



The 'Mystery of Lawlessness'

A Biblical and Historical Exposition of 'Antichrist' in All its Many Facets

Abstract

In this paper, we examine the thorny topic of the identification of the Antichrist as he is portrayed in Scripture. There have been a great many offerings throughout the history of the Church as to who this might be, and even in our own day. In view of the fact that the revealing of the Antichrist will be the final chapter in the cosmic history of sin and lawlessness and considering that it is the curtain-raiser to the second coming of Christ, it is surely a subject which warrants our close attention. So all the hallmarks of the Antichrist are therefore provided. Additionally, the history of teaching about the Antichrist is opened up in this paper, from the early church fathers through the medieval period, the Reformation, the Puritans down to the present day. Moreover, the meaning of the word "antichrist" is dissected from Scripture and applied in all the ways that are legitimately viable. No stone is left unturned in this wide-ranging paper. It has been written to build up the people of God with logical, honest, orthodox exposition, to the glory of God.

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PROLOGUE

In recent years, the biblical teaching about the Antichrist has suffered from two main problems. First, in many churches one never hears anything about it whatsoever, as if there had never been any such teaching. Second, when it actually **is** taught in churches, it is very often dressed in somewhat sensationalist clothing and served up alongside some highly speculative eschatological teachings — not to mention the cavalier manner in which certain persons are speculatively put forward as candidates for the Antichrist. The fact is — as I will show throughout this paper — that when he is finally revealed, **any speculation will be unnecessary as there will be no doubt whatsoever in the minds of God's people that it is indeed him.**

While it is true that there is a great deal which is obscure on this subject, this should not prevent us from addressing it from a strictly biblical standpoint. There is much which is obscure about the creation; yet this does not deter pastors from preaching on the subject. There is much which is obscure about the crucifixion of Christ, yet this does not deter pastors from preaching on the subject. If mystery were a deterrent to preaching, there would be little in the way of sermon material available. If the fact that something cannot be completely understood dictated whether or not it was preached upon, preachers would soon become a redundant aspect of the armoury of God. Surely, we should be guided by the words which tell us that *“the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever”* (Deuteronomy 29:29). In spite of the mystery surrounding the subject of the Antichrist, there is much which *has* been revealed in Scripture. Thus, we should do all that we can — under the Lord's guidance — to handle it with restraint, the pursuit of logic, and a sense of awe.

The Greek word ἀντίχριστος, *antichristos*, in the Bible manuscripts — from which the English word “antichrist” is a direct translation — is made up of two words, *anti* and *christos*. In Greek, the prefix *anti* has two possible meanings, as Strong's Lexicon plainly shows: *“over against, opposite to”* and also *“for, instead of, in place of (something)”*. I firmly believe that both these ideas can be applied simultaneously to the “Antichrist” as revealed in Scripture, and I will show that to be the case as we move through this paper.

The concept behind the notion of “antichrist” is this: “A diabolical power which both opposes and seeks to usurp God and His Christ, and to establish its reign over the world — a world which, in reality,

belongs to its Creator". Opposition to and usurpation of the authority and kingship of Christ is the special province of Satan and has been from the beginning of time. One can see this perfectly exemplified in Luke 4:5-7:

"Then the devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 'I will give You authority over all these kingdoms and all their glory', he said. 'For it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish. So if You worship me, it will all be Yours'".

It is true that Satan became — at least from a purely "legal" standpoint — the "prince" or "ruler" of this world, as a result of the Fall, when Adam lost the right to be "prince" of God's creation.¹ However, as a result of the victory on the Cross, Satan was "cast out" of this usurped princedom and lined up for judgement (John 12:31; cf. Revelation 12:9).

Even though "*he knows that he has a short time*" (Revelation 12:12) — which fills him with demonic rage — Satan still continues doggedly to build his kingdom on earth in a stealthy fashion. This is Satan's *chimera* — his grand illusion, his self-deception — that, alongside of his knowledge of defeat, he is deluded into thinking that he really does own the world and its kingdoms and that he can dispense with them as he wishes. He can tolerate no competition and regards Christ as the impostor rather than himself. He will continue to cherish this illusion until it is finally shattered from him by outright force at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Speculative History of the Identity of the Antichrist

The actual identity of the Antichrist has long been the source of speculation and has worn many faces throughout the history of the Church — not all of them a single individual. For instance, the Roman emperors Nero, Domitian and Caligula were joined more recently by Mohammed, Hitler, Saddam Hussein, Mikhail Gorbachev, Phillip Duke of Edinburgh, Barack Obama and Donald Trump as suspects for the

¹ Although, before Christ's victory, he could rightly be called "*prince of this world*" from a purely legal standpoint (i.e. he gained the right to such princedom, under the sovereignty of God to fulfil His purposes, because of Adam's failure), he has never really been the proper owner, for, in reality, "*the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness*" (Psalm 24:1; 1 Corinthians 10:26).

Antichrist. Even the Arian heresy in AD.325 has qualified as a contender for the role! There is no end to the proffered candidates for the role of the “Antichrist”; which is ludicrous because, as I said above, when he is indeed finally revealed, **there will be no doubt in any genuine Christian’s mind whatsoever that it is him.**

Other more nebulous identifications have been made. The German Lutheran theologian Ernst Hengstenberg (1802-1869) and his school identified it with *“the social radicalism and military despotism which characterized the government of Napoleon III”*.² Swiss theologian, Frédéric Godet (1812-1900) and others claimed that the Antichrist was *“that merely negative liberalism which, accompanied by an almost cynical sensualism, works in modern civilisation as a most baneful agency of demoralization”*.³ That all of these characters and the movements that those theologians identified have been partakers in the universal “spirit of antichrist” (which I will develop below) cannot be denied; but to assert that they are the ultimate adversary of God is another matter altogether. While they have had many “antichrist” qualities, they have fallen short of fulfilling many vital criteria which would enable them to qualify as **the** final and actual “Antichrist”.

The Popular Claim that the Pope of Rome, or the Papacy, is the Culprit

For the past few hundred years, one such object of antichrist identification has been the pope of Rome or, at least, the office of the papacy. This is not at all a view that I share, and I will prove why that is the case. When the future publication of this paper and its contents was originally announced, I received a number of threatening letters from the “Reformed Protestant mafia” insinuating that *Diakrisis* is part of a counter-Reformation conspiracy, ominously warning me not to publish something which I would *“later regret”*. I have never been remotely intimidated by these sub-Christian missives, having received them from one warped source or another on many occasions regarding articles I have written. When my original article on Israel back in the 1990s was announced, I even received nasty threats from some folk who were bent out of shape. Welcome to the volatile Christian scene! Such small-minded, embittered people have even turned whole churches against me and others because of their

² *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Funk & Wagnalls, 1887, Vol.I, p.92.

³ *Ibid.*

opposition to articles we have penned and their inability to handle disagreement. At one time, I was quite thrown by this ugliness; but now, at this stage in the game, I just take it all in my stride and have fellowship with much care and caution to avoid those circles in which such attitudes prevail.

However, the purpose of these writings is to declare what I believe to be the truth, in love, but without the hindrance of the fear of man (Proverbs 29:25; Psalm 27:1). The truly faithful believer should not object to his views being held up to biblical scrutiny and must be willing to change them if they are weighed in the balance and found wanting. Readers are therefore encouraged to apply themselves with objective vigour and a Berean spirit to these pages (cf. Acts 17:11).

It is boldly claimed that those who do not adhere to the papal Antichrist dogma “*have in many cases, we fear, never sat down to make a thorough study of the matter*”.⁴ However, it is precisely because I **have** made a thorough study of this matter, over a number of years — nay, decades! — that this paper is now being written.

At one time, I too had toyed with this notion of the office of the Roman papacy as being identified with the “*man of lawlessness*” in Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians. However, the more I examined the matter, the more I discovered that certain biblical details just would not fit the dogma. The stark realisation that *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) must take precedence over the doctrines of men brought a new desire for unprejudiced study some decades ago, not only on this subject but on many others as well. And what a liberating joy it is to study the Scriptures without the imposed encumbrance of human shibboleths (Galatians 5:1), while being immune to the intimidation of fanatically prejudiced men and women who love to punish those with whom they disagree.⁵

There are numerous publications, ranging from the purportedly scholarly to the downright scurrilous, which have attempted to justify the doctrine of the papal Antichrist. It has long been a controversy in the churches. One definitive article of the more academic kind

⁴ *Banner of Truth Magazine*, No.335-336, Aug./Sep. 1991, p.8.

⁵ A *shibboleth* is a biblical word which is used to describe any criterion prescribed as mandatory for full membership of a group. Its origin lies in a Gileadean test-word to identify an Ephraimite. Ephraimites could not pronounce “*sh*” correctly (Judges 12:5-6).

appeared in a well-known, widely respected “Reformed” magazine.⁶ It proclaimed the doctrine of a papal Antichrist at its strongest through the medium of a précis of a treatise called “*A Display of Antichrist*” by the Genevan theologian Francis Turretin (1623-1687), for whom I have a great deal of respect in many other matters.⁷ Readers can obtain this article so that they can make an assessment for themselves as to the quality of the material. I want to avoid presenting a parody of the teaching about the papal Antichrist, as I work on the basis of a policy of open dialogue rather than the closed-minded rhetoric on controversial matters which mostly prevails in many Reformed circles today.

It is my firm conviction that the original 16th and 17th century Reformers advocated the view that the pope of Rome was the Antichrist purely out of historical reasons, because they needed to justify their separation from the Roman Catholic Church, rather than out of the desire for a wholly honest exegesis of Scripture. A review of their writings on the papal Antichrist will show that it inevitably occurs in such a context.⁸ In Church history, one repeatedly finds the tendency to raise up secondary doctrines to the level of shibboleth status, if that doctrine can be used to justify a sectarian schism which needs to be upheld. Such has been the case with the notion of a papal Antichrist.

In those circles where rigid adherence to the pope of Rome as the Antichrist is mandatory, there is propagated a false “either-or” concept in which they claim that the only alternative to their view is one which will inevitably lead to acquiescence to Rome and an acceptance of the Roman Catholic Church as an error-free denomination of Christianity. But this is really a heavy-handed tactic designed to make people fearful to question their supposedly “orthodox” position.

Therefore, in order to show the straw-man status of such a claim, and to quell all potential rumours that *Diakrisis* is run by a Jesuit spy :-),

⁶ *Banner of Truth Magazine*, op. cit., pp.1-8.

⁷ Turretin’s 3-volume polemical “*Elenctic Theology*” is a great work, very readable, with a mass of theological information.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1, where it is stated that Francis Turretin’s work, “*A Display of Antichrist*”, is “his seventh disputation on the theme of why Protestants must separate from the Church of Rome”.

let it be known that I regard the Vatican as a subversive, doctrinally erroneous institution — a monstrous perversion of Christianity, a veritable “synagogue of Satan”, and a vital part of the developing “mystery of lawlessness”, which will one day be shown in its fullness when the Antichrist is finally revealed.⁹

In this paper, we will examine the biblical and historical references to the Antichrist, followed by an examination of the qualities and character of the Antichrist from the data given to us in Scripture.

I. BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO THE ANTICHRIST

We will take this under two headings: First, dealing with the literal, *explicit* biblical references to the “Antichrist”, then dealing with the *implicit* references.

1. LITERAL, EXPLICIT REFERENCES

The actual word ‘antichrist’ appears as a translation of the Greek word, ἀντίχριστος, *antichristos*. This occurs in only four places in Scripture — all by the same writer in just two books in the New Testament. Four times it appears in the apostle John’s first letter and once in his second letter:

“Children, it is the last hour; and just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).

“By this you will know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and which is already in the world at this time” (1 John 4:2-3).

Whereas those texts refer to **the** Antichrist (the second referring additionally to the “*spirit of the Antichrist*”), the two other texts merely refer to the principle or “spirit of antichrist”:

⁹ The final chapter in my book, “*The Serpent and the Cross*”, which deals with ecumenism and interfaithism, contains much material revealing the part which the Vatican is playing and will play in the corruption of the visible church, leading to a religious confederation in support of the “Antichrist”.

“Who is the liar, if it is not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22).

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, refusing to confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.” (2 John 7).

*“The Antichrist is coming, so now **many antichrists** have appeared”.* There is a crucial difference between a personal being known as “The Antichrist” and what one can call “mini-antichrists” (the “many antichrists” in the text) — deceivers and false teachers, especially those who deny the incarnation of the Son of God as the Man Christ Jesus.

As I have already observed, the force of the prefixed Greek word *anti* — as well as meaning “against” — also carries the whole idea of being “instead of” something or “in the place of” it. **The overriding concept of “antichrist” is, therefore, a diabolical power which both opposes and seeks to usurp by counterfeit God and His Christ and to establish its tentacular reign over the world, which, in reality, belongs to its Creator** (Luke 4:5-6; Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:2).

It is clear from the Biblical data that there are passages which refer to generic hallmarks of “antichrist” (e.g. 1 John 2:22), which can be applied to numerous individuals, belief systems and movements throughout the history of the Church, as well as those which can be ascribed to a specific individual adversary of God and His Christ in whom those generic hallmarks find their ultimate manifestation in the actual Antichrist (e.g., 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

The Biblical references to “antichrist” have generally been extended considerably further than these four Johannine occurrences of the word in the many theological deliberations on the issue. That the concept should stretch further than the *explicit* references is hardly surprising, in view of the Lord’s statement, in the wake of the Fall, that He would put enmity between “the seed of the serpent” (the children of the devil, cf. John 8:44) and “the seed of the woman” (pre-eminently Christ, but ultimately all the elect children of God, cf. Galatians 3:16), thus establishing a spiritual conflict of cosmic proportions which will not be resolved until the final judgement at the return of Christ (Genesis 3:15; Revelation 20:9-10).

Although the above texts represent the sum of the *literal, explicit* material in the Bible of the actual word “antichrist”, this does not mean that there are no further references to the Antichrist in the whole of Scripture. There are only two verses in the Bible in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are explicitly mentioned together (Matthew 28:19; Galatians 4:6); but that does not mean there are no other verses in Scripture which plainly reveal the Trinitarian Godhead.¹⁰

2. IMPLICIT, PROPHETIC REFERENCES

i. New Testament Implicit Prophetic References

The foremost among these must surely be the passage in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12. As Leon Morris writes in the New Bible Dictionary:

“Paul does not use the term ‘antichrist’, but the ‘man of lawlessness’ of whom he writes in 2 Thessalonians 2:3ff. clearly refers to the same being”.¹¹

In this passage, Paul reveals that the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will not happen until two events have first occurred: **1)** The *apostasia*, the falling away (more on this later), and **2)** The revealing of the “man of lawlessness”, a personal being who is widely (and, in my opinion, sensibly) regarded as being identified with the Antichrist. This passage clearly speaks of an individual person. The Greek word used is ὁ ἄνθρωπος, *ho anthrōpos*, a man, singular. Paul never speaks figuratively or symbolically without leaving the reader in no doubt that he is doing so (e.g., Galatians 4:24).

