

## SECTION 2: HYPOCRISY

## Acting

All acting is form, and the acting out of Christianity's ceremonial forms is an imitation of life in the Spirit. Membership in Christian churches is an imitation of membership in the body of Christ; Christian communion ceremonies are imitations of the saints' spiritual communion with God; and Christian baptisms in water are imitations of the spiritual baptism of Christ. Imitations of life have no life, and they impart no grace. They and other imitations were instituted by believers (with the aid of Rome) who were not content with worship in spirit and in truth, and it is a tragedy that they are practiced by many in God's family, the ones who do not yet possess the knowledge of God.

The ancient Greek word *hypocrite* referred to a stage actor. In acting, the character the audience sees is not the person who is there, and the act is an imitation of life. The words an actor speaks are not his own, for they are not from his heart; they are words that the author of the play told him to say. Likewise, an actor's deeds on stage are not done from his heart; they are deeds he is told to perform. An actor is not really living; he is imitating what is real. The real person on the stage is hiding behind a form; his body is seen, but his real thoughts and feelings are not expressed.

Satan became an actor, a hypocrite, when what he appeared to be was no longer what he really was; his appearance of humility became a mask for the sin that was in his heart. This putting on an act, this seeming to be one thing but really being another is the pit into which Satan fell the moment he first left a first wrong impression about himself. His continued obedience and service to God appeared to be sincere, and millions of angels admired him because of it; however, the real Satan was the one not seen, the one who loved himself and who coveted God's glory. That hypocrisy, that putting on an act, is what Jesus cast out of heaven, and since Satan's expulsion, every creature in heaven has been completely what he appears to be. Whatever any heavenly being says or does now is said or done sincerely. There is no more play-acting where Jesus has set things in order; in heaven, it is Paradise; in hell, it is Torment; and in the lives of Spirit-filled saints, it is God's righteousness in the flesh (2Cor. 5:21).

Satan deserves the title, "the father of lies" (Jn. 8:44) because he was the first to tell a lie,<sup>1</sup> but Satan *became* a lie before he ever told one, for he continued to appear to be a humble servant of God after his heart became proud. However, since the knowledge of what was truly good and evil was hidden in the Son, Satan did not understand that he was a lie even after he became one. For thousands of years, Satan believed that he was in good standing with God after he became evil, and it was his continued appearance of goodness which influenced many angels to believe the lie Satan had become.

The same is true of people who become a lie. They believe themselves and do not know how God sees them. From the moment someone becomes a lie, even true words that he speaks are lies because his use of those words leaves the impression that he himself is truthful. This is what I meant before when I said that if a man, himself, is not the truth, he is a liar no matter what he says. Such a man is lying even when he quotes the Bible because truthfulness is a matter of the heart, not of the verbiage that proceed from the mouth. After all, Satan accurately quoted scriptures to Jesus in the wilderness, but was he not lying when he did so? If Jesus had believed Satan when he quoted the holy Scriptures, we all would have perished. And in

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<sup>1</sup> There is no scripture which records Satan, by name, misstating a fact.

the garden of Eden, the Serpent told Eve the truth, factually speaking,<sup>2</sup> but the Serpent himself was a lie. Therefore, everything he said to Eve was a lie, and Eve's life was ruined because she trusted him.

### Worldly Wisdom

To know how to put on a convincing act requires a certain kind of wisdom. For example, the actress whom Joab hired to fool King David was called "a wise woman" (2Sam. 14:2–3). The Bible does not deny that worldly people have wisdom; in fact, Jesus said that in the world's kind of wisdom, sinners exceed the righteous (Lk. 16:8). At the same time, the Bible is clear that worldly wisdom will not save a soul from death and that few who possess it are called by God into His kingdom:

#### 1 Corinthians 2

26. You see your calling brothers, that not many are wise in the flesh, not many are powerful, not many are of noble birth.
27. On the contrary, God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame those who are wise, and God chose the weak things of the world that He might put the strong things to shame,
28. and God chose the base things of the world, and things that are despised, and things that are not, that He might bring to nothing the things that are,
29. so that no flesh might boast before God.

