

Judgment begins at the house of God (also salvation)

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Let me begin by explaining why I am writing such an article as this. I am looking for a way (if it is still possible) to stop, and even turn back, the satanic steamroller that is destroying the culture and taking over all aspects of life in the country where I live, Brazil. (Of course the same is true of other countries as well.) The only possible ‘medicine’ is the love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10, see below), so the bottom line is this: what can we do to promote the love of the truth? Lamentably, the vast majority of the churches are part of the problem, rather than being part of the solution. I venture to say that less than 1% of the churches want a Bible with objective authority.¹ The culture outside the church is totally dominated by relativistic humanism, and most church members have been heavily influenced by that worldview. On the way to promoting the love of the truth, we must defend the objective authority of the biblical Text,² and the place to begin is with the churches.³ **To promote truth necessarily involves exposing lies.**

Any surgeon knows that for certain pathological conditions the only alternative to a premature physical death is radical surgery. The patient will not like the news, but if the surgery is successful, he will end up thanking the surgeon. Similarly, a brother probably will not appreciate being told that he has embraced a lie, but if he will stop and think, and change, he will end up thanking us. In desperate times ‘business as usual’ is not enough; it is necessary to take risks.⁴

Now consider 1 Peter 4:17—“Because the time has come for judgment to begin at God’s house; now if it starts with us, what will be the end of those who keep disobeying the Gospel of God?” Although the ‘publishing’ of this letter is often stated to have been around 60 AD, or even later, I suspect it may have been at least ten years earlier. In any case, although the nation of Israel will yet return to center stage, beginning with the day of Pentecost Sovereign Jesus has been interacting with the world using mainly His body, the Church. Since Peter is writing to Christians, he is referring to them as “God’s house”. It is possible to translate the verse above as ‘from God’s house’, that house being the point of departure. It seems clear that God’s judgment does not stop with us; it goes on to the world.

God has always judged His people

Once the blood of God’s Lamb had been shed, thus paying for the sin of the world, the judgment against those “who keep disobeying the Gospel of God” became more direct. But since judgment starts with God’s house, the demands upon those claiming to belong to Christ also became more direct. The fate of Ananias and Sapphira is an emphatic case in point.⁵ What I wish to emphasize is that God’s judging His house began at the beginning, it began on

¹ In consequence, they are lacking in spiritual power and spiritual discernment.

² It is the biblical Text that defines and teaches the Truth, and in order to arrive at the Truth we must understand that the Text has objective authority. Relativistic humanism is inimical to objective authority, and any attempt to relativize the authority of Scripture only serves the enemy.

³ Our only hope of correcting the national culture depends upon first correcting the churches.

⁴ In order to try to save the ‘patient’, I must take the risk of being rejected and hated. On the other hand, Ezekiel 3:20-21 explains an even more serious risk.

⁵ They were not given any warning, nor any chance to repent or explain.

the day of Pentecost, with reference to the Church. When we cry out to God to judge the world, the judging of God's house as a prior condition is not a factor¹—God has been judging His house right along.² However, I would say that judging is one thing, but correcting is another. The correcting of the culture begins with, and depends on, the correcting of the churches.

Consider what happened to the apostle Paul. The Holy Spirit had told him repeatedly **NOT** to go to Jerusalem, but he went anyway. When he got there he kowtowed to big boss James, who was well on his way back into Judaism. Do you remember his pitch to Paul? "You see, brother, how many tens of thousands are the Jews who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to our customs" (Acts 21:20-21).³ If his "many tens of thousands" was not a blatant exaggeration, as I suspect, then the whole church in that area was in a bad way (which it probably was anyway). Was Paul judged? He spent the next five years, at least, in chains.⁴

Was James judged? He was killed, not long after. Was the church in Jerusalem judged? The city was destroyed in 70 AD, and the Jerusalem church ceased to exist. The city was little more than a ruin for centuries.⁵ And now consider 1 Corinthians 11:29-30: "He who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself, not distinguishing the Lord's body. Because of this many among you are weak and sick, and a good many have died." Paul declares that God had already visited sickness on many, and death on even more. God was judging His people. A variety of further texts could be mentioned, but Hebrews will do. Please read 2:1-3, 3:12-4:13, 6:3-8, 10:26-31, and 12:28-29. "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God", "because our God is indeed a consuming fire!"

And then there are the seven letters that the glorified Jesus sent to the seven churches. Each letter ends with a promise to "the one who overcomes"; so what happens to you if you don't? Although He had some good things to say about the church in Ephesus, He said He would remove their 'lampstand' if they did not return to their first love. Indeed, in due time all seven of those churches lost their lampstand. Two of the letters refer to the doctrine and works of the Nicolaitans, that Sovereign Jesus says He hates. The etymology of the term suggests the beginning of the distinction between clergy and laity. It may have begun with James in Jerusalem.⁶ Before the end of the first century, a certain Clement was the bishop of Rome.

¹ For many years I had the idea that it was a prior condition that had not yet been fulfilled—don't ask me where I got it!

² Of course this has always been true. The O. T. is full of God's judgment upon His people, Israel. Adam was judged; Moses was judged. God has always required an accounting based on the benefits and blessings one receives.

³ "The law", "Moses", "our customs" = Judaism.

⁴ Try living in chains for just twenty-four hours, and see how you like it!

⁵ References during the early centuries to especially good NT manuscripts in Jerusalem are probably just pious hogwash. The center of gravity of the Church had moved north.

⁶ The Jews were accustomed to a high priest, a single individual at the top of the religious pyramid. Evidently that attitude invaded the churches.

The term 'bishop' came to be used of a presbyter who had authority over the other presbyters in his area, the boss presbyter.¹

Attempting to control someone else's spiritual life is forbidden

But the concept of special spiritual authority being vested in a 'bishop' soon ran afoul of Sovereign Jesus' words in Matthew 23:8-12 and John 4:23-24. First Matthew:

"But you (pl.), do not be called 'Rabbi'; because your Teacher is one, the Christ,² and you are all brothers. 9 And do not call anyone on earth your 'father'; because your Father is one, He who is in the heavens. 10 Neither be called leaders/guides; because your Leader is one, the Christ. 11 On the contrary, the greatest among you must be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

In verse 9, since the second person here is plural, the Lord is evidently referring to calling someone your spiritual father; He is not saying not to acknowledge your physical father. "Your (pl.) Father is one"—obviously they did not all have the same physical father. Verse 10 may be why we have no record in Scripture of a Christian calling someone his disciple; even in 1 Corinthians 3:4 Paul evidently avoids using the term. **I take it that our Lord is forbidding any effort by one Christian to control the spiritual life of another.** We may point the way, we may encourage, we may discipline when occasion warrants, but the rest is up to the Holy Spirit.³ The Lord had already told the Samaritan woman that the Father must be worshipped "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24).

