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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. (*2 Corinthians* 10:3-6)

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The Falling Away and the Rise of the Man of Sin

by Rondald N. Cooke

Editor's note: The following is excerpted from Dr. Cooke's Tract XIV Part 1 of his Exegetical Series.

The Falling Away of Protestantism in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Everyone is a creature of his times and place in church history. We have been influenced by the times we have lived through and in which we had our ministry. Great changes have taken place in my lifetime, in both the British Isles and North America, which includes English-speaking Canada.

Rudyard Kipling wrote his poem about England, when that nation had reached the zenith of its power, and when the Sun never sat upon the British Empire. I have quoted this verse at times when preaching about America. For America replaced England as the greatest nation in the world, and in many ways duplicated what England had experienced a century or so earlier. Kipling wrote,

> Far called our navies melt away
> On dune and headland sinks the fire
> Lo all our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre
> Judge of the nations be with us yet
> Lest we forget, lest we forget.

Some in England did not like what Kipling wrote about the state of England then (1891), but he was surely correct in warning the nation about the possibility of forgetting God amidst the glory of the British Empire.

However, England's colonial empire helped to spread the gains of the Protestant Reformation far and wide across the world at that time. England was involved in freeing Palestine[1] from the Turks, fighting the Afghan forces north of India, ruling India and Burma—now called Myanmar.

They were also busy colonizing Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Nyasaland, North and South Rhodesia, Nigeria, and the Gold Coast. They were involved in rescuing Kitchener from the Sudan, fighting the Boers in South Africa, and working to establish British Guiana, and British Honduras in the western hemisphere. (The names of all these colonies changed, if, and when they became self-governing.)

Because of all this colonizing, many in England began to see the possible "Christianizing" of the world arising out of the British Empire upon which the Sun never set. Such thinking surely impinged upon the exegesis of Scripture.

Postmillenialism dominated England in the latter part of the eighteenth century. What was called German Rationalism arose in Germany and came into England also. The idea that the world was getting better and better, rather than worse and worse, arose out of these two movements.

[1] My uncle Henry was killed in Mesopotamia in 1925. He was a soldier in the British Army. My uncle Robert was killed in the first World War. My uncle James survived the first World War and won a medal for bravery. My uncle John served all through the second World War and afterwards in India. John lived into his 80s and James into his 90s, while Robert and Henry did not reach 21.

The hymnody of England tended to be Postmillennial in its eschatology. Isaac Watts led the way: "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun / Does his successive journeys run / His kingdom spread from shore to shore / Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

Reginald Heber, whose Diocese was half of India, continued the strain:

> From Greenland's icy mountains, to India's coral sand
> Where Africa's sunny fountains roll down their golden sand
> From many an ancient river, to many a palmy plain
> They call us to deliver their land from error's chain.

The Great Awakening in England also came as a time of Refreshing from the Presence of the Lord, that stirred the British Isles at that time. It was also a time when the Roman Catholic Church suffered many setbacks. The French Revolution saw the massacre of priests and nuns. The taking of the Pope captive by Napoleon and brought to Paris where he crowned Napoleon Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

Such events made many think that the Papacy was finished, and that the words of Samuel Roffey Maitland were true: "the Antichrist was an atheistic individual persecutor of the church, more like what was seen in the French Revolution, than anything ever seen in the Church of Rome."

Maitland surely started a movement in England that completely changed how the Antichrist came to be regarded within the ranks of Protestantism. At the same time, what was called German Rationalism was invading both Britain and America.

John Dick, a Scottish minister, writing in the early part of the nineteenth century, observed the effect of the French Revolution upon some Christian ministers.

> An attentive observer cannot have failed to remark a very striking peculiarity of the present times [1818]. It is the influence of the principles of infidelity upon many professors of the Christian religion…. In some instances, such concessions are made, as amount to a complete surrender of the point in debate. The inspiration of the Scriptures is an article of our faith against which infidels have directed all their arguments…. What is the consequence? Many professed champions of Christianity seem to have concluded that the article [of the inspiration of the Scriptures] is not tenable, because it has been furiously assailed and accordingly, they have abandoned it wholly, or in part, to the enemy. The spirit of infidelity is working among Christians themselves.

Those who followed this spirit of infidelity also repudiated the Protestant Reformation, which was built upon *Sola Scriptura*, the Bible Alone, which is the *inspired* Word of God, which is the only authority for faith and practice in the Church.

Maitland started his attack upon the Reformation, and its identity of the popes of Rome as the dynasty of the Antichrist, in 1826. The Plymouth Brethren started around 1828, and those in the movement carried on the Futurist Approach to the Apocalypse. They also repudiated the position of the Protestant Reformers on the identity of the Antichrist.

