

For the convenience of friends in the country, three copies will be sent, post free, on receipt of three stamps, to be forwarded to Mr. E. Butt, 4, Denmark Terrace, Cold Harbour Lane, Camberwell, S.E.; or friends wishing them sent weekly will please direct as above.

Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MAN OF SIN. No. II.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24TH, 1869,

BY MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”—2 Thessalonians ii. 4.

You are aware, most of you, that these words were our text last Lord's Day morning, and that the theme of this text is the man of sin and his doings. I observed then, and just repeat the thought, that the man of sin must be understood mystically, and is made up of that compound principle, falsehood and enmity, that is to say, false doctrine concerning God; and wherever there is received a false doctrine concerning God, that inspires the mind that receives it with enmity against God. Therefore it is that we have not the man of sin on earth abstractedly, but we have a great many representatives of the man of sin, which will come before us pretty strongly this morning; after I have just reminded you of the meaning of this first part of the verse,—namely, that he “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God.” I then reminded you that civil powers or rulers are called gods, because they are rulers, and, therefore, they are to be venerated and respected, because they are ordained of God for the protection of the peaceable and right-minded citizens, and for the punishment of those that would interfere with the rights and liberties of the right-minded. Therefore, “he beareth not the sword in vain;” but is a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well. The apostle therefore is perfectly right in teaching us to pray for the wellbeing and welfare of the civil powers, that we may live a peaceable and a quiet life in all holiness and godliness, and avail ourselves of the liberty we have to do all the good we can, enjoy all the privileges we can, and glorify God all we can. Now, as I observed last Lord's Day morning, and I just repeat the remark before I enter into the other part of the subject, we all know that an ecclesiastical power did exist that did prostrate the civil powers of the world under its own dominion, and made use of them to shed torrents of blood, and to slay thousands and tens of thousands of the saints of God. These that did this were the representatives of the man of sin. The man of sin,—namely, falsehood and enmity, that compound principle, has its permanent residence in Satan; Satan is therefore abstractedly the man of sin. But I speak of it thus figuratively that we may clearly understand the matter. There are a great many things suggested in the middle part of this verse, which I must pass by; or else I had intended to have said a word or two upon the difference between governing the gospel and being governed by the gospel; I will make just a remark upon that before entering upon matters that are more immediately important. Take, for instance, the Roman Catholic religion. You observe that the priests are not governed by the gospel, but that their laws govern the gospel. Just

so in the Church of England,—the Church of England is not governed by the gospel of God, but the laws of the Church of England govern the gospel. Hence, when their ministers are called to account, they are summoned before the Ecclesiastical Courts, and the question is not whether they are in a scriptural or an unscriptural position, but whether they have violated the laws of the Church or not. If I join a society of any kind, and know what the laws are, I ought either to leave that society or obey the laws. Therefore, for my part, I have no particular sympathy with those ministers that join the Church of England, then violate its laws, and become prosecuted; I think it serves them right, they should not join such a parliamentary establishment. Still, at the same time, there remains the truth that their laws govern the gospel, instead of the gospel governing them. This the martyrs of old saw,—that all human organizations brought into the gospel dispensation governed the gospel, instead of the gospel governing the people. If we are rightly taught in these matters we shall be determined to call no man on earth Master in these sacred and eternal things; we shall be determined to call no man on earth Father, for one is our Father, which is in heaven; we shall be determined to pass by all human authority and renounce all human laws, I mean in these matters. The civil power has nothing whatever to do with religion, it has no business to meddle with it; its province is quite in another sphere altogether. The church of God is not an organization, organized by men, but it is a congregation; and religion is an individual thing. Our unity is not earthly, but heavenly; not ecclesiastical but spiritual; not political, but divine; a unity formed by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, by the oneness of the people in Christ, by their being brought into God's eternal counsel, and it is not in this church nor in that, in this mountain nor in that, nor in the other, but in spirit and in truth they that worship the Lord acceptably must worship him.