"The time is coming, in fact now is, when the genuine worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Really, because the Father is looking for **such** people to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit,⁴ and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The Father "is looking" for those who will worship Him in spirit and truth.⁵ It may be that we have here a window on the reason why God created a race such as ours—persons in His image with the capacity to **choose**. God "is looking" for something, which means He does not have it, at least not automatically, nor in sufficient quantity. I take it that He wants to be appreciated for who He is, but to have meaning such appreciation cannot come from robots—it has to be voluntary. So He created a type of being with that capacity, but He had to take the risk that such a being would choose not to appreciate Him. Unfortunately, most human beings make the negative choice, and with that negative choice come all sorts of negative consequences. Ever since Adam human beings are born with an inclination toward

¹ In the writings of the 'church fathers' that have come down to us, there appears to be no mention of 'apostles' after the first century. This means that there was no 'apostolic succession'; the more so since apostles are designated by God, not ordained by men. Since the second century there has only been 'discipolic' succession. Any claims in our day based on apostolic succession are spurious (as were any such claims after the first century).

² Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "the Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

³ It is normal, indeed inescapable, that a new Christian will receive his first ideas about spiritual things from the older Christians around him. But as he grows and matures, he should learn to depend directly upon Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Again the lack of the definite article presents us with an ambiguity; the rendering 'a spirit' is possible. But as I indicate by the underlining, I understand that the quality inherent in the noun is being emphasized, which is another use of an absent article (in Greek).

⁵ See also 2 Chronicles 16:9, that tells you how to have God's help.

sin,¹ so for someone to choose to appreciate God is definitely not automatic, nor even easy. No one can reasonably accuse God of having 'stacked the deck' in His own favor, of 'buying votes'—He seems to have done just the opposite. If a human being, against his natural inclination, chooses to appreciate God, then God receives what He is looking for.

“In spirit and truth” presumably means that it cannot be faked, cannot be forced or imposed, cannot be merely physical, cannot be merely emotional (though both body and emotions can, and often will, be utilized). The concept of ‘bishop’ (and in our day even of lowly pastors) as someone having the authority to control the spiritual life of others is an open rebellion against Sovereign Jesus, who forbids any such attitude or proceeding.² But rebellion against God is Satan’s ‘thing’, and will certainly call down God’s judgment (see the discussion of 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 below).

Someone who wishes to control the spiritual life of others must develop a doctrinal ‘package’; he must define what they may and may not believe, and/or do. But of course that gave rise to competing ‘packages’, and competition between ‘bishops’, to the point that they were mutually excommunicating each other, and so on. That gave rise to different ‘churches’, and in our day to different ‘denominations’. This mentality guarantees the perpetuation of the falsehoods that have been incorporated into the denominational ‘packages’. In some cases they reached the point of declaring that only those who were within their ranks could be saved. Anyone who embraces a ‘package’ elevates that package above God’s inspired Word, and that is idolatry. Such idolatry offends the Holy Spirit, who has a special interest in that Word; such idolaters no longer listen to the Holy Spirit (if they ever did). Such idolaters condemn their ‘package’ to become an ‘old wineskin’, devoid of spiritual power.

I would say that the only way to avoid becoming an ‘old wineskin’ is to be constantly listening to the Holy Spirit and obeying what He says. Unfortunately, few Christians are in the habit of consulting the Holy Spirit, and those who do are marked for persecution. No Establishment can tolerate anyone who listens to the Holy Spirit. Surely, or have you forgotten John 3:8? “The wind blows where it wishes, and you (sg) hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who has been begotten by the Spirit.” Notice that the Lord is saying here that it is **we** who are to be unpredictable, like the wind, or the Spirit (“comes” and “goes” are in the present tense). If you are really under the control of the Spirit you will do unexpected things, just like He does, and that definitely will not please the ‘bosses’.³ (Since Satan is forever muddying the water with excesses and abuses, spiritual discernment is needed, but lamentably such discernment appears to be a rare commodity in

¹ Babies have to be self-centered in order to survive, but self-centeredness is the essence of sin, which, however, is not charged to the account until the person can understand what he is doing.

² A typical proceeding is to dictate who may, or may not, participate in the ‘Lord’s Supper’, as though the ‘table’ belongs to the leaders of the congregation, rather than to the Lord—after all, it is the ‘Lord’s Table’.

³ But what about Hebrews 13:17? “Obey your leaders and submit, for they keep watch over your souls, as those who must give account.” In the first place, I would say that the reference is to administrative matters, so that things be done ‘decently and in order’. But the minute a leader attempts to impose a falsehood, he should not be obeyed; he is no longer listening to the Holy Spirit. As Peter said to the council, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). I treat 1 Peter 5:5 similarly. Some 4% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “submitting to one another” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

the churches.) An Establishment is defined by its 'straightjacket' (or 'package'), and the Holy Spirit does not like straightjackets, and vice versa.

The love of the Truth

During the middle ages the Church all but died out, at least in the West. And why did the Church almost die out? It was because the Church became part of the problem, rather than being part of the solution. And how did it become part of the problem? It became part of the problem by rejecting the love of the truth (see the discussion of 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 below). When the Church becomes part of the problem, the surrounding culture is condemned. Did you get that? **When the Church becomes part of the problem, the surrounding culture is condemned.** Surely, because salvation begins at the house of God.