The next main movement was the Oxford Movement, which was also called the Tractarian Movement because it was energized and kept going by a series of Tracts repudiating both the Reformation and the teaching that the Papacy is the Antichrist. The Tractarians wanted to return to the early "fathers," and wanted to bring in various Roman Catholic teachings and practices into their Anglican Church.

While various evangelicals and Reformed writers were helping the Papacy to graduate from the stigma of Antichrist to a true Christian Communion, Roman Catholic writers were also addressing the dramatic recovery of the Papal Dominion in the modern world, after its almost total collapse caused by the French Revolution. Paul Collins wrote *Absolute Power: How the Pope Became the Most Influential Man in the World* in 2018. The blurb on the cover reads:

> In 1799, the Papacy was at rock bottom…. Rome had been seized by the revolutionary French Armies, and cardinals were scattered across Europe, With the next papal election uncertain, it seemed that even if Catholicism survived, the papacy was finished. And yet, just over two hundred years later, the pope's influence reaches across the world—from Cuban politics to gender equality to the refugee crisis.

> In this gripping narrative of religious and political history, Paul Collins tells the improbable success story of the last 220 years of the papacy, from the ignominious death of Pope Pius VI in 1799, to the exalted reception of Pope Francis today.

However, while a number of books written in the Third Millennium praised the *recovery* of the Papacy after the time of the French Revolution, such books were simply non-existent in the years following that Revolution. Throughout the 19th century the Papacy was in a struggle to recover from the effects of the French Revolution, and the other revolutions in 1848, sweeping across Europe at that time. Italy itself was working toward nationhood that took the Papal States from the Papacy and made the Pope "the prisoner of the Vatican," rather than the ruler of the world.

The slow but sure recovery of the Papal Dominion coincided with the Falling Away within Evangelical Protestantism. There were several *main* components of the Falling Away within Evangelical Protestantism that we will try to address throughout this Tracts.

…

The Historicist Approach

The Second approach is the Historicist, which maintains that the prophecies of this book [*Revelation*] give a broad sweep of the great features of Church history from apostolic times to the end of the world. This group comprises by far the greater number of Protestant writers including almost all the Puritans—men like Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop Newton, Cunningham, Elliott, and others. While the Preterist view confines Antichrist to a past period of history now completed, and the modern Futurist view confines Antichrist to a time still future after the rapture of the Church, the Historicist approach holds that Antichrist is past, present, and future.

Critics of the Historicist view have maintained that the various advocates of this view differ greatly among themselves as to the interpretation of the various details and symbols of the book. But this criticism can equally be applied to the Preterists and the Futurists. They also disagree in their interpretation of the details of the book.

The Historicists wrestled with the various symbols of the book in trying to fit the seals, vials, and trumpets into a sequential unfolding of the history of the church. But they did not maintain that everything in the book was already fulfilled in church history. Dean Woodhouse, for example, viewed the vials as designating successive inflictions of Divine vengeance upon the enemies of the Church, *not yet fulfilled.*

Other Historicists viewed the seventh seal, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials all as still future. So, the Historicist view is not locked into only the past history of the Church, but views at least some of the book as still future.

However, almost all Historicist exegetes connect the Papacy to Mystery Babylon and the Great Whore. Whereas the two Jesuit views, Preterist and Futurist, connect Mystery Babylon to pagan Rome in the past (Preterist) or to Rome in some future time (Bellarmine with others) or to a literal rebuilt Babylon not Rome (Walvoord with others) some time in the distant future.

There was agreement for years among the expositors of the Apocalypse that the prophecies of the book taken in conjunction with other prophetic Scripture such as *2 Thessalonians* 2:3-12 and *1 Timothy* 4:1-5 all referred to the rise and temporary ascendancy of a great religious apostate power, in the midst of the Christian Church, and which would be distinguished by certain characteristics. 1. There would arise the corruption of established religion, and this corrupted religion would spread and maintain itself by fraud and force (*2 Thessalonians* 2:3, 8-10; *1 Timothy* 4:1-2; *Revelation* 17:2-5; 18:3-5). 2. Gross immorality and licentiousness, combined with hypocritical religion and self-righteous ascetism and monasticism would accompany this religious system (*1 Timothy* 4:2-3). 3. Arrogant and blasphemous pretensions combined with the usurpation of Divine prerogatives and offices, resulting in the persecution of God's elect people (*2 Thessalonians* 2:4-5; *Revelation* 17:6-14 and 18:6-20). 5. Reliance upon the support and aid of worldly powers and alliances, co-operating with them in their persecution of any tyranny over God's elect (*Revelation* 17:1-2; 18:3, 9).

Such was the picture that the Protestant interpreters drew from these prophecies. They saw a great rival Antichrist, the enemy of God, seated in the temple of God in the Scriptures and having its

counterpart clearly revealed in history as the evil system of the Papacy. They saw abundant proofs furnished by the records of the church during the long night of the persecution of God's elect in the dark ages. They compared the leading traits of character which the Scripture reveal about this persecuting apostate religious system to the actual appearance of these traits in church history. They saw them pre-eminently fulfilled in the corruption and persecution of the Papal system.

