

PART FIRST

THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER III

GOD'S LAW, AND HOW SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD.

Probation before exaltation, the law of the moral universe of God—The temptation of the Lord Jesus by Satan the trial of his faith by the Father—The Temptation explained—God's foreknowledge does not necessitate; nor does He justify, or condemn, by anticipation—The Serpent an intellectual animal, but not a moral agent, nor inspired—He deceives the woman—The nature of the transgression—Eve becomes the tempter to Adam—The transgression consummated in the conception of Cain—A good conscience, and an evil conscience, defined—Man cannot cover his own sin—The carnal mind illustrated by the reasoning of the Serpent—It is metaphorically the serpent in the flesh—God's truth the only rule of right and wrong—The Serpent in the flesh is manifested in the wickedness of individuals; and in the spiritual and temporal institutions of the world—Serpent-sin in the flesh identified with "the Wicked One"—The Prince of the World—The Kingdom of Satan and the World identical—The Wiles of the Devil—The "*Prince*" shown to be *sin*, working and reigning in all sinners—How he was "cast out" by Jesus—"The works of the Devil"—"Bound of Satan"; delivering to Satan—The Great Dragon—The Devil and Satan—The Man of Sin.

MAN in the first estate is "a little lower than the angels"; but, in the second, or higher, estate, he is to be "crowned with glory and honour"; and to take his stand in the universe upon an equality with them in nature and renown. Man's first estate is the natural and animal; his second, the spiritual, or incorruptible. To be exalted from the present to the future state and inheritance, he must be subjected to trial. From the examples recorded in the scriptures, it is evident, that God has established it as the rule of His grace; that is, the principle upon which He bestows His honours and rewards to prove men before He exalts them. Probation, then, is the indispensable ordeal, to which every man is subjected in the providence of God, before he is accepted as "fit for the Master's use". By these examples, also, it appears, that man's probation is made to bear upon *the trial of his faith* by testing *his obedience*. An untried faith is worth nothing; but a faith that stands the test of trial, "is much more precious than gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire"; because the sustained trial will be "found unto praise, and honour, and glory, *at the appearance* of Jesus Christ".

An untried faith is a dead faith, being alone. Faith without trial finds no scope for demonstration, or evidence of its existence. Thus, it is written, "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: *show* me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith *by my works*. Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and *by works was faith made perfect*?... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and NOT *by faith ALONE*.” “Without faith”, says Paul, “it is impossible to please God”; and it is also apparent from James’ testimony just recited, that the faith with which He is pleased, is a faith that is made manifest by works; of which Noah, Abraham, Job, and Jesus, are pre-eminent examples.

Now, this “precious faith” can only be educed by trial; for the trial elaborates the works. This is the use of persecution, or tribulation, to believers; which in the divine economy is appointed for their refinement. Peter styles the “manifold persecutions”, to which his brethren were subjected, “the trial of their faith”; and Paul testified to others of them, that “it is through much tribulation they must enter the Kingdom”. Probation is a refining process. It purges out a man’s dross, and brings out the image of Christ in his character; and prepares him for exaltation to his throne. We can only enter the Kingdom through the fire; but, if a man be courageous, and “hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”, he will emerge from it unscorched; and be presented holy, unblameable, and unrebukeable before the King.

A man cannot “honour God” more than in believing *what He promises*, and doing what He commands; although to repudiate that belief, and to neglect, or disobey, those commands, should highly gratify all his senses, and place at his disposal the kingdoms of the world, and all their glory. Not to believe the promises of God is in effect to call God a liar; and no offence, even to men of integrity in the world, is so insulting and intolerable as this. “Let God be true”, saith the scripture. His veracity must not be impeached in word or deed; if it be, then “judgment without mercy” is the “sorer punishment” which awaits the calumniator. The unswerving obedience of faith, is the “faith made perfect by works”, tried by fire. God is pleased with this faith, because it honours Him. It is a working faith. There is life in it; and its exercise proves that the believer loves Him. Such a man it is God’s delight to honour; and, though like Jesus he be for the present, “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”, the time will certainly come, when God will acknowledge him in the presence of the Elohim, and overwhelm his enemies with confusion of face.

Probation before exaltation, then, is upon the principle of *a faith in the promises of God, made precious by trial well sustained*. There is no exemption from this ordeal. Even Christ himself was subjected to it. “By the grace of God he tasted death for every man. For it was fitting for God, that in bringing many sons to glory, He should make the Captain of their salvation *perfect through sufferings*.... For in that he himself hath suffered *being put to the proof* (πειρασθείς), he is able to succour them who axe tried.” And “though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience *by the things which he suffered*: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation *unto all them that OBEY him*.”. He was first morally perfected through suffering, and then corporeally, by being “made into a spirit” by the spirit of holiness in his resurrection from the dead. I say, “morally perfected”; for, although he was without transgression, his perfection of character is predicated upon his “obedience unto death”.

The probation of the Lord Jesus is an interesting and important study, especially that part of it styled the Temptation of Satan. Paul, speaking of him as the High Priest under the New Constitution, says, “He was put to the proof in all things according to our likeness, without transgression”; that is, “having taken hold of the seed of Abraham”, “being found in fashion as a man”, the infirmities of human nature were thus laid upon him. He could sympathize with them experimentally; being, by the feelings excited within him when enticed, well acquainted with all its weak points. By examining the Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

narrative of his trial in the wilderness, we shall find that he was proved in all the assailable points of human nature. As soon as he was filled with the Spirit at his baptism in the Jordan, it immediately drove him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. This was very remarkable. The Spirit led him there that he might be put to the proof; but not to tempt him; for, says the apostle, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, *neither tempteth he any man*”. God, then, did not tempt Jesus; though His Spirit conducted him thither to be tempted, and that, too, “by the devil”, or the enemy.

This enemy within the human nature is the mind of the flesh, which is enmity against God; it is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be. The commandment of God, which is “holy, just and good”, being so restrictive of the propensities, which in purely animal men display themselves with uncontrolled violence, makes them appear in their true colours. These turbulent propensities the apostle styles “sin in the flesh”, of which it is full; hence, he also terms it “sinful flesh”. This is human nature; and the evil in it, made so apparent by the law of God, he personifies as “*pre-eminently A SINNER*”, χαθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ἀμαρτωλός. This is the accuser, adversary, and calumniator of God, whose stronghold is the flesh. It is the devil and satan within the human nature; so that “when a man is tempted, he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed”. If a man examine himself, he will perceive within him something at work, craving after things which the law of God forbids. The best of men are conscious of this enemy within them. It troubled the apostle so much, that he exclaimed, “O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death”, or, this mortal body? He thanked God that the Lord Jesus Christ would do it; that is, as he had himself been delivered from it, by God raising him from the dead by His Spirit.

Human nature, or “sinful flesh”, has three principal channels through which it displays its waywardness against the law of God. These are expressed by “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”. All that is in the world stands related to these points of our nature; and there is no temptation that can be devised, but what assails it in one, or more, of these three particulars. The world without is the seducer, which finds in all animal men, unsubdued by the law and testimony of God, a sympathizing and friendly principle, ready at all times to eat of its forbidden fruit. This sinful nature we inherit. It is our misfortune, not our crime, that we possess it. We are only blameworthy when, being supplied with the power of subduing it, we permit it to reign over us. This power resides in “the testimony of God” believed; so that we “are kept by the power of God *through faith* unto salvation”. This testimony ought to dwell in us as it dwelt in the Lord Jesus; so that, as with the shield of faith, the fiery assaults of the world may be quenched by a “thus it is written”, and a “thus saith the Lord”.

Jesus was prepared by the exhaustion of a long fast, for an appeal to the desire of his flesh for food. Hunger, it is said, will break through stone walls. “He was hungry.” At this crisis, “the Tempter came to him”. Who he was does not appear. Perhaps, Paul refers to him, saying “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light”. Some one “came to him” who was his adversary, and who desired his ruin; or, at least, acted the part of one on the same principle that the adversary was permitted to put the fidelity of Job to the proof. The trial of this eminent son of God, was perhaps recorded as an illustration of the temptation of the Son of God, even Jesus, to whom “there was none like in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil”. From his birth to his baptism in the Jordan, he was faultless. But in the words of Satan concerning Job, “Did Jesus fear God for nought? Had not God made a hedge about him?” Yes; God was his defence: and “in keeping his testimony there is great reward”. But, the adversary calumniated Jesus, in suggesting that his

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

obedience to God had been prompted by mercenary motives. He “feared”, not simply for what he should get, but because of his love for his Father’s character as revealed in the divine testimonies. The adversary affected to disbelieve this, and to suppose that, if God would just leave him in the position of any other man, he would distrust Him; and eat of the world’s forbidden fruit, by embracing all it would afford him. Thus, the adversary may be supposed to have moved the Lord to permit him to put the fidelity of Jesus to the test. God, therefore, allowed the experiment to be tried; and by His spirit sent him into the wilderness for the purpose. So the adversary went forth from the presence of the Lord, and came to him there.

