

# THE *DEVIL* & THE CHURCH

By E.M. Bounds

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The identification of Christ with men was as complete in extent as it was real in nature. The first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews sets forth seven proofs of Divine Sonship, and the second chapter enumerates the following seven points of His identification with man: He descended to man's level, took man's nature, endured man's temptation, died in man's place, conquered the devil, man's foe, achieved man's victory, and secured man's salvation. --Samuel Chadwick.

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THE devil is too wise, too large in mental grasp, too lordly in ambition, to confine his aims to the individual. He seeks to direct the policy and sway the scepter of nations. In his largest freedom, and in his delirium of passion and success, "he goes out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth." He is an adept in deception, an expert in all guileful arts. An archangel in execution, he often succeeds in seducing the nations most loyal to Christ, leading them into plans and principles which pervert and render baneful all Christly principles. The Church itself, the bride of Christ, when seduced from her purity, degenerates into a worldly ecclesiasticism.

The "gates of hell shall not prevail" against the Church. This promise of our Lord stands against every Satanic device and assault: But this immutable word as to the glorious outcome does not protect the Church from the devil's stratagems which may, and often do, pervert the aims of the Church and postpone the day of its final triumph.

The devil is a hydra-headed monster, but he is hydra-headed in plans and wisdom as well as in monstrosities. His master and supreme effort is to get control of the Church, not to destroy its organization, but to abate and pervert its Divine ends. This he does in the most insidious way, seemingly innocent, no startling change, nothing to shock nor to alarm. Sometimes the revolutionizing and destructive change is introduced under the disguise of a greater zeal for Christ's glory. Introduced by some one high in church honour, often it occurs that the advocate of these measures is totally ignorant of the fact that the tendency is subversive.

One of the schemes of Satan to debase and pervert is to establish a wrong estimate of church strength. If he can raise false measurements of church power; if he can press the material to the front; if he can tabulate these forces so as to make them imposing and aggregating in commands, influence, and demand, he has secured his end.

In the Mosaic economy, the subversion of the ends of the Church and the substitution of material forces was guarded against. Their kings were warned against the accumulation, parade, and

reliance on material forces.

It was in the violation of this law that David sinned when he yielded to the temptation of Satan to number the people.

It was to this end some suggest that the devil contended with Michael, the archangel, about the body (or system) of Moses, referred to in Peter and Jude and narrated by Zechariah, third chapter. At which time there was given that redoubtable, rallying text which asserts the eternal separation of spiritual forces from and their antagonism to the material. "*Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit*, saith the Lord."

To this, the third temptation of our Lord was directed. In measure, such temptation by which the devil tried Jesus was intended to subvert the ends of His kingdom by substituting material elements of strength for the spiritual.

This is one of the devil's most insidious and successful methods to deceive, divert and deprave. He marshals and parades the most engaging material results, lauds the power of civilizing forces and makes its glories and power pass in review till church leaders are dazzled, and ensnared, and the Church becomes thoroughly worldly while boasting of her spirituality. No deceiver is so artful in the diabolical trade of deception as Satan. As an angel of light he leads a soul to death. To mistake the elements of church strength, is to mistake the character of the Church, and also to change its character all its efforts and aims. The strength of the Church lies in its piety. All else is incidental, and is not of the strength of things. But in worldly, popular language of this day, a church is called strong when its membership is large, when it has social position, financial resources; when ability, learning, and eloquence fill the pulpit, and when the pews are filled by fashion, intelligence, money and influence. An estimate of this kind is worldly to the fullest extent.

The church that thus defines its strength is on the highway to apostasy. The strength of the Church does not consist of any or all of these things. The faith, holiness and zeal of the Church are the elements of its power. Church strength does not consist in its numbers and its money, but in the holiness of its members. Church strength is not found in these worldly attachments or endowments, but in the endowment of the Holy Ghost on its members. No more fatal or deadly symptom can be seen in a church than this transference of its strength from spiritual to material forces, from the Holy Ghost the world. The power of God in the Church is the measure of its strength and is the estimate which God puts on it, and not the estimate the world puts on it. Here is the measure of its ability to meet the ends of its being.

On the contrary, show us a church, poor, illiterate, obscure and unknown, but composed of praying people. They may be men of neither power nor wealth nor influence. They may be families that do not know one week where they are to get their bread for the next. But with them is "the hiding of God's power," and their influence will be felt for eternity, and their light shines, and they are watched, and wherever they go, there is a fountain of light, and Christ in them is glorified and His kingdom advanced. They are His chosen vessels of salvation and His luminaries to reflect His light.