Men and Satan share in the kind of wisdom that is esteemed in this world, the kind that leads to acting righteous without being righteous, but Paul warned believers to use that kind of wisdom is to drink condemnation (1Cor. 11:29), and James likewise cautioned the saints to avoid it:

#### James 3

14. If you have bitter envy and strife in your heart, do not glory *in spite of it*, and, so, lie against the truth.
15. This wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

This wisdom is unspiritual because it is the wisdom of men; it is demonic because it is the wisdom of demons; and it is earthly because it is in this world, where men and demons live together.

James was warning believers of the behavior of some who, though not perfect with God, rejoice in the Assembly of saints as if they were, the way Satan and his angels, before they were cast out, did in heaven (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1), singing God's praises with the other sons of God (Job 38:7).

Jesus warned his followers that they must have a clear conscience when they come to worship God:

#### Matthew 5

23. If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,
24. leave your gift there before the altar and go your way; be reconciled to your brother first, and then come offer your gift.

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<sup>2</sup> It was true, as the Serpent told Eve, that if she ate the forbidden fruit, her eyes would be opened and that she would be like God (as the Serpent thought God was), knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:5, 7a, 22). Even the Serpent's lie that she would not die if she disobeyed God (Gen. 3:4) was in a way true, for neither she nor Adam dropped dead when they ate the fruit. We are not told how long Eve lived after she ate the fruit, but Adam died at the age of 930.

Many hypocrites have worshipped in the Assemblies of New Testament people almost from the beginning. Ananias and his wife Sapphira paid the ultimate price for doing so (Acts 5:1–10). And near the end of his life, Peter warned the saints to watch for men who would come to them as ministers of Christ, but with worldly wisdom:

2Peter 2

13b. They are spots and blemishes, . . . reveling in their deceitful ways while they feast with you.

14b. They are cursed children [of God].

. . .

17. These are wells without water, clouds driven by a storm, for whom is reserved the blackness of eternal darkness.

18. Making pretentious, vain speeches [sermons], they entice to sensuality, through lusts of the flesh, those who once had truly escaped from those who live in error,

19a. promising them liberty while they themselves are slaves to corruption.

Ministers such as this skill people in worldly wisdom, in hypocrisy, by teaching them ceremonial forms. For millennia now, with promises of eternal benefits for those who participate in their ceremonies, they have seduced multitudes, including many of God's children, to choose form over life, that is, to choose the appearance of righteousness over the righteousness of God. It is especially egregious when ministers who have the Spirit, though not led by it, add to the world's pressure on God's children to trust in the Institution's forms.

### Half Good

Worldly wisdom makes God's children half good, but the half that it makes good is what is seen instead of what is within, and in God's eyes, being half good is worse than being no good at all because it is less honest (cf. Mt. 6:22; Lk. 11:34). Entirely backslidden souls are obvious, and they pose no real threat to God's children, but half-good believers make Jesus sick, and he will at some point cast them out of the kingdom of God. Jesus warned the half-good pastor in Laodicea,

Revelation 3

15. I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were either cold or hot.

16. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth.

To be vomited out of the mouth of Christ is to be cast out of the body of Christ, which is the ultimate—and irreversible—curse in this life. The fact that Jesus threatened one of his servants with such a curse reveals how much he abhors half-goodness.

Half-good believers have enough love for Jesus to repent and receive His life, but not enough love for him to continue in his word and be made free (cf. Jn. 8:31–32). Satan is the father of all half-good believers because, like them, he did not continue in the truth he once knew (Jn. 8:44). It is better never to have belonged to God than to belong to Him and fail to continue in holiness. When Peter wrote the following, he was speaking of children of God who had become half good:

2Peter 2

20. If after escaping the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, their last state is worse than the first.

21. It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.
22. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A dog returns to his own vomit, and a washed sow to wallowing in the mud.”

Satan was vomited out of heaven because he is half good. His greatest achievement while in heaven was to maintain an appearance of righteousness while having a heart corrupted with pride (Ezek. 28:17). He obeyed diligently every command that God gave him, but he had a self-serving motive for doing so (cf. Isa. 14:13–14).

The same is true of ministers who are like him. They diligently maintain proper form, yet, in their hearts, they are far from God (cf. Lk. 11:39). They have “a form of godliness”, but they refuse the power of God that makes men godly (2Tim. 3:5). They seduce innocent people into their net with false promises (e.g., Amos 5:18; Jer. 6:14), and then exploit for self-gain the souls they ensnare (2Pet. 2:1–3). They revere forms of the Institution as if they were equal with God’s commandments, and they sometimes revere them beyond that (cf. Mt. 15:1–6). The leaders in Israel whom Jesus called Satan’s sons were not physical descendants of Satan; he called them Satan’s sons because they acted the same way Satan did, worshipping in form and condemning those who did not.