Having arrived at the crisis when Jesus was suffering from the keenest hunger, the adversary assumed the character of an angel, or messenger of light to him. Being acquainted with “the law and the testimony”, for which he knew Jesus had a profound regard, he adduced it in support of his suggestions. He invited him to gratify the *cravings of the flesh* by helping himself. He was God’s son; but then his Father seemed to have abandoned him; why not therefore use the power he possessed, whose presence in him was of itself a proof of God’s approval of its exercise, and “command that the stones be made bread”? But Jesus disregarded the reasoning; and set it aside by “*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*”.

Failing in this, the scene of the temptation was then removed to “the pinnacle of the temple”; and, as Jesus fortified himself by the word, the adversary determined to be even with him; and in appealing to *the pride of life*, so strong in the nature laid upon him, to strengthen himself with the testimony likewise. “*If thou be the son of God, as thou proudly assumest to be, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*” But Jesus met him with “*Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*”

Lastly, the scene was shifted to a lofty mountain. From this position, by the power granted him, he showed Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world”, visible from that elevation; “and the glory of them”. He knew that Jesus was destined to possess them all; but that he was also to obtain them through suffering. Jesus knew this, too. Now, as the flesh dislikes suffering, the tempter proposed to gratify *the desire of his eyes* by giving him all he saw, on the easy condition of doing homage to him as the god of the world. “All this power”, said he, “will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.” But Jesus resisted the enticement; and said, “Get thee hence, adversary: for *it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*”. “Having ended all the temptation he departed from him *for a season.*” And Jesus returned in *the power* of the Spirit into Galilee.

In this manner, then, was he put to the proof in all things according to the likeness of his nature to ours, but without transgression. He believed not this angel of light and power, and would have none of his favours. He preferred the grace of God with suffering, to the gratification of his flesh with all the pomp and pageantry of this vain and transitory world. Its “*glory*” is indeed delivered to the adversary of God, His people, and His truth: and to whomsoever he wills he gives it. The knowledge of this truth ought to deter every righteous man from seeking after it; or even accepting it, when offered upon conditions derogatory to the truth of God. And, if those who possess it, such as kings, priests, nobles, etc., were what they pretended to be, they would follow Jesus’ and Paul’s examples, and renounce them all. Christianity in high places, is Christ falling down before the adversary; and doing homage to him for the honour, riches, and power of the world. What fellowship hath Christ with Belial?

Certainly none.

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

If the principles upon which the temptation of the Lord Jesus was permitted, be understood, the necessity of putting the first Adam to the proof will be readily perceived. Would he retain his integrity, if placed in a situation of trial? Or, would he disbelieve God and die? The Lord God well knew what the result would be; and had made all necessary provision for the altered circumstances which He foresaw would arise. His knowledge, however, of what would be, did not necessitate it. He had placed all things in a *provisional state*. If the man maintained his integrity, there was the Tree of Lives as the germ of a superior order of things; but, if he transgressed, then the natural and animal system would continue unchanged; and the spiritualization of the earth and its population be deferred to a future period.

God's knowledge of what a man's character will be, does not cause Him to exempt him from trial. He rewards and punishes none upon foregone conclusions. He does not say to this man, "I know you are certain to turn out a reprobate, therefore I will punish you for what you would do"; nor does He say to another, "I know thee that thou wouldst do well all the days of thy life: therefore, I will promote thee to glory and honour, without subjecting thee to the tribulation of the world". His principle is to recompense men according to what they *have done*, not for what they would do. Thus he dealt with the Two Adams; and with Israel: to whom Moses says, "The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no". And thus also the Lord Jesus treated Judas. He knew he was a thief, and would betray him; yet he trusted him with the bag, and made no difference between him and the rest, until his character was revealed. The Lord knew what was in the heart of Israel, and whether they would obey Him; but He subjected them to such a trial as would cause them to reveal themselves in their true character, and thereby justify Him in His conduct towards them. With these remarks, then, by way of preface, I shall now proceed to the further exposition of things connected with this subject in the Mosaic account.

THE SERPENT.

"It was more subtle than any beast of the field."

The Serpent was one of "the living things that moved upon the earth", and which the Lord God pronounced "very good". Moses says, it was more subtle, or shrewd, than any of the creatures the Lord God had made. It was, probably, because of this quality of shrewdness, or *quickness of perception*, that Adam named it *nachash*; which is rendered by δράκων in the New Testament, from δέρχομαι *to see*; as, δράκοντα τὸν ὄφιν τὸν ἀρχαῖον, *the Dragon, the old serpent*. It was doubtless, the chief of the serpent tribe, as it is styled "*the*" serpent; and, seeing that it was afterwards condemned to go upon its belly as a part of its sentence, it is probable it was a winged-serpent in the beginning: fiery, but afterwards deprived of the power of flight and made to move as at present.

Its subtlety, or quickness of perception by eye and ear, and skilfulness in the use of them (πανουργία), was a part of the goodness of its nature. It was not an evil quality by any means; for Jesus exhorts his disciples to "be *wise* as the serpents; and unsophisticated (ἀχέραιοι) as the doves". This quality of shrewdness, or instinctive wisdom, is that which principally strikes us in all that is said about it. It was an observant spectator of what was passing around it in the garden, since the Lord God had planted it eastward in Eden. It had seen the Lord God and His companion Elohim. He had heard their discourse. He was acquainted with the existence of the Tree of Knowledge, and the Tree of Lives; and knew that the Lord God had forbidden Adam and his wife to eat of the good and evil fruit;

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

or so much as to touch the tree. He was aware from what he had heard, that the Elohim knew what good and evil were experimentally; and that in this particular, Adam and Eve were not so wise as they. But, all this knowledge was shut up in his own cranium, from which it could never have made its exit, had not the Lord God bestowed upon it the power of expressing its thoughts in speech.

And what use should we naturally expect such a creature would make of this faculty? Such a one, certainly, as its cerebral constitution would enable it to manifest. It was an intellectual, but not a moral, creature. It had no “moral sentiments”. No part of its brain was appropriated to the exercise of benevolence, veneration, conscientiousness, and so forth. To speak phrenologically, it was destitute of these organs; having only “intellectual faculties” and “propensities”. Hence, its cerebral mechanism, under the excitation of external phenomena, would only develop what I would term *an animal intellectuality*. Moral, or spiritual, ideas would make no impression upon its mental constitution’ for it was incapable, from its formation, of responding to them. It would be physically impossible for it to reason in harmony with the mind of God; or with the mind of man, whose reasoning was regulated by divinely enlightened moral sentiments. Its wisdom would be that of the untutored savage race, whose “sentiments”, by the desuetude of ages, had become as nothing. In short, we should expect that, if the faculty of speech were bestowed upon it, it would make just such a use of it, as Moses narrates of the serpent in the garden of Eden. Its mind was purely and emphatically a “Carnal Mind”, of a more shrewd description than that of any of the inferior creatures. It was “very good”; but, when he undertook to converse upon things too high for him; to speak of what he had seen and heard; and to comment upon the law of the Lord, he lost himself in his dialogisms, and became *the inventor of a lie*.

Thus prepared, he commenced a conversation with the woman. “Yea”, said he, as though he were familiar with the saying, “hath God said, Ye shall not eat of *every* tree of the garden?” In this manner he spoke, as if he had been pondering over the matter to find out the meaning of things; but, not being able to make anything of it, he invited her attention inquiringly. She replied, “We may eat of the fruit of the tress of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die”. This was enunciating “the law of the spirit of life”, or *the truth*; for “the law of God is the truth” Had she adhered to the letter of this, she would have been safe. But the serpent began to intellectualize; and, in so doing “abode not in the truth; because there was no truth in him”. When he may be speaking the falsehood (ὅταν λαλήῃ τὸ ψευδὸς) he speaks out of his own reasonings (ἐχ τῶν ἰδίων λαλεῖ). He could not comprehend the moral obligation necessitating obedience to the divine law; for there was nothing in him that responded to it. Hence, says Jesus, “there was no truth in him”.

This, however, was not the case with Eve. There was truth in her; but she also began to intellectualize at the suggestion of the Serpent; and from his reasonings to doubt, and finally to conclude, that the Lord God *did not mean exactly what He said*. This was an error of which all the world is guilty to this day. It admits that God has spoken; that He has promulgated laws; that He has made promises; and that He has said, “He that believeth the gospel, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned”. All this professors admit in theory; while, as in the case of Eve, in practice they deny it. They say He is too kind, too loving, too merciful, to act according to a rigid construction of the word: for if He did, multitudes of the good and pious, and excellent of the earth, would be condemned. This is doubtless true. Sceptics, however of this class should remember that they only are “the salt of the earth” who delight in the law of the Lord, *and do it*. Every sect has its “good and pious” ones, who are thought little or nothing of by adverse denominations. The law of God is the only true standard of goodness and piety; and men may depend

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

upon it, attested by the examples in Scripture, that they who treat Him as not meaning exactly what He says in His word, “make God a liar”, and are anything but good and pious in His esteem.

