



ON THE
SAINTS



ON THE
SAINTS

JESSIE PENN-LEWIS



WHITAKER
HOUSE

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

WAR ON THE SAINTS

ISBN: 978-1-62911-837-6

eBook ISBN: 978-1-62911-119-3

Printed in the United States of America

© 1996 by Whitaker House

Whitaker House
1030 Hunt Valley Circle
New Kensington, PA 15068
www.whitakerhouse.com

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical—including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system—without permission in writing from the publisher.

Please direct your inquiries to permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Background and Introduction | 7 |
| 1. War on the Saints | 9 |
| 2. The Powers of Darkness | 23 |
| 3. Recognizing Our Adversary..... | 31 |
| 4. You Are at Risk..... | 43 |
| 5. The Danger of Passivity | 60 |
| 6. Discerning Good and Evil..... | 78 |
| 7. Counterfeits of the Divine..... | 96 |
| 8. Symptoms of Demonic Attack | 117 |
| 9. The Path to Freedom..... | 128 |
| 10. Overcoming Through Will and Spirit | 148 |
| 11. Victory Over the Powers of Darkness | 161 |
| 12. War on the Powers of Darkness | 184 |
| 13. The Holy Spirit, Revival, and Ultimate Triumph..... | 203 |
| Appendix: The Attitude of the Early Fathers to Evil Spirits | 220 |
| About the Author..... | 222 |

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

W*ar on the Saints*, presented here in a rare unabridged version, is a classic book on spiritual warfare that grew out of the experiences of the Welsh Revival. At the turn of the twentieth century there was a tremendous outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Wales, led by a quiet young man named Evan Roberts. The revival resulted in an international renewal that affected hundreds of thousands around the world and brought about a striking transformation of society.

As is tragically the case in many powerful works of God, some believers became carried away with emotionalism. Others seemed to be influenced by evil supernatural forces that tried to disrupt this genuine outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In fact, in the face of criticism that he was taking glory for himself and that the revival was full of emotional excesses, the earnest and devout Roberts abruptly withdrew from the movement, not wanting to do anything that would interfere with the work of God.

Christian author Jessie Penn-Lewis and her husband opened their home to him so that he could rest and recuperate from the strains of the ministry. His reaction to the criticism was so strong that he lived with them almost as a recluse and completely disappeared from public life, never to be involved with the revival again. While there, he helped to write *War on the Saints* with Mrs. Penn-Lewis, who had been an eyewitness to the revival as well. *War on the Saints* is the result of what Mrs. Penn-Lewis saw as the deceptions of the Enemy at work in the midst of revival, and the excesses caused by the destructive forces of evil to prevent the work of God in awakening.

Since *War on the Saints* was written as a response to the Welsh Revival, it must first be understood in this historical context. Mrs. Penn-Lewis's zeal and concern over the excesses of that revival may have caused her to question and reject even some of the genuine workings of God through the Holy Spirit that took place in it. Because of this, and because the emphasis in this book is on counterfeit manifestations and the deceptions of the Enemy, the genuine

workings of God are not often explained, which would have provided a helpful balance for readers. In addition, some of the advice regarding “passivity” and other manifestations may seem unusual to modern believers because it was given in response to specific problems of the day.

At the same time, *War on the Saints* is considered a textbook on spiritual warfare by many Christians and contains a wealth of valuable spiritual insight and knowledge that is essential for the church today. First, Mrs. Penn-Lewis believed that there is clear evidence that the church is in the end times. She notes from Scripture that the special onslaught from the Enemy during the last days will be in the realm of spiritual deception, and not from “worldly” temptation, and that the Christians of her day were totally unprepared for this. This same lack of understanding and preparation is true of the church now, and *War on the Saints* fills a significant void in spiritual understanding for believers in our generation.

Secondly, *War on the Saints* provides crucial insights about the deceptions and lies of the Enemy that bring defeat, discouragement, and ineffectiveness to Christians. These insights are particularly relevant to the church at the dawn of the twenty-first century, as we are closer than ever to end-times deception and the return of Christ. This book assumes that readers have first-hand knowledge of the working and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it approaches spiritual warfare from the standpoint of the responsibility of the believer in working with God against the destructive purposes of Satan and the powers of darkness.

