**Antichrist** (Part Two)

by William Law

Edited with Commentary by Fred Pruitt  
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# Part Two Alternate Introduction

(This is an excerpt with commentary from An Affectionate Address to the Clergy, by William Law. It was his last work. He went to the Lord just a few weeks after he finished the book in 1761.)

William Law is in my opinion one of the clearest expositors of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all history. He had two distinct periods in his ministry as a priest of the Church of England [CE] from 1711 until his glorification in 1761. The first part was focused on achieving a “devout and holy life” by earnest human travail, or “self-effort” as we would say. The second period came from his discovery of Jacob Boehme, a Lutheran “mystic” who had lived a century before Law in Germany. He loved and devoured Boehme’s books so much that he called him, “My blessed Behmen!”

I would have called William Law something affectionate like that when I first began to drink from the Spirit’s outpourings through him. Two of Law’s books in one volume came my way in the summer of 1982. It was called, Wholly for God, and included “The Spirit of Love,” and, “The Spirit of Prayer.”

I have memories of baking in the summer afternoon heat while reclining in an outdoor chaise lounge reading the book. Either in our front yard or at the neighborhood swim club we belonged to in those days. While the kids would swim to the sound system blaring, “I love rock and roll, put another dime in the juke box, baby,” I would be reading and trying to understand William Law.

The way Law expressed Gospel Truth was a world beyond me at that early stage. At the time I was a beginner in my new comprehension of Galatians 2:20. I was fully consumed with seeking understanding and knowing how to walk in union and express it to others. The “existential” sufferings we endured in 1980 – leaving our ministry in California and moving via Amtrak back to Georgia with three little ones and fifteen cardboard boxes – all culminated for me in early 1981. In a final desperation move having no other place to go, I let go of all efforts and expectations of my own “progress” in the Lord. I received in a new-found inner emptiness through a faith infusion from the Spirit, the utter gut-deep realization that I “couldn’t do it, but He can and is doing it.” (“It” being the managing of my life.) In short, I realized by the Spirit, the totality of my “death” with Him and that I had no strength, no anything. I had seen that nothing in me could produce the Life of Christ, period. I was done, kaput; I had run out of steam.

Some, including this writer for a time, saw Law primarily as Boehme’s interpreter to the English-speaking world. A musician who wants to learn to play the blues will go past the contemporary blues artists of our time, players like Eric Clapton or Stevie Ray Vaughn, because he is looking for their SOURCES. He might start out there but somewhere along the way others will turn him on to some of the originators of the blues, like Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf or Robert Johnson and it takes you to deeper roots. I was that way about William Law. I loved what I got out of him in the beginning, but I thirsted to get to Boehme. So, I sort of pushed him aside, sped around him looking for a deeper well maybe in Jacob Boehme, lost him in the dust and forgot about William for a long time, about 39 years.

And just like that, here I am again. Coming into this second, later “discovery” of Law’s work, my respect for him has grown exponentially. I no longer see him as a “second banana” to Boehme, or “just” a cleric writing academic papers, but instead as a true Knower of the Gospel depths and heights who stands on his own. Even though Law’s writings are infused with Boehme, what emerges is not an English Boehme, but a man who has tapped the mother lode within himself and whether he speaks in Boehme’s words or his own, it is authentically Christ in and as William Law. And because Law saw these truths for himself, it makes it all that much more desirable that we would see the same for ourselves. A little warning – if you go get you some William Law to read, it may take a bit of adjustment to his language, terminology, etc., but once what he is saying begins to click in our hearts and make sense – get ready! Sometimes I can only take him in small doses because it’s like trying to drink from a fire hose!)

**Continuing on with William Law ….**

**Antichrist is SELF-EXALTATION**

The Enemies to Man's rising out of the Fall of Adam, through the Spirit and Power of Christ, are many. But the one great Dragon-Enemy, called Antichrist, is SELF-EXALTATION. This is his Birth, his Pomp, his Power, and his Throne; when Self-Exaltation ceases, the last Enemy is destroyed, and all that came from the Pride and Death of Adam is swallowed up in Victory.

