



CHAPTER 2

IN WHAT SENSE IS THE ANTICHRIST RIDING INTO HIS JERUSALEM?



HE Antichrist is riding into his Jerusalem in this sense: According to Scripture the vast, sweeping, tyrannical power and the glory which the papacy had accumulated in the past, but which was shattered by the gospel in the Lutheran Reformation, will be restored to the papacy.

The Development of the Papacy and its Gradual Rise to Power. For your warning and defense Holy Writ prophesies the rise to power of the papacy. For instance, in Revelation 13:1-2, John prophesies, “I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.”



The scene in Revelation 13:1-13. A woodcut by Hans Lufft for Revelation 13 in Luther's 1534 and 1545 Bibles. On the right, the seven-headed beast rises out of the sea (verses 1, 2), the third curse of three to come upon the New Testament scene. On the bottom left the lamb-like second beast rises out of the earth, and makes fire come down from heaven in the sight of men (verses 11, 13).

Looking out to sea in the direction of Italy, while standing in spirit on the shore of the Mediterranean, John sees the papacy rise in time, that horrible horned monster, prophesied in the past, which owed its power, place, and authority to the devil.¹ At one point it had not been in existence; but, in time, it assuredly arose, made its appearance, and amassed great power. Its development and rise is summarized as follows:

“The papacy was of gradual growth, and its small beginnings are involved in obscurity. . . . Very early the church at Rome occupied a prominent place, for it was the oldest church in the West and was in the world's capital A growing tendency appears in the history of the first three centuries to accord first the church, and then the bishop, of Rome a preeminence of honor in the Church The fall of the [Roman] empire in the West (476) enabled the Roman bishops to increase their power and to subject one province after another to their spiritual sway. They soon proclaimed themselves the superiors of earthly rulers With [Pope] Gregory I (590-604) began the papacy of the Middle Ages, and documents were forged to uphold all the papal pretensions. While the spread of Islam freed Rome from her Eastern rivals, her missionaries, as they converted the Germanic peoples to Christianity, simultaneously inculcated

[persistently taught] obedience to Rome. [Emperors] Pepin and Charlemagne, in return for papal favors, laid the foundation of the temporal power Through the genius of [Pope] Gregory VII the papacy rose to the meridian of its power, maintaining itself in the ascendancy for more than two centuries (1073-1303) During this time the Popes became lords of the earth. They triumphed over the imperial house of Hohenstaufen, humbled and deposed rulers, bestowed kingdoms, and wielded the scepters of both the spiritual and the political worlds.”²

This is the power which the popes once accumulated. Though they lost it as a result of the Reformation, Scripture prophesies (Revelation 13:12) that they will have it given back to them. This is what is meant by the metaphor “The Antichrist is riding into his Jerusalem.”

The Temporary Obstacle. Also 2nd Thessalonians 2:6-7 prophesies of the rise of the Antichrist, declaring, “Now you know what is restraining . . . for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.”

The Holy Spirit here describes an obstacle that withholds, hinders, and restrains the iniquitous Antichrist from developing at the time of this epistle. Its wicked attitude already was active among Christians; but something was holding back the development of its seat, power, and great authority; something stood in the way.

What was it; and why is this obstacle in verse six also described as a “he” in verse seven? The obstacle was the Roman Empire; “he” was the Roman emperor. Indeed, the pride and the lust for power of the mystery of iniquity was already at work in the first century. Recall the apostle Paul’s admonition to the Ephesian clergy: “After my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29); and Peter’s specific warning to the pastors: “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1st Peter 5:2-3)! Thus the *First Epistle* of Clement, dating from the same century, declared, “Our Apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be contention over the bishop’s office.”³

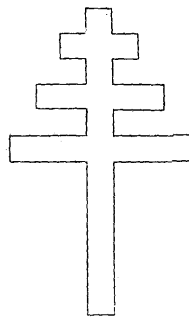
But the development of the papacy was held back, restrained, and suppressed by the power of the Roman Empire and its reigning emperor. “As long as ancient Rome ruled the world, there was no room in the world for the spiritual-temporal monarchy of the Antichrist. Ancient Rome must first fall before a new Rome could be built on its ruins The Roman Empire served as a barrier, for a while at least, to the appearance of the Antichrist.”⁴

As a result, Tertullian freely admitted, “There is also another, even greater obligation for us to pray for the emperors; yes, even for the continuance of the empire in general and for Roman interests. We realize that the tremendous force which is hanging

over the whole world, and the very end of the world with its threat of dreadful afflictions, is arrested for a time by the continued existence of the Roman empire. This event we have no desire to experience, and in praying that it may be deferred, we favor the continuance of Rome.”⁵

Paul relates that he already had told this to the Thessalonians (verse 6). So why then did not the apostle expressly mention the Roman Empire and emperor in 2nd Thessalonians 2:6 and 7? In a letter which Jerome (A.D. 331-420) wrote (A.D. 406) to a lady of Gaul named Algasis, he responded to her eleventh question, “What is the meaning of 2nd Thess. 2:3?” with the reply: “If he [Paul] openly and unreservedly were to have said, ‘Antichrist will not come unless the Roman Empire first be destroyed’, the infant church would have been exposed in consequence to persecution,”⁶ for the Romans held that they were to rule forever.⁷

The Early Christian Church could have deduced from Numerous Prophecies of the Antichrist in Scripture a very Accurate Picture of the Antichrist. For example, the apostolic Christians should have known that the city of the Antichrist would be in Rome. Already centuries before this Daniel 11:45 had related that his home would be between two seas (the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian). Peter in his first epistle (5:13) referred to Rome by the name “Babylon.” What is more, since Daniel chapter seven reported that the Antichrist would be a little horn that grew out of the fourth world power, namely, Rome; and in that the Antichrist beast in Revelation 17:9 “sits” on seven hills (of Rome); and in that this same beast is described in the following verses (Revelation 17:10-11) as the “eighth” power (five had fallen: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek; one was still active at the time of the writing of the book of Revelation - Roman; and the seventh would be the Holy Roman Empire), the Antichrist would have a lot to do with the old Roman Empire. Indeed, with the Antichrist sitting in the temple of God, it would have to be a Christianized Roman Empire, albeit a distorted Christian one. In addition, the “number of the beast” (Revelation 13:18) was known to the early church to be *Lateinos*, that is, “the Latin one” (“the Roman”) according to Irenaeus.



The papal cross.
This is the cross which is carried before
the pope, and may be used by no one else.

Since it also would take years, even centuries, for someone like the Antichrist to dupe most of the church, to rise to its pinnacle of power, to be revealed to the church as a hoax, and finally, to last until Judgment Day (Revelation 19:20), the early Christians

could and should have assumed that it would be an office like a kingly office, or like the office of the emperor with which they were quite familiar, that is, it would be filled with a long succession of men.

Thus all of these features should have come as no surprise to the early church. Early on, indeed, from its inception, the papacy at Rome needed no revelation as the Antichrist. But because of the “falling away” (2nd Thessalonians 2:3) of almost the entire Christian church into spiritual darkness and unbelief; because of the lack of gospel light; and because of the great deception by the papacy, it needed a revelation.

Yet what did the Early Christians actually think about the Antichrist? Their thoughts are revealed in the writings of the early clergy and theologians, the so-called church fathers. For instance, “Irenaeus [A.D. 140] describes him as summing up the apostasy [the “falling away”] in himself Tertullian [A.D. 150] identifies him with the Beast, and supposes him to be about to arise on the fall of the Roman empire Cyprian [A.D. 250] sees him typified in Antiochus Epiphanes Chrysostom [A.D. 347] as *ἀντιθεός τις* sitting in the Temple of God, that is, in all the churches.”⁸ While these church fathers were unanimous in the belief that the Antichrist would be a single person, not a series or a succession of men occupying the same position, and bearing the same name, Augustine (354-430) is the first to profess a collective interpretation, broadening the term “Antichrist” to include others beside himself, in this case, his followers.⁹

Just the same, centuries after this, even after the devil had raised up the papacy to its terrible fully developed state, and the antichristian facts of the papacy were evident for all to see, the prevailing ideas about the Antichrist were still off base. This was due to the spiritual darkness in the church. For example,

“The received opinion of the twelfth century is brought before us in a striking and dramatic manner at the interview between King Richard I. and the Abbot Joachim at Messina, as the king was on his way to the Holy Land. ‘I thought’, said the king, ‘that Antichrist would be born in Antioch or in Babylon, and of the tribe of Dan; and would reign in the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem; and would walk in that land in which Christ walked; and would reign in it for three years and a half; and would dispute against Elijah and Enoch, and would kill them; and would afterwards die; and that after his death God would give sixty days of repentance, in which those might repent which should have erred from the way of truth, and have been seduced by the preaching of Antichrist and his false prophets’. This seems to have been the view defended by the archbishops of Rouen and Auxerre and by the bishop of Bayonne, who were present at the interview; but it was not Joachim’s opinion. He maintained [the Antichrist] . . . was shortly to come, being already born in the city of Rome, and about to be elevated to the Apostolic See (Roger de Hoveden in *Richard I.*,

anno 1190). In his own work on the Apocalypse Joachim speaks of the second Apocalyptic beast as being governed by ‘some great prelate who will be like Simon Magus, and as it were universal pontiff throughout the world, and be that very Antichrist of whom St. Paul speaks’. These are very noticeable words. Gregory I. had long since (A.D. 590) declared that any man who held even the shadow of the power which the popes of Rome soon after his time arrogated to themselves, would be the precursor of Antichrist. Arnulphus bishop of Orleans (or perhaps Gerbert), in an invective against John XV. at the Council of Rheims, A.D. 991, had declared that if the Roman pontiff was destitute of charity and puffed up with knowledge, he was Antichrist — if destitute both of charity and of knowledge, that he was a lifeless stone (Mansi, tom. ix. p.132, Ven. 1774); but Joachim is the first to suggest, not that such and such a pontiff was Antichrist, but that the Antichrist would be a *Universalis Pontifex*, and that he would occupy the Apostolic See. Still, however, we have no hint of an order or succession of men being the Antichrist. It is an actual, living, individual man that Joachim contemplates.