War on the Saints is a warning flag to Christians, especially those who are mature in the faith and are confident that they will never be deceived by the Enemy. Deception and ignorance are the keywords of this spiritual classic, and they are words of caution to which we must pay careful attention. All Christians should take the admonition of the Scriptures, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). *War on the Saints* helps us to take heed so that we will stand fast in the faith during the most severe test of the church yet—the end of the age, when the attack of the Enemy will be the most deceitful and overwhelming. Spiritual knowledge and preparation are the best protection, for “he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22).

1

WAR ON THE SAINTS

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints.

—Revelation 13:7

What do you suppose is Satan's chief plan for you and me? What is the purpose for which he fights so fiercely? It is to keep us ignorant about himself and his ways, and about the evil spirits that assist him in his destructive work. And whenever the church of Jesus Christ, either through denial or apathy, remains ignorant about Satan, it unknowingly *takes sides with him*. Every believer should keep an attitude of openness to all truth and reject the false knowledge that has slain its tens of thousands, and kept the nations in the deception of the Devil.

Since the Garden of Eden, man's ignorance has been a major and essential condition that has caused him to be deceived by Satan and evil spirits. And throughout human history, ignorance on the part of the people of God concerning the powers of darkness has made it easy for the Devil to carry out his work as the Deceiver, even—or especially—among Christians.

FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

Today there is a special onslaught of deceiving spirits upon the church of Christ, the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Holy Spirit explicitly made known to the church through the apostle Paul: that a great deceptive attack would take place in the "latter times" (1 Tim. 4:1). More than eighteen hundred years have passed since that prophecy was given, but the special manifestation of evil spirits in the deception of believers today points unmistakably to the fact that we are at the close of the age.

It was revealed to Paul that the peril to the church during the latter times was to come especially from the *supernatural realm*, from which Satan would send forth an army of "teaching spirits," to deceive all who would be open to teachings by spiritual revelation, drawing them unknowingly away from full allegiance to God. We are warned that it is not worldliness that is the great danger to believers in the end times. It is spiritual deception, for those who are open to the work of the Holy Spirit and spiritual revelation.

Yet, in the face of this clear prediction of danger in the end times, we find that the church is almost entirely ignorant of the work and activities of this army of evil spirits. Most believers too readily accept everything “supernatural” as coming from God. Supernatural experiences are received without question or discernment, because all such experiences are thought to be divine.

The majority of even the most spiritual people do not carry out a full and continuing war upon this army of wicked spirits. Many Christians shy away from the subject and from the call to war against evil forces, saying that, if Christ is preached, it is not necessary to give prominence to the existence of the Devil or to enter into direct conflict with him and his hosts.

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THE ONSLAUGHT?

Yet large numbers of the children of God are becoming prey to the Enemy due to their lack of knowledge. Through the silence of teachers on this vital truth, the church of Christ is moving toward the peril of the closing days of the age unprepared to meet the onslaught of the Enemy. Because of this, and in view of the clearly given prophetic warnings in the Scriptures, the already evident influx of the evil hosts of Satan among the children of God, and the many signs that we are actually in the “latter times” referred to by the apostle, all believers must gain knowledge about the powers of darkness. This knowledge will enable them to endure the “fiery trial” (1 Pet. 4:12) of these days without being ensnared by the Enemy.

Without this knowledge, it is quite possible for a believer who thinks he is fighting for truth and is defending God and His works to actually be fighting for, defending, and protecting evil spirits and their works, because if he thinks something is divine, he will protect and stand for it. It is possible for a Christian, through ignorance, to stand against God, to attack the very truth of God, and to defend the Devil!

Knowledge of the powers of darkness may be gained by an understanding of the Scriptures combined with personal experience. The Bible gives us much insight into satanic powers. But those who have gained an understanding of these evil forces through personal experience—interpreted by the Holy Spirit and shown to be in line with the truth of the Word of God—will benefit the most. Scripture, apart from experience, does not enable the believer to know, and realize, the actual existence of the Devil and his hosts of evil and the way they deceive and mislead people. The believer may have a

direct witness in his spirit to the truth of the Bible; however, through experience he receives a personal witness to the inspiration of Scripture and to its testimony concerning the existence of supernatural beings and their works.