Consider 1 Timothy 3:15—"so that you may know how it is necessary to conduct oneself in God's household, which is the Church of the living God, pillar and foundation of the truth." My first impression would be that the truth should be sustaining the Church, not vice versa. But it is the Church that has the responsibility to promote and defend the truth in the society at large—in education, health, commerce, government, everywhere. Salvation can come to an individual just by reading God's Word, all by himself, but to transform a whole culture requires the Church. Remember also what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman in John 4:22, "salvation is from the Jews". Quite so. The Lamb of God is a Jew, and the O.T. canon came through the Jewish people (for that matter, most, if not all, of the N.T. was written by Jews as well). As Paul says in Romans 3:2, "they were entrusted with the oracles of God". The Oracles of God are His written revelation to the human race.

Then came the Protestant Reformation, but because of its emphasis on reason it was born deformed. It was not long before 'packages' developed within the Reformation, and in the nineteenth century it was besieged by three satanic sophistries (2 Corinthians 10:5): 1) Darwin's theory of evolution, 2) the so-called 'higher criticism' of the Bible, and then 3) the text-critical theory of Westcott and Hort.¹ These were followed by materialism, humanism, relativism, etc. A biblical Text with objective authority barely limped into the twentieth century, but then came the onslaught of liberal theology.²

To understand the full impact of the onslaught of liberal theology, one must take account of the milieu. Reason has always been important to the historic or traditional Protestant denominations. In consequence, academic respectability has always been important to their graduate schools of theology. The difficulty resides in the following circumstance: for at least two centuries academia has been dominated by Satan, and so the terms of 'respectability' are dictated by him. Those terms include 'publish or perish', but of course he controls the technical journals. Since he is the father of lies (John 8:44), anyone who wished to tell the

¹ The W-H theory did away with any notion of a NT text with objective authority. My demonstration that that theory is a tissue of falsehoods was first published in 1977 (the book having gone through at least six revisions since), and so far as I know, it has never been refuted. *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1977); *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV* (self-published with Amazon.com, 2014).

² One response to liberal theology was the so-called Neo-orthodoxy; it holds that the Bible is made up of divine parts and human parts, so that the whole cannot be said to be God's Word. Since that view offers no way to know which parts are and which are not, it also does away with any notion of a NT text with objective authority.

whole truth has always had a hard time getting an article published, no matter how good it was. To get an article published one had to toe the party line. 'Taking account of the existing literature' obliges one to waste a great deal of time reading the nonsense produced by Satan's servants, all of which was designed to keep the reader away from the **truth**—the 'reader' in this case being the students who in their turn would become pastors and church leaders, seminary professors, etc.¹

The TRUTH—aye, there's the rub. Consider 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12:

That one's coming is according to the working of Satan with all power² and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all wicked deception among those who are wasting themselves,³ because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved. 11 Yes, because of this God will send them an active delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all may be condemned who have not believed the truth but have taken pleasure in wickedness.⁴

Although verse ten is in the context of the activity of the Antichrist, who will find an easy target in 'those who are wasting themselves' (my translation), it does not follow that no one will be wasting himself before that activity. Obviously, people have been wasting themselves all down through history, and the underlying cause for that 'wasting' has never changed—"they did not receive the love of the truth". (It began in the Garden.)

Consider Romans 1:18: "Now the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of the people who suppress the truth by unrighteousness." To 'suppress the truth' is a deliberate act, an evil choice that invites God's wrath. (Romans 1:24-25 and 2:8 give more detail.) To hear a sermon about 'the love of God' is easy enough, but how many have you heard (or preached) about 'the wrath of God'? 'God hates sin but loves the sinner' is standard fare, but consider Psalm 5:4-6.

"For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in your sight; You **hate** all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man."

This is not an isolated text; there are a fair number of others in the same vein. Someone who deliberately chooses to be evil and to promote evil, having rejected the truth, thereby makes God his enemy, makes himself an object of His wrath.⁵ God has been judging sin for six thousand years.

¹ The systematic contamination of successive generations of future pastors inevitably resulted in the contamination of the congregations as well.

² When Satan fell he did not lose his power.

³ The verb here, ἀπωλλυμι, often rendered 'to perish' (John 3:16 in KJV), is used in a variety of contexts, but I take the core meaning to be 'waste'. The participial form here is ambiguous as to voice, either middle or passive, but the basic form of the verb is middle. Ephesians 1:5-14 makes clear that a basic objective of our redemption is that we be "to the praise of His glory", which was part of the original Plan (Isaiah 43:7). Only as we live for the glory of God can we realize or fulfill our potential, our reason for being. If you live for any other reason, you are wasting yourself.

⁴ 'Taking pleasure in wickedness' involves rejecting the Truth of a moral Creator who will demand an accounting, or even overt rebellion against that Creator (like Lucifer/Satan).

⁵ A person who sells himself to evil will spend eternity in the Lake of fire and brimstone, but usually gets a taste of God's wrath in this life as well.

Consider also Luke 16:31 “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone should rise from the dead.’” Abraham states a disquieting reality: people who reject God’s written revelation are self-condemned. As Jesus said in John 8:31-32, “If you abide in my word, you really are my disciples; and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will make you free.” So what happens if you don’t abide?

Consider further 2 Timothy 4:4, “They will turn their ears away from the Truth and be turned aside to fables.” Notice the progression: first they choose to turn away from the Truth, but after that someone else takes over and leads them into ever greater stupidities—that someone else is Satan, using his servants.

But to return to Thessalonians, please notice carefully what is said there: it is God Himself who sends the “active delusion”!¹ And upon whom does He send it? Upon those who do not receive the love of the truth—it is a direct judgment upon their rejection of the truth.² And what is the purpose of the strong delusion?—the condemnation of those who do not believe the truth. Dear me, this is heavy. Notice that the truth is **central** to anyone’s salvation. This raises the necessary question: just what is meant by ‘the truth’?

In John 14:6 Sovereign Jesus declared Himself to be ‘the truth’. Praying to the Father in John 17:17 He said, “Thy Word is truth”. Once each in John chapters 14, 15 and 16 He referred to the third person of the Trinity as “the Spirit of the truth”. Since the Son is back in Heaven at the Father’s right hand, and the Spirit is not very perceptible to most of us, most of the time, and since the Word is the Spirit’s sword (Ephesians 6:17), our main access to ‘the truth’ is through God’s Word, the Bible. The Bible offers propositional truth, but we need the Holy Spirit to illumine that truth, and to have the Holy Spirit we must be adequately related to Sovereign Jesus—it is Jesus who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). If that is ‘the Truth’, then what is ‘the lie’? I suggest that ‘the lie’ is short for Satan’s kingdom and all it represents. In that event, we could also say that ‘the Truth’ is short for Christ’s Kingdom and all it represents.

