

**The
DEVIL'S
RELIGION**

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THE DEVIL'S RELIGION

Whatever statistics one cares to read, there is a common consensus that church attendance in the United Kingdom has fallen sharply. Ten percent or less of the adult population attend a place of worship with any degree of regularity. There has also been a rise in those who describe themselves as having 'no faith', with many people even denying the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet at the same time, between 50% and 60% of the population continue to **'identify as Christian'**. Looking at the abysmal state of society, and the rows of empty pews in the churches, we could perhaps be forgiven for asking 'where are they all?' Here is a strange contradiction: the country is full of persons who call themselves 'Christian', but are never to be found in a church or chapel building; who do not know the Bible; who do not pray; who do not even have faith. There are those who, whilst owning the title of 'Christian' (or even holding ecclesiastical office) deny the reality of God, the inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His substitutionary death, His resurrection, or His ascension back to Heaven. There are self-professed 'Christians' who do not believe in a day of judgment, or Hell, or Heaven, or a life hereafter. And as for the claims of God and His Word upon their present lives, conduct and behaviour – this is refuted outright. What manner of 'Christianity' is this?

In these days of such pretension and false profession, when the title of 'Christian' is glibly appropriated by so many, let some searching questions be asked: what is a genuine Christian? What is real Christianity? These queries could be answered by means of positive example; by comparison with the patriarchs and apostles of old in their exercise of the faith – but in the course of this article, a very different approach will be taken. The benchmark will instead be Satan. For the Scriptures have much to say concerning the Adversary of God and men, and his understanding of truth. Let nominal 'Christians' test themselves

by this measure: what do they have, more than Satan has? What is their religion, more than the Devil's religion?

Faith in God

The common retort of titular 'Christians' when challenged as to the reality of their claims, is this: 'Of course I'm a Christian – I believe in God!' This at least has a ring of orthodoxy, and corresponds with the opening statements of many historical creeds and confessions. Surely this must be accepted as proof of genuineness? In the early First Century, the Apostle James regularly encountered those who made hollow professions of faith, to whom he gave this salutary reproof: "*Thou believest that there is **one God**; thou doest well: **the devils also believe***" (James 2:19). Here is a striking fact: the Devil believes in God. For him, the existence and being of God is not a matter of conjecture, but an established fact. Furthermore, the Devil is a monotheist – he believes in one God. Unlike many alleged 'Christians', he knows the polytheism and relative religion of the ecumenist to be a lie.

Indeed, the Devil, it might be said, meets the 'minimum requirement' established in the Hebrew Epistle: "*he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*" (Hebrews 11:6). Concerning the second clause, a glimpse of the Devil's operations in the world is given in the opening chapters of the Book of Job, in which this exchange is overheard: "*Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land*" (Job 1:9-10). Satan knows by bitter experience that God is boundlessly good and gracious to those who call upon His name. Those so-called 'Christians' – who reduce God to a mythological figure or a philosophical construct; who argue about the pronouns used in relation to Deity; who deny His dealings with men; who doubt the efficacy and

power of prayer, and thus cease from it – have stooped lower than the Devil.

Fear of God

Concerning fallen spirits and their comprehension of God, James gives a further detail: “*the devils also believe, and tremble*” (James 2:19). This disposition of fear is borne out by those encounters between the Son of God and devils, recorded in the Gospels (cf Mark 1:24, Luke 8:28, 31). Their knowledge of God – His power and authority, His holiness and justice – has this effect upon them. It is a sad indictment of many persons who claim to ‘believe in God’, that the thought is of so little consequence, and produces no result. Surely the very word ‘God’ denotes omnipotence and dominion; One Who has created all things, and sovereignly controls all that He has made and is therefore worthy of all reverence and praise? “*Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy*” (Revelation 15:4). The Scriptures state: “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” (Proverbs 9:10) – from which it is evident that many professed ‘Christians’ have not even begun, nor yet progressed as far as the devils.