WE CONTINUALLY FACE THE ENEMY'S DECEPTION

It is crucial to understand that being deceived by the Evil One does not end when a person becomes a Christian and receives the regenerating life of God. Satan's ability to blind our minds is only frustrated as much as his deceptive lies are driven away by the light of truth. Even though a believer's heart is renewed and his will has turned to God, the deeply ingrained tendency toward self-deception and the presence, in some measure, of the blinding power of the Deceiver on his mind, still manifest themselves in many forms, as the following statements from Scripture show:

1. A person is deceived if he is a "hearer," and not a "doer," of the Word of God (James 1:23).
2. He is deceived if he says he has no sin (1 John 1:8).
3. He is deceived when he thinks he is "something" when he is "nothing" (Gal. 6:3).
4. He is deceived when he thinks he is wise with the wisdom of this world (1 Cor. 3:18).
5. He is deceived by seeming to be religious, when an unbridled tongue reveals his true condition (James 1:26).
6. He is deceived if he thinks he will sow and not reap what he sows (Gal. 6:7).
7. He is deceived if he thinks the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9).
8. He is deceived if he thinks that contact with sin will not have its effect on him (1 Cor. 15:33).

Deceived. How the word repels us, and how involuntarily every human being resents it when it is applied to himself. We do not realize that this very resentment is the work of the Deceiver for the purpose of keeping the deceived ones from knowing the truth and being set free from deception.

If men can be so easily deceived by the deception arising from their own fallen nature, how eagerly will the forces of Satan seek to bring about even more deception. How cunningly will they work to keep men in bondage to

the old creation, out of which will spring numerous forms of self-deception, enabling the evil spirits to more readily carry on their deceiving work. Their methods of deception are both old and new, adapted to suit the nature, state, and circumstances of their “victim.” Instigated by hatred, malice, and bitter ill will toward mankind and all goodness, the emissaries of Satan do not fail to execute their plans with a perseverance worthy of imitation by Christians who are working for godly goals!

BE ALERT FOR SUBTLE DECEPTION

The Arch-deceiver is not only the deceiver of the entire unregenerate world, but also of the children of God, with this vital difference: in the deception he seeks to practice upon Christians, he changes his tactics and works with subtle, penetrating strategies and in tricks of error and guile concerning the things of God. (See Matthew 24:24; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 13–15.)

Deception is the chief weapon that the Prince of Darkness relies on to keep the world in his power—deception planned to beguile men at every stage of life: (1) deception of the unregenerate who are already deceived by sin; (2) deception suited to the “carnal” Christian; and (3) deception matched to the mature or “spiritual” believer, who has moved out of the preceding stages into a realm where he is now open to more subtle tricks.

Once the deception that holds a person in an unregenerate condition or in the stage of the carnal Christian life is removed and he emerges into the heavenly places described by Paul in Ephesians, he will find himself amid the most intense workings of the deceptions of the Enemy, where the deceiving spirits are actively attacking those who are united to the risen Lord.

The work of the Deceiver among the most mature and effective believers is especially disclosed in Ephesians 6:10–18, where the veil is pulled away from the satanic powers, revealing their war upon the church of God and the individual believer’s armor and weapons for conquering the Foe. From this passage we learn the crucial truth that when the believer is in his highest experience of union with the Lord, and in the “high places” of the spiritual maturity of the church, he will fight the sharpest and closest battle with the Deceiver and his hosts.

WARNINGS ABOUT THE LAST DAYS

Therefore, as the church gets closer to the end time, and is being matured for translation by the inworking power of the Holy Spirit, the full force of

the Deceiver and his hosts of lying spirits will be directed upon the body of Christ. A glimpse into the onslaught of deceiving spirits is given in the gospel of Matthew, where the Lord uses the word *deceived* in describing some of the particular characteristics of the “latter days.” He said: “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matt. 24:4–5); “Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many (Matt. 24:11); “There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24).

A SPECIAL FORM OF DECEPTION FOR CHRISTIANS

It is important to remember that this special form of deception against Christians is described in connection with spiritual, and not worldly, things. This incidentally shows that the people of God, at the end time, will be expecting the coming of the Lord. They will therefore be extremely aware of all movements from the supernatural world to such a degree that deceiving spirits will be able to take advantage of this, and will anticipate the Lord’s appearing by “false Christs” and false “signs and wonders,” or by mixing their counterfeits with the true manifestations of the Spirit of God.

In the above passages from Matthew, the Lord says that men will be deceived concerning: (1) Christ and His Parousia, or coming, (2) prophecy or teaching from the spiritual world through inspired messengers, and (3) the giving of proofs that the “teachings” are truly of God, by “signs” and “wonders” so godlike and therefore so exact a counterfeit of the working of God as to be practically indistinguishable from His true working by those described as His elect. Therefore, God’s elect—if they are to be able to discern the false from the true—will need to possess some other test than judging by appearances to determine whether or not a “sign” is from God.