They saw the actual historical gross corruptions of Christian doctrine and worship in the system of the Papacy. They saw the prediction of Timothy concerning the doctrine of demons which forbade marriage fulfilled in the celibate and monastic lifestyle of Roman Catholicism. (And one could surely ask, Will anything else come close to fulfilling this prophecy in the future?) They saw the blasphemous claims of Divine titles, the pretended miracles and wonders, which were predicted concerning the Man of Sin, fulfilled in the Papacy.

They saw in the oppression and persecution of God's elect the fulfillment of these prophecies which spoke of the love of the truth being despised and the spread of delusion that was to accompany the rise of the Man of Sin, all fulfilled in the Papal system. Millions of people blinded by error and deluded by ritual and ceremony, perishing forever in their sins, yet wrapped up tight in a religious system that claims to be not only Christian, but the *one true and only* Apostolic, holy, catholic, Church.

Samuel Maitland attacked the 1,260 years of Papal ascendancy, which some of the Historicist commentators followed. But some Historicists did not follow the 1,260-year ascendancy of the Papal Dominion. The early Lollard commentator did not follow the 1,260 year-day principle; neither did Luther, Calvin, nor Tyndale. Among later Historicists. J. A. Wylie did not follow the year-day principle in his book *The Papacy Is the Antichrist*.

Maitland, as far as I can see, makes no difference between the Historicists like the Continuists who go into much greater detail in trying to link John's visions to church history, and the Synchronists who would be less insistent on precise dates and events.

Maitland obviously failed to see the difference the Reformation made to the whole field of Biblical interpretation. The form of interpretation that Maitland defends was "indirect Bible exegesis" … i.e. from the fifth and sixth centuries on, men began to look to what they called "the fathers." Then some began to emphasize Tradition. So, for generations men approached the Bible *indirectly*; through the door of the "church fathers" and Tradition. And men like Bellarmine would stoutly defend this mode of interpretation, declaring that it was impossible to understand the Bible apart from infallible Tradition. The Reformation cleared away much of this rubbish and taught that every believer was his own priest and could read the Bible *alone* by himself.

In fact, Wylie wrote in 1888, seeming to be replying to the charges of Maitland. Such Historicists still saw the Papacy as the Antichrist but did not follow a detailed chronology of church history corresponding in detail to the predictions of the Apocalypse. They saw more or less, a correspondence with the descriptions of Mystery Babylon the Great, and the rise of the *Therion*—the Beast—of the Apocalypse with what was predicted in chapters 15-19 rather than trying to fit the predictions of the Apocalypse into a complete description of church history. They saw the rise of Papal Rome as fulfilling what the Seer saw and revealed primarily in these chapters.

…

Prolegomena to the Interpretation of the *Apostasia* and the Antichrist

We are not going into questions of Authorship or Canonicity. We believe in an inspired and inerrant Bible. Our task is to discuss the attempts to interpret the passages and texts of Scripture relating to the *Apostasia*, the Antichrist, the Beast, the Woman who rides the Beast, Mystery Babylon the Great, and any other pertinent texts.

The Difficulties Faced by Those Attempting to Interpret the Book of Revelation

While some of the best commentators on the books of the Bible never attempted to write a commentary on the *Apocalypse* of John, many other writers did write commentaries on the book. Indeed, thousands of attempts were made to write a commentary on *Revelation* from the second century of the Christian era until the Third Millennium. The fact that many scholars like Jerome, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield, and various other

capable writers never attempted to write a commentary on the book, surely attests to the difficulties involved in the interpretation of the *Apocalypse.*

Dr. Eldon Ladd of Fuller Seminary described the turmoil over the interpretation of prophecy that erupted at the start of the 19th century in England. He said, "there was *a paper war* that lasted many years in England," that started at the beginning of the 19th century.[2] This paper war certainly involved the identity of the Antichrist and the Beast of the *Apocalypse.*

Mr. Iain Murray, while discussing *The Puritan Hope*, made a very interesting comment about the original interpretation of the Reformers:

> This central hope [the second coming of the Lord] then, the Reformers clearly asserted. It was in regard to other subjects bearing on unfulfilled prophecy that they left no united testimony. Several of these subjects received little attention from the first generation of Reformers and, with one exception, they were left for their successors to take up. The exception was the unanimous belief that the Papal system is both the "man of sin" and the Babylonian whore of which Scripture forewarns (*2 Thessalonians* 2; *Revelation* 19). In the conviction of 16th century Protestants, Rome was the great Anti-Christ, and so firmly did this belief become established that it was not until the 19th century that it was seriously questioned by evangelicals.[3]

It is this "unanimous belief" that we seek to document in our study.

