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The References to AntiChrist in II Thessalonians Compares with those in the Epistles of St. John

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THE REFERENCES TO ANTICHRIST
IN II THESSALONIANS COMPARED
WITH THOSE IN THE EPISTLES OF
ST. JOHN

A Thesis presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary

in partial fulfillment of the
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Bachelor of Divinity

by

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Approved by

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The prophet Daniel, sometime during the sixth century before the birth of our Savior, pictured in a vision the arch-enemy of God, the king who destroys the true worship of God.* Some six hundred years later, Saint John the Divine on the Isle of Patmos, clarifies the vision of Daniel through another vision, in which he sees the woman arrayed in scarlet on the seven hills.** The abominations of the king whom Daniel saw are portrayed by Saint John in an extremely vivid and unmistakable announcement. But just who is this destructive person or force? If one will approach the matter in an unbiased manner, he must of necessity come to but one conclusion. Everything harmonizes the fit the Pope at Rome. The head of the Roman Catholic Church fits the description perfectly. The prophecy has been fulfilled.

But do the descriptions given by Daniel and Saint John agree with the description given by Saint Paul in the second chapter of his second letter to the Thessalonians and with the description given by epistles of John? In order to come to a decision on this point, let us first examine the characteristics of this man as they are given by Saint Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians.

AN EXAMINATION OF II THESSALONIANS 2, 3-12

In the first place, there is a definite time element given in verses 3-5. This reference to time is one of the most conclusive arguments for the assertion that this man of iniquity must be the Pope at Rome. In order to establish this

* Daniel 11.
** Revelation 17.

fact as clearly as possible, let us consider these various references to the time.

We learn, first of all, that there is to be a great apostasy. A general and widespread falling away must first occur before "the man of sin", "the son of perdition", is to be revealed. This falling away, this great apostasy, is to consist of such an enormous denial that Saint Paul sees fit to designate it with the definite article (ἡ ἀποστασία). This must all occur before the coming of the Last Day, and immediately as a result of this falling away the man of lawlessness will be revealed. Now this falling away must occur within the Christian Church, or else it would be no apostasy in the Christian sense of the term. Unless it were to occur within the Church, it seems hardly plausible that Saint Paul would deem it necessary to devote such a large portion of his letter to a warning against this apostasy.

The man of lawlessness, the son of perdition, is to be at the head, is to lead this apostasy. Just this very thing has been done by the Pope. He has led souls away from Christ, but the deadliest thing of all is the fact that he remains within the Christian Church, teaching his doctrine and forcing it upon his followers under the guise of true Christianity. At first this man is to be hidden, will not come out into the open, but Paul says that he will be revealed (ἀποκαλυφθήσεται). He will be revealed in his true character; the world will see just what and who this man is; his evil and cunning nature will be brought to light.

As we proceed, we see that he is called the man of perdition, "perdition marking him from the start, and there is only one such perdition. This is exactly what Jesus calls Judas in John 17,12. 'ὁ ἀνθρώπος' states that the Antichrist is not Satan, but a human being, and thus 'ὁ υἱὸς' 'the son of perdition'." *

It is further stated that the man "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."(II Thess. 2,4). The name "God" is ascribed by Scripture "not only to the true God, who is above all, but also to the principalities and powers of heaven as well as to rulers on earth, who govern as the higher powers ordained by God." ** (Romans 13,1). Jesus Himself also makes reference to the fact that men sometimes are rightly called by the name of "god". *** But here we see that this man of lawlessness disregards the Word of God and vaunts and exalts himself above all that is called God, and declares and demands that he be looked upon as the very God. This is the lawlessness that is connected with this perdition. He seats himself in the temple of God with the idea of permanency. He usurps the place of the one true God. The sanctuary of God is intended to have God, and God alone, as its occupant; but this man of perdition seats himself therein and demands the respect and reverence due God Himself. After he has once established himself in the temple of God, he takes up and alters the will of

* Lenski--Interpretation of Paul's Epistles, p. 417.

** C.T.M., Vol. IV, 1933, P.E.Kretzmann, p.427.

*** John 10,34.

God to his own choosing. He gives his commands as divine commands, and will not allow Christians to be saved without his power. "This could be true only of one who sets aside the divine laws; who undertook to legislate where God only has the right to legislate, and whose legislation was contrary to that of God." * There can be absolutely no doubt but that that which is said here must refer solely to the head of the Roman Church. Every single point applies with startling accuracy. The Pope of Rome has exalted himself above every ordained class of priesthood, above all the kings and emperors of this world. This can best be seen from the papal bulls which have been sent out from Rome by the Pope himself. Continually he complains that injustice has been done to him when temporal power was taken from his hand. "Is quidem primum fictis de causis deturbatus est propugnaculo libertatis iurisque sui, principatu sui...". ** "Neque alio spectat civilis Principatus occupatio, quem divina Providentia multis abhinc saeculis Romano Antistiti concessit, ut libere ac expedite potestate a Christo collata, ad aeternam populorum salutem uteretur." *** Although Holy Scripture gives us the prophecy, we must look into history itself for the fulfillment of this, that kings and emperors have been subjected to the power of the Pope at Rome. It has been quite common for Popes to subject rulers of the world to papal authority. They have erected absolute jurisdiction and uncontrolled supremacy over kings and emperors, "deposing some, advancing others,

* Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, Vol. VIII, p.82.

** Sanctissimi Domini Nostri Leonis Divina Providentia Papae XIII Epistolae Encyclicae, Vol. II, p.295.

*** *ibid.*, Vol. I, p.6.

obliging them to prostrate themselves before him, to kiss his toe, to hold his stirrup, to wait bare-footed at his gate, as Gregory VII did to Henry IV at Canossa; treading even upon the neck, as Alexander III did to Frederic I; and kicking off the imperial crown with his feet, as was Celestin's action against Henry VI." * Finally he has taken it upon himself to usurp authority over the consciences of his subjects, legislating where God alone has the right to legislate. This has laid the foundation for the decree of papal infallibility.

"So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (II Thess. 2,4a). Without a doubt, the Pope has claimed higher honors as the "viceregent of Christ" than has ever been accorded any other person. Catholic writers have ascribed power over all others to him, and since this has not been denied by the papacy, we may safely assume that the Pope wishes it to be thus. A prominent writer in the Catholic Church writes thus:

"Our Lord God the Pope; another God upon earth; king of kings and lord of lords; the same is the dominion of God and the Pope. To believe that our Lord God the Pope might not decree as he has decreed is heresy. The power of the Pope is greater than all created power, and extends itself to things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal. The Pope doeth whatsoever he listeth, even things unlawful, and is more than God." **

How can it be doubted that in this passage of Paul the reference is to the papacy? Language could not be plainer, and

* Thomas Newton-- Dissertations on the Prophecies, p.455.