There are signs everywhere unmistakable and of dire import that Protestantism has been blinded and caught by Satan's dazzling glare.

We are being seriously affected by the material progress of the age. We have heard so much of it, and gazed on it so long, that spiritual estimates are tame to us. Spiritual views have no form nor comeliness to us. Everything must take on the rich colorings, luxuriant growth and magnificent appearance of the material, or else it is beggarly. This is the most perilous condition the Church has to meet, when the meek and lowly fruits of piety are to be discounted by the showy and worldly graces with which material success crowds the Church. We must not yield to the flood. We must not for a moment, not the hundredth part of an inch, give place to the world. Piety must be stressed in every way and at every point. The Church must be made to see and feel this delusion and snare, this transference of her strength from God to the world, this rejection of the Holy Ghost by the endowment of "might and power," and this yielding to Satan. The Church more and more is inclined not only to disregard, but to despise, the elements of spiritual strength and set them aside, for the more impressive worldly ones.

We have been and are schooling ourselves into regarding as elements of church prosperity only those items which make showings in a statistical column, and which impress an age given up to the materialization of secular facts and figures; and as the most vital spiritual conditions and gains cannot be reduced to figures, they are left out of the column and its aggregates, and after a while they will neither be noted nor estimated. If we do not call a halt and change our methods, the whole estimate of the strength of a church will be supremely worldly. However imposing our material results may be, however magnificent and prosperous the secular arm of the Church appears, we must go deeper than these for its strength. We must proclaim it, and iterate and reiterate it with increased emphasis, that the strength of the Church does not lie in these things.

These may be but the gilded delusions which we mistake for the true riches, and while we are vainly saying, "We are rich and increased in goods," God has written of us that we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They will be, if we are not sleeplessly vigilant, but the costly spices and splendid decoration which embalm and entomb our spirituality. True strength lies in the vital godliness of the people. The aggregate of the personal holiness of the members of each church is the only true measure of strength. Any other test offends God, dishonours Christ, grieves the Holy Spirit, and degrades religion.

A church can often make the fairest and best showing of material strength when death in its deadliest form is feeding on its vitals. There can scarcely be a more damaging delusion than to judge of the conditions of the Church by its material exhibits or churchly activity. Spiritual barrenness and rottenness in the Church are generally hidden by a fair exterior and an obtrusive parade of leaves and an exotic growth. A spiritual church converts souls from sin soundly, clearly and fully, and puts them on the stretch for perfect holiness, and those who are straining to get it, to keep it, and to add to it.

This spirituality is not a by-play, not to be kept in a corner of the Church, not its dress for holiday or parade days, but it is its chief and only business. If God's Church is not doing this work of converting sinners to holiness and perfecting saints in holiness, wherever and

whenever this work is not blazing and conspicuous, wherever and whenever this work becomes secondary, or other interests are held to be its equivalent, then the Church has become worldly. Wherever and whenever the material interests are emphasized till they come into prominence, then the world comes to the throne and sways the scepter of Satan. There is no readier and surer way to make the Church worldly than to put its material prosperity to the front, and no surer, readier way to put Satan in charge. It is an easy matter for the assessments to become of first moment by emphasizing them till a sentiment is created that these are paramount. When collecting money, building churches, and statistical columns are to stand as evidences of real church prosperity, then the world has a strong lodgment, and Satan has gained his end.

Another scheme of Satan is to eliminate from the Church all the lowly self-denying ordinances which are offensive to unsanctified tastes and unregenerate hearts, and reduce the Church to a mere human institution, popular, natural, fleshly and pleasing.

Satan has no scheme more fearfully destructive and which can more thoroughly thwart God's high and holy purposes, than to transform God's Church and make it a human institution according to man's views. God's right arm is thereby paralyzed; the body of Christ has become the body of Satan, light turned into darkness and life into death.

Men who sit in apostolic seats often through a marvelous blindness, sometimes through a false attachment to what they deem truth, and for what they consider the honour of Christ, are found trying to eliminate from the system of Christ those painful, offensive, unpopular, and self-denying features to which it owes all its saving efficacy, and beauty and power, and which stamp it as divine.

We have a painful illustration most instructive and warning in Peter, recorded thus:

"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Here is a lesson most suggestive, a lesson for all times, a warning for each man, for all men, for church men, for saintly men and for apostolic men. An apostle has become the mouthpiece of Satan! Alarming, horrible, unnatural and revolting picture! An apostle, zealous for his Master's glory, advocating with fire and force a scheme which would forever destroy that glory! An apostle, the apostle Peter, Satan's vicegerent! The apostle who had but just made that inspired confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," which placed him in highest honour and commendation with Christ and the Church! Before the words of that divine and

marvelous confession had died from his lips, this same apostle is the inflamed and self-willed advocate of views and plans which will render his confession a nullity, and raze the impregnable and eternal foundations of the Church.