**FP:**This is a Truth that is both universal (in darkness only), and precise. We may see that SELF-EXALTATION is Satan or Lucifer. SELF-EXALTATION is the kingdom of darkness, with its own false light – *“I will exalt my throne above the stars of God,”*  its own false “word” – *“I will ascend into heaven,” –* culminating in its own false love – *“I will be like the most High.”*It is Anti-Christ in the rebellious “I will,” (“Not thy will, but mine be done”), meaning that everything Christ is, the kingdom of darkness is the same in reverse. It is Isaiah 14:12-15.

Law’s word, “When SELF-EXALTATION ceases,” has two fulfillments. Its “universal” fufillment is that SELF-EXALTATION will one day cease to exist in all the manifest universe. It has been forever put down, never to rise again. From an eternal standpoint, this as an already accomplished fact.

The second fulfillment is found in individual human beings. When SELF-EXALTATION ceases in our humanity, is the moment we recognize in some way by and in faith, that it has ceased in us and that God or the Spirit has done it. This is the fulfillment of *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”*

Does that mean we are to always be striving to get the outer “earth” to line up with “heaven above?”

In the Roman Empire it was illegal to be a Christian for the first two hundred or so years of the Church. As a result, Christians didn’t concern themselves too much with the mechanics of worldly government. For the most part the general population had little to nothing to do with choosing their governments or their policies anyway.

While Christians didn’t fall under serious persecutions constantly, they were generally looked down on and avoided. When periods of persecution did break out from time to time, they were not persecuted for their faith, per se, but primarily for being unpatriotic, in that they were mostly pacifists and avoided military service.

However, their biggest offense against the Empire was that they would not participate in periodic services and sacrifices to honor the Emperor’s “godhood” status. The current Emperor, whoever he might have been, was automatically and legally designated a “god” by the Roman Senate, to which all persons in the Roman Empire were obliged to give homage and worship, as well as making or paying for a sacrifice to demonstrate the sincerity of their worship.

Most upper-class and educated Romans were more practical than religious and knew Emperor worship was something for the state more as propaganda than true “religion.” They knew that the Emperor was not really a god, but nonetheless his worship was a necessity to maintain as a point of stability within the whole empire. It kept the plebians (working class Romans) for the most part under the thumb of the ruling class. They were made to believe that to rebel against the Emperor was the same as rebelling against “the gods” when they had been pagans and rebelling against “The God” in its last century after it had become legally “Christian.”

Rome, like all totalitarian societies, in order to intimidate the populace by their power, required visible acts of contrition from every person. No one could “protest” by refusing those acts of forced compliance. Amazingly, just to understand how twisted in thinking this “natural mind” can be, those who oppress others until they make some act of obeisance, actually convince themselves they are being loved and adored by those who are forced against their will. They choose not to see that part.

However, it wasn’t until the Christian faith was not only legal, as Constantine had decreed in 313 A.D. in the “Edict of Milan,” but the ONLY legal religion in the Roman Empire as determined by Emperor Theodosius in the “Edict of Thessalonica” in 380 A.D., that Christians started considering how to run the government and subsequently the whole Roman world. They were quick learners. In short order, they who had been under persecution and fear from the authorities and society for more than two centuries, then became the persecutors of their former oppressors!

In the more than fifteen hundred years since that edict became law, most have thought that fulfilling the Lord’s Prayer’s “on earth as it is in heaven” part, meant to get out there and aggressively Christianize the world, which has meant different things at different times to different people. The most obvious meaning to the natural mind of man was to attempt to re-make the world after some Christian utopian “visions,” which each sect or country in “Christendom” sought to propagate or defend by force of arms and law to compel “Christianity,” as each saw it. The differences primarily had to do with adherence to contemporary moral codes as interpreted by “the Church,” with also rigid adherence to the Church’s religious requirements as well. They all sought a whole society based on rigid “Christian laws” (as people understood them according to the wisdom of men) and unable-to-be-questioned “Christian rule,” (according to the non-existent “Divine Right of Kings”).

Now, during that time, there were many who saw through all that elevation of churchianity and all that vain pomposity. They knew that no resolutions were going to be found in the remaking of society after some crude earthly attempt to recreate an earthly kingdom of heaven. More than one attempted to set up a Godly theocracy mixed with the natural mind and vanity of man. That’s a partnership doomed from the start.