The Second Letter to the Thessalonians is in a completely different genre to the Book of Revelation, where there is a massive amount of symbolism based on Old Testament imagery. In the passage in 2 Thessalonians there is *mystery*, but there is not obscurity. In 2 Thessalonians, there is no Biblical warrant for taking the “man of lawlessness” as anything other than literally, and for that reason he must therefore be one specific individual — the ultimate climax of

¹⁰ See my article on that subject at this link: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2023/09/08/the-blessed-three-in-one-the-christian-teaching-concerning-the-trinity-proven-from-scripture/>.

¹¹ D.R.W. Wood (ed) et al, “New Bible Dictionary”, IVP, 1996. From the article entitled “The Antichrist”.

human sin in history — rather than a succession of individuals or an office which can be held by numerous individuals.

Another New Testament implicit prophetic reference occurs in Revelation 13. Here we are being presented with a picture of the “*mystery of iniquity*”, which Paul mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2, coming to its fullness in the world kingdom set up by the Antichrist. In Revelation 13, we also have these two beasts, which are synonymous with the beast and the false prophet who are said to be judged later in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 19:20; 20:10). There is a sense in which these two beasts symbolize a major aspect of the mystery of iniquity — the devil’s work delegated — working through governmental systems (first beast), religion and scientific and philosophical belief systems (second beast) throughout the entire age, although coming to their complete fulfilment during the brief reign of the ultimate representation of human rebellion and sin — the actual Antichrist. Many commentators (as do I) agree with Philip E. Hughes when he states, regarding the beast in Revelation 13:

“It is preferable to see the beast as the spirit of antichristianity manifested through human agencies during the whole course of the Christian era, though perhaps achieving its final and fiercest force under the leadership of a malevolent personage in the ultimate climax of all history”.¹²

This same process is identical to that of 1 John 2:18:

“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that **the Antichrist is coming**, even now **many antichrists have come**, by which we know that it is the last hour”.

The Mystery of Iniquity weaves its way throughout “the last hour” of history — which is the period of time from the ascension of Christ to His return (which can be discerned from 1 John 2:18, where we see that “*the last hour*” was present even in John’s day).¹³ Throughout this

¹² Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, “*The Book of Revelation: A Commentary*”, Wm. B. Eerdmans/IVP, 1990, p.145.

¹³ This “*last hour*” of history — the period of time from the Ascension of Christ to His Second Coming — is also known as “*the last days*” (Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2). The “*last hour*” or “*last days*” must be distinguished from “*the time of the end*” (Daniel 12:4,9) or “Endtimes”.

entire period of “the last hour” we find what John refers to as “many antichrists” — what I call “mini-antichrists” — coming and going; but these are all merely forerunners of the final Antichrist and must not be confused with him.

A number of commentators also see a veiled reference to the Antichrist in John 5:43, when the Lord Jesus Christ, in conversation with the unbelieving Jews, juxtaposes another person with Himself in the statement: *“I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if **another** comes in his own name, **him** you will receive”* [emphasis added]. We will return to consider this reference later in this paper.

All the New Testament references to the Antichrist have their roots in Old Testament prophecies. So let us now look at the implicit prophetic references in the Old Testament.

ii. Old Testament Implicit Prophetic References

Daniel 7:8-11: “While I was contemplating the horns, suddenly **another horn, a little one**, came up among them, and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like those of a man and a mouth that spoke words of arrogance. As I continued to watch, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from His presence. Thousands upon thousands attended Him, and myriads upon myriads stood before Him. The court was convened, and the books were opened. Then I kept watching because of the arrogant words the horn was speaking. As I continued to watch, the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire”.

This “little horn” in Daniel 7 is generally interpreted as the final, culminatory Antichrist of history. However, it should be pointed out that the “little horn” of Daniel 8:9 refers to the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes and not to **the** Antichrist. As we will later see, Antiochus Epiphanes was one of many “mini-antichrists”, a type (symbol or forerunner) of the final Antichrist and is thus described in a very similar manner.

In the above passage in Daniel 7, we see that even as the Antichrist is spouting his “*pompous words*”, the Day of Judgement is brought to

pass and he is destroyed. John provides the same picture in the Book of Revelation. Let it be proclaimed from the mountain-tops that every time the Antichrist is spoken of or referred to in Scripture, we find that — in the same breath, as it were — it is revealed either that believers will not *finally* be overcome by him, or they will ultimately have the victory, or that all his plans will be dashed and his life destroyed by Christ's coming (see, e.g., 1 John 2:24-27; 4:4; 2 John 9b; Daniel 7:11-12, 22, 25-26; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 14:1-20). Such an emphasis on ultimate victory is necessary for the encouragement of God's people because the Scriptures also make it clear that during the reign of the Antichrist, he will horribly persecute and even overcome believers, utterly shattering the power of the Church in the world (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 13:7,15). But don't worry, the gates of hades will ultimately not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18)!

A "horn" in Scripture is a symbol of strength or power (see e.g., 1 Samuel 2:1; Psalm 132:17; Lamentations 2:17). It is very appropriate that the Antichrist, the most powerfully evil human being ever to be born into this world, should specifically be described as a "little" horn rather than a big one (Hebrew זַעֲרָה, *ze'êrah*, "a little one", Daniel 7:8). Strong's Enhanced Lexicon shows that the Hebrew there is related to a root word meaning "to be insignificant".¹⁴ In other words, he may look like a powerful character to the superficial, faithless observer (and he will indeed be a terrifying adversary); but in the overall scheme of things — and especially in comparison to the power and strength of God — that horn can only ever be regarded as a "little" one! We should remember this well. It is a helpful reminder not only of God's sovereignty but also of the devil's enforced subservience to his Creator. Scripture repeatedly provides us with such comfort in the face of awful persecution (e.g. Revelation 2:10-11; Matthew 10:22; Luke 21:17-19; John 16:33).

If we just take a big step back at this point to give ourselves a bird's eye view of history, we see the 'Antithesis' — the primal spiritual battle — going right back to Genesis 3:15, epitomized in the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. There is a spiritual conflict

¹⁴ See also this translation in *Brown, Driver & Briggs: Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

which came into being at the time of the Fall which will not be resolved until the Day of Judgement at the end of this present evil age.

There is a double kingdom conflict here: The kingdom of God, which is built on reality, invisible to the eye yet everlasting; and the kingdom of Satan, which is an illusion, founded in the world and only temporary. This conflict shapes all of world history from the Fall to the final trumpet and was ordained to be that way by God Himself (Genesis 3:15).

Jesus endorsed this same conflict when He said: *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword”* (Matthew 10:34). And again: *“Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division”* (Luke 12:51). This division occurs naturally whenever or wherever the Gospel is proclaimed. The one group (the sheep) hears Christ’s voice and becomes part of the spiritual kingdom of God; the other group (the goats) rejects the claims of Christ and remains under the force of Satan’s earthly kingdom (John 10:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; Matthew 25:31ff.). **The setting up of his kingdom on earth has been Satan’s obsessional aim from the commencement of human history.** It has often been thwarted by the Lord from coming to full fruition (e.g. at the Flood and at Babel, etc.), as the time was not right for its consummation and final judgement.

Sin came into the world on the back of the satanic lie that man can be like God (Genesis 3:5); and the Bible teaches that this lie will find its climax, its fullness, its denouement, its culmination, its realisation in the coming of a human being known as the Antichrist, who will set himself up as God-incarnate — and the world which rejects Christ will believe the lie (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). **What began with the seduction of our first parents comes to its zenith in the Antichrist — the perfected man of lawlessness and representative of the pinnacle of human sin. All history is heading towards the hideous revelation of the mightiest demonstration of all that man, apart from Christ, can achieve: The revealing of the Antichrist.**

This is the reason that the mysterious number “666” is used by John in relation to the Antichrist:

“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of man: His number is 666.” (Revelation 13:18)

The indefinite article is not there in the Greek. 666 is the number of Man, period; humanity, mankind, not “a” man. The Lord’s number is 7, the number of perfection. A triple seven, 777, would represent the Trinitarian Godhead. Man’s number is 6, always falling short of 7, no matter how much he may try to assume deity. 666 is a Trinitarian 6. The Antichrist is the epitome of humanistic earthbound achievement, as opposed to the glorious achievement of our Lord in the divine perfection of 777. 666 is the number of *man* rather than that of *God*, of whom we will always fall short in spite of our many schemes, pretensions or aspirations.

When the Antichrist is revealed, the full force of hatred for all that is good and right (and also for those who practise it) will come into play. Thus, the scene will be one of increasing iniquity, godlessness, anomie, apostasy from the law of God, and the awful persecution of the saints. However, we must always remember that shortly after the revealing of the Antichrist comes the return of the true Christ to bring down judgement, effect the resurrection and restore all things.

3. TYPOLOGICAL REFERENCES TO THE ANTICHRIST IN SCRIPTURE

If we listen to “the ‘music’ which lies behind the words” of the Bible (which is necessary if we are to comprehend its full breadth and scope), we can look at what happened to Old Testament characters and see them serving as “types”. A “type” is a pattern, a kind of example or forerunner, a symbol so powerful that it has great lessons for those who will learn from the example. Paul specifically refers to these typological examples when he says:

“Now these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

In other words, the principal characters of the Old Testament and the historical events in which they were involved carry a spiritual significance which must be understood if one is to grasp the deep things of God. The Greek word translated as “examples” in the above Scripture verse is from τύπος, *typos*, from which our word “type” is derived. Therefore, these things happened to them so that they could serve as “types” or patterns, spiritual examples from which we can learn and grow spiritually.

Examples of this sort of “typology” can be seen over and over again in the life of numerous key Old Testament characters. For instance, look at

Moses. His life and experience were a model of Scripture typology. As but one example, he leads God's people to freedom out of the house of bondage under Pharaoh, through the wilderness into the Promised Land. The typological significance of this is the parallel with the historical fact that Christ leads His people out to freedom from being under bondage to Satan, then leads them through the wilderness of this world into the heavenly life to come. Moses was a "type" of Christ, as also were Samuel and David. They provide us with hugely important general typological lessons for our spiritual life, our growth as children of God and our understanding of ourselves in relation to the world around us and our fellow professing Christians.

There are a number of places in which we see typological references to the Antichrist or the "spirit of antichrist" in Scripture. These instances serve as foreshadowings of the final Antichrist and exhibit certain characteristics which will be his also. Because of this, some of these types of the Antichrist have been mistaken for the Antichrist himself. This is why we have to be so careful when we point to a living person in our rush to identify him positively as the "man of sin".

➤ **The first "type" of the Antichrist in Scripture is the character called Nimrod:**

"Cush was the father of Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; so it is said, 'Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD'. His kingdom began in Babylon, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar" (Genesis 10:8-10).

Previous civilisation had been wiped out by the Flood, and Noah's great-grandchild, Nimrod, started a kingdom which was centred in a part of Mesopotamia known as Shinar. Within this kingdom lay the city which came to be known as Babel. Babylon is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word *babel*.

This Nimrod is referred to as being "*a mighty one on the earth*" and "*a mighty hunter before the LORD*" (Genesis 10:8-9). The phrase "*before the LORD*" carries the significance of being "*in the face of the LORD*", in the sense of setting himself up as something special in front of God — as in the hubristic idiomatic phrase "to fly in the face of". In fact, the Berean Bible has a note by the word "before", saying, "*or in defiance of*", for that encapsulates the essence of the Hebrew. When we learn that the name Nimrod comes from the Hebrew verb-form *nimrodh*,

“let us revolt or rebel”,¹⁵ we have here an image of a grand potentate setting himself up against God and building an earthly kingdom *“in his own strength”*.

Thus, not only can we say that this Nimrod is in the image of his father Satan, but he is also a type and forerunner of the ultimate rebel, the *“man of lawlessness”*, prophesied by the Apostle Paul as heading up the spiritual Babel (what will really be Babel 2.0) at the time of the end, the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:2-12).

➤ **Another typological example of the Antichrist was the situation at Babel itself:**

“Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4).

This was indicative of the “spirit of antichrist” — human beings making a fancy name for themselves by both setting themselves up in the place of God and also opposing Him in every way. **In other words, they were collectively setting up the first one-world, ecumenical, autonomous, political and religious confederated state-system.** This is the epitome of spiritual pride and a sure pointer to the satanic origins of this human endeavour. **The event of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 has been the only time in previous history when there has been a mass confederation of peoples under a leader deliberately getting on their hind-legs against God.** Since then, the ego-crazed emperors who have set up a godless empire did not bring all the peoples together in a mass confederation, but they set themselves up against other peoples and then were eventually toppled by some other self-obsessed egomaniacal emperor who set up a new empire. The next Babel type of event — when *all* the peoples come together as one in a confederation will be under the *real* Antichrist at the end of this age.

➤ **Another typological example of the Antichrist is the description of the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:13-14:**

“For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of

¹⁵ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, Wartburg Press, 1942, p.366.

the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High”.

There is a striking similarity between the above statement about the king of Babylon, *“I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God”* (Isaiah 14:13), and the statement made by the people of Babel: *“Let us build...a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves”* (Genesis 11:4). This reveals the king of Babylon as a type of Antichrist and an echo of Satan. The fact that there is a reverberation of the spirit of Satan should not surprise us. For the Antichrist will be, in a sense, Satan personified on this earth. Satan will delegate his power, throne and authority to the Antichrist when he is revealed (Revelation 13:2b).

What applies typologically to the King of Babylon in Isaiah 14:13 can also be applied to the description of the King of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:1-2):

“Because your heart is lifted up, And you say, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas,’ Yet you are a man, and not a god, though you set your heart as the heart of a god”.

Again, we see that this is just as much of a typological reference to Satan as it is to the Antichrist. The context is rebellion. **Satan was the first rebel against God. The Antichrist — as the climax of sin and lawlessness — will be the last rebel against God.** Then the rebellion will be finished forever.

➤ **Daniel’s description of Antiochus Epiphanes is also a typological reference to the Antichrist:**

“And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host.” (Daniel 8:9-11a).

We have already seen that the “little horn” of Daniel 7 is a prophetic reference to the actual Antichrist. Here, the same description is given to Antiochus Epiphanes — the Seleucid King who reigned from 175-164 BC who persecuted the people of God and desecrated the Jewish temple in 156 BC. According to Greek historian Diodorus,

“Antiochus sacrificed a large pig at the image of Moses, and at the altar of God that stood in the outward court,

and sprinkled them with the blood of the sacrifice. He commanded likewise that the books, by which they were taught to hate all other nations, should be sprinkled with the broth made of the pig's flesh. And he put out the lamp (called by them immortal) which burns continually in the temple. Lastly he forced the high priest and the other Jews to eat pig's flesh".