“The master had said that a pope would be the Antichrist; his followers began to whisper that it was *the* Pope. Amalric, professor of logic and theology at Paris at the end of the 12th century, appears to have been the first to have put forth the idea. It was taken up by three different classes; by the moralists, who were scandalized at the laxity of the Papal Court; by the Imperialists, in their temporal struggle with the Papacy; and, perhaps independently, by the Waldenses and their followers in their spiritual struggle.”¹⁰

When the German emperors in their rivalries with the popes applied the title “Antichrist” to them, they did it not according to scriptural knowledge, but according to zeal [Romans 10:2].

An Enlightened Appraisal of the Papacy. Nevertheless, a few centuries before Luther some individual believers and groups of believers, not a part of the “falling away” from the apostolic faith, did come to the conclusion that the papacy is the Antichrist on the basis of Scripture through the enlightenment and regeneration of the Holy Spirit. For instance, “the Hussites followed the Waldenses in this theory of Antichrist, applying to it the papal system. So did Wickliff and his followers Lord Cobham (Sir John Oldcastle), executed as a Wickliffite, 1417, declared to King Henry V that, ‘as sure as God’s word is true, the pope is the great Antichrist foretold in Holy Writ’.”¹¹

Just the same, it is Luther who is credited by God’s Word with the Revelation of the Antichrist (2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8). No other revelation of the Antichrist was as extensive as Luther’s; no other identification received as much worldwide attention and acceptance. Wycliff, Huss, and others before Luther had taught that the pope is the Antichrist. But their revelation of him did not get very far. Why not? incidentally,

because they often confused law and gospel as part of their creed; primarily, because God chose Martin Luther to head his Reformation, and would bless his efforts.¹² As God raised up Moses, and none other, to free the Israelites; as the Lord prophesied of and raised up John the Baptist, and none other, for the pre-Messianic preparatory work; so the Lord raised up Martin Luther for the revelation of the Antichrist.

First of all, Luther personally recognized the papacy as the Antichrist - not from carnal motives - but on the basis of Holy Writ through the enlightenment of the Spirit of God.

What is more, Luther revealed the Antichrist in the full sense of the word, that is to say, not only was the general unbelieving public informed, but specifically, millions were brought to believe that the papacy is the Antichrist. This was accomplished after Luther and his followers, such as Bugenhagen, preached the old apostolic gospel, and millions came to faith; and having been regenerated, they also were enlightened by the Spirit to view the papacy according to its biblical prophecies. They saw it with the eyes of an enlightened vision. Without such regenerated vision, the believing public could not have seen the papacy for what it truly is; nor would they have been convinced of it; for the revealed things of God are foolishness to the natural man; neither could he know them (1st Corinthians 2:14). Hence the papacy would not have been revealed, so to speak. But by regenerating millions of minds with the gospel, Luther's writings brought them to see that the pope is the Antichrist.

Thus, even though the fact that the papacy is the Antichrist was present and demonstrable throughout the Dark Ages; though others had called attention to this fact, alerting the church to recognize this fact; still, the gospel - a widely published gospel - was needed to open the spiritual eyes of the people to this fact; for just as no one "can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1st Corinthians 12:3), so no one properly could say that the pope is the Antichrist but by the Holy Spirit. Yet this revelation was accomplished by Luther on a grand scale, and the papacy was exposed as the Antichrist according to Holy Writ's own description and promise (2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, & 8).

A Prophecy contains a Promise. A word should be said here about the nature of scriptural prophecy, namely, that it contains a promise. That is to say, in a prophecy God not only tells you in advance about what he is going to do, but he also promises it. Consequently, in that he is giving you a promise, you must respond accordingly; that is, you must take it to heart, accept it as truth, trust in it, and not ever treat it as a novelty! In fact, if the prophecy would be a gospel promise, that is, if it would guarantee to you salvation, protection, assistance, or deliverance, you also must treat it as such, and not neglect to do so! You must derive comfort from it, and teach and exhort others to derive comfort from it also!

For this purpose, then, the prophecies in Revelation are intended to serve the elect: not only to caution and to inform them; not only to prepare and to alert them, but especially to assure them of the Lord's high help and deliverance; to guarantee to them that their strong Shield and Defender will not leave them helpless. It is this aspect of the

prophecies in Revelation and 2nd Thessalonians that must be brought out for the comfort of our congregations. Indeed, this is primarily why these prophecies have been written. What good will they be, then, if you would fail to use these prophecies ahead of time as they were intended? Remember the Lord's rebuke to the Emmaus disciples and to doubting Thomas (Luke 24:25; John 20:27, 29)!

Further Biblical Prophecies concerning Luther. In order to impress upon his church that he surely would deliver them, and that they would have another scriptural prophecy in which they could take calming comfort, the Lord prophesied of the revelation of the Antichrist by Luther not only in 2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8, but also in Revelation 13:3a.

2nd Thessalonians 2:3: Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.

Revelation 13:3a: I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded.

6 - And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

8 - And then the lawless one will be revealed.

“The papacy did receive a mortal blow from the Reformation.”¹³ Luther's gospel doctrine, and the power which that gospel has over the power of darkness (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12; 2nd Corinthians 4:6) is what gave the papacy a deadly blow in the Reformation. “Through Luther's word, work and fearless testimony the Roman papacy received a wound”¹⁴; “the deadly blow dealt it [the papacy] by the Reformation.”¹⁵

“Luther has unmasked the Papacy, so that today anyone may know it and guard against it. In truth, the Reformation consisted in the discovery and exposure of the Pope as the Antichrist. That was the turning point in Luther's work when . . . he came to the conviction that Antichrist sat in Rome and from that seat on the seven hills spread his tentacles over all lands. So this doctrine that the Papacy is the Antichrist is most closely connected with the Reformation; it was then and by that work that Antichrist was revealed. He is not killed, not entirely destroyed; but he is continually being consumed by the Word of our God; he has lost his power except over those who willingly submit to him. That, too, became evident in the days of the Reformation. Every reform movement before that time was killed by the Pope's ban and interdict. Why not Luther's Reformation? Why did not the Pope lay the interdict on Germany or Saxony after he had excommunicated Luther? He threatened it; but by that time Luther had written his *Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* and his book *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. He had

proved to Christian people that the Pope has no power to ban individuals or whole countries and close heaven to them; so he had freed them from the fear of the Pope; and [Popes] Leo X and Clement VII knew that any attempt to lay the interdict on Germany would meet with contempt and derision. So the Pope's power and tyranny is broken. The fact that this essay can be read here is proof that the Papacy has lost its power."¹⁶

"Through the Reformation, God definitely broke the power of the papacy, and since then, despite all efforts of the Jesuits and others, papal power has been only an emaciated [thin] shadow of its former self. Even so-called Catholic countries have shown themselves less and less tractable [easily managed] to the political intrigues of the Roman Curia and have enacted laws to curb the power of the hierarchy and to protect their own sovereignty."¹⁷

"The theocratic systems of Hildebrand had perished beyond redemption. Even Catholic princes refused to be any longer ruled in political affairs by the vicegerent of Christ. The ban had lost its power, but the popes still strove to rescue the idea, even where they had to yield the fact, and never ceased to enter impotent protests against measures of which they disapproved."¹⁸

The revelation of the papacy (2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8) and its deadly blow (Revelation 13:3a) is expressed likewise in the prophecy of Revelation 14:8 in the words "is fallen, is fallen."

2nd Thessalonians 2:3: Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.

Revelation 13:3a: I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded.

Revelation 14:8: And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

6 - And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

8 - And then the lawless one will be revealed.

The prophecy of 2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8 describes the object (papacy), the time (after the "falling away" but before the Last Day), the purpose (to reveal), and the effect (exposure) of Luther's Reformation.

The prophecy of Revelation 13:3a describes the object (papacy), the purpose (to wound fatally), and the effect (fatal wounding) of Luther's Reformation.

The prophecy of Revelation 14:8 describes the subject (Luther), the object (papacy), the purpose (to topple), the effect (signal defeat), and an unmistakable, identifiable mark (the Babylonian Captivity metaphor) of Luther's Reformation.

Luther is the Second Messenger. Revelation 14:8 bears out that Martin Luther was a chosen instrument of God, for he was raised up at a critical time to clean house in the church, and to restore the cheering gospel to a troubled peace-robbled world.