Creation

To cast doubt upon the veracity of God’s Word has always been a tactic of Satan, with his timeless and insidious question: “*Yea, hath God said. . . ?*” (Genesis 3:1). So successful has he been in this, that multitudes of people, ‘Christians’ amongst them, write off large sections of the Bible, deny its authenticity, criticise its historical accuracy, or categorise it as irrelevant to themselves. Nowhere is this more apparent than the opening chapters of Genesis, which are at best reduced to an ‘origins myth’ or Hebrew poetry, and at worst, excised completely. It must be noted however, that the Devil was there. Himself a created being, afterwards rebelling against God, he began at once to assault the works of God, starting in the physical Garden of Eden. To this extent it can be said that the Devil is a creationist. The supernatural generation of

this present universe is known to him. While many ‘Christians’ boast of taking a more rational or scientific interpretation of Genesis, the Devil surpasses them. He knows ‘that the worlds were framed by the word of God’ (cf Hebrews 11:3), and saw the unfallen first creation, at first hand.

The Deity of Christ

A further insight into the Devil’s theology is afforded by Matthew’s account of the temptation of Christ. “*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil... And when the tempter came to him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*” (Matthew 4:1, 3). While Satan had the audacity to use the word ‘if’ in his approach to the Lord, he is obliged also to acknowledge the title ‘Son of God’. Indeed, it is clear from the exchange which follows that if Christ had not been divine, these temptations would have held no weight or meaning. There were none more aware of the true nature of the Lord Jesus than the Devil and his legions who sought to oppose Him. Numerous examples occur in the gospels, in which evil spirits, despite themselves, announce: “*Jesus, Thou Son of God*”; “*I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God*”; “*And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God*” (Matthew 8:29, Mark 1:24, 3:11). There are churchmen and apologists who reduce the person of Christ to ‘a man ahead of His time’, ‘a misunderstood revolutionary’, ‘an example of suffering and self-sacrifice’, which they find more palatable than ‘God manifest in flesh’ (cf 1 Timothy 3:16). In this, they fall short of the Devil. “*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*” (1 John 2:22).

Miracles

Another stumbling block for many nominal ‘Christians’ is the supernatural power of God, and the occasions upon which it has been made manifest in the world. The miracles wrought by Christ, the

prophets and apostles are frequently explained away in terms of coincidence, meteorological phenomena, exaggeration, mass hallucination – in fact, any conceivable interpretation other than the Divine intervention of an omnipotent God. The Devil has no such problem: *“If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread... If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone”* (Matthew 4:3, 6). These temptations would have been empty and pointless taunts, had not Christ the means to accomplish the things described. Being endowed with no small power himself, the Devil does not balk at the notion of miracles, as so many ‘Christians’ do.

The Word of God

Surprising as it may be to hear from the lips of the Arch-Deceiver the expression ‘it is written’ (cf Matthew 4:6), and a word-perfect quotation of Psalm 91:11-12, a further fact is thereby demonstrated: the Devil knows the Bible. He is able to quote, or mis-quote it as his purposes require. As his exchange with Eve shows, no sooner had God begun the declaration of His Word to humanity, than the Devil was fully acquainted with it (cf Genesis 3:1). This is in stark contrast to many ‘Christians’, who scarcely know the Book, or rarely read it, and certainly could not recall verses from memory. The Adversary also knows the veracity of that Word – that the penalty of spiritual death would follow immediately upon sin (in the case of Eden); and that God would most certainly fulfil His purposes through Christ for salvation (in the case of tempting the Lord) – else why make the temptations as he did?

Amongst those ‘Christians’ who do know something of the Bible, there are plenty who dispense with parts of it as being immaterial or inapplicable. Frequently are God’s Law and His Commandments consigned to the Old Testament era, as though they no longer had any

relevance to believers. While the Devil is doubtless the author of this error, he is not himself deluded by it. He knows the immutability of God's Law – that it is the only standard of righteousness; the blueprint of holiness, “*without which no man shall see the Lord*” (Hebrews 12:14); he knows the blessedness of obedience, and the consequences of transgression. If the Law of God does not stand, against what legal code is Satan the ‘Accuser of the brethren’ (cf Revelation 12:10)? If the Law is revoked, and sin is no longer sin, then why does he continue to tempt the saints to commit sin? Because the Devil knows better.