** *ibid.*, p. 456.

it would be hard to find room for the thought that anything might occur later on which would be a more clear manifestation of the fulfillment of this prophecy. When we view the ungodly claims of the papacy, this passage becomes one of the clearest in Holy Scriptures.

He sits in the temple of God and purports himself to be God. He claims such honors and such reverence as the true God would if He should appear in human form. It is indeed well to note that the present participles are used throughout the passage to show that this action and evil workings of this man are going on regularly and continually.

He sits in the temple of God, the Christian Church. When the Christian Church was instituted, it was designated as the peculiar habitation of God, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." * But this usurper leaves no stone unturned. He places himself in the dwelling-place of God and demands divine reverence. The Pope shows by this very pagan act that he is the undisputed Antichrist. He seats himself in God's own sanctuary. He does not openly deny the true God, but once the veil has been removed from the system, it is easily seen that the true worship of God is overthrown. Fundamentally, his doctrine is built upon human commands and human obedience. Under the guise of the true worship of Christ he promulgates his horrible doctrine of work-righteousness. By the institution of saint-worship and saint-mediation the Catholic Church is connected with the paganism

* Ephesians 2, 20.

of the early peoples. If this idolatry is not apostasy from the true worship of God, then we need look no further for the fulfillment of this prophecy. When Paul wrote this letter, the Church had not seen such an apostasy, and never since has there been one that is comparable to this. The Pope does not say that God and Christ are no longer God and Christ and that the temple does not belong to them, but he claims the right for himself to sit in the temple as a divine being worthy of reverence. Antichristianity can go no farther than this. The history of the Christian Church through all these hundreds of years has had but one phenomenon of this type--the papacy.

Paul then continues: "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time." (II Thess. 2,6). The man of sin was not yet revealed. His time was not yet come; the season for his manifestation to the world of his true character had not yet arrived. The "mystery of iniquity" was already working, but it was not yet clearly evident to the world just what or who this individual was. The seeds had already been sown, but they had not yet sprouted or grown to full maturity. There was some obstacle that hindered his appearance, but the apostle Paul does not say whether this object was a person or a thing. It is indeed fitting, then, that we establish just what this force was.

Just what this was is hard to establish, due to the great many years that have intervened, but we can say with a large degree of certainty that it was the Roman Empire. "As long as the Roman Empire, with the emperor at its head, was in

power, the Christian Church not being a religio licita, the aspirations of the hierarchy could not come to fruition." * The reference is to something that then operated to constrain or hold back the tendency of things, so that "the man of sin" should not at once appear, or that things could not so soon develop as to give rise to the antichristian workings of this "mystery of iniquity". There was something at work which would ultimately lead to the open manifestation of the evil, but there was also something holding back, so that it would not become clear until a later period.

It is not known precisely what is referred to by the phrase "what withholdeth" (τὸ κατέχον). The phrase means something that holds back or restrains. The word here is in the neuter gender, "what withholdeth". In the following verse it is in the masculine gender, (ὁ κατέχων), --"he that letteth or withholdeth". The reference would seem to be to some agency or state of things under the control of an individual, or of some civil power, that was then operating as a restraint to the budding influence of this "mystery of iniquity". The inference that it refers to the Roman Empire, with the emperor at its head, seems to be the one that best fits the circumstances here. IT is the only thing that could hold back the workings of the papacy. There has been little dispute on this point. All the Church fathers and authorities agree that it was the influence of the Roman Empire which checked the spread of this force of evil.

The next verse gives us a little more information as to

* C.T.M., Vol. IV, 1933, P.E. Kretzmann, p. 429.

the definite character of this person. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." (II Thess. 2,7). This verse gives us one of the chief references to the time. The first half of the verse shows to us the gradual rising of the papacy. This flood of evil did not burst forth into evident visibility, but slowly, gradually it wormed its way forth to manifestation. The mystery of this lawlessness was already operative. Paul does not pretend to know, nor does he say, just how fast this was developing. It was still veiled in mystery, no one as yet was able to see it, because something was holding it up. "The damnable thing is not merely dormant, but it is already operative, although as yet unseen. It is like a viper in its shell, presently to crawl out, then to be blasted." * Paul seems to have reference to some form of sin which was working secretly and silently, which had not yet developed itself. This revelation of the man of sin is a great deal like the Old Testament prophecies; a long succession of facts is listed, but all references to the exact time of their fulfillment is omitted. This was done purposefully, in order that we might ever be on the alert.

In this verse, the neuter(τὸ κατ'ἐξουσίαν) is replaced by the masculine(ὁ κατ'ἐξουσίαν). These terms, however, are not parallel to "the apostasy" and "the man of lawlessness". The apostasy is an abstract term, and refers to the fact that many have turned away from the true worship of God, while the "man of lawlessness" has reference to a single person who is

* Lenski--Interpretation of Paul's Epistles, p. 427.

to be the leader of this apostasy. In the case of "τὸ ¹ΚΑΤΕΧΩΝ" and "ἡ ²ΚΑΤΕΧΩΝ", the case is entirely different. There is merely a change in gender: "the thing that holds up--- the one that holds up". This second part of the verse again emphasizes the time element which Paul is portraying. First of all, it was clearly shown that the development was gradual. Here we see that there are hindrances which have to be removed. These hindrances, as we shall see, were the very things that held up the development of the antichristian papacy. It evidently has reference to a power, while the masculine has reference to a person who exercises this power. There can be no doubt that this is a reference to the restraining power in verse 6, or the same power under the control of an individual. It was a power that served as a check on the corruptions that then existed, but it is certain from the words of the text that it would be removed sometime in the near future, after these evils had fully developed themselves. Then would come the greatest revelation of all--the man of sin. The supposition that the Roman Empire was the restraining force which hindered the ecclesiastical claims of supremacy which afterwards characterized the papacy, corresponds with all that the language of the text supplies.

"He who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way". This will be an effectual check on these corruptions which will prevent their full development, until it is removed, and then the man of sin will appear. It is evidently clear that there is something which is a definite obstacle

to the full development of the plans of this man of sin, and that this obstacle must be removed before this man can bring his plans to completion. It seems very clear that this restraining force lies outside the Church itself, and therefore the best supposition must be that it is some civil power. But is there any fact in history which will agree with this interpretation?

