

6-1-1933

"Papam Esse Ipsum Verum Antichristum"

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Recommended Citation

Kretzmann, P. E. (1933) ""Papam Esse Ipsum Verum Antichristum"", *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 4 , Article 60.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol4/iss1/60>

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wortlich sind für alle Abirrungen, auch auf dem Gebiet der Lehre, nicht nur in ihrer eigenen Gemeinde, sondern auch in der Kirchengemeinschaft, zu der sie gehören: Joh. 10, 5 („Einem Fremden aber folgen sie nicht nach; denn sie kennen der Fremden Stimme nicht“), 1 Joh. 4, 1 („Ihr Lieben, glaubet nicht einem jeglichen Geist, sondern prüfet die Geister, ob sie von Gott sind“); 2 Joh. 10 („So jemand zu euch kommt und bringt diese Lehre nicht, den nehmet nicht ins Haus und grüßet ihn auch nicht“). Auch den Laien- gliedern muß daher gegebenenfalls zum Bewußtsein gebracht werden, daß sie sich im falschen Lager befinden und darum leicht sich fremder Sünden teilhaftig machen können: Gal. 3, 1 („Wer hat euch bezaubert, daß ihr der Wahrheit nicht gehorchet?“), Gal. 5, 9 („Ein wenig Sauer- teig verfäuert den ganzen Teig“).

Apologie, 242, § 48: „Doch soll man falsche Lehrer nicht annehmen oder hören; denn dieselbigen sind nicht mehr an Christus' Statt, sondern sind Widerchristi.“

Schmalkaldische Artikel, 518, § 52: „Darum sollen gottesfürchtige Leute solche greuliche Irrtümer des Papstes und seine Tyrannei wohl bedenken und zum ersten wissen, daß solche Irrtümer zu fliehen und die rechte Lehre der Ehre Gottes und der Seelen Seligkeit halben anzunehmen sei.“

Schmalkaldische Artikel, 520, § 58: „So steht Gottes Befehl und Wort da, daß wir Abgötterei, falsche Lehre und unbillige Wüterei fliehen sollen.“

Schmalkaldische Artikel, 524, § 72: „Denn so gebietet Paulus, daß alle Bischöfe, so entweder selbst unrecht lehren oder un- rechte Lehre und falschen Gottesdienst verteidigen, für sträfliche Leute sollen gehalten werden.“

Großer Katechismus, 572, § 17: „Denn das muß ja sein, wer die Zehn Gebote wohl und gar kann, daß der muß die ganze Schrift können, daß er könne in allen Sachen und Fällen raten, helfen, trösten, urteilen, richten beide geistlich und weltlich Wesen und möge sein ein Richter über alle Lehre, Stände, Geister, Rechte, und was in der Welt sein mag.“

P. C. Kretzmann.

“Papam Esse Ipsum Verum Antichristum.”

“*Haec doctrina praeclare ostendit papam esse ipsum verum anti- christum, qui supra et contra Christum sese extulit.*” “This teaching shows forcefully that the Pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against, Christ, because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which, never- theless, is nothing and is neither ordained nor commanded by God.” (Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. IV, *Conc. Trigl.*, 474 f.) There is nothing uncertain or ambiguous about this statement, and it will be well for us to set forth, chiefly on the basis of Scripture, but with certain digressions also into the field of history, just why we firmly hold to the declaration given in the caption of this article.