The desecration of the Temple is a particular sport of those who operate in the "spirit of antichrist", an example of which we see in Matthew 24:15, a classic prophetic double reference to both the sacking of Jerusalem by Titus in AD.70 and also the manner in which the Antichrist will sit "*as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). [The identity of the "temple of God" in that context will be explained later in this paper].

➤ **Another type of the Antichrist in Scripture is Judas Iscariot.**

Judas is referred to by the Lord Jesus as "*the son of destruction*" (John 17:12). Exactly the same phrase is used in reference to the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

➤ **Another type of the Antichrist in Scripture is Herod, the ruler described in Acts 12:21-23:**

"Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, *'The voice of a god and not of a man!'* Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died".

The typological significance to the Antichrist here is in Herod setting himself up as God, allowing himself to be worshipped as such, followed swiftly by his destruction through a mighty act of God (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8). We see here how easily the mass of people, with their mob mentality, give obeisance to a hollow 'ruler' because they are seduced by some outward expressions and fail to see through to the evil reality of the man himself.

➤ **Another typological reference to the Antichrist is the Roman Emperor, Titus (AD 39-AD 81), who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70.**

Jesus also refers to this violation of the temple by an antichrist figure in His Sermon on the Mount of Olives when He says: "*So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' spoken of by*

the prophet Daniel" (Matthew 24:15). Some have referred these words to what I mentioned above in relation to Antiochus Epiphanes IV. But this prophecy clearly also refers to an event as yet unfulfilled in Jesus' time. It would seem, therefore, that Jesus was using a typical future prophetic double-reference. Let me explain...

In the first place, he was referring to the destruction of the Jewish temple by the Roman Emperor Titus in AD 70, as Jesus had earlier specifically spoken of the fine buildings of Jerusalem being destroyed and the rest of His words answer the disciples' probing question at the outset about when would those things be (Matthew 24:1-3).

In the second place, it would seem that He was referring to the usurpation of divine privilege by the *actual* Antichrist who "*seats himself in the temple of God*". Jesus must be referring jointly to this future event as well as the AD 70 Titus episode because this verse in His address is directly linked with the time of great tribulation mentioned a few verses later when He says, "*at that time*" (Matthew 24:21). That time of great tribulation spoken of by Jesus there cannot possibly refer to the Titus episode in AD 70 in Jerusalem because He says that the time of tribulation to which He is referring will be worse than anything seen "*from the beginning of the world*" and worse than anything which will be seen again (Matthew 24:21). There have been plenty of terrible times and events which have been at least as bad as (and many even worse) than what happened in Jerusalem in AD 70. **But the still future great tribulation prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 24:15 will be far worse than anything ever to have happened on this earth at any time.** Nevertheless, Titus was still a forerunner/type/prefigurement of the Antichrist to come (a major 'mini-antichrist'), and he gives us a nasty taste of what the real Antichrist will be about.

➤ **Another typological reference to the Antichrist (and even a literal one) would be the description of false christs and false prophets in Matthew 24:24:**

"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect". The many false christs and false prophets are preparatory "mini-antichrists" paving the way for the ultimate false christ, the Antichrist who, it is said, will operate "*with every kind of power, sign, and false wonder*" (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

We can see that there is a great deal of typological reference to “antichrist” in Scripture — when men in authority set themselves up as God and are then judged accordingly for their pride, hubris and failure to acknowledge their Creator.

Now that we have scanned the Scriptures for references to the Antichrist, let us examine briefly the way this teaching has been treated throughout history.

II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TEACHING CONCERNING THE ANTICHRIST

1. VIEW OF THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

The early church fathers wrote extensively about the Antichrist. Most had something to say on the subject; but the best-known treatises were those of Irenaeus of Lyons, Hippolytus, Lactantius and Hilary of Poitiers.¹⁶

They all believed that the Antichrist would be a future individual, rather than a succession of individuals or an office, and that his coming would immediately precede the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. For some hundreds of years, the belief was that the return of the Lord Jesus was imminent and, because the Scriptures plainly showed that this must first be preceded by the revealing of the Antichrist, they were looking for the Antichrist too.

Most held that he would be a Jew, and many even went so far as to say that he would be of the tribe of Dan — based on the prophecy in Genesis 49:17: *“Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider shall fall backward”*, and also because of the fact that Dan is strangely missing from the list of tribes in Revelation 7.¹⁷

¹⁶ The best source for these works is the multi-volume series edited by Philip Schaff, *“Ante-Nicene Fathers”* and *“Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers”*, Series I & II, published by Wm. B. Eerdmans.

¹⁷ The fact that there were a number of anomalies in the list of tribes in Revelation 7 is indicative that we are dealing there with a kind of ‘Christianised’ version of the tribes which somehow *replaces* that of ancient Israel in a symbolic sense. The Divinely ‘sealed’ 144,000 in chapter 7 of the Book of Revelation can be none other than a symbolic reference to the servants of God of all time — disciples who are both Jews *and* Gentiles. **For, although the text speaks of this 144,000 coming “from all the tribes of**

Thus, for some hundreds of years the view of the early church fathers held sway. However, as the visible church itself became intertwined with “beast” government (i.e. the secular powers) the wayward idea came into play that the Church was building the kingdom of God on the earth, and the imminent return of Christ began to fade. As that happened, the concept of the Antichrist also eventually came to play very little part in people’s religious thinking.

2. MEDIEVAL VIEW

Around the eleventh century, the idea began to take hold that the power of the papacy was a menacing development and as the conflict between the Emperors and Popes gathered steam, the idea of the papacy as a very probable candidate for the Antichrist began to emerge. By the time of the Albigenses (13th century), the Waldenses (13th-16th centuries), and the disciples of John Huss (1372-1415) and John Wycliffe (1330-1384), this then became the vogue idea about Rome. Alongside this, the restraining agent in 2 Thessalonians 2 was identified as the secular power which was widely regarded as a revival of the old Roman Empire.

3. ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW

It is worth mentioning here that the Roman Catholic view has, in general, continued the belief of the early church fathers that the Antichrist was a personal individual who was yet to come and that He would be destroyed by the second coming of Christ.

4. VIEW OF THE REFORMERS

The Reformers believed that the papacy was the Antichrist, whereas the Romanists of that era believed it was Martin Luther (1483-1546). In the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1531, written by Philip Melancthon in consultation with Luther), it is stated:

***Israel*”, it is a representation of the whole *Ekklesia* which is made up of both transformed Jews and gentiles, and which is the *new Israel*! This is clearly shown in a number of relevant Bible texts with which you should familiarise yourself (Romans 2:29; Galatians 3:7-9, 29; 6:16; Philippians 3:3). For further details about that 144,000 and why it refers there to the whole Church of Jews and Gentiles, please consult my commentary on the Book of Revelation, “*The Essential Apocalypse*”, available here: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2025/03/12/second-edition-of-the-essential-apocalypse-is-now-available-as-an-e-book-in-pdf-format/>].**

“The pope takes plenary power in both the temporal and the spiritual realm, both swords, the temporal and the spiritual. Now, this definition of the papal kingdom rather than of the church of Christ has as its authors not only the canonists but also Daniel 11:36-39.

“If our opponents defend the notion that these human rites merit justification, grace, and the forgiveness of sins, they are simply establishing the kingdom of Antichrist. The kingdom of Antichrist is a new kind of worship of God, devised by human authority in opposition to Christ. Thus the kingdom of Mohammed has rites and works by which it seeks to be justified before God, denying that men are freely justified before God by faith for Christ’s sake. So the papacy will also be a part of the kingdom of Antichrist if it maintains that human rites justify.... In his eleventh chapter Daniel says that the invention of human rites will be the very form and constitution of the kingdom of Antichrist.”

We can see here that Melancthon (1497-1560) held a double-Antichrist view, identifying both Mohammed and the pope — as did other theologians of the European Reformation such as Martin Bucer (1491-1551), Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) and Johannes Piscator (1546-1625).

In Luther’s Smalcald Articles (1537, written as a rebuttal to the doctrine that was to become the *Council of Trent*), it is stated that the Pope’s seizure of power to himself is: “*A powerful demonstration that [he] is the real Antichrist*”. This papal Antichrist view came to be held by the leading Swiss theologians of the Reformation era: Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), John Calvin (1509-1564), Theodore Beza (1519-1605) and Francis Turretin (1623-1687).

In the late 16th century, a Jesuit named Alcazar — in order to deflect attention from the pope — advocated the preterist view that the Roman emperor Nero (37-68 AD) had been the Antichrist, and that Scripture prophecies such as those in 2 Thessalonians 2, etc. had their fulfillment in the time of the early church. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) followed this same idea in the Netherlands, holding that Caligula (12-41 AD) had been the Antichrist, and the German rationalists later took that idea on board. Others in that period saw Simon Magus (Acts 8:9ff) as the fulfillment of the Antichrist prophecy.

But it was the understanding of the pope or the papacy as the Antichrist which continued to be that which was enshrined in the Reformed Creeds and Confessions. The Irish Articles of Religion (1615), drawn up probably by Bishop Ussher, state (in 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”.

That is a clear reference to the text in 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1644) together with the Savoy Declaration (1658) and the 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) — which both mimicked the Westminster Confession (in conformity with the prevailing Protestant trend of the day) — also contained a paragraph which identified the pope of Rome, or the office of the papacy, as the specific fulfilment of the prophecy of the “man of lawlessness” referred to in Paul’s Second Letter to the church at Thessalonica (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

This tradition has, therefore, been carried into the present era by those denominations which adhere rigidly to these confessions — although certain denominations have removed that particular article or made it not binding on their members.

Theologians such as Princeton professor Charles Hodge (1797-1878) also adhered to the papal Antichrist idea in his three-volume “*Systematic Theology*”. However, the postmillennialist Reformed theologians, Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921) and Lorraine Boettner (1901-1990), both held to a preterist notion that the Antichrist prophecies had been fulfilled during the time of the Roman Emperors.

At this point, we should observe that the view of the pope or papacy as the Antichrist most often goes hand-in-hand with a postmillennial view of the return of Christ. This naturally follows the Reformers idea that their Reformation had dealt a death blow to the papacy from which it would never recover; and their basis was the text in 2 Thessalonians 2:8: “*whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming*”.

Therefore, when the Puritans realised that a lengthy period of time had passed since the first revelation of the papacy without it having been destroyed, they had to somehow work out a rationalization for

this anomaly in order to explain it away: Thus, what we can call “The Puritan Gap Theory” came into being! It was claimed by the old Protestants that the preaching of the truth from the Word of God by the Reformers (which they applied to the phrase “*the breath of His mouth*”) had brought about the demise of the papal Antichrist from a spiritual standpoint, and that his complete obliteration would not occur until the return of the Lord (exemplified in the phrase “*the brightness of His coming*”).

Thus, a gap of indeterminate time was placed between the first and second parts of this verse in order to accommodate a theory.¹⁸ The insertion of arbitrary gaps in the middle of prophecies (let the reader understand) in order to make them fit into a preconceived scheme has always been a diverting pastime in the history of the church.

We should remember that to label with certainty any specific person in history as the Antichrist is a most serious charge and should not be taken lightly, as it singles out that person as being hopelessly hell-bound — unevangelisable — a judgement which one cannot make with certainty about any other human being alive today. I will have more to say on this later.

After the 17th century, the consideration of the identification of the Antichrist faded somewhat while the Protestant church enjoyed periods of what have come to be known as ‘revival’. But during the 19th century, the interest of some scholars in this subject was rekindled.

As it became obvious that the papacy had **not** been dealt a death blow at all but was thriving very well, people began to rediscover what the Patristic sources had taught on this subject. Henry Alford (1810 - 1871), for example, an Anglican scholar and Dean of Canterbury from 1857 until 1871, specifically refuted the papal Antichrist idea and deliberately followed the early church fathers as a model of correct interpretation. Other Reformed scholars followed him, as did John Eadie (1810-1876) in Scotland. But his fellow countryman, Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874), continued to hold firmly to the papal Antichrist idea.

¹⁸ For a discussion of this, see J.P. Lange, op.cit., p.130. See also J. Marcellus Kik’s article on “*Antichrist*” in Jay P. Green (ed.), “*The Encyclopedia of Christianity*”, National Foundation for Christian Education, 1964, pp.263-264.

This idea of a personal future Antichrist also became the view of the Plymouth Brethren and fundamentalists generally during the first half of the twentieth century — mainly through the teachings of Dispensationalism, although the novel dimension was also added that the Antichrist would only come **after** a so-called “rapture of the saints” had taken place before the time of great tribulation. Most modern orthodox commentators believe in a personal future individual as the Antichrist.

It is at this point that we need to answer more closely a commonly-posed question on this subject, and one that is not without controversy: ***Is it possible that the pope or any other currently identifiable personage could be the Antichrist?*** I will now answer this question by showing definitively, from Scripture, the unique qualities and character of the Antichrist which set him apart from all other men.

III. THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ANTICHRIST

The first passage of Scripture to which one must turn in order to ascertain the true identity of the Antichrist is to be found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12. Concerning this passage, the Banner of Truth magazine article to which I referred in the Prologue makes the following statement:

“In the light of the evidence given by Paul in this passage of Scripture, the way to identify this Antichrist is to search in the annals of church history to see what, if any, figure has ever emerged in the Christian church who might correspond with this description. As a matter of fact, the one ecclesiastical institution which appears exactly to fit the evidence is that of the papacy”.¹⁹

Bear in mind that if this statement is correct in its assertion that the papacy is the revealed Antichrist, then it must be shown that every pope has exhibited all the characteristics set forth by Paul in this passage. I shall therefore, with the aid of an open Bible, closely examine 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 and other relevant texts in order to discover the identity of this ultimate adversary of Christ and His people.

¹⁹ *Banner of Truth Magazine*, op.cit., p.6.

The first characteristic of the Antichrist is that:

1. HE IS PERSONAL AND INDIVIDUAL

2 Thessalonians 2:3 clearly shows that what we are being presented with is not a “general principle” or an “office”, but an individual person who appears in history. The Greek words which are used are ὁ ἄνθρωπος, *ho anthrōpos*, “the man”, singular. As has already been observed, a decisive consideration in this is that Paul never speaks figuratively or symbolically without leaving the reader in no doubt that he is doing so. Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians is in a completely different genre to the Book of Revelation. We have no Biblical warrant for taking the “man of lawlessness” as anything other than literally, and he must therefore be a specific individual rather than a succession of individuals or an office which can be held by numerous individuals. This fact alone should rule out the possibility of identifying the office of the papacy as the Antichrist.

However, Turretin argues that the Antichrist cannot possibly refer to one single person but “*must refer to an office or succession of persons in office in the visible church*” on the basis of Paul’s statement, in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, that the Antichrist’s first manifestations were already at work in his day.²⁰ But this proves too much; for although the “mystery of lawlessness” was certainly at work in the middle of the first century AD, the papacy was not already at work in Paul’s day and did not rise until many years after the apostolic period.