"The tradition that generally prevailed was that what hindered was the Roman Empire; and therefore the primitive Christians in the public offices of the Church prayed for its peace and welfare, as knowing that when the Roman Empire should be dissolved and broken into pieces, the empire of 'the man of sin' would be raised on its ruins. How this revolution was effected, no better writer can inform us than Michiavel: 'The emperor of Rome quitting Rome to hold his residence at Constantinople, the Roman Empire began to decline, but the Church of Rome, augmented as fast. Nevertheless, until the coming in of the Lombards, all Italy being under the dominion either of emperors or of kings, the bishops assumed no more power than what was due to their doctrine and manners; in civil affairs they are subject to the civil power.-- But Theodoric king of the Goths fixing his seat at Ravenna, was that which advanced their interest, and made them more considerable in Italy; for there being no other prince left in Rome, the Romans were forced for protection to pay greater allegiance to the Pope'." *

Thus the Pope made his first great step toward commanding honors which were not due him.

In the course of time, the Pope made various attempts to usurp authority, but he never experienced any great success.-- but this is also true: "Rome has plenty of time". She need

* T. Newton--Dissertations on the Prophecies, pp. 457.458.

never hurry. So on down through the years we see the Pope constantly agitating, going just a little farther ahead. He has experienced various ups and downs. As we advance farther into history, we come to the time when Pepin died, and was succeeded by his son, Charles. About the same time, Theodore the First was advanced to the papacy, and immediately he had a falling out with Disiderio a Lombard, the duke of Tuscany. Disiderio immediately took it upon himself to besiege Rome. In looking about for aid, Theodore besought the king of France to help him. Charles not only supplied him with an army, but himself marched as its head over the Alps, where he met Disiderio and immediately defeated him. Then Charles decided to pay the Pope at Rome a visit. It was here that Charles "adjudged and determined, 'that his Holiness being God's vicar, could not be subject to the judgment of man.'" For which the Pope and the people together declared him emperor, and Rome began again to have an emperor of the west; and whereas formerly the popes were confirmed by the emperors, the emperor now in his election was beholden to the Pope; by which means the power and dignity of the empire declined, and the Church began to advance, and by these steps to usurp upon the authority of temporal princes." *

In this manner the emperor of Rome, the force which was restraining the forces of the papacy, was "taken out of the way". The Pope, the emperor of the west, supplanted the regular emperor, and thus he was able to exert his greatest influence.

* T. Newton--Dissertations on the Prophecies, p.459, a quotation from Machiavel's History of Florence, book I, p.6.

To anyone who is acquainted with the rise of the papacy, nothing can be more manifest than the correspondence of facts which the apostle Paul here relates in regard to the open revelation of the man of sin. There are a few facts here which correspond with such definiteness that it will pay us to view them just a bit more closely.

In the first place, there were corruptions in the Church of Rome, just as there were elsewhere, but they were more evident in Rome because it was the seat of philosophy and power. It was here that the degrading influence from the outside could wield its strength more openly than elsewhere. So we can surmise that it was so much easier for the papacy to lay its foundations in Rome for the tremendous havoc that it was to exert later. There would not be such open opposition as would be expected elsewhere.

There were great efforts made by the bishop of Rome to increase his power. Time and time again he gave notice to the world of the homage he expected. In the Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII for 1879, we find the following statement: "The church of Rome is one monarchy over all the kingdoms of the world, as the mind and soul of the body of a man, or as god in the world. Therefore the church of Rome must not only have the spiritual power, but the supreme temporal power". * There was a gradual approximation to this open statement of being the universal and supreme bishop. At the time of Paul the mystery was beginning to loom on the horizon. It took centuries for the open statement, but it was

* T. Graebner--The Pope and Temporal Power, pp. 11.12.

certain that it must come. The universal corruption of doctrine and worship in the Catholic Church came in by degrees; the usurpation of power on the part of the bishops of Rome was gradual, not all at once. Thus this lawlessness could the more easily gain a firm and almost immovable foundation. "The apostle justly calls it a 'mystery of iniquity', because wicked designs and actions were concealed from the common view and observation. By pretended devotion, superstition and idolatry were advanced; and by a pretended zeal for God and His glory, bigotry and persecutions were promoted." *

There was also a common tendency to yield him respect and deference in all matters of importance. Thus the power had earnestly begun to work. Its influence was beginning to take root. Thus he could the more openly come out and make his statements, which were, in effect, a denial of the supremacy of God. The Pope makes his claim for vicarship, ultimately supplanting God and the true worship of God on earth.

Although this force on the part of the papacy was actually beginning to take form, nevertheless the Roman Empire served as check on its growth. If the Roman Empire would have survived and not fallen, there could never have been a chance for the Roman bishop to obtain the civil and ecclesiastical eminence which he finally did. There would have been two heads at Rome, both claiming for itself the divine and supreme power. Thus, if the Roman Empire would have withstood the onslaughts, the true character of "the man of

* Matthew Henry's Commentary, Vol. VI, on II Thessalonians.

sin" would never have been revealed.

Finally, however, the influence and dominion of the Roman Empire was removed, so that the Word of God could be fulfilled. The man of lawlessness had to be revealed. As soon as the Roman government was put out of the way, then the true character of the papacy was openly revealed to the world. In all history there cannot be found another instance which so perfectly fulfills the requirements of a prophecy as does the development of the papacy. The events which are pictured in the text follow in rapid succession, but in reality it took years for them to develop. That is the usual manner of prophecy. The prophet or writer of God merely gives the prophecy with little or no regard for the exact time of the fulfillment. We must look to history for the fulfillment of the prophecy, and in the case of this passage, the development of the papacy from history fits all the requirements with such startling accuracy that we stop to wonder how the Catholics, who claim to be such accurate historians, have not been able to see the handwriting on the wall. But thus it has always been, and thus it always will be.