The apostle Paul’s words to Timothy (see 1 Timothy 4), containing the special prophecy given to him by the Holy Spirit for the church of Christ in the last days, exactly coincide with the words of the Lord recorded by Matthew. The two letters of Paul to Timothy are the last epistles that he wrote before his departure to be with Christ. Both were written in prison. Paul’s prison was to him what Patmos was to John, when John was shown things to come “in the Spirit” (Rev. 1:10).

Paul was giving his last directions to Timothy for administering the church of God up to the end of her time on earth. Yet he was not giving these

rules to guide only to Timothy. He was giving them to all God's servants in dealing with God's household. In the midst of all these detailed instructions, his keen prophetic vision looks on to the "latter times," and, by express command of the Spirit of God, he depicts in a few brief sentences the peril of the church in those times. This warning was given to Paul in the same way that the Spirit of God gave the Old Testament prophets some significant prophecy, only to be fully understood after the events had come to pass. Paul wrote,

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

(1 Tim. 4:1–2)

Paul's prophetic statement appears to be all that is foretold in specific words about the church and its history at the close of the age. The Lord spoke in general terms about the dangers that would encompass his people at the end time, and Paul wrote to the Thessalonians more fully about the apostasy and the wicked deceptions of the lawless one in the last days. Yet, the passage in Timothy is the only one that specifically shows the special cause of the peril to the church in its closing days on earth, and how the wicked spirits of Satan will break in upon her members and, by deception, beguile some away from their purity of faith in Christ.

In the brief message given to Paul, the Holy Spirit describes the character and work of evil spirits, recognizing their existence and their efforts directed toward believers to deceive them and to draw them away from the path of simple faith in Christ and all that is included in the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). The character of the spirits—rather than the men they sometimes use in their work of deception—is described in 1 Timothy 4:1–3.

The grave danger to the church at the close of the age is therefore from supernatural beings who are hypocrites, who pretend to be what they are not, who give teachings that appear to bring about greater holiness by producing ascetic severity to the flesh, but who themselves are wicked and unclean and bring the foulness of their own presence to those they deceive. For where they deceive they gain a foothold; and while the deceived believer thinks he is more holy and more sanctified and more delivered from the desires of the flesh, these hypocritical spirits defile him by their presence, and, under the pretense of sanctity, hold their ground and hide their activities.

"SOME SHALL DEPART FROM THE FAITH"

The spiritual danger involves every child of God, and no believer can dare say he is exempt from peril. The prophecy of the Holy Spirit declares that (1) "some shall depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1); (2) the fall will result from giving heed to deceiving spirits, not through obvious evil but by hidden workings, for the essence of deception is that the operation is looked upon as sincere and pure; (3) the nature of the deception will be in doctrines of demons, i.e., the deception will be in a doctrinal sphere; (4) the doctrines will be delivered with hypocrisy, that is, spoken as if true; and (5) two instances of the effect of these evil spirit doctrines will be the forbidding of marriage and abstaining from meats, both, Paul wrote, "which God hath created" (1 Tim. 4:3). Therefore, their teaching will be marked by opposition to God, even in His work as Creator.

TYPES OF SATANIC FORCES

There is a vast realm of doctrinal deception by deceiving spirits that is penetrating and inter-penetrating evangelical Christianity, and by which evil spirits, in more or less degree, influence the lives of Christians and bring them under their power. Even mature Christians, who battle "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12), are affected. These satanic forces described in the above-quoted verse are shown to be divided into (1) principalities—force and dominion dealing with nations and governments; (2) powers—having authority and power of action in all the spheres open to them; (3) world rulers—governing the darkness and blindness of the world at large; and (4) wicked spirits in heavenly places—forces being directed in and upon the church of Jesus Christ, in "wiles" (Eph. 6:11), "fiery darts" (Eph. 6:16), onslaughts, and every conceivable deception through doctrines that they are capable of planning.

ALL BELIEVERS ARE IN DANGER

The danger to the household of God is therefore not only for a few, but for all believers, for obviously none can "depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1) except those who are actually in the faith to begin with. The peril is from an army of teaching spirits poured forth by Satan upon all who are open to teachings from the spiritual world, and who, in their ignorance of danger, are unable to detect the wiles of the Enemy.