Now then, for something to be received, it must be offered; one cannot believe in something he has never heard about (Romans 10:14). A baby born to Satanist parents and dedicated to him may well grow to adulthood without ever having been exposed to ‘the truth’. The same holds for cultures that have no knowledge at all of Christianity. In such circumstances a person can be serving ‘the lie’ because that is all he knows. He has not rejected ‘the truth’, because he has no knowledge of it. For such a person there is hope; if some day ‘the truth’ is presented to him, he has the option of embracing it, as has happened many times.

The use of the verb ‘receive’ clearly implies an act of volition on the part of those not receiving the truth; that love was offered or made available to them but they did not want it; they wanted to be able to lie and to entertain lies told by others. But the consequences of such a choice are terrible; they turned their back on salvation. Notice in verse 11 that God sends the active delusion so that they will believe the lie; God pushes them toward the lie! In

¹ I understand ‘active’ in the sense of ‘aggressive’; it is not a passive delusion that lies quietly in your brain, allowing you to go your merry way. It is aggressive, it tries to control how you think, and therefore what you do and who you are.

² Please note that it is not enough to merely ‘accept’ the truth; it is required that we love the truth. Satan tantalizes us with fame and fortune (on his terms, of course), so to love the truth requires determination; since the love in question is ἀγαπᾶν, it involves an act of the will.

John 8:44 Sovereign Jesus stated that Satan is the father of lying, there being no truth in him. So if God Himself sends delusion, He is turning the victims over to Satan. So if God turns you over to Satan, what are your chances?

Notice the sequence: first they reject the love of the truth; it is as a consequence of that choice that God sends the delusion. The implication is that there is a **point of no return**;¹ God sends the delusion so that they may be condemned. The only intelligent choice is to embrace the truth! If God offers you the truth and you reject it, your choice turns Him into your enemy—not a good idea!

A correct solution depends upon a correct diagnosis

Why did I write this article? I am looking for a way (if it is still possible) to stop, and even turn back, the satanic steamroller that is destroying the culture and taking over all aspects of life in the country where I live, Brazil. (Of course the same is true of other countries as well.) The only possible ‘medicine’ is the love of the truth, so the bottom line is this: what can we do to promote the love of the truth? Lamentably, the vast majority of the churches are part of the problem, rather than being part of the solution. I venture to say that less than 1% of the churches want a Bible with objective authority.² The culture outside the church is totally dominated by relativistic humanism, and most church members have been heavily influenced by that worldview. On the way to promoting the love of the truth, we must defend the objective authority of the biblical Text,³ and the place to begin is with the churches.⁴ To promote truth necessarily involves exposing lies.

The world hates the Truth

Satan never quits with his attacks against the objective authority of God's Word; it began back in the Garden: "Yea, hath God said?" Satan hates the Truth, because as Sovereign Jesus said in John 8:44, "there is no truth in him". Satan is the father of lying (same verse), so whenever we tell a lie we are doing Satan's thing. And whenever we embrace a lie (like evolutionism, Marxism, Freudianism, Hortianism, humanism, relativism, etc.) we give Satan a foothold in our minds, which he usually turns into a stronghold. When Satan gets someone to sell himself to evil, having rejected the truth, that someone becomes what Jesus called a ‘dog’ in Matthew 7:6.⁵ A ‘dog’ reacts in an aggressive and violent manner against any presentation of the Truth. The media and academia are filled with such dogs; they are sworn enemies of the Truth. Why did the Sovereign say **not** to offer anything ‘holy’ to such people? The implication is that it would be a waste of time; they are beyond recovery—their ongoing opposition will also get in the way. However, in order to save the people that they are damaging, it will be necessary to challenge and refute what they represent—before attempting to do this, you

¹ However, since God is gracious and longsuffering, He may grant a number of opportunities to repent before a person reaches that point. In my own experience, I threw off a variety of falsehoods that I was taught one at a time over a period of years. That said, I should not assume that I am now totally free from false ideas; I need to keep listening to the Holy Spirit as I study the Scriptures.

² In consequence they are lacking in spiritual power and spiritual discernment.

³ It is the biblical Text that defines and teaches the Truth, and in order to arrive at the Truth we must understand that the Text has objective authority. Relativistic humanism is inimical to objective authority, and any attempt to relativize the authority of Scripture only serves the enemy.

⁴ Our only hope of correcting the national culture depends upon first correcting the churches.

⁵ 1 Timothy 6:5 and 2 Timothy 3:8 may refer to such ‘dogs’ as well.

had better know how to wield God's power (Ephesians 3:20). To confront a 'dog' is not the same as offering him something 'holy'.

Consider our Lord's words recorded in Luke 17:2—"It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to fall." What is worse than a horrible, premature physical death? Spiritual death. Whoever destroys the faith of a 'little one' is self-condemned. What about all the professors and pastors who make it their business to destroy the faith of their students and hearers?

Consider also 2 Peter 3:5—"This because they deliberately ignore that heavens and land (out of water and through water) had been existing from of old by the word of God." It appears to me that the term "deliberately" has a direct bearing on the intended meaning of the Greek term usually rendered as 'forget'. How can one 'forget' deliberately? To 'ignore' is deliberate; to 'pretend' is deliberate. When a professor, a scholar, or a scientist ignores the scientific evidence for a worldwide flood, he is deliberately deceiving his students or readers. To do so is to be perverse, to do so is to serve Satan.

Comparing Romans 1:18: the wrath of God is upon those who suppress the truth, with Psalm 5:5: God hates all workers of iniquity, with what Jesus said in John 6:44: "No one is able to come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him", we may reasonably conclude that the Father will not draw someone whom He hates. So anyone who has become a 'dog' is condemned. Just by the way, have you not noticed that those who were brought up in a Christian environment but then turned their back on Jesus are often more virulent in their opposition to God's truth than those who were brought up as pagans? There is no way to save a 'dog', but we should work to save their students and readers—how can we do this apart from demonstrating that what the 'dog' teaches is wrong? To confront a 'dog' is not the same as offering him something 'holy'; we are not trying to save him, we are refuting him for the sake of his students and readers.