But this man of sin shall meet his end with the same degree of definiteness as was his rise to power. "And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (II Thess. 2,8). This "then" refers, according to Dr. Kretzmann, to "some time after the removal of the restriction which kept the hidden lawlessness

from being put into execution openly." * The head of the antichristian kingdom is called "that wicked one", or that lawless person who sets up a kingdom in direct contradistinction to the divine power and dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is called "wicked" because of the eminent depravity and lawlessness of the kingdom of which he was to be the head. But there is one assurance in this verse. Just as surely as he would manifest himself openly and clearly to the world, it was just as sure that this would begin the death toll of his rule. The discovery of this man by the world would lead to his utter destruction and complete annihilation. But let us establish just when this revelation of the man was made known to the world. From the text before us we see that after the restraining force, the Roman Empire, fell, this man of sin was to hold dominion and sway for some time. Just how long this was to be is not given to us. But there was also to come a complete revelation to the world of his true character. This was to take place some time after the fall of the Roman Empire. We must allow the papacy some time for its full development. It seems clear from the text that the people of the world would recognize the power and authority of this man, but that they would be unable to judge his true character, due to the fact that all of his deeds were veiled in deceit. Purporting to be serving the Lord, he was in fact demanding honor above God. The people had to recognize this man as important, or else the revelation of his character would serve no purpose.

* P.E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary, New Testament, Vol. II, p. 363.

As was the case in all the other points of this prophecy, Scripture gives us but the bare prophecy. Again we must look to history for the fulfillment. Is there any fact in history that will bear out the assumption that we are here dealing with the papacy? Just when and what caused the true revelation of this heinous opponent of God?

We can justly say that it was the outstanding work of Doctor Martin Luther which brought about the true revelation of the soul-destroying work of this ungodly man. When Doctor Luther brought again the true Word of God to light which for so long had been hidden in papal darkness, it was easy for the people to recognize the antichristian character of the Pope. For many centuries the papacy had relegated the Scriptures to a secondary position. The word of the Pope had precedence over the Word of God. The traditions of the Catholic Church had been put on a par with the Word of God at the Council of Trent. When a question came up as to which stood higher, the Word of God or the decrees of the Pope, men had to submit to the will of the Pope, regardless of what the Word of God had to say. This is best exemplified in the words of the Council of Trent where it was decided that regardless of the fact that Christ definitely instituted the Lord's Supper under both kinds, nevertheless the Roman Catholic Church was given the right to change the original institution. * This all leads but to one thing. Though the Word of God is clear, nevertheless the Catholic

* Trid. Sess. 13, ch.3; Sess. 21, canons 1.2.3.

Church reserves for itself the right to mutilate the Word of God to fit its own unchristian doctrine. Also, when the Pope speaks "ex cathedra", it is supposed that he cannot err, that he is infallible. Despite the fact that history has showed that the Pope definitely has erred, they always have the safeguard of reserving for themselves the right of determining when the Pope speaks with that authority. But if we page through the annals of Church history, our attention is called to the following noteworthy fact. Pope Honorius I definitely declared "ex cathedra" that he was in favor of the Monothelites. At that time (681 A.D.) the Sixth Ecumenical Council took place at Constantinople, the last of such councils which was recognized by both the East and the West. Constantine the Bearded presided as the emperor. The matter of Monothelitism was finally settled. The Monothelites were condemned, and with them also Pope Honorius as a heretic. The infallible body condemned an infallible vicar of Christ as a heretic! "He was by name anathematized by the council as a heretic, and this declaration was approved by more than one of his successors, notably by Leo II." * This fact clearly shows that the Pope, the supposed "vicar of Christ on earth", has been shown to side with heresy. In spite of the fact that this man reported that he was speaking "ex cathedra", the Catholic Church will maintain that such was not the case. One cannot pin them to a definite statement as to when the Pope is speaking authoritatively, but it should suffice when the man in question decided that

* G.P. Fisher--History of the Christian Church, p.135.

he was speaking "ex cathedra".

In such a manner the workings of the papacy completely deluded the people, until the God-sent messenger, Martin Luther, arose and had the courage to present the Catholic Church, headed by the Pope, a deadly blow. Although Luther stood face to face with death at the hands of the papacy, nevertheless he made known to the world the ungodly character of the papacy, showing that for the Word of God they had been forcing the commands of men upon the people. Instead of trusting in the merits of Christ, the Popes had so deceived the people that they believed that men could buy their way to salvation, or through conforming to the decrees laid down by the Popes themselves, who had placed themselves in the temple of God and had taken it upon themselves to dictate and enslave the consciences of their followers. But God saw fit, as we are told in this text, to "reveal that wicked one". Thus, if one, with an unbiased opinion, face the facts as they are presented, he must of necessity come to the conclusion that the text deals with the Papacy, and that it was Martin Luther who finally revealed the true character of this man of lawlessness.

"Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." (II Thess. 2,8). To whom does this refer? Who is the one that shall give the final touch to the complete annihilation of the head of this ungodly system? This evidently speaks of that which goes out from the mouth of the Lord, that which He speaks.

That is the word and truth of the Gospel. "And he had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword." * "And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword." ** This is a common picture in the Bible. The Word which the Redeemer uses is often referred to as a sword or a rod which goes forth from the mouth of the Lord. (Cf. Isaiah 11,4). The Word which goes forth from His mouth is like a sharp sword. It will cut deep, it will lay open the heart, it will destroy His enemies. "Und zwar 'durch den Geist--- durch den Hauch oder Odem--seines Mundes.' Was ist das anders als das Wort Gottes, so aus seinem Munde gehet, das Wort Gottes, das da ist Geist und Leben." *** In this verse Saint Paul assures the Thessalonians that the Lord Himself will consume and destroy this wicked person. God allowed a man, Martin Luther, to make the first deadly attack upon the Pope, but it will be God Himself who will utterly destroy him. When God has meted out His punishment upon this man, he will be utterly destroyed, completely helpless. First the Lord will consume him, and that will be by the spirit of His mouth-- that is, the Word Of God. God will use the very thing which the Pope has corrupted--the Word of God--to effect the destruction. What the Pope has adulterated and changed to suit his plans and false doctrines, that very thing the Lord will use directly to effect a complete annihilation of the entire papal system.

We note that the Lord will destroy him with the "bright-

* Revelation 1, 16.

** Revelation 19, 15.

*** Zapf--Abhandlung ueber den Antichrist, p.21.

ness of His coming." This is evidently a Hebraism, which means the splendid or glorious appearing of the Lord. The Greek word which is used (ἐπιφάνεια) merely means an "appearing" or "appearance". In this sense it is used in I Tim. 6,4; II Tim. 1,10; II Tim. 4,1.8; Titus 2,13. In all these locations it has the connotation of appearing, and refers to the manifestation of the Savior when He shall come to judge the world. The word itself does not necessarily have the meaning of a dazzling light, a light of insufferable brightness, which would consume all that would appear before it, but it means merely that this antichristian man will be destroyed. It is not the brightness of the Lord which will effect the destruction of this man of sin, but the Lord Himself. "It would seem to follow from this that however this enormous power of wickedness might be weakened by truth, the final triumph over it would be reserved for the Son of God Himself on His second return to our world." * At first, the revelation of the truth will weaken and diminish the power of this man of iniquity, but the final destruction will be effected by the person whom the Pope has for so many years blasphemed.