Peter, a chief apostle, fathering and advocating schemes which would discrown Christ of His Messiahship, and bring heaven's favorite plan to a most disastrous and shameful end! How came this? What baneful impulse impels Peter? Satan has entered him and for the time being, has mastered his purposes, and so Christ reproves Peter, but in the reproof strikes a crushing blow at Satan. "Get thee behind me, Satan," a reminder and duplicate of the wilderness temptation. "Thou art an offense (a stumbling block) to me." The devil's trigger to catch Christ in the devil's trap-"Thou savourest not the things which be of God, but those that be of men." The devil is not in sight. Man appears and his views are pressed to the front. The things which men savour in church plan and church life are against God's plan. The high and holy principles of self-denial, of unworldliness of life, and of self-surrender to Christ, are all against men's view of religion, a losing thing with them. The devil does not seek to destroy the Church only indirectly. Men's views would eliminate all these unpopular principles of the cross, self-denial, life surrender and world surrender. But when this is done, the devil runs the Church. Then it becomes popular, cheery, flesh-pleasing, modem and progressive. But it is the devil's church, founded on principles pleasing in every way to flesh and blood. No Christ is in it, no crucifixion of self, no crucifixion of the world, no second coming of Christ, no eternal judgment, no everlasting hell, no eternal heaven. Nothing is in it that savours of God, but all that savours of men. Man makes the devil's church by turning Christ's Church over to men leaders. The world is sought and gained in the devil's church, but the man, the soul, heaven, are all lost, lost to all eternity.

The very heart of this disgraceful apostasy, this dethroning Christ and enthroning the devil, is to remove the Holy Spirit from His leadership in the Church and put in unspiritual men as leaders to plan for and direct the Church. The strong hands of men of great ability and men with the powers of leadership have often displaced God's leadership. The ambition for leadership and the enthronement of man-leadership, is the doom and seal of apostasy. There is no leadership in God's Church but the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The man who has the most of God's Spirit is God's chosen leader, ambitious and zealous for the Spirit's sovereignty, ambitious. to be the least, the slave of all.

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Sometime in the country I have stood and watched the village blacksmith at work, and for a long time could not make out the use of the little trip hammer. The big hammer I could understand, but why should the smith strike in turns the anvil and the iron puzzled me. One day I ventured to ask an explanation, and found that the little hammer regulates the stroke of the big one. The smith holds the glowing metal, turning it lest the stroke fall too often upon the same spot, directing the blows that they may descend at the right moment; turning, tempering, regulating till the metal is fashioned to the desired shape. So God holds the soul and regulates the stroke. Sometimes He makes the Devil His hammer-man. . . . Satan strikes to smash. God regulates the stroke, and turns His malice to our perfecting, and the Devil sweats at the task of

fashioning saints into the likeness of Chris. --Samuel Chadwick.

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THERE are two ways of directing the Church, God's way and the devil's way. God's way and man's way of running the Church are entirely at poles. Man's wise plans, happy expedients and easy solutions, are Satan's devices. The cross is retired, the world comes in, self-denial is eliminated, all seems bright, cheerful and prosperous, but Satan's hand is on the ark, men's schemes prevail, the Church fails under these taking, pet devices of men, and the bankruptcy is so complete that the court of heaven will not even appoint a receiver for the collapsed and beggarly corporation.

All God's plans have the mark of the cross on them, and all His plans have death to self in them. All God's plans have crucifixion to the world in them. But men's plans ignore the offense of the cross or despise it. Men's plans have no profound, stem or self-immolating denial in them. Their gain is of the world. How much of these destructive elements, esteemed by men, does the devil bring into the Church, until all the high, unworldly and holy aims, and heavenly objects of the Church are retired and forgotten?

One of these taking, man-savouring, Satanic devices is to pervert the aims of the Church after this manner of statement and effort, that the main object of the Church to-day is not so much to save individuals out of society, as to save society, not to save souls so much as to save the bodies of men, not to save men out of a community so much as to save men and manhood in the community. The world, not the individual, is the subject of redemption.

This popular, seductive and deadly fallacy entirely subverts the very foundation of Christ's Church. Its materializing trend is so strong that it will sweep away every vestige of the spiritual and eternal if we do not watch, work and speak with sleepless vigilance, tireless energy, and fearless boldness. The attitude and open declaration of much of the religious teaching we now hear is in the same strain and spirit which characterized Unitarian, Jewish, or rationalistic utterances half a century ago.