A key consideration here is that every one of the early church fathers regarded the “man of lawlessness” not as an office or influence, but as an individual person — the very incarnation, concentration and culmination of sin — with the *parousia* as the personal return of the Lord Jesus for judgement and to bring in His kingdom.²¹ So it is not only Roman Catholic writers, as Turretin falsely claims,²² who say that the Antichrist is uniquely an endtime phenomenon. Turretin then dismisses the witness of the Early Fathers on the basis that “*it is always easier to speak of prophecies which are fulfilled than of those*

²⁰ Ibid., p.4.

²¹ E.g. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Origen, Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, Jerome. For an elaboration on this, with copious citations from these men, see Henry Alford, “*The Greek New Testament*”, Moody Press, 1968, Vol.III, pp.56-57.

²² *Banner of Truth Magazine*, op. cit., p.2.

which are still to be fulfilled".²³ He deduces that because "*the rise of the papacy occurred after their day...they are particularly ill-qualified to speak on this subject*".²⁴ But this is based on the preconceived assumption that those who identify the papacy as the Antichrist are correct — a view which, as we shall see, is totally unproven.

The key to understanding this entire passage in Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians — and especially the identification of the Antichrist — is the concept of "usurpation" or "imposture". The Antichrist comes to power in a gross parody of the true Christ, imitating Him by setting himself up as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4) and as a performer of extraordinary miracles (2 Thessalonians 2:9).²⁵ Remember that, in Greek, the prefix "*anti-*" has the meaning of "in the place of". **Thus, because Christ is a single individual person making His entrance on the stage of this world at a unique moment of history, so the Antichrist must be also as he will come in counterfeit of ("in the place of") the true Christ.** As the Scottish Presbyterian Dr. John Eadie points out in his great exegesis of the Greek text:

"The person so described is a man, *anthropos* — a single man, and not a series or succession of men, not the personification of evil influences, or the head of a human organisation. This man, made of sin, and the representative personification of it, is the counter-Christ, 'he who opposes'; both are individual men, both come to view, or are 'revealed' in immediate personal manifestation, both are signalised in character, the one by righteousness, the other by sin. The one has life and glory as his destiny, but the other ruin and perdition!"²⁶

Just as the many "mini-antichrists" who apostatised in John's day were individual people, so the Antichrist who is the ultimate

²³ Ibid., p.5.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The demonic realm has always acknowledged the Deity of Christ and the cosmic reality of His miraculous power (Luke 8:28, 31; Acts 8:13, 18-19; 19:15; Jas.2:19). In this respect, the demons ironically put the Lord Jesus on a far higher pedestal than many professing Christians today!

²⁶ John Eadie, *Commentary on First and Second Thessalonians*, Macmillan, 1877, p.269.

culmination of them will also be an individual person (1 John 2:18-19). The “man of lawlessness” will clearly be alive at the time of the second coming of Christ, whose appearance (“*parousia*”) will destroy him (2 Thessalonians 2:8). His manifestation is therefore confined to a single lifetime rather than a succession of offices. The papacy, on the other hand, has been active for centuries in the form of many individuals.

Certainly, the thrust of the entire passage in 2 Thessalonians is that of a short reign of the ultimate sinful man, brought to an abrupt halt by the One who reigns over all.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that:

2. HE WILL BE THE ULTIMATE EPITOME (THE VERY CLIMAX) OF HUMAN EVIL

This is why the Antichrist is referred to in Scripture as the “*man of lawlessness*” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He is the climax and apex of all human lawlessness and sin. **He will be more lawless than any other human being who has ever been in history.** In fact, the full extent of the lawlessness of the Antichrist is beyond human imagining. He will make any of the previous worst human beings ever seem like saints in comparison. For he will be the funnel of satanic rage, empowered and energized by Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:4a). If you could visualize Satan personified in human form, the Antichrist would be it.

Furthermore, **the Antichrist will direct the mass persecution and slaughter of genuine disciples of Christ in order to remove all evidence of them from this earth** (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:7; 12:7). This is the action of someone who has total global power and the support of the whole world.

For the above reasons, no human being yet — whether pope or US president, or indeed any other person who has been vainly identified as the Antichrist — has the right amoral qualifications to be labelled as *the* Antichrist. There have been many in history who have been hideously lawless; but even so, none of them comes close to what will be the evil of the Antichrist. When that person is revealed, it will be very obvious that he is the one. There will be no doubt whatsoever in the minds of genuine disciples of Christ concerning the correct identification. There will be no “perhaps” about it.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that:

3. HE WILL BE REVERED AS LEADER OF THE WHOLE WORLD

The Antichrist, when he is revealed, will be voluntarily revered by all (and that “all” will even revere Satan who energizes the Antichrist), heading up a global government, rather than merely being the ruler of a single nation-state (see Revelation 13:3-4, 8).

Before going any further with this section, I should explain here that the “beast” set forth in the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Revelation depicts the way that the “mystery of lawlessness” and the “spirit of the Antichrist” have manifested exponentially in governance and world culture during the whole Gospel Age as a satanic world-system which climaxes in the actual “man of lawlessness”, the Antichrist. The two beasts mentioned in that chapter represent symbolically a different aspect of the “spirit of the Antichrist” and the satanic world-system — two sides of the same coin, as it were. Thus, **the first beast out of the sea is the political, governmental, and administrative aspect of the enforcement of Satan’s kingdom-building across the planet, leading ultimately to the creation of a global government under the Antichrist.** The second beast out of the earth involves all the ‘spirit of the antichrist’ influences in society of a pseudo-religious nature, the application of godless philosophy and science — along with the supportive unethical use of technology — which will endorse, prop up and advocate the governmental aims of first beast. **Therefore, the second beast provides the undergirding religio-philosophical rationale and the scientific foundation for the whole political beast-system and culminates in a kind of global oneness interfaith religious confederation alongside the global government.**²⁷

The only dissenters of that veneration of the Antichrist will be genuine disciples of Christ, who will be increasingly bumped off for their awareness of who he is and their refusal to submit to him (Revelation 11:7; 13:7). So, before one goes off identifying some present person as the Antichrist, the *real* “man of lawlessness” will have the whole world eating out of his hand, so to speak, with his

²⁷ For a detailed explanation of all this, please see sections 5-8 of Chapter 6 in my commentary on the Book of Revelation, “*The Essential Apocalypse*”, which you can either obtain as an actual book or as a PDF eBook here: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2025/03/12/second-edition-of-the-essential-apocalypse-is-now-available-as-an-e-book-in-pdf-format/>].

demonic leadership skills, smooth-talking sophistry and mesmeric attraction. He will be revered as the leader of the whole world by all except the comparatively few who follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is this:

4. THE APOSTASY WHICH BRINGS HIM TO POWER, AND OF WHICH HE IS A PART, IS ABSOLUTE

Until we wake up to the fact that that the greater part of the 'visible church' (i.e. that which the world sees as "the church") is — under the permission of God, being run by Satan and overseen by his realm of darkness, and has been for countless centuries, though in different ways at different times and to various extents — we will not be effective warriors of spiritual warfare. Until we open our eyes to the fullness of the strategies being used in the churches by that realm of darkness we will be aiding and abetting those strategies. **That realm's principal strategy is to get people to wallow in subjective experience rather than submit to biblical truth.** It works every time: The tendency of the huge number of unregenerate humans in both the world and in the churches is to put themselves on a pedestal over and above the will and law of God.

All the demonic strategies within the church leading to its apostasy follow on from that tendency — whether it is alleged "Holy Spirit" shenanigans, so-called "deliverance ministry", calling yourself an Apostle, speaking in gibberish 'tongues', gender-bending and perversions of human sexuality ('gay' Christianity), prosperity theology, "name it and claim it" nonsense, occult 'New Thought' techniques masquerading as Christian practice (e.g., power of positive thinking, 'Law of Attraction', visualization meditations, etc.), phony faith-healing (involving psychology rather than miracles), so-called megachurches (stadium "Christianity"), false notions about 'global revival', Christian Zionism and bigging-up the modern Israeli state, nutty Endtime fantasies (e.g. Moses and Elijah returning as the 'two witnesses' of Revelation 11, the so-called 'rapture', the wildly unbiblical claim that there can be no tribulation for Christians, the 1000-year reign of Christ on earth from Jerusalem, Dominion Theology, etc.), Popes and the Vatican, poncing around in weird hats and outfits in front of congregations in churches, burning people at the stake, Inquisitions and torture, 'heavy shepherding', creating phony ecclesiastical power structures, and many other insane bandwagons. All this was prophesied by the Holy Spirit through Paul

the genuine Apostle when he said (literal translation), *"But the Spirit expressly states that in later times some [i.e. certain ones] will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons"* (1 Timothy 4:1). When he says, "in later times", this is not the same as "the last days" or the "Endtime". As I have shown in a previous article, entitled "[Are We Living in the Endtimes?](#)" (which was drawn from my commentary on the Book of Revelation), the "last days" covers the entire period from the ascension of Christ to His return. The Endtime involves the immediate run-up to the return of Christ. However, Paul in this verse is not referring specifically to those here. He is simply saying *"at some time later than this"*. In fact, we know very well that it all started to go awry in the visible church within decades of his writing and has continued to do so down to the present day, to greater or lesser degrees at different times.

Furthermore, that word "some" or "a certain number" does not merely refer to a few. As Albert Benson correctly wrote in the early 1800s: *"For though it be said only some shall apostatize, yet by some in this place many are understood, which is the case also in many other passages of the Scriptures, as Bishop Newton has fully proved"*. Indeed. For this verse is parallel to that in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, which speaks of a global apostasy that is vast and plainly ultimately has eschatological connotations. That apostasy began in the visible church not long after Paul's life on this earth (initially through Docetism, Gnosticism and what followed it), and the apostasy will plainly climax increasingly towards the time of the end of this age. It is not merely a *church* apostasy though. For in the world, the law of God and the truth of Christ will increasingly be spat upon publicly — with certain secular flashpoints serving to deepen the apostasy — e.g. the Renaissance (bigging up the "genius of man"), the Age of Enlightenment (giving rise to liberalism, socialism and rationalist philosophy), the Theory of Evolution (undermining the Divine creation and the Bible), the 1960s pseudo-counterculture, etc.²⁸

This apostasy is a collective one, developing gradually — much of it in secret (occultly) — involving both the secular world and the visible church and will come to its fullness with the acceptance and revering

²⁸ This entire movement of apostasy throughout history is part of what has been traced in all its facets with copious evidence in the second edition of my 1044-page book, *"The Serpent and the Cross"*. If you wish to obtain it, please contact me directly at diakrisis-project@outlook.com.

in both of those spheres of the “man of lawlessness”, the Antichrist, and the global government which will have paved the way for him. It is all a part of the “mystery of lawlessness” which burgeons throughout this evil age and which Paul said is characterized by *“deceitful spirits and teachings of demons”*. This does not merely involve the Endtimes but began soon after Paul wrote about it.

However, this apostasy which prepares the way for the revealing of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and which is a hallmark of his reign is not merely a rejection of the articles of the Christian faith but is a denial of every Divine ordinance, **every solitary whisper of Christ**. This apostasy surely does not merely encompass the professing Church but involves the whole of humanity, in preparation for the Antichrist.

To apostatize represents a disintegration of moral and spiritual principles into godless betrayal, dissolution, debauchery, degeneracy or licentiousness. Apostasy is not a mere falling away from the faith by the outwardly previously faithful (i.e. a purely religious apostasy). It is an all-out revolt against natural and Divine law — a mass global rebellion against God the Creator by the created, an increasingly insistent denial that the Christ had come in the flesh, and the resultant hubristic promotion of the self. This is the natural outcome of the “spirit of the Antichrist” and the “mystery of lawlessness” and it builds exponentially as the end of the age draws near. It is, in fact, a principal form of Satanism for it involves a bigging-up of the human will against the will of God.

Thus, we are speaking here about an apostasy away from even those good and necessary things of this world which have been established through the suffusive presence of the general grace of God — e.g. helpful laws, crime-busting policing, national defence, the restraining force of government, etc.

Let there be no mistake about it, when the Antichrist is revealed he *“shall intend to change times and law”* (Daniel 7:25) in such a way that the whole world will be embroiled in it. As Matthew Henry puts it, in his comment on that verse, the Antichrist’s aim is to *“abolish all the ordinances and institutions of religion, and to bring everybody to say and do just as he would have them. He shall trample upon laws and customs, human and divine”*. That apostasy will be utterly complete and global, not merely confined to the environs of the visible church. This is yet another reason why the Antichrist cannot be the pope or the office of the papacy.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that

5. HIS HARBINGERS OPERATED EVEN IN PAUL'S TIME

First century Christians knew about the Antichrist and had an expectancy that he would be revealed in due time. John told the recipients of his first letter: *"You have heard that the Antichrist is coming"*, adding *"even now many antichrists have come"* (1 John 2:18; 4:3). Although **the** Antichrist was a future expected event, the general principle of "antichrist" was already at work in the form of many harbingers — what I call "mini-antichrists".

As a parody of the true Messiah's forerunners, the Antichrist would also have **his** forerunners preparing the way. This is what Paul refers to as the *"mystery of lawlessness"* which was already in energetic motion at the time of his writing in around AD 50 (2 Thessalonians 2:7a), preparing the way for the "man of lawlessness" who would come countless years later.

Like John, he was referring to **human forerunners** of the Antichrist rather than, as Turretin claims above, the Antichrist himself at work in some fashion. The papacy — whether in form or as an unrevealed principle — was not already operational in Paul's day. Papal Antichrist advocates reply to this by saying that Paul must have received divine revelation about this pre-papal manifestation, which was not discernible to the ordinary believer. But this surely begs the question rather than providing a plausible interpretation. In fact, it was not until the second century that a monarchical episcopate arose in Rome. The first Bishop of Rome to claim the ancient pagan title of *"Pontifex Maximus"* was Leo I, who held office from 440 to 461.

We need to be aware, as Prof. F.F. Bruce rightly asserts, that *"no identification of the mystery of lawlessness can be acceptable if it would not have been intelligible to the Christians to whom 2 Thessalonians was first addressed"*.²⁹ This incarnation-denying "mystery of lawlessness" can be directly juxtaposed with what Paul refers to as "the mystery of godliness" which is rooted in the incarnation of Christ: *"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh"* (1 Timothy 3:16). To be Antichrist is to deny

²⁹ F.F. Bruce, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Vol.45 in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, Word Books, 1982, p.187.

the incarnation (1 John 4:3). Let us develop this juxtaposing of these two very contrasting “mysteries”.

The Two Contrasting Mysteries of ‘Godliness’ and ‘Lawlessness’

That verse in 1 Timothy 4:1 about departing *“from the faith, giving heed to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons”* follows on *immediately* after the verse in 1 Timothy 3:16 which speaks about the “mystery of godliness” which plainly refers to the coming of Christ, as the full text says:

“Confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: Who was revealed in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit, was seen by angels, was proclaimed among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory”.