Paul does not say how long the Pope will remain after he has been revealed. He does not even say that there will be an interval at all. All that he says is that God will blow His breath upon this lawless one. The Word of God is poison to this man of iniquity. According to Lenski, we observe the

* Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, Vol. VIII, p. 89.

following: "The Lord shall make away with the antichrist by means of the breath of His mouth(His Word); the Lord shall abolish the antichrist by means of the Epiphany of His Parousia." *

Thus we see that the entire scope of this passage can have reference to no one but the Pope at Rome. There is no other person or force that fits the requirements as does the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

But there have been some objections raised to this conclusion, the most important of which is that the antichrist must find his fulfillment in some future time, that it will be a future person or power. These people look forward to some world conqueror who will assemble all the antichristian elements about himself. Now this objection can be met and defeated successfully.

Paul explicitly tells us that this abomination was active already at his time. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." It was active at his time, and Paul says that it must continue until the end of the world, when Christ Himself will blast the Antichrist and his kingdom to bits. From this we must conclude that it is a series of persons, since no one person could live for such a long period of time. The first beginnings were just noticeable at the time of the apostle, and there was to be no let-up until Christ should make His appearance to destroy this man. If the evil was already beginning to break forth at the time of Paul, it would take a great deal of imagination to suppose that the real antichrist

* Lenski--Interpretation of Paul's Epistles, p. 431.

will appear at a future date. The two phrases "what withholdeth" (τὸ κατέχευ) and "he who lets" (ὁ κτείνων) clearly show us that it is a power or a person--a great power and one who exercises rule and dominion. The force that was withholding the breaking forth of the abomination of this evil-working person had to be removed. Paul speaks definitely to the people of Thessalonica, for he tells them that it is well-known among them what this restraining force was. "Ye know what withholdeth". (v.6). Is there anything today that will fit the requirements of this passage? Is there still some force which is evident to all of us that still hinders the manifestation of the evil of this person? There can be no other conclusion than that this restraining force was the Roman Empire. The only person in the annals of all history who fits the description of "the son of perdition" is the Pope at Rome. Indeed, it is not an individual Pope or person, but it implies that there is a series of persons who can fit under one common classification.

Anyone who faces this text with an open mind must see and realize that there is no other person upon earth who ever has or ever will fill the requirements as does the Pope. By this we do not mean this or that Pope in particular, but the Pope in general, the chief head and supporter of this apostasy. It can be said that the apostasy has produced the Pope, and that he has become the leader of the falling away from God. He is the man of sin, not only on account of the scandalous lives which many of the Popes have led, but because of their scandalous doctrines and principles. The Pope

claims unto himself the power to dispense with the God-given duties of man, and also, on the other hand, claims the right to offer indulgences and pardons for sale for the most abominable and heinous crimes. He has completely corrupted the true worship of God, perverting it from the revealed Word of God to superstition and idolatry of the grossest kind.

Here we may make reference to a sermon preached by Gabriel Biel on the festival of the birth of the Virgin Mary:

"In danger, in trouble, in desparate straits cry to Mary, think of Mary. Let her not be removed from your heart nor from your lips. And in order not to lose the intercession of Mary, do not depart from the example of her life. If you follow her, you cannot go astray; if you call upon her, you need never despair; if she holds you, you need not fear; her guidance protects you against weariness; and if she is your friend, you will attain the shore of everlasting life." *

Such a statement, approved and recommended by the Pope, stamps the papacy as an institution, based upon and grounded in false doctrine. The Pope is like the false apostle Judas, the "son of perdition", whether as being the cause for the destruction to others, or as being destined to destruction himself. He is the greatest adversary to God among men, "excommunicating and anathematizing, persecuting and destroying by croisadoes and inquisitions, by massacres and horrid executions, those sincere Christians, who prefer the Word of God to all the authority of men." ** The heathen emperors of Rome may have slain thousands of men, but the Pope at Rome

* Th. Graebner--The Dark Ages, p.12, a quotation from Gustav Plitt, Gabriel Biel als Prediger, p.23.

** T. Newton--Dissertations on the Prophecies, p. 455.

has slain tens of thousands. There is hardly any country on the face of this earth that has not at some time or other been the scene of one of these wholesale slaughters. The Pope has placed himself above all that is God or worshipped, exerting an absolute supremacy over all. He has made the Word of God of none effect by the traditions, forbidding what God has commanded, such as marriage, communion in both kinds, forbidding the reading of the Scriptures in the vernacular, commanding what God has forbidden. He has made the way of salvation dependent upon the works of man, thus making the work of Christ of non-effect. While in fact he does not deny the work of Christ, he has decreed that our Lord was unable to fulfill the complete work of salvation. Instead of a full and free salvation, he has created a religion of doubt, sinking countless thousands of souls into despair. He sits in the temple of God, showing off as God. At all times he demands divine authority in the Church, affecting divine titles and attributes, such as holiness and infallibility. Not only content to demand that he deserves the reverence due God alone, but he also claims for himself the actual powers of the Almighty God, such as condemning man for not believing in him or for not accepting his word as the final authority. This is very well exemplified in the case of Martin Luther and countless others, who were excluded from the Catholic Church for not submitting themselves before the judgment of the bishop of Rome. At all times he decrees that his utterances are on a par with the Word of God, and

at times he claims superiority to the Word of God. There is no other person who can be mistaken for this man of sin; without a doubt Paul here refers to the Pope at Rome.

