

# 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. (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 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>1</sup> 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.

Postmillennialism 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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### **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 (Bellarmino 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 asceticism 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.

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*To be continued in the next Trinity Review.*

### **New Book**

*Marxism: Logically and Systematically Dismantled* by Gordon H. Clark is now available for \$12.95. *Marxism* is taken from Clark's *Historiography: Secular and Religious*, his third chapter on Marx's view of history. In this book, Clark applies his Christian, logical, and philosophical understanding to analyze Marxism, especially its views on history, and in so doing he logically and systematically dismantles the philosophy of Marx and Engels and their acolytes. Not only does Clark dismantle the Marxism of his and previous generations, but his analysis and criticism also vitiate postmodern conceptions of Neo-Marxism as seen in Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory, where economic class struggle has been replaced with race, gender, and cultural struggles against oppression by the "white, Christian, heterosexual patriarchy" of Western Civilization.