The peril comes from supernatural spirits who (1) are persons, or beings (Mark 1:25), (2) have intelligent power of planning (Matt. 12:44–45), and

(3) use strategy (Eph. 6:11). The deception comes to those who “give heed” (1 Tim. 4:1) to them.

To reemphasize, the peril is supernatural. And those who are in danger are the spiritual children of God, who are not often deceived by the world or the flesh, but who are open to all they can learn of spiritual things and who have a sincere longing to be more spiritual and more advanced in the knowledge of God.

Deception by doctrines does not concern the world as much as the church. Evil spirits would not urge spiritual Christians into open sin such as murder, drinking, gambling, etc., but would plan deception in the form of teaching and doctrines. Yet, believers do not realize that deception from teaching and doctrines allows evil spirits to oppress a deceived person as much as through sin.

HOW EVIL SPIRITS DECEIVE

How the evil spirits get men to receive their teachings may be summed up in three specific ways.

First, evil spirits give their doctrines or teachings as spiritual revelations to Christians who are unaccustomed to the spiritual realm and who accept anything supernatural as coming from God, simply because it *is* supernatural. This form of teaching is given directly to a person in sudden “flashes” of insight on a particular Scripture, “revelations” by visions of Christ, or streams of Scripture texts apparently given by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, evil spirits mix their teachings with the person’s own reasoning, so that he thinks he has come to his own conclusions. The teachings of the deceiving spirits in this form appear so natural that they seem to come from the person himself, as if they were the product of his own mind and reasoning. The spirits counterfeit the working of the human brain and inject thoughts and suggestions into the mind, for they can directly communicate with the mind, apart from gaining possession of the mind or body. Those who are deceived in this way are ignorant that the deceiving spirits have incited them to reason without sufficient data, or on a wrong premise, and that, therefore, they have come to false conclusions. The teaching spirit has achieved his purpose by putting a lie in the person’s mind through false reasoning.

Thirdly, evil spirits use the indirect means of deceived human teachers who are presumed to be conveying undiluted divine truth, and who are

implicitly believed because of their godly life and character. Christians say, “He is a good man and a holy man, and I believe him.” They presume that the life of the man is a sufficient guarantee for his teaching, instead of judging his teaching by the Scriptures, apart from his personal character. This erroneous practice has its foundation in the widespread idea that everything Satan and his evil spirits do is obvious evil, yet the truth is that they work under cover of light (2 Cor. 11:14). If they can get a good man to accept some idea from them and pass it on as truth, he is a better instrument for deceptive purposes than a bad man who would not be believed.

FALSE VERSUS DECEIVED TEACHERS

There is a difference between false teachers and deceived ones. There are many who are deceived among the most devoted teachers today because they do not recognize that an army of teaching spirits has come forth from the abyss to deceive the people of God. Teaching spirits will make a special effort to deceive those who have to transmit doctrine, and will seek to mingle their own teachings with truth in order to get them accepted.

Every believer must test all teachers for himself—by the Word of God and by their attitude to the atoning Cross of Christ and other fundamental truths of the Gospel. We must not be misled into testing teaching by the character of the teacher. Good men can be deceived, and Satan needs good men to float his lies under the guise of truth.

The apostle Paul described how teaching spirits teach. He said they speak lies in hypocrisy (1 Tim. 4:2). That is, they speak lies as if they were truth. And the effect of their working sears the conscience. For example, if a believer accepts the teachings of evil spirits as divine because they come to him supernaturally, and he obeys and follows those teachings, his conscience is idle so that it practically becomes dulled and passive—or seared—and he does things under the influence of supernatural “revelation” that an active-ly-awakened conscience would sharply rebuke and condemn.

These believers give heed to evil spirits, first by listening to them and then by obeying them. They are deceived by accepting such things as wrong thoughts about God’s presence and about divine love, and they unknowingly give themselves up to the power of lying spirits. Working in the line of teaching, deceiving spirits will insert their lies spoken in hypocrisy and deceive believers about sin, themselves, and all other truths connected with the spiritual life.

THE ENEMY USES SCRIPTURE TO DECEIVE

Scripture is generally used as the basis of these teachings and is skillfully woven together like a spider's web, so that believers are caught in the snare. Single texts are wrenched from their context and place in the perspective of truth; sentences are taken from their correlative sentences; or, texts are carefully picked out from over a wide field and netted together so that they appear to give a full revelation of the mind of God—but the intervening passages, giving historical setting, actions, and circumstances connected with the speaking of the words, and other elements that give insight on each separate text, are skillfully dropped out.