There are two things more we have to notice. First, *what is that temple in which he thus as God sitteth?* Secondly, *in what sense he is God,*—*showing himself that he is God.*

First, *what is that temple in which the man of sin as God sitteth?* I will first notice the negative. I have sometimes thought that the temple of God here spoken of must mean the temple of God nominally; that is, they call a false church the temple of God, and they sit in that temple;—the man of sin sits and rules in that temple. But I do not think this is the meaning. I think we must take the words just as they are,—that this man of sin does sit in that which is properly the temple of God, but not in that which is specially the temple of God. I shall therefore first carefully describe what the true temple of God is; and that will clearly show that it is not in the special, true temple of God that the man of sin sitteth. Then I shall have to show what the temple of God is in which the man of sin sitteth. First, what is the temple of God? The true or special temple of God was, I admit, typified by the temple of old; but there is one point which we perhaps hardly ever attend to, and which, perhaps, has not struck the attention of many of you,—that while the temple in general was a type of the church of the blessed God, for that is called a temple again and again, yet it was the holy of holies that was in an especial manner a type of the true spiritual church of God. Let us trace this out. Mark, then, that none was admitted into the holy of holies but the high priest. God was there, and the high priest was admitted, but none was admitted into the holy of holies but the high priest. Let us stop here for a moment, and see whether we ourselves possess that which is called the most holy faith;—“building up yourselves in your most holy faith.” I could bring abundant proof to show that the true church of God is indeed the holy of holies. Now none but the high priest was admitted. Look at your experience. How often have we sung these words, and have we not sung them from personal experience?

"None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good."

I speak now to the people of God; as to those of you that are not convinced of your state, and do not know the Lord, you will not understand me; but those that are convinced of their state, and know the Lord, will understand me when I appeal in this way to you;—can you admit anything as your justification before God but the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Do you not most heartily, sincerely, and solemnly renounce all pretension whatever to creature righteousness? Do you not feel as satisfied as you do of your existence that if you appear before the throne of God among the righteous, it must be by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by him who is Jehovah our righteousness? Secondly, while you hold this truth, and the all-sufficiency of his righteousness, could you admit anything as your hope but the atonement of Christ? Remember, the high priest entered with the blood of the sacrifice into the holy of holies; and so Jesus Christ not only entered heaven itself by virtue of the victory he had wrought, the atonement he had made, and the harmony he had established in the perfections of God, but he came into the Church of God by his precious blood. And if we are taught of God, we shall admit nothing else; the all-sufficiency of the atonement of Christ will be a truth to us so clear and so precious that we shall spurn all penance, all pretensions of sacrifice or atonement, all human ceremony; we shall see that Jesus Christ hath by his atoning power made a clean sweep of everything; his omnipotency compassed everything, and swept the whole eternally away, so that had you eyes to realize objects at an infinite distance, you would not be able in the whole range of infinity to find a single shadow of a cloud. He is a morning without clouds; he blotted out as a thick cloud our sins, and as a cloud our transgressions; he has done the work, his head shall wear the crown, his name shall have the honour; and we would die, God keeping us, rather than admit any one into our souls as our hope before God but the Lord Jesus Christ. Your bosom is his holy of holies, your soul is his holy of holies, your heart is his holy of holies; and none must be admitted into it but the High Priest. How welcome Jesus is to the heart! Did the disciples ever see the Lord without being made glad? Never. Did they ever feel the efficacy of his blood without being made glad? Never. Did they ever feel the savour of his name without being made glad? Never. Doth the man of sin sit in this holy of holies? I trow not; the church cannot admit him; "a stranger will they not follow." He sitteth in the temple of God, but not in this special department, not in this holy of holies. I glory in the thought of the true church being the holy of holies. What holiness is there like Christ as our sanctification? what righteousness is there like Christ's righteousness as our justification? what exaltation is there like that which we have in oneness with Jesus Christ? and what dignity is there like that had by the saints of God? "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." All the blessings are by this High Priest. That is the true holy of holies, the true church. Why, angels will not shine so brilliantly as will the saints of God. The holiness of angels is created; our holiness is the holiness of Christ himself. Angels will not shine as will the righteous; made righteous by the righteousness of Jesus, they shall shine even as he shines; they shall shine forth as the sun in his strength. Angels cannot boast of such heirship, of such relationship, of such a standing. It may well be called the holy of holies, the highest of all standings, the most noble, the most dignified. Oh, how little do we realize the glory and dignity of our position as objects of God's love, choice, salvation, grace, and mercy! But again, in this same holy of holies there was the ark of the covenant, and I will take the apostle's

