

# Laodicea, part 2 – The Laodicean State

## CONTENTS

<i>The Root</i> .....	1
<i>A System of Doubt</i> .....	2
<i>The Truth of the Atonement</i> .....	2
<i>Misuse of the Atonement</i> .....	3
<i>The Work of Regeneration</i> .....	4
<i>Christ and Antichrist</i> .....	5

By Edward Irving

From *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 10, “Epistle to the Church in Laodicea”, 1831.

In this short article (a continuation of part 1 which covered the meaning of “Hot or Cold”), the root cause of the Laodicean condition is clearly set forth, 60 years before elders Waggoner and Jones would preach the same truth to the Seventh-day Adventist church, and 130 years before the 1888 Awakening took place in that same church over the same issues.

These issues, which Laodiceans fail to grasp, are: (1) a proper understanding of human nature: the power of sin is not just an integral part of the flesh, but a spiritual power that is removed by the grace of Christ in forgiveness; (2) Christ is our example: we can live a life of victory as Christ did, for He came in our flesh and was victorious over it; (3) the atonement is not just a substitution, whereby Christ hides our evil deeds from judgment.

## The Root

And now, to come to particulars, let us a little explain this Laodicean state, continually halting between two: hypocritical, and not following the light; not zealous for God, nor yet zealous for nature; neither in the condition of hotness nor of coldness.

The root of it is false doctrine concerning the flesh and the Spirit; as if they both lived, and might and ought both to live in the saints, and keep fighting against one another to the end. Whereas the true doctrine is, that he who is born of the Spirit does not sin, neither can sin; and that his flesh is buried

with Christ, his old man crucified in Christ's crucifixion, and the body of the sin of the flesh laid in Christ's tomb, thence never to arise again.

Yet it is most true, that a certain Manichean notion has ever lived in the church, and now lives in its strength, as if the flesh of the regeneration were not to be utterly impotent, but only to be opposed by the faith and hope of the Spirit within him. How many there be, who think they are in a good way, when they are in a state of warfare between flesh and Spirit. Whereas the truth is, they are in a very bad way, which if they will not know and repent of, they must speedily perish.

It is not true that religion consists in having the faith and hope of holiness after the resurrection in the world to come, but in having it now, in being now delivered from the law of sin and death, in being now made free from sin, and fulfilling the righteousness of the law; by walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

### **Romans 8**

<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

<sup>4</sup> That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

## **A System of Doubt**

And yet it is a thing of verity, that among the heads of the religious world, the state of doubt in the conscience, and of conflict in the members, is upheld as the most common experience of the child of God; and that though holiness be a thing to set before him, it is a thing to be believed as unattainable.

And to save all comes in their panacea of atonement, which they present as the evidence that God never expected anything like perfect holiness in His people:

“Therefore be of good courage, go on as you are going,

sigh and lament over your sins, and confess them, and be ever comforted in the atonement.”

How many souls through eternity will have to damn this system of sin-indulgences! Oh! for some Luther to expose those modern vendors of indulgences.

## The Truth of the Atonement

Now the truth of atonement is, that thereby we have liberty of access into God’s presence at all times (*Ephesians* 2:18), through the blood of Christ (*Colossians* 1:20), and boldness at His throne (*Hebrews* 4:16), and faith to ask what we please, and it shall be done unto us (*John* 15:7).

- And shall we not ask for grace to help us (*Hebrews* 4:16), and for strength to be perfected in our weakness? 2 *Corinthians* 12:9.
- And asking through the merits of Christ, shall we not receive? *John* 16:24.
- And receiving, shall we not use the Holy Ghost, which every one that asks receives? *Romans* 5:5.
- And Him receiving, shall we not be able to conquer the flesh and be righteous, even as Christ is righteous? *Romans* 8:37; 1 *John* 3:7.

The atonement opens the door, and keeps open the door into the chamber of Omnipotency; the atonement is the floor upon which the petitioner stands, and does the work of the temple of God; which is holiness, and not a mixture of the holy and the unholy.