### Reliance upon Appearances

People often become devoted to the forms they choose, and there are countless forms from which to choose: political forms, social forms, and religious forms. Men have even fought wars over their competing forms, each claiming that their form is the right one. History is replete with examples. Jesus would say that such men don’t need to kill each other because they are already dead—to God.

Nothing but God’s life can deliver us from our natural attraction to form, our predilection for reliance upon appearances. When Paul said that Christ died for us “when we were without strength” (Rom. 5:6), the strength to which he was referring was the strength to live sincerely and escape the flesh’s love of form. The pressure of this world for us to put on an act is too great for any of us to withstand, but God gave His Son so that we, who all our lives were afraid to stop hiding behind forms, might live. After Christ delivered him, Paul saw the bondage of mankind to form, the bondage he once was in, and he exhorted his converts to hold on to the precious liberty Christ had given them: “Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and do not submit again to a yoke of bondage!” (Gal. 5:1).

In the end, false teachers won the day who taught believers to add ceremonial forms to their worship, which led directly to the formation of Christianity, but no one could blame Paul for the loss. He had labored earnestly to rescue his converts from false teachers and save them from abandoning their liberty in Christ to return to their former bondage:

#### Galatians 4

8. When you did not know God, you lived as slaves to things which by nature are not divine,
9. but now, having come to know God—or rather, having been known by God—how is it that you want to return again to live—again!—as slaves to weak and worthless elements?

Yet, false teachers persuaded these and other believers that they *were* still slaves, that they were still required, in spite of all that Paul had taught them, to perform carnal ceremonies, using “elements of the world” such as water (for baptism), fire (for burning incense and sacrifices), and natural food and drink for religious meals, and special clothing for worship.

God sent His Son to earth to give us life, not form. Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn. 10:10). A prime reason for God giving us His kind of life was to deliver us from our fallen nature, with its bondage to form, so that we might truly live and worship Him acceptably, in spirit and in truth. The author of Hebrews explained:

Hebrews 9

8. If the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctifies for the purification of the flesh [as the law required],
9. how much more does the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve a living God!

A purged conscience rejoices in Christ and has no fear to live and worship without form. As Paul said it, “We are the circumcision [the Israel of God] who serve God in spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh” (Phip. 3:3).

Jesus promised his followers that he would liberate them, though at the time, they did not know what they would be liberated from. They loved with all their hearts the ceremonial forms of Moses’ law and never dreamed of serving God without them. Moses’ law was a light (Ps. 119:105), but the light of God’s Son robbed the law of all its glory and changed its light to darkness (cf. 2Cor. 3:7–11). Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12), and in hearts where the light of God’s life shines, faith in forms is quickly cast out, just as Satan fell like lightning out of heaven.

### The One the World Wanted

By nature, fallen humans love form for the same reason Satan does, to wit, the careful maintenance of proper form puffs them up and makes them appear to be good. In that regard, nothing changed on earth when Satan was cast down to earth; men already loved his ways, and he already loved the ways of man (Mt. 16:23). Satan was not cast down to earth as a stranger; he was cast down to a place where he fit in well, and he still does. “The whole world lies in wickedness,” John said (1Jn. 5:19), but not because Satan was cast down here. The world was wicked long before Satan was cast out of heaven; that is what made it a fitting place for him.

Satan was able to deceive the entire world (1Jn. 5:19) because when he was cast down to earth, hypocrisy was already the norm. Men were already devoted to form, trusting in appearances, just as Satan had been doing in heaven for millennia. The ungodly were as prepared to follow Satan when he was cast down to earth as the righteous were prepared to follow the Son when he was sent here.

Immediately after Satan was cast out, a voice in heaven cried out, “Woe to the earth and the sea! For the Accuser has come down among you!” (Rev. 12:12b). That sympathetic cry, however, did not come because innocent earthlings were about to be attacked by the big bad wolf; rather, it came because the people of earth were being given the one they really wanted, the god of proper form, the master of appearances who would inspire half-good believers to devise the most deceitful Institution in history: Christianity. Christianity claims to be the only way to God out of all the religions on earth, but it is, in fact, the darkest of all religions, for unlike any other religion, it offers dead forms to people in the name of the Prince of life. Jesus taught me long ago that the closer a thing comes to being true without being true, the more evil it is because the more people it can deceive.