hint; he saith, "Of which I cannot now speak particularly;" for if I were to go into the particulars of all the things connected with the ark and the holy of holies, and what they set forth, it would take more than all the time I have to spare this morning. But a hint to the wise is enough. You all know that beautiful scripture, the last verse of the 11th of Revelation, "The temple of God"—that is, the church of God—"was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple"—the true holy of holies—"the ark of his testament." Now if the church were not the holy of holies, the ark would not be there. The ark was not in the holy place—that was not good enough; it was in the holy of holies. And so when the New Testament church is opened the ark of the covenant is seen there. Why, here is something new,—what is it? The Old Testament church, as a national church, was commonly holy, with a loseable holiness; but here is a church that is the holy of holies, with the ark of the covenant in it. And every little bit of a Hebrew scholar, much more a good and great Hebrew scholar, well knows that the original word translated "covenant," signifies eternal purification by the interposition of the everlasting God; he hath interposed and sworn, "In blessing I will bless thee." What is this ark of the covenant but the goodwill and eternal and immutable counsel of the great God? Here, then, is the holy of holies. Will we admit any other will but the will of God? Will we admit free-will? No. Thirty-five years ago I finished one of my little publications with, "A sworn enemy to free-will;" and I certainly did not swear deceitfully, for I have stuck to it from that day to this, and I shall to all eternity. I will have no will but the good will of my dear covenant God. I have his good, acceptable, and perfect will, and he has interposed according to his good pleasure for my eternal welfare. Here is the ark of the covenant. The man of sin there? No, thank you. He is pretty close;—Ezekiel says, "threshold against our threshold," and only a wall to part us; but we are parted though, and we shall see presently the premises are very distinct. And what does David say of this covenant? "It is ordered in all things." You know when men erect large buildings, and undertake large plans, there are sure to be a great many things come to light afterwards which they did not see at the first. Not so with our God; when he formed his covenant, it was formed in his own infinite understanding, in his own infinite knowledge; not anything escaped his notice; and neither angels nor men would be able to range over the vast breadth, or number, the infinite items of that covenant; yet wide as is its range, innumerable as are its objects, and infinite as are its glories, the Psalmist, by the eternal Spirit of God, bore this testimony, that "it is ordered in all things, and sure; this is all my salvation and all my desire." Can the man of sin dwell there? Nay; the light would put his eyes out; nay, the wonders would frighten him. He might come and marvel, and hasten away; fear would take hold upon him.

Then there was not only the ark of the covenant; there was the mercy-seat. Ah, mercy, what a sweet thought! The Israelite comes,—here is the mercy-seat; how am I to obtain mercy? Am I a sinner?—here is a sin-offering. Am I exposed to God's wrath? There is a burnt-offering. Am I an enemy? There is a peace-offering. Am I starving? There is a meat-offering. Am I weary? There is a sabbath-offering. Am I sick? There is an offering to heal the leper. It does not matter what it is; there is the mercy-seat; and as you sometimes sing,—

Whatever I need in Jesus dwells,
And there it dwells for me.

If you cannot say the last clause, you can say the first,—

"Whatever I need in Jesus dwells,"

Perhaps you will stop there, and say, I wish I could say the other,—

"And there it dwells for me."