Eve having repeated the law in the hearing of the Serpent, he remarked that *they should not surely die*: “for” said he, “God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil”. The falsehood of this assertion consisted in the declaration, “Ye shall not surely die”, when God had said, “Dying ye shall die”. It was truth that God did know that in the day of their eating *their eyes would be opened*; and it was also true that they should then become *as the Elohim*, in the sense of *knowing good and evil*. This appears from the testimony of Moses, that when they had eaten “the eyes of them both were opened”; and from the admission of God Himself, who said, “Behold, the man is become like one of us, to know good and evil”. The Serpent’s declaration was therefore an admixture of truth and falsehood, which so blended itself with what Eve knew to exist, that “she was beguiled by his shrewdness” from the simplicity of the law of God.

But how did the Serpent know that the Lord knew that these things would happen to them in the day of their eating? How came he to know anything about the gods, and their acquaintance with good and evil? And upon what grounds did he affirm that they should not surely die? The answer is, one of two ways—by *inspiration*; or, by *observation*. If we say by inspiration, then we make God the author of the lie; but if we affirm that he obtained his knowledge by observation—by the use of his eyes and ears upon things transpiring around him—then we confirm the words of Moses, that he was the shrewdest of the creatures the Lord God had made. “Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of *every* tree?” This question shows that he was aware of some exceptions. He had heard of the Tree of Knowledge and of the Tree of Lives, which were both in the midst of the garden. He had heard the Lord Elohim, and the other Elohim, conversing on their own experience of good and evil; and of the enlightenment of the man and woman in the same qualities through the eating of the Tree of Knowledge: and of their living for ever, if obedient, by eating of the Tree of Life. In reasoning upon these things, he concluded that, if they did eat of the forbidden fruit, they would not surely die; for they would have nothing more to do than to go and eat of the Tree of Life, and it would prevent all fatal consequences. Therefore, he said, “Ye shall not surely die”. The Lord God, it is evident, was apprehensive of the effect of this reasoning upon the mind of Adam and his wife; for He forthwith expelled them from the garden, to prevent all possibility of access to the tree, lest they should eat, and put on immortality in sin.

The reasoning of the Serpent operated upon the woman by exciting the lust of her flesh, the lust of her eyes, and the pride of life. This appears from the testimony. An appetite, or longing for it, that she might eat it, was created within her. The fruit also was very beautiful. It hung upon the tree in a very attractive and inviting manner. “She saw that it was *good for food*, and that it was *pleasant to the eyes*”. But there was a greater inducement still than even this. The flesh and the eyes would soon be satisfied. Her pride of life had been aroused by the suggestion that by eating it their eyes would be opened: and that she would be “made wise” as the glorious Elohim she had so often seen in the garden. To become “as the gods”; to know good and evil as they knew it—was a consideration too cogent to be resisted. She not only saw that it was good for food and pleasant to the eyes, but that it was “a tree to be desired as making one wise” as the gods; therefore “she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat”. Thus, as far as she was concerned, the transgression was complete.

THE NATURE OF THE TRANSGRESSION.

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

“The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.”

The effect produced upon the woman by the eating of the forbidden fruit, was the excitation of the propensities. By the transgression of the law of God, she had placed herself in a *state of sin*; in which she had acquired that maturity of feeling which is known to exist when females attain to womanhood. The Serpent’s part had been performed in her deception; and sorely was she deceived. Expecting to be equal to the gods, the hitherto latent passions of her animal nature only were set free; and though she now knew what evil sensations and impulses were, as they had done before her, she had failed in attaining to the pride of her life—an equality with them as she had seen them in their power and glory.

In this state of animal excitation, she presented herself before the man, with the fruit so “pleasant to the eyes”. Standing now in his presence, she became the tempter, soliciting him to sin. She became to him an “evil woman flattering with her tongue”; “whose lips dropped as a honeycomb, and her mouth was smoother than oil”. She found him “a young man void of understanding” like herself. We can imagine how “she caught him, and kissed him; and with an impudent face, and her much fair speech, she caused him to yield”. He accepted the fatal fruit, “and ate with her”, consenting to her enticement, “not knowing that it was for his life”: though God had said, transgression should surely be punished with death. As yet inexperienced in the certainty of the literal execution of the divine law, and depending upon the remedial efficacy of the Tree of Lives, he did not believe that he should *surely die*. He saw everything delightful around him, and his beautiful companion with the tempting fruit; and yet he was told that his eyes were shut! What wonderful things might he not see if his eyes were opened. And to be “as the gods”, too, “knowing good and evil”, was not this a wisdom much to be desired? The fair deceiver had, at length, succeeded in kindling in the man the same lusts that had taken possession of herself. His flesh, his eyes, and his pride of life, were all inflamed; and he followed her in her evil way “as a fool to the correction of the stocks”. They had both fallen into unbelief. They did not believe God would do what He had promised. This was a fatal mistake. They afterwards found by experience, that in their sin they had charged God falsely; and that what He promises, He will certainly perform to the letter of His word. Thus, unbelief prepared them for disobedience; and disobedience separated them from God.

As the Mosaic narrative gives an account of *things natural*, upon which *things spiritual* were afterwards to be established in word and substance; the key to his testimony is found in *what actually exists*. When, therefore, he tells us that the eyes of Adam and Eve were closed at first, in that he says they were opened by sin, we have to examine ourselves as natural beings for the meaning of his words. Moses, indeed, informs us in what sense, or to what phenomena, their eyes were closed, in saying, “They were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed”. If their eyes had been surreptitiously opened, they would have been ashamed of standing before the Lord Elohim in a state of nudity; and they would have had emotions towards one another, which would have been inconvenient. But, in their unerring ignorance of the latent possibilities of their nature, shame, which makes the subject of it feel as though he would hide himself in a nutshell, and be buried in the depths of the sea, found no place within them. They were unabashed; and had they been created with their eyes open, they would have been equally so at all times. But, seeing that their eyes were opened in connexion with, and as the consequence of doing what was forbidden, having “yielded their members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity”; and their superior faculties being constituted susceptible of the feeling, they were ashamed; and “the uncomely parts of the body” became “their shame”; and from that time have been esteemed dishonourable, and invariably “hid”. The inferior creatures have no such feeling as this, because they have never sinned: but *the parents of Cain* in their

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

transgression, having served themselves of the members they afterwards concealed, were deeply affected both with shame and fear; and their posterity have ever since more or less partaken of it after the same form.

Having transgressed the divine law, and “solaced themselves with loves”, “the eyes of them both were opened” as the consequence; and when opened, “they *knew* that they were naked” which they did not comprehend before. “By the law is the knowledge of sin”, and “sin is the transgression of the law”; so, having transgressed the law, “they knew they were naked” without lawful use of one another in His own time. They were quite chagrined at the discovery they had made; and sought to mitigate it by a contrivance of their own: so “they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons”.

Although thus corporeally defended from mutual observation, the nakedness of their minds was still exposed. They heard the voice of the Elohim, which had now become terrible; and they hid themselves from His presence amongst the trees. They had not yet learned, however, that the Lord was not only a God at hand, but a God also afar off; and that none can hide in secret places and He not see them; for He fills both the heaven and the earth. Their concealment was ineffectual against the voice of the Lord, who called out to him, “Where art thou Adam,?” And he answered, “I heard thy voice in the garden, and *I was afraid, because I was naked*; and I hid myself.” Adam’s heart had condemned him, therefore he lost confidence before God.

A GOOD, AND AN EVIL CONSCIENCE.

The reader, by contemplating Adam and Eve in innocency, and afterwards in guilt, will perceive in the facts of their case the nature of a *good conscience*, and of an evil one. When they rejoiced in “the answer of a good conscience”, they were destitute of shame and fear. They could stand naked in God’s presence unabashed; and instead of trembling at His voice, they rejoiced to hear it as the harbinger of good things. They were then pure and undefiled, being devoid of all conscience of sin. They were then of the truth, living in obedience to it as expressed in the law; and therefore their hearts were assured before Him. No doubts and fears oppressed them then. But mark the change that afterwards came over them. When they lost their good conscience, terror seized upon them at the voice of God, and shame possessed their souls; and they sought to get out of His sight, and to remove as far from Him as possible. Now, what was the cause of this? There is but one answer that can be given, and that is—SIN.

Sin, then, takes away “the answer of a good conscience towards God”, and converts it into an evil conscience; which may be certainly known to exist, when the subject of it is *ashamed* of the truth, and harassed by “doubts and fears”. They are ashamed of the truth, who, being enlightened, feel themselves condemned; or, being ignorant, apprehend it. Such, on account of unbelief, or of “a dead faith”, may well be ashamed and afraid; for to be ashamed of God’s truth is to be ashamed of His wisdom and power. People of this description proscribe all conversation about the truth as unfashionable, and vulgar; or as calculated to disturb the peace of the family circle; others, again, make a great outcry against controversy as dangerous to religion; as though God’s truth could be planted in the hearts of men, already prepossessed by God’s enemy, without controversy: others subjected to the timidity of sin, reduce everything to opinion, and inculcate “charity”; not that they are more liberal and kind than other people; but that they fear lest their own nakedness may be discovered, and “men see their shame”; while another class of bashful professors cry out, “Disturb not that which is quiet”, which is a capital maxim for a rotten cause, especially where its subversion

would break up all “vested interests”, and pecuniary, emoluments. So it is; while “the righteous are bold as a lion, the wicked flee when no man pursueth”. Sinners, however “pious” they may be reputed to be, are invariably cowards; they are ashamed of a bold stand for their own *profession*; and afraid of an independent and impartial examination of the law and testimony of God.

