27.)

We may well ask, To what else can we appeal but to the Holy Scriptures? We feel like Peter of old, who said to the Lord,

" Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6: 68).

The next extract will show to what a daring extent the teaching as to the blasphemous doctrine of Transubstantiation can go:—

"You will go [to the altar when partaking of Holy Communion] with this one solemn thought ever before your mind, namely that your body is about to become a tabernacle for the most sacred Flesh and Body of Jesus, God Incarnate."

(Parish Tracts, Rev. J. H. Buchanan. First Series, No. 10 Confirmation.)

Our last extract shows us that there is very little divergence, if any, between Roman Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism.

"I still feel, that as a matter of doctrine, that is of belief, the difference between what is held by English

Churchmen, and what is held by Roman Catholics is infinitesimal."

(Revd. T. Mozley, Vol. 12, p. 386, 2nd Edition.)

Alas! the Free Churches show the same tendency, and in Scotland ritualistic practices are becoming increasingly common. We can see Scripture being fulfilled under our very eyes, as we note these ominous steps towards open apostasy; not far off, we feel assured.

Side by side with this terrible backsliding we find Rationalism, that is Modernism and Higher Criticism, to use modern terms, rearing its head. It is true that Rome outwardly stands for the fundamentals of the Christian Faith, but alongside with this outward profession, there is the wholesale undermining of them by tradition. It is well known that whilst Modernism is not allowed outwardly by Rome, her priests are very largely modernists, many even totally infidel as to the truths of the Bible.

But in the circle of Protestantism, where freedom of the press is allowed, we have Modernism publicly rearing its head everywhere. The Principals of Theological Colleges, whether at Oxford or Cambridge, or among the Free Churches, are very largely modernistic. Here is seen the subtility of Satan, for poisoning the stream at its source secures the pollution of the whole course of the stream. To poison the minds of the ordinands means that when they are ordained they will pass on the malignant infection to the congregations they are pledged to feed with the pure, unadulterated Word of God.

A glaring example of what we have just said is found in Dr. Moffatt's Translation of the New Testament. In his preface to this Translation he writes:—

"Once this translation is freed from the influence of the theory of verbal inspiration, these difficulties cease to be formidable."

What kind of Bible can we have, if it is not verbally inspired? What confidence can we have in a translator who does not believe the very words of the Lord Jesus?

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, not one jot [the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet] or one tittle [a small mark on a letter to differentiate it from another letter very like it in appearance] shall in no wise pass from the law [embracing the five books of Moses, including Genesis], till all be fulfilled " (Mått. 5: 18).

If this is not a claim to verbal inspiration, then we do not know the plain meaning of words. The saddest feature is that one denial leads to another, for in denying verbal inspiration of the original Scriptures, Dr. Moffatt denies the very words of our Lord. If He made a mistake, and Dr. Moffatt knew better than our Lord, where is Christianity? The Modernist in that case would be our only authority, and that, no doubt, is what he wanted.

Another lurid sign of the awful spread of this soul-destroying Modernism is the late Professor A. S. Peake's Commentary on the Bible. It contains criticism of every book in the Bible, written by sixty-one men of scholarship, most of them being Principals and Professors of Theological Colleges, and every one of them Modernists. Its writers cover a large field, and are a plain proof of how rotten most of the training of theological students is. Dr. Graham Scroggie well described Peake's Commentary as "sodden with infidelity."

One extract alone will suffice to prove that this description is true. Professor Peake, writing on the Book of Genesis, says,

"Apart from internal inconsistencies there are intrinsic incredibilities . . . . much of Genesis 1-2 is of mythical origin; but it has been purified by the religious genius of Israel and the spirit of revelation" (p. 138).

There is no need to labour the point of the infidelity of this quotation. "Internal inconsistencies," "intrinsic incredibilities," "mythical origin," are terms that would destroy the Bible, rob it of its authority, and take from sinful men the only book that can give them hope beyond the grave. The writer told Professor Peake that, if he

believed his Commentary, the only honest thing he could do would be to throw his Bible with the utmost contempt at the back of the fire, and give up all pretence of being a Christian. And yet this Professor Peake was the Principal of a Free Church Theological College.