Forms may be carried out with no repentance toward God, no humility, no love for truth, and no hunger for God’s righteousness. Institutionalized religion, thriving as it does on form, requires no spiritual life; it requires only that its forms be carried out. The most ungodly of humans may perform ceremonies and call

that the worship of God, but calling it worship does not make it acceptable to God. Using the name of Jesus does not sanctify Christianity's forms; it only gives them an appearance of legitimacy in the eyes of those who do not have the knowledge of God.

There has never been a ceremony performed in heaven, and in this New Covenant, unlike the old one, God has instituted no ceremonies on earth. This is a covenant purely of the Spirit, sealed with the blood of Jesus. Everything believers offer to God now must be offered in the Spirit, and everything Christ does for our souls, he does through the Spirit. The Spirit is God's conduit for His care for us, and it is our access to Him (Eph. 2:18). If the Spirit is not in a thing, Christ is not in it, and if the Spirit is not in a person, he does not belong to Christ (Rom. 8:9b).

Ceremonial religion is Christianity's substitute for life in the Spirit; it is a spiritual placebo that cures nothing. It is because God's Spirit is not involved that men of the Institution perform ceremonies; if the Spirit were involved, the ceremonies would get in the way. Most importantly for Christians, and the entire world, ceremonial forms provide an appearance of righteousness so that the Spirit might be respectably rejected and, so, one's status in society is preserved.

### All Who Are Willing

Both Satan and the world hate those who are no longer of the world, but are called of God and led by His Spirit:

#### John 15

18. If the world hate you, know that it hated me before it hated you.
19. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but since you're not of the world—on the contrary, I've chosen you out of the world—the world hates you.

#### Revelation 12

9. And the great Dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent who is called the Accuser, and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.  
...
13. And when the Dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman [Israel] who had given birth to the boy [Jesus].  
...
17. And the Dragon was furious because of the woman, and went to make war against the remnant of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and have the witness of Jesus.

The witness of Jesus is the Spirit (Rev. 19:10), and those who receive it are made foreigners to this world. With the new birth, they become citizens of a heavenly country, and Christ sends his ministers as ambassadors of heaven to a lost world (2Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20). People of the world can sense this dramatic difference between themselves and God's children, though they cannot understand it.

#### 1Peter 4

3. The time that is past is sufficient for us to have done the will of the masses, walking in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, banquetings, carousings, and lewd worship of idols,
4. concerning which they think it strange that you do not run with them to the same excess of debauchery, speaking blasphemies.

God's kind of life makes no sense to the world, and sinners often assume that those who are filled with it are deluded or evil, or both. Men can believe, in a philosophical sense, that God is holy and unlike humans, but they do not believe that God's kind of life changes sinners into holy beings whose manner of life reflects God's character the way Jesus did. As a seminary student, when I testified to my class about something wonderful Jesus had shown me, my professor scoffed at the idea. "So," he sarcastically replied, "you think you have heard something from God?" He was adept at ceremonial form, but he did not know God. God's kind of life was strange to him, and he was suspicious of it. But man's unbelief changes nothing. God talks to His children every day, all day long, guiding them through this wasteland of wickedness called earth. If He didn't, we would all be lost.

Jesus told his disciples, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9), and referring to that statement, Preacher Clark once asked a congregation, "Has anybody seen God in you lately?" When anyone who loves this world sees God in any of His children, they hate what they see, and that is why Paul assured Timothy that "all who are willing to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Tim. 3:12). Paul was speaking from experience.