In this way, a wide net is made for the unwary or untaught in the principles of Scripture exegesis, and many a life is sidetracked and troubled by this false use of the Word of God. Because the experience of ordinary Christians in regard to the Devil is limited to knowing him as a tempter or as an accuser, they have no conception of the depths of his wickedness and of the wickedness of evil spirits, and are under the impression that evil spirits will not quote Scripture, whereas they will quote the whole Book if they can deceive just one soul!

The teachings that deceiving spirits are now promoting are many. They are often thought to be found only in false religions, but the teaching spirits who suggest their doctrines or religious ideas to the minds of men are ceaselessly at work in every nation, seeking to play upon people's religious instincts and to substitute lies for truth.

THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY TRUE TEST OF TRUTH

All truth comes from God, and all that is contrary to truth comes from Satan. Therefore, truth alone dispels the deceptive doctrines of the teaching spirits of Satan—the truth of God, not merely views of truth—truth concerning all the principles and laws of the God of Truth. “Doctrines of demons” simply consist of that which a man thinks and believes as the outcome of suggestions made to his mind by deceiving spirits. All thoughts and beliefs belong to one of two realms—the realm of truth or the realm of falsehood—each having its source in God or Satan.

Even the thoughts that apparently originate in a man's own mind come from one of these two sources, for the mind itself is either darkened by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4), and therefore fertile soil for his teachings, or renewed by God (Eph. 4:23), purified from the veil of Satan and made open to the

reception and transmission of truth. Since thought or belief originates either from the God of Truth or the Father of Lies (see John 8:44), there is only one basic principle for testing the source of all doctrines or thoughts and beliefs held by believers or unbelievers: the test of the Word of God—the only channel of revealed truth in the world.

All teachings originating from deceiving spirits

1. weaken the authority of the Scriptures
2. distort the teaching in the Scriptures
3. add the thoughts of men to the Scriptures
4. put the Scriptures entirely aside

The ultimate purpose is to hide, distort, misuse, or put aside the revelation of God concerning the Cross of Calvary, where Satan was overthrown by the God-man, and where freedom was obtained for all his captives. The test of all thoughts and beliefs is therefore their harmony with the written Scriptures as a whole—in their full body of truth—and their attitude to the Cross and sin.

Some doctrines of demons, tested by these two primary principles, are Christian Science, spiritualism, and New Theology. All do not acknowledge sin, the Savior, or the Cross. Islam, Confucianism, and Buddhism also do not acknowledge the Savior or the Cross. They are “moral” religions, with man as his own savior. And while demon worshippers have no knowledge of a Savior or of His Calvary sacrifice, they do have true knowledge of evil powers, which they try to appease because they have seen evidence of their existence.

“SIGNS AND WONDERS” ARE NOT PROOF

In the church, countless thoughts and beliefs that are opposed to the truth of God are injected into the minds of Christians by teaching spirits. This renders them ineffective in the warfare with sin and Satan, and subject to the power of evil spirits—even though they are saved for eternity through their faith in Christ (see 1 Peter 1:3–5) and accept the authority of the Scriptures and know the power of the Cross.

All thoughts and beliefs should therefore be tested by the truth of God revealed in the Scripture, not merely by certain Scripture texts or portions of the Word, but by the principles of truth revealed in the Word. Satan will endorse his teachings by “signs and wonders” (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13). Therefore, “power,” “signs,” and “fire...from heaven”

are no proof that a teaching is of God. Nor is a teacher's "beautiful life" to be the infallible test, for Satan's ministers can be "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13–15).

SUPERNATURAL COUNTERFEITS

The climax of the flood tide of these deceiving spirits sweeping upon the church is described by the apostle Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians, where he spoke of the manifestation of one who will eventually gain entrance into the very sanctuary of God, so that he "sitteth in the temple of God" (2 Thess. 2:4), setting himself up as God. The presence of this one will be a presence like God, and yet he will be "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:9–10).

The Lord's words recorded by Matthew are reaffirmed in the revelation He gave to John on Patmos, that, at the close of the age, the main weapon used by the Deceiver for obtaining power over the people of the earth will be supernatural signs from heaven, when a counterfeit "lamb" does "great wonders" and even "maketh fire come down from heaven" to deceive those on earth, and exercises such control over the whole world that "no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast" (Rev. 13:11–17). Through this supernatural deception, the full purpose of the deceiving army of Satan will reach completion in the prophesied worldwide authority. The deception of the world with deepening darkness and the deception of the church through "teachings" and "manifestations" will reach the highest flood tide at the close of the age.

