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Miscellanea

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spite of all hardships which this involved, v. 15. Why? The Word of Jesus constrained him.

To this day the Word exercises like power, Acts 4:20; Matt. 12:34. In the Word we have seen with the eyes of faith our Savior Jesus; in the Word we have heard His message of peace and salvation. In the Word we have tasted of the heavenly gift, Heb. 6:4, 5. This Word opens our mouths and lips, so that they freely confess that Jesus is the Lord.

Let us thank God for this power unto salvation, and let us remain steadfastly loyal to His Word.

TH. LAETSCH

Miscellanea

Antichrist — and the Son of Perdition

(A study of 1 John 2:18, 22 f.; 4:4; 2 John 7, compared with 2 Thess. 2:3-12)

As we make this study, it is understood that the relation between 2 Thess. 2:3-12 and 1 John 2:18 ff. is a matter of exegesis; but that it is important for our understanding of the teaching concerning Antichrist is obvious. The words "for our learning," Rom. 15:4, and "for doctrine," 2 Tim. 3:16, apply also to the entire New Testament.

We offer an exegesis of the John passages only, and not of the paragraph in 2 Thessalonians, since the latter has been previously dealt with in this publication (IV, p. 424 ff.). Besides, the current series of articles on the Eschatological Content of the Epistles to the Thessalonians must not be overlooked.

In 1 John 2:18, 22 f. John addresses his readers in his customary way as *παιδιά*, little children, and then continues: The last hour it is, and just as you heard that Antichrist is coming, and now many antichrists have appeared; whence we understand that it is the last hour. . . . Who is the liar except he who denies that Jesus is the Christ; this is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. Every one who denies the Son does not have the Father either. Chap. 4:3: And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not of God, and this is that (spirit) of the Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he is coming, and now already he is in the world. 2 John 7: For many deceivers went out into the world, those who do not confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh: this is the deceiver and the Antichrist.

Let us analyze the text more exactly. The apostle tells his readers that they heard, namely, as a historical fact, information had reached them, it was a part of the instruction they had received in connection with their religious training, not mere idle gossip or an evanescent bit of news.

The apostle associates this information with *ἑσχάτη ὥρα*, without the article, which gives the expression the connotation peculiar to the New Testament. It usually refers to the entire period beginning with the Apostolic Age and ending with the final coming of the Lord. The

apostle, with his readers, was living at the beginning of this age, or era. Cp. 1 Pet. 1:5, 20.

Ἀντίχριστος, without the article, practically a proper noun, a word indicating an opponent of Christ or a rival and substitute for Christ, or both together, "nicht nur ein Gegner Christi, sondern ein Gegenchristus."

Ἐρχεται, is in the process of coming, although he is at the same time, strange to say, already in the world. "Nach neutestamentlichem Sprachgebrauch futurisch: kommen wird oder soll." (Luthardt, in Strack-Zoekler.) The manner of expressing the thought reminds one of John 1:9, 10, 31, where the Logos is also spoken of as being in the process of coming into the world, namely, for future full revelation, although he was already in the world, having been made flesh and dwelling in the midst of His people.

Ἀντίχριστοι πολλοί, imbued with the same spirit of Antichristianism as the one greatest exponent of this hostility against Christ, but nevertheless πνεύματα, ψευδοπροφήται, of smaller caliber, who exhibit antichristian characteristics, but not in the same degree as the one in whom all these qualities find their highest development and expression.

These facts gave John and others the understanding that the last period of the world had begun, for so the Lord Jesus Himself had prophetically stated, Matt. 24:23, 24.

Antichrist in the full sense of the word is designated as ὁ ψεύστης, the liar in the most absolute and comprehensive sense, the culmination of whose false teaching would actually subvert the very foundation of the Christian religion, one who would undermine the essential facts of even Christology and Soteriology.