Understanding then, that *sin*, or the transgression of God’s law, evinced by doubts, fears, and shamefacedness, is *the morbid principle* of an evil conscience, what is the obvious indication to be fulfilled in its removal? The answer is, *blot out the sin*, and the conscience of the patient will be cured. The morbid phenomena will disappear, and “the answer of a good conscience towards God” remain. From the nature of things, it is obvious that the sinner cannot cure himself; though superstition has taught him to attempt it by fastings, and penances, and all “the voluntary humility and vain deceit,” inculcated by “the blind”. Adam and Eve vainly imagined they could *cover their own sin*, and efface it from divine scrutiny; but the very clumsy device they contrived, betrayed the defilement of their consciences. Their posterity have not learned wisdom by the failure of their endeavour; but, to this day, they are as industriously engaged in inventing cloaks for their evil consciences, as were their first parents, when stitching fig-leaves together to cover their shame. So true is it that, though God made man upright, he hath sought out many inventions. But after all the patching and altering, and scouring, they are but like “the filthy garments” taken from the high priest, Joshua; to which all the iniquity laid upon him adhered with the inveteracy of a leprous plague.

Men have not yet learned the lesson, that all they are called upon by God to do is to *believe His word and obey His laws*. He requires nothing more at their hands than this. If they neither believe nor do, or believe but do not obey, they are evil doers, and at enmity with Him. He asks men for actions, not words; for He will judge them “according to their works” in the light of His law, and not according to their supposititious feelings and traditions. The reason why He will not permit men to prescribe for their own moral evils is because He is the physician, they the lepers; He their sovereign, they the rebels against His law. It is His prerogative, and His alone, to dictate the terms of reconciliation. Man has offended God. It becomes him, therefore, to surrender unconditionally; and, with the humility and teachableness of a child, to receive with open heart and grateful feelings, whatever in the wisdom, and justice, and benevolence of God, He may condescend to prescribe.

Until they do this, they may preach in His name; make broad the phylacteries; sound trumpets in the synagogues and in the streets; make long prayers in public; disfigure their countenances with grimace that they may appear to fast; build churches; compass sea and land to make proselytes; found hospitals; and fill the world with their benevolences:—all is reducible to mere fig-leaf invention as a substitute for “the righteousness of God”. “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose *sins are covered*,” but this blessedness came not upon Adam, nor upon any of his posterity, by garments of their own device. The Lord’s covering for sin is “a change of raiment”, even “white raiment”, which He counsels men to buy “that they may be clothed, and that the shame of their nakedness do not appear”. He alone can furnish it. His price is that men should believe, and put it on.

THE CARNAL MIND

“The thinking of the flesh is enmity against God.”

When the Lord bestowed the faculty of speech upon the Serpent, He enabled it to give utterance to its thoughts. The possession of this power did not, however, confer upon it moral accountability. This depends on a different constitution of “the flesh” Where no “moral sentiments” exist as part of

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

“the flesh”, or brain, there is no *ability* in the creature to *render an account* for its aberrations from the requirements of moral, or spiritual, institutions. Speech only enabled it to utter the thinkings of its unsentimentalized intellect. It spoke, like Balaam’s ass, under the impulse of the sensations excited by what it had seen and heard. The thinkings of its flesh could not ascend to faith, being destitute of the organic ability to believe; therefore its speech could express only fleshly thoughts. Faith was too high an attainment for it. The light of God’s law could not shine into it. Like all the inferior animals, it was a creature of mere sensation; and could utter only sentences formed of combinations resulting from the impressions of sensible objects transmitted to its sensorium by the five senses; it transcended them, however, in being more observant and reasoning than they.

What it *had done*, and not what it *intended* to do, was made the ground of the Serpent’s condemnation. “Because thou hast done this”, said the Lord God, “thou art cursed above all cattle”, etc. It was incapable of moral intention. It did not intend to deceive; but it did deceive; therefore, it was a deceiver. It did not intend to lie; but it did lie; therefore, it was a liar, and the father of a lie. It did not intend to cause the woman’s death; but still it brought her under sentence of death; therefore, it was a murderer: and became the spiritual father of all intentional liars, deceivers, unbelievers, and man-killers, who are styled “the Serpent’s seed”.

The Serpent had propensities and intellect, and so had the woman; but her mental constitution differed from his, in having “moral sentiments” superadded to her propensities and intellect. By the sentiments she was made a morally accountable being; capable of believing, and able to control and direct her other faculties in their application. The propensities enable a creature to propagate its species, take care of its young, defend itself against enemies, collect food, and so forth: *intellect* enables it to do these things, for the gratification of its sensations; but when, in addition to these, a being is endowed with the sentiments of conscientiousness, hope, veneration, benevolence, wonder, etc. it possesses a spiritual, or sentimental, organization, which makes it capable of reflecting as from a mirror, the likeness and glory of God. The appropriate sphere of the propensities is on things sensual and fleshly; while that of spiritual, or sentimentalized, intellect, is on “the things of the spirit of God”. In the mental constitution of man, God designed that the sentiments, *enlightened* by *His truth*, should have the ascendancy, and preside over, and govern his actions. Under such an arrangement, the thoughts of the man would have resulted from spiritual thinking as opposed to the thoughts of the inferior creatures, which are purely the thinking of the flesh. Where the truth has possession of the sentiments, setting them to work and so forming the thoughts, it becomes the law of God to them; which the apostle styles “*the law of his mind*”; and because it is written there through the hearing of “the law and the testimony”, which came to the prophets and apostles through the spirit, he terms it, “*the law of the spirit*” inscribed “on fleshy tables of the heart”; and “the law of the spirit of *life*” because, while obeyed, it confers a right to eternal life.

But in the absence of this law and testimony, the “moral sentiments” are as incapable of directing a man aright, as though he were all intellect, or all propensities. By a right direction, I mean, according to the mind of God. The sentiments are as blind as the propensities when intellect is unenlightened by divine revelation. The truth of this is illustrated by the excesses into which mankind has plunged in the name of religion. Mohammedanism, Romanism, Paganism, and the infinite varieties of Protestantism, are all the result of the co-workings of the intellect, and sentiments, under the impulse of the propensities. They are all the thinkings of the flesh, predicated on ignorance, or misconception, of the truth. Hence, they are either altogether false; or, like the dialogisms of the shrewd Serpent, a clumsy mixture of truth and error.

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

The *Carnal Mind* is an expression used by Paul; or rather, it is the translation of words used by him, in his epistle to the Romans. It is not so explicit as the original. The words he wrote are τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς, *the thinking of the flesh*. In this phrase, he intimates to us, that *the flesh is the thinking substance*, that is, the brain; which, in another place, he terms “*the fleshy tablet of the heart*”. The kind of thinking, therefore, depends upon the conformation of this organ. Hence, the more elaborate and perfect its mechanism, the more precise and comprehensive the thought; and *vice versa*. It is upon this principle such a diversity of mental manifestation is observable among men and other animals; but after all, how diverse soever they may be, they are all referable to one and the same thing—*the thinking of the flesh, whose elaborations are excited by the propensities, and the sensible phenomena of the world*.

Now, the law of God is given, that the thinking of the flesh, instead of being excited by the propensities within and the world without, may be conducted according to its direction. So long as Adam and Eve yielded to its guidance, they were happy and contented. Their thoughts were the result of right thinking, and obedience was the consequence. But when they adopted the Serpent’s reasonings as their own, these being at variance with the truth, caused an “enmity” against it in their thinkings, which is equivalent to “enmity against God”. When their sin was perfected, the propensities, or lusts, having been inflamed, became “*a law in their members*”; and because it was implanted in their flesh by transgression, it is styled, “the law of sin”; and death being the wages of sin, it is also termed, “the law of sin and death”; but by philosophy, “the law of nature”.

The thinking of the flesh, uninfluenced by the ameliorating agency of divine truth, is so degenerating in its effects, that it reduces man to savagery. There is nothing elevating or ennobling in fleshly thoughts; on the contrary, they tend to physical deterioration and death; for “to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”. If ferocious creatures become tame, or civilized, it is the result of what may be termed spiritual influences; which, operating from without the animal, call into exercise its highest powers, by which the more turbulent are subdued, or kept in check. It is unheard of that wild beasts, or savage men, ever tamed or civilized themselves; on the contrary, the law in the members when uncontrolled in its mental operations is so vicious in its influence as to endanger the continuance of the race. If, therefore, God had abandoned Adam and his posterity to the sole guidance of the newly-developed propensities, the earth would long ere this have been peopled by a population not a whit above the aborigines of Australia, or the savage tribes of Africa. Notwithstanding the antagonism established between His law and the flesh, by which a wholesome conflict has been maintained in the world, a vast proportion of its people are “blind of heart” and “past feeling”, in consequence of their intellect and sentiments having fallen into moral desuetude; or of being exercised upon the reasonings of the flesh, as were Eve’s upon the speculations of the Serpent.