False doctrines in the churches

I suspect that not many Christians in the so-called 'first world' really believe what Sovereign Jesus said in Matthew 7:14: those who find the way of Life are **few!** We need to consider carefully Revelation 22:15; "whoever loves and practices a lie" is excluded from the heavenly City.¹ The Text has 'a' lie, not 'the' lie. The verb here is φιλέω, that refers to emotional love; someone who sells himself to a lie usually becomes emotionally attached to it, and they react aggressively (often irrationally) if you challenge their lie. In contrast, in 2 Thessalonians 2:10 the love of the truth is ἀγαπή love, that refers to an act of the will whereby you align yourself with the truth.

Consider 1 Timothy 4:1-2—"Now the Spirit says explicitly that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceiving spirits and to things taught by demons—through hypocritical liars whose own consciences have been cauterized." Notice that one

¹ Help! "A lie" is rather general, open-ended. What happens if I accepted a lie without realizing that it was one? But the text does not say 'accepts'; it says 'loves' and 'practices'. The implication is that the contrary evidence, to the lie, is available, but has been rejected, or deliberately ignored—the person sold himself to the lie.

cannot “fall away from the faith” unless he was first with the faith. Be not deceived, the churches (with exceptions, of course) are filled with a variety of ‘doctrines’ of demonic origin. The enemy uses a certain type of person to ‘sell’ them. Whatever its origin, any false doctrine gives the enemy an entrance into the life of the church, and then into the persons who attend there.

But let us return to Revelation 22:15. The verb ‘practice’ indicates a value that orients your conduct. If you are practicing a lie, that lie has become part of what you are, part of your private ‘package’. Depending on the nature of the lie, its contaminating influence could end up touching all areas of your life. A lie like ‘God does not exist’ touches everything. Obviously, the more lies that someone practices, the worse off that he will be. Notice, however, that the verbs “loves” and “practices” are in the present tense, which means that while there is life there is hope; it is still possible to repent and change and escape condemnation. Anyone who is overtaken by death while practicing a lie will be excluded from the City.¹

Now notice what it says in Ezekiel 18; I encourage you to read the whole chapter with care. Each person is responsible for his own destiny, and it is possible to change destinies. Verses 21-22 teach that someone who starts out wrong can change to right, and live. Verse 23: “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, “and not that he should turn from his ways and live?” But verse 24 teaches that the reverse is true; someone who starts out right can change to wrong, and die. While there is life there is hope, except for certain irreversible conditions.²

If you consult the Holy Spirit on a given matter, He will not permit you to believe a lie. “He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). He is the Spirit of the Truth (John 15:26) and He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). It follows that He hates lies. “These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, **a lying tongue**, . . .” (Proverbs 6:16-17). “Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD” (Proverbs 12:22). And remember that liars cannot enter the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27, 22:15). The case of Joshua and the Gibeonites provides a negative example. The Text says explicitly that they did not seek the Lord’s guidance (Joshua 9:14), and the negative consequences lasted for centuries.

I will now discuss some of the lies that Satan has succeeded in ‘selling’ to many Christians, precisely because they did not consult the Holy Spirit before embracing them. It may be that most people simply accept what they are taught because they trust the teacher, as well as not feeling competent to attempt an independent judgement—and many of them may stop short of ‘loving’ and ‘practicing’. It is also lamentably true that very few churches teach how to consult the Holy Spirit, but none of this changes the consequences of a lie. Such lies often become strongholds of Satan in their minds, that they then defend emotionally. Have you ever noticed that when you challenge certain doctrines the people simply explode? They are incapable of discussing the question rationally; they do not know all that the Bible says on the subject. For all that, to promote the truth we must expose lies. If the promoting of the love of the Truth is our top priority, then we must accept the consequences of exposing and

¹ All of us have received false information that we assumed to be true, and in some cases may even have acted upon it, but if it did not become part of our ongoing practice, then it will not necessarily result in keeping us out of the City.

² These will be discussed below in the section, “Sins that lead to death”.

denouncing lies. If all Christians were to throw off all of the eight cherished falsehoods discussed below, the world would see an outpouring of God's power unprecedented in human history.

Sovereign grace: The doctrine of 'sovereign grace' is obviously false. God is indeed sovereign, but no single one of His attributes can be, by simple logic, since it is constrained by all the others. God is certainly grace, but He is also love (which necessarily includes the hate of evil, because of the consequences to loved ones), truth, wisdom, power, justice, wrath, eternity, and doubtless others that our finite minds cannot comprehend. Nowhere does the Bible teach that grace is sovereign; the doctrine is an invention. Those who use the idea of sovereign grace to protect sin and comfort the sinner¹ are in for a terrible surprise. Anyone who has embraced the notion of 'sovereign grace' did not consult the Holy Spirit before doing so.

Unconditional love: The doctrine that God's love is 'unconditional' is also false. Since we have no way of deserving His love beforehand, presumably God offers His love without prior condition—it is unconditional only in that sense. But the minute someone receives God's love, then His expectations come into play. From John 4:23-24 it is clear that the Father is looking for a response to His love; He wants to be reciprocated. This is also clear from John 14:21 and 23. If God's love is unconditional, why then does He chasten us? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19). "Whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6). And why does He demand an accounting? "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10; see also 1 Corinthians 3:11-15). Those who use the idea of unconditional love to protect sin and comfort the sinner are in for a terrible surprise. Anyone who has embraced the notion of 'unconditional love' did not consult the Holy Spirit before doing so.