These characteristics of Antichrist are further enlarged by the statement, 4:3, that every spirit, everyone professing to be a teacher of the Church, who would vitiate and neutralize the full Biblical confession of Jesus, definitely did not have his origin from God. And, with a slight shift of connotation, which identifies the spirit in the false teacher with the man himself, this is the spirit of that particular Antichrist to whom John had referred in chapter 2 as the one great opponent of Christ, one who would attempt to be a substitute of the one Savior. Even now already this spirit was in the world. Yet he was also in the process of coming, the text thus indicating that no individual person is meant, but an exponent of Antichristianism who would unite in himself all the most insidious opposition to the Christian religion throughout the last great hour of the world.

This thought is brought out also in 2 John 7, for, whereas, according to the apostle, many deceivers went out into the world, namely, by forsaking the company of the true confessors, with whom they should have remained in unity of faith and confession, yet this one, this culmination and personification of all hostility against Christ, would prove to be the deceiver, the Antichrist, *kat' erochen*, the very embodiment of the spirit which is in diametrical contrast to the core of the Gospel, the doctrine of the person and work of Christ.

We now ask: Who is this Antichrist? And who are the many antichrists whom the apostle places alongside the one great exponent of all hostility against Christ?

It may be said, of course, that the situation in the days of the Apostle John forms the background for the admonition given in these passages. And we might think of Gnosticism as a movement which, in one form or other, has been with us practically throughout the centuries. Yet the false teachers of the later Apostolic Age, even the individual ἀντίχριστοι, such as Carpocrates, Basilides, Valentinus, Cerinthus, Bardesanes, the Mandaeans, the Manichaeans, and others, were merely the forerunners and prototypes of all similar false teachers. But this does not exhaust the text, for the position of the one great Antichrist, according to this text, is unique. The double character of our passages, including both the prophetic element and the description of a movement already in evidence, compel us to see here a description of the Antichrist *kat' exochen*, not as an individual, but as a corporate or representative head of a system of falsehood and Antichristianism which culminates in a *de facto* denial of the fundamental facts, both of Christology and Soteriology, as the text so definitely states. In other words, the one great Antichrist, who was even then in the process of coming and whose progressive revelation could be expected throughout the ἰσχύατη ὥρα of the world's history, the one who would, in essence and substance, deny the facts of Soteriology and, by implication as Luther shows, also of Christology, and therefore also of Theology, is none other than the Papacy, with its representative head, the Pope of Rome.

Here the objection will probably be raised: Surely the Pope and the Roman Catholic sect do not deny the incarnation of the Son of God; it does not deny the Father and the Son. It is true, the Roman Church still subscribes to the Ecumenical Creeds and even emphasizes strongly, in parts of its liturgy, its adherence to the deity of Christ. But the word of Scriptures finds its application here: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him," Titus 1:16. No protestation of loyalty to the Scriptural doctrines of the Savior, no matter how vehement, can change the fact that the Roman Church, throughout the centuries, has virtually deposed Christ by its Mariolatry and saint-worship, culminating in the doctrine of the assumption of Mary, thus vitiating the Biblical doctrine of Christology. And in a similar manner, no amount of quibbling can change the fact that this same sect has completely neutralized the entire Scriptural teaching on Soteriology by its condemnation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. (See *C. T. M.*, January, 1942.)

These considerations are further strengthened by a comparison of the pertinent passages in the letters of John with 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12. We find there a parallelism which has been quite commonly acknowledged, by both Lutheran and Reformed theologians and commentators. Note this similarity:

The John Passages

Ἔρχεται
'Αντίχριστος
Πάν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας
οὐκ ἔστιν (ψεύστης)
'Αρνούμενος, πλάνος

2 Thessalonians

Ἐάν μὴ ἔλθῃ
'Ο ἀντικείμενος
Υἱὸς τῆς ἀπολείας, ἐν πάσῃ
δυνάμει ψεύδους
Τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ
ἐδέξαντο

Even those commentators who are not in the Lutheran camp have commented on the parallelism, although some of them do not draw the conclusion that the only phenomenon meeting all the details of both descriptions can be none other than the Papacy. Pieters (in *The Lamb, the Woman, and the Dragon*, p. 199) says: "From the earliest times the Antichrist of St. John and the Man of Sin of St. Paul have been regarded as one and the same. This is now so well established that it is assumed in all modern discussions. I have not found any writer who even raises the question." He makes this statement although he does not share the view.