Paul goes on in his letter to the Thessalonians in these words: "Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders." (v. 9). By this Paul means that when this man has been revealed, it will become evident to the people that this man is in league with Satan, for he will produce such things as could be done only under the employment of Satan. It hardly requires any particular proof to show that the pretensions of the Catholic Church and the corruptions of the Pope are all supported by feigned and imaginary visions and miracles. The power of performing miracles has been one of the standing claims of the papacy throughout the centuries. One can hardly pick up a book which is approved by the Catholic Church in which are not cited a host of alleged miracles and wonders. We need not make unprovable assertions, but let us hear what Bellarmin, the Catholic man of note, has to say: "Undecima nota est gloria miraculorum". * He proudly asserts that the glory of miracles is the eleventh note of the Catholic Church, but he seems to over look the fact that the apostle Paul assigns them as the distinguishing mark and characteristic of "the man of sin". It hardly needs any proof that the papacy has always relied on the proof of its intended miracles for support. As soon as the papacy was able to come forth openly,

* T. Newton--Dissertations on the Prophecies, p.460, a quotation from Bell. de Notis Ecclesiae, lib.4, cap.14.

it was evident that it was activated by the example of the devil. The Catholic Church uses the same means as Satan to delude the people: lying, deception, and error. Just as Scripture never attributes any real miracles to the devil, in like manner no actual miracles can be attributed to the Pope or his followers. The papacy operates with all kinds of power, but that is all; this power that is used is created power, the power that belongs to every human being. The wonders that are attributed to the Pope are "lying wonders" indeed, and there is nothing more damnable than a lie. The very foundation upon which a lie is built is the devil: "Ye are of your father the devil...when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it." * This very mark would be sufficient proof that the Pope is the antichrist described by Paul. He has taken the honor and glory away that rightly belongs to God, and in this stead he has deluded and defrauded his followers with lies and "lying wonders". When Christ shall come to destroy this ungodly monster, then will all these lies come to light. There will be no foundation on which he can stand. When a lie comes into contact with the truth, the lie is shattered. It is no more. Just so shall the kingdom of this satanic man be absolutely and completely annihilated. There will be no foundation for him to stand upon. These "lying wonders" of this man of sin are such as tend to create excitement, as do all the cunning workings of Satan. But perhaps the greatest of these is the power claimed of performing a miracle at the

* John 8, 44.

pleasure of the priest when he "changes" the bread and wine into the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But the following verse of the text gives us the most heinous lie and deceit performed by the Catholic Church under the supervision and sanction of the Pope at Rome. "With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (v.10). "There are two ideas here. The first is, that there would be deceit; and the other is that it would be for the purpose of promoting unrighteousness or iniquity." * This sinful system would have to be maintained by deceit and fraudulent methods. The entire Catholic Church is characterized by this verse. The most diabolical Catholic order, the Jesuits, works exclusively along the lines of deceit. The Pope has so deluded the minds of his followers that they no longer recognize the truth, but live under a lie, look for salvation through a fraud. They prefer the system of error and delusion to the simple pure Gospel, by which they might have been saved. The most ungodly act of the papacy is that they have withdrawn the free and full way of salvation through the merits of Christ from the adherents to this system, and have substituted for the God-given way their own method--salvation through works. As if the work of Christ is insufficient and must be supplemented by the assigned works of the Pope! Indeed they are perishing, for they have spurned the way of truth and have clung to a system governed by the devil through the reason of men. This char-

* Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, Vol. VIII, p. 90.

acteristic of the Pope absolutely establish him as the Anti-Christ. This is his supreme denial of God, by which he de-thrones Christ and substitutes the works of man.

"Thus the papacy also will be a kingdom of Antichrist if it thus defends human services as justifying. For the honor is taken away from Christ when they teach that we are not justified gratuitously by faith, for Christ's sake, but by such services; especially when they teach that such services are not only for justification, but are also necessary, as they hold above in Article III, where they condemn us for saying that unto true unity of the Church it is not necessary that rites instituted by men should everywhere be alike. Daniel 11, 38 indicates that new human services will be the very force and constitution of the kingdom of Antichrist. For he says thus: 'But in his estate shall he honor the god of forces; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold and silver and precious stones'. " *

By demanding that men must be saved through the power of the Pope, the Catholic Church definitely places its kingdom among those governed by the devil.

Saint Paul continues: "And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." (v.11). It is not necessary here to suppose that there was any positive influence on the part of God in causing this delusion to come upon them, for that would be contrary to the very nature of God; but it simply means that God withdrew all restraint, and allowed them simply to show that they no longer loved the truth. Nor does the last part of the verse imply that God wanted them to believe a lie. Indeed not. He wishes all

* Apology, Article XV, p. 319, paragraph 18.

men to believe the truth. The truth was brought to them at the hands of Martin Luther, but the Pope maintained that he was correct, while Luther was a damnable heretic, and so to the present day they continue under a delusion. God has left them to believe in a falsehood. There can be no other end for them than the complete destruction foretold by Paul in the preceding verses.

"That they might all be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (v.12). The grounds or reasons why they would be damned are now stated. The "all" refers to all who are included in the apostasy. The papacy has branded the real saving facts of the Gospel truth with its "anathema". The apostasy of the papacy boasts of its error and its unrighteousness. These men will be condemned for not believing the truth. A devilish perversion has taken hold of them, making them blind to all sound and true doctrine. The result is that those who have forsaken the way of God and find their pleasure in unrighteousness instead of in the pure Word will be under the wrath and the condemnation of God. "In this way Antichrist serves as a tool in God's hands for the punishment of such people as reject the truth of the Gospel." *

As we thus have examined this text from Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, we must of necessity reach the conclusion that this prophecy has been completely fulfilled in the papacy. There is no reason at all to look forward to

* P.E. Kretzmann--Popular Commentary, N.T., Vol. II, p. 364.

a future antichrist. This does not say that there will be no possibility of a Pope arising in the future who will himself fill all the claims of the passage completely. The passage, however, has found its complete fulfillment in the papacy, and only by a perversion of the text or by a biased opinion will demand that the prophecy stands unfulfilled.

While this passage from II Thessalonians describes undoubtedly the papacy, there still remain the passages from the Epistles of Saint John which specifically use the word "antichrist". Do not these passages contradict the statements of Saint Paul? Let us briefly consider these passages.

AN EXAMINATION OF I JOHN 2, 18.22; 4,3; II JOHN 7

In the first place we read in I John 2, 18: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

This passage very clearly shows that Scripture makes a distinction between antichrists in general and the one Antichrist "κατ' ἐσχάτην", as he is described in II Thessalonians. St. John evidently makes reference to the one Antichrist who lies in the future. This man we have established as the Pope at Rome. But John here speaks of the spirit of opposition to Christ which was prevalent at his time. "Now already this anti-christian spirit is working, a foreshadowing of what will occur when Antichrist himself shall come."