George Eldon Ladd corroborated the statement made by Iain Murray:

> Many of the great Christians of Reformation and Post-Reformation times shared this view of prophetic truth and identified Antichrist with the Roman Papacy. This is a fact which should be well pondered by modern students who insist that a pre-tribulational eschatology is *essential* to an orthodox theology. Among adherents of this interpretation were the Waldenses, the Hussites, Wyclif, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Melachthon, the Baptist theologian John Gill, the [Anglican] martyrs Cranmer, Tyndale, Latimer, and Ridley, John Wesley, and Johnathan Edwards.[4]

Here, Dr. Ladd even includes some of the Dissenters from Rome before the Reformation and adds others who were leaders of their Protestant denominations, men like Jonathan Edwards, the Congregationalist, and John Wesley, leader of the Methodists, and John Gill, a leading Baptist theologian.

One hundred years before Dr. Ladd wrote about the Paper War, Dean Henry Alford had pointed out the controversies over the interpretation of the Beast of the *Apocalypse*. He wrote:

> The Beast that thou sawest, that was, and is not, [and yet is] and shall come up out of the abyss and goeth to perdition. (These words have been a *very battlefield* for apocalyptic expositors whose principal differing interpretations are far too long to be given at all intelligibility here, but will be seen best in their own words, and compendiously but fairly stated, in the notices in Mr. Elliott's[5] fourth volume.) [6]

Added to the Paper Wars and Evangelical Battlefields were the sheer number of sermons, articles, and commentaries written on the *Apocalypse* in England and America in the past 200 years. Ladd mentions that many periodicals appeared early in the 19th century "that were devoted to prophecy."

> Most of them only experience a short life but exercised great influence for a few years. One of these periodicals was *The Investigator* (1831-1836), edited by J. W. Brooks, the last volume of which contained a *Dictionary of Writers on the Prophecies* in which Brooks compiled over 2,100 titles of books on prophetic subjects, together with 500 commentaries on books of the Bible…. Numerous anonymous tracts appeared bearing such titles as "The End of All Things Is at Hand."[7]

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[2] George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope,* Eerdmaan's, 1966, 33. (Emphasis added.)

[3] Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope,* Banner of Truth Trust, 1971, 41.

[4] Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 33-34. (Emphasis original.)

[5] Referring to E. B. Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae*, a 4-volume commentary on the *Apocalypse* published in 1851 from the Historicist position.

[6] Henry Alford, *Greek New Testament*, Guardian Press, Reprint, Volume 4, 708.

[7] Ladd, 35-36. (Emphasis original.)

E. R. Craven, a Presbyterian who translated Lange's commentary on the book, in the middle of the 19th century, claimed that, "Darling's *Cyclopedia Bibliographica*, published in London in 1859, had 52 columns consisting of the titles of special works on the *Apocalypse*, which comprised 26 pages of titles of commentaries on the book."[8]

And there have been hundreds more commentaries, articles, and books about the *Apocalypse* written since 1859. Thus, the interpretation of the *Apocalypse* is obviously not an easy task.

Dr. Ladd also claimed that "Futurism is now widely held, and that he is convinced this is the correct view"[9] to adopt in interpreting *Revelation.* Later, he added,

> That this biblical pattern of prophetic truth has become so widely accepted among our evangelical churches is due in good part to the fact that during the last decades of the 19th century, God raised up a group of devout students of the Word to place a *new emphasis* upon the Blessed Hope. These men have exercised a *profound influence* for the study of the Word of God and a love for prophetic truth. This has meant essentially a return to the interpretation which prevailed throughout the first centuries of the history of the Christian Church.[10]

We would agree with much of what Dr. Ladd wrote, except that we do not believe that the Futurist view of the Man of Sin—the Antichrist is the correct one. There certainly was a *new emphasis* within the ranks of Protestantism throughout most of the 19th century in England and America. Such an emphasis did influence many to reject the Reformed identity of the Antichrist and go back to the early "Fathers" and their interpretation of the Antichrist. However, as Clarence Larkin observed, there was a *revival* of the Jesuit view among Protestants at the beginning of the 19th century, rather than the view of the early church "fathers." This Jesuit Futurist view would become the most popular view throughout the rest of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Great Anomaly

What brought about the profound change in the identity of the Antichrist in Protestantism, at the beginning of the 19th century, and ever afterwards, right up to the present day? Beginning at the start of the 19th century the Protestant position on the identity of the Antichrist came under attack by the Chilean Jesuit Emanuel Lacunza in AD 1801. However, throughout the rest of the 19th century various Protestant writers joined up with the Jesuits to repudiate the identification that the Protestant Reformers had made that the Pope of Rome was the Antichrist.