To save society is a kind of religious fad to which much enterprising, lauded church work is committed. Advanced thinkers and discoverers have elaborated the same idea. They seem not to realize their true condition, which is one of going back, and not going forward. This backward step entombs religion in the grave where Judaism has been buried 0 these centuries. It may well accord with the idle dreams of the worldly rabbis to think of regenerating the world and ignoring the individual.

The phrase to save the world," has a pompous sounding; and right taking to flesh and blood is it for the Church to apply itself to bettering the temporal surroundings of the individual, and improve his sanitary conditions; to lessen the bad smells that greet his nose, to diminish the bacteria in his water, and to put granite in the pavement for him to walk on instead of wood or brick. All this sounds finely, and agrees well with a material age, and becomes practical in operation, and evident and imposing in results. But does this agree with the sublime dignity and essential aim of the Church? Do we need any Church to secure these ends? Councilmen of

common talent an efficient street commissioner, and the ordinary vigilance of the average policeman, will secure these results in their best way. It needs no Church, no Bible, no Christ, no personal holiness, to secure these ends, and this is the point to which all this vaunted advance tends. If the ends of the Church are directed to those results which can be as well or better secured by other agencies, the Church will soon be regarded as a nuisance, a thing to be abated by the most summary process.

The purposes of the Church of God rise in sublime grandeur above these childish dreams and effete philosophies. Its purpose is to regenerate and sanctify the individual, to make him holy and prepare him by a course of purifying and training for the high pursuits of an eternal life. The Church is like the seine cast into the sea. The purpose is not to change the sea so much as to catch the fishes out of the sea. Let the sea roll on in its essential nature, but the net catches its fishes. No bigger fools would ever be found than fishermen who were spending all their force trying by some chemical process to change the essential elements of the sea, vainly hoping thereby to improve the stock of the fish that they had not and never could catch. By this method, personal holiness, the great desideratum for church operation and ends, would be impossible, and heaven would be stricken from creed and life and hope.

To save the world and ignore the individual, is not only utopian, but every way damaging. It is the process, fair and laudable in name, to save the world, but in results it is to lose the Church, or, which amounts to the same, making the Church worldly, and thereby unfitting her for her holy and sublime mission. Christ said that gaining the world and saving the man are antagonistic ends. Christ teaches Peter that his Satanic device would gain the world to and for the Church, but would lose the soul. Everything would seem thrifty to the cause when in reality all was death.

The Church is distinctly, preeminently and absolutely a spiritual institution, that is, an institution created, vitalized, possessed and directed by the Spirit of God. Her machinery, rites, forms, services and officers have no comeliness, no pertinency, no power, save as they are depositions and channels of the Holy Spirit. It is His indwelling and inspiration which make its divine being and secure its divine end. If the devil can by any methods shut the Holy Spirit out from the Church, he has effectually barred the Church from being God's Church on earth. He accomplishes this by retiring from the Church the agencies or agents which the Holy Spirit uses, and displaces them by the natural, which are rarely if ever the media of His energy. Christ announced the universal and invariable law when He said, " That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." The Church may have a holy preacher, a man of great prayerfulness, of great grace, filled with the Spirit. But if Satan can by any method retire him, and put a man of no prayerfulness, plausible, eloquent and popular, the Church may seem to have gained, but it has gained by the substitution of natural for spiritual forces, a gain which has all unconsciously revolutionized the Church. Officer a church with holy men, not highly cultured, but well-versed in the deep things of God, and strong in devotion to Christ and His cause, not wealthy, nor of high social position. Now change these officers and put in men who are every way decent in morality, but not given or noted for prayer and piety, men of high social position and fine financiers, and the Church scarcely marks the change save marked improvement in finances. But an invisible and mighty change has taken place in the Church, which is radical. It has changed from a spiritual Church to a worldly one. The change from

noonday to midnight is not more extreme than that.

At this point Satan is doing his deadliest and most damning work, the more deadly and damning because unnoticed, unseen, producing no shock and exciting no alarm.

It is not by positive, conspicuous evil that Satan perverts the Church, but by quiet displacement and by unnoticed substitution. The higher is being retired, the spiritual gives place to the social, and the divine is eliminated, because it is made secondary.

The perversion and subversion of the Church is secured by Satan when the spiritual forces are retired or made subordinate to the natural, and social entertainment, and not edification becomes the end. This process involves not only the aims and ends of entertainment, but it is intended to soften and modify the distinctly spiritual aim, and to widen from what is deemed the rigid exclusiveness of spiritual narrowness. But in the end it eliminates all that is distinctly spiritual, and that which is in any sense deeply religious will not survive the death of the spiritual. Edification as the end of God's Church is wholly lost sight of, and entertainment, that which is pleasing and pleasant, comes to the front. The social forces not only retire the spiritual forces, but effectually destroy them.