But there were also people who didn’t take that most obvious route of trying to make everybody “conform” to whatever Christian flavor or set of rules was their favorite.

I don’t know if the type of outer satisfaction so many are looking for in the “return” of Christ will bring the true satisfaction that is the heart of Christ. The reason I say that is because perhaps the most important thing I have learned in my sojourn on the earth, is that a whole universe of “outer” satisfaction would not lift the heart or our countenance if the Lord God did not fill to overflowing throughout the heights, depths, widths and lengths of our inner being, with His unbounded Spirit of Love.

It is in that moment of recognition of what He has done, or what already is, only waiting for our moment’s gaze upon it. Just like the brass serpent in the wilderness. They only had to “gaze” upon it. The Divine Light comes in a rush like a cleansing fire in that moment’s recognition that SELF-EXALTATION has been taken out of the way as an impedance. It has been the enemy’s primary tool to beat us with all our lives. Once we see the emptiness of it, how pitiful it always has been, we also see that pride is forever a blowhard and will never give itself up. Not to worry.

It has to be taken out and the Spirit is just the Person to do it! Don’t ask Him to do it. If you are in Christ, He has done it already! If you believe you are not “in Christ” yet, then take care of that first. In some way, nothing formal, just something spontaneous from the heart, and say something like, “Lord Jesus, I’m yours. Thank you for forgiving all my sins. Please take me into your kingdom and come into me and fill me with Your Spirit so that I might be born again from above. I don’t know what’s next, Lord, but I want to be with You where You are. Amen”

**William Law continues …..**

There has been much sharp looking out, to see *where* and *what* Antichrist is, or by what Marks he may be known. Some say he has been in the Christian World almost ever since the Gospel Times, nay, that he was even then beginning to appear and show himself. Others say he came in with this, or that *Pope*; others that he is not yet come, but near at Hand. Others will have it, that he has been here, and there, but driven from one Place to another by several new risen Protestant Sects. (**FP:** The interesting thing about this paragraph is to remember when it was written – 1761!)

But to know with certainty, *where* and *what* Antichrist is, and who is with him, and who against him, you need only read this short Description which Christ gives of himself. "(1) I can do nothing of myself. (2) I came not to do my own will. (3) I seek not my own glory. (4) I am meek and lowly of heart."— Now if this is Christ, then *Self-Ability* or *Self-Exaltation*, being the highest and fullest Contrariety to all this, must be alone the *one great Antichrist*, that opposes and withstands the whole Nature and Spirit of Christ.

(**FP:**Let us pay attention to and hear with hearing ears what William Law is saying to us. In our time much ado has been made of “The AntiChrist.” It has long been thought that he would be the last great world leader of wickedness, an invader of countries and deceiver of men. A large number of people believe he will be a great prophetic leader as well.

William Law doesn’t dispute any of that. Law’s point is in agreement with what the Apostle John wrote in his first Epistle:

*“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists.”*(1 John 2:18)

AntiChrist is a spirit that is here now and has been since the beginning.

Both Law and the Apostle John stress the same thing. Just as Christ is moved exclusively by the Holy Spirit or Spirit of the Father, we live out of the Life that is within us as well. Neither does John have any shades of grey. There is no sharing of our inner center. One “Motivating” Spirit and one “Receiving” spirit joined as One, only occupies that seat, which is the seat preserved exclusively for Holy One within us.

The point John is making here, with William Law being in complete agreement as am I, is that everything is ultimately a product of inner consciousness. *“Keep your heart with all diligence,”*says the Proverbs writer,*“for out of it are the issues of life.”*

Let me one more time quote Law’s description of Christ’s inner attributes so that we might have that firm foundation in our understanding of Who Christ IS and who He is NOT.

*(1) I can do nothing of myself.*

*(2) I came not to do my own will.*

*(3) I seek not my own glory.*

*(4) I am meek and lowly of heart."*

*“*Now if this is Christ, then Self-Ability or Self-Exaltation, being the highest and fullest Contrariety to all this, must be alone the one great Antichrist, that opposes and withstands the whole Nature and Spirit of Christ.” William Law, 1761