This resulted in the complete abandoning of the exegesis of Reformed Evangelical Protestants within almost all the larger denominations. Yet I never heard of this complete dismissal of the Protestant interpretation of the Antichrist ever mentioned by any preacher or professor I sat under, or any book or pamphlet I have ever read. It might never have happened as far as my education is concerned. Yet it was an exegetical catastrophe of immense magnitude in the history of interpretation. The two Jesuit teachings on the identity of the Antichrist replaced the Reformed Protestant identity of the Antichrist in almost all Protestant denominations and in many independent churches, academic institutions, and in most of the "Christian" writings ever afterwards.

The Great Anomaly is this: that almost *no one today* now follows the position on the identity of the Antichrist that the leaders of their denomination all followed at one time. Even those who separated from the Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist churches to continue their original witness, did *not* follow their original leaders. For example, it is a fact of history that very, very few, if any at all, within the two largest bodies of Lutheranism in America, believe what Martin Luther believed about the identity of the Antichrist. It is also a fact of church history that few, if any, in the larger Presbyterian denominations follow Knox with regard to the identity of the Antichrist.

The PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) not only does not follow John Knox, but it does not even follow the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, for one of the first things this Presbyterian denomination did

[8] Lange, *Commentary*, Zondervan, Volume 12, 91.
[9] Ladd, 6.
[10] Ladd, 7-8. (Emphasis added.)

was to remove that statement made in that *Confession* identifying the Pope of Rome as the Antichrist. So, this Presbyterian denomination dismissed not only John Knox, but also the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and gave the field of exegesis to the Jesuits.

It would be difficult to find any modern Methodist in the Methodist Church who now follows John Wesley and his view of the Antichrist. The same could be said about the Calvinist Methodists. Very few, if any, follow George Whitefield's view of the Antichrist. This is also true of all the Methodist bodies who separated from the United Methodist Church.

In the larger denominations of the Baptists, the American Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Conservative Baptist Convention, few, if any, now follow what John Gill, or the *Baptist Confession of Faith* taught concerning the identity of the Antichrist. Millions of Baptists bought and read the *Left Behind* series of prophetic fiction, which was Futurist to the core, and repudiated the *Philadelphia Baptist Confession*.

Among the Congregationalists, few, if any, believe what John Cotton believed concerning the identity of the Antichrist. Cotton was probably the first colonial writer to write upon the identity of the Antichrist, whom he identified as the Popes and their Papal dominion. Those Congregationalists who came over on the *Mayflower*, in their statement of faith identified the Pope as Antichrist.

Among the Reformed, few, if any, now believe what Calvin believed concerning the identity of Antichrist.

In the modern Anglican Church it would be very difficult to find anyone today who follows the position of Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, or Bishop Hooper, who were burned at the stake by what they believed were the followers of the Antichrist in Rome. The one Protestant denomination that is the exception is the Lutheran. For while the two larger Lutheran denominations no longer follow Luther, the Missouri-Lutheran Synod and the WELS, a smaller conservative Lutheran group, do follow Luther's position on the Antichrist. Also, Lenski, the 20th century Lutheran New Testament commentator, also followed Luther's view of Antichrist.

However, there were many men who did follow the leaders of their denominations for about 300 years, but as we move into the modern era, it is difficult to find anyone who *now* follows what the original Reformers believed concerning the identity of Antichrist. Among the Scottish Presbyterians for years, men like Wylie, Cunningham, Fairbairn, and Chalmers, followed, presented, and enlarged upon Knox's view of the Antichrist. Even Charles Hodge, who waffled quite a bit on what the Roman Catholic Church was to him, did spend about 20 pages in his work on Eschatology setting forth the Papacy as the Antichrist; even though he believed that the Roman Catholic Church was a Christian Church. He separated the occupants of the Papal Chair from the Church and basically followed Luther's and Calvin's position on the identity of Antichrist.

Turretin, Pictet, and Bengel all promoted, defended, and expanded upon the position of Luther. Jonathan Edwards carried on Cotton's position and enlarged upon it in the Congregational Church. Barnes carried on Calvin's position. A. J. Gordon carried on Gill's position in his Baptist ministry. Elliott carried on the earlier views of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley in his Anglican Church in the middle of the 19th century. However, as the church moved into the 20th century great changes developed in both the British Isles and North America in all the major Protestant denominations.

Proof of the Great Anomaly: The Position on the Identity of the Antichrist in the Creeds of Protestantism

The Protestant Reformers saw the Apostasy rising in the early church, and the Man of Sin arising out of that Apostasy. This *apostasia* then kept developing into the Dark Ages that produced what various writers have called *Christendom*, but which Luther correctly called Popedom. To the Dissenters from Rome before the Reformation to the Protestant Reformers to those who followed in their train there were certain crucial beliefs that all these people held to, while not agreeing on every detail of prophetical interpretation.