The coming of the Antichrist still lies in the future". *

It is clear that John understood by the word all those who were in direct opposition to the Messiah, the Son of God. For, as we proceed to the following verse of this chapter, this becomes clear. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." (I John 2, 22). The word "antichrist" as John uses it might denote anyone who either was or claimed to be in the place of Christ, or one who, for any cause, was in opposition to Him. In this passage John strikes at the very heart and the center of those who places themselves over against Christ. They had denied that Jesus was the Christ. This meant that they denied the deity of our Lord and Savior. John writes this epistle in which he defends the Incarnation of Christ, and for this reason he strikes at those who were deniers of this. The key-note of this entire letter is a defense of the fact that Christ was manifest in the flesh. *

As we look through the pages of Church history, we find that the most probable persons to whom John here refers are the Gnostics. Their teaching that an aeon, Christ, descended on the man Jesus at baptism, and left Him before His passion, is an out-and-out denial of the deity of Christ. It denies that Christ, the Son of God, was ever manifest in the flesh, as we understand it. This is John's formal reply to Gnosticism.

* Lutheran Commentary, Vol. 11, p. 315.

** Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 50A, p. 69.

There are some who wish to imply that St. John here is making a reference to the Antichrist, "the man of sin". This cannot be held for various reasons. In the first place, the Antichrist, as he is described in II Thessalonians, in the Revelation of St. John, by the prophet Daniel, is characterized, not by a denial of the deity of the Son of God, but by his placing himself on a par with the Almighty God. The particular Antichrist was to deceive the people by shewing himself as a defender of the truth, while in fact he was usurping the throne of God. St. John here is talking not of an individual, but of a class of people who denied that Christ was manifest in the flesh. No one will be so foolish as to say that the Pope at Rome is guilty of this sin. No administrator of papal authority can be found who has denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. John wishes to warn his people that there are some at that time who wish to destroy Christianity by denying the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Another point which plays in here is that the antichrist of whom John is speaking denies also the Father. Not only do they deny the Son, but they also deny the Father. There are some who wish to say that this can also be applied to the Pope. Their line of argument is as follows: The Pope denies the full satisfaction won by Christ. Therefore by that very act they are denying the essence of Christ. And since they deny the Son, they also deny the Father, since without the Son of God there can be no Father. That may be well and good, but they overlook the fact that John specifically states that

there must be an open denial of the Son and the Father. This does not leave room for the argument that the papacy fulfills the requirements of this passage by their implications that Christ was unable to meet the full demands of God. St. John says: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" The word "liar" means that they have openly stated that Jesus was the Christ. This cannot be applied to the papacy by saying that by implication they deny that Jesus is the Christ.

Furthermore, John speaks to the recipients of this letter as if they were well acquainted with the man who denied that Jesus was the Christ. Now by reasonable argument, can it logically be that they would be acquainted with the man who by implication denied the deity of Christ. It seems to me that the person about whom John here speaks was someone who by open confession denied Christ. I do not think that it can be justly applied to the papacy. Indeed, it is true that the Pope might well be included among the "antichrists", but that he is the specific person about whom John here speaks does not, in my opinion, seem to follow.

It is probable that John here is giving his answer to the Gnostics of his day, who by full confession denied that Jesus was the Christ. They did not imply their belief; they made a bold statement to that effect.

It is remarkable to note that St. John here is not unduly aroused by the fact that there are those who denied that Jesus

was the Christ. John tells his people that he is not writing them this letter because they know not the truth, but because they knew the truth, and hence they should be able to distinguish between falsehood and lie. And then he proceeds with his description of the person whom he considers the greatest liar, namely the person who tried to weaken the person of Christ. It seems rather he is cautioning his readers to be on the alert. John does not seem to consider this person or persons a real menace to the life and welfare of the church. He does not seem particularly worried about the fact that there were so many antichrists. The same condition prevails in our church today. There are innumerable foes to Christ on every side of us, but rather than fear for the life of the church, these persons serve only to keep us on our guard.*

What seems to me to be the best interpretation is that John here warns his readers to be on the alert for those who are striking at the foundations of the Christian belief, that they should recognize those who deny the Lord and Savior, since they know that antichristian spirits are ever among the children of God. They knew that the one Antichrist, as he is defined in II Thessalonians, would come. From the fact that there were many antichrists in the world they should see that these people are a foreshadowing of what will come when the Antichrist should make his appearance.** These all help the Antichrist to destroy the foundations of Christianity,

* Roos, Kurze Auslegung der drei Briefe, p. 134.
** Lutheran Commentary, Vol. II, p.315.

but they should not worry, since Christ is ever at their side, and God's word stands sure.

The next verse which we would like to consider is I John 4,3: "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already it is in the world." This passage contains practically the same thought as the preceding one, but there is a difficulty in this passage which must be explained. When we look at this passage in the original, we find that the words "that spirit" are not contained in it; and also that the word "antichrist" is preceded by the definite article, so that the passage now reads: "and this is that of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come." At first glance, it again seems to indicate that St. John is speaking of the Antichrist, "κατ' ἐσχάτην", but if we examine the text more closely, we see immediately that such is not the case. In the verse preceding this verse, John tells his readers that every Spirit that is of God must confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. But there are also some who have gone out that deny that Christ was manifest in the flesh, and such a spirit could not be of God. It is not that John here speaks of the same person of whom St. Paul tells us. St. Paul looks ahead to the future, and tells the Thessalonians that there will be a manifestation of the evil person at some time when the hindrances have been removed.

But John fixes his eye on his own times, and tells his readers of those things which they must guard against at the present time. The great Antichrist of whom Paul speaks lies in the future. His workings may have their beginnings at this time, but the open manifestation of that person will be reserved for a later date. St. John says specifically that that spirit was already in the world at that time. These people, whom I hold to be the Gnostics, were making their influence felt all over the then Christian world, and it is specifically against these that John issues his warning. He wishes to make clear to his readers that one of the fundamental facts of Christianity is that Jesus Christ came into the world, that he was manifest in the flesh. And this was to be the guiding line whereby they could test the spirits to see whether they were of God or not. All those who deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh must be stamped as antichristian.

It is indeed true that this very thing at time has been found to be characteristic of the papacy, but it would be folly to say that John here specifically is thinking of the evils of the bishop of Rome. We can say that the antichristian spirit is here getting its first foothold, and that it later reached its culmination in the papacy at Rome, but I cannot see that John here is speaking with the same authority as Paul did in II Thessalonians concerning the Pope. The evils of the opposition to Christ are already beginning to rear their heads at the end of the first century, and surely they reached their heights when the Pope came forward with his

heinous doctrine, but that is as far as we can go.