What are the characteristics of antichristianism, and what distinction does Holy Scripture make between antichrists in general and the one Antichrist κατ' ἐξοχήν in particular? The answer to this double question can best be given on the basis of several passages in the epistles of John. In 1 John 2, 18 we read: "Little children, the last hour it is; and just as you heard that Antichrist is coming, even now *many antichrists have come into existence*, whence we recognize that it is the last hour." In 1 John 4, 1 we are told: "Beloved, do not yield belief to every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God, for *many pseudoprophets have gone out into the world.*" And in 2 John 7: "For *many deceivers have been going out into the world*, such as do not make the confession of Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh." It is clear from these three passages that antichristianism is represented, in general, by men who are false prophets or deceivers, to whom the Holy Ghost applies the specific name "antichrists," the word itself indicating an atmosphere of rivalry, giving color to hostility. Antichristianism is in its very nature a phenomenon of this present αἰών, of the world, that which will find its end and culmination on the Day of Judgment. It is not an external power arising against the Christian Church and the Christian faith, but it is a movement represented by many deceivers or false prophets who have fallen away from the truth while still outwardly connected with the Church, so that it was only their going out (v. 19) which made them known as no longer belonging to the Church. They arise, they come into existence, within the Church, and then the separation takes place. It is not stated that this separation means a physical removal, for unfortunately in many instances the false teachers pervert whole congregations and thus remain in their positions of honor and influence. The ἐξίγχεσθαι is further explained by the παρεποῦσθαι; for it is the revealing of their antichristian teaching on the part of the faithful teachers that is equivalent to their removal from the ranks of the orthodox believers. The serious aspect of antichristianism is brought out by the words of the apostle, which characterize their false teaching not as a mere aberration in a minor point of doctrine, but as a refusal to make confession of Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. In other words, antichristianism subverts the doctrines of christology and soteriology, the whole basis of objective justification as taught in Holy Writ, thereby destroying the fundamental facts of salvation.

It is evident that antichristianism was not confined to Gnosticism, Manichaeism, or any other of the early heresies which subverted the truth of the objective salvation and justification, but is found throughout this last aeon of the world wherever and whenever teachers of this type arise in the Church. There have been antichrists in every period of the Church's history. The Apostolic Age had its Judaizing

teachers, the subapostolic age its Gnostics, the period immediately preceding Nicaea the heresies enumerated by Ireneaus, the period following Nicaea the Arians, the period of the later ecumenical councils its Nestorians, Monophysites, and Monothelites, the later Middle Ages the Bogomiles, the Cathari, the Albigenses, and the Petro-Brussians, the period since the Reformation the great mass of anti-Trinitarian and antichristian sects whose false doctrines have culminated in the theology of the social gospel and in Modernism.

But Holy Scripture speaks not only of antichrists and pseudo-prophets of this kind. In a very emphatic manner the Christians of all times are warned against *one great Antichrist*, a phenomenon in history which is unique in almost every respect. The three passages in John's epistles from which we have quoted make a very clear distinction between antichristianism as represented by the minor antichrists and the one Antichrist *καὶ ἡσυχία*, even though the latter is described as possessing some of the characteristics of the former. 1 John 2, 18 expressly states: "Antichrist is coming," the absence of the article giving the subject the force of a proper noun. 1 John 2, 22 declares: "This is the Antichrist, who *denies the Father and the Son.*" In 1 John 4, 3 we read: "And every spirit that *does not confess Jesus* is not of God; and *this is that of the Antichrist*, who, as you have heard, *is coming and now is already in the world.*" Here we must again add 2 John 7b: "This is *the deceiver and the Antichrist.*"

The characteristics of the Antichrist as given by the Apostle John are the following: He has the spirit that does not confess Jesus; he denies the Father and the Son; and he is a deceiver. Of this Antichrist it is said that he both is coming and that he is already in the world. In other words, he represented a power which was even then in existence, but was also in process of coming, and the most distinguishing feature of his character is given as the denial of the Father and of the Son, specifically of Jesus.

The Apostle John, in 1 John 4, 3, refers to the fact that his readers had heard of the coming of the Antichrist, and there can be no doubt that he intends to have them recall what they had heard from the Apostle Paul, particularly in the latter's exposition in 2 Thess. 2, 3—12. The points which are enumerated in this *locus classicus* on the doctrine of the Antichrist are the following. The apostle speaks, v. 3, of *the apostasy*, of the falling away from the truth, a denial therefore of such large proportions that it is particularly designated with the specific article. Not only was this apostasy to precede the coming of the Last Day, but also *the revealing of the man of lawlessness*, a man who would be characterized by his rebellion against the Law of God, against the revealed truth and will. This person is then called *the son of perdition*. As he peculiarly belongs to sin, is the representative