The unilluminated thinking of the flesh gives birth to the “works of the flesh; which are, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, dissensions, sects, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like”. Unchecked by the truth and judgments of God, the world would have been composed solely of such characters. Indeed, notwithstanding all His interference to save it from the ruinous consequences of its vicious enmity against His law, it seems to have attained a state of immorality in the apostolic age well nigh to reprobation. “They were”, says the apostle, “without excuse: because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became *vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*. Professing themselves to be wise (or philosophers) they became fools,

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

and changed the glory of the Incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible men, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also *gave them up* to uncleanness *through the lusts of their own hearts*, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. For this cause, God gave them up unto vile affections: working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, *God gave them over to a reprobate mind* to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.”

Such is the carnal mind, or thinking of the flesh, as illustrated by the works of the flesh: a hideous deformity, whose conception is referable to the infidelity and disobedience of our first parents: by whom “sin entered into the world, and death by sin”. It is *the serpent mind*; because it was through his untruthful reasonings believed, that a like mode of thinking to his was generated in the heart of Eve and her husband. The seed sown there by the Serpent was corruptible seed. Hence the carnal mind, or thinking of the flesh, unenlightened by the truth, is *the serpent in the flesh*. It was for this reason that Jesus styled his enemies “serpents, and a generation of vipers”. Their actions all emanated from the serpent-thinking of the flesh, which displayed “a wisdom not from above”, which was at once “earthly, sensual, and devilish”; as opposed to that which “is from above”, and which is “*first* pure, *then* peaceful, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”.

The carnal mind, or serpent in the flesh, is the subject of a two-fold manifestation—namely, *individually and collectively*. An individual manifestation is more or less observable in persons who “mind the things of the flesh”, or “earthly things”. To do this is to be “*after the flesh*”, and “*in the flesh*”; of whom it is testified, “they cannot please God”. By a figure, *sin is put for the serpent*, the effect for the cause; seeing that he was *the suggester* of unbelief and disobedience to man, by whom it entered into the world. Hence, the idea of the serpent in the flesh is expressed by “sin in the flesh”; which was “condemned in the flesh” when Jesus was crucified for, or on account of, sin, “in the likeness of sinful flesh”. In the animal man there dwelleth no good thing. The apostle affirms this of himself, considered as an unenlightened son of the flesh. “In me, that is, in my flesh”, says he, “dwelleth no good thing.” Hence, whatever good was in him, did not originate from the thinking of the flesh excited by the propensities, and traditions of Gamaliel; but from “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus”; that is, from the influence of “the testimony of God” concerning “the things of the kingdom and name of Jesus Christ”, upon “the fleshy tablet of his heart”, most assuredly believed. Submission to this “made me free”, says he, “from the law of sin and death”. This attests the truth of the Lord’s saying, that “if the truth made a man free, he should be free indeed”. Sin, though still in the flesh, should no more reign in his mortal body, nor have dominion over him.

If it were not for the law, or truth, of God, we should not know what sin is; for, says the apostle, “I had not known sin, but by the law”; “for without the law, *sin is dead*”. If a man committed theft, or adultery, or any other thing, he would not know whether he did right or wrong in God’s esteem, if God had not said they shall not be done. The lower animals steal, kill, and obey their propensities uncontrolled; but, in so doing, they do not sin, because God has made them with the ability and disposition so to do, and has not forbidden them. *Wrong* consists not in any particular act of which we

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

are capable; but in that act being contrary to the letter and spirit of the divine testimony: in other words, *right* is the doing of the will of God. Hence, if we saw a man bowing down before an image of the Virgin Mary, which is death by His law, and He commanded us to kill him, we should do wrong to refuse, although He has said, “Thou shalt not kill”. Men have lost sight of this truth. They know not, or seem not to know, that the only true standard of right and wrong, truth and error, is the divine law. Hence, they inflict upon themselves and one another all sorts of pains and penalties, making their lives miserable, because of nonconformity to standards of faith and morals, which know no other paternity than the serpent-thinking of sinful flesh.

Sin was in the world from the fall to the giving of the law through Moses. But it did not appear to be sin to those who obeyed its impulses; because, there being no such law as the Mosaic, “the sons of God” did not know when they might have erred. They were not held accountable to any future retribution for doing things, which, under Moses’ law, were punishable with death. They were amenable only to “the way of the Lord”, even as the disciples of Jesus are at this day. This required them to walk by faith in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, whose love was shed abroad in their hearts by the testimony they believed.

The Serpent in the flesh shows itself in individuals in all the colours of its skin. It manifests itself in all the deceptions men practise upon themselves and one another. Its most insidious and dangerous manifestations emanate from the pulpit, and ecclesiastical thrones. In these, the Serpent presents himself to mankind, presumptuously entertaining them with things he does not understand. From thence he delights them with the assurance of wisdom upon principles in harmony with their nature. “God doth not mean”, saith he, “exactly what He says. Trouble not your consciences about the letter of His word. He knows that the circumstances in which you are placed prevent a rigid construction of it. Besides, the times are changed, and the world is better than it used to be. He takes the will for the deed. The spirit is everything; the letter is nothing; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Eat, then, and drink, and be merry. Be diligent in business, fervent in the cause of your church, serving your clergy; and when you die, ye shall be as gods in the elysian fields!”

But the serpent in the flesh manifests itself in *all* the high places of the earth. It obtrudes itself upon all occasions, and through all the channels of human life. Popes, cardinals, and priests; bishops, ministers, and deacons; emperors, kings, and presidents; with all who sustain them, and execute their behests, are but the fleshly media through which the thinking of the flesh finds expression. They are “the high things that exalt themselves against *the knowledge* of God”, which are to be cast down. They are faithless of this knowledge, which they make of no effect by their traditions; and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin”. My business will be to show what this knowledge is; and, if it be found that I speak not according to “the law and the testimony” it will be because there is no light in me; and that, like them, I speak my own thoughts as of the flesh, and not according to the gospel of the kingdom of God.

As I have remarked before, *sin* is personified by Paul as “preeminently *a sinner*”; and by another apostle, as “the Wicked One”. In this text, he says, “Cain was of that Wicked One, and slew his brother”. There is precision in this language which is not to be disregarded in the interpretation. Cain was of the Wicked One; that is, he was *a son of sin*—of the serpent-sin, or original transgression. The Mosaic narrative of facts is interrupted at the end of the sixth verse of the third chapter. The fact passed over there, though implied in the seventh verse, is plainly stated in the first verse of the fourth chapter. These texts conjoined read thus: “And Eve gave unto her husband, and he did eat with her. And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived. And the eyes of them were both opened, and they

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

knew that they were naked”. Now, here was a conception in sin, the originator of which was the Serpent. When, therefore, in the “set time” afterwards, “Eve bare Cain”, though procreated by Adam, he was of the Serpent, seeing that he suggested the transgression which ended in the conception of Cain. In this way, sin in the flesh being put for the Serpent, Cain was of that Wicked One, the pre-eminent sinner, and the first-born of the Serpent’s seed.

Now, they who do the works of the flesh are the children of the Wicked One, or of sin in the flesh; on the like principle that those Jews only were the children of Abraham who did the works of Abraham. But they did not the deeds of Abraham, but evil deeds. They were liars, hypocrites and murderers: therefore, said Jesus, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye are willing to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him”. We have seen in what sense this is affirmed of the Serpent, the unaccountable and irresponsible author of sin. Every son of Adam is “conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity”, and therefore “sinful flesh”; on the principle that “what is born of the flesh is flesh.” If he obey the impulses of his flesh, he is like Cain, “of the Wicked One”; but if he believe the “exceeding great and precious promises of God”, obey the law of faith, and put to death unlawful obedience to his propensities, he becomes a son of the living God, and a brother and a joint-heir of the Lord Jesus Christ of the glory to be revealed in the last time.

