

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

October, November, December 1994

Copyright 2003 John W. Robbins Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692

Email: Jrob1517@aol.com

Website: www.trinityfoundation.org

Telephone: 423.743.0199

Fax: 423.743.2005

Antichrist

Edited by John W. Robbins

The early church scanned the future in anticipation of the coming Antichrist who was depicted so strikingly by Daniel, Paul, and John. Many thought that he would appear on the scene after the fall of the Roman Empire. It is not surprising that the early church had indistinct ideas about the great Antichrist.

It is significant that the church did not come to any distinct or united conviction about the identity of Antichrist until the clear Gospel of justification by faith alone began to chase away the shadows of the dark ages of the papacy. Not only did the church come to a united understanding of justification by faith alone, but at the same time it came to a united understanding about the identity of Antichrist. It is important that we realize this relationship between justification by faith alone and the identity of Antichrist.

We do not contend that the Reformers were without fault in their theology. There were points on which they could not agree among themselves. But we had better give serious consideration to the points on which the Christian Church reached total and united agreement. With one united voice the Church said that the Antichrist was the papacy.

Nowadays many want to dismiss the Reformers' view of Antichrist as mere polemics of a bygone era. But it was not a matter of ill will in the midst of theological controversy. "This understanding of the

position and function of the papacy became an important part of Luther's theology. It was not merely part of his polemic but apart from all personal animosity a sincere theological conviction" (George W. Forell, *Faith Active in Love* [Augsburg, 1954], 171). The reason so many today cannot appreciate the united view of the Reformers as to the identity of Antichrist is that they do not see the importance of justification by faith alone. They do not regard this doctrine as the great central article of faith, the very air which Christians breathe. They do not recoil with horror to see this doctrine adulterated or relegated to a position of only relative importance.

To the Reformation Church the papacy was the very Antichrist because it committed the ultimate impiety by making war on justification by faith alone. Francis Pieper expressed the view of the Reformation when he wrote in *Christian Dogmatics*:

There can be no greater enemy of the Church of God than the Papacy. In and by the doctrine of justification the Church lives. . . . Can anything worse befall the Church than being robbed of the doctrine of justification, by which alone she lives and exists? When the enemy takes my earthly life, he can do me no greater harm in earthly matters. And when the Pope has taken away the spiritual life of the Church

by robbing her of the doctrine of justification, the climax of harm has been reached (Concordia, 1950, Vol. 2, 553-554).

An English theologian of the nineteenth century, Dr. H. Grattan Guinness, wrote:

From the first, and throughout, that movement [the Reformation] was energized and guided by the prophetic Word. Luther never felt strong and free to war against the papal apostasy till he recognized the pope as antichrist. It was then he burned the papal Bull. Knox's first mission as a Reformer, was on the prophecies concerning the Papacy. The Reformers embodied their interpretation of prophecy in their confessions of faith, and Calvin in his *Institutes*. All the Reformers were unanimous in the matter. . . . And their interpretation of these prophecies determined their reforming action. . . . It nerved them to resist the claims of that apostate church to the uttermost. It made them martyrs; it sustained them at the stake. And the views of the Reformers were shared by thousands, by hundreds of thousands. They were adopted by princes and peoples . . . (*Romanism and the Reformation* [S. R. Briggs], 250-260).

The United Testimony of the Reformers on the Identity of Antichrist

The Reformers' system of prophetic interpretation, known as "the Protestant system," was unchallenged in the Protestant movement for three hundred years. It has been all but forgotten today.

Martin Luther:

"We are convinced that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist" (*What Luther Says*, ed. Ewald M. Plass, Vol. 1, 34). "You should know that the pope is the real, true, final Antichrist, of whom the entire Scripture speaks, whom the Lord is

beginning to consume with the spirit of his mouth and will very soon destroy and slay with the brightness of his coming, for which we are waiting" (Plass, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, 36, 37).

John Calvin:

"Daniel and Paul had predicted that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God. The head of that cursed and abominable kingdom, in the Western church, we affirm to be the Pope. When his seat is placed in the temple of God, it suggests that his kingdom will be such that he will not abolish the name of Christ or the Church. Hence it appears that we by no means deny that churches may exist, even under his tyranny; but he has profaned them by sacrilegious impiety, afflicted them by cruel despotism, corrupted and almost terminated their existence by false and pernicious doctrines; like poisonous potions, in such churches, Christ lies half buried, the Gospel is suppressed, piety exterminated, and the worship of God almost abolished; in a word, they are altogether in such a state of confusion that they exhibit a picture of Babylon, rather than of the holy city of God" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. 4, chap. 2, sec. 12).

Heinrich Bullinger:

"By the little horn many understand the kingdom of Mohammed, of the Saracens and of the Turks. . . . But when the apostolic prophecy in *Second Thessalonians* 2 is more carefully examined, it seems that this prophecy of Daniel and that prophecy of the apostle belong more rightly to the kingdom of the Roman pope, which kingdom has arisen from small beginnings and has increased to an immense size" (trans. from Heinrich Bullinger, *Daniel Sapientissimus Dei Propheta (Daniel the Most Wise Prophet of God)*, chap. 7, fol. 78v).