Braune, in the Lange-Schaff Commentary, has almost an entire paragraph on the obvious similarity, although he also is not ready to identify Antichrist with the Papacy. Luthardt, in the Strack-Zoetker Commentary, notes the parallelism, as does Daechsel in his *Bibelwerk*, Erich Haupt in his *Der erste Brief des Johannes*, Clarke's Commentary (which refers it to the Papacy), and the Pulpit Commentary (which indicates that the Papacy is meant). Buechsel (*Die Johannesbriefe*) writes: "Die Gestalt des Antichristen wird uns greifbar zuerst 2 Thess. 2, 3 ff." Huther states (in Meyer's *Kommentar*): "Mit Recht haben fast saemtliche Ausleger angenommen, dass Johannes unter diesem Feinde denselben versteht, von dem Paulus 2 Thess. 2:3 ff. redet; die Zuege die in der Schilderung des Apostels Paulus und die in den Andeutungen des Johannes hervortreten, entsprechen einander zu sehr, als dass daran gezweifelt werden duerfte."

This is also the position of Lutheran commentators, who are nearer to us in their adherence to Scriptural doctrine and share our conception of the Antichrist. Luther's statement is clear and comprehensive: "Wie es fromme Lehrer vorher gesagt haben, also stehen jetzt die Ketzler auf, als die Cerinther, Ebioniten und andere, welche sie mit einem trefflichen Worte ἀντίχριστοι oder Widerchristen genannt haben. Also, wenn Paulus spricht: 'Es reget sich schon bereits die Bosheit heimlich, ohne dass, der es jetzt aufhaelt, muss hinweggetan werden; und alsdann wird der Boshafte offenbaret werden', 2 Thess. 2:7, so gibt er damit zu verstehen, der wahre Antichrist wuerde in kurzem da sein und verrate schon damals seine Ketzereien. Denn dieser Antichrist streitet wider die Person Christi, ein anderer wider dessen Menschheit, der dritte wider die Gottheit Christi. Dieses sind Widerchristen stueckweise, die Christo nur in gewissen Stuecken zuwider sind, dergleichen die Schwærmer sind. Ein anderer ist wider den ganzen Christum, und dieser ist das Haupt von allen, dergleichen das Papsttum ist. Denn der Hauptartikel christlicher Lehre ist dieser, dass Christus unsere Gerechtigkeit sei. Wer nun diesen angreift, der nimmt uns den ganzen Christum und ist der wahre Widerchrist; Die Uebrigen tun ihm dazu Vorschub. Einer, der Ketzerei wider die Person Christi anrichtet, ist nicht ein so grosser Ketzler, als der Ketzerei wider das Verdienst Christi anstiftet." (IX:1435.)

This view is endorsed by other teachers of the Church, such as A. L. Graebner (in an article on Christology, *Theol. Quart.*, IV, p. 273), also by Zorn in his short exposition of the three Letters of John. And

Lenski writes, in his customary emphatic way: "Those are certainly right who find John's coming Antichrist in Paul's prophecy. . . . The great Antichrist is the Papacy." Only by recognizing this fact shall we do justice to the passages included in this brief investigation. (See *Brief Statement*, C. T. M., Vol. IV, p. 415, § 43.)

P. E. KRETZMANN

D. F. Pieper über den Antichristen

Luther schreibt (XII, 495 f.) über den Gegensatz zwischen der Papstkirche und der christlichen Kirche: „Daraus siehst du, wovon du dich abwendest, das ganze Papsttum mit alle seinem Anhange tobt und wüthet, und wofür sie zu halten sind, die diesen Artikel“ (von der Vergebung der Sünden durch den Glauben an Christum ohne des Gesetzes Werke), „so hier St. Petrus predigt und bestätigt durch aller Propheten und der ganzen Schrift Zeugnis, nicht hören noch leiden wollen und nicht aufhören, darob fromme, unschuldige Leute zu verfolgen; eben mit dem Schein, daß sie die Kirche sein wollen und derselben Namen aufs höchste wider uns rühmen, so sie doch mit ihrer Lehre, Glauben und Tat über sich selbst zeugen, daß sie aller Propheten und also der ganzen Kirche Zeugnis zuwider glauben und lehren. Diese können je nicht die Kirche Christi sein, weil sie so kürztiglich und unverschämt St. Petrus und aller Schrift widersprechen, ja Christum selbst, als das Haupt, in seinem Wort mit Füßen treten, sondern müssen des leidigen Teufels verdammte Rotten sein und der christlichen Kirche höchste Feinde, ärger und schädlicher, denn keine Heiden oder Türken sind.“