Eternal security: The doctrine of 'eternal security', as usually understood, is also false, and even more dangerous to the souls of men than the two discussed above. A crass statement of the 'doctrine' would go something like this: Once saved, always saved, no matter what you do afterwards. When one mentions passages like Ephesians 5:5-6 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, that list practices that exclude from the Kingdom, the standard defense is to say that such people never were saved. But do they not beg the question? Both the passages above were written to believers, not unbelievers. Why would the Holy Spirit write such things to believers if it were simply impossible for them to fall into such practices? And why did the glorified Jesus say, "I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life" (Revelation 3:5)? Please note that it is impossible to blot out a name that is not there! To try to argue that the glorified Jesus was using an impossible 'bogey-man' to scare them would make Him out to be a liar, which He cannot be (Titus 1:2). And then there are all the passages that speak of enduring to the end, so as to be saved. But the definitive text on the subject is Hebrews 6:3-6. The descriptions given in verses 4 and 5 can only refer to someone who has been regenerated, as verse 6 makes clear. The only way to "crucify again" is if you have already done so, at least once. To say that the Holy Spirit is using an impossible 'bogey-man' to scare them would make Him out

¹ By 'comfort the sinner' I mean to tell a sinner not to worry about his sin, rather than confronting it.

to be a liar, as well, also impossible.¹ Those who use the idea of eternal security to protect sin and comfort the sinner are in for a terrible surprise. Anyone who has embraced the notion of ‘eternal security’ did not consult the Holy Spirit before doing so.

Salvation without works: The Protestant Reformation correctly rejected the Roman doctrine of salvation by works, but to replace it with ‘faith alone’ is open to serious misunderstanding. Ephesians 2:8-10 gives us the truth on this subject in a nutshell:

“For by grace you have been saved, through the Faith²—and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ You see, we are His ‘poem’,³ created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance in order that we should walk in them.”⁴

We are not saved by good works, but we are indeed saved for good works; we do not do good works in order to be saved, but we must do good works because we are saved. James is very clear on this point; a faith that does not produce cannot save (James 2:14). Faith without works is dead (James 2:17,20,26). If you are alive, you do things. The plan of redemption is not just about getting us to heaven, it is about our contributing to Christ’s Kingdom down here. To tell someone that all he has to do is ‘believe in Jesus’⁵ and ‘bang’, he goes to heaven, is a cruel falsehood. Anyone who has embraced the notion that he can be saved without working did not consult the Holy Spirit before doing so.

Substitutionism: The doctrine of ‘substitution’ holds that the Church totally replaces Israel as God’s people and that never again will Israel receive any special attention from God. Adherents of substitution are obliged to ignore or mistreat the considerable percentage of the total biblical text that is prophecy relating to the end times. They must also reject plain biblical statements to the contrary, the equivalent of making the Holy Spirit out to be a liar (don’t forget that to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is unforgivable). 1 Corinthians 10:32—“Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.” This text makes clear that during the Church Age there are three categories of people: Jews, non-Jews and the Church (made up of both Jews and non-Jews who are in Christ). Before Pentecost there were two categories: Jews and non-Jews. Substitutionists hold that after Pentecost there were still

¹ An appeal to John 10:28-29 reflects a basic misunderstanding of the Text; the crucial point is the semantic area of the verb “snatch”. Being snatched is one thing; jumping out is another. You cannot ‘snatch’ yourself, it must be done by an outside force, and no such force is greater than God. But, if you don’t want to go to Heaven, you won’t; God will certainly not take you there against your will. Sovereign Jesus puts it very plainly in John 15:6, “If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch . . .” ‘Abiding’ is up to us; we are not forced to do it. If we choose not to, we are out. Note that you cannot be “cast out” unless you are first in.

² The Text has ‘the’ faith; the reference is to a specific Faith, presumably the body of truth that revolves around the person of Jesus.

³ The English word ‘poem’ comes from the Greek word here, *poiema*, and is one of its meanings. Just as each poem is an individual creation of the poet, so we are individual creations, not produced by a production line in a factory.

⁴ “Prepared in advance”—I imagine that this refers to God’s moral code, the rules of conduct that everyone should follow (if everyone did, we would not need jails, rescue missions, etc.).

⁵ Unfortunately, most versions do not translate the Greek text adequately with this clause; the Text never has ‘believe in Jesus’, it always has ‘believe into Jesus’, the point being that one must change location from being outside to being inside. To believe into Jesus involves commitment. It is also wrong to use ‘accept Jesus’ rather than the biblical ‘receive Jesus’—one ‘accepts’ from someone who is inferior in rank, from someone superior in rank one ‘receives’. A ‘Jesus’ that you merely accept cannot save you, since he would be smaller than you are.

just two: Church and non-Church, wherein the Church replaced Israel. But it is not so; Israel still exists as a separate entity in God's plan. Chapters nine, ten and eleven of Romans go into some detail on this point. Romans 11:1-2—"I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! . . . God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew."¹ Substitutionism contradicts this plain statement. At the end of Galatians 6:16 we find "the Israel of God". It is very common to hear this phrase used as a synonym for the Church, but it is not. According to Greek grammar, the repetition of the preposition 'upon' in two phrases joined by 'and' makes clear that the objects of the prepositions refer to distinct entities. Hence, "the Israel of God" cannot be a reference to the Church, assuming that "those who conform to this rule" refers to those who are "in Christ Jesus". I take "the Israel of God" to refer to sincere, devout Israelites. Anyone who has embraced the notion of 'substitution' did not consult the Holy Spirit before doing so.

Idolatry: Idolatry is certainly sin, but in what sense is it a lie? Well, does it not replace something true with something false? 2 Timothy 3:16 says that Scripture is like God's breath. Psalm 138:2 says: "You have magnified your word above all your name", and a name represents the person. And John 17:17 says: "Your word is truth". To place church tradition above God's Word is a form of idolatry. To place a denomination's doctrinal 'package' above God's Word is a form of idolatry. To place a church leader's word above God's Word is a form of idolatry. Any of the above hinder spiritual growth, and may lead to ultimate loss, because they all contain falsehood. Anyone who has adopted any of those practices did not consult the Holy Spirit before so doing.

Cessationism: The doctrine of 'cessationism' is also false. Cessationism claims that the 'sign gifts' ceased when the NT Canon was completed, or when the last shovelful of dirt landed on the apostle John's grave.² The alleged scriptural basis for this is found in 1 Corinthians 13:8^b-10. These verses have received more than their fair share of mistreatment, partly because commentators have not linked verse 12 to them (seeing verse 11 as parenthetical). Consider verse 10: "But whenever the complete should come, then the 'in part' will be done away with." If we can pinpoint the 'then', we will have also pinpointed the 'when';³ and verse 12 pinpoints the 'then'. When will we see 'face to face', when will we know as we are known? 1 John 3:2 has the answer: "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." It is at the return of Christ that we will see 'face to face', so "whenever the complete should come" refers to Christ at His second coming. The problem with 'prophecy', 'tongues' and our present 'knowledge' is that they are 'in part', but after the return of Christ we will have no further need for them. Since Christ has not returned yet, these 'in part' things are certainly still with us. The claim that 'the complete' refers to the

¹ Recall that this was written decades after Pentecost and the beginning of the Church.