## Misuse of the Atonement

But behold how otherwise it is used as the encouragement of indolence, the pillow of contentment, the maker-up of deficiencies, the general indulgence, into which all who will cleave unto the Laodiceans have ready admission. And what

is the consequence, but universal confession of sins, and universal abiding in them; words for works, penances for performances.

But the conscience of man is not so pliable as his social principle. The spirit of the religious world soon teaches him to prate as they do, and to speak as they do; but the conscience will not acquit him, and he has no assurance, and will hear of none. He will not take to himself the guilt of believing that he has done a good work, or can do one, but will plentifully expatiate over his evil deeds and shortcomings, and contentedly continue in them; because of what other use is the doctrine of atonement, but to make all scores clean, and all obligations straight?

I know what horror these words will awaken. Oh! that I could make them tenfold stronger, in order to reach this root of all bitterness in the religious world: their false views of atonement supporting and supported by their false views of the flesh and of the Spirit—in which indulging, through the natural desires of the flesh and of the mind, behold what a confusion of truth and falsehood, of holiness and unholiness, they have produced by it.

## **The Work of Regeneration**

I am advocating the doctrine, that the Holy Ghost, in the soul of a regenerate man, can and ever ought to:

- overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil combined against him;
- take the members of our being out of their hands, and make them to serve God;
- love with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and serve with all the members the living and true God.

This is a life of godliness, is the life of God in us, is holy and acceptable to God, is our reasonable service, is the prov-

ing of the good, and the perfect will of God. *Romans* 12:2. No sin, original or actual, defiles such a work as that it should need atonement; though such a work will never be done otherwise than in the faith of Christ, as our atonement both for original and actual sin.

And I further declare that until the soul wills and truly believes, until the Holy Ghost works such good, holy, and acceptable works in us, and makes us to bear such fruits as glorify the Father, that soul will be full of vileness and doubtfulness, and wickedness, cram it with evangelical doctrines as you may.

Yet, true it is, and of verity, as every honest man, who is conversant with this subject, will bear me witness, that in the religious world, it is the daily doctrine that no good works can we do by any power of Christ; and that original and actual sin cleaves to the best of them, and makes them to be exceeding vile. It is not true, it is a lie.

### **1 John 3**

<sup>7</sup> Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.

Now, this state of uncertainty, of ungodliness, of error; this mixed state between the words of holiness and the works of holiness; this feeling of a demand for what it is impossible to perform, has brought the church into the Laodicean state in which they are, out of which there is but one way of bringing them: which is to show them that holiness is really attainable in flesh, and ought never to be absent from the flesh of the regenerate man, and is the very condition of his being.

## **Christ and Antichrist**

And this cannot be taught from any other instance but that of Christ Jesus, who alone did holiness in flesh; and who has received power over all flesh to do the same in every one

whom the Father bestows upon him; who has set us an example that we should follow His steps.

When the enemy is pressed with the instance of Christ as the proof positive, that righteousness can be brought out of our flesh, his schismatical spirit immediately divides his manhood from us, saying:

“But His flesh was not such as ours in its properties and propensities; otherwise He were a sinner, both original and actual, as we are.”

By this declaration:

- the glory of God in bringing His will out of His creation, the glory of Christ in becoming our brother, to do this, and the glory of the Holy Ghost to serve him in the doing of it, are all subverted;
- pure Manicheism is introduced, the doctrine of a good and an evil principle flowing side by side in the church—the one incapable of putting the other down, and therefore both having equal origin and authority;
- holiness in our flesh is declared to be impossible, because Christ’s flesh had to be changed in order to work it; and unholiness is sanctified;
- to overcome the flesh is declared to be impracticable;
- God is dethroned, and Christ is unmanned, and the Holy Ghost is set at nought;
- the devil is enthroned, and sin has an omnipotency, and poor mortals must sin on to the end.

Such are the principles that produce the Laodiceanism, and keep it up. The Lord is striking a blow at the root of it, by maintaining the true flesh of Christ: whether the church will give heed to him, or to the fables of the doctors, God only knows.