Therefore whatever mercy we need is in this holy of holies, because Christ is there. Will we admit any deficiency in God's mercy? What, for instance, does Popery tell us? Why, that by the merits of the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and of the Virgin Mary—why, there is no such person in existence, for she ceased to be a woman when she died, and is now a glorified spirit,—by those merits and God's mercy we are to get to heaven. Ah, that tale will do very well for the blind, for the deaf, for the dead, and those that know not God; but they must not come to Zion with that tale; they may go pretty near to Zion, but not into Zion. The true church, then, is the holy of holies. The last point I will here name is that God himself was there, God dwelt there. "The name of that city from that day shall be, The Lord is there; and I will no more hide my face from them." The Lord dwelt in Zion, and so he dwells in the church. And do we want any other? No. The temple was sometimes so filled with glory that no man could enter in. Take the temple to be a type of the church, and that no man can come into that church with his free-will wares, his human ceremonies and doings. The man to whom God is all and in all, that is the man that is a true member of the true church. What shall I say to the glory of this holy of holies, this glorious temple? And our God had determined that this holy, new covenant church should acquire a world-wide fame, that it should gather up sinners into it. Let us hear what David says upon it. I admit he is speaking of the literal temple, but it has a further meaning; I like his words uncommonly. In 1 Chron. xxii. 5, David says, "The house that is to be builded for the Lord *must be*"—it *must be*; I like that; I do like the certainty of God's truth—"*must be* exceeding magnificent of fame and of glory throughout all countries." That was temporally fulfilled in Solomon's day; when people came from all nations to hear his wisdom; but more gloriously fulfilled in the apostolic age, when the true church appeared not in carnal and worldly, but in spiritual magnificence, when they could endure anything and everything for the Lord's and the truth's sake. When the Lord thus shone in the church, that church was so magnificent that it drew thousands and thousands into it, east, west, north, and south; and John saw those that had been drawn into this holy of holies, and saith they are "a number that no man can number, out of all peoples, nations, kindreds, and tongues." It "must be exceedingly magnificent of fame and of glory throughout all countries." And what does the Lord say in the 62nd of Isaiah? and that was fulfilled in the apostolic age, and has been going on more or less ever since; and let us hope the time may come when the gospel shall once more be preached in all nations; we have some encouraging signs even of that. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem;" and they are the right sort of watchmen, too; they will let the people in that keep the truth, and shut those out that do not keep the truth; but blind watchmen will let those in that do not know the truth, and shut those out that do know the truth. But the Lord saith, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Nor did those watchmen, the apostles and those that followed close upon them, and that were associated with them; they were men of earnest prayer, and wonderful power with God; and this new, this little Jerusalem, became a praise in the earth.

Now David also prepared for this temple,—the materials, by wars, in other words, by victories, by labour, and by great expense. You can understand that, can you not? If Jesus Christ had not conquered your sins, he would never have got you; if he had not conquered your enemy, the devil, he would never have had you; and if he had not conquered death and hell, that stood against you, he would never have had you; but he has got you, and you have got him; you are come together to part

no more for ever; there is not anything that shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Then also David prepared for the temple by great labour. So Jesus Christ laboured hard in life, and laboured hard in death; but he shall see of the travail, or labour, of his soul, and shall be satisfied; because in labouring he has laid the foundation, and he himself saith, "Upon this rock I will build my church;" I will be indebted to no creature for this; "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And at great expense David made provision; and so the dear Saviour gave his precious life. "Ye are bought with a price," an infinite price, a price that beggars all the silver and the gold, the jewels, precious stones, and treasures of the world; they are all nothing in comparison of the price laid down for your eternal redemption.