The term "Babylon" refers to the papacy at Rome (Revelation 17:3-5, 9, 18), a New Testament power similar to that of the city/state, world power Babylon of old that had captured the church of God and had enslaved it for years. Indeed, the papacy had made millions over the centuries become unfaithful to the gospel by getting them drunk with its wine, that is, by deceiving, tempting, and spiritually seducing them with clever false doctrines, and by a pretense of godliness, with the result that God's wrath was kindled against them for their unbelief and blasphemy. As punishment for leading so many captive into damnation, the Almighty struck the papacy a mighty blow.

As a result, this new version of Babylon fell mightily, that is to say, its power and hold over millions of church members through its clever, godless hoaxes were broken when it was exposed as a fraud by the Lutheran Reformation. This tremendous turning point in church history, this remarkable earth-moving reform was accomplished by Martin Luther, who, through his writing *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in 1520, and by other writings, got millions to see through regenerated eyes the faith-killing fraud of the Roman Catholic system, and the true path to heaven.

Subsequently, the gospel took off like a shot across Europe and beyond, to the extent that whole nations were converted in a matter of years. How was it that the Lutheran Reformation spread so far? It was because God had raised up Martin Luther.

Hence the second angel, or messenger, predicted and taught by Revelation 14:8, who caused and then announced the results of Rome's disastrous demise, was none other than Luther, for nothing in church history fits the Revelation 14:8 prophecy but Luther and his Reformation.

Indeed, the angel in Revelation 14:8 is no one else than Luther. In the original Greek of the New Testament the word "angel" means "messenger." This word could mean either those holy, bodiless spirits that serve God, or it could mean a person, a human being, a messenger that is sent by people (Galatians 4:14), or by God. John the Baptist is described as a messenger sent by God (Matthew 11:10-11). In Matthew 11:10 the *New King James Version* accurately translates the Greek with the word "messenger" instead of "angel." Still, in the book of Revelation, the *New King James Version* also frequently uses the word "angel" where a human messenger obviously is meant. For example, the angels of the seven churches in Revelation are not invisible spirits, but the

pastors of these respective churches (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). A more accurate translation in this place would have been “messenger.”

In Revelation 14:6, 8, 9 the Greek word for “angel” or “messenger” also occurs. From the internal and external evidence, it is not three, bodiless spirits that are being spoken of, but three, human messengers, each so special and so important that Scripture went to the great length of prophesying of their messages and missions to the church centuries before their appearances, as Holy Writ but rarely has done before, as in the case of John the Baptist (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 11:10-11).

For instance, not only Revelation 14:8, but also verses 6 and 7, and verses 9 to 11 refer to human messengers, because, in the first place, as is stated in verse 6, the gospel is to be preached “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” “Now God has His Gospel preached by men and not by angels from heaven”;¹⁹ just as the man John was told to prophesy again before many peoples, nations, and tongues (Revelation 10:11).

“It is also well to observe that Luther is fitly called an angel according to the original signification of this word. Angel in the original means messenger, one who is sent and who does not come of his own accord. In this original sense of the word Luther was indeed an angel; for God made him the reformer of the church when Luther himself had never thought of undertaking any such thing.”²⁰

But why has Revelation 14:6-11 described the first (and the other two) as flying in the middle of heaven (verse 6) since it is a man and not an angel?

Lenski replies: “The beast with his antichristian deceit, propaganda, and tyranny comes up ‘out of the earth’ (13:11); this angel with the Gospel appears ‘flying in mid heaven’. He and his message are from above, from heaven and God. Neither the dragon nor the dragon’s two beasts [Revelation 13:1, 11] can reach him ‘in mid heaven’ and stop his gospeling . . . they are unable to reach this divine messenger ‘in mid heaven’ and to smother his ‘great voice’.”²¹

Hence Revelation 14:8 describes not an angel, but a human messenger; and that messenger is Martin Luther.

This is substantiated by the fact that Luther pronounced the fall of the papacy, and contributed to its fall by the use of God’s Word, which is described and taught in the words, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen.”



The scenes in Revelation 14:1-11. Another woodcut by Hans Lufft from Luther's Bibles of 1534 and 1545. The left and the top depict verses 1-5. The right and middle of the picture portray verses 6-11, the three angels; the one on the left holds the everlasting gospel, the middle one holds grapes of wine, and the one on the right pours out wine of fiery wrath. Below them is the fall of Rome, the great city, Babylon (verse 8).

The Greek word for “is fallen” means “to fall, to be destroyed,” “expressing what has just happened.”²² The reason why the words “is fallen” are repeated is explained thus: The “repetition of the verb [is] for emphasis . . . This is to remove all possibility of doubt.”²³

“We must not forget Luther’s peculiar mission, which was, as rightly declared by Elector John Frederick, the Magnanimous, the overthrow of popery. ‘Hence’, says the Elector, ‘Luther uses such violent words not without good reason. His intention is not to convert popery, which is not possible, and therefore popery needs no fair words. Luther’s avowed purpose is to show up popery so plainly that everybody may clearly recognize its abomination, and learn to beware of it’.”²⁴

“What was Luther’s work when he undertook the Reformation? His great work consisted in exposing, dethroning, and putting out the pope who had made such havoc in the Church of God.”²⁵

Luther: “The Kingdom of Antichrist begins to fall. I see an insuppressible insurrection coming out of this bull” (from a letter of Luther to Spalatin discussing the papal bull which demanded that Luther recant the gospel in 1520).²⁶

This was the “effect of the Reformation: it brought about the exposure and fall of . . . Rome.”²⁷

Luther liberates the Captives of Babylon. Listen to the following testimonies attest to the fact that the papacy’s reign over the church was indeed a Babylonian captivity.

“The great Babylon, namely the papal church, actually fell through the work of the Reformation; her walls were demolished, and her portals were opened, so that God’s people, who up to that time had been incarcerated behind locked doors, were now able to march out.”²⁸

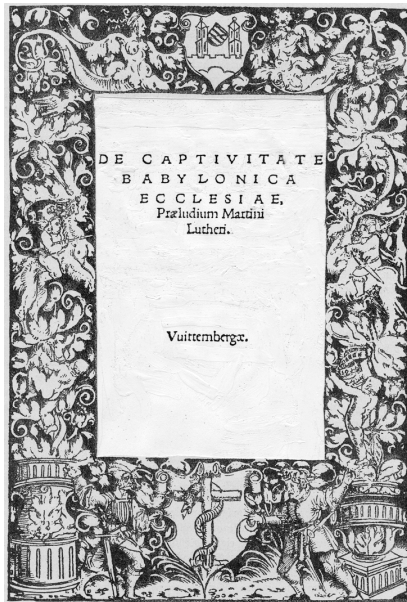
“Babylon would fall, the power of Rome would be broken . . . by the preaching of Martin Luther.”²⁹

The truths which Luther had brought to light “had gone home to the heart of millions suffering under the yoke of Roman bondage.”³⁰

“Like the true Nebuchadnezzar, the Romish Pope had led the people of the New Covenant away into the captivity of a spiritual Babylon; robbed the Temple of the Church of its adornments, holy vessels, and furniture; profaned and corrupted it; and finally converted it into a heap of ruins. The tyranny over conscience in the papacy, by means of the numberless commandments of men, was the captivity; the hidden concealment, yea, the execration, of the Gospel and the prohibition of the Bible were the robbery of the Church The Jesuit Cardinal Bellarmine was compelled, among other things, to make the following confession: ‘Several years prior to the breaking out of the Lutheran heresy there was no discipline in regard to morals, no knowledge of holy science, no reverence for holy things; scarcely was there anything remaining of religion’ The Babylonian captivity of the people of the Old Covenant and the destruction of its Temple were a prophetic picture of the desolation preceding the Reformation of the Church of the New Covenant.”³¹

Not only could the papacy’s enslavement of the Christian church at Luther’s time be likened to the Babylonian Captivity, but Revelation 14:8 also prophesied that Luther would use this very metaphor in his war against the papacy.

The Metaphor. By his booklet *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and by other, similar writings, Luther pronounced and contributed to the downfall of the papacy, using scriptural language, likening the papacy to the ungodly, corrupt Old Testament kingdom of Babylon, and pronouncing it powerless. “Babylon is fallen, is fallen” (Isaiah 21:9) is an accurate description of Luther’s manner of writing, of his fight against the Antichrist, and of his victorious outcome by the grace of God.



The title page of Luther's writing (in Latin) *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, published in Wittenberg in 1520. The coat of arms of Wittenberg is represented at the top center, the brass snake of Moses at the bottom.

“During the summer of 1520 he [Luther] delivered to the printer a sheaf of tracts The most radical of them all in the eyes of contemporaries was the one dealing with the sacraments, entitled *The Babylonian Captivity* This assault on Catholic teaching was more devastating than anything that had preceded.”³²

“In *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, Luther demolished the three walls behind which Rome sat entrenched in her spiritual-temporal power. Now in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* he enters and takes her central stronghold and sanctuary - the sacramental system by which she accompanied and controlled her members from the cradle to the grave.