Nicholas Ridley:

"The head, under Satan, of all mischief is Antichrist and his brood and the same is he which is the Babylonical beast. The beast is he whereupon the whore sitteth. The whore is that city, saith John in plain words, which hath empire over the kings of the earth. This whore hath a golden cup of abominations in her hand, whereof she maketh to drink the kings of the earth, and of the wine of this harlot all nations hath drunk; yea, and kings of the earth have lain by this whore; and merchants of the earth, by virtue of her pleasant merchandise, have been made rich.

"Now what city is there in the whole world, that when John wrote, ruled over the kings of the earth; or what city can be read of in any time, that of the city itself challenged the empire over the kings of the earth, but only the city of Rome, and that since the usurpation of that See hath grown to her full strength?" (*A Piteous Lamentation of the Miserable Estate of the Church in England, in the Time of the Late Revolt from the Gospel*, in *Works*, 53).

Philip Melanchthon:

"18. Since it is certain that the pontiffs and the monks have forbidden marriage, it is most manifest, and true without any doubt, that the Roman pontiff, with his whole order and kingdom, is very Antichrist.

"19. Likewise in *2 Thessalonians*, 2, Paul clearly says that the man of sin will rule in the church exalting himself above the worship of God, etc.

"20. But it is certain that the popes do rule in the church, and under the title of the church in defending idols.

"21. Wherefore I affirm that no heresy hath arisen, nor indeed shall be, with which these descriptions of Paul can more

truly and certainly accord and agree than with this pontifical kingdom

"25. The prophet Daniel also attributes these two things to Antichrist; namely, that he shall place an idol in the temple, and worship [it] with gold and silver; and that he shall not honor women.

"26. That both of them belong to the Roman pontiff, who does not clearly see? The idols are clearly the impious masses, the worship of saints, and the statues which are exhibited in gold and silver that they may be worshiped" (trans. from Philip Melanchthon, "De Matrimonio," *Disputationes*, No. 56, in *Opera (Corpus Reformatorum)*, Vol. 12, cols. 535, 536).

John Hooper:

"God hath given this light unto my countrymen . . . that [neither] the bishop of Rome nor none other is Christ's vicar upon the Earth. . . . It is so plain that it needeth no probation; the very properties of Antichrist, I mean of Christ's great and principal enemy, are so openly known to all men that are not blinded with the smoke of Rome that they know him to be the beast that John describeth in the Apocalypse" (*Declaration of Christ and His Office*, chap. 3, in *Works*, Vol. 1, 22, 23).

The Origin of Futurism and Preterism

Not only did the Reformers proclaim the mighty truth of justification by faith alone for the liberation of men's souls, but they nerved thousands to break from the tyranny of the dark ages of the papacy by clearly identifying the Antichrist of Bible prophecy. The symbols of Daniel, Paul, and John were applied to the papacy with tremendous effect. The realization that the incriminating finger of prophecy rested squarely on Rome aroused the consciousness of Europe. In alarm Rome saw that she must successfully counteract this identification of

Antichrist with the papacy or lose the battle. She must present plausible arguments which would cause men to look outside the medieval period for the development of Antichrist.

The Jesuits rallied to the Roman cause by providing two alternatives to the historical interpretation of the Protestants. These alternatives, preterism and futurism, were designed to deflect attention from the papacy as Antichrist by making Antichrist exclusively a figure of the past (preterism) or of the future (futurism). In this way the Jesuits attempted to refute the Reformers' identification of the papacy as Antichrist.

The first alternative developed by the Jesuits was preterism—which is now the view held by many post-millennialists. Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) of Seville, Spain, devised what became known as the "preterist" system of prophetic interpretation. This theory proposed that Revelation deals with events in the pagan Roman Empire, that Antichrist refers to Nero, and that the prophecies were therefore fulfilled long before the time of the medieval church. Alcazar's preterist system has become popular among Protestant liberals, modernists, and postmillennialists.

The second view developed by the Jesuits was futurism, which is the view held by most dispensationalists and fundamentalists. This tack was taken by Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) of Salamanca, Spain. He was the founder of the "futurist" system of prophetic interpretation. Instead of placing Antichrist in the past as did Alcazar, Ribera argued that Antichrist would appear far in the future. About 1590 Ribera published a five hundred page commentary on Revelation denying the Protestant application of Antichrist to the Church of Rome. The gist of his futurist system was as follows:

(1) While the first few chapters in the Revelation were assigned to ancient Rome in the time of John, the greater part of the prophecies of the Revelation were assigned to the distant future, to events immediately preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ.

(2) Antichrist would be a single individual who would abolish the Christian religion, rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, and be received by the Jews.

(3) Antichrist's blasphemous work would continue for a literal three and a half years.

(4) The locale of the conflict with Antichrist would be the Middle East—i.e., Palestine.

Ribera's futurism was expanded and polished by later Catholic scholars and became the dominant Catholic system of prophetic interpretation.

Roman Catholic author G. S. Hitchcock summarizes the genesis of futurism and preterism as follows:

The Futuristic School, founded by the Jesuit Ribera in 1591, looks for Antichrist, Babylon, and a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, at the end of the Christian dispensation. The Praeterist School, founded by the Jesuit Alcazar, explains the Revelation by the Fall of Jerusalem [in A.D. 70] or by the fall of Pagan Rome in 410 A.D. (G.S. Hitchcock, *The Beasts and the Little Horn*, 7).