of sin, its personification, so he is the son of eternal condemnation and destruction, one who is destined to eternal damnation on account of his rebellion. — It is further said of the Antichrist that *he sets himself, and vaunts himself above, all that is called God or an object of worship, so that he sets himself into the temple of God, showing himself forth that he is God.* Scripture ascribes the title *god* not only to the one true God, who is above all, but also to the principalities and powers of heaven (Ps. 97, 7, cp. with Heb. 1, 6) as well as to rulers on earth, who govern as the higher powers ordained by God (Ps. 82, 1, 6, cp. with John 10, 34; Ex. 22, 28). Above all these, yea, above the one true God, who alone bears the title with full right, the Antichrist would exalt and vaunt himself. He would do the same with regard to every *σέβασμα*, every object and every form of worship. So great would this pride and usurpation finally become that the Antichrist would even presume to occupy the temple of God and to exercise the prerogatives of God. It is significant that present participles are used throughout this verse, indicating the enduring nature of the phenomenon, and that the temple of God is referred to, evidently not one built of wood or stone, but a spiritual structure, as frequently in the New Testament. Cp. 1 Cor. 3, 16. 17.

The description continues in v. 6: *And now you know what withholds that he may be revealed in his own time.* At the time when the Apostle Paul was writing to the Thessalonians there was still something, some power, some hindrance, which was restraining the Antichrist from being revealed before his appointed time. The restraint was in keeping with the purpose of God, for it was His intention to make known, to expose, the Antichrist at the time appointed by Him. — The apostle next explains why and in what sense he speaks of a revealing of the man of lawlessness: *For the mystery of lawlessness is active even now, only until he who restrains for the present is out of the way.* The apostle saw before him the scattered, shapeless mass of ungodliness, of lawlessness, which was to gain form and personality in the Antichrist. The movement which later culminated in the reign of the Antichrist was at that time still hidden and covered; it had not yet come out into the open; one could not as yet point out specific instances of its destructive power. It was indeed at work; it was active in certain phenomena and developments, in certain usurpations of power, in certain tyrannical excrescences instigated by unruly spirits. Against a clear and unmistakable manifestation of power, however, another force was at that time active, one which made it impossible for the lawlessness of the Antichrist to carry out his design. The *ὁ κατέχων* is clearly not an individual person, but a representative of a power (*τὸ κατέχων*) whose activity extended over some time. In the same way the mystery of iniquity is spoken of as a person, for the mystery of lawlessness finally found its culmination in the Lawless One.

This is spoken of in v. 8: *And then the Lawless One shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and He shall make an end of him by the appearing of His coming.* Here both the revelation and the final disposition of the Antichrist are included in one short statement. Then, or at that time, namely, when the restriction shall have been removed which was still interfering with the open execution of the *dropia*, then the proud one, the Lawless One, would appear before the eyes of the world without any cloak or covering. Throughout the last aeon of the world the Lawless One would then be active, until the Lord would bring upon him his final destiny, namely, in His great *parousia*, when He would destroy, or consume, him with the breath of His mouth.—Meanwhile, however, the Antichrist would continue his nefarious activity: *Whose coming is after the working of Satan in all power and signs and lying miracles and in all deceitfulness of unrighteousness to them that are lost, because they did not accept the love of the truth that they might be saved*, vv. 9. 10. So the man of lawlessness, or wickedness, was to derive his power, or energy, from Satan, and the strength that he was to wield would be that of a lie, just as the signs and wonders would be products of lies and frauds. At the same time he would continue in all deceit of unrighteousness, having a glittering show of righteousness and holiness, with good works, pomp, and show flaunted before the eyes of the world at all times, so that his influence and power would have results among those who would be perishing, for all those who would actually support the system, with a knowledge of its falsehood, would thereby forfeit their claim to salvation.

On account of their perversity, as a just recompense for their refusal to accept the truth, the Lord would give the adherents of the Antichrist up to their obduration: *And for this reason God sends them working of delusion that they should believe the falsehood, that all might be judged who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* God would punish all those who would be deliberately disobedient by giving them up to the lie which they would choose by preference. A power, or strength, of deception would enter their hearts until they would refuse to return to the truth, since a devilish perversion would take hold of them. And the end would be the condemnation of the Lord. Such is a brief exposition of the words of the apostle in 2 Thess. 2.

If we now take the points given in the passages from John's epistles and those contained in 2 Thess. 2, we have the following list:

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 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 himself and raising himself above constituted authorities.