“The theme that is presented by the Prelude Luther calls *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. The reference is clear from the contents of the document: just as the Jews were carried away from Jerusalem into captivity under the tyranny of the Babylonian Empire, so in Europe the Christians have been carried away from the Scriptures and made subject to the tyranny of the papacy. This tyranny has been exercised by the misuse of the sacraments.”³³

“By this most emphatic writing the heart of Rome's doctrine was cut out.”³⁴

“Luther stalks through the Church and with a rod of iron smites these deadly superstitions as a potter’s vessels, and only potsherds remain. He knocked away the underpinning, and papal dominion fell with a crash, and great was the fall thereof The Kaiser’s confessor, the French Franciscan Glapion, could not believe the work [*On the Babylonian Captivity*] was written by Luther; on reading it, he felt ‘as if one had scourged him from head to foot’. In Rome Katharinus attacked it with his pen; at Paris the University condemned it; at London King Henry VIII wrote a book against Luther’s book Bugenhagen, the rector of Trepow, in Pomerania, read it and angrily flung it to the ground, ‘No worse heretic has ever attacked the Church’; but he picked it up, studied the arguments, and said, ‘The whole world is blind; Luther alone sees the truth’! . . . From Rome to London was felt the earthquake in the Church caused by the pen of this terrible monk. Preserved Smith says: ‘The doctrines it taught have become fundamental to all reformed systems of theology’.”³⁵

Where did Luther get the idea for the metaphor, “the Babylonian Captivity”? Either he got it from Rev. 17, or he came by it from the following source: “When the pious monk, Dr. Fleck, found these [95] theses posted up at Steinlausig and had read a portion of them, he exclaimed in the height of his joy: ‘Ho, ho! this man will accomplish it: he comes, upon whom we have waited so long’. He then wrote a very consoling letter to Luther and exhorted him to go on in good cheer, as he was on the right path, and God and all the prayers of the captives in the Romish Babylon would be with him.”³⁶

See the first paragraph on page 32! Luther recognized that the papacy was the Babylon of Revelation 17. He intended to refer to it publicly in his *Babylonian Captivity* booklet, drawing the inference which biblically is called for in Revelation 17. To be sure, in doing so Luther was oblivious to the fact that he was fulfilling Revelation 14:8. Nevertheless, his choice of the metaphor was called for, indeed, it was demanded by the divinely-arranged circumstances at this time.

Furthermore, as the prophecies of the holy Scriptures concerning the Antichrist have been fulfilled in the pope of Rome and in his rule, this biblical doctrine being clearly defined in the holy Scriptures; as the prophecies of the holy Scriptures in Isaiah and in Malachi concerning the forerunner of the Messiah have been fulfilled in John, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, this biblical doctrine likewise being defined in the holy Scriptures with sufficient and assured clarity; so also in the prophecy of Revelation 14:8 regarding the biblical message of the Second Messenger, the holy Scriptures teach that Martin Luther would use the “Babylonian captivity” metaphor. This is a biblical doctrine being defined clearly in the holy Scriptures.

Be aware that the Scriptures’ use of the name “Babylon” in Revelation 17 means the same thing as the term “Babylonian captivity”! These terms are synonymous. Indeed, the word “captivity” is redundant.

Though the subject “Babylon” has been changed into an adjective in the subsequent term “Babylonian captivity”; while the word “captivity,” in fact, has taken on the preponderance of the meaning, the Scriptures still chose the simple term “Babylon” for Revelation 17 in order to convey the meaning “spiritual captivity.” In fact, if the meaning of “spiritual captivity” would not be assigned to it, the word “Babylon” will not make any sense. Therefore, realize that in Revelation 17 the Scriptures are teaching not of a mere authority, but of an authority whose singular pertinent relevant feature is a captivity, because it is a captivity; indeed, an ungodly cruel spiritual enslavement of God’s people! This is the point which the Scriptures make in Revelation 17 by their choice of the singular name “Babylon.”

In this regard, keep in mind that the language of Revelation has been so ordered to picture one thing that is familiar to you in order to describe clearly for you a future subject which is unfamiliar to you!

Thus, when the Scriptures prophesy of and teach in Revelation 14:8 that in his teaching office, Martin Luther would use this very metaphor from Revelation 17, his awaiting audience could and should have expected him to use it, being divinely assured of it. In other words, it was prophesied that in that teaching capacity to which God had called him, Martin Luther neither would pronounce the sound “Babylon” merely with his mouth, nor simply write its letters down on paper with his pen, but rather that Luther publicly would teach this term in the singular sense of Revelation 17, which is “Babylonian captivity.” This is what Revelation 14:8 teaches. See it! Nod your head to it!

In addition, in Revelation 14:8 the Scriptures also teach that Martin Luther would use this term in order to identify the papacy with that authority which is prophesied by the Bible in Revelation 17.

Therefore, Revelation 14:8 is not a case, for instance, in which Martin Luther simply mulled over various metaphors from which he possibly could select one to use as an attention-getting, literary device, such as “Israel is enslaved in Egyptian darkness,” and finally settled on “Babylonian captivity” for arbitrary reasons.

Neither is Revelation 14:8 a case in which God merely was able to look into the future according to his omniscience, and to report to you on his findings. Rather, as it is the case of all of his biblical prophecies, Revelation 14:8 informs you ahead of time of what God has planned to do for you, for the purpose of your faith’s reassurance; and that in fulfilling his prophecies, he assuredly will carry out his plan to the letter, using his predetermined characters, action, speech, and plot.

Thus, because this is a doctrinal matter, Revelation 14:8 does not allow for any differences in interpretation.

In addition to the blow which the Almighty gave the papacy in the Reformation, he also punished the papacy through war. Three times Catholic armies invaded and sacked Rome from 1526 to 1527.

For instance, “Ugo do Moncada, the Kaiser’s [Emperor Charles the Fifth’s] envoy, and Pompeo Colonna, the Pope’s Cardinal, let loose their troops on the Pope. Not a Roman hand was raised to help the Pope, who had taxed his people almost to starvation. The Kaiser’s eagle floated over the Vatican. Imprisoned in St. Angelo, the Pope could watch the plundering of his palace on September 20, 1526. Relics, crosses, sacred vessels, and vestments were stolen, and even the altar of St. Peter’s was robbed. Soldiers wore the white garments and the red cap of the Pope and in mockery gave the papal blessing. A cardinal driving the Holy Father from the Vatican and looting his furniture - what a sight!”³⁷

On May 6, 1527, Catholic troops again stormed the city. Though the pope and some cardinals were able to escape to the castle St. Angelo, “the Catholic soldiers dressed like cardinals, marched to the Castle, proclaimed Luther Pope, and threatened to hang Pope Clement VII.”³⁸

On September 25, 1527, Rome was sacked for the third time.

“Lope de Soria, Karl’s [Charles the Fifth’s] ambassador to Genoa, advised the Kaiser to end the temporal power of the Popes, who were the causes of all the wars he had seen during his residence of twenty-eight years in Italy. Chancellor Gattinara’s nephew awaited the Kaiser’s decision whether any sort of apostolic chair were to remain at Rome or not! Macchiavelli desired the end of the Papacy as the root of all evil.”³⁹

“Bishop Stafileo said to the Rota on May 15, 1528, God’s punishment had come ‘because all flesh has become corrupt, because we are not citizens of the holy city of Rome, but of Babylon, the city of corruption’. He called Rome the whore of Babylon, and said the Lord had driven the buyers and sellers from His temple.”⁴⁰

Since Martin Luther was the Second Messenger (Revelation 14:8), who, then, was the First (Revelation 14:6-7)?

To arrive at the identity of the first messenger, one must do as was done in the case of Luther, and in the case of the papacy in chapter 1; namely, one must look at Holy Writ (Revelation 14:6-7), and compare it with the pertinent and relevant evidence, scriptural or historical. Then an inference should be drawn from it. (On the method of drawing inferences, see chapter 1, page 44-45!)

The description of the first messenger (Revelation 14:6-7) matches up with the following evidence from the books of Acts and Romans:

Romans 15:15-17, & 19

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on *some* points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God,

16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

17 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things *which pertain* to God.

19 in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Revelation 14:6

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth - to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people -

Acts 14:15

Acts 17:24 & 31

Revelation 14:7

saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them."

24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

31 "because He has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

The person that is making these statements is the apostle Paul. Paul was the messenger described by Revelation 14:6-7. There Scripture speaks and teaches of Paul, just as it spoke and taught of John the Baptist as the messenger in Malachi 3:1. Consult Matthew 11:10-11! In Revelation 14:6-7 Holy Writ is describing Paul and the influence which he had in the spread of the gospel by his several missionary journeys, and by his New Testament epistles. The main mission of Paul had been to spread the gospel especially to all of the non-Jewish people in the known world around the Mediterranean (Romans 15:19; 16:26). In Acts 13:2 the Holy Spirit commanded, “Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” as foreign missionaries. Though Paul wore other hats, so to speak, this was his mission according to the Spirit of God (Acts 9:15).



The Acts of Paul and Thekla, based on a first-century document, describe Paul as “a man small in size, bald-headed, bow-legged, strongly built, with meeting eyebrows, and a rather large nose: full of grace, for at times he looked like a man, and at times he had the face of an angel.”

For instance, the first messenger is described as having a “loud” voice (Revelation 14:7). In contrast to a quiet voice, which only few would hear, Paul indeed had a “loud” voice. Not a few, but many in many different lands took notice of his gospel message. The book of Acts has recorded Paul’s preaching to the different, unbelieving people in different lands.

