

learn three important facts. First, That we must expect errors and the propagators of errors: Second, That, these propagators of errors may be enabled "to shew great signs and wonders: and Third, That, nevertheless, it is the duty of the Ministers of Christ to raise their voices against any thing which may appear to them to partake of that nature. At the time of St. John the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were still vouchsafed to men. Yet, even then, in those highly favoured times, when "they spake with tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance," "many false prophets had gone out into the world." Even then, when an Elymas was struck "blind for a season," or an Ananias and a Sapphira were struck dead, propagators of error went about, almost "deceiving the very elect." Whilst St. Paul lived, the Judaizing teachers endeavoured to obscure the free salvation of the Gospel by teaching the disciples that they ought to conform to the law of Moses. To meet this error, St. Paul wrote his epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians. The doctrine of justification by faith only, as set forth in those epistles, was perverted after his time, so that men were led to suppose that a lifeless faith, a mere belief that such a person as the Saviour did come down from heaven, lived, died, and rose from the dead, was quite sufficient; though that faith produced no effect whatever upon their lives and conduct. To meet this error, St. James wrote his epistle. In like manner the very epistle, whence our text is taken, was written to meet the false teaching of those who denied the real deity of Christ, who explained away his proper humanity and the reality of his sufferings and death, as an atoning sacrifice. "At this time," as an eminent commentator remarks, "heretics came forward much more openly than at an earlier period."

From that time to this error has prevailed. Even in St. John's time there were the Ebionites, the Cerinthians, the Gnostics, the Nicolaitans, and many others. Since his death, amongst a thousand minor heresies, we have recorded in ecclesiastical history those of the Manicheans, of the Arians, and of the Pelagians. In the present day we have sects without number, holding doctrines diametrically opposite to each other: some denying the Divinity of the Saviour, others the existence of a place of punishment hereafter; some laying aside both the Sacraments of the Gospel,

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