A modern church with its kitchen and parlour, with its club and lyceum, and with its ministries to the flesh and to the world, is both suggestive and alarming. How suggestive in the contrast it presents between the agencies which the primitive Church originated and fostered, as the conservator of its principles and the expression of its life, and those which the modern and progressive Church presents as its allies or substitutes. The original institutions were wholly spiritual, calculated to strengthen and cultivate all the elements which combine to make a deep and clear experience of God. They were training schools for the spiritual life, subservient to its culture as the chief end. They never lingered in the regions of the moral, the aesthetic and the mental. They fostered no taste nor inclination which was not spiritual, and did not minister to the soul's advance in divine things.

They took it for granted that all who came to them, really desired to flee from the wrath to come, and were sincerely groaning after full redemption, and that their obligation to furnish to these the best aids were of the most sacred and exacting kind. It never occurred to them that the lyceum or sociable were channels through which God's grace would flow and could be laid under tribute for spiritual uses. These social and fleshly forces are regarded in many quarters as the perfection of spiritual things. These agencies are arrayed as the mature fruit of spiritual piety, flavoured and perfected by its culture and progress, and ordained henceforth as the handmaids of the prayer and testimony meeting. We object most seriously to the union. What have they in common? " How indeed can two walk together unless they be agreed? "

What elements of piety are conserved by the lyceum or sociable? What phases of spiritual life do they promote? By what feature of the lyceum is faith invigorated? Where do you find in it any elements which are distinctly pious, or are aids to piety? How does the sociable produce a more prayerful, a holier life? . What secret springs has it to bring the soul nearer to God? Wherein does it form or strengthen the ties of a Christly fellowship? Is it not frivolous and worldly? Is it not sensuous and fleshly? Does it not cater to and suit the tastes of the carnal, the

light and worldly? What unity of purpose and spirit is there between the lyceum and witnessing for Christ? The one is intensely spiritual. The other has in it no jot or tittle of spiritual uses.

We might as well add to the list of heavenly helpers, the skating rink, calisthenics and the gymnasium. If the young people desire to join a lyceum, enjoy a sociable or establish a bank, let them do so, but do not deceive them and degrade piety by calling these things holy institutions and feeders of spiritual life.

Disguise it as we may; reason about it as we will; apologize for it as we do; vainly philosophize of growth and change and culture, the truth is, we have lost that intense type of personal experience, that deep conviction of eternal things which are such evident features of all great spiritual movements. Many preachers and people have fallen so low in their experience that they do not relish these distinct and strongly spiritual agencies; and are devising schemes and institutions to gratify their non-spiritual tastes with schemes which are midway between Christ and the world; which, while not essentially wrong, do not possess one grain of spiritual power, and can never be the channels of heavenly communications.

It is said we cannot get the people to attend the distinctly spiritual means of grace. What is the trouble? Are the institutions worn out and no longer of value to the humble, pious soul? Who will dare affirm this? The tastes of the people are low and perverted. Shall we then change the agencies to suit the unsanctified appetites? No; let us tone up the appetite for spiritual things, and correct and elevate the tastes of our people. Let the revolution begin with the preacher. Let him wrestle with God until his ordination vow becomes vitalized, so that all can feel the pressure of his aim, the ardour of his zeal, his singleness of purpose, and the holiness and elevation of his life, and until the people catch the fire and purpose of his heart, and all press on to the regions of perfect love, panting for all the fullness of God. Under this united, mighty, divine impulse the social and the lyceum will be forgotten and become stale, and all saintly assemblies will be attractive and delightful.

The Church cannot confederate with non-spiritual agencies. By this she breaks the tension of her faith and discards the Holy Ghost. She cannot be the purveyor to unsanctified desires. Neither is it her province to fall down to the beggarly task of entertaining the people. This is her saddest mistake, when her solemn assemblies are surrendered to the concert and lecture, her praise turned into worldly music, her classrooms into parlours, her sociables more popular than her prayer-meetings, the house of God made a house of feasting, and social cheer is sought after rather than a house of prayer. The unity of the Spirit and the holy brotherhood are displaced and destroyed to make room for social affinities and worldly attractions. Her high and royal duty, that by which she maintains her spotless fidelity to her Lord, is to stress holiness and afford all means for its advancement and perfection. This done, spiritual character and affinities will order all the rest.

--E.M. Bounds