The “mystery of godliness” which issued in the revealing of the Christ (the pinnacle of Divine godliness) and the spread of His Gospel plainly has its counterpart in the “mystery of lawlessness” which will ultimately issue in the revealing of the Antichrist (the pinnacle of human godlessness, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10). These are the two parallel incidents, spiritual events, which frame this present evil age — one emanating from the *“mystery of godliness”* and the other emanating from the *“mystery of lawlessness”*. **Christ is the forerunner of the new creation to come. The Antichrist is the climax of the old creation (the present one) which is doomed.**

Remember that the Bible was not written with chapter divisions. These were a later addition in the 13th century (although some lesser divisions had occurred earlier). So that verse in 1 Timothy 4:1 (as we know it today) follows on directly, without a break, from what we now call “1 Timothy 3:16”. So, having just written of the “mystery of godliness”, Paul then reveals a prophecy of the Holy Spirit: *“But the Spirit expressly states that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons”*. So he is, in effect, saying “Yeah, sure, the ‘mystery of godliness’, the Christ, has been revealed, BUT the battle is by no means over yet, as there is going to be a global apostasy in both the visible church and the world which will be stage-managed by deceiving spirits and teachings from demons”. This is why there can be no “global revival” or “golden age” as so many heretics like to claim. Human evil has to come to its head before Christ can return in judgement, as Paul specifically states (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). That is the reality, and no amount of

Dominionist Theology, Theonomy or so-called “Christian Reconstructionism” can alter that prophetic reality.

This is not a ‘negative’ thing. On the contrary! The worse that things become in the world and end-of-age signs appear (exactly as prophesied) the nearer the return of Christ and the new creation approach (cf. Luke 21:28). That is a positive thing! One needs the greatest gift of discernment these days if one is going to not only “endure to the end” but also be an effective warrior for Christ in the midst of a doomed creation and what will come upon this earth. **That is not capitulation to evil but an escalation of one’s warriorship and a jubilation in doing it.** There is nothing gloomy about what we are up to! Our job is to “*expose the works of darkness*” and spread the fullness of Truth which finds its pinnacle in the Gospel of Christ. So, let’s do it! With joy!

When the word “mystery” is used by the New Testament writers it refers to that which is hidden to the unspiritual eye but is discernible to the one who has been enlightened by the Lord (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14). Paul himself defines a mystery as that “*which has been kept secret...but now has been made manifest...and...has been made known*” (Romans 16:25). Paul had already spoken to the Thessalonians about these things when he was with them (2 Thessalonians 2:5). The “mystery of lawlessness” was already operational in his day.

Paul identifies hardened followers of the Antichrist as those who “*believe the lie* [Greek: *to pseudos*]” (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Some Bible versions render an inadequate translation of the Greek here by using the term “a lie”. This is not merely **a** lie — it is **the** lie. What is *the lie* to which he refers? Surely, it is the lie told to our first parents in Eden by Satan (Genesis 3:4-5) who is the very father of the lie (John 8:44) — the same lie which is literally embodied in the Antichrist: That man can be God and can achieve immortality in his own power.

The Outward and the Veiled Aspects of the Mystery of Lawlessness

The “mystery of lawlessness”, as an influence working secretly in the world in preparation for the revealing of the man who will be the epitome of lawlessness is, therefore, any phenomenon in this world — secret or revealed — which contributes towards the antichristian conditions over which the Antichrist will ultimately preside. In other words, **the “mystery of lawlessness” is any influence or movement which propagates the Lie concerning the deification of man along with the possibility of eternal life outside of Christ.**

This malevolent “mystery” is being wrought on two different but complementary levels, *exoteric* and *esoteric* — outwardly and more veiled.

The *exoteric* (outward) aspects of the “mystery of lawlessness” function through the political manipulation and power-mongering which we have seen in the building of many vast empires, headed by a self-deifying despot (types or forerunners of the Antichrist), which have come and gone throughout the age. Paul would have been well aware of this aspect as embodied in the corrupt Roman empire of his day, enabling him to say that the “mystery of lawlessness” was already at work in his own time.

The *esoteric* (veiled) aspects of the mystery of lawlessness operate through occult deception and bewitchment. In the wake of Christ’s victory on the Cross and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world, the power of Satan had been dealt a mortal blow (Colossians 2:15; cf. Revelation 12:9; 13:3a). No longer could he work so openly throughout the nations as he had in times before Christ; but he had to operate in clandestine fashion through vast persecution by the governmental powers (Revelation 12:13) and “a flood” of false teaching (Revelation 12:15).

Most commentators are agreed that this “flood” out of the mouth of the serpent refers to the spewing forth by Satan of a flood of heresies to blight “the woman” — God’s people, the early church — as an act of malignity in the wake of the cross. This was the essence of Satan’s clandestine operations. Similarly, it is this binding of Satan’s power by the Lord throughout the Gospel Age (Revelation 20:1-3) which makes it necessary for Satan to delegate that power to his minions working occultly throughout the age and, ultimately, the Antichrist: “*The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority*” (Revelation 13:2).

In the apostolic era, many such influences were at work in the background, notably some syncretic belief systems of the Gnostic variety, to which Paul alludes elsewhere in his writings (Colossians 2:18-23). This is surely a good part of what Paul means by the “mystery of lawlessness” already being at work. The apostle John also refers to such belief systems, operational in the early apostolic era, as being of the “spirit of antichrist” (1 John 2:18-23). These were the precursors of later Western sectarian developments such as the

Templars, Cathars, Freemasons, Rosicrucians, Theosophists, and the New Consciousness, Neo-Gnostic or New Age teachings of today.³⁰

The Antichrist will be the consummation of both *exoteric* and *esoteric* aspects of the same demonic power which seduced our first parents in the Garden of Eden, and which we see powerfully symbolised in the two beasts of Revelation 13 (the deification of secular authority and the seductive power of false religion and its supporting facets). On this basis, neither the papacy nor any pope who has so far lived can possibly be the Antichrist; for if this was the case, *every single pope* that has so far been in office (more than 300 to date) would have openly applauded any influence which propagated the lie of his master in Eden.

Although it is true that the papacy has assumed, at various times in history, all the self-deifying conceits of worldly political power, and even advocated outright mysticism, not all the popes have behaved in this manner, while Gnostic antichristian sects such as Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism have at least *outwardly* always been *officially* censured by the Vatican (I know, I know... the Vatican has had its own secret masonic lodge known as P2, but I am speaking about what Roman Catholicism publicly maintains). The true Antichrist, when he has been revealed, will view such sects benignly — provided they pay him homage — as he is the outcome and fruition of all that those sects have stood for throughout this evil age.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that

6. HE HAS THE GENERIC QUALITIES OF “ANTICHRIST”

In his first letter, the apostle John elaborates on two “generic” characteristics which are in the “spirit of antichrist” which, by sheer dint of logic, must also be applicable to the actual Antichrist when he is revealed. The first of these “generic” antichrist characteristics is

i. A Denial of the Biblical Teaching About the Incarnation of the Son of God

“By this you will know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that **confesses** that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that **does not confess** that Jesus has

³⁰ Again, the development of all this is copiously exposed in my 1044-page book, “*The Serpent and the Cross*”, which you can obtain from me by messaging me at diakrisis-project@outlook.com.

come in the flesh is not from God. This is **the spirit of the antichrist**, which you have heard is coming and which is already in the world at this time” (1 John 4:2-3).

In this passage, John tells us that a fundamental element of “antichrist” is the denial of the teaching about the incarnation of the Son of God. Accordingly, if the Antichrist himself is to be a culmination of all the lesser “antichrist” forerunners, the denial of this teaching must also be a leading characteristic of the final Antichrist.

However, it has to be said that the papacy has outwardly never made such a denial. Moreover, insofar as the teaching about the incarnation is concerned, one of the greatest statements ever penned was the “*Tome*” of Pope Leo I (Leo “the Great”, d.461), which affirmed by way of a letter to Flavian (June 13, 449) a positive exposition of the two natures, divine and human, united in Christ. It was this great work — along with the Nicene Creed and two Cyrilline letters — which was drafted in its entirety into the “*Definition of Chalcedon*” in 451, which stated:

“Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance [*homoousios*] with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer [*theotokos*]; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence [*hupostasis*], not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.”

Is it really possible that what was arguably the most foundational and crucial credal document in the entire history of the Christian church could have been penned by the God-defying, Christ-denying Antichrist? Of course not. I am not making a general defence of the religion of Roman Catholicism, which I believe to be more or less a cult to take people away with the fairies. I am simply showing that the papacy cannot be the Antichrist for the above reason and many others.

Those who uphold a papal Antichrist position will say that although Roman Catholics purport to uphold the teaching of the incarnation, they deny it with their actions, e.g. through the ritual of the Mass. However, the passage in 1 John 4:3 specifically refers to that which is “confessed” or “declared outwardly” in words [Greek: *homologeō*]. The same Greek word is used in Hebrews 10:23a: “*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering*”. It refers to that which one outwardly and publicly confesses. The “*spirit of antichrist*” — and, by logical extension, the actions of the Antichrist himself — involves an **active, outward, verbal denial** of the reality of Christ’s incarnation. This no pope has ever done. Thus, the office of the papacy, while being corrupt in many ways, could not possibly be the Antichrist.

Another of the generic “antichrist” characteristics is

ii. A Denial of the Trinitarian Godhead

“Who is the liar, if it is not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? **This is the antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son.** Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father, but whoever confesses the Son has the Father as well.” (1 John 2:22-23)

Another generic characteristic of “antichrist” is a denial of the teaching concerning the Trinity, and especially the relationship within that Trinity between the Father and the Son. To deny the Father and the Son is to deny also the Holy Spirit as the three stand as one together (Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2). See also the important Trinitarian statement involving the Antichrist which is presented in 1 John 4:2-3.

Again, the Vatican has never publicly denied this teaching. Furthermore, if to deny the Father and the Son makes a person a partaker in the spirit of “antichrist” (1 John 2:22), how can a papal Antichrist advocate explain away the official Creed confessed in the Roman Catholic Church: “*I believe in God the Father... and in the Lord*

Jesus Christ... and in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, which proceeds from the Father and the Son”? The Antichrist could never tolerate these words to fall from his lips or, indeed, from anyone else’s. Thus, the Antichrist is still a figure to come in this world and has not yet been.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that

7. HE SETS HIMSELF UP AS “GOD”

The apostle describes the “man of lawlessness”, the Antichrist, as *“exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God”* (2 Thessalonians 2:4). This self-deification involves two distinct factors:

i. Opposition and Exaltation Above All That Is Called “God”

Here the Antichrist takes the Satanic vision to its ultimate realisation: Opposition to, and exaltation over, **everything** that is given divine status by man and **every** object of divine homage. It is absolute. As we have seen, such *hubris* was typified in the Kings of Babylon (Isaiah 14:13-14) and Tyre (Ezekiel 28:2a, 6) and augured in the exalted claims of many other human rulers (e.g., Herod, Acts 12:21-22). The Antichrist will pay no homage to anything or anyone other than himself.

There is no other human being to whom this could apply. Certainly, the papacy falls very far short of fulfilling this aspect of the Antichrist prophecy. For the papal adoration of false gods and goddesses is well-known. Not only that, but extreme veneration being shown towards many relics of “the saints” has been a notable characteristic of the popes down the ages. Furthermore, the pope offers outward adoration of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; he proclaims himself publicly as *“servant of servants to the Most High”*. As John Eadie observes about the pope in his great *“Excursus on the Man of Sin”* in his cogent commentary on the Thessalonian Epistles:

“In all he does — even in the burning of heretics, in organising crusades against unbelievers, in crooked and unscrupulous diplomacy, in tampering with oaths and civil allegiance, in acts of ferocious cruelty and wildest ambition, or in doing ungodly and wicked acts at which most men shudder — he ever acknowledges divine

authority and avows submission to the divine guidance".³¹

This is a real "Achilles' Heel" in the concept of a papal Antichrist. For, far from exalting himself above all objects of worship, as the Scripture expressly states concerning the Antichrist, the pope is often engaged in creating objects of worship and then openly adoring them himself! Moreover, the present pope can often be seen paying homage to the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders and even to the gods and shrines of a wide variety of world religions.

Some will say that although the pope *outwardly* pays homage to these things, he *inwardly* exalts himself above them. That may be so; but it still does not conform to the image of the Antichrist in the Scriptures. For the "man of lawlessness" depicted in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 will not even **pretend** to adore the many dumb objects that man has exalted to the status of "god". He will acknowledge nothing in the world as having divine status or being worthy of worship but himself. This no pope has ever done. Nor any other personage.

How strange it is, therefore, that the Banner of Truth article should make the assertion that "*the extraordinary claims and conduct of the various Popes have fulfilled to the letter this characteristic of Antichrist which the apostle Paul has given to us*".³² Sweeping statements such as these will only serve to bring the true faith into disrepute. How can we hope to present a credible image to the Church and to the world as defenders of truth when we are so willing to twist it in support of a pet personal belief system?

The second self-deification factor of the Antichrist shown in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 is that:

ii. He Sits as "God" in the Sanctuary of God

When the *actual* Antichrist is finally revealed, it is said that he, too, will "*seat himself in the temple/sanctuary of God, proclaiming himself to be God*" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). However, that obviously cannot be the Jewish temple of God because that has been definitively destroyed in AD 70 as God's way of showing that Old Covenant Israel was finished, as we will see further below. Even if some Jews today (with some 'Christian Zionists' — a contradiction in terms! — thrown in for

³¹ John Eadie, op.cit., p.353.

³² *Banner of Truth Magazine*, op. cit., p.3.

good measure) were to set up some kind of so-called “Third Temple” in Jerusalem, it would not be a genuine God-ordained temple but an utterly humanistic counterfeit because the Old Covenant is finished and has given way to the New Covenant in Christ (a much better one, as is stated in Hebrews 7:22; 8:6!). Let me just develop this a bit as it is important for us to realise that there can be no future temple of God which has been made with human hands — no matter how many temples are built by deluded humans in Jerusalem or elsewhere.

Just as the Old Covenant nation of Israel morphed into the Church, which became the new Israel (Galatians 6:16; Philippians 3:3) meaning that the old Israel became redundant, so the Old Covenant temple of Israel — where God dwelt — also morphed into the Church, which became the new temple of God through the indwelling Spirit (2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:21-22; cf. John 14:23) meaning that the physical temple of God also became redundant.

Therefore, neither Israel nor its Temple can exist anymore as being from God. Bear in mind that the Paul who said that the Antichrist will seat himself in the “temple of God” is the same Paul who said that the temple of God in the New Covenant is the people of God the body of Christ. Thus, the Antichrist sitting in the temple of God cannot possibly refer to any physical temple for no temple made with hands can possibly be a temple “of God”, where God dwells, but only a counterfeit “temple” designed by sinful and disobedient humans.