But serpent-sin, being a constituent of human nature, is treated of in the scripture in the aggregate, as well as in its individual manifestations. The “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”, generated in our nature by sin, and displayed in all the children of sin, taken in the aggregate constitute “*the world*”, which stands opposed to God. Serpent-sin in the flesh is the god of the world, who possesses the glory of it. Hence, to overcome the world is to overcome the Wicked One; because sin finds its expression in the things of the world. These things are the civil and ecclesiastical polities, and social institutions of the nations, which are based upon “the wisdom that descendeth not from above”—the serpent wisdom of the flesh. If this be admitted, it is easy to appreciate the full force of the saying, “The friendship of the world is enmity against God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”. Let no more, then, who would have God’s favour, seek the honour and glory of the world in *Church* or State; for promotion in either of them can only be attained by sacrificing the principles of God’s truth upon the altar of popular favour, or of princely patronage. Let no man envy men in place and power. It is their misfortune, and will be their ruin; and though many of them profess to be very pious, and to have great zeal for religion; yea, zeal as flaming as the scribes and Pharisees of old; they are in friendship with the world, which in return heaps upon them its riches, and honour, and therefore they are the enemies of God. It is unnecessary to indicate them in detail. If the reader understand the scripture, he can easily discern them. Wherever the gospel of the kingdom is supplanted by sectarian theology, there is a stronghold of “the carnal mind, which is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”. This is a rule to which there is no exception; and the grand secret of that formality, coldness, and spiritual death, which are said to paralyse “the churches”. They are rich in all things, but *the truth*; and of that there is a worse than Egyptian scarcity.

THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD.

“The prince of this world shall be cast out.”

Sin made flesh, whose character is revealed in the works of the flesh, is the Wicked One of the world. He is styled by Jesus ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου the Prince of this world. *Kosmos*, rendered world in this phrase, signifies, that *order of things* constituted upon the basis of sin in the flesh, and styled *the kingdom of Satan*, as opposed to the kingdom of God: which is to be established upon the foundation of “the word made flesh” obedient unto death. Incarnated sin, and incarnated obedience, are the bases of the two hostile kingdoms, of God and of the adversary. The world is Satan’s kingdom; therefore it is, that “the saints”, or people of God, both Israelites outwardly, and “Israelites indeed”, are a dispersed and persecuted community. Satan’s kingdom is the kingdom of sin. It is a kingdom in which “sin reigns in the mortal body”, and thus has dominion over men.

It is quite fabulous to locate it in a region of ghosts and hobgoblins, remote from, or under the earth, where Pluto reigns as “God of Hell”. This notion is a part of the wisdom of those fleshly thinkers, who, as the apostle says, “professing themselves to be wise, became fools”; a wisdom, too, which “God hath made foolishness” by “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ”. The kingdom of sin is among the living upon the earth; and it is called the kingdom of Satan, because “all the power of the enemy”, or adversary, of God and His people, is concentrated and incarnated in it. It is a kingdom teeming with religion, or rather forms of superstition, all of which have sprung from the thinking of sinful flesh. This is the reason why men hate, or neglect, or disparage, the Bible. If the leaders of the people were to speak honestly they would confess that they did not understand it. Their systems of divinity are the untoward thinkings of sinful flesh; and they know that they cannot interpret the Bible intelligibly according to their principles. At all events they have not yet accomplished it. Hence, one class have forbidden their people the use of the scriptures at all, and have placed it among prohibited books. Another class advocates them, not because it walks by the light of them, but because they hate the tyranny of Rome. These, in their public exhibitions, substitute their sermonizings for “reasoning out of the scriptures”, and “expounding out of the law of Moses and the Prophets”. Thus they neglect the Bible, or use it only as a book of maxims and mottoes for their sermons; which, for the most part, have as much to do with the subject treated of in the text as with the science of gymnastics, or perpetual motion.

But the carnal policy does not end here. The neglect of the preachers might be supplied by the searching of the scriptures by the people themselves. But this is discouraged by disparagements from the pulpit. The word is proclaimed to be “a dead letter.”; the prophecies are said to be unintelligible; the Apocalypse incomprehensible, and utterly bewildering; that it is necessary to go to college to study divinity before it can be *judiciously* explained; and so forth. The people for whom I write, know this to be the truth. But what is the English of all this? It is that the pulpit orators and newspaper scribes are consciously ignorant of “the sure word of prophecy”: so that, in order to maintain their ascendancy, they must repress the enterprise of the people, lest they should become “wiser than their teachers”; and find that they could do infinitely better without their services than with them, and thus their occupation would be gone.

As for a college education in divinity qualifying boys for “*preaching the word*”, the absurdity of the conceit is manifest in the fact that the “college-bred divines” are all at variance among themselves upon its meaning. Call a convention of priests and preachers of all religious sects and parties, and assign to them the work of publishing a scriptural and *unanimous* reply to the simple question, *What do the scriptures teach as the measure of faith, and rule of conduct, to him who would inherit the Kingdom?* Let it be such a reply as would stand the scrutiny of deep and earnest investigations—and what does the reader expect would be the result? Would their knowledge of all the languages living

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

and dead; of Euclid's Elements; of Liguori, Bellarmine, Luther, Calvin, and Arminius; of the mythologies of the Greeks and Romans; of all the creeds, confessions, catechisms and articles of "Christendom"; of logic, ancient and modern; of the art of sermonizing; and of all religious controversies extant:—would their acquaintance with such lore as this bring them to unanimity; and cause them to manifest themselves as "workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth?" What can we reason upon this point, but from what we know? Experience, then, teaches us that their performance of such a thing, so simple and easy in itself, would be utterly impracticable; for "the thinking of the flesh is enmity against God"; and until they throw away their traditions, and study the Word, which is very different from "studying divinity", they will continue as they are, perhaps unconsciously, the perverters and enemies of the truth.

The kingdom of Satan is manifested under various phases. When the Word was embodied in sinful flesh, and dwelt among the Jews, the Kosmos was constituted of the Roman world, which was then based upon the institutions of paganism. After these were suppressed, the kingdom of the adversary assumed the Constantinian form, which was subsequently changed in the west to the Papal and Protestant order of things; and in the east to the Mohammedan. These phases, however, no more affect the nature of the kingdom than the changes of the moon alter her substance. The lord that dominates over them all from the days of Jesus to the present time is SIN, the incarnate accuser and adversary of the law of God, and therefore styled "the Devil and Satan".

The words ὁ ἄρχων signify *the prince*, or one invested with power. All persons in authority are styled ἄρχοντες in the New Testament, such as magistrates, and chiefs among the people. Hence, the *archōn* of the *archōns* would be the chief magistrate of the kingdom. Now, sin in its sovereign manifestations among the nations executes its will and pleasure through the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of a state. What, then, is decreed by emperors, kings, popes, and subordinate rulers, are the mandates of "the Prince of the World", who works in them all to gratify their own lusts, oppress the people, and "make war against the saints", with all the energy they possess. Taken collectively from the chief magistrate to the lowest, they are styled ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι, *principalities and powers*; the χρονοκράτορες τοῦ σκότους τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, *the world-rulers of the darkness of this age*; who are τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, *the spirituals of wickedness in the high places* of the kingdoms. So the apostle writes of the rulers of the world in his day; and from the conduct they now exhibit before the nations in all their kingdoms, it is clear that the style is as characteristic of the rulers, and of these times, as it was in the first century of the Christian era. Iniquity has only changed its form and mode of attack against the truth. The world's rulers, temporal and spiritual, are as essentially hostile to the gospel of the kingdom as ever. They could not embrace it and retain the friendship of the world. This is as impossible now as at the beginning. But things are now quiet with respect to the gospel; not because the world is reconciled to it, but because there are scarcely any to be found who have intelligence of it, faith and courage enough earnestly to contend for it as it was originally delivered to the saints.

In apostolic times, it was the privilege of the church to make known to the world-rulers "the manifold wisdom of God". This mission brought the disciples of Christ into contact with them, as is related in the Acts. When they stood before these men of sin, in whom the thinking of sinful flesh worked strongly, the truth of God proclaimed to them brought out the evil of the flesh in all its malignity. They imprisoned the disciples of Christ; threatened them with death; tempted them with rewards; and when they could not shake their fidelity to the truth, tormented them with the cruellest tortures they could invent. The apostle styles these the μεθοδεῖαι τοῦ διαβόλου, the artifices, or *wiles*

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

of the accuser: against which he exhorts believers to stand firm, being panoplied with the whole armour of God. The war being thus commenced by an attack upon the strongholds of power, the magistrates, urged on by the priests, were not content to take vengeance against them when they came in their way; but they obtained imperial decrees to hunt them out, and destroy them. This they did with destructive energy and effect. They *calumniated* the disciples, charging them with the most licentious and impious practices; and employed spies and informers, who personated brethren, to walk among them, and watch an opportunity of *accusing* them before the judge. These *adversaries* of the Christian, being actuated by the same spirit of sinful flesh, the apostle terms ὁ ἀντίδικος ὑμῶν διάβολος, *your adversary the accuser*; and to express the ferocious spirit that impelled the enemy, he compared him to a roaring lion, walking about, on the look out for prey. “Resist him”, says he; not by wrestling with flesh and blood in personal combat; but by continuing “steadfast in the faith, knowing that *the same sufferings* are inflicted in the world upon your brethren”.