Zur Beurteilung der Papstkirche, insofern sie die christliche Rechtfertigungslehre verflucht und aus der Kirche und der Welt zu verbannen sucht, sagten wir früher: *) „Es kann keinen größeren Feind der Kirche Gottes geben als das Papsttum. Die Kirche lebt in der Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und durch dieselbe. Dies ist die geistliche Lebensluft, welche die Christen atmen: ‚Rein Gott ist mir armen Sünder gnädig und macht mich selig nicht auf Grund meiner Werke und meiner eigenen Würdigkeit, sondern um seines menschengewordenen Sohnes Jesu Christi, meines Heilandes, willen.‘ Damit diese Lehre gepredigt werden konnte, ist der Sohn Gottes vom Himmel herabgekommen und hat sein Gottesblut am Kreuze vergossen. Und diese Lehre nun, welche die eigentliche Lebensluft der Christen ist, und in welcher die Frucht des Todes des Sohnes Gottes zum Ausdruck kommt — diese Lehre sucht der Papst nicht nur immerfort auf alle Weise den Christen aus den Herzen zu reißen, indem er die Christen durch seinen falschen Gottesdienst auf eigene Werke und auf Werke der Heiligen führt, sondern diese Lehre verflucht der Papst auch ausdrücklich. Ja, der Papst verflucht alle diejenigen, welche dafürhalten, daß sie allein aus Gnaden um Christi willen gerecht und selig werden. Und obwohl so der Papst durch sein ganzes Kirchentum, ja durch schreckliche Flüche den Christen das nimmt, wodurch allein sie selig werden können, so bindet er doch wiederum die Gewissen der Menschen an sich durch lügenhafte Kräfte, Zeichen und Wunder und durch die Behauptung, keiner könne selig werden, der nicht dem Papste unterworfen sei. Sagen Sie selbst, kann es wohl einen größeren Feind der

*) Vorträge über die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung, S. 65. 66.

Kirche geben als den Papst? Was kann der Kirche Schlimmeres widerfahren, als wenn ihr die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung genommen wird, wodurch allein sie lebt und existiert? Wenn mir jemand das irdische Leben nimmt, so kann er mir danach in irdischen Dingen keinen größeren Schaden mehr zufügen. So nimmt der Papst der Kirche ihr Leben, das geistliche Leben, durch die offizielle Fortnahme der Lehre von der Rechtfertigung. — Man hat an einen Nero erinnert und in seinesgleichen den Antichristen finden wollen. Man hat auf die Ungläubigen hingewiesen und diese für den Antichristen erklärt. Nun ist es wahr, ein Nero und seinesgleichen haben die Christen in Massen in grausamster Weise abgeschlachtet. Aber dabei konnten die Christen ganz fröhlich singen: „Herr Jesu, nimm meinen Geist auf!“ Und das Blut der Märtyrer ist der Same der Kirche geworden. Aber das Papsttum mordet nun schon seit einem Jahrtausend immerfort Millionen geistlich, nachdem es sie unter dem Schein der geistlichen Pflege angelockt hat. Wie töricht ist es daher, wenn man in neuerer Zeit in Napoleon III. den Antichristen hat sehen wollen, und manche seit einigen Jahren sogar zu Boulanger als Antichristen Lust haben. Es ist ebenfalls wahr, die offenbar Ungläubigen sind wütende Feinde der Kirche. Aber was die Christen von den ausgesprochenen Ungläubigen zu halten haben, wissen sie. Durch dieselben werden sie nicht betrogen. — Woher kommt es nun wohl, daß man heutzutage in dem Papst nicht den Antichristen erkennen will? Woher diese befremdliche und traurige Tatsache, daß fast alle neueren, „gläubigen“ Theologen nach dem Antichristen umhersuchen, während derselbe vor ihren Augen groß und mächtig sein Werk in der Kirche hat? Sie stehen nicht in der Lebendigen Erkenntnis der Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und der Wichtigkeit dieser Lehre für die Kirche. Ich muß aus eigener Erfahrung bekennen, daß ich erst dann in meinem Gewissen lebendig überzeugt wurde, daß der Papst der Antichrist sei, als ich einerseits erkannte, was die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung sei, und welche Bedeutung diese Lehre für die Kirche habe, und andererseits, daß das Papsttum in der Leugnung und Verfälschung der Lehre von der Rechtfertigung sein eigentliches Wesen habe und durch den Schein der Frömmigkeit und durch die Behauptung, die alleinseigmachende Kirche zu sein, die Gewissen an sich binde.“ („Christliche Dogmatik“, II, 668—670.)