Omit one of the apostles from New Testament history, such as Peter or John, and the unfortunate loss would not be as significant as if Paul were omitted!⁴¹ Without Paul, his influence, his missionary journeys, and his thirteen new Testament epistles, the early New Testament church would not have had the phenomenal growth and size which it had by the grace of God at the end of Paul’s life.⁴² Paul plays such an outstanding part in the spread of the gospel (1st Corinthians 15:10) that he is mentioned in nineteen out of twenty-eight chapters in Acts.



The Second and Third Messengers are sent by God to deal with the critical issue of the papacy (Revelation 14:8 and 9-11). Why did not the First Messenger also deal with so critical a problem, “the third curse” (Revelation 9:12; 11:14), as the papacy?⁴³ The reason is that the papacy still had not arisen in Paul’s day. It had not been a tangible force with which to be reckoned. Though the pride and the wickedness of the mystery of lawlessness was already at work during Paul’s lifetime (2nd Thessalonians 2:7), it was being held back for the time being (2nd Thessalonians 2:6-7).

The Resemblance of Luther to Paul. Something should be said about the God-ordained resemblance between Luther and the First Messenger Paul. These two, special messengers that God had seen fit to raise up for the best interests of his church were very much alike. Indeed, they were similar to the previous, outstanding messengers sent by God, namely, Elijah and John the Baptist. For instance, “He [Luther] so entirely agreed with Paul that Julius Hare called the Apostle a ‘Luther before Luther’.”⁴⁴ Renan thinks to disparage Paul by calling him a Protestant, the forerunner and author of Protestantism.⁴⁵

“Luther’s defense of such cardinal doctrines was Pauline The spirit of the early Church had revived in Martin Luther. His entire approach to theology was apostolic. There was the same emphasis upon the great cardinal doctrines of sin and grace Though almost fifteen centuries had passed since the martyrdom of Paul, Martin Luther was raised to continue his work. One may call him a post-Apostolic Church Father. If not in point of time, he certainly was such in point of doctrine. Julius Hare says of the Reformer: ‘Though Luther was not what is technically termed a Father and could not be so from the period when for the good of mankind it was ordained that he should be born, yet it has pleased God that he, above all other men since the days of the Apostles, should, in the truest and highest sense, be a Father in Christ’s church, yea, the human father and nourisher of the spiritual life of millions of souls, for generation after generation’.”⁴⁶



The Reformation by Wilhelm von Kaulbach (1805-1874).

The artist depicts how all science and art, music and painting, learning and printing, flourished during the 1500's and thereafter because Luther stood in the center of it all with the open Bible. Consult 2nd Corinthians 3:17: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"!

"Among great benefactors, Martin Luther is one of the most illustrious. He headed the Protestant Reformation. This movement is so completely linked with literature, the religion, the education, the prosperity, yea, even the political history of Europe and America that it is the most important and interesting of all modern historical changes." (Dr. John Lord.)

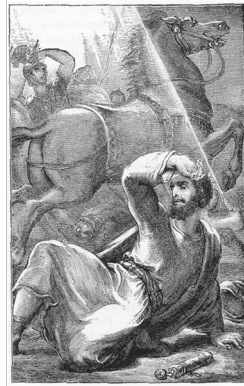
Frederick Farrar, in his book *Life of St. Paul*, is quoted as remarking,

"As a Reformer, who altered the entire course of history, Luther alone resembles St. Paul. What the Reformer did when he nailed his theses to the door of the cathedral of Wittenberg, that St. Paul did when he wrote his Epistle to the Galatians. It was the manifesto of emancipation; it marked an epoch in history In vehemence, effectiveness, and depth of conviction this epistle is paralleled only by Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in which he realized his saying that his battle with the papacy required a tongue of which every word is a thunderbolt. What Luther did at Wittenberg and at Worms and at Wartburg, that, and more than that, Paul did when he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians."⁴⁷

Otto “Pfleiderer [1839-1908] compares Paul to Luther in the boldness of his stand for Christ and its great results.”⁴⁸

Who was there in Paul’s day that could equal him in ability to spread the gospel?
Who has been able since that time to equal the capability of Paul except Martin Luther?
Who has been able to equal Martin Luther and the task which he performed?

Paul



On his journey to Damascus, a light suddenly knocked Saul to the ground (Acts 9:31), and sent him on the way for Christian Missions.

Luther



On his journey to Erfurt, a lightning bolt struck near Luther, and sent him on the road to the Reformation.

“A glance at the catalog of almost any great library - that of the British Museum for instance - will show that more has been written about Luther than about any man, save one, who ever lived [Jesus] Few writers have been more prolific. In all Luther published over 350 works The still incomplete Weimar edition of his works now contains approximately 100 volumes, each averaging 700 pages.”⁴⁹

Paul and Luther have been two unique messengers from God. They are unique in the fact that one easily could tell them apart from the many other pastors, missionaries, and reformers sent from God. Though each was similar in character, each emphasized the same doctrines, each proclaimed the gospel message with a loud voice so that many people in many lands heard them, Luther and Paul had their own separate missions. Scripture describes their different missions in Revelation 14:6-7 and 8. Paul was sent to evangelize the Gentile nations. Luther was sent to weaken the papacy.

A Chronological Harmony, then, of the Episodes in Chapters 13 and 14 of Revelation, is the Following:

14

6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people —
7 saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

13

1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of a bear*, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

14

3a I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded,

8 And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon” is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

3b and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.

[We are living at this point in time.]

11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

15 He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

16 And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads.
17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

14

9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand.

10 "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

11 "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Indeed, a more extensive harmony is offered in the following:

A Harmony of Prophecies In Chronological Order of Their Events

The Spirit will tell you things to come (John 16:13).

- | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Paul | Romans 15:15-17, 19;
16:26; Acts 13:2; 20:21 | Rev. 14:6 | |
| | Acts 14:15; 17:24, 31
Romans 2:2ff; 16:27 | Rev. 14:7 | |
| 2. Arianism
(The First Curse). | | Rev. 9:1-12 | |
| 3. Islam
(The Second Curse). | | Rev. 9:13-19 | |
| 4. The Rise of the
Papacy: the First
Beast (The Third
Curse, Rev. 11:14). | 2nd Thess. 2:9-10 | Rev. 13:1-2 | |
| 5. Luther's
Reformation/
Golden Age | 2nd Thess. 2:3, 6, 8 | Rev. 13:3a | Rev. 14:8 |
| 6. The Survival/minor
Recovery of the
Papacy. | | Rev. 13:3b | |
| 7. A.D. 2000 | | | |
| 8. The False Prophet:
the Second Beast,
restores Power
Fully to the Papacy. | | Rev. 13:11-18 | |
| 9. The Third
Messenger;
Reformation/
Golden Age. | | | Rev. 14:9-11 |
| 10. The Last Day:
Destruction of the
Papacy and the
False Prophet. | Psalm 110:6 ⁵⁰
Isaiah 11:4 ⁵¹
2ndThess. 2:8b | Rev. 18;
19:20: 20:10 | |

The Remarkable Recovery of the Papacy. For all practical purposes the papacy should have diminished and gone out of existence by the deadly blow given it by the gospel in the Lutheran Reformation. Yet it did not. It survived. Indeed, this also was prophesied (Revelation 13:3b). The end of the papacy was not to come just yet, for 2nd Thessalonians 2:8 teaches that the papacy would be destroyed by the Lord at his second advent: “whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”

Popedom “recovered from its deadly wound She had not been swept away from the face of the earth; but God’s Word tells us clearly and distinctly, that this would not happen through the Reformation, yet, it would not happen before the day of judgment. Through his appearance on judgment day, Christ Himself will put an end to the Antichrist We therefore see that Babylon, although fallen, is still with us.”⁵²

In his comments on Revelation 13:3, George Stoeckhardt (1842-1913) remarks:

“One of the beast’s heads is wounded unto death, but then presently the wound is healed, so that the beast does not die. However, it is said here that one head was wounded. The Papacy did receive a mortal blow from the Reformation. But from this wound it did recover, insomuch that its antichristian rule goes on, and the greater part of the world runs after the beast in wonder and amazement. And the dwellers on earth worship the beast. They say, ‘Who is like unto the beast’? We see to this day that the greater part of the world pays homage to the Pope. The membership of the Church of Rome worships the Pope, calls him God and treats him as God. Obedience to the Pope is regarded as the First Commandment.”⁵³

“One fact is clear beyond the possibility of controversy, namely, that Luther, by the grace and in the power of the one Lord of the Church, let the stream of the Word of God into this structure, which had been defiled by the doctrines of men, and thus restored the Church of Christ to its pristine and apostolic purity. Thus the Wicked One was revealed, 2 Thess. 2:8; the Antichrist was exposed. But though the Antichrist, in keeping with Rev. 12-14, had received a severe blow, he still did live, Rev. 13:14, for this strong delusion would be destroyed only with the brightness of the Lord’s coming, 2 Thess. 2:8.



The scene in Revelation 19. A woodcut by Hans Lufft for Luther's Bibles showing the first beast, the seven-headed monster, the papacy, being thrown into the lake of fire (verse 20). Above that the Lord with a sword coming out of his mouth vanquishes his foes (verses 11-21).