To walk being dead in trespasses and sins, is to live according to *the course* (αἰών) of this world. So says the apostle. The *course of the world* is according to the thinking of sinful flesh, in whatever way it may be manifested or expressed. If a man embrace one of the religions of Satan’s kingdom, he is still “dead in trespasses and sins”, and walks according to the course of the world. In brief, anything short of faith in the gospel of the kingdom, and obedience to the law of faith, is walking according to the course of the world. To walk in sin is to walk in this course. Hence, the apostle terms walking according to the course of the world, walking according to *the Prince of the Power of the Air*—ὁ ἄρχων τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος; which he explains as “*the Spirit now working* in the children of disobedience”. The “*power of the air*”, or aerial power, is *the political power of the world*, which is animated and pervaded by *the spirit of disobedience*, which is sin in the flesh; and styled above, the Prince of the Power of the Air. This is that prince of whom Jesus spoke, saying, “Now is the judgment (χρῆσις) of this world; now shall the Prince of this World be cast out”, that is, “judged”. The key to this is suggested in what follows: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me. This he said, signifying *what death he should die.*”

The judgment of the Prince of the World by God, was exhibited in the contest between Jesus and the civil and spiritual power of Judea. “Its poison was like the poison of a serpent”, when “the iniquity of his heels compassed him about”. “The battle was against him” for a time. They bruised him in the heel. “The *enemy* smote his life down to the ground; and made him to dwell in darkness, as those that had been long dead.” But here the serpent-power of sin ended. It had stung him to death by the strength of the law, which cursed every one that was hanged upon a tree. Jesus being cursed upon this ground, God “condemned sin in the flesh” through him. Thus was sin, the Prince of the World, condemned, and the world with him according to the existing course of it. But Jesus rose again, leading captivity captive; and so giving to the world an earnest, that the time would come when death should be abolished and sin, the power of death, destroyed. Sinful flesh was laid upon him, “that through death, he might destroy *him* that had the power of death, that is, the devil”, or sin in the flesh: for, “*for this purpose* the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”.

THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.

It is clear to my mind that *sin* is the thing referred to by the apostle in the word *devil*. The sting of the Serpent is its power of destruction. The “sting of death” is the power of death; and that, the apostle says, in one place, “*is sin*”; and in another, “*is the devil*”. There are not two powers of death; but one only. Hence, the *devil* and *sin*, though different words, represent the same thing. “Sin *had* the power

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

of death”, and would have retained it, if the man, who was *obedient* unto death, had not gained the victory over it. But, thanks be to God, the earth is not to be a charnel house for ever; for he that overcame the world in his own person, is destined hereafter to “take away the sin of the world”, and to “make all things new”. Every curse will then cease, and death be swallowed up in victory; for death shall be no more.

The works of the devil, or evil one, are *the works of sin*. Individually, they are “the works of the flesh” exhibited in the lives of sinners; collectively, they are on a larger scale, as displayed in the politics of the world. All the institutions of the kingdom of the adversary are the works which have resulted from the thinking of sinful flesh; though happily for the saints of God, “*the powers that be*” are controlled by Him. They cannot do what they please. Though defiant of His truth, and His hypocritical and malignant enemies, He serves Himself of them; and dashes them against one another when the enormity of their crimes, reaching to heaven, demands His terrible rebuke.

Among the works of sin are the numerous diseases which transgression has brought upon the world. The Hebrews, the idiom of whose language is derived from the Mosaic narrative of the origin of things, referred disease to sin under the names of the devil and Satan. Hence, they inquired, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” A woman “bowed together with a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years”, is said to have been “bound of Satan”, or the adversary, for that time; and her restoration to health is termed “loosing her from the bond”. Paul also writes in the same idiom to the disciples at Corinth, commanding them to deliver the incestuous brother “unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh”; that is, inflict disease upon him, that he may be brought to repentance, “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”. Thus he was “judged and chastened of the Lord that he might not be condemned with the world”. This had the desired effect; for he was overwhelmed with sorrow. Wherefore, he exhorts the spiritually gifted men of the body to forgive and comfort, or restore him to health, “lest Satan should get an advantage over them” by the offender being reduced to despair: “for”, says the apostle “we are not ignorant of his devices”, or those of sin in the flesh, which is very deceitful. Other of the Corinthians were offenders in another way. They were very disorderly in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, eating and drinking condemnation to themselves. “For this cause”, says he—that is, because they sinned thus—“many are weak and *sickly* among you, and *many sleep*”, or are dead. Many other cases might be adduced from scripture to show the connection between sin and disease; but these are sufficient. If there were no moral evil in the world, there would be no physical evils. Sin and punishment are as cause and effect in the divine economy. God does not willingly afflict, but is long-suffering and kind. If men, however, will work sin, they must lay their account with “the wages of sin”, which is disease, famine, pestilence, the sword, misery and death. But let the righteous rejoice that the enemy will not always triumph in the earth. The Son of God was manifested to destroy him and all his works; which, by the power and blessing of the Father, he will assuredly do.

THE GREAT DRAGON

Ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος, καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην.

“The old Serpent, surnamed the Accuser and the Adversary, who deceives the whole habitable.”

The οἰχομένη ὄλη, or *whole habitable*, in the days of the apostles, was that part of the earth's surface which acknowledged the dominion of Rome. Upon this platform had been erected the largest empire then known to the world. By its imperial constitution was aggregated in one dominion all "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life". These lusts found free course through the constituted authorities of the pagan church and state. Of the horrors perpetrated upon the world lying under them by their wanton riot, the reader will find an ample account in the history of pagan Rome. In the progress and maturity of this dominion, sin reigned triumphant over the human race. Its lusts were let loose, and the propensities alone directed the policy of the world.

The only antagonism experienced by sin was established in Judea. There, as we have seen, the first battle was fought, and the first victory won over sin, by the Son of Mary. These were the two combatants—*sin*, working in the children of di obedience; and "*the truth*", in the person of Jesus. Sin bruised him in the heel; but God healed him of his wound, and so prepared him for the future contest, when he should bruise sin in the head. Now, sin could only have crucified him by the hands of power; for as this world is a concrete, and not an indigested concourse of abstractions, sin, which in the abstract "is a transgression of law", must be incorporate to be competent to act. Sin corporealized attacked Jesus through the Roman power instigated by the chief priests of Israel. At this crisis, sin was brought to a head, and ready to sting its victim to death. The event was now about to happen, which the Lord God predicted, saying to the Serpent, "*Thou shalt bruise his heel*". No one would be simple enough to suppose that the literal Serpent was to do this *in propria persona*. He was, however, to do it, in the sense of his being the instrumental cause of sin; which, through those that should afterwards obey it, should inflict a violent death upon the son of the woman. Hence, the Roman power, which put Jesus to death (for the Jews had not power to do it) represented the Serpent in the transaction. And, as sin had been working in the children of disobedience for 4,000 years; and manifesting itself in the Ninevite, Assyrian, Chaldean, Persian, and Macedonian empires, whose power was at length absorbed into the Roman, the last came to be symbolized as "*the Old Serpent*".

When the woman's seed rose from among the dead, and "led captivity captive", the war upon the Old Serpent began in good earnest. The manner in which it was conducted on both sides, may be learned from the Acts of the Apostles. The parties were the Jewish and the Roman power on the one hand, and the apostles and their brethren on the other. These enemies were the two seeds; the former, the "*Seed of the Serpent*"; and the latter, by constitution in Christ Jesus, the "*Seed of the Woman*". Hence, in the Apocalypse, "the Old Serpent", and "the Woman", became the symbols by which they are represented. During 280 years; that is, from the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 33, to A.D. 313, when Constantine established himself in Rome, the contest raged between the pagan power and the woman with intense fury. She was calumniated, *accused*, and tortured, by the Old Serpent without pity. Hence the Spirit of God surnamed him Διάβολος, or the *Accuser*; and Σατανᾶς, or the *Adversary*; so that, when he was "cast out" from the government of the empire, "a loud voice" is represented as "saying in the heaven, Now is come deliverance, and power, and the kingdom of our God, and the dominion of his Christ: for *the Accuser* of our brethren, *who accuseth* them before God day and night, is cast down". The history of this period is a striking illustration of the "*enmity*" God has put between the seed of the Serpent and the seed of the woman. In the war between them the heel of her seed was bruised by the Serpent power, as it had bruised that of their great Captain; but thanks be to God who gives them the victory, the time is at the door, when they will leave the dead, and with him bruise the Old Serpent's head upon the mountains of Israel. There can be no friendship between these parties. Death or victory is the only alternative. There can be no peace in the world till one or other be suppressed. The "*enmity*" is the essential hostility betwixt sin and God's law, which is the truth.

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

Either truth must conquer sin, or sin must abolish the truth; but compromise there can be none. I have great faith in the power of truth, because I have faith in God. He is pledged to give it the victory; and though deceivers in church and state may triumph for the time, and tyrants “destroy the earth”, their end is certain and their destruction sure.