² To affirm that the miraculous gifts ceased when the last shovelful of dirt fell on the apostle John's grave is an historical falsehood. Christians who lived during the second, third and fourth centuries, whose writings have come down to us, affirm that the gifts were still in use in their day. No 20th or 21st century Christian, who was not there, is competent to contradict them. Any 'cessationist' will have a stronghold of Satan in his mind on that subject, because he has embraced a lie. Any doctrine that derives from reaction against excesses and abuses gives victory to Satan. Any argument designed to justify lack of spiritual power cannot be right.

³ These two temporal adverbs work together.

completed New Testament canon does violence to the Text. If it had really been the Holy Spirit's purpose to tell us that the *charismata* would disappear in a few decades, He presumably could have done a much better job of it. Cessationists also generally choose to ignore all that the Bible says about warfare with Satan and his angels, and in consequence they spend their lives in spiritual defeat, producing much less for the Kingdom than they could and should. They do not even do the same things that Jesus did, much less the greater things (John 14:12). Those who use the idea of cessationism in an attempt to explain and justify their lack of spiritual power are being foolish, if not worse. Anyone who has embraced the notion of 'cessationism' did not consult the Holy Spirit before doing so.

Prosperity gospel: While there may be variations on the theme, the basic 'pitch' is to the hearer's selfish interests, while any serious commitment to Christ and His Kingdom is severely ignored. The emphasis is upon blessings, not the Blessor, but the blessings are not free; to get them one must contribute heavily to the purveyors thereof. But Sovereign Jesus gave the definitive answer to this stupidity (or should it be 'perversity') in Matthew 6:24—"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." 'Mammon' is sometimes translated as 'money', but it probably includes more than that, although money is central to it—a materialistic worldview. As Jesus said, someone serving mammon cannot be serving God at the same time. Anyone who wants to go to heaven must reject mammon. Anyone who has embraced any form of the prosperity 'gospel' did not consult the Holy Spirit before doing so.

The reader may well have tired of the refrain, "did not consult the Holy Spirit", but of course there is more to the story than that. Recall what Sovereign Jesus said to the Sadducees, "You are deceived, not knowing the Scripture nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). To be ignorant of both the Scripture and the power of God is to be spiritually bankrupt. Anyone who has embraced any of the falsehoods discussed above did not study the Scriptures sufficiently before doing so.

There are many, many more false things being taught in our churches,¹ but I consider that the short list discussed above is sufficient for my present purpose. **If all Christians were to throw off all of the eight cherished falsehoods discussed above, the world would see an outpouring of God's power unprecedented in human history.**² I am well aware that one painful consequence of taking Revelation 22:15 seriously is to consider the fate of people we loved and respected who passed on while embracing one or more of the falsehoods discussed above. That is a question that is in God's capable hands. For ourselves, 2 Corinthians 10:12 comes to mind: "But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." We had best base what we are and do on God's Text.

I now move on to a topic that has received very little attention, so far as I know. It underscores the importance of promoting the love of the Truth.

¹ All false teaching has a certain destiny; as Sovereign Jesus said in Matthew 15:13, "Every plant that my heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted."

² The outpouring in Moses' time was limited to a small area, as was the outpouring in Jesus' time. Today there are Christians all around the world.

Sins that lead to death

Consider 1 John 5:16-17—“If anyone should see his brother sinning a sin not leading to death, let him ask, and He will give him life for those who do not sin unto death. There is sin leading to death; I am not saying that he should make request about that.¹ 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.” It should be obvious that John is not contradicting Romans 6:23—“The wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Obvious, because the shed blood of God’s Lamb delivers the true believer from that death (the spiritual part). Anyone who dies outside of Christ is condemned by his sin.

But notice that John is talking about Christians; “If anyone should see his **brother** . . .” John is saying that for believers there are sins that lead to death and others that do not. A necessary question presents itself; is he talking about a premature physical death (everyone dies sooner or later), or is it spiritual death? John clearly says that a sin leading to death is irreversible, there is no point in praying about it, God will not grant life. A premature physical death is not all that serious if the person still goes to heaven. I think of two possible candidates:

- 1) God sometimes kills those who participate in the ‘Lord’s Table’ in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). The use of the verb ‘sleep’ indicates that they do not lose their salvation; I believe it is reserved for the death of believers.
- 2) Acting in an irresponsible manner (presumptuously) with the intent of obliging God to work a miracle to save you. Satan tried to get Jesus to do this, but did not succeed (Matthew 4:5-7). People who attempt this generally die prematurely.

That said, however, I rather doubt that John was writing about physical death. Consider what is said in Hebrews 10:26-31.

“Because, if we deliberately keep on sinning after having received the real knowledge of the Truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 just a certain fearful anticipation of judgment and fierce fire that is ready to consume the hostiles. 28 Anyone who rejected Moses’ law died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be deemed worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has regarded as unholy the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, “‘Vengeance is up to me”, says the Lord, “I will repay”.’ And again, ‘The LORD will judge His people.’ 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God!”

Notice that verse 28 refers to a premature physical death, so the “how much worse punishment” in the next verse must refer to spiritual death. Notice further that from verses 19-25 (same chapter) it is clear that the author is addressing believers. This is confirmed by verse 26: “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” can only apply to someone who has already taken advantage of Christ’s sacrifice. Notice also the ‘after having received the real knowledge of the Truth’ and ‘by which he was sanctified’ (verses 26 and 29).

¹ I suppose that a request about a sin leading to death simply will not be granted. In that case it does no harm to take a chance, in the hope that you can still make a difference. We ignore this area of truth to our peril.

I will now discuss some possible candidates for sin that condemns a Christian to spiritual death, that causes irreversible spiritual ruin.