### "Works of the Accuser"<sup>3</sup>

In Jesus' day, sons of Satan the Accuser were leaders of Israel who were looked upon as pillars of the community and paragons of righteousness; however, like their father, they did all their good deeds in order to be seen as good (Mt. 23:5). Inwardly, where men could not see, they were "fools and blind" (Mt. 23:17a), "ravenous wolves" (Mt. 7:15a) whose hearts were full of all uncleanness, hypocrisy, and lawlessness (Mt. 23:27b, 28b). Jesus bluntly told them, "You are of your father, the Accuser, and you want to carry out the desires of your father" (Jn. 8:44), for they were doing what Satan was doing—relying on appearances and enforcing the forms of the law. Like Satan, they were anointed by God to occupy high positions in God's order, wielding authority which even Jesus acknowledged: "Jesus spoke to the people and to his disciples, saying, 'The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat. So, whatsoever they tell you to observe, observe and do'" (Mt. 23:1–3a).

It must be stressed that Jesus called those men sons of the Accuser only because they were so much like the Accuser. They thought and behaved the way Satan would have thought and behaved if he were a human, and by paying attention to their works, we may learn what "works of the Accuser" are. Jesus mentioned some of their activities:

- They made long, public prayers (v. 14) and called attention to their almsgiving (Mt. 6:2).
- They occupied special seats at public meetings (v. 6).
- They held prestigious titles granted by the Institution (v. 7).
- At much expense, they traveled to distant places to convert others to their Institution (v. 15).
- They built tombs and monuments in honor of dead servants of God (vv. 29–31).

Those deeds were impressive to God's people in Israel, and it must have stunned those who heard Jesus condemn the respected men who did them. John said, "For this reason was the Son of God revealed, to destroy the works of the Accuser" (1Jn. 3:8b), and the deeds we just listed were some of those works. Making long, public prayers, occupying seats of honor, and holding prestigious titles are all works of the Accuser; they are forms, not life. Evangelizing for the Institution and building monuments are likewise

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<sup>3</sup> This word is often translated "Devil", but the word "Devil" carries so much Christian mythological baggage that it should be used sparingly. It is best translated "Accuser" or "Slanderer", as biblical scholars since at least Lactantius (circa 240–320) have been known to do (e.g., *The Divine Institutes* II.ix).

works of the Accuser, and men will praise you for doing them. However, the life of God precludes the need for such deeds.

The works of the Accuser cannot be murder, thievery, and fornication, and the like, for the men whom Jesus called Satan's sons despised people who did those things, even to the point of wanting to kill them (e.g., Jn. 8:1–11). Those in our time who call themselves Satan worshippers are a pathetic joke to Satan, and his ministers despise them. The way of Satan is the way of the Institution, not debauchery and disorder. What is called Satanism is no more the way of Satan than Christianity is the way of Christ. If Satan were your neighbor, you'd like him. If he were human, he would be a clean-cut, law-and-order guy who would feed your dog and watch over your property when you go out of town. He is much more like respectable men than any man knows.

By nature, humans are attracted to Satan because their ways, when they follow respectable forms, are like his. The Satan that the world hates is the hideous Satan that men such as medieval Christian myth-makers invented, the terrifying Satan who breaks all the rules and torments souls in the afterlife. Men pride themselves for hating that Satan, but they do not hate the lovely, anointed Satan revealed in Scripture:

Ezekiel 28

12b. Thus says the Lord GOD: You are the epitome of symmetry, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

. . .

14. You are an anointed cherub that covers, and I put you on the holy mountain of God. You have walked freely in the midst of the stones of fire.

15. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.<sup>4</sup>

The Satan of Scripture is a well-organized creature who maintains order in his domain. Jesus said of him,

Mark 3

24. If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26. And if Satan is risen up against himself, he is likewise divided; he cannot stand, but is finished.<sup>5</sup>

The traditional Christian depiction of Satan as a repulsive figure who goes around trying to lure people to commit adultery, murder, etc. is ludicrous. How could that Satan deceive anyone, especially God's children? That creepy image of Satan is an image which people accept without question because if Satan is like that, they can congratulate themselves on how good they are by comparison. However, as long as people believe that Satan is like that, they will never believe how much he and humans have in common, nor will they see ceremonial works for what they really are: dead, useless works devised by carnally minded men who are like the Accuser.

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<sup>4</sup> Even without his beautiful body, which he abandoned to possess Judas, his great wisdom remains, along with his anointing, his place as god of this world, and his history.

<sup>5</sup> Some demons within Satan's realm do move people to commit base evils. To the proud higher-ups in Satan's kingdom, however, it appears that those demons are contemptible (Cf. Howard Pittman, *Placebo*, p. 22), and ministers who are like Satan rail against the poor souls who are under their power.