The original physical temple of God in Jerusalem is finished by Divine decree, as embodied in the complete and definitive obliteration of the physical temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. Therefore, for the Antichrist to be “seated in the temple/sanctuary of God” can only refer to him assuming the place of God and His prerogatives and privileges — attempting to take the place of God in counterfeit of Him — while considering himself to have power over the people of God in whom God now resides as His true temple. For that is the only “temple of God” which is in existence or can be.

By the way, this reference is always taken by papal Antichrist advocates to mean that the Antichrist will have his office in the Christian Church.³³ But there are a number of facts which strongly contradict this view.

³³ e.g., *Banner of Truth Magazine*, op.cit., p.2.

Firstly, the Roman Catholic Church, as an institution, is not “the Church”, as even the papal Antichrist advocate would affirm! One cannot have it both ways. We are well aware that Paul refers figuratively to the individual Christian as being “*the temple of God*” (1 Corinthians 3:16; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19). However, these particular Scriptures do not refer to the Church as an institution but to the individual believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Even in saying that the entire Body of Christ is the temple of God, this still would not include the corrupt Vatican-dominated institution of the Roman Catholic Church which is plainly not part of the Body of Christ (although individuals within it can be, though that is a discussion for another time).

In fact, this phrase about the Antichrist sitting in the temple of God simply refers to the attempt, on the part of the Antichrist, to dethrone God. By way of illustration, the king of Tyre, as a type of the Antichrist, is described by Ezekiel as claiming divine status and sitting “*in the seat of gods*” (the literal Hebrew in Ezekiel 28:2). But this had nothing to do with his being part of the Old Testament “church” or people of God. Paul was drawing on this prophetic Old Testament imagery (as he does elsewhere in this 2 Thessalonians passage) in order to make his point clear to the readers of his time, for whom this Scripture would have been familiar.³⁴ Just as Jesus’ description of the Pharisees as sitting “*in Moses’ seat*” was a reference to their professed power and authority (Matthew 23:2), so the reference to the “man of lawlessness” as sitting in the temple of God refers to his usurpation of God’s power and authority — putting himself in the place of God, and forcing himself on the world as a divine ruler with no competitor.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that

8. HE WILL CONTROL GLOBAL WORSHIP OF HIMSELF THROUGH ECONOMIC BOYCOTT

“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one

³⁴ See R.L. Harris *et al*, “*The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*”, Moody Press, 1980, Vol.11, pp.411-412, for a revealing analysis of the Hebrew words *yashab*, “to sit”, and *shebet*, “seat”, in relation to God’s dwelling place or tabernacle.

who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:16).

It is clear here that there will be some way of distinguishing the followers of the Antichrist from the disciples of the true Christ, which will not be difficult in view of their profession of faith. And this form of distinguishing will enable them to engage in the business of selling and/or purchasing the necessities of life. The imagery in this verse is drawing on that used in the command by the Lord in the Old Testament for believers to be so immersed in God’s ways that they were to *“bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes”* (Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18). This has been taken literally by many Jewish people, who wear the commandments of God in a little box containing a scroll on their foreheads and arm. However, it is clear that Deuteronomy 6:8 is not to be taken in any legalistically literal sense but in the way one lives one’s life. Such devotion was an identifying mark of those who were genuinely the Lord’s people in Israel.

We see in Revelation 13:16 that the Antichrist will also have a way of identifying those who are his. For this “mark” is all about allegiance. Just as a few verses later we see that God’s people are marked by a symbolic seal on their foreheads (Revelation 14:1), so Satan’s people through the Antichrist are marked by a symbolic sign that they are in allegiance to him.

In other words, there will be a spiritual way of distinguishing between those who follow the Antichrist and those who follow the true Christ. The former will be able to live a normal life and engage in normal activities, whereas the latter will not — just as it was in John’s time when Christians were stigmatized as pariahs, unable to lead a normal life, and tortured and executed in hideous ways. So it will be in the time of the final manifestation of Antichrist, the ultimate man of lawlessness.

For true believers in Christ will refuse to kowtow to the authorities and submit to their demands for worship of anything other than the one true God and His Son, thus bringing great hardship on themselves because of these restrictions. This is how it was in John’s day, when he wrote the Book of Revelation near the end of the first century AD, and this sort of boycott on the Christians was applicable then as it will be when the Antichrist is revealed at the end of the age. In fact, this will prove to be a key distinguishing point between true and false

Christians, just as Deuteronomy 6:8 came to be in Old Testament times.³⁵

Notice also that this economic control and requirement of obeisance and allegiance is global and covers the whole of humanity: “*He causes all...*”. Such universal global control has never yet been wielded by any earthly or religious leader. Thus, we must still be awaiting the revealing of the Antichrist.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that

9. HE COMES IN COUNTERFEIT OF THE TRUE CHRIST

It is important to realise that the coming of the Antichrist, when he is finally revealed, will be a grotesque counterfeit of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, he will be the ultimate “false christ” so completely that the mass of people will be fooled by it, believing him to be the Messiah who has come to cure all the world’s problems. Not only will the world be fooled by him, but the deception will be so strong surrounding this event that so also will a mass of professing Christians be fooled!

Remember that the Greek word for Antichrist, ἀντίχριστος, *antichristos*, has the prefix “anti-” which in Greek means both “against” and “in the place of”. This has serious implications for the identity of the Antichrist. **For it shows that his coming will be a counterfeit of the second coming of Christ and this will fool many.**

There are a number of ways in which the Antichrist will counterfeit the true Christ. The first way in which the Antichrist will counterfeit the true Christ is that:

i. He Will Claim Unique “Messiahship”

He will present himself as the returned “messiah”, ready to rule the world. This counterfeit is typified by the description of the beast “*out of the earth*” as having “*two horns like a lamb*” but in reality, speaking “*like a dragon*” (Revelation 13:11). This is the language of counterfeit — a dragon in lamb’s clothing. The Antichrist will set up a global kingdom on this earth in its present form in crass counterfeit of the eternal spiritual kingdom of Christ which has its fulfillment in the new

³⁵ For much expanded detail about the ‘mark of the beast’, please go to my website at <https://diakrisis-project.com> and search on the phrase “mark of the beast” to find the few articles I have written on this subject.

heavens and new earth, a new creation (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1).³⁶

Notice that Paul speaks of **two** “parousias” — “comings” — in the same breath in his second letter to the Thessalonians. Theologically, the word παρουσία, *parousia*, has always been associated with the second coming of Christ; yet in the same chapter describing the two events, that exact same Greek word is used for both the second coming of Christ and the revealing of the Antichrist (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 9). This surely more than hints that unless great discernment is exercised, the *parousia* of the Antichrist will be mistaken by many for the *parousia* of the Christ. **In fact, knowing the difference between the coming of the Antichrist and the coming of the true Christ — distinguishing between one parousia and the other — will be a hallmark of true faith.**

Immediately after speaking of the brightness of Christ’s “coming” [Greek: *parousia*] (2 Thessalonians 2:8), Paul reminds us that “*the coming [Greek: *parousia*] of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan*” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). So, there are two comings, Christ’s and Satan’s, both involving the Greek word *parousia*. One is empowered by true Divinity. The other is according to the working of Satan. The Antichrist comes in counterfeit of the true Christ and many (including many who profess to be “Christians”, but who are not properly steeped in a solid understanding of Scripture) will be fooled by this.

³⁶ Plainly it is impossible to counterfeit the **heavenly** kingdom of Christ in actuality. But an **earthly** kingdom is the best that Satan can do in his desperation to deliver a counterfeit, which seems to be good enough for many who long to see a “golden age” on earth. Since the devil’s defeat by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and His successful ascension to heaven, the Old Serpent no longer has any access to heaven, and his sphere of activity has therefore been limited to the earth and its immediate environs (see Revelation 12:8-9) — exactly as Jesus had foreseen and foretold (Luke 10:18; John 12:31). The earth is the full extent of Satan’s haunt, and he makes the most of it, offering here perfection, peace and a “Golden Age” to anyone who will follow him. But just as he couldn’t fulfil his promise to our first parents of “no death” if they surrendered to his lies, so he cannot even deliver a true “heaven on earth”, as history will finally prove. The promise of a future Golden Age offered by Satan and his associates will always be a huge confidence trick which can only ever be, at best, the cosmic equivalent of a house party on a sinking ship.

Another way in which the Antichrist will counterfeit the true Christ is that:

ii. He Will Claim to Be “God”

The Lord Jesus Christ plainly claimed divinity for Himself (e.g. John 5:17-18; 8:58; 10:30 Luke 20:41-44). [You can read a detailed treatise proving the Divinity of Christ here: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2024/06/24/the-divinity-of-christ-proven-a-sermonic-exposition/>]. As I have already shown, true to his strategy of counterfeit, the Antichrist will also present himself as “God incarnate”, and he will expect to be worshipped as such (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:4) in counterfeit of the one, true God.

Another way in which the Antichrist will counterfeit the true Christ is that:

iii. He Will Be Subordinate, with Derivative Power

Jesus, as the incarnate Son of God was subordinated to the Father, in terms of the Trinitarian economy and His mediatorial work (John 12:49-50; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). The Antichrist will mimic this through subordination to **his** ‘father’, Satan, whose power he will wield. Thus, Paul can say: *“The coming of the lawless one **is according to the working of Satan**”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9). It will be *“the dragon”* (symbol for Satan) who will give the Antichrist *“his power, throne and great authority”* (Revelation 13:2). He will be subordinate only to Satan, operating in his hideous power; just as the Lord Jesus was subordinate only to God the Father, operating in His divine power, at His command. This is counterfeit.

Another way in which the Antichrist will counterfeit the true Christ is that:

iv. He Will Perform Signs and Wonders

Like the true Christ, the Antichrist will perform “miracles”, but they will really be *“lying wonders”*: *“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Thus, the coming of the Antichrist will be a satanic supernatural event of great sophistication, and **he will have advanced supernatural capabilities**, being directly energised by Satan, as that Bible text explicitly states. Although the world will be deceived into believing that the age of divine miracles has returned, in reality the coming of

the Antichrist will be attended by a gargantuan display of deceptive sorcery.

One can assume that his presence will be truly satanic, with an accompanying aura of extreme evil, as if Satan himself was here on earth: *"The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority"* (Revelation 13:2). For the Antichrist as a human being to have all Satan's power, throne and authority is difficult for us to contemplate. Nevertheless, it will not be mere trickery but will be fuelled by the darkest satanic power imaginable. **They are called "pseudo-wonders" not because they have no potency whatsoever but because they are mere counterfeits of what God and His Son can do.** As J.P. Lange says on 2 Thessalonians 2:9:

"The miracles of the "man of sin" are performed by dark, gloomy powers. They are indeed at bottom nothing really creative but are assumptions, imitations, manifestations of a sham strength which at last is a wretched impotence, monstrosities without any saving object, but not mere juggleries. The Bible throughout treats sorcery in a more serious way than as if it were all empty legerdemain".³⁷

This aspect of counterfeit has serious implications for the notion of a papal Antichrist. It is certainly true that pseudo-miracles and "visions" have often been a hallmark of Roman Catholicism in history. But the awful malignity of the satanically-inspired Antichrist will be way beyond anything ever committed by the Vatican and certain of its popes or protégés.

Furthermore, the beast out of the earth, the spiritual and philosophical prop of the governmental aspect of the Antichrist (Revelation 13:11), also known as *"the false prophet"* (Revelation 19:20), *"performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men"* (Revelation 13:13). Even if one wants to say that this is not to be taken absolutely literally but is simply to encapsulate the idea of counterfeit, nevertheless, to my knowledge, such grandiose acts of cosmic sorcery have never yet been performed by any holders of the papal office or their accomplices, or indeed by any other possible candidate so far put forward as being the true Antichrist.

³⁷ J.P. Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, Zondervan, 1960, p.131.

Another way in which the Antichrist will counterfeit the true Christ is that:

v. He Comes as Part of a Pseudo-“Trinity”

The Antichrist will also be part of an attempt to counterfeit the Trinity as an evil triumvirate. For just as the Father sent the Son to earth (John 5:30; 12:45; 16:5), so the symbolic dragon (identified as Satan) is said to empower the first beast and set him up on earth as his representative (Revelation 13:2 & 4). Coupled with that, the Holy Spirit has been sent to testify about Christ and glorify Him (John 15:26; 16:14), while the second beast (aka “the false prophet”) is said to testify about the first beast and glorify him to the world through deception and worship (Revelation 13:12-14). So, on the one hand there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Correspondingly and counterfeiting, there is the dragon, the first beast, and the false prophet (the second beast).

The master key to understanding the present era and its many aspects of counterfeit lies in realising that the powerbase of Antichrist is forged on the anvil of Christ. This is one of its leading characteristics.

The preparation for the coming of the Antichrist is clothed in quasi-Christian platitudes, as part of a gross global counterfeit. Then, when the Antichrist is finally revealed, he will be presented as the true “Christ” who has now come to set up his kingdom on earth. **Let it be understood that deceptive hyper-pseudo-Christianity lies at the heart of Satan’s unfolding plan for the world.** And the world is absolutely full of it, and has been from not long after the end of the early church era.

So a key characteristic of the Antichrist — and an often widely ignored one — is that he comes in counterfeit of the true Christ, as a triumphal “messiah”. Because of this, not only will many professing Christians be deceived into believing that the Antichrist is the true Christ returned, but the adherents of many of the world’s religions will see him as their long-awaited saviour, as I will develop in a later section below.

It is worth noting that, although the pope of Rome has been called the “Vicar of Christ”, he has never actually impersonated Christ himself, claiming to be the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah. This is yet another reason that the office of the papacy cannot possibly be the Antichrist.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that:

10. HE WILL BE A SATANIST AND WILL HEAD-UP A GLOBAL RELIGION OF SATANISM

The Scriptures show that the Antichrist will operate in all the power and authority of Satan himself: *"The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority"* (Revelation 13:2). The "dragon", in the Book of Revelation, is clearly identified as *"that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world"* (Revelation 12:9). The Antichrist will actually be "energized" by Satan: *"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working [Greek: ἐνέργεια, *energeia*] of Satan"* (2 Thessalonians 2:9). This makes the Antichrist the ultimate Satanist.

Not only will the Antichrist be a Satanist, but all his followers — without exception — will have Satanism as their religion: *"So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast"* (Revelation 13:4). The dragon is Satan or the Devil. The Antichrist will create a world of Satanists — devil-worshippers who will also worship the Antichrist as the devil incarnate. As John puts it: *"They worshiped the beast"* (Revelation 13:4). But before you get carried away to imagine a whole world full of people bowing down to Baphomet or some other outwardly evil equivalent, let me explain this further.

They will worship the dragon — Satan. They will worship the beast — the Antichrist — who will be energized by the dragon. **This will be the most intense worship of Satan that has ever visibly manifested itself in the whole of human history, although it will be steeped in rampant deception (and, of course, presumably he will not be referred to with the name of "Satan").** The mass of people will avidly support the Antichrist's pogrom against followers of the true Christ as they will be perceived to be 'holding back the world from its peaceful resolution'. This is what the world is building towards, even as we read these words.