In 1898 the English Protestant Joseph Tanner made these observations on the beginnings of futurism and preterism:

Accordingly, toward the close of the century of the Reformation, two of her [Rome's] most learned doctors set themselves to the task, each endeavoring by different means to accomplish the same end, namely, that of diverting men's minds from perceiving the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Antichrist in the Papal system. The Jesuit Alcazar devoted himself to bring into prominence the *Preterist* method of interpretation, which we have already briefly noticed, and thus endeavored to show that the prophecies of Antichrist were fulfilled before the Popes ever ruled at Rome, and therefore could not apply to the Papacy. On the other hand

the Jesuit Ribera tried to set aside the application of these prophecies to the Papal Power by bringing out the *Futurist* system which asserts that these prophecies refer properly not to the career of the Papacy, but to that of some future supernatural individual who is yet to appear and to continue in power for three and a half years. Thus, as Alford says, the Jesuit Ribera, about A.D. 1580, may be regarded as the Founder of the Futurist system in modern times (*Daniel and the Revelation* [Hodder & Stoughton, 1898], 16, 17).

Ribera's futurism was polished and popularized by the great Roman Catholic controversialist, Cardinal Bellarmine (1542-1621) of Italy. This shrewd prince of the Roman State-Church took up the battle against Protestantism and became the foremost apologist for Rome in the Counter Reformation. Bellarmine insisted that the prophecies concerning Antichrist in Daniel, Paul, and John had no application to the papal power. Between 1581 and 1593 he published the most detailed defense of the Roman faith ever produced, *Disputationes de Christianae Fidei Adversus Huius Temporis Haereticos*. The third part of his *Disputationes* was devoted to showing that Antichrist is not the papacy but a single man who will appear at the end of time. Bellarmine wrote:

For all Catholics think thus that Antichrist will be one certain man; but all heretics teach . . . that Antichrist is expressly declared to be not a single person, but an individual throne or absolute kingdom, and apostate seat of those who rule over the church (*Disputationes*, Bk. 3, chap. 2, 185).

Bellarmino further said:

Nor can anyone be pointed out who has been accepted for Antichrist, who has ruled exactly three and one-half years; therefore the Pope is not Antichrist. Then Antichrist has not yet come (Chapter 8, 190). The pope is not Antichrist since

indeed his throne is not in Jerusalem, nor in the Temple of Solomon (Chapter 13, 195).

For nearly three hundred years the Protestant movement had no lack of expositors who very ably defended the Protestant, or historical, school of prophetic interpretation. Until the nineteenth century, Protestantism stood united on the historical principle of prophetic interpretation, and neither futurism nor preterism penetrated the Protestant movement. Today there are two prophetic camps fighting each other within "Protestantism," and the Protestant doctrine has been abandoned or rejected. The two camps are the futurists—the dispensationalists, fundamentalists, and amillennialist—and the preterists—the postmillennialists and the liberals. Both are wrong. Neither is Protestant. Both reject the Reformers' identification of the Papacy as Antichrist. Both are unwitting disciples of the Jesuits.

Futurism

Futurism first entered Protestantism in nineteenth-century England by two apparently widely separated developments. The first was the appearance of a Romanizing tendency in the Church of England. Briefly, the development was as follows:

Dr. Samuel R. Maitland (1792-1866), curate of Christ Church at Gloucester and later librarian to the archbishop of Canterbury, was the first notable Protestant scholar to accept the Riberan interpretation of Antichrist. Maitland held the Reformation in open contempt and freely admitted that his view of prophecy coincided with Roman Catholic interpretation. His views were first published in 1826 and received widespread study and interest. James H. Todd (1805-1869), professor of Hebrew at the University of Dublin, studied and accepted Maitland's futuristic views. He strongly attacked the Reformers' historical system of prophetic interpretation. Todd's views were published and widely circulated among the theologians of his time.

John Henry Newman (1801-1890), famous high church Anglican who converted to Rome and became a cardinal, was one of the leading spirits in the Oxford, or Tractarian, movement. Five years before he joined the Roman State-Church, Newman advocated Todd's futurism in a tract called *The Protestant Idea of Antichrist*. Newman wrote:

We have pleasure in believing that in matters of Doctrine we entirely agree with Dr. Todd. . . . The prophecies concerning Antichrist are as yet unfulfilled, and that the predicted enemy of the Church is yet to come.

Through the publication and dissemination of thousands of tracts, the Oxford Movement leavened English Protestantism with the idea that the Reformers' understanding of Antichrist was untrustworthy. It effectively diverted attention from Rome to some unknown person to come in the future.

About the same time as the development of the Oxford Movement, there was another development in England which played a decisive role in bringing futurism within the Protestant movement. There was a growing disenchantment with the deadness of the established churches, a reaction against the spiritualizing tendency of postmillennialism (with its tendency toward modernism and preterism), and a revival of hope in the soon coming of Christ and the last things. Two religious leaders played an important role in these developments: Edward Irving (1792-1834), born in Scotland and a brilliant Presbyterian preacher, became a noted expositor in the British Advent Awakening. At first a historicist in his approach to the prophecies, Irving came to adopt futuristic views. He despaired of the church being able to complete her Gospel commission by the ordinary means of evangelism and began to believe and preach about the miraculous return of the gifts and power of the early church.