8. His doctrine is, in its last analysis, a denial of the Father and of 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*.

It is surely a heavy and scathing arraignment that we have before us. We ask at once: To which historical phenomenon must we apply the description? We answer without hesitation, on the basis of the evidence which can easily be adduced, that the passages briefly explained above apply to the Pope of Rome, with his whole system, with his entire pernicious activity. Every statement applies with unmistakable force.

1. Romanism is a system personified in its head, who is thus a representative person. We do not single out any particular individual, although some Popes were in their own persons more representative of the system than others. Every new Pope simply inherits the system and is the exponent of the system, quite frequently also its spokesman.

2. The movement which culminated in the papal system had its origin about the year 50 A. D., when the first indications of a hierarchy with more or less evident powers began to appear. Passages like Acts 20, 30 are prophetic as well as descriptive.

3. Romanism arose in the very midst of the Church of Jesus Christ, its very bishops being the ones who fostered the idea by their hierarchical aspirations and their gradual assumption of more power.

4. 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.

5. When the Christian religion, at the time of Constantine, became the state religion, the outward organization of the Church could be built up without hindrance, and this factor became still more prominent with the energetic efforts of Leo I to establish the throne of the Papacy. The end of the Western Empire (476 A. D.) was merely an additional factor in the rise of the Papacy. From the end of the fifth century onward the true character of the Papacy was revealed more and more.

6. The Antichrist was exposed by Luther and was so recognized at the time of the Reformation; but he recovered from the blow, due chiefly to the divisions in the Protestant ranks and the Jesuit Counter-Reformation, so that he has continued his pernicious activities to this day.

7. As early as the year 445 A. D. Valentinian III, a monarch controlled by Pope Leo I, passed this celebrated decree: "The primacy of the Apostolic See having been established by the merit of St. Peter, its founder, the sacred Council of Nice, and the dignity of the city of Rome, we thus declare our irrevocable edict that all bishops, whether in Gaul or elsewhere, shall make no innovation without the sanction of the Bishop of Rome; and, that the Apostolic See may remain inviolable, all bishops who shall refuse to appear before the tribunal of the Bishop of Rome, when cited, shall be constrained to appear by the governor of the province." It is a well-known fact that Pope Gregory VII (1073—1085) made the declaration that the papal power was superior to that of the emperor, so that Henry IV was obliged to do penance at Canossa, in January, 1077. And it is just as generally known that the Popes since his time have never given up their claims to earthly power and dominion, many of their demands being based upon the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, and that the present papal state is just a logical culmination of developments consistent with the claims of the papal hierarchy.

8. The doctrine of Romanism apparently lays great stress on the three Ecumenical Creeds—the Apostolicum, the Nicenum, and the Quicunque, so that the confession of the Father and of the Son seems to be safeguarded. But a confession of the lips which seemingly agrees to the Biblical statements concerning the Persons of the Godhead, but takes away from these very same Persons the divine works and the peculiar honor demanded by Scripture, is a hollow mockery. God the Father can be approached, even understood, only in and through the Son. Every organization, therefore, that takes from the Son any part of the honor demanded by the Bible, is antichristian in character. The case against Romanism is well put in a recent book: "One great aim, if not the chief aim, of the enemy of God in propagating the Romish heresy (which is what we take to be 'the depths of Satan') is to degrade the Lord Jesus Christ from His place as the *Son of God*; for it is under that title that He is presented to men: 1. as the Creator and Heir of all things (Matt. 11, 27; Col. 1, 13—16; Heb. 1, 1—3); 2. as the only Way of Access to the Father (John 14, 6; Eph. 2, 18); 3. as the only Source and Giver of life to perishing men and hence the only Savior (John 5, 21. 24—26; 1 John 5, 12); and 4. as the One who has brought to mankind the final and complete message or Word of God (Heb. 1, 2; Rev. 22, 18. 19).—In direct opposition to each of these features of revealed truth concerning the 'Son of God,' though the opposition is indeed disguised (so far as possible) with diabolical cleverness, the Romish hierarchy systematically present Jesus Christ, not as the Son of God, but as the Son of Mary. In all its doctrine, in all its ceremonies, in all its liturgy and books of devotion, in all its pictures and images, and in all its literature the false Church of Rome, with most consummate and satanic craft and with most deadly purpose, exalts Mary, making her the compassionate one, the efficacious intercessor on behalf of sinners, the real mediator between God and men, and exhibits Christ in a position of subordination, the effect being, of course, that the