Calvary

Central to the Faith is the mighty work of Calvary; the vicarious and atonement-working death of the Lord Jesus. Yet even on this point, there are those ‘Christians’ who demur, and will have it to be no more than ‘a gross miscarriage of justice’, or a prime example of ‘suffering for one’s beliefs whatever the cost’. Of particular redemption wrought by blood, penal substitution, remission of sin, and the propitiation of Divine wrath, they know nothing. The Devil has a higher estimation of those great events, for he was there. Indeed, he was inciting and prompting some of the terrible things that were done on that momentous day; seeking, as he thought it lay within his power, to thwart the purposes of God and bring the plan of salvation to nought. The Lord Jesus said concerning His sufferings: “...*this is your hour, and the power of darkness*” (Luke 22:53), “*the prince of this world cometh*” (John 14:30). The Devil was there at Calvary, and knows exactly what befell. He is not under any illusion or doubt concerning it.

The Gospel

As the Biblical record goes on to describe, matters did not transpire as the Devil had designed or desired, and by virtue of the death which He died, the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished the purposes of God in salvation and destroyed any vestige of power unto which the Adversary laid claim (cf Hebrews 2:14-15, 1 John 3:8). Which glorious truth has

since been published abroad, and the gospel has gone forth declaring Christ, the way of salvation for sinners (John 14:6). But there are ‘Christians’ who deny the power of the gospel. Some do not preach it at all; whilst others, doubting the life-imparting efficacy of preaching alone, substitute instead all manner of worldly means, thinking thereby to convince and charm unbelievers. By contrast, the Devil knows the gospel’s strength, and labours hard against it: *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them”* (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). He knows that the glorious gospel is as a light shining in a dark place; dispelling the night of sin, turning blindness to sight and causing the lost to be found. If it were not so, why would he put forth his energies to silence or supplant it, and intensify the incredulity of unbelievers?

The Day of Judgment

There is amongst ‘Christians’ a paucity of understanding, and much confusion in relation to the future purposes of God, ranging from those who deny the doctrine of eternal punishment, the existence of Hell, or a Day of Judgment altogether, to those who invent all kinds of fantastical theories of millennia and dispensations to come. While the Devil surely rejoices at such an abundance of unbelief and error, he himself has a dreadful cognisance of the truth on this subject: *“for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time”* (Revelation 12:12). From the time of his fall, to the inevitable summons of Divine justice, Satan knows there to be a very limited period, and its brevity is the stimulus of his diabolic purposes. This short season in which he is permitted to vent his fury against the works and people of God is not ‘free rein’, but merely an intermission before sentence is executed against him. For he, like all *“the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, [God] hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day”* (Jude 6). While ‘Christians’ quibble and question, and fail to live in the light

of its imminence, the coming Day of the Lord is a fearful prospect to the Devil, and a motivation to his malice.

Church Attendance

Despite the wise purposes of God Who ordained the New Testament church, the love and labours of Christ that established it, and the faithful ministry of the Apostles by which it was brought into the world, many professing ‘Christians’ seem to devalue and reject it as an institution. At least, so one might conclude from their disparagement of it, persistent absence from the ‘public means of grace’, or a misguided determination to be self-sufficient believers in a state of solitary isolation. Although it is designed for their protection, edification and greater fulfilment, large numbers of modern ‘Christians’ attempt to exist outside of the Biblically-instituted system of the local church, and minimise their interaction with it. They could learn a lesson from the Devil. His great interest in the church upon earth is a clear indication of its vital, spiritual importance. He knows the safety afforded by a ‘fold’, and desires to break and enter by nefarious means (cf John 10:1); he knows the preciousness of the seed that is broadcast in the local church, and would, if possible, come to take away the word sown in the heart of the hearers ‘immediately’ (cf Mark 4:15) with the unclean birds of distraction, ignorance and forgetfulness. It is a solemn thought, but one that must be contemplated by church-rejecters and persistent absentees, that the Devil is more acquainted with the condition of their local assembly than they are; and boasts of a better attendance record than they can.