In 1831 the "gift of tongues" and other "prophetic utterances" made their appearance among his followers, first in Scotland among some women and then in London. Irving never detected the imposture and gave credence to these new revelations. Under

the influence of these revelations of "the Holy Ghost" "by other tongues," a new aspect was added to the expectation of a future Antichrist—the rapture of the church before the advents of Antichrist and Christ. The origin of this theory has embarrassed some of its advocates, and the defenders of this novel theory have tried to deny its historical beginning. But the discovery in a rare book by Dr. Robert Norton entitled *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets: In the Catholic Apostolic Church*, published in 1861, establishes the origin of this innovative doctrine beyond all question. Norton was a participant in the Irvingite movement.

The idea of a two-stage coming of Christ first came to a Scottish lass, Miss Margaret MacDonald of Port Glasgow, Scotland, while she was in a "prophetic" trance. Norton actually preserved Miss MacDonald's pretribulation vision and "prophetic" utterance in his book. He wrote:

Marvelous light was shed upon Scripture, and especially on the doctrine of the second Advent, by the revived spirit of prophecy. In the following account by Miss M. M.—, of an evening during which the power of the Holy Ghost rested upon her for several successive hours, in mingled prophecy and vision, we have an instance; for here we first see the distinction between that final stage of the Lord's coming, when every eye shall see Him, and His prior appearing in glory to them that look for Him (15).

A little later the idea of the secret pre-tribulation rapture was adopted and polished by the Plymouth Brethren in their founding Powercourt Conferences of the 1830's. S. P. Tregelles, who participated in the Powercourt Conferences, admitted that the Brethren obtained the idea of the rapture from the Irvingite movement. He wrote:

I am not aware that there was any definite teaching that there should be a Secret Rapture of the Church at a secret coming until this was given forth as an "utterance" in Mr. Irving's church from what was then received as being the voice of the Spirit.

But whether anyone ever asserted such a thing or not, it was from that supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and the modern phraseology respecting it arose (*The Hope of Christ's Coming*, 35; cited by George L. Murray, *Millennial Studies—A Search for Truth* [Baker Book House, 1960], 138).

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), one of the prominent founders of the movement often known as Plymouth Brethren, was not only an ardent futurist, but he added another new dimension to the futuristic scheme—dispensationalism. Oswald T. Allis wrote in his book, *Prophecy and the Church*:

"The Dispensational teaching of today, as represented, for example, by the *Scofield Reference Bible*, can be traced back directly to the Brethren Movement which arose in England and Ireland about the year 1830. Its adherents are often known as Plymouth Brethren, because Plymouth was the strongest of the early centers of Brethrenism. It is also called Darbyism, after John Nelson Darby (1800-82), its most conspicuous representative. The primary features of this movement were two in number. The one related to the Church. It was the result of the profound dissatisfaction felt at that time by many earnest Christians with the worldliness and temporal security of the Church of England and of many of the dissenting communions in the British Isles. The other had to do with prophecy; it represented a very marked emphasis on the coming of the Lord as a present hope and immediate expectation. These two doctrines were closely connected.

The Parenthesis Church

"The beginning of the Brethren doctrine regarding the Church is found in the claim that an ordained ministry and eldership was not necessary to the proper observance of the great central rite of the Christian Church, the Lord's Supper. It

was claimed that Christian believers might meet together to break bread, without any ecclesiastical order or government whatsoever. And since the New Testament speaks quite definitely of the ordaining of elders, it was claimed that this "professing church" which is characterized by a ministry or eldership having "successive" or "derivative" authority was Jewish and Petrine, and to be sharply distinguished from the Church described by Paul as a "mystery," which is entirely unique, utterly distinct from Israel, a heavenly body having no connection with the Earth. So understood, the Church age is to be regarded as a "parenthesis" between the Old Testament kingdom of the past and the Old Testament kingdom of the future, or in other words as constituting an "interruption" in the fulfillment of the kingdom promises to Israel. This distinction between the true (Pauline) Church and the professing (Petrine) church is of fundamental importance.

The Any Moment Coming

"Closely connected with the doctrine of the Church was the doctrine of the Coming. Brethrenism had its beginnings at a time when there was great interest in the doctrine of the second advent. Edward Irving had stirred London by his flaming eloquence, declaring in sermon after sermon that the Lord might come at any moment. The Brethren, who were ardent Chiliasts, took the position that the Church as a heavenly body had no connection with earthly events, that such events concerned Israel and the nations, that the Church must live in constant expectancy of the coming of the Lord, that no events of any kind must be regarded as necessarily intervening between the Church and this any moment expectancy, and particularly that the rapture of the Church would certainly take place before the great tribulation.

"This any moment doctrine of the coming had a natural and inevitable consequence, which is of prime importance in Dispensational teaching. It led to the discovery of a second hidden interval or parenthesis in the course of redemptive history as set forth in the Bible. If the Church has nothing to do with earthly events and may be raptured at any moment, and if the Bible clearly refers to events which are to precede the coming of Christ to the Earth, the logical inference is that there must be two aspects or "stages" of the coming: one which concerns the Church only and is timeless and signless, and the other which concerns the Earth and will be separated from the former by an interval during which the predicted events will take place. Consequently, instead of adhering to the view that the rapture, the catching up of the saints to meet the Lord in the air, would be immediately or speedily followed by their return with Him to reign over the Earth, which was the view generally held at that time by Premillennialists, the Brethren reached the conclusion that a sharp distinction must be drawn between the coming of the Lord *for* the saints (the rapture) and His coming *with* the saints (the appearing or revelation). In between these two events, they claimed that they could recognize an important interval of time; namely the 70th week of *Daniel 9.*, the second part of which they identified more or less exactly with the events recorded in *Revelation 4-19.* Consequently, this second parenthesis, as we may call it, between the rapture and the appearing, is both a very necessary and also a distinctive feature of Brethren teaching, almost if not quite as important as the Church parenthesis referred to above.