"BELIEVE NOT EVERY SPIRIT"

It is striking to note that the apostle who was chosen to transmit the revelation in preparation for the last days of the church militant should be the one to write to the Christians of his day, "Believe not every spirit" (1 John 4:1–6), and to earnestly warn his "children" that the "spirit of antichrist," the "spirit of error," was already actively at work among them. They were to "believe not"—that is, to doubt—every supernatural teaching and teacher until they were proved to be of God. They were to test the teachings to determine if they came from a "spirit of error" and were part of the Deceiver's campaign as antichrist.

If this attitude of neutrality and doubt toward supernatural teachings was needed toward the end of the apostle John's life—some fifty-seven years

after Pentecost—how much more is it needed in the “latter times” (1 Tim. 4:1) foretold by the Lord and by the apostle Paul—times that were to be characterized by a clamor of voices of “prophets” (those whom we call speakers and teachers today) using the sacred name of the Lord, and during which teachings received supernaturally from the spiritual realm would abound. These teachings would be accompanied by such wonderful proofs of their so-called divine origin that they would perplex even the most faithful of the Lord’s people, and even, for a time, deceive some of them.

WE MUST FACE THE TRUTH

The prophet Daniel, in writing about these “latter times,” said that some of the teachers “shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end” (Dan. 11:35). The truth must be faced: the elect may be deceived. We learn from Daniel’s words that they are apparently *permitted* to be deceived for a season, so that in the test of fire they may be “tried” or refined (the word refers to the expulsion of dross by the smelting fire), “purged” or purified (the removal of dross already expelled), and made “white” (the polishing and brightening of the metal after it has been freed from its impurities). It is probably in connection with this solemn word, *tried*, that one strange statement about the war at the close of the age is made, when it is said of the attack of the leopard-like beast, that “it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Rev. 13:7).

Daniel also speaks of the prevailing of the Enemy for a season: the horn “made war with the saints, and prevailed against them” (Dan. 7:21). Daniel adds: “Until the Ancient of days came...and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (v. 22). It appears, therefore, that in the “time of the end” (Dan. 11:35), God will permit Satan to prevail for a season against His saints, even as he prevailed over Peter when the apostle was handed over to him to be sifted (Luke 22:31); as he seemed to prevail over the Son of God at Calvary, when the “hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53) closed around Him at the Cross (Matt. 27:38–46); as he is shown to overcome the “two witnesses” described in Rev. 11:3–7; and as in the last great manifestation of the Dragon-deceiver’s triumph over the saints and his power over the whole inhabited earth. (See Revelation 13:7–15.)

GOD’S TRIUMPHS HIDDEN IN APPARENT DEFEAT

All these instances take place at different periods of time in the history of Christ and His church (and in the description in Revelation, the prevailing

of the leopard-like beast may refer to the saints on the earth *after* the rapture of the church), but they show the principle that God's triumphs are often hidden in apparent defeat. The elect of God must therefore pay careful attention, at all stages of the war with Satan as Deceiver, not to be swayed or moved by appearances. For the apparent triumph of supernatural powers, which appears to be divine, may prove to be satanic; and appearances of outward defeat, which appear to be the Devil's victory, may prove to hide the triumph of God.

PAY ATTENTION TO CHRIST'S WARNING

"Success" or "defeat" is therefore not an accurate criterion that a work is of God or Satan. Calvary stands forever as the revelation of God's way of working out His redemption purposes. Satan works for time, for he knows his time is short, but God works for eternity. Through death to life, through defeat to triumph, through suffering to joy, is God's way.

The key point to remember is that knowledge of truth is the primary safeguard against deception. Christians must know—and must learn to prove the spirits until they do know—what is of God, and what is of Satan. The words of the Master, "Behold, I have told you" (Matt. 24:25), plainly imply that our personal knowledge of danger is part of the Lord's way of guarding His own. Believers who blindly rely upon what they refer to as "the keeping power of God," without seeking to understand how to escape deception when they have been forewarned by the Lord, will surely find themselves entrapped by the subtle Foe.

In chapter two, we will explore what the Bible reveals about the nature of Satan and his evil spirits, and how Christ exposed and defeated the powers of darkness.