They did not all agree in the details of their exegesis of Scripture, but they all agreed, as Murray and Ladd noted, on the identification of the Popes of

Rome as Antichrist, and the Papal Dominion as the *Therion*—the Wild Beast of the Apocalypse.

The Apostle Paul reveals *the Apostasia* – the Falling Away of the church into *the* Apostasy. Modern Evangelicalism is a *confused mixture* corresponding to Mystery Babylon – to *Mystery Confusion*. At the Tower of Babel, the Lord said, "Let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not *understand* one another's speech. So the *Lord scattered them abroad*. Mystery Babylon religion is *not* Biblical Christianity.

Tim Alberta is praised for his book *The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism*. He is praised for painting a troubling portrait of the American Evangelical movement. He supposedly has described this movement through, "the eyes of televangelists, and small-town preachers, celebrity revivalists, and everyday church goers." He tells "the story of a faith cheapened by ephemeral fear, a promise corrupted by partisan subterfuge, and a reputation stained by perpetual scandal." He supposedly documents the "growing fracture inside American Christianity, and the fighting of today's believers against flesh and blood, with their eyes fixed on the here and now."

The trouble with the book is this: he is describing the Falling Away of the visible church in America today. He claims to be writing about "*believers,*" about small-town preachers, and televangelists as if they were all true *Evangelical Reformed Protestants*, when in reality he is describing what the Bible calls the *Apostasia—Falling Away* from the true faith of the Bible. There is a terrible mixture out there today, but it is *not* the true Church. The true Church *separates* from such a mixture. And it is very small by comparison to the visible church that has fallen away from the truth of the Bible and is part of the religious system of the Papal Man of Sin.

The claims of the Pope of Rome were looked upon as the badge of Antichristianity by the Dissenters before the Reformation, and by the original Reformers and those who followed them. For they saw in the Scriptures they studied that the Scarlet Woman who sat upon the Wild Beast of the Apocalypse was the symbol of that great city that ruled over the kings of the Earth, the city of Rome.

As the old writers used to say, Antichrist is so like Christ that only the elect can see the difference. The rest of the world thinks the totality of Antichristianity, the Beast, Mystery Babylon the Great, the Woman, the Harlot, the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition are altogether wonderful. The world worships the religion of Antichrist, it weeps over the fall of Babylon, it wonders after the Beast and is blinded by the god of this age to the true Gospel of Christ.

We want to establish this truth because it impinges upon the *Apostasia*—the Falling Away. Those who are slaves to their sins are unable to understand the Apostasia, for they are part of it. Their slavery arises from the god of this age—this world—who blinds the minds of those who believe not the Gospel. The god of this age hides the Gospel from their minds, lest the light of it should shine unto them. Those captive in the prison house of Mystery Babylon religion are blind to the true Gospel and enslaved by their sins. True freedom is completely unknown to them. Unsaved humanity is in slavery to its sins; but those enslaved in Antichristianity are in a worse state than those who are not. For they are captives in the prison of Mystery Babylon religion while believing they are members of the true church of Christ situated in Rome.

From before the time of Wycliffe right up to the time of the Reformation, and for three hundred years after, Dissenters, Reformers, Puritans, and Biblical preachers all saw the Popes of Rome as the Antichrist and the Papal Dominion as the *Therion*—the Wild Beast of the Apocalypse. They all certainly did not agree on the details of prophetical interpretation, but they all did agree on the Papacy as Antichrist. That belief was written into the creeds of Protestant churches when they set forth what they believed in their Confessions of Faith.

The Roman Catholic interpretation attacked certain aspects of the interpretation of the Reformers by proposing two different approaches to the book of *Revelation*: the Futurist and the Preterist approaches. These two were set forth by the Jesuits, and they were diametrically opposed to each other. If a person held to the Futurist approach, he obviously could not at the same time hold to the Preterist approach, and vice versa. But the fact that these two approaches contradicted each other did not matter to the Jesuits. They wanted to refute the Protestant approach, even if it involved contradicting each other.

All those who dissented from Rome also believed, promoted, and defended *separation* from the *Apostasia*—the great Falling Away. Those who dissented from Rome believed that she was the Antichrist and therefore to have a true church based upon *Sola Scriptura*, the only way forward was to separate from the great Prostitute Church.

All the main denominations of Protestantism believed that Papal Rome was the Falling Away from the faith and the Antichrist of Scripture.

The Faith of the Historic Christian Churches

This doctrine is written into the Historic Creeds and Confessions of all those Churches which held in their earliest days the Bible to be the Sole Rule of Faith and Practice in the church.