The Jewish Remnant

"Closely related to this teaching regarding the Church and the Coming and indeed

indispensable to it was the doctrine of the Jewish Remnant. If the Church consists only of those who have been redeemed in the interval between Pentecost and the rapture, and if the entire Church is to be raptured, then there will be no Christians on Earth during the period between the rapture and the appearing. Yet during that period 144,000 in Israel and an innumerable multitude from the Gentiles (*Revelation 7*) are to be saved. How is this to be brought about, if the Church has been raptured and the Holy Spirit removed from the Earth? The answer to this question is found in the doctrine of the Jewish remnant. After the rapture of the Church a Jewish remnant is to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom and through the preaching of this Gospel multitudes are to be saved.

"This Brethren Controversy, as we may call it, has now become largely a thing of the past. The Plymouth Brethren are today one of the smallest of Christian groups, and their distinctive conception of Church order and government is very largely ignored. On the other hand, the fact that many of the views of the Brethren (their conception of the Church as a heavenly mystery and their prophetic program as a whole) are fully accepted in Dispensational circles, are indeed characteristic of Dispensationalism as such, has made Dispensationalism an issue of greater or lesser importance in practically all evangelical denominations at the present time.

Dispensationalism in America

"The distinctive features of Brethrenism were fully developed and formulated before the middle of the last century. Darby made his first visit to Canada in 1859 and subsequently paid repeated visits to Canada and the United States. In 1862 James Inglis of New York began the publication of a monthly, *Waymarks in the*

Wilderness, which helped to spread the teaching of the Brethren on this side of the Atlantic. One of the most influential advocates of this teaching was James H. Brookes of St. Louis, whose *Maranatha* appeared about 1870 and passed through many editions. But while Brookes' Dispensational views so closely resemble those of the Brethren that it seems clear that they were largely derived from them, Brookes gave no credit for them to Darby or any other of the Brethren. This may be due to the fact that there were associations with the name of Darby which Brookes wished to avoid. But his attitude was characteristic of the movement as a whole. Dispensationalists have accepted the prophetic teaching of the Brethren, but until recently have shown themselves decidedly unwilling to disclose the source from which they derived them. Brookes was active in the summer conferences known as "Believers' Meetings for Bible Study" which were commenced in the seventies, and also in the Prophetic Conferences, the first of which was held in New York in 1878.

"Without attempting to trace the history of Dispensationalism in detail, it will suffice to point out that it has owed its rapid growth in no small degree to two books, *Jesus is Coming* by "W. E. B.," and the *Scofield Reference Bible*. Blackstone's *Jesus is Coming* was published in 1878. The *Scofield Reference Bible* was published by Oxford University in 1909. It is the Bible of Dispensationalists, and has probably done as much to popularize the prophetic teachings of Darby and the Brethren as all other agencies put together. That Scofield was indebted to the Brethren for his Dispensational views cannot be questioned. He derived them first indirectly, from Brookes, and then directly from the Brethren and their writings. He held Darby's *Synopsis*, which is the standard commentary among the Brethren, in high esteem; and in the introduction to

the *Reference Bible* he acknowledged his indebtedness to the Brethren Movement without expressly mentioning it and made special mention of the "eminent Bible teacher," Walter Scott, who was a prominent figure among the Brethren. There are today scores of Bible Schools and Institutes in this country and elsewhere, especially in Canada, where Dispensational interpretation of the Bible is stressed and the *Scofield Reference Bible* practically a textbook. And the number of books and periodicals in circulation today which represent this viewpoint is legion (Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1972, 9-14).

Two Outstanding Defenders of Protestant Hermeneutics

When developments in England were seriously eroding the historical, or Protestant, system of prophetic interpretation, two great opponents of futurism arose:

1. Edward Bishop Elliott (1793-1875), graduate of Cambridge in 1816, produced a most elaborate work of 2,500 pages on Revelation. He exposed the fallacious interpretations which involved abandonment of the Protestant position on Antichrist and attacked the Romanizing tendencies in the Tractarian movement. It was Elliott who presented a thorough, documented history of the rise of futurism and preterism from Jesuit sources.
2. Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness (1835-1910) of London published nine major works on prophecy between 1878 and 1905. Alarmed by the inroads of the futurist school of interpretation stemming from the Jesuits, Guinness mounted a tremendous defense of the historical school, the Protestant view, which holds to the progressive fulfillment of prophecy from John's time to the second advent.

A Summary and Appraisal

In the last one hundred years the Protestant movement has largely abandoned the prophetic convictions of historic Protestantism and has opted

for theories which have their origin with the Jesuits. The liberal and postmillennial wings of the Protestant movement, often denying the inspiration of the Bible or spiritualizing away its most pointed truths, have adopted the preterist view of prophecy, first espoused by the Spanish Jesuit Alcazar. The right wing of Protestantism, the dispensationalists and fundamentalists, have taken over the Spanish Jesuit Ribera's futurism, and have made it a part of orthodoxy. This represents a remarkable triumph of the theories of Rome's Counter Reformation.