#### MODERNISM CANNOT SUCCEED

It is sad indeed that Modernism has spread so alarmingly in England and Scotland, in the National Churches and among the Free Churches. However, there are signs that Modernists and Higher Critics are beginning to feel that all is not well with them. They are finding out that their negative theories do not feed the soul; that the preaching of ethics and politics and literature is not "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1: 16). It strangles spiritual life. It fails to attract congregations. On every hand there is the lament of dwindling church membership. It touches them on a very sore point, that small congregations mean small collections. This is where the boot pinches badly. They begin to wonder how spiritual life and power can be regained. Their efforts are only helping on the apostasy, and dragging their hearers down to perdition. Blind leaders of the blind!

## ARCHÆOLOGISTS SAY THAT THE BIBLE IS TRUE

The findings of archæologists have always proved the Bible to be true to the discomfiture of the Modernists. For instance, they were insistent at one time that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because, they affirmed, writing was quite unknown for long after his lifetime. The archæologists got to work. Their spades turned up more than soil. In the light of their discoveries Professor Sayce, who had to abandon Modernism, convinced by discoveries that shattered their "assured results," wrote:—

<sup>&</sup>quot;The Babylonia of the age of Abraham was a more

highly educated country than the England of George III . . . , men and women were reading and writing and corresponding with each other; schools abounded, and great libraries were formed."

(Monument Facts and Higher Critical Fancies,

And Abraham lived 400 years before Moses was born. Modernists do not like to be reminded of how dogmatic they were in their statement that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because writing, they said, was then not known. Now we know differently.

Modernists likewise ridiculed the story of the Flood as narrated in the Bible. That also has been incontestably proved by archæology. Sir Leonard Woolley's graphic account of what he discovered at Ur of the Chaldees sums up with these words:—

· "There could be no doubt that the flood was the Flood of Sumerian history and legend, the flood on which is based the story of Noah."

(Ur of the Chaldees, 6, 19,)

Sir Charles Marston, the author of **The Bible is True**, in the light of amazing archæological discoveries, penned words as true as they are scathing of the "assured results" of Modernism. He writes:—

"As human knowledge is advanced, the apparently assured facts of but a few years ago become THE PROVED FICTION OF TO-DAY."

(The Bible is True, p. 58.)

Modernists conveniently forget the mistakes they make, only to make new ones, which in their turn get discredited as fresh facts come to light.

#### THE END DRAWS NEAR

We have seen how the neglect to pay true regard to the warnings of Colossians 2 led to Roman Catholicism, and how Protestantism has suffered badly through the same neglect, and is rapidly approximating to Rome, history repeating itself. It will be readily seen, when the Lord comes to take His Church to glory, and all true believers are caught up, that only the empty shell of a Christless profession will be left behind. In such a condition it will be easy for the road to full apostasy to be taken.

With the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit in the peculiar way in which He is on earth in this present Church period (2 Thess. 2: 7), the drag on the wheels of declension, exercised by the Spirit of God, will be removed, and the world will then see Satanic power on a larger scale than ever. The empty professors of Christianity will then throw off all restraint, and the apostasy of Christendom will be full and complete. Scripture leads us to believe that in the last days Roman Catholicism will draw into its folds Protestantism, and all forms of religious profession, only to become totally apostate, as we shall see in our closing remarks.

#### THE FINAL END

We ask our readers to give close attention to Revelation 17 as showing clearly the end of apostasy.

The Apostle John in his apocalyptic vision tells how one of the seven angels with the seven last vials talked with him, saying:—

"Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters" (Rev. 17: 1).

The utmost abhorrence of the Divine mind is shown in that Romanism is described as "The Great Whore." Just as a whore is a pestilent member of society, debasing womanhood, and degrading the idea of marriage, so the Spirit of God uses this departure from chastity and morality to symbolize His utter detestation of spiritual adultery, which Rome so markedly stands for in Christendom, that is the Church and the ungodly world consummating complete union.

We have only to read the description of "The Great

Whore "in Revelation 17 to see how closely it fits in with the history of Roman Catholicism, and with no other religious body in the world. Just as a photograph resembles the person photographed, so the symbolism of Revelation 17 answers to the sad and strange story of the religious and political pride of the Romish religion. On her forehead is plainly written her name. It is written in the history of the dark ages up to the present time. Here it is:—

"MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rev. 17: 5).

It is well known that in the fourth century the Emperor Constantine decreed that his empire should profess Christianity. The practical result was that pagan Rome was still pagan Rome with only a thin veneer of Christianity imposed upon it. The temples dedicated to heathen deities were given Christian names. The turnover was mechanical with no change of spirit. Pagan rites and customs still appeared under Christian names. Thus it will be easy when total apostasy takes place to remove the thin veneer of Christian profession and revert to paganism. So aptly does Revelation 17 use the term, "Babylon the Great."