Episcopalian (*Anglican*)

The *Irish Articles* adopted by the Archbishops, Bishops, and Convocation of the Irish Episcopal Church and approved by the Viceroy in 1615 state:

> *Article 79*: The power which the Bishop of Rome now challenges to be supreme head of the universal Church of Christ, and to be above all emperors, kings, and princes is a usurped power, contrary to the Scriptures and Word of God, and contrary to the examples of the Primitive Church; and therefore is for most just causes taken away and abolished within the King Majesty's realms and dominions.
>
> *Article 80*: The Bishop of Rome is so far from being the supreme head of the universal Church of Christ, that his works and doctrine do plainly discover him to be that "man of sin," foretold in the Holy Scriptures, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and abolish with the brightness of His coming." (Shaff, Philip, Editor, *Creeds of Christendom*, Baker Book House, Reprint, Volume III, 540.)

The Second Scottish Confession and [Presbyterian] National Covenant AD 1580

> We abhor and detest all contrary religion and doctrine: but chiefly all kinds of papistry in general and particular heads, even as they are now condemned and confuted by the Word of God and the Kirk of Scotland. But in special, we detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the Scriptures of God, upon the church, the civil magistrate, and the confidences of all men: all his tyrannous laws made upon indifferent things against our common liberty. His erroneous doctrine against the sufficiency of the written Word, the perfection of the law, the office of Christ, and His blessed Gospel.
>
> His corrupted doctrine concerning original sin, our natural inability and rebellion to God's law, our justification by faith alone, our imperfect sanctification and obedience to the law. His five bastard sacraments, with all his rites, ceremonies, and false doctrine. His blasphemous opinion of transubstantiation. His blasphemous priesthood: his profane sacrifice for the sins of the dead and the living. His canonization of men, worshiping of images, his purgatory, prayers for the dead, his multitude of advocates or mediators, with manifold Orders, and auricular confessions. His justification by works, works of supererogation, merits, pardons, peregrinations, and stations: his holy water, baptism of bells, his worldly monarchy and wicked hierarchy. His erroneous and bloody decrees made at Trent, with all subscribers and approvers of this cruel and bloody Band conjured up against the church of God. (Shaff, *loc. Cit.*)

The *Belgic Confession* in article 36 along with the *Bohemian Confession* published in 1536, both declare the Papacy to be the Man of Sin. The French churches meeting at the Vapincensi National Synod in 1604, approved an article of faith unanimously, which was then added to their *Confession of Faith*:

> Since the Roman Bishop sets himself up as monarch of the world-wide Christian Church, appropriating to himself the supremacy over all churches and pastors, and because his insolence and pride are such that he calls himself God (*Can. Satis. Dist.* 96.L.1.*Sacr. Caerem cap. De Bened. ensis*); and that he apportions all power to himself in heaven and in earth; and that he disposes of all ecclesiastical matters without

> restraint, as he wills; and that he establishes the articles of faith as he wills; and the authority of Scripture is subservient to his authority; and that their interpretation is his to give without restraint, as he wills; and that he exercises the traffic in souls; and that he releases as free, men bound by vows and oaths; and that he institutes new cults in the worship of God; and that pertaining to civil matters, he tramples the legitimate authority of magistrates by giving, taking, and transferring kingdoms — we believe and assert that he is the true and real Antichrist, the son of perdition (II Thessalonians 2:3), foretold in the Word of God…*the Whore clad in purple* (Revelation 17:1), sitting on seven hills in the great city (Revelation 17:9), *firmly holding authority over the rulers of the earth* (Revelation 17:18), and wait expectantly for God, when according to His promise (which has already begun), finally destroys him, broken and conquered by the Breath of His mouth and by the glory of His coming. (Turretin, Francis, *Whether It Can Be Proven the Pope is the Antichrist*, Reprint, Protestant Reformed Publications, 7, emphasis original.)

The Declaration of the Kingdom of England and Scotland by the Honourable Houses of Parliament and the Honourable Estates of the Kingdom of Scotland in the Year 1643

> It is his own truth and Cause which we maintain with all Reformed Churches and which hath been witnessed and sealed by the testimony, sufferings, and blood of so many Confessors and Martyrs, against the heresies, superstition, and tyranny of Antichrist. The glory of His Name, the exaltation of the Kingdom of His Son, and the preservation of His Church, and of His hand from utter ruin and devastation is our aim, and the end which we have before our eyes. His Covenant have we in both nations solemnly sworn and subscribed, which we would not have put in our hearts to do, if He had minded to destroy us. The many prayers and supplications which these many years past, but especially of late have been offered up with fasting and humiliation, and with strong crying and tears unto Him that is able to deliver and save us, are a seed which promise unto us a plentiful harvest of comfort and happiness: and the Apostacy, Atheism, Idolatry, Blasphemy, Profanity, Cruelty, Excess, and open mocking of all godliness and honesty have filled up the cup of our adversaries to the brim, and threaten their speedy and fearful destruction, unless it be prevented by such extraordinary repentance as seemeth not yet to have entered into their hearts. (Turretin, *Whether It Can Be Proven the Pope is the Antichrist*, 7-9.)