Luther's Writing of 1542

In 1542 Luther was a sick and weary man who had only four more years to live. Early in 1546 his oft-repeated prayer was heard, and he was translated into glory. Nevertheless, also during the last years of his life Luther continued to be aggressively active. His preaching ministry was carried on without interruption. His correspondence increased to such an extent that he complained that he could do hardly anything else than write letters. He was the faithful and cheerful counselor of thousands of persons of all stations and ranks of life. Of the writings of the great Reformer which appeared in 1542 we mention the following three as meriting special study by our pastors at this time.

The first is *Bruder Richards Verlegung des Alkoran* (*Brother Richard's Exposition of the Koran*), which is found in the *St. Louis*

Edition of Luther's works, XX:2218—2285. To the 224 paragraphs of Brother Richard on Mohammedanism Luther added 33 of his own, in which he exposes and castigates the fraud of that antichristian cult. Of eminent importance in this striking polemic is Luther's declaration: "I do not regard Mahomet as the Antichrist. He is too crude [er macht's zu grob] and has an easily recognized black devil [einen kenntlich schwarzen Teufel] who can deceive neither faith nor reason. But the Pope in our country is the real Antichrist. He has the exalted, subtle, beautiful, resplendent devil, who sits within Christendom." This statement deserves attention especially because in some of his writings Luther occasionally spoke also of Mohammed as the Antichrist, regarding him as on the same level with the Pope. Here, as in his last great polemic against the Pope, "Wider das Papsttum zu Rom, vom Teufel gestiftet," which appeared in the early part of 1545, Luther definitely marks the Pope as the Antichrist, just as he already had done officially in his "Smalcald Articles" in 1537.

A much shorter writing of Luther published in 1542 is his "Trost fuer fromme, gottselige Frauen, denen es unrichtig in Kindesnoeten ergangen ist." You will find it in Vol. X:730—735. Here Luther shows himself a master of pastoral theology, comforting women burdened with the cross of miscarriages and similar troubles. It is a booklet consisting only of nine paragraphs, but every pastor ought to read it not only on account of the comfort which Luther affords in such cases but also because of the high veneration which the great Reformer here shows for Christian motherhood. It is a pity that this wonderful "Trostschrift" should remain unread by the majority of Lutheran ministers.

Luther's "Von den Juden und ihren Luegen" appeared in 1543 but was completed already in December, 1542. The book is divided into four parts, one showing that unbelieving Judaism has no ground upon which to rest its rejection of Christ; another in which he points out by sound exegesis that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah have been fulfilled in Christ; a third which controverts the "lies of the Jews concerning the person of our dear Lord Jesus Christ"; and a fourth, making clear the difference between the Messiah of the Christians and that of the Jews. This monograph of his is found in Vol. XX:1860—2029. No one can read this fine treatise without having his faith in Christ mightily strengthened by Luther's excellent Scripture exposition.

J. T. M.