millions who are thus deluded and blinded by 'the god of this world' are led to put their trust in Mary instead of in Jesus Christ, the *Son of God*. It does not in the least affect the truth of what we are now setting forth that in Romish formularies the words of Scripture are often used and that Christ is often referred to therein by His Scriptural titles; for all that is but a part, and a most effective part, of the scheme of deception. The devil knows the Scripture, and he knows how to quote it to his own ends, and he knows also how to mix in with the pure meal the deadly poison of his own doctrine. Notwithstanding, therefore, the orthodoxy of creeds and formularies, the maintenance professedly of the doctrine of the Trinity (though truly it is denied in practise), and all that, the Christ of Romanism is 'another Jesus,' (Mauro, *Of the Things Which Soon Must Come to Pass*, 107 f.)

9. The presumption of Romanism in the field of liturgies and the outward forms of worship was apparent almost from the beginning. Although every bit of historical evidence denies the primacy of Peter, and in particular the alleged twenty-five years of his Roman bishopric, and although there is no evidence for the so-called Petrine Liturgy as being the product of Peter's studies, yet all other liturgies were eliminated in the course of the centuries (the Ephesine-Gallican, as continued in the early British and the Irish, the Mozarabic, and others), so that only parts of these ancient forms are permitted upon occasion, while the Roman Liturgy has been forced upon all Roman Catholic churches throughout the world. This means that the abomination of the Mass, the adoration of a small piece of bread, and similar idolatrous customs are found wherever the Roman Church has been established.

10. The Church of Antichrist is intimately connected with various lying wonders, the greatest of which is the alleged miracle of the Mass, where the blessing of the priest is supposed to effect the transubstantiation of the bread into the physical body and of the wine into the physical blood of Christ. The doctrine of the Mass is one of the most ingenious and pernicious inventions ever foisted upon a church-body, and yet it is believed by millions of deluded people. The same holds true of the miracles connected with alleged visions of the Virgin Mary, as at Lourdes in France, and those associated with supposed relics of saints. That apparent or real results are often achieved cannot be doubted, but even less can the word of the Lord in Deut. 13, 1—5 be doubted.

11. The deceptions practised by Romanism in the field of doctrine are by no means confined to the doctrine of the Mass, the primacy of Peter, and the denial in fact of the Son and the Father; no, there is hardly a fundamental doctrine of Christianity left which has not been contaminated, especially since the Council of Trent. The matter has actually reached the stage where it is a difficult thing for many members of the Roman Catholic Church to hear enough of the truth concerning their salvation that they may know the way to heaven.

12. As to the last point, that is still in the future. But according to present indications there is little prospect of changing the Roman Church, since it is evidently intrenched as firmly as ever. The situation is aggravated by the fact that only a relatively small number of churches at this time have the courage to point to the collective person of the Roman Pope as the Antichrist and that even in certain

parts of the Lutheran Church a dubious attitude is taken concerning the question. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" 1 Cor. 14, 8.

But a number of objections are raised to the identification which is here advocated on the basis of our Lutheran Confessions. It is held by various commentators and theologians that the Antichrist must be regarded as an individual person or that he must be looked for in some of the present antireligious movements or that he must be expected at some time in the future, in connection with the signs inaugurating the Last Day. Let us examine these objections somewhat more closely.

In the first place, the text in 2 Thess. 2, 6, 7 indicates that the restraining power which held back the development of the Antichrist is referred to by means of a masculine form, v. 7, and of a neuter form, v. 6, that, therefore, the revelation of Antichrist also extended over some length of time in the history of the Roman Empire. The whole passage clearly speaks of historical developments, which cannot be associated with only one individual, neither on the one side (that of the Roman Empire) nor on the other (that of the son of perdition in the midst of the Church). This is further supported by the prophecies concerning the Antichrist in the Book of Daniel. The passage in Dan. 8, 23 ff. is very much like the eschatological sayings of Jesus, in which incidents near at hand and such centuries in the future are placed side by side, and in part even interwoven. Antiochus Epiphanes, who is referred to at the beginning of the passage, is rightly regarded in history as a type of the Antichrist of the New Testament. Cp. Dan. 9, 26, 27; 11, 36 ff.