The Presbyterian Church, at the turn of the twentieth century, revised the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and deleted the sentences identifying the papacy as Antichrist. The Reformational understanding of prophecy has been either deliberately rejected or forgotten. The two contending factions, the futurists and the preterists, can be traced directly to the Jesuits. Both agree on one thing: The Protestant view is wrong.

The Reason for the Change in Eschatology

We need to understand the reason Protestantism has abandoned her historic prophetic convictions. It is because the great truth of justification by faith alone is no longer at the center of the church's attention. That truth has been eclipsed by an earthly, man-centered vision. Dr. Francis Pieper wrote:

What, then, may be the reason that men are today disinclined to recognize the Pope as the Antichrist? Whence this strange and deplorable phenomenon, that nearly all recent "believing" theologians search about for the Antichrist while he is performing his work in the Church right before their eyes, his soul-destroying activity as plain as day? The trouble is that they have no living knowledge of the doctrine of justification and of the importance of this doctrine for the Church. From my own experience I must confess that I was vitally convinced that the Pope is the Antichrist only after I realized, on the one hand, what the doctrine of

justification is and how much it means to the Church, and, on the other hand, that the real essence of the Papacy consists in denying and cursing the doctrine of justification. . . .

Most modern Protestant theologians have adopted the Roman view of the doctrine of justification, as Dollinger pointed out in his lectures on the reunion of the Christian Church [in the nineteenth century].

The historic Protestant identification of Antichrist is not a matter of cheap polemics against the papacy. Rome is the religious personification of human nature. "We cannot reproach Rome with anything which does not recoil upon man himself" (J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, Vol. 1, 32). It is for good reason that the apostle calls the Antichrist the "man of sin" (2 *Thessalonians* 2:3). Paul's words echo the book of *Daniel*. The prophet describes this power which grew up out of the Roman Empire and among the ten nations of Western Europe as having "eyes like the eyes of man" (*Daniel* 7:8). And the leopardlike beast of *Revelation* 13, which is obviously the same power as the horn of *Daniel* 7, is said to have "the number of man" (*Revelation* 13:18). The papal system was developed by man. Its beginnings are found in 3 *John*. Great men like Augustine, who combated the heresy of Pelagianism, tragically helped build the Roman State-Church into the papacy. Augustine combated Pelagius by showing that there was much evil in the best saints—and his own impact on subsequent church history proved his own words. More and more the Roman State-Church bore the image and superscription of man until it sat in the temple of God acting as if it were God. It was the expression of the one sin of all ages—man taking the place of God.

Casting the Truth to the Earth

The focus of the Christian's affections is above. It is "where Christ sits on the right hand of God" (*Colossians* 3:1). The Old Testament scripture most frequently alluded to in the New Testament is *Psalms* 110: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand. . . ." It needs to be made startlingly clear

that Christ at the right hand of God, and not Christ in the human heart, is the great focal point of the apostolic proclamation. Christ has achieved, perfected, justified, and secured the salvation of his people, and he has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. But all these blessings are in Christ, *reserved in Heaven* for all who are kept by the power of God through faith (*1 Peter* 1:3-5). The Christian does not possess these blessings within himself, for they are found outside of him in the person of Christ. Christ himself at the right hand of God, absent from his saints on Earth, is the redemption, righteousness, security, perfection, and life of his people. The Holy Spirit dwells in the saints to direct their affections, their faith, and their attention outside of themselves to Christ at the right hand of God.

In contrast, let us look at the spirit of Antichrist. Daniel, the great prophet who described the Antichrist, said, "It cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced and prospered" (*Daniel* 8:12).

Consider how the truth of justification by faith alone was thrown down to the Earth. The Christian's righteousness with God is at the right hand of God. But through the influence of sinful human nature—the man of sin—

It needs to be made startlingly clear that

Christ at the right hand of God, and not Christ in the human heart, is the great focal point of the apostolic proclamation.

The Church lost this great truth of justification. More and more it focused on the inward work of grace in the human heart. Finally, the Church taught that the Christian's righteousness with God is found in the Holy Spirit's work in his heart—the experience of renewal and sanctification. The *personal* righteousness of the believer on Earth was put in place of the *vicarious* righteousness of Christ in Heaven. Faith was no longer directed to the doing and dying of Christ alone for justification with God. It was directed to the inner experience of the believer. In short, a present righteousness on Earth (the good works of men) took the place of a heavenly and all-sufficient righteousness (the good

works of Christ) mediated for poor sinners at the right hand of God. Thus did the sin of man throw down the truth to the ground.

The whole development of the Roman system is a de-mostration of what happens when the human heart and inward religious experience become the focus of the Church's attention. What makes it more terrible is that it is done under such a pious pretext. It is done under the guise of honoring the Holy Spirit, who indwells Christians. James Buchanan pinpointed the doctrine of Antichrist when he wrote:

There is, perhaps, no more subtle or plausible error, on the subject of Justification, than that which makes it rest on the indwelling presence, and the gracious work, of the Holy Spirit in the heart . . . nothing can be more unscriptural in itself, or more pernicious to the souls of men, than the substitution of the gracious work of the Spirit *in us*, for the vicarious work of Christ *for us*, as the ground of our pardon and acceptance with God (*The Doctrine of Justification* [London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961], 401, 402).