- 1) Matthew 10:33 falls within the instructions that Jesus gave to the twelve apostles before He sent them out two by two: “Whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven”. One possible reference is to a Christian who caves under persecution. Revelation 21:8 consigns ‘the cowardly’ to the Lake. A Christian who becomes a Mason (Freemason) is clearly condemned. During the initiation ritual the candidate is asked, “Where are you coming from?” and he must answer, “I am coming from darkness”. Then he is asked, “What are you coming for?” and he must answer, “I am coming for light”. At that moment the candidate has formally denied Jesus before men. Surely, because in John 8:12 Jesus affirmed: “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” Further, such people generally do so for material gain, thereby switching from Jesus to mammon (Mathew 6:24).
- 2) Hebrews 10:29 refers to someone “who has trampled the Son of God under foot”, evidently referring to a virulent rejection by someone who was once a Christian (sanctified). I can think of several modern day examples. Some years ago there was a very successful Canadian evangelist named Charles Templeton. His evangelistic campaigns filled football stadiums; many thousands of people responded to his invitations; at least one hundred Canadian foreign missionaries received their call under his ministry. But then someone convinced him that he needed more ‘culture’, more ‘sophistication’, and he went to a liberal theological seminary in the USA to get it. When he returned he was blaspheming God and cursing Jesus Christ; as a television host his favorite sport was to ridicule the Christian faith. Years later he told someone that he “missed Jesus”, which indicates that he knew that he could not return (Hebrews 6:6).
- 3) And how about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Mark 3:30 defines it as ascribing to Satan something done by the Holy Spirit. Is it impossible for a Christian to do this? Have you never heard someone roundly condemn all things charismatic as being from Satan? I would suggest that to be careless on this point is not to be recommended—better safe than sorry.

Sins for which we may pray

Now then, having said all of that, what might be some sins about which we may, and should, pray? Well, how about the embracing of any one of the lies that I discussed above? If we can get a brother to abandon such a lie, we will be doing him a tremendous favor. I may not enjoy hearing a doctor tell me I have a life-threatening condition, but if I allow him to save me from a premature death, I will end up thanking him. Similarly, a brother probably will not appreciate being told that he has embraced a lie, but if he will stop and think, and change, he will end up thanking us. If we wish to save a brother from Revelation 22:15, it is a risk that we must take.

And then there is Hebrews 3:12-13. “Take care, brothers, that there not be a malignant heart of unbelief in any of you, so as to go away from¹ the living God; 13 rather, exhort yourselves

¹ Notice the direction. The term ‘malignant’ implies satanic influence.

every day, while it is called 'today', so that none of you be hardened through sin's deceitfulness." I rendered "exhort yourselves" because the pronoun here is reflexive, not reciprocal, but being plural it probably includes both ideas—each one should exhort himself, but we should also exhort each other. If we are attentive and vigilant, there will be no end of things to pray about, things where we can still make a difference.

All of this relates to the purpose of this article in the following way. To promote truth it is necessary to expose and combat falsehood. The obvious place to start with our promoting is with individual believers, and the more so if they are leaders and teachers within their communities. Although they may reject us and our 'impertinence', Ezekiel 3:20-21 bears directly on this question.

"Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. 21 Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul."

When we see a brother going in the wrong direction, it is incumbent upon us to warn him, even if he rejects us. Notice again, "his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered" —how terrible! Allow me to insist that the question before us is not merely theoretical or 'pedantic'; it is terribly practical, it is of the essence. In the words of Deuteronomy 32:47, "It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." It is certainly life for each one of us individually, but it is also life for the churches, and then it will be life for the world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I will review the 'building blocks' that make up the article.

1) Why did I use 1 Peter 4:17? There was a time when I thought that I could not ask God to judge the world because He had not yet judged the Church. But I was mistaken. God has always judged both His 'house' and the world. More to the point, the world is in the mess that it is because of failure in the Church. Further, judging is one thing, but correcting is another, and the correcting of the culture begins with, and depends on, the correcting of the churches. To correct a group of people begins with getting them to see where they are wrong, which involves denouncing error and showing a way out.

2) Why did I use Matthew 23:8-12 and John 4:23-24? I tried to trace a basic cause of failure in the Church—a correct solution depends upon a correct diagnosis. The Church became part of the problem, rather than being part of the solution, and it became part of the problem by rejecting the love of the Truth. The concept of 'bishop' (and in our day even of lowly pastors) as someone having the authority to control the spiritual life of others is an open rebellion against Sovereign Jesus, who forbids any such attitude or proceeding. But rebellion against God is Satan's 'thing', and will certainly call down God's judgment.

3) Why did I use 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12? This text gives the essence of the problem and the essence of the solution. The consequences of rejecting the love of the Truth are devastating, both to the Church and to the world. It is God Himself who sends the “active delusion”!¹ And upon whom does He send it? Upon those who do not receive the love of the truth—it is a direct judgment upon their rejection of the truth.² And what is the purpose of the strong delusion?—the condemnation of those who do not believe the truth. The only solution that I can see is to promote the love of the Truth, which necessarily involves denouncing error.

4) Why did I use Revelation 22:15? This text states plainly the terrible consequence of embracing a lie. To promote love of the Truth it is necessary to expose lies, and this is a necessary part of correcting the churches so they can be salt and light in the surrounding culture. A correct solution depends upon a correct diagnosis. Although they may reject us and our ‘impertinence’, Ezekiel 3:20-21 bears directly on this question. When we see a brother going in the wrong direction, it is incumbent upon us to warn him, even if he rejects us. Notice again, “his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered”—how terrible!

5) Why did I use 1 John 5:16-17? This text emphasizes the possible terrible end result of being flippant about sin and the Truth. Anyone who is flippant about sin does not have the mind of Christ. We ignore to our peril the instruction given in Hebrews 3:12-13. And then there is 1 Corinthians 9:27—the Greek term *adokimos* is stronger than some commentaries would have you believe.

The future of the Church and of the world depends on the love of the Truth.

¹ I understand ‘active’ in the sense of ‘aggressive’; it is not a passive delusion that lies quietly in your brain, allowing you to go your merry way. It is aggressive; it tries to control how you think, and therefore what you do and who you are.

² Please note that it is not enough to merely ‘accept’ the truth; it is required that we love the truth. Satan tantalizes us with fame and fortune (on his terms, of course), so to love the truth requires determination; since the love in question is *αγαπη*, it involves an act of the will.