Now I may just say, before I leave this part, that the man of sin does come into the churches; you know he is not received there, but he does come. I shall not attempt to describe the various forms, I will mention only one. He has in times past come into the churches in a way of persecution,—unquestionably so. You can all understand that scripture in the 5th of Micah, "This man," Christ Jesus, "shall be the peace when the Assyrian," which is another name for the adversary, the man of sin, "shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces," into our churches, "then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men," that is, the prophets and apostles. So the enemy did come into our palaces, the churches, and take a good many poor people of God, and kill their bodies; that was all he could do. Much could I say upon the delusive power of the man of sin. "He shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness," in unrighteous dealing with the solemn truths of God.

Thus, then, it does not appear to me that the temple here spoken of means the temple of God nominally; and it does not appear to me that the temple here spoken of means the true church of God. What are we to do, then? My text does say that "he sitteth in the temple of God." Having dealt in these negatives, where shall we get the positive? What is the gospel dispensation? The gospel dispensation is God's temple, and the man of sin dwells in that temple. Now hear what the Lord Jesus Christ saith about it: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." And has not this man of sin done violence to the saints, violence to the truth and to the ordinances of God, in substituting human ceremonies therefor? And was it not the man of sin by his representatives that did violence to Jesus Christ himself? Therefore the temple here I take to mean the gospel dispensation; that is, God's temple; and in this temple the man of sin sitteth,—in it his representatives sit, and call themselves Christians, and call the one hundred and seventy millions, supposed to be the present number of the Roman Catholic Church, Christians. Now if you go to the 11th of Revelation, in the beginning of that chapter John is commanded to measure the holy of holies. "Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. So John was going on to measure all the premises of the temple. No, do not measure that. Oh, but that is a part of the temple, it belongs to the temple, it is part of the premises, it is God's premises. But do not measure that, for it is an outer court; they are outside of soul-trouble, outside of God's truth, outside of salvation; we know they are. "The court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not, for it is given unto the Gentiles," why, they call themselves Christians. Ah, it is what the Lord calls them, not what they may call themselves. "And the holy city," the true church of God, "shall they tread under foot forty and two months," a mystically limited time; how long that time lasts it is not for me to say; the Lord knows, and it shows the time is limited. And you may apply this to your private circumstances: "Ye shall have tribulation ten days;" you

may have some trouble that is almost unbearable, but the Lord will appear by and by; the time is limited; and you will say, The Lord has appeared just in time; for if it had gone on much longer, I do think I should have put an end to my existence. Ah, the Lord knew that, and so he steps in just in time, and shows you what a poor, stupid creature you are, and how wise and good he is; how well he does his work, and you will look up to the Lord, and say,—

“I know in all that me befell,
My Jesus has done all things well.”

Thus, then, the man of sin sitteth in the gospel dispensation, and this gospel dispensation, this temple, has suffered violence, “and the violent take it by force.” How much might be said upon this; a great many circumstances have run through my mind, none of which I must touch upon now. “The violent take it by force.” Were not the prophets taken by force, and put to death? Was not Jesus Christ, speaking after the manner of men, taken by force, and put to death? Were not the apostles taken by force? And this blessed book,—all, ye three hundred Popes, there was a time when you withheld the lamp of heaven from erring, dying men, and substituted your own infernal delusions in the place thereof. The Bible suffered violence, and you took it from the people by force. But at the last great day this mystic Jezebel, with all her representatives, shall have judgment without mercy, for they showed no mercy to the saints of God. “The violent take it by force;” but they could not keep it; no, bless the Lord, we have got the Bible, never to let it go again; they would have to burn three parts of the world to ashes before they got the Bible from us again. Here, then, it is that the man of sin sitteth in the gospel dispensation, called the temple of God, exalting himself, and showing himself that he is God.