The next passage that comes into consideration is found in II John 7 : "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." Here again we have the same problem as in the aforementioned passages. The definite article is again attached to the word "antichrist", but this must be explained again as the specific antichrist of whom John is thinking. John here is concerned with the many deceivers, or antichrists, who have gone out into the world. This passage is very similar to the passage in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." * This passage in John simply states that the Christians should be on their guard against the many that are arrayed against Christ, those who shall come as Christians, but inwardly they are the greatest opponents of the Gospel of Christ. The world is full of such people, but this passage narrows the concept to those who shall deny the incarnation of our Savior. True indeed, this is one of the greatest sins of which we can think, but it is not the spirit of the great antichrist. This denial of Christ's having come in the flesh is the main characterization in the mind of St. John of the greatest liar and deceiver. But it is plain to see here that John is not speaking of an individual person, upon whom he could lay his finger, but instead he is speaking of a class

* Matthew 24,24.

of persons.

It is interesting to note that the present participle is used here (ἐρχόμενον). This would seem to indicate the exact position of some of the Gnostic teachers. There were two classes of deniers of the incarnation of our Lord. The first class was the Jews, who denied that the incarnation had taken place. They did not deny the possibility of such an occurrence. In fact, they were looking for the coming of the Messiah; they simply denied that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. So, on the one hand they were deniers of the incarnation of Christ. But these are not the people of whom John is speaking. He speaks here of those who deny that there was a possibility of the Son of God being manifest in the flesh. And this description exactly describes the Gnostics which were so prevalent at the time of John. These people are the other class of deniers of the incarnation of Christ. They did not deny that it had taken place. They went farther than that. They denied that it could take place. No such person as the Christ coming in the flesh was possible.*

As we have looked over these several passages from the Epistles of St. John, we come to this conclusion as to his use of the word "antichrist". The word "antichrist", according to John, might denote anyone who either was or claimed to be in the place of Christ, or who for any reason was in opposition to him.

* Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 50A, p. 2.

A BRIEF RESUME OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DOCTRINE AS IT IS FOUND IN II THESSALONIANS AND IN THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

It is indeed evident that we must make a difference between antichrists in general and the one great Antichrist "κατ' ἐφοχῆν" in particular. Let us therefore, consider the essential characteristics as we find them in John, and then as they are found in II Thessalonians, leading from the general to the particular.

It is clear from the three passages in the Epistles of St. John that antichristianism is represented by men who are false prophets, so that they well deserve the name "antichrist", showing that they are openly opposed to Christ. According to John it is not a power that has arisen outside of the Church, but rather by men who were outwardly connected with the Church, falling away from the truth. So it was their going out, or falling away, that severed them from the Church. This does not mean that this is a physical removal, but as is often the case, they remain in the Church and there promulgate their false doctrine.* John here characterizes their error, not as a minor or small deflection from the truth, but their error strikes at the basis of Christianity,--a denial of Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This denial destroys the fundamental facts of salvation.

John here states that "Antichrist" is coming, speaking of the person with the force of applying to him a proper name. Then he specifically characterizes him on the point which he considers the fundamental characteristic of the Antichrist--

* C.T.M., Vol. IV, 1933, p.425.

the denial of the Father and the Son.

The characteristics of the Antichrist as given by the apostle John are the following: He has the spirit which does not confess Jesus; he denies the Father and the Son; he is a deceiver. John states that this antichrist is coming and that he is already in the world. In other words, this is a person or power which was in the process of developing, but it was already in the world, the chief feature of his character being the denial of the Father and the Son.

In the last passage of John which we considered, II John 7, he gives them warning that there are many and that they must constantly be on their guard against these false teachers. In the preceding passage, I John 4,3, he makes reference to the fact that they know that the one great Antichrist is coming, a reference no doubt to the teaching of Saint Paul in II Thessalonians.

Let us for a few moments consider then the characteristics of the Antichrist, as they are recorded by St. Paul. We can list the characteristics in the following manner:*

1. The Antichrist is not any particular individual, but a representative person, or a power represented by a person or in a person.
2. He was in the process of coming, or development, as early as the middle of the first century, when the mystery of lawlessness was already at work.
3. He is not an outside person or power, but arose in the midst of the Church, in the temple of God.
4. The revelation of his lawlessness was hindered by a power headed by a restraining person.
5. After the removal of this hindering influence the Antichrist came out openly with his claims and was also revealed in his true nature.
6. He was exposed before the world, but continued his activity as the son of perdition.
7. He claims divine prerogatives for himself, vaunting

* Dr. P.E. Kretzmann, C.T.M., Vol. IV, 1933, pp. 428.429.

- himself and raising himself above constituted authorities.
8. His doctrine is, in its last analysis, a denial of the Father and the Son as revealed in both their persons and their work in the Holy Scriptures.
 9. He presumes to direct every object and every form of worship.
 10. He operates with lying wonders, that is, such as are based upon lies and intended to spread lies.
 11. He is constantly deceiving people who give credence to his false claims.
 12. He will not be destroyed until the Lord's great parousia.

Thus we have a picture of the one Antichrist who will rock the foundations of Christianity with his lies and godless actions. It required but little proof to show that the institution of the papacy has fulfilled the requirements of this passage perfectly.

There are several differences between the characterization as given by Paul and by John. Paul is dealing with a person that is not fully developed, whose greatest work lies in the future. John deals with the evils of his time, the men whom he could see. The workings of the Antichrist according to Paul being that he will sit in the temple of God, within the Christian Church, and under the guise of true Christianity will do his greatest evil work; the antichrist according to John is that man, or class of men, who openly deny the very roots of Christianity. Paul's antichrist works by cunning treachery; John's antichrist is the brazen and open denier of Christian truth.

Thus after we have considered these passages according to John and according to Paul, we come to the conclusion that both men are dealing with persons who undermine the very roots

of Christianity. The most heinous of these being the great Antichrist as described by Paul. This passage of Paul should be a constant warning to every devout Christian to be on the alert for cunning and sly workings of those who under the guise of true love of God are destroying the souls of men. There are many antichrists today, just as there were at the time of Paul, but the greatest of them all, the papacy at Rome, should be a constant reminded to us that the Word of God stands sure, and until the time of the appearance of Christ when He Himself shall blast that man, may the motto of every true Christian be the words of Luther:

IMPLEAT VOS DEUS ODIO PAPAE!!!

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