When man's *personal* righteousness took the place of Christ's substitutionary righteousness, the whole process of putting man in the place of God began.

The whole development of the Roman system is a demonstration of what happens when the human heart and inward religious experience become the focus of the Church's attention.

The Church usurped the authority of Christ. Its voice was put forth as the voice of God, its priests became mediators in the place of Christ, and its mass was set forth as the present and experiential sacrifice in the place of the historical cross. All the horrors of the papal system are corollaries of its one great error of putting an inside righteousness of the heart in the place of the outside righteousness of Christ.

The Deadly Wound

Luther did not center his attack on the abuses of the papacy but against its doctrine of justification. Complaining against the radical enthusiasts, who

aimed their attack on papal customs and abuses, Luther said:

We moreover did teach and urge nothing but this article of justification, which alone at that time did threaten the authority of the Pope and lay waste his kingdom. . . . Images and other abuses in the church would have fallen down of themselves if they had but diligently taught the article of justification (*A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* [London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1953], 218, 219).

The Reformation restored the truth of righteousness by faith—a righteousness not on Earth but in Heaven, not in man but in Christ, not personal but vicarious, not infused but imputed, not earned but given by grace, not experiential but judicial, not psychological but legal.

The Reformation restored the truth of righteousness by faith—a righteousness not on Earth but in Heaven, not in man but in Christ, not personal but vicarious, not infused but imputed, not earned but given by grace, not experiential but judicial, not psychological but legal. This was the sword of truth which inflicted such a blow on the papacy that prophecy described it as a "deadly wound" (Revelation 13:3).

The Healing of the Deadly Wound

The same sinful tendencies which corrupted the truth of justification by faith alone in the early Church have been at work in the Protestant movement for centuries. Contemporary religionists are preoccupied with things other than the great article of justification. They are obsessed with the human heart and what goes on in it. This religion of internalism, which never gets higher than a man's own spiritual navel, takes many forms:

(1) It is often taught that faith itself justifies as an ethical act. People are urged to "surrender" as if a certain quality in the heart called "faith" or "trust" will make them pleasing in the sight of God.

(2) Every sinner who comes to faith by the hearing of the Gospel and work of the Spirit will make a decision for Christ, but this is far different from

urging people to become Christians by their own acts of decision. There is a popular type of "decisionism" which tends to ground salvation on some religious act—it may be called "faith," "decision," "surrender," etc. But justification by grace alone teaches us not to trust in our own acts of repentance, contrition, and consecration, and hide ourselves in the faithfulness of Christ alone.

(3) So-called "evangelicalism" has far more to say about the psychological and moral change in the believer (regeneration or renewal) than about God's salvation in Jesus Christ. Along with this, baptism is often set forth as the outward sign of this inward experience. Baptism becomes a sign and memorial of the believer's "death"—a memorial of his decision and consecration—instead of a witness to the one efficacious death of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is subtly changed into a message of self and self crucified instead of Christ and Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). The believer's mystical act of "dying" becomes the focus of attention. This crisis experience of "yielding," "surrendering," and "dying" is said to be the means of getting the Spirit or getting the victory over sin (according to a misuse of Romans 6:1-7).

Just as Rome put man's personal righteousness in the place of Christ's vicarious righteousness, so this teaching puts the personal "dying" of the believer in the place of the vicarious death of Christ.

Just as Rome put man's personal righteousness in the place of Christ's vicarious righteousness, so this teaching puts the personal "dying" of the believer in the place of the vicarious death of Christ. It is so easy to forget that it is Christ's unique, unrepeatable death which frees us from sin and the law and brings us the Spirit (Romans 6:2-7; 7:4; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Galatians 3:13, 14).

(4) The apostles proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus with great power, but modern "evangelicalism" prefers to focus on the resurrected life of the believer. The new birth, of course, is vitally important, but it is a soul destroying error when we substitute the "gospel" of the changed life for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The new birth, of course, is vitally important, but it is a soul-destroying error when we substitute the "gospel" of the changed life for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Instead of preaching the good news about Christ, the pulpit on the changed life itself as the supreme event. Go to a typical "testimony meeting," and you will have full proof of that. But the devotees of Indian gurus, Mary Baker Eddy, and dozens more religious charlatans also have glowing testimonies about how their masters have given them victory over drugs, changed their personalities, and filled them with radiant peace. The apostles did not run around preaching a new lifestyle obtainable by believing in Jesus—as if Jesus were a mere means to this end. Modern "evangelicalism" preaches the conversion event of the believer far more than the death of Christ: It preaches salvation by new birth rather than salvation by the finished work of Christ.

(5) There is no question but that the doctrine of the Spirit's indwelling and the Spirit-filled life has become a focus of "evangelical" interest. The charismatic movement has merely carried this evangelical preoccupation with the Spirit's work in the heart a little further than most of its "evangelical" friends.

(6) Contemporary fascination with counseling and psychology in the churches is a logical result of the man-centered message of the churches. The churches have long been preaching an experiential message; they have long been preoccupied with inner experience. In the past twenty years they have discovered that unbelievers have had a lot to say about inner experience, and they are now preaching psychology rather than the Christ of history.