As for the second objection, that the Antichrist must be identified with some of the present-day antichristian movements, such as Modernism and Bolshevism, the contention will not stand in view of the description given in the passages explained above. Although Modernism arose within the Church and is decidedly and glaringly antichristian in character, it lacks some of the specific points which are associated with the Antichrist, and it has no one exponent who might be regarded as the collective head. Mohammedanism and Bolshevism are both excluded since they originated outside of the Church. The former is spoken of in Rev. 9, 17 ff., and the latter may be included in the forces of Gog and Magog, Rev. 20, 8, 9.

As for the third objection, which would place the rise of Antichrist into the future, this is clearly ruled out by several passages in the Book of Daniel and in the Book of Revelation. For although these books are prophetic books, the explanations interspersed in the prophetic sections almost compel the reader to draw certain conclusions as to the outward form and character as well as to the time of the beginning of Antichrist's kingdom. In Dan. 11, 36 ff. the

description begins with that of Antiochus Epiphanes, but it is expanded almost immediately to include the Antichrist. This is apparent particularly in vv. 44 and 45. The tidings out of the East which troubled the Antichrist were those which set forth the extent of the Oriental secession, and the tidings out of the North were those of the Lutheran Reformation. On account of these tidings, especially the latter, the Antichrist went out with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away with, many, namely, in the Counter-Reformation and in the Inquisition as instigated by the Jesuits. The last words of the chapter are especially significant, for according to them the Antichrist was to plant his tabernacle, his palace, between the seas, over against the mountain of the ornament of holiness, so that his palace was intended as a rival of the ancient seat of Jehovah's power in the midst of His holy people. It should be noted also that the tabernacle of the Antichrist is located between seas, just as the text states.

But we must here include also the passages from the Book of Revelation, especially chap. 13, 11 ff.; 17, 3 ff., particularly vv. 11 and 18; 18, 1 ff. If we summarize all the points concerning the great empires and then make a comparison concerning the last two, it is clear that "the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition," is the Antichrist, the collective head of the Roman system. "The seven heads are seven mountains, where the woman sits on them." The city of seven hills is Rome, and therefore this reference to the Church of the Antichrist, to the Church of Rome, is clear. In this entire paragraph, chap. 17, 9-14, the Roman Empire is conceived of as the continuation of the ancient world empires, of which five have fallen, the Egyptian, the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Persian, and the Greek-Macedonian. At the time when John wrote, the Roman Empire was in power. And as for the seventh ruler and empire, that is undoubtedly to be found in the Christianized Roman Empire, in the kingdom of the Antichrist. The papal state indeed was and is not of great extent, but the dominion of the Pope during the thousand and more years of his kingdom reached far beyond the boundaries of his province, and his influence and authority are still evident in the life of the nations. We quote once more from Mauro (p. 399 ff., *passim*): "Here is information which we should clearly fix in our minds, namely, 1) that the Roman Empire, under which John was living when he wrote this description, was the sixth in the succession of seven Gentile kingdoms and 2) that another was to follow, which should be the last and which would have but a short term of existence." Who is not constrained to think here at once of the end of the old Roman Empire, of the rise of the Papacy, and of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation? There is a succession indeed, but there is also a continua-

tion; there is a restriction at times of temporal, physical power and authority, but there is authority and power nevertheless. But to continue our quotation: "*Romanism* did arise during the course of the existence of the Roman Empire; it is a system of religious character and political aim; and it has been, from the beginning, closely identified with the nations comprising the Roman Empire. . . . The Roman Empire itself arose out of the tumultuous and restless sea of the multitudinous nations, whereas the Papacy, as a political system, arose out of the stabilized part of the world, in fact, in the very heart of the Roman Empire itself. So closely have they been identified from the beginning that the capital city of the empire has been also the seat of the Papacy. . . . Behold, then, the three great actors in the last drama of earth's history: 1) the dragon, the real potency behind it all, though invisible; 2) the beast, the Roman Empire, still existing in its iron framework of civil government and now in process of assuming its final ten-horned form; and 3) the Papacy with its vast organization, its millions of blinded and superstitious devotees, and its steadfast political aim!"