“How are we to look upon the events which transpired between the first denunciation of the Papacy as the Antichrist by Wycliff and Huss and especially by Luther and the close of the Council of Trent in 1563? These years are to be regarded in the same way as those during which the Lord gave His chosen people of the Old Testament the final opportunity to embrace the truth of the Savior who had appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, between 27 and 70 A.D. They were times of testing, of searching the hearts. Between the last decades of the fourteenth century and the seventh decade of the sixteenth century, and specifically between 1517 and 1563, the Lord gave all the members of the Church an opportunity to decide for the truth. The alternative before them was: Christ or - Antichrist. The Church of Christ had, of course, been there all the time, hidden, to a large degree, under the filth and debris of the doctrines of the Antichrist, which Luther had now washed away with the limpid stream of God's holy Word. But the Antichrist and his minions, hardening their hearts against the gracious call of the Lord, just as the Jews of the first century had hardened their hearts against the preaching of the apostles, gathered the filth and the debris which had been swept out of the structure of the Church and therewith built up a denomination of their own.”⁵⁴

Even the Reformed churches are not excused from hardening their hearts against Luther's resurrected apostolic gospel, and from having “contempt for Luther and his writings. Oh yes, at times they speak very highly of him, and some of them learned very important truths from Luther; but they have not learned to recognize him as God's great

Reformer of the Church before the end of the world. God demands of men that they recognize His gifts, and when they are not recognized, judgment follows. God wanted Pharaoh to know His prophet Moses. Pharaoh would not, and we know what befell Pharaoh. Saul refused to recognize David, and utter ruin for time and eternity overtook Saul. The Jews hardened their hearts against the preaching of Jeremiah, and Jeremiah had to sing his Lamentations. Worst of all, the Jews refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and destruction came upon Jerusalem and the curse upon the Jewish race. God expects every one of us to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, and He expects the modern world to accept the message of Martin Luther. And because Reformed theologians, Reformed preachers, have passed him up, God has given them up to their endless crudities, vagaries, and sectarian puerilities, e.g., immersionism, Seventh-day Adventism, apostolic succession, revivalism, Sabbatarianism, faith-healing, and any number of other oddities, whereby they tear the Church Catholic asunder. Luther was wonderfully preserved from rationalism and fanaticism, whereas Reformed theologians are continually pendulating to and fro between these two.”⁵⁵

“Those reformers who did not follow Luther in making the Bible the sole and only foundation for any article of faith, but gave to man’s reason a voice in spiritual matters, set sail in a leaking ship. They have tried all manner of makeshifts to keep their ship afloat, but the difficulties have been ever increasing. As long as they kept their constituency in a state of fanaticism, fortune seemed to smile upon them, but just as soon as these bodies cool down from fanaticism to rationalism, their craft begins to sink.”⁵⁶

Thus we see from the historical facts according to Scripture’s prophecy (Revelation 13:3b) that the papacy recovered from the deadly blow given it by the Reformation. This blow should have knocked it out; the papacy should have ceased to exist. Indeed, at one low point the papacy had lost all of its lands, and was told by the people of Italy in 1870 that if a pope ever would step outside of the Vatican while he would be pope, he never could return, and the Vatican palace would become government property. However, due to the gullibility of men who do not love the truth (2nd Thessalonians 2:10) but darkness, the papacy has kept enough credibility with them to have the power to survive. Remnants of the Roman Catholic church which resisted Luther’s reforming, refusing to return to the pure gospel, survive to this day, and have shored up the fallen papacy. Indeed, these remnants now number 944 million, 18 percent of the world’s population, according to the Vatican’s tally for 1991. Thus the papacy will be around for “42 months” (Revelation 13:5), that is, for a time of extreme suffering, until the end of time.

How is it that the papacy has had such staying power? Many other evil, human institutions have failed in a short time and have become insignificant footnotes in the

pages of history. Why not also the papacy? It is because the devil has been behind it, Holy Writ informs us (Revelation 12:9; 13:2; 17:8; 20:2-3), keeping it from breaking up long after it should have.

In addition, Luther's Reformation gospel influence and his exposure of the papacy as the Antichrist rapidly are declining today. Why? because extremely few people believe them anymore. Thus, though the facts themselves have not changed, people's regenerated understanding and acceptance of them have been lost. Consequently, the papacy no longer stands revealed in the sense of 2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8. It has, in the latter part of this century, fast become "unrevealed." In fact, the Antichrist almost has become concealed as it was before the Reformation. Yet this alone is not the boost which the Antichrist will receive for a return to power (Revelation 13:12), in which he will ride into his Jerusalem of glory, pomp, and honor.

From the 1840's to 1950 our country enjoyed a golden age of Christianity. During this time the gospel was preached and published, believed and spread like never before. Yet since that time things have changed drastically. As there have been rises and falls in kingdoms and countries throughout history, so in this golden age there is now also a fall; and what a fall it is! Ideology is now being preached and taught in churches formerly dedicated to Christ's name that is nothing short of paganism. Today the vast majority of Protestant and Lutheran congregations are spiritually bankrupt. Oh yes, some have a sense of spirituality about them, but not the one which Scripture requires. As a result, we are witnessing the advent of another "falling away" from the gospel. "Repentance and remission of sins" (Luke 24:47) are not being preached in Christ's name. Rather substitutes under the name "gospel" are being pushed.

In addition, "there is a tremendous religious ignorance in the United States. There are a lot of people who believe in God, but they have a poor understanding of doctrine and the Bible. We have a religious culture, but a high degree of religious ignorance. I'm not saying stupidity, but a high degree of just not knowing."⁵⁷

What is more, because the mainline Lutheran and Protestant denominations have kept on rejecting more and more of Christian doctrine until there is barely anything left; because they have rejected more and more of biblical morality to where they actually are promoting immorality, such as adultery, homosexuality, abortion, etc., a certain percentage of their members will become disgusted and leave, looking for a church that has a semblance of Christianity, and which stands for biblical morals.

While other denominations toss their Christianity overboard, and become shipwrecked concerning the faith, the Roman Catholic church repeatedly makes the headlines as being the one which takes a stand against abortion, homosexuality, etc. Indeed, the average layman will soon be led to believe that the papal church is the only one in Christendom strong enough to be a dam against the flood of immorality, unbelief, and lawlessness that he sees going on all around him.

Thus do not be surprised to read about more and more congregations in the future which leave their various denominations, and follow the lead of the Roman Catholic church in its stands against immorality, copying its words, definitions, doctrines, and practice.

Furthermore, because they are surrounded by a flood of ideological flux and uncertainty concerning faith and morals, church members are going to be tempted to have “a deep-seated craving for the support of an absolute external authority.”⁵⁸ Merely having faith, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1), will no longer be satisfying for them. Many instead will want “the pillar of the papacy to lean upon, that absolute external authority that has ever charmed and misled those whose hopes were not grounded in Christ . . . but looked to something visible and tangible, something that made a grand impression to our natural eyes. That explains the respect the world has for the pope; his is a power and authority that can be seen, photographed, felt. He is a power in this world that must be dealt with, while Christ, the true head of the church, dwells in the midst of His church unseen and unnoticed by fleshly eyes.”⁵⁹ Because of this many will be drawn to the papacy.

Thus the stage is set for a second, great “falling away” (2nd Thessalonians 2:3), in which members of the Protestant denominations forsake their Christ-less, creed-less clubs for the Roman Catholic church.

Yet this alone will not be the cause for the papacy to reascend to the zenith of its pomp and power which it had during the Dark Ages. According to Holy Writ something else will cause the Antichrist to ride into his Jerusalem. A new player will be introduced by the Old Dragon to accomplish this.

Who will it be? The answer to this will be discussed in a coming chapter.

Exhortation. Unless Christendom quickly turns back to the Lord’s truth, comes to its senses, repents, and stands firmly in Christ’s blood-bought, liberty-bringing forgiveness; unless Christendom turns aside from its current course, a sure thing will happen: the Almighty will keep his promise to do the following: “‘Behold, the days are coming’, says the Lord God, ‘that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find *it*’” (Amos 8:11-12).

Do not let this happen to you! Cling to the old gospel now, and stand firmly in the liberty with which the almighty Son has freed you: liberating you from the judgment of the Last Day, the eternal torments of hell, and the pangs of an unforgiving conscience! Know and love this liberty! Speak of this liberty to others! Live it! Stand firmly in that liberty with which the compassionate Christ has made you free!



Objections

“Many Reformed commentators and teachers, for instance, have drawn all sorts of wild conclusions about the goings on in Revelation. Indeed, a person could make the things in Revelation to be almost whatever he wants them to be. So how is it that the three individuals in Revelation 14:6-11 are to be understood as men and not as bodiless spirits?”