When the human heart and subjective inner experience become the center of the church's teaching, the truth is cast down to Earth. Man on Earth has taken the spotlight from Christ at the right hand of God; it is the spirit of Antichrist. Glorification of religious experience under the sanctimonious pretext of honoring the Holy Spirit is the glorification of man and leads to the worship of the creature rather than worship of the Creator. This

is what the great issue described in Revelation 13 and 14 is all about.

The Church cannot ignore the mighty truth of justification by faith alone without casting the truth to the ground. When the pursuit of man's religious experience on Earth takes the place of faith in Christ's intercession of righteousness in Heaven, people "mind earthly things"—even their own "belly," or internals (Philippians 3:19).

How Views of the Gospel Influence Views on Prophecy

An earthly, man-centered, experience-centered religion will have a corresponding effect on views about eschatology.

Instead of looking to the Jerusalem which is above (Galatians 4:26), which descends "out of Heaven from God" (Revelation 21:10), there is a looking to an *earthly* Jerusalem. Instead of looking to Mount Zion which is in "heavenly Jerusalem," where Jesus stands as Mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 12:22-24), there is a looking to an *earthly* Mount Zion. Instead of looking to the true temple of Heaven, where Christ is high priest after the order of Melchisedek (Revelation 11:19; Hebrews 8:1, 2), there is a looking for an *earthly* temple to be built in Palestine. And the end of all *earthly*, man-centered religion is an *earthly* and man-centered millennium. An "exciting experience of the Spirit-filled life" is to be exceeded by an even more exciting future in the coming earthly utopia.

Futurism and preterism are extensions of Roman Catholic spirituality to the things of prophecy. The only reason that they could take root on Protestant soil is because, as Catholic scholar Louis Bouyer wrote, there has been "a rediscovery of Catholicism" within the Protestant movement (*The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* [Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1964], 189). The so-called "Protestant" churches are saturated with Catholic mentality and Catholic spirituality. A Judaizing corruption of the Gospel has led to a Judaizing concept of prophecy and eschatology.

The Implications of Revelation 13

However unpleasant and alarming it might be, we ought to take off our futurist and preterist glasses and look at the way Protestantism read Revelation 13 for three hundred years. Just as the Hebrews got a new Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, so the church has new teachers who know not justification by faith alone nor the Protestant system of prophetic interpretation. This generation of Christians needs to be told how our spiritual fathers understood the symbol of the leopardlike beast in Revelation 13.

Until the last one hundred years Protestants generally understood that the great leopardlike beast of Revelation 13 was a symbol of the papacy. John wrote:

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority (Revelation 13:1, 2).

This echoes Daniel 7, where the prophet describes the four great empires (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome) under the symbols of the lion, the bear, the leopard and the ten-horned beast. Apparently, the spirit of Babylon, Greece, etc., lives on in the power brought to view in Revelation 13. The evil work of this beast corresponds exactly with the evil work of the "little horn" of Daniel 7.

The "little horn" of Daniel 7 grew out of the beast which symbolized the Roman Empire. It is therefore a Roman power. It grew up among the ten nations of Western Europe and dominated them. It is described as continuing its existence until the judgment takes away its dominion. The "little horn" clearly describes Papal Rome, and the beast of Revelation 13 is obviously the same power brought to view. So Protestant theologians of a bygone era said that Revelation 13:1-10 describe the papacy. They also understood that the Protestant Reformation inflicted the "deadly wound" on the papacy through proclaiming the truth of justification by faith alone. Thereafter the power of Rome

suffered a great decline in Europe, until the opening of the nineteenth century witnessed a papacy so weakened that most observers saw it ready to die as a world power, never to rise again.

But the prophecy of Revelation 13 does not end there. Even as Christ received his death wound and lived again, so the Antichrist would receive his death wound and live again. The prophet shifts his attention to a lamblike beast rising from the Earth (Revelation 13:11). The lamb is elsewhere used as a symbol of Christ. Here a new power arises which is completely different from the wild, ravaging "beasts" that came before. In appearance and profession this power is Christian. But a strange thing happens. This second beast, which supplanted the first beast, begins to act like the first beast. Instead of preaching the Gospel, it preaches another gospel. It becomes a "false prophet" (Revelation 16:13) which works miracles and brings fire down from Heaven in the sight of men (Revelation 13:13). It thereby deceives people into once again worshiping the first beast (Revelation 13:11-13). A likeness of the first beast is formed, and together the beast and its image unite to compel all men to follow in their train.

Now if the first beast of Revelation 13 is, as Protestantism once believed, a symbol of Romanism, what is signified by this second beast, which finally becomes a likeness of the first beast? Could it be a symbol of a Pro-testantism which, having lost the truth of justification by faith alone, proclaims a "gospel" in the power and spirit of Antichrist?

If Revelation 13 is truly a description of where the current religious scene is heading, it demands the most urgent and prayerful attention on the part of God's people. The great mistake of the Jewish nation was that, failing to recognize Christ, they fulfilled prophecy by condemning him (Acts 13:24). The great danger facing the Christian Church is that, failing to recognize Antichrist, we will fulfill prophecy by promoting him. One thing from Revelation 13 stands out clearly. Just as Christ, the image of God, is also God, so the lamblike beast, on becoming an image of Antichrist, is also Antichrist.

The Reformation of All Things

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means, for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. . . . For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming. Amen.

Extensively revised and adapted from an essay that appeared originally in Present Truth, now defunct.