Sir George Sinclair, author of Letters to Protestants of Scotland, wrote:—

"Romanism is a refined system of Christianised heathenism, and chiefly differs from its prototype in being more treacherous, more cruel, more dangerous. more intolerant."

(First Series, p. 121.)

We get a description of the display of wealth and splendour that Rome so well knows how to set forth with so much pomp and ritual.

"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication . . . (Rev. 17: 4).

We all know how elaborate and ornate the vast cathedral of St. Peter at Rome is, as well as in the lesser degree countless Cathedrals and Churches in many lands, how we may see images decked with gold and blazing with jewels, how Rome's pope, cardinals, and priests are decked with gorgeous robes of purple and scarlet.

The story is well told of the Pope in the Middle Ages showing St. Thomas Aquinas the splendours of the Vatican, including immense displays of gold, silver and precious stones. Said the Pope with a courtly smile, "You see, Thomas, the Church cannot now say what it said in early times, 'Silver and gold have I none." Back came the quick and pointed retort, "No, nor can it say, 'Rise up and walk," implying the lack of spiritual power in a worldly Church.

Further we read,

"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration" (Rev. 17: 6).

This points most clearly to Rome. Rome has been the only great persecuting Church professing the Christian religion. Think of the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 21st, 1572), when ten thousand Huguenots, men, women and children, were put to death, simply because they were true believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, and had committed the crime of possessing Bibles. When the news of this awful massacre reached Rome, the city was illuminated, the cannon of St. Angelo were fired in celebration, whilst the Pope Gregory XIII went in procession to all the churches, and offered thanksgiving at the shrine of every saint. Think of the bloody and cruel work of the Inquisition, and the faggot and the flames of Smithfield, of Ridley and Latimer (1555), of Cranmer (1556) burned at the stake in Oxford.

We are told in this striking chapter that the woman rides on a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, and that it had seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads and ten horns designate Imperial Rome—see Revelation 13: 1-10, where the beast is seen as the fourth great world power—having in it the characteristics of the former great world powers; of Babylon, having the mouth of the lion; of Medo-Persia, having the feet of the bear; of Greece, having the appearance of a leopard.

Here we see indicated the connection between Imperial Rome and Religious Rome, asserting itself with fresh ostentation in the last times. The likeness is very complete. We are told that the seven heads set forth seven mountains on which the woman sitteth. Rome is well-known as the city of the seven hills.

Of Imperial Rome the chapter tells us there had been five kings up to the time that the Apostle John wrote. A sixth was one the throne when he wrote. Prophecy as to the last times is arrested whilst the Church is on this earth—described as we have seen in "the things that are" (Rev. 2 and 3), whilst the last things come before us after the Church is raptured to glory (Rev. 4 and on). The seventh king that is to come is to continue but a short space, and then the eighth, who will go into perdition, will be the Political and Military Head of the Revived Roman Empire in the last days, working in conjunction with the second beast, the Antichrist, as seen in Revelation 13.

Surely in all this we have the setting for the drama of the last days. This huge apostate religious profession will in the very end be destroyed by Imperial Rome. We read that the ten kings of that Empire will hate "the whore," be so infuriated by her blasphemous pretensions and her attempt to dominate the world, that they will rise in anger against her. Her assumption will be her ruin.

The ten kings will make her desolate and naked, eating her flesh and burning her with fire—eating her flesh, pointing to the confiscation of her palaces, wealth, endowments and property; burning her with fire, to the complete destruction of her system. Thus following total apostasy will succeed total destruction.

Do we not get a foreshadowing of this in Nazi Germany? First she became largely apostate, put hundreds of pastors in prison, and sought to obliterate every vestige of Christianity in the country. Now she lies stricken, bleeding, helpless, in the complete power of those, who have risen against this evil thing. Never has such a defeat been seen in all the history of the world, and it may well stand as an example of what will happen in the last days on a far larger scale.

In Revelation 17: 14 we find the Battle of Armageddon indicated, the final triumph of the Lord Jesus, spoken of as the Lamb, and yet the Lord of lords and the King of kings. The full details of this battle are found in Rev. 19: 11-21.

The task we set ourselves is finished. We can only commit what has been written to the Lord, and seek His favour that it may be used to the enlightenment and help of His beloved people.

God will triumph. All His ways vindicated. His counsels and plans brought to fruition. His name glorified for ever and for ever. Amen and amen.

#### BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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