First of all, the three individuals described in Revelation 14:6-11 are quite different from the bodiless spirits mentioned elsewhere in Revelation. For example, these three do not do the supernatural things which angels do. They are conspicuous by their lack of supernatural characteristics compared with the angels mentioned before and after them. They do not come down from heaven, from heaven’s temple, or from its altar (compare 14:15ff.). They do not pronounce woes to come, nor explain visions or events to come. Their speech is straightforward and without the typical symbolism found in the angels’ speech in Revelation. The three are raised up in a response to the chronological earthly events of chapter 13. Indeed, their speech consists of practical theology in action which believers would be compelled to carry out in their lives in response to such events as depicted by chapter 13; that is to say, it would be typical of law and gospel applications to the spiritual problems confronted on earth, not in heaven. For instance, 14:6-7 is Paul’s response to Christ’s general and the Holy Spirit’s particular (Acts 9:15) missionary command; 14:8 is Luther’s response to the papacy; 14:9-11 is the third messenger’s response to the papacy and to the second beast. Neither do angels exercise church discipline or reformation, provide soul cures for corruption in the church (vv. 8-11), or preach the gospel as foreign missionaries do (verses. 6-7). The speech in 14:6-11 is foreign to the angels’ duties in heaven. Thus the speech of these three messengers is out of character, so to speak, for the typical angel, for the angels’ speaking in Revelation is rhetorical. For example, in 19:17 an angel calls to the birds to come and feast. Neither the birds nor people on earth hear it. Yet the preaching in 14:6-8 is not rhetorical. People on earth have heard it (Acts 14:15; 17:24, 31).

What is more, angels do not do the things to which 2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8 and Revelation 14:8 refer. In these places God has prophesied that the papacy would be revealed. Things like this do not happen by themselves. They need men to do them.

Angels are not the actors in such matters on earth. God has men do the revealing through the gospel.

In addition, Revelation chapter 14 is a complement to and coincides with chapter 13. In chapter 13 the Lord reveals what specific ungodly men would do to his church. In chapter 14 he reveals what specific godly men would do in response to these ungodly men. Verses six to eight describe the main missions of Paul and Luther. They were special earthly messengers sent by the Lord, not spirit messengers.

Furthermore, when you look at the fulfillment of the prophecies of 2nd Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13:1-3a, you can build on these as on pieces of a puzzle, and see that Paul and Luther do fit as messengers of Revelation 14:6-8.

Indeed, if Scripture would have prophesied about men in Revelation, one should expect Holy Writ to do as it has done in the past in regard to its prophecy of John the Baptist; that is to say, that (1) Scripture would have a summary of their preaching mission (as, for instance, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness,” Isaiah 40:3); (2) it would give some identifying mark which would distinguish them from any other (as, for example, “I will send you Elijah,” Malachi 4:5); and (3) the men in Revelation would be described as God’s messengers (as John the Baptist was described with the Hebrew word for angel/human messenger, Malachi 3:1). This is precisely what we find in 14:6-11. Verses six and seven summarize Paul’s preaching mission, and is characteristic of him and no other. Verse eight summarizes Luther’s preaching mission, “Babylon” being the metaphor which identifies and distinguishes Luther from any other. In addition, both are called by the Greek word for messenger.

Just the same, some will not see this readily. For example, when a Jewish delegation interviewed John the Baptist (John 1), they could not identify him though they had Scripture’s prophecies of him. The fault lay with them. Their unregenerate eyes and their hardened hearts were the problem, for fulfilled, scriptural prophecy is clear.

Scripture sparingly predicts men, for instance, John the Baptist “there has not risen one greater” (Matthew 11:11), Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28), Ishmael, Isaac, and Josiah. Yet when it does, the men it predicts are outstanding; they are head and shoulders above all others. Just so it is with Paul and Luther. The massive historical evidence corroborates and demonstrates that they are two outstanding messengers sent by God that stick out prominently like twin mountain peaks rising from a plain. What these two have done for the New Testament is monumental. Hence, since the Old Testament found it important to report on the edifying missions of Moses, Elijah, and Jonah, will it make sense that God would remain silent on similar giants in the New Testament, such as Paul and Luther? Indeed, it will be out of character for him to do so.

Moreover, simply to contend that 14:6-8 does not speak of Paul and Luther would not be all that easy. For (1) any other explanation will not hold up, nor fit the facts; and (2) it would have to be shown that Paul and Luther do not fit the statements of 14:6-8.

“What about the angel in Revelation 18:2-3? He says practically the same thing as Revelation 14:8? Are they not the same, then, or at least, saying and doing the same thing?”

No, for there are differences in the two accounts. The messenger in 18:2 comes down from heaven with great power, lightening the whole earth. This is obviously a bodiless spirit having supernatural powers. The person in 14:8 is not so characterized. Moreover, the scene in 18:2ff. is the Last Day. The scene in 14:8 is not the Last Day, nor is its parallel passage, 13:3a, in which the papacy receives a temporary wound, not a final one, since further New Testament history follows in 13:3b-18, which precedes that of 14:9-11 which follows 14:8. The angel in 18:2ff. simply is announcing the end of the papacy as other angels have announced previously the various plagues. There is nothing more for men to do in 18:2ff. But that is not the case in 14:8-11 and in 13:3b-18.

It should be kept in mind also that the declaration of Luther in 14:8 was not merely an announcement. As Paul’s preaching was not apart from its result, though 14:6-7 does not bring it up, so Luther’s announcement describes the very preaching he had done prior to causing the papacy to fall.



The scene in Revelation 18. Another woodcut by Hans Lufft depicting the final overthrow of Rome on the Last Day.

“Yet does not the word ‘angel’ itself indicate that those referred to in 14:6-11 are bodiless spirits?”

Not necessarily, for the Greek word, ἄγγελος, referred to hereafter as *aggelos*, means “messenger,” whether a bodiless spirit, or a human messenger. The context would determine which one will be meant. Thus all the beings in Scripture referred to by the name *aggelos* are not alike. The *New King James Version* has attempted to translate *aggelos* with “angel” whenever a spirit obviously would be meant, and with “messenger” whenever a human being would be meant. Just the same, this has not been done consistently. For example, the angels (*aggelos*) of the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are

not angels at all but human beings, namely, the pastors of these churches, for angels do not talk to congregations, and they do not share in the guilt of the sinful behavior of those congregations (2:4f.). Why the *NKJV* translators chose to use the word “angel” in those instances rather than “messenger” or “pastor,” is unknown.

In addition, one might think that in order to avoid confusion the Spirit of God would have refrained from the use of the Greek word *aggelos* where men are involved. But in his holy prudence and high purpose, the Spirit did not. Indeed, since Revelation actively uses the word *aggelos* to indicate male preachers, you should not be surprised if Revelation would use it again later on.

Furthermore, it should be noted that in 14:6-8 *aggelos* is part of God’s description of Paul and Luther which he would have you know and appreciate. As John the Baptist was called by the Hebrew word which, like its New Testament Greek counterpart, could mean either a heavenly spirit or a human messenger, and yet Holy Writ expected there to be no confusion about him (Malachi 3:1), so the Spirit’s use of the word *aggelos* in 14:6-9 also is not meant to confuse.

“Did John see Paul and Luther represented in the form of angels in 14:6-8, or in the form of men (for instance, 6:2-8), then? If they would have been in the form of men, why did John not record it?”

Again, the Spirit’s use of the word *aggelos* is his description to you. You must take that to heart. There should be no confusion on your part. The Spirit of God does not set out to bewilder you. The delegation sent to John the Baptist (John 1) was all confused about Scripture’s prophecies of Christ and John the Baptist when there was no need for them to be.

Whether John in Revelation 14 saw bodiless spirits which were meant to represent Paul and Luther, or whether he saw only men, it must be maintained that what is spoken of and taught in 14:6-11 is men.

“Could John have seen Paul and Luther represented in the form of men, or, perhaps, the bodiless souls of men in 14:6-8?”

Yes, he could have, for John himself was caught up in the spirit, and brought up to heaven (Revelation 4:2, 1). Ezekiel was lifted up, and flew in mid heaven (Ezekiel 8:3). Paul also was caught up to the third heaven (2nd Corinthians 12:2), whether in the body or out of the body, he could not tell.

“But would not John have been surprised at such an occurrence, that is, of seeing men fly in mid heaven, and have mentioned it?”

Not necessarily, for we see elsewhere that the woman in Revelation 12:14, for example, was given the wings of eagles, and flew; that the two witnesses breathed fire from their mouths (11:5), returned to life (11:11), and ascended up to heaven (11:12)

without any recorded incredulity on John's part. Indeed, while the entrances of the two beasts (13:1, 11; for instance, a lamb-beast coming up out of the earth) could have produced in John amazement and fear, there is no recorded incredulity on the part of John.

“Could Paul and Luther have been depicted to John in 14:6-8 as bodiless spirits with wings?”

Yes, they could have been. For example, since the papacy, a man, is depicted as a monster (Revelation 13:1-3), it could follow that Scripture could portray Luther as something other than a man. Because evil, Arian preachers have been pictured as locusts (Revelation 9:1-2), and the evil empires in Daniel 7 as beasts, good men, too, could be depicted as something other than men.

“What about the other descriptions in 14:6-7, such as ‘another angel’, and ‘flying in the midst of heaven’? Do these not indicate bodiless spirits rather than men?”

By themselves the terms “midst of heaven” and “flying” would indicate spirits rather than men. But other factors enter into this.

For example, the midst of heaven, where the birds fly (19:17), “may be the air, or the region between heaven and earth; or the middle station between the corrupted earth and the throne of God in heaven. In this sense, the air is the proper place where God's threatenings and judgments should be denounced.”⁶⁰ An instance of a bodiless spirit in mid heaven is in 1st Chronicles 21:16. Nevertheless, there is an instance of a man also being in mid heaven, namely, the prophet Ezekiel (“the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me, in visions of God, to Jerusalem,” to the temple, Ezekiel 8:3).