The Dragon is the organic symbol of the Old Serpent power, as the Leopard with *four heads* and *four wings* was of the quadrupartite constitution of the Macedonian. The Dragon appears in four principal scenes in the Apocalypse; *first*, in taking him who hindered out of the way A.D. 313; *second*, in the surrendering of the power, throne, and extensive dominion of the west, to papalized imperio-regal Europe, A.D. 800; *third*, in the present crisis of the gathering of “the powers that be” to their last conflict for the world’s dominion; and *fourth*, in the suppression of the Serpent power by the Lord Jesus, when he bruises his head, and restrains him for 1,000 years. As the symbol of the Old Serpent in its pagan constitution, with Rome as his satanic seat, he is styled “the great Red Dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads”; but after the revolution by which paganism was suppressed, the serpent-power of Rome is simply styled “the Dragon”. About A.D. 334, a new capital was built, and dedicated, by Constantine, and called NEW ROME by an imperial edict; which, however, was afterwards superseded by the name of *Constantinople*. Old and New Rome were now the top capitals of the Dragon-dominion; and so continued to be until Old Rome was surrendered to the imperio-papal power of the West. New Rome, or Constantinople, then became the sole capital of the Dragon empire; and Old Rome the capital of the Seven-headed and Ten-horned Beast; an arrangement which continued for more than a thousand years: so that “they do homage to the Dragon, and they do homage to the Beast”, that is, they of the east are subject to Constantinople; and they of the west, to Rome.

But the time is at hand when the dominion, divided between the Dragon and the Beast, may be reunited; and the old Roman territory, the οἰκουμένη ὅλη, with an immense addition of domain, again subject to one sovereign. This may be by the fall of the Two-horned Beast, and the expulsion of the Turks from Constantinople, which will then become the throne of the dominion, represented by Nebuchadnezzar’s Image, which is to be broken to pieces in “the latter-days”. The establishment of this sovereignty being accomplished, it stands upon the earth as the Accuser and Adversary of God’s people Israel; and will make war upon them; and will combat with the faithful and True One, and his saints, as did the Old Serpent-power against *Michael* Constantine and his confederates in the early part of the fourth century. The result will be the same. The victory will be with Jesus, the G0reat Prince of Israel, who will break his power to pieces upon the mountains of Israel in the Battle of Armageddon. This great Adversary of the latter days, is the Northern Autocrat for the time being. He is styled Gog by Ezekiel. In him will be acuminated “all the power of the enemy”; that is, of SIN, imperially manifested in a dominion, such as the world has never seen before. Because of this, it is styled the Old Serpent; and because it will exist upon the old Roman territory, it is called the Dragon: and from its hostility to God and His truth, it is “surnamed the Devil and Satan”.

THE MAN OF SIN.

“The Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition.”

The Dragon, the Old Serpent, surnamed the Devil and Satan, being representative of SIN *in its imperial constitution*, as manifested in the past, present, and future, upon “*the Habitable*”, or Roman territory; the Man of Sin is that dynasty, “whose coming was after the energy of the Adversary with

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

all power, and tokens, and prodigies of falsehood, and with all the deceit of iniquity in them that perish". This is what he was in his coming, or presence. The power is styled, "the Man of Sin" not because it is to be found in only one man, but because it is sin preeminently incarnate in an order of men. This order occupying one throne, was to "be revealed" out of *an apostasy* from the original apostolic faith; but before its presence could be manifested, a certain obstacle was to "be taken out of the way". No order of men such as the apostle describes, could make its appearance upon the territory of the Roman Dragon, so long as the constitution of the empire continued pagan. This, then, was the obstacle to be removed. While it continued, the elements of the new power were at work in the Christian body; but incapable of the exercise of political authority. These elements are collectively styled "the Mystery of Iniquity", the open manifestation of which was withheld for a time.

When the "*Red*" or pagan aspect of the Dragon was changed for the "*Catholic*", by the victories of Constantine, the *opposing power* was removed; in fact, the Adversary, or Satan, now a *professor* of Christianity, took "the Mystery of Iniquity" under his patronage; and as he found paganism no longer fit for the contest against the apostolic faith, he determined to change his weapon, and to fight it with the apostasy in the name of Christ. Hence, the first thing he did was to impose this apostasy on the world as its religion. He married it to the state, and established it by law. The National Establishment, as it now became, assumed the character of "Mother Church"; and the community in Old Rome, with its bishop now converted into the chief magistrate of the city at its head, claimed to be the mistress of all churches. The apostasy being united to Satan, became the open enemy of God, and the worse than pagan persecutor of His truth. Its name is Catholic; and since the division of the Dragon territory into east and west, and the great schism about *image-worship*, it is surnamed Greek Catholic, and Roman Catholic. The undivided catholic apostasy in its first establishment is represented in the Apocalypse by "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars". This woman, after *nine months of years*, or "a set time", and not long before she was clothed with the imperial robes, was "pained to be delivered" of her child, which had been conceived in her by sin. As the betrothed of the Second Adam, the Serpent had beguiled her, and had corrupted her mind from the simplicity that is in Christ. Part of her body had embraced another Jesus, another Spirit, and another gospel; by which they were so corrupted that they were prepared to take the sword; declare for the first military chieftain, whose anti-pagan ambition of supreme power should induce him to embrace their cause; and to turn Christianity into a State Religion. This party found a semi-pagan suited to their purpose in Constantine, surnamed "the Great". When he avowed himself their champion, all the power of the Old Serpent was brought to bear against him and his confederates. They fought; and victory perched upon the standard of the Cross, now become "the mark" of the Apostasy.

Constantine was the man-child of sin, who began that iron-rule, which, in the name of Christianity, has soaked the dust of the earth with the best and noblest blood of its inhabitants. He set himself up as the arbiter of faith, and the corrector of heretics; and though pretending to believe, yet refusing to be immersed till within three days of his death, that he might commit all the sins he would be likely to do before he was baptized for remission of sins—yet he is belauded by ecclesiastics as a great and pious Christian! What Constantine began, his successors on the Dragon throne, Julian excepted, perfected. For the Bishop of Old Rome, they conceived an especial veneration and regard; seeing that he was more of a hypocrite, and as much of a serpent as themselves. They energized him with all power, and set him up as the supreme pontiff of the world. This God upon earth, whom the pagan predecessors knew not, they "honoured with gold, with silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things". A humble bishop of an obscure society in Rome, they acknowledged as a god, and

Thomas, D. J. (1990). *Elpis Israel: an exposition of the Kingdom of God* (electronic ed.). Part First Chapter 3. Birmingham, UK: The Christadelphian.

increased with glory; so that “by the energy of Satan with all power”, the dominion founded by the man-child of the apostasy was matured; and at length possessed by the Roman bishop as the full-grown Man of Sin.

The presence of the Man of Sin in Rome for upwards of twelve centuries past may be determined by Paul’s description of him. If we find an order of men there answering to the character recorded against them, we may know that the Man of Sin has been revealed. He describes him as one “*who opposes and exalts himself above every one called a god, or an object of veneration; so that he sits in the temple of the god as a god, exhibiting himself that he is a god*”. This in few words is highly descriptive of the Popes. “God” in the passage signifies *a ruler* of whatever kind; for “god” in the scriptures is applied to angels, magistrates, and the whole nation of Israel; as “I said, ye are gods; but ye shall die as one of the princes”; and “worship him, ye gods”; the former being addressed to Israel; the latter, to the angels concerning Jesus. The “*temple of the god*” is St. Peter’s at Rome. Now, the history of the papacy shows the applicability of the description to the Popes, and to them exclusively. They have systematically opposed and exalted themselves above every ruler, whether emperors or kings, and above all bishops and priests; so that they have sat in St. Peter’s as gods, exhibiting themselves thus, because they claim to be gods upon earth. The incarnate devilism of these blasphemers of God’s name, and of His people, and murderers of His saints, cannot be surpassed by any power that could possibly arise. They are essentially sin corporealized in human shape; and therefore most emphatically the order of the Man of Sin; as “the Holy, Apostolic, and Roman Catholic Church” is the “Mother of Harlots, and of all the abominations of the earth”.

Paul styles this dynastic order ὁ ἄνομος, *the Lawless One*; and because of its destiny, “*the Son of Perdition*”. In the Apocalypse, it is represented by an Eighth Head of the Beast, which divides “*the habitable*” with the Dragon. Of this head, the Spirit saith, “*It goeth to perdition*”. It is a head, which exercised both civil and pontifical dominion over the west; and when resolved into other symbols its conjoint dominion is represented by a Two-horned Beast; and an image of the sixth head of the Seven-headed Beast; the former symbolizing the Austrian power; and the latter, his ally, the Lawless One. These are both doomed to perdition together. Their present intrigues are contributing to kindle a flame in Europe, that will convert it into “*a lake of fire burning with brimstone*”. Into this will the Beast, and the Lawless One, his pseudo-prophet, be “*cast alive*”. The dominions they represent will be utterly destroyed by the lightning and thunderbolts of war; and their power transferred to the Dragon, the Old Serpent, surnamed the Devil and Satan, of whom I have already spoken in the last section. The binding of the Dragon will terminate the struggle which began in 1848. Sin will then be chained; and all flesh implicated in maintaining its ascendancy, be put to shame before the universe of God.