All who subscribed to this Confession of Faith and National Covenant must have thought it was worth discussing and worth contending for, in what are known as the "killing times" in Scotland. For 40 years after this *Second Scottish Confession of Faith* was proclaimed, thousands suffered persecution, and thousands were martyred. They were beheaded, mangled, drowned, battered, and hacked to death to uphold it. (Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena*, Ralph Smith printers, Volume II, 190.)

Presbyterian: *Westminster Confession of Faith*

> There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense be head thereof, but it (he) is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God, whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. (Chapter 25, Paragraph VI)

Congregational: *Savoy Declaration*

> There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense be head thereof, but it (he) is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God, whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. (Chapter 26, Paragraph IV)

Baptist: ***The Baptist Confession of 1688***

> The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the Church is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof, but is no other than Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God: whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. (Chapter 26, Paragraph IV)

Methodist: ***Notes of John Wesley on the New Testament, 2 Thessalonians 2:3***

> However, in many respects, the Pope has an indisputable claim to those titles. He is, in an emphatical sense, the man of sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is too, properly styled, the son of perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, both of his opposers and followers, destroyed innumerable souls, and will himself perish everlastingly. Indeed, no less is implied in his ordinary title, "Most Holy Lord," or "Most Holy Father," so that he sitteth enthroned in the temple of God, mentioned in Revelation 1:1. Declaring himself that he is God—claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone. (Wesley, John, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, Schmul Publishers, Reprint, 536.)

The translators who produced the *Geneva Bible* and the translators who produced the *Authorized Version* all believed that the Pope is Antichrist.

What Was the Cause of the Great Anomaly?

The cause of the Great Anomaly was the *repudiation* of the exegesis of the Protestant Reformers and those who followed them. This repudiation of Reformed Protestant exegesis started at the very beginning of the 19th century and has continued unabated right up to the present day.

The Chilean Jesuit Emanuel Lacunza published his commentary on *Revelation* in 1801. He followed the Futurist approach to the book. Samuel R. Maitland, an Anglican curate, followed the Jesuit Futurist and wrote several books repudiating the exegesis of the Dissenters and the Protestant Reformers. Various other *Protestant* commentators then followed Maitland. This was the start of one of the greatest exegetical catastrophes in the history of Protestantism. The result of it was the *transformation* of the Papal Antichristian Dominion into a Christian Communion.

At the beginning of the 19th century in both England and America by far the *majority* of Protestants in both countries believed the Papal Dominion was Antichrist, and the Beast of the *Apocalypse*. By the end of the 19th century very few still believed this. Indeed, throughout the 20th century the majority of believers in both countries were Futurists. The transformation of the Papal Chair into a Christian communion was slowly but surely achieved across the board within the ranks of Protestantism, Reformed, Evangelical, and Fundamentalist.

This transformation of the Papacy from being the Antichrist to a Christian communion was accomplished by various Protestant church historians, Protestant exegetes, Protestant professors, Protestant pastors, Protestant evangelists, missionaries, journalists, and writers of articles in various Protestant magazines. They came from various backgrounds and different Protestant denominations, but they all helped the cause of the Papacy, some unwittingly, especially in delivering the Papal Dominion from the stigma of Antichrist and Antichristianity.

During the 19th century the two Jesuit approaches to *Revelation* – Futurism and Preterism, began to reappear in England and North America. They were challenged by those who opposed them in both countries. However, as time went on the challenge slowly abated, until only very few scholars continued it.

Indeed, as the church moved into the 20th century millions followed Futurism and Preterism. Futurism dominated America throughout the 20th century, most of my lifetime in ministry. However, there was a revival of the Preterist approach to *Revelation* beginning in the 1970s, which has continued to this day.

We mention these two eschatological positions on *Revelation*, for they had a tremendous influence on Biblical exegesis in my lifetime and across the board in the British Isles and North America. For both approaches to *Revelation* dismiss almost the whole time that we call *Church History*. Futurism puts everything about the Antichrist at the end of time, ignoring the time from the writers of the New Testament up until now, and even still looking to the future.

The Reformed Reconstructionists followed the Jesuit Preterist approach to the *Apocalypse*, which claims that Antichrist arose and fell by AD 70, or shortly after, so is nowhere to be seen throughout the rest of church history. Both views dismiss church history from most of their exegesis. It simply has no place in their eschatology whatsoever.

We will give some examples of the *erratic exegesis* that appeared in the writings of Protestants, which helped the cause of Papal Rome, especially in North America in the second part of this Tract. America was founded by Protestants, almost all of whom believed the Papacy is Antichrist and the Wild Beast of the *Apocalypse*, and not upon a Judean-Christian foundation. Even those Christian schools who advertise that America arose out of "Christendom" fail to even recognize the exegesis of the Protestant Reformers, which is the true basis of the United States of America.