If this short summary of the Scriptural facts concerning the Antichrist as compared with known historical data does not yet carry conviction to some one who may feel reluctant about risking the final identification of the Antichrist as the collective head of Romanism, as the representative person of this amazing system of antichristianism, a further detailed study of all the passages referred to, especially with the aid of Luther, is strongly recommended. (See, for example, his tract against Ambrosius Catharinus in Vol. XVIII, 1434 ff. of the St. Louis Edition.) For we must always remember that Luther was not at first biased against Romanism, but that he was until 1517, and even later, a strong protagonist of the system. Cp. his comments on 1 John 4, 1 ff.

But as for Lutheran theologians, doubt or hesitation is hardly excusable, since our Confessions make such clear statements concerning the Antichrist that the issue is clear-cut. We quote, first, from the Smalcald Articles: "This teaching shows forcefully that the Pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against, Christ, because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which, nevertheless, is nothing and is neither ordained nor commanded by God. This is, properly speaking, to *exalt himself above all that is called God*, as Paul says, 2 Thess. 2, 4. . . . Therefore, just as little as we can worship the devil himself as Lord and God, we can endure his apostle, the Pope, or Antichrist, in his rule as head and lord." (*Conc. Trigl.*, 475, §§ 10. 11. 14.) The last statement is incorporated in the Formula of Concord, 1059, § 20. We quote further from the Smalcald Articles: "Now, it is manifest that

the Roman pontiffs, with their adherents, defend [and practise] godless doctrines and godless services. And the marks [all the vices] of Antichrist plainly agree with the kingdom of the Pope and his adherents. For Paul, 2. Ep. 2, 3, in describing to the Thessalonians Antichrist, calls him *an adversary of Christ*. . . . This being the case, all Christians ought to beware of becoming partakers of the godless doctrine, blasphemies, and unjust cruelty of the Pope. On this account they ought to desert and execrate the Pope with his adherents as the kingdom of Antichrist, just as Christ has commanded, Matt. 7, 15: *Beware of false prophets*. . . . Even though the Bishop of Rome had the primacy by divine right, yet, since he defends godless services and doctrine conflicting with the Gospel, obedience is not due him; yea, it is necessary to resist him as Antichrist. The errors of the Pope are manifest and not trifling." (*Loc. cit.*, 515, § 39; 517, § 41b; 521, § 57.) Other important passages which belong here are 499, § 11; 469, § 25; 417, § 98.

The doctrine of the Antichrist is well summarized by two recent teachers of the Lutheran Church. Hoenecke (*Ev.-Luth. Dogmatik*, IV, 219 ff.) first lists the characteristic features of Antichrist: originating in the midst of the Church, coming after the working of Satan, described as a collective person, having his throne in the midst of the Church of God, coming forward after the removal of the restraining power, and then applies these features to the Papacy. He even makes the following sharp remark: "*Wir sprechen dem, der diesen Artikel nicht glaubt, die Seligkeit nicht ab, wohl aber die lutherische Kirchengemeinschaft.*" — Pieper (*Christl. Dogmatik*, III, 527—534) speaks in a similar strain, giving as the characteristics of Antichrist: apostasy, sitting in the midst of the Church, pretending that he is God, active by the working Satan, remaining to the Last Day. This he applies to the system of Romanism headed by the Pope as a representative person, closing with the words: "*Jeder Lehrer in der christlichen Kirche ist schwach in der Theologie, der, obwohl er mit der historischen Erscheinung des Papstes bekannt ist, im Papsttum nicht den 2 Thess. 2 geweisagten Antichrist erkennt.*"

If we value the pure, the *saving* doctrine of the vicarious atonement through the blood of Jesus Christ, the God-man, in these latter days of the world, we shall do well to keep these facts concerning the Antichrist in mind, so that we may give heed to the prayer of Luther: "*Impleat vos Deus odio papae,*" the hatred being indeed not directed against him as an individual, but against him as the representative of the system of Romanism, as the collective head of an organization of such a pernicious nature that he, and he alone, is rightly called the Antichrist.

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