This is not to say that people will realise it is the Satan that we know today who is behind all this. It will all be presented as wholesome and spiritual, real religion, the culmination of all the religions in an interfaith celebration. The devil is always at his most potently seductive when he comes in the clothing of the messiah — with *"horns like a lamb"* who is secretly and really *"a dragon"* (Revelation 13:11). **It will be the ultimate deception and delusion, inveigling the world into imagining it is engaged in virtue and honour when it will really be involved in the most heinous act of idolatry in the entire history of humanity.** And all that disciples of Christ will be

able to do is stand and watch the show with astonishment, knowing that prophecy has finally been fulfilled. What a debacle it will be!

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that:

11. HE WILL BE THE FULFILMENT OF ALL THE PROPHECIES OF WORLD RELIGIONS

Now if it is the case that the Antichrist will present himself to be the **true** Christ — in counterfeit of Christ — it naturally follows that in order to do so he will have to teach that Jesus Christ was an impostor and not the real Son of God; and the world will be more than ready for that.

Imagine the situation: We already live in a world which, in the main, hates the very idea of Christ — the true Christ — and which is already geared-up to believe lies without requiring any authentication, courtesy of politicians, social media, AI, and the mainstream media. As time progresses, the teaching concerning the Son of God is going to come under even greater attack.³⁸ Soon, even the “Jesus Seminar” will seem like Aunt Mabel’s tea party. When the Antichrist is revealed — the ultimate impostor, presenting himself as the returned Christ — who do you think is going to be fooled? Not merely the easily programmable inhabitants of the Christian scene but also the adherents of the majority of the world religions.

The Antichrist will be extolled as the ‘World Teacher’ which many religions claim is coming to save the world and bring in utopia on this present earth. In His sermon on the Mount of Olives concerning the great tribulation, Jesus says, “At that time, if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There He is!’ do not believe it” (Matthew 24:23). Of course not. For at the time when the great tribulation begins, the only globally-visible ‘christ’ of note on the scene will be a false one: Namely, the Antichrist!

The coming of the Antichrist will be steeped in deception of the highest order — more so than at any other time in history. It will be a testing time for the Christian, who will look around him or her in absolute wonder at the level of deception among the people of the world. It will be astonishing — like being surrounded on all sides by zombies (which it already is to a certain extent)!

³⁸ See Tal Brooke, *The Conspiracy to Silence the Son of God*, Harvest House, 306pp.

An interesting and significant fact is that the concept of a coming 'World Teacher' who sets up a 'Golden Age' on earth can be found in many of the world's religious systems as well as in the literature of the occult. At present, numerous religious groups are living in just such expectations.

For example, the Shi'ite Muslims believe that *"God has designated a line of the family of 'Ali to act as sources of spiritual guidance to the community"*.³⁹ The various members of this family line are known as "Imams". However, in the ninth century the twelfth of the line disappeared and this led to a hiatus in the manifestation of the Imams. However, *"the Shi'is now await the return (raj'a) of the expected Imam, who will re-establish a reign of justice and peace on earth"*.⁴⁰ The significance to world events of this expectation of the *Mahdi*, as he is called, should not be missed. For the Shi'ites believe that

"towards the end of the world, before the Last Day (Qiyama), a Mahdi, often identified with the returned Jesus, will establish a reign of justice on the earth. In Shi'ism the Mahdi is a vital figure, identified with the Hidden Imam who will reappear and rule by divine prescription".⁴¹

The Ayatollah Khomeini was a Shi'ite Muslim and his Iranian Revolution of 1978-9 was a Shi'ite-inspired event. It is worth noting that after this Revolution, the Ayatollah Khomeini became recognised as "Vilayat Faqih" or supreme temporal representative in Iran of the "Hidden Imam" or Mahdi who is still to come.⁴² The power of the Shi'ites worldwide is enormous. If a World Teacher was to appear who could fulfil their expectations, his powerbase would be immense.

It is not only the many millions of Shi'ite Muslims who are expecting a 'World Teacher' to establish a reign of peace and justice on the earth. Classical Buddhism also speaks of the expectancy of a future World Teacher to follow in the line of its founder Shakyamuni Gautama Buddha, who was alive in the sixth century B.C. Establishing the link even more profoundly, the name of their expected teacher is

³⁹ John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Penguin Dictionary of Religion*, Penguin, 1984, p.161.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp.162-164.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.198.

⁴² Ibid., p.58.

Bodhisattva Maitreya, which corresponds precisely with the name of the “Ascended Master” expected to come as the ‘World Teacher’ in the understanding of the New Spirituality of followers of Alice Bailey and her Theosophist ilk, such as the Neo-Gnostics of today.

There is yet another interesting connection here: In neo-gnostic ideology, the etheric retreat where their so-called “Ascended Masters” are reputed to live is referred to as *Shambhala*. In the religion of Tibetan Buddhism, the same name of *Shambhala* refers to:

“a mystic kingdom ruled by the lineage holders of the Kalachakra Tantra (Wheel of Time Tantra). It is said that King Suchandra of Shambhala received this Tantra from Buddha in the latter’s eightieth year and entrusted it to his successors, the last of whom, Rigden Pema Karpo, is expected to return and establish Shambhala as a universal kingdom”.⁴³

Once again, we discover in yet another religion this idea of a coming ‘World Teacher’ who sets up a ‘Golden Age’ on earth. Let us remember here that the Tibetan Buddhist Dalai Lama, who is so influential among the Neo-Gnostics of today, occupies a similar role to that of the Ayatollah Khomeini in terms of being the “supreme temporal representative” of the Buddha, until the coming of “the Maitreya” to ‘*establish Shambhala as a universal kingdom*’.

Another important factor to recognise, in relation to the global expectation of a ‘World Teacher’ who will usher in a “Golden Age” on earth, is that the Jewish people of the world are still awaiting their Messiah to bring a universal reign of peace and justice on earth. This fact takes on sinister proportions when one considers the enigmatic statement of the Lord Jesus to the Jews that, although they would not accept Him as the Messiah, “*if another comes in his own name, him you will receive*” (John 5:43).

Here we begin to gain an insight into the true identity of this ‘World Teacher’ expected by so many of the world’s religions. As Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) rightly states, concerning the words of the Lord Jesus to the Jews in John 5:43: “*He intimated that they would*

⁴³ Ibid., p.294.

receive Antichrist, who will seek the glory of his own name".⁴⁴ Similarly, Hilary of Poitiers (AD c.300-367) puts it like this:

"The Jews accordingly did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ who was the Son of God and God, but [they will] receive the impostor who calls himself God."⁴⁵

This "impostor" will deceive not only the spiritually-blinded Jews but also the whole world (apart from genuine Christians) into thinking that he is the fulfilment of the religious expectations enshrined in their prophecies.

Numerous other cults and groups hold beliefs which are significant to this concept of a coming World Teacher. Among them, the American Indian Hopi tribe has been lending support to the spiritual timetable of the Neo-Gnostics. Special dates have been given in ancient Hopi prophecy as being auspicious to a quantum leap in evolution which is associated with the coming of a 'World Teacher', which Hopis call the "Pahana". This has been a major influence on the New Age timetable for upcoming future events.

Even many of those who profess to be "Christians" (but aren't really) will fall for the deceptive sway of the Antichrist, believing him to be the returned Christ. The Antichrist will naturally be welcomed with open arms by ET and UFO lovers, who will see him as a culminating 'space brother', not to mention those in hock with the World Economic Forum who are fomenting a global religious alliance as well as a global government.⁴⁶

What are Christians to make of all this millennial expectancy and the advent of a World Teacher? Surely, just as the idea of a future "Golden Age" on earth (which was originally a Rosicrucian fabrication) has been fomented by Satan in his strategy of the Last Days, as a way of seducing people from the biblical fact of eternal life in the New

⁴⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *Tractates on the Gospel According to St. John*, Tractate XXIX, §8.

⁴⁵ Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, Book IV, Chapter.xxvi.

⁴⁶ For much expanded information on this whole subject area, please read section 7 of Chapter 6 in my commentary on the Book of Revelation, "*The Essential Apocalypse*", which you can either obtain as an actual book or as a PDF eBook here: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2025/03/12/second-edition-of-the-essential-apocalypse-is-now-available-as-an-e-book-in-pdf-format/>]

Heavens and New Earth, so he has also dredged up the idea of a coming World Teacher who will set up a reign of peace and justice *on earth*, all in crass counterfeit of the Second Coming of Christ who will establish a *heavenly* kingdom rather than an earthly one (John 18:36; Luke 17:20; 2 Peter 3:12-13; Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1-5).⁴⁷

Many New Spirituality people even refer to their coming World Teacher as “The Ascended Master Christ” — a description which will no doubt be used to persuade untaught and undiscerning people who profess to be “Christians” (or those who have fallen for the New Age channelled book, “A Course in Miracles”) that this character is the actual returned Jesus Christ. Surely, it is not impossible that such a one as this expected World Teacher, who will have great occult powers and political panache, will actually come in the not-too-distant future. Not only is the technology in place for such global events to be simultaneously presented but the people of the world today are crying out for a strong leader to take them into the coming years of uncertainty.⁴⁸ Naturally, such a leader would have to be highly ecumenical and interfaith if he is to satisfy the requirements of all the sects and religions who are awaiting his coming. But that is not beyond the bounds of possibility, given the present syncretistic outlook of the world. When such a world leader does appear, could he be anyone other than the Antichrist?

In view of the Scriptural data, it is likely that there will be a massive degree of deception about this event when it comes to pass (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11), especially when one considers that there are a great many professing Christians who are also expecting Jesus to set up a kingdom of peace and justice, a “Golden Age”, on the earth! With such foolish, unbiblical ideas, they are setting themselves up for deception.

We should remember the warning of the Lord that false christs can be so bewitching that they have the potential to deceive the elect (Matthew 24:24), if that was possible. Remember also how He added emphatically, “*See, I have told you beforehand*” (Matthew 24:25), just as He has in 2 Thessalonians 2, which John Lange rightly describes in

⁴⁷ See also footnote 36.

⁴⁸ Mendacious deceivers like Donald Trump and his ilk are a mere rehearsal to increase that kind of gullibility to be seduced by a phoney leader, the eventual realization of which will be the Antichrist, who will be infinitely more mendacious, sorcerous, and globally seductive than Donald Trump.

his commentary on 2 Thessalonians as *“a highly important part of the prophetic word”*.

On the basis of the above, the pope is hardly likely to fit the bill for the role of the Antichrist. Although the Vatican today is syncretist and ecumenical, there is far too much historical “churchy” baggage to enable any pope to create the universally-appealing powerbase necessary for the global hegemony of the Antichrist.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that:

12. HIS COMING HAS BEEN UNDER RESTRAINT THROUGHOUT THE GOSPEL AGE

“And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who now restrains it will continue until he is taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7).

There are many theories on the meaning of this, but the most popular (by the way, not necessarily a good sign!) is that it refers to the secular power of governmental law constraining the mystery from becoming too advanced before its time is ripe in God’s plan. I do not buy into this theory. The fact is that Satan’s bid to build his earthly kingdom has been under some restraint from the very beginning, which is why it came under special Divine judgement at the Flood and at Babel. But Paul reiterates this restraint in relation to the satanic “mystery of lawlessness” which has been building towards the revealing of the Antichrist throughout this age.

Those who believe in a pre-tribulational rapture think that the “restraint” in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 refers to the Holy Spirit working through the church, which will be *“taken out of the way”*. Obviously, I do not believe in a pre-tribulational rapture, but the fact that there is a Gospel to proclaim means that the tide of evil is being held back until the last of the number of the elect has been brought to faith.

Others believe that it means the withdrawal of the Lord’s work of grace in the world. There is an element of truth to that too. But it is not the full story.

Another view (to which I also adhere) is that the restraining force is angelic. There are references to such an influence in Scripture, notably in relation to evil being restrained until the moment when,

under divine authority, it must be carried out. For example, in Revelation 9:13-15, in reference to the Endtimes, it is said:

“Then the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God saying to the sixth angel with the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates’. So the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind”.

The good angel there releases four demons (fallen angels) from their judgemental restraint. There is another similar reference, which depicts Satan being restrained from deceiving the nations into a global persecution of the people of God:

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:1-2).⁴⁹

Many believe the restraining “angel” there to be Christ; others believe him to be Michael. Either way, the emphasis in those verses is on a global restraining power, holding back the evil of the powers of darkness until the moment ordained by God for its release.

Perhaps the “restraint” in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 involves both angels **and** the modicum of rule of law being exercised through the secular powers. There is every reason to believe that there is a mysterious influence on global government by angelic powers (see e.g. Daniel 10:13, 20-21). But this whole area of restraint is under wraps at the moment. One day all will be made abundantly clear.

Can you feel those bonds of restraint being removed little by little already? Do you sense that which Divinely restrains in this world being increasingly taken away? **As the restraint is taken out of the way, so the ‘mystery of lawlessness’ — both of which Paul speaks about in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 — buds and comes into ‘bloom’**

⁴⁹ For an exposition of these verses, please see the appropriate section in my commentary on the Book of Revelation, “*The Essential Apocalypse*”, which you can either obtain as an actual book or as a PDF eBook here: <https://diakrisis-project.com/2025/03/12/second-edition-of-the-essential-apocalypse-is-now-available-as-an-e-book-in-pdf-format/>.

like a dark spiritual shadow that has yeasted its way through history on an increasingly insidious basis the nearer the end of this age approaches. This 'mystery of lawlessness' is on a par with the 'spirit of the antichrist' to which John refers in 1 John 4:3. This is that dark spiritual shadow (courtesy of the fallen archangel, Satan) which has haunted human history, and which is building up to a climax of evil such as most could never imagine. But it will not be as if humans are 'civilized' one moment and the next moment they become total monsters. The restraints are surely removed as if on an exponential curve. The longer it happens the worse things become, and faster.

Surely, we are witnessing the undoing of restraint on the 'mystery of lawlessness' being acted out in so many ways before our eyes. This was especially accelerated by the Covid debacle of the early 2020s and that exponential curve is shooting upwards at an unprecedented rate. **I am 'bumping' into very many people on social media whose irrationality knows no bounds.** I try to make a habit of entering various frays with comments to stimulate thinking processes. I do not do it in an aggressive manner but with rational, common sense, and spiritual input. Many of the responses I receive beggar description. It is as if so many folks have lost the ability to think straight — as if some hideous force has 'got them by the short and curlies' (if you are familiar with that expression). I feel that we are fast approaching a time when these people will finally proclaim that $2 + 2 = 5$ (or anything but 4) and be proud of it! **It is not only as if a kind of mental disorder is creeping through the world but an actual spiritual possession, as if an invisible hand of evil and deception has crippled their insight and is turning them into barbarians.**

We have reached the stage at which the mass of people in general would rather believe a lie than receive the truth. This is the case now in so many different ways. You can see it across the world. I witness it in my exchanges on social media with so many folks. It is getting totally out of hand. We are dealing with people who actually *prefer* lies to the truth, which they disparage. Their bitter and deluded hatred of truth is plain to see. This is, in fact, all a **rehearsal** for the time when the mass of people (i.e. those who refuse discipleship of Christ) will "believe the lie" (tō pseudos) about which Paul speaks in that prophecy in 2 Thessalonians 2:11. **That lie will be that the Antichrist is God manifested in the flesh.** Their previous intrinsic disdain for the truth will result in God sending them a "working of

delusion”, finally handing them over to their own wilful disobedience, so that they will believe that lie — the ultimate in falsehood. **That is hardly surprising in view of the fact that the vast majority of humanity is so ready to believe falsehood even now.** The current president of the USA lies almost every day (fact-checkers abound), as do many other world leaders. Yet those lies are believed by millions upon millions of people. It is all part of the exponential-curve-style build-up of the ‘mystery of lawlessness’ and the ‘spirit of the antichrist’.