Lastly, *in what sense he is God*; “showing himself that he is God;” I feel a little fear here lest the idea I intend should not strike your minds, but it stands thus. Noah, you build an ark after such a plan. The Lord comes the next day. Well, Noah, how are you getting on? Pretty fair, Lord, but thy plan won't do at all. I have had the opinion of several people, and thy plan won't do at all; I mean to build the ark after a certain plan. Very well, Noah, then you are God, are you? because I will never go into partnership. The Lord never goes into partnership,—No. If you are God, you must be God. You mean to say you know better than I do. Yes, Lord. Very well, if you are such a fool as to think so, I am no longer God; you shall be your own God, and just see how you will do. We know what the consequence would have been; the flood would not have cared for Noah's plan, but did care for God's plan; alas! all men by nature and practice are in this sense gods, but they will have to die like men. Satan does not care for human invention, but he does care for the interposing hand of the blessed God. So a system is set up,—it is not safe to preach that doctrine; it is in the Bible, but it is not safe to preach it; and there is another doctrine, it is not safe to preach it; and therefore we form a pious conference, and a pious organization, to see that those pestilential and dangerous doctrines are not preached; and so we will have not the infallibility of God, but the infallibility of the creature; and so the creature knows better than God what ought to be preached. If the Lord consulted man, where would his children be, where would his counsels be? They would come to nought. So, then, this representative of the man of sin, that usurps authority over the truth, and over the consciences of men, sits in the gospel dispensation, showing himself, that he is God; that is, that he puts down God's truth, and is infallible, and of course is, therefore, God over all, *cursed* for evermore. One Scripture saith that “there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus Christ.” And now what does the Saviour say? “He that is not with me is against

me." "Ah," says one, "well, I am not for free grace, and I am not against it." Then you will be reckoned against it; you will go the wrong side of the wall, as sure as you exist; for "He that is not with me is against me." You must stand out for him. Ah, I will go farther than that;—if you are for him and his truth in a shilly-shally, off and on, if you wish it, sort of way, what will he say? "Because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth." You must stand right out for him. David says, "I have stuck unto thy testimonies;" and saith the Saviour, "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations," and been decided for me; I am decided for you, and appoint to you the same glorious destiny. "And he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." I will tell you of a fourfold gathering, in conclusion, that I gather by him. First, I gather all my sins together by him. I lay hold of his atonement as gathering all my sins together, not one left; all cast into the land of oblivion. You cannot gather your sins together and get rid of them in any way but by Jesus Christ. Secondly, we are to gather all our troubles together by him. Sometimes when you go to a friend you say, I have got so many troubles I do not like to tell them all. Oh, well, if you have got so many troubles as that I cannot help you; if you had only so and so I could help you. Not so with the Lord,—casting all your care upon him. Thirdly, if we would gather poor sinners together it must be by Jesus Christ. Let his name be preached. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ." And lastly, by Jesus Christ we are to gather all the promises together. Do not you attempt to eat a promise out of Christ, for it will not taste nice to you; they are not ripe anywhere else. There are a great many promises not in him,—old covenant conditional promises; but all the promises that are in him are yea and amen; they are all ripe, sweet, and precious. So that we do not leave one sin for the representatives of the man of sin to forgive us; we do not leave one trouble; and we shall not leave one soul, for "not a hoof shall be left behind;" "he will gather the lambs with his arm," and take them to where "they shall be preserved;" and we shall not lose one blessing. The 62nd of Isaiah is very beautiful upon this, to which you may refer; to us then there is one God and ONE Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. And so it is that the representative of the man of sin puts the Bible *under* his authority, and thus (if it were real) reigns over the God of gods, the Lord of lords, and King of kings. So that the blessed God knows nothing, or is nothing, in comparison of this representative of the man of sin, and yet this is the Beast the world worshippeth. They bow to its image, receive its mark (disbelief of the truth); and glory in the number of its name, saying, See what a number we are! and so shall all do whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. xiii. 8.

A COURSE OF LECTURES, by Mr. WELLS, upon the "BOOK OF REVELATION," every *Thursday Evening*, at the Surrey Tabernacle, at a quarter-past Seven, until further notice.