Outward Piety

One final sad contrast to make is this: rarely does one meet ‘Christians’ whose faith shines forth from them in an outward, evident way. Many are content to confine their external expressions of Christianity to the Lord’s Day, or the privacy of their own homes – but would hate to appear ‘religious’ in public. Holiness is embarrassing to them. Piety is unfashionable. In some quarters, ‘Christians’ are actually taught to

behave as much like the world as possible, as this (it is alleged) will facilitate the 'building of bridges' with unsaved persons and create evangelistic opportunities. A poorer excuse for ungodliness could scarcely be imagined; but such are the errors of the age. To meet an individual who is manifestly a child of God, with a radiant testimony, is an almost unknown experience. Concerning the Devil however, Paul describes how, on occasions: "*Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light*" (2 Corinthians 11:14). What a solemn condemnation! The Devil can give a better impersonation of godliness than many 'Christians' ever attain to in reality. He can simulate more artificial light than they produce of genuine effulgence.

Conclusion

Of the points considered thus far, this is the summary: The Devil, that great enemy of God and His people, both believes that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. In consequence of that knowledge, he has a fear for God, and even a degree of subservience and obedience to Divine authority. He knows the veracity of God's Word, the truth of Creation and supernatural power, the perpetuity of God's Law, the deity of Christ, the reality of Calvary's work, the power of the gospel, the fact of judgment to come, the state of the local church, and how to appear outwardly pious. All this he has – and yet remains the Devil. This much religion an individual may have – but remain no better than the Devil. Many false professors fall far short, even of this.

To return to the original question – what then are the distinguishing features of true Christianity, what are its hallmarks and unmistakable proofs? If none of the things previously listed suffice as evidence of genuineness – what else is left? Or to make the same enquiry another way – what is there that the Devil does **not** have, or cannot fabricate? Amongst them is included **faith**, which is the gift of God. Such things that Satan believes, he knows to be the case by first-hand experience, or by 'sight' (if such a word is appropriate for a spirit-being). He has not

come to those convictions by the impartation and exercise of God-given faith. Nor is it possible for the Devil to ‘believe to the saving of the soul’, for there is no saving or redemptive work provided for him in which to trust. Herein is a profound thought: though there was also a ‘Fall’ in the angelic creation (cf 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6), and though the Fall on earth subjected the whole material creation unwillingly to bondage (cf Romans 8:20), a way of salvation and deliverance was made for none, except a remnant of the human race only (cf Hebrews 2:16). Thus, a **personal** faith in Christ for one’s **own** salvation is the unique privilege and characteristic of a true child of God.

Likewise, those much-maligned and neglected aspects of the Christian life, namely “*fruits meet for repentance*” (Matthew 3:8) and “*things that accompany salvation*” (Hebrews 6:9) are a vital necessity. The context in which James makes his statement concerning the religion of devils is this: “*But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*” (James 2:20). Whatever Satan’s perception of God, or comprehension of truth might be, this much is clear: he never hated sin, never eschewed it, never repented of it, never hungered and thirsted after righteousness, never loved that which is right, never did any good work. Nor ever will he. “*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God...*” (1 John 3:10). Only the Lord is of power to look upon the heart and see its true condition; man is obliged to look upon the outward appearance (cf 1 Samuel 16:7). For this reason among others it is prescribed that: “*we should bring forth fruit unto God*” (Romans 7:4). Inward faith must, and will, always be accompanied by outward evidences of godliness; and by those **fruits** are the true people of God known one to another (cf Matthew 7:20). May God graciously deliver us from false profession, and, “*make [us] perfect in every good work to do His will, working in [us] that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen*” (Hebrews 13:21).

R. J. Steward

THE DEVIL AND THE TRUE CHRISTIAN COMPARED

“And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God . . . And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him” (Mark 1:23-24, 34).