So do not be shocked by all this. The people willingly, wilfully, believe the lies they are told. They actually *want* to believe them. They even *revel* in believing them. The bigger the lie, the more they will believe it. Pearl Harbor. 9/11. Covid. And many more. The inner governments and intelligence agencies of nation-states are actually founded on deception, lies and their propagation. **That is what the word “intelligence” has been reduced to: Lies and the mind-control necessary to successfully propagate those lies.** Dumbing-down at its highest. However, what we are witnessing now is ‘peanuts’ compared to what we will see in the future years as the exponential curve swoops ever forwards and upwards towards the moment when the ultimate ‘man of lawlessness’ is revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:8) — the pinnacle of the humanistic refusal to accept that without the true God in Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5). Always remember though that the Antichrist is a mere man *“whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and annihilate by the majesty of His arrival”*.

Surely now we can see how the mass of people’s minds can be so easily mesmerized by patent falsehood. **They are being sucked into a vortex of deception which will be both an astonishment and an abomination. It is happening all around us exponentially even now.**

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that:

13. HE IS PURELY AN ESCHATOLOGICAL FIGURE

“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”
(2 Thessalonians 2:8)

The very appearing of the Lord Jesus will destroy the “man of lawlessness”. This is not to say that he will merely be annihilated.

Contrary to the beliefs of many professing Christians today, the Scripture is unequivocal about the eternal state of the Lord's arch-opponent, together with those who do not know God or who do not obey the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8; Revelation 20:10). The thrust of this verse and, indeed, of the entire passage in 2 Thessalonians, is that the "man of lawlessness" will reign briefly before being wiped off the face of the earth by the return of the Lord. During that brief reign, he will instigate a terrible persecution of believers on earth at that time (Revelation 13:7).

It is true that the papacy has, at certain times in history, also engaged in the vicious persecution of true Christians. But the persecution described as being that of the Antichrist in Scripture is global, complete, utterly shattering to the visible church, and also immediately precedes the coming of Christ (Daniel 7:21,25; 12:7). The Antichrist is thus an eschatological figure, appearing at the end of time, rather than a perennial one throughout the Gospel Age, as the papal Antichrist view upholds. This is therefore yet another "Achilles' Heel" in the notion of a papal Antichrist.

The eschatological nature of the Antichrist causes a lot of problems for the Postmillennialists and those who believe in the papal Antichrist theory. I have already shown earlier how the seventeenth century Puritans — who were mainly postmillennial in their eschatology, and upheld the papal Antichrist idea — forced a gap of indeterminate time between the phrase "*the breath of His mouth*" and that of "*the brightness of His coming*" in 2 Thessalonians 2:8.⁵⁰ This is very similar to the cavalier way in which the Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) and later the Scofield Reference Bible of 1909, had revived the concept of a time gap of indeterminate length in Genesis 1:2 in order to accommodate contemporary geological age theories with the Scriptural data. However, no such gap can be posited there; and neither can such a gap be accommodated in 2 Thessalonians 2:9. Always beware of spurious gaps imposed on Scripture!

In this verse, Paul — drawing on Old Testament terminology for his imagery — is using the classic biblical device of parallelism to describe the same act in two different ways. The first part of the verse is drawn from contrasting descriptions of the Lord's mighty "breath"

⁵⁰ See my remarks about the "Puritan Gap Theory" on pp. 24-26 above.

in creation (Psalm 33:6) and destruction (Isaiah 11:4), while the second part echoes the words of the Psalmist who says:

“O LORD, God of vengeance, **O God of vengeance, shine forth.** Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud. How long will the wicked, O LORD, how long will the wicked exult?” (Psalm 94:1-3).

Jesus will come as “the God of vengeance”, shining forth! To split the verse in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 in two, making each part relate to two different chronological events separated by many hundreds of years, is a gross distortion of the text in order to squeeze it into a preconceived eschatological system. Only one event is being described: The bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which the self-exalted Antichrist’s brief reign will be brought to complete ruin.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that:

14. HE IS DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION

Just as the phrase “*man of sin*” (2 Thessalonians 2:3c) is a description of the *nature* of the Antichrist, so the phrase “*son of perdition*” [Greek: *apoleia*, destruction] in 2 Thessalonians 2:3d describes his *final destiny*. His natural heritage, as the result of his unrepentant, blasphemous actions, is eternal death. Judas Iscariot, whom the Lord Jesus described with the same phrase, received a similar fate as the result of his actions (John 17:12; Acts 1:25).

Because of this connection with Judas, some have elaborated that the pope is therefore revealed as the Antichrist. The bizarre syllogistic reasoning which they use to prove this is as follows: **First premise:** Judas, as “*the son of perdition*”, was a false apostle; **Second premise:** because the Antichrist is the only other personage in Scripture described as “*the son of perdition*”, he will also be a false apostle. **Conclusion:** Therefore, because the pope falsely claims to be an apostle of Christ, he must be the Antichrist. This is so typical of the speculation and poor logic which so often blights the Church in this age of confusion. It would be just as foolish and illogical to claim that because Judas Iscariot was the treasurer for Jesus and the apostles, therefore the Antichrist will have to be an Israeli bank manager!

Because there is this firm knowledge of the dreadful eternal destiny of the “man of lawlessness”, it is important that we do not rush headlong — our minds blinded with prejudice — without objective

Scriptural attestation, into identifying him with any living human being of whom we may happen to disapprove.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that:

15. ALL HIS FOLLOWERS WILL BE DAMNED

“For this reason God will send them a powerful delusion so that they believe the lie, in order that judgment may come upon all who have disbelieved the truth and delighted in wickedness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

These words make it clear that there will come a point at which all the dedicated followers of the “man of lawlessness” will be **1)** unable to repent, and **2)** subject to the same eternal destiny as the “man of lawlessness”. God, in His judgement, sends them an “*energizing of error*” (the literal meaning of the Greek). In other words, they are hardened in their belief in the lie (the lie that the real God is not God and that the Antichrist is “God incarnate”) for the purposes of divine judgement. There are a number of other instances in Scripture where God, as part of His sovereign prerogative, does such an astounding thing (e.g. Exodus 8:32; 9:12; 10:20; Josh.11:20; 1 Samuel 2:25; cf. 1 Pet.2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). **This should give us all a serious pause for thought concerning our own comportment in this world and our allegiances.**

If all the dedicated followers of the “man of lawlessness” — marked out by their allegiance to the beast — are so hopelessly deluded and bound for the just condemnation of God, then a number of facts logically follow: **First**, no true Christian could ever be numbered among the followers of the “man of lawlessness”; **second**, none of his dedicated followers could ever repent and become Christians; **third**, all his followers will be utterly damned. **This is the face of the future, after the Antichrist is revealed and all allegiances across the world have been fully formed.**

These facts form *yet another* nail in the coffin of the advocates of an already revealed papal Antichrist. For, if such a system was correct, these conditions would have to apply to all Roman Catholics who have ever lived under any pope; and who would want to assert that about Augustine, Bernard, Anselm, Blaise Pascal, et al? Even Luther and Calvin were originally part of the Roman Catholic Church. If the papacy really was the Antichrist, they would never have been able to renounce their master. None of those who embrace the Antichrist, once he has been revealed, can escape his clutches. The Lord will see

to that (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12; cf. Revelation 14:9-11). Think about it. This is pure logic in action.

Objection: “If this is true, why does Revelation 18:4 portray the Lord as calling believers out of the Antichrist and the Roman Church?”

Answer: There is a false understanding at the heart of this objection. For “Babylon” in Scripture is not the Church of Rome; neither is it the Antichrist, although Rome has certainly made its contribution to it and the Antichrist will reign over it, under the inspiration of his master, Satan. In fact, “Mystery Babylon” has existed far longer than the papacy. It is the symbol of the satanic world-system of lawlessness in all its forms: political, religious and mercantile. This is most likely the context of Peter’s use of the word “Babylon” in 1 Peter 5:13, referring to the corrupt and persecutory nature of the Roman imperial power in relation to the church.⁵¹

The verse cited above in Revelation 18:4 portrays Christ calling believers to separation from the seductive power of the corrupt anti-Christian world-system, which includes false religion, which climaxes towards the time of the end. This verse comes as a fitting crown to six other previous texts which call God’s people out of the satanic world-system in this way (cf. Isaiah 48:20; 52:11; Jeremiah 50:8-9; 51:6-8; Zechariah 2:6-7; 2 Corinthians 6:17-18). It is a tendentious misapplication of Scripture to portray Revelation 18:4 as solely some kind of anti-Catholic rallying call for Protestants. It is not.

To sum up, the characteristics of the Antichrist, as plainly revealed in Scripture, are as follows:

- ❖ Although many lesser “antichrists” (mini-antichrists) have come and gone over the centuries, the actual Antichrist himself is a single individual who arrives on the world stage as an eschatological figure, shortly before the final day of judgement.
- ❖ His coming has been under restraint (probably angelic) throughout the Gospel Age.
- ❖ He sets himself up as “God incarnate”.
- ❖ He will be revered as the leader of the whole world.
- ❖ He comes in counterfeit of the true Christ.
- ❖ He will have the ability to perform signs and false miracles.

⁵¹ Historical evidence shows that Peter spent his final years in Rome.

- ❖ He is the climax of, and he also propagates, a total apostasy away from the laws of God and from anything which detracts from his self-asserted “deity”.
- ❖ He vehemently denies the teachings concerning the incarnation of Christ as God manifested in the flesh and the Trinitarian Godhead, yet he himself appears as part of a satanic counterfeit ‘triumvirate’.
- ❖ He seeks to usurp the unique Divine nature and Messiahship of Christ.
- ❖ He will fulfil all the endtime “messianic” prophecies of the world’s religions about an expected “World Teacher”.
- ❖ He will control worship of himself through selective economic boycott.
- ❖ He will be a Satanist and will set up a pernicious global religion of satanism (though not calling itself that but in the spirit of the satanist’s decree “*do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law*”) which masquerades as some kind of ‘wonderful culmination’ of all the world’s religions.
- ❖ He will savagely persecute and kill all true disciples of Christ.
- ❖ He is doomed to destruction by the return of Christ.
- ❖ His followers will also all be damned.

EPILOGUE

Therefore, having now examined some of the leading features of the Antichrist, the “man of lawlessness”, we must surely reach the conclusion that he cannot possibly be positively identified with the office of the papacy or, indeed, any pope who has so far lived.

Although I would not go so far as to claim that the identification of the papacy with the Antichrist is the realm of “*the less educated circles of Protestantism*”,⁵² I would certainly endorse William Hendriksen’s statement that “*to call the pope the Antichrist is contrary to all sound exegesis*”.⁵³ In fact, the advocates of the papal Antichrist myth display a hermeneutical ignorance and “Machiavellian” willingness to play fast and loose with Holy Scripture. It is my considered view that an adherence to the notion of a papal Antichrist is more the result of the obligation to conform to the systems, prejudices and confessions of

⁵² *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, op.cit., p.64.

⁵³ William Hendriksen, *Commentary on 2 Thessalonians*, Banner of Truth, 1972, p.175.

men, rather than an honest, consistent and objective exposition of the Word of God.

Although the office of the papacy manifests many of the characteristics of “antichrist” and is thereby a true forerunner, it cannot possibly be **the** Antichrist as it falls far short at many crucial points of fulfilling all the biblical criteria necessary to make such a positive identification.

There may well be an intimate connection between the Vatican and the revelation of the “man of lawlessness”. This would not come as any surprise to the watchmen of this world. But the assertion that the office of the papacy has always been the *revealed* Antichrist cannot, in the light of the biblical data, be upheld. In fact, the real Antichrist, when he is revealed, will be so consummately evil, so consistently devoted to the destruction of the Church — the very incarnation of Christ-usurping, God-hating *antitheos* — that even the worst pope who has ever lived will seem like a Boy Scout leader by comparison.

Therefore, I believe that the genuine Christian attitude to those ensnared by the wayward teachings of Rome should be to make them the subjects of our prayers rather than our scurrility (1 Timothy 2:1-4) and the objects of our evangelism rather than the bitter hostility which has flowed so easily from the pens of Protestant writers during the last few hundred years.⁵⁴

Having shown that the papacy does not meet all the criteria for a positive identification as the Antichrist (though certainly as a ‘mini-antichrist’), we must inevitably conclude that the *parousia* of the “man of sin” is still awaiting its realisation in history.

Meanwhile, the “mystery of lawlessness”, under the express will and permission of God is, with gathering momentum, still at work in the world — moulding events and people according to the teaching and designs of evil principalities and powers of darkness. It only awaits the removal of the restraining power for the revealing of the “man of

⁵⁴ So vehement is that scurrility and bitter hostility that even this statement will be misunderstood and denounced in some quarters as being “soft” towards the Vatican. However, the preservation of Truth should **never** be at the expense of compassion and empathy; otherwise, we stray into the realm of Revelation 2:1-4, with all its consequences (Revelation 2:5). Love, knowledge and discernment are necessary bedfellows and must not be separated (see Philippians 1:9-10 for proof of this). If we lose any one of those three qualities, we will stumble, to our cost.

lawlessness” and the brief anarchic epoch which will bring down the final curtain of this evil age.

As a fitting conclusion to the present study, and for your comfort, we close here with some words from the pen of Henry Alford as the final words in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians:

“If it be said that this is somewhat a dark view to take of the prospects of mankind, we may answer, first, that we are not speculating on the phenomena of the world, but we are interpreting God’s word: secondly, that we believe in One in whose hands all evil is working for good,—with whom there are no accidents nor failures,—who is bringing out of all this struggle, which shall mould and measure the history of the world, the ultimate good of man and the glorification of His boundless love in Christ: and thirdly, that no prospect is dark for those who believe in Him. For them all things are working together for good; and in the midst of the struggle itself, they know that every event is their gain; every apparent defeat, real success; and even the last dread conflict, the herald of that victory, in which all who have striven on God’s part shall have a glorious and everlasting share”.

Amen!

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