We learn, in the first place, from these verses, the uselessness of a mere intellectual knowledge of religion. Twice we are especially told that the unclean spirits knew our Lord. In one place it says, *“they knew Him”* (Mark 1:34). In another, the devil cries out, *“I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God ”* (Mark 1:24). They knew Christ, when Scribes were ignorant of Him, and Pharisees would not acknowledge Him. And yet their knowledge was not unto salvation . . . [Theirs was] a knowledge unaccompanied by faith, hope or charity. Those who possessed it were miserable beings, full of bitter hatred against both God and man . . .

The mere belief of the facts and doctrines of Christianity will never save our souls. Such belief is no better than the belief of devils. They all believe and know that Jesus is the Christ. They believe that He will one day judge the world and cast them down into endless torment in hell. It is a solemn and sorrowful thought, that on these points some professing Christians have even less faith than the devil. There are some who doubt the reality of hell and the eternity of punishment. Such doubts as these find no place except in the hearts of self-willed men and women. There is no infidelity among devils. ‘They believe and tremble’ (cf James 2:19) . . .

Let us beware of an unsanctified knowledge of Christianity. It is a dangerous possession, but a fearfully common one in these latter days. We may know the Bible intellectually and have no doubt about the truth

of its contents. We may have our memories well stored with its leading texts, and be able to talk glibly about its leading doctrines. And all this time, the Bible may have no influence over our hearts, wills and consciences. We may, in reality, be nothing better than devils.

Let it never content us to know religion with our heads only. We may go on all our lives saying, “I know this, and I know that”, and sink at last into hell with the words upon our lips. Let us see that our knowledge bears fruit in our lives. Does our knowledge of sin make us hate it? Does our knowledge of Christ make us trust and love Him? Does our knowledge of God’s will make us strive to do it? Does our knowledge of the fruits of the Spirit make us labour to show them in our daily behaviour? Knowledge of this kind is really profitable. Any other religious knowledge will only add to our condemnation at the last day...

Let us take heed that our faith is a faith of the heart, as well as of the head. Let us see that our knowledge has a sanctifying influence on our affections and our lives. Let us not only know Christ, but love Him, from a sense of actual benefit received from Him. Let us not only believe that He is the Son of God and [a Saviour], but rejoice in Him, and cleave to Him with purpose of heart. Let us not only be acquainted with Him by the hearing of the ear, but by daily personal application to Him for mercy and grace.

“The life of Christianity”, says Luther, “consists in possessive pronouns”. It is one thing to say, ‘Christ is a Saviour’. It is quite another to say: ‘He is **my** Saviour and **my** Lord’. The devil can say the first. The true Christian alone can say the second.

J. C. Ryle (1816 – 1900)
Expository Thoughts on the Gospels (Mark, Luke)

“The devils assent to the articles of Christian religion. It cometh to pass partly through the subtlety of their natures – they are intellectual essences – partly through experience of providences [and] sight of miracles. They are sensible of the power of God in rescuing men from their paws; so that they are forced to acknowledge there is a God, and to consent to many truths in the scriptures. There are many articles acknowledged at once in Matthew 8:29: “*Jesus, Thou Son of God... art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?*” They acknowledge God, Christ the Son of God ... then a day of judgment, which will occasion more torment to themselves and other sinners... So it is said (cf Philippians 2:10) ‘Things under the earth’ – that is the devils who are turned into hell, which is represented as a subterranean place – do ‘bow the knee’ to Christ. Well then, never rest in the devils’ faith. Can the devils be justified or be saved? They believe there is a God, that there is a Christ, that Christ died for sinners. A Christian is to exceed and go beyond devils; beyond other men, beyond pagans; beyond hypocrites in the church; beyond himself... Is it not a notable check to atheistical thoughts: Should I be worse than devils? ... [Yea] worse than devils: [for] the devils are under the dread of this truth. We are stupid, insensible of providence, careless of judgments, while ‘the devils believe and tremble’. The Lord might well expostulate thus: “*O foolish people, and without understanding ... Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence?*” (Jeremiah 5:20-21).”

Thomas Manton (1620 – 1677)