“What would be the significance of having men, instead of spirits, fly in mid heaven?”

It would symbolize that they were sent from heaven; that they were raised up by God; that they were not from below like the two beasts in chapter 13; also that they could not be slain in the middle of their missions as the two witnesses were in chapter 11. Luther and the Third Messenger (14:8-9) are above the two beasts' ability to stop them or to slay them. In the case of Paul: he flew around the world, in a sense. That is, he started out in one place, and being unstoppable, he kept on going until all people, all tongues, *et cetera*, eventually heard him.

Therefore, being off the ground, or in mid heaven, one, naturally, would be flying. There the three messengers would be beyond the reach of the two beasts. For example, whereas the dragon chased the woman around in chapter 12 (until she was given the wings of eagles to escape, 12:14), Paul was unrestrained and successful. As the first beast put the church into captivity, regenerated Luther was above it. Whereas the second beast re-seduced and re-captivated the church, the Third Messenger was unstoppable, and

could not be brought down, as were James the apostle, Stephen, or John Hus. In fact, this is another identifying mark which the Lord has provided for your recognition of the three messengers.

“Since 14:6-11 denotes men, why then does Scripture use the term ‘another’ angel in verse six? By using the word ‘another’ Holy Writ must mean an angel like the one mentioned previously.”

There is a difficulty, however, in this case with the term “another,” for the last *aggelos* mentioned prior to 14:6 was not just a few verses before, but three chapters or forty-five verses before in 11:15. Thus there is no continuity between 11:15 and 14:6, as there is between 8:2 and 8:3, for instance.

In addition, though 14:15 uses the words “another angel,” the *aggelos* in 14:15 is not like the *aggelos* mentioned before in 14:9.

The best solution, then, to Revelation’s use of the adjective “another” with *aggelos* is to emphasize the feature of “different.” That is, when John is given by the Holy Spirit the word “another” to write in Revelation, John is introduced to a brand new scene. As the click of a slide projector could introduce you to a different scene than what you saw before, so in 14:6, 8, and 9 John is subjected to a whole new scene with different characters, action, speech, and plot.

*“If the three *aggelos* in 14:6 were not bodiless spirits, would not the Holy Spirit, then, have omitted the word ‘another’ to avoid confusion, and have substituted something else, such as the words ‘a great sign’, or three ‘other men’?”*

Again, out of humble respect and awe, remember that the Holy Spirit intentionally gave John the words “another *aggelos*” not for the purpose of confusion. This is the same Spirit who gave John the words *aggelos* to use seven times in chapters two and three in reference to each pastor of the seven churches. Though some might think it peculiar to call a pastor by that name, or that it might be confusing to use that term considering all of the heavenly beings that were going to be talked about in Revelation, the Holy Spirit did not think it confusing, but deemed it good and best.

The same thing is true when the Spirit gave the Hebrew counterpart to the Greek *aggelos* to Malachi (3:1). Some might think that it would have been less confusing if the Holy Spirit would have used the word “man” or “prophet” instead of “messenger.” Yet the Spirit of God deemed his way best. Even with such a critical personage as John the Baptist, the Spirit knew that it would not be confusing, nor asking too much of his readers to conclude that this prophesied messenger was a human being rather than a heavenly spirit.

Thus the three individuals in 14:6-9 could have appeared to John as men, for it is by no means conclusive that these three messengers appeared only in the form of heavenly spirits. The details of 14:6-9 that have been discussed, such as “midst of

heaven,” “flying,” and “another,” are not conclusive proof that only spirits are being pictured, for there are plausible explanations as to why Scripture would use these words in picturing men. For example, it could have been done not for the purpose of indicating a spirit, but to describe different aspects of the three messengers which already have been discussed above, in which case the terms “midst of heaven,” “flying,” and “another,” would point to the attributes of bodiless spirits only coincidentally.

In conclusion, then, 14:6-11 speaks of and teaches of three men, not three spirits, no matter what difficulties our minds may have with certain details in the text. Whether John saw three spirits (representing men), or three men: it must be maintained that these three are men.

“Generally, the conservative Lutheran position on Revelation 14 has been that 14:6-7 refers to Luther. Why is it that 14:6-7 refers to Paul, and 14:8 refers to Luther?”

First of all, 14:6-7 brings our memories back to Scripture’s description of Paul’s purpose, mission, and preaching in Acts and Romans, and to no other person.

Secondly, Holy Writ sparingly prophesies of men. Yet when it does do so, the men are outstanding, far above everyone else, such as John the Baptist or Cyrus. Have there been any like John the Baptist in the New Testament so far? Yes, there have been two of them: Paul and Luther.

In addition, the sample of preaching given in 14:6-7 is typical of Paul, not Luther. The law spoken in 14:6-7 is not exhortations directed toward the unregenerate members in the Christian church, which would have been the case with Luther. It is law addressed to heathen not yet in the church, which was the case in Paul’s missionary activities among the gentiles.

What is more, Luther will not be confused with Paul if their particular missions would be kept in mind. For example, Luther was called to reform a corrupt church. Paul was raised up to evangelize the known world. Though Luther wore various hats, such as exegete, catechist, preacher, professor, writer, confessor, polemicist, and hymnist, to name a few, many of which hats were worn also by Paul, who wore such hats as inspired writer, preacher, defender of justification by faith versus legalism/works [Colossians, Galatians], a manager of the transition from the Old to the New Testaments, Luther’s main mission was to topple the papacy through a church cleaning, and Paul’s was to convert the gentiles. In the course of their duties both Paul and Luther caused the gospel to be spread worldwide. It is this last item that has caused some well-meaning Lutherans to confuse Luther’s main mission with Paul’s. That is, some have thought that since the Lutheran Reformation caused the gospel to be spread far and wide, the prophecy of Paul, 14:6-7, should refer to Luther. But the spreading of the gospel to all nations was not Luther’s main mission, though it did occur. Therefore, even though both Paul and Luther caused the gospel to go out to many nations, and both announced a fall of the Babylonian captivity (Paul in 2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8), still Luther’s main mission was to weaken the papacy, which is described in 14:8.

“Luther did not send, nor plan to send, missionaries to India, China, and other foreign countries. And that is a fact. But it is a fact that must be set down to the credit of Luther. Luther had no business to engage in a missionary campaign. The business for which God raised him up was the business of reforming the Church. Before he could aim at Christianizing the heathen, he had to Christianize apostate Christendom. It took every moment of his time, every stroke of his pen, every ounce of his strength. If God had given him the opportunity to prepare, besides the hundreds of missionaries he was instrumental in sending throughout Germany and England and France, other hundreds for India and China, never fear, his great heart would have seized the opportunity as quickly as later generations did, and, no doubt, more energetically. But the one great need was the deliverance of the Church from the rule of Antichrist. Luther would have been woefully derelict in his duty if he had not concentrated all his efforts on this one objective. *He was the Reformer. As Lehre and Wehre* says, 65, p. 379: ‘Luther would not have minded his business if he had made foreign missions his business. He was called to reform the Church . . . Christendom as led by the papacy believed that the grace of God must be gained by man’s works; it believed exactly what the heathen and the Turk also believe . . . The Pope would have been much pleased and probably would have subscribed quite liberally to the mission budget if Luther had gone in for foreign missions instead of showing up Antichrist through the preaching of the Gospel and warning Christendom against him . . . Through Luther, Christendom also was to be put in a position to bring the Gospel to the heathen’.”⁶¹

“Luther had to deal with conditions that made foreign missions for him and his followers an absolute impossibility. The visible Christian Church was almost entirely popish, the wealth was concentrated in the hands of the priesthood and the monks, the Pope still governed the riches of the world and, save for a small territory in Europe, was the absolute lord of the civilized world. As compared with his resources, kings and princes were in a wretched state of poverty; the seafaring nations were under popish control; in fact, Alexander VI, in 1493, had presumed to parcel out the New World recently discovered between Spain and Portugal, conditioning this grant on the Romanizing of the natives. America, Africa, India, were thus open to none but Roman Catholic missions; the inquisition with its *autos da fe*’ and other persecutions was bent upon suppressing Protestantism in popish and other lands, and while Romish priests and monks accompanied all foreign expeditions, Protestants were *ipso facto* barred. But above all, the Lutheran Reformers had their hands full with providing faithful ministers and teachers for the rapidly increasing Lutheran Churches and countries. While foreign missions, then, were physically out of the question for the young Lutheran Church,

home missions and the organization and staffing of the Lutheran churches was her specific task.”⁶²

In addition, when God raised up Luther, he saw to it that Luther would use the isolated, distinct, identifying mark that could not confuse him with any other, and which would stand out prominently, namely, the Babylonian metaphor.

This is Scripture’s description of Paul and Luther’s main missions; you must abide by it.

“Is it not unusual, though, for Scripture to prophesy of Paul after the fact, that is, after he had already died? Should it not have left him out of a prophecy dealing with the future?”

No, for the effect of Paul’s missionary activities, indeed, of his New Testament epistles, lasted for years, even centuries after Revelation was written. Confer also the vision of nations in Daniel 2 and 7, in which the first nation, Babylon, had already come, while three more lay in the future! Babylon was mentioned in order to afford a complete picture of the matter at hand. Hence, by being supplied with a prophecy of Paul, you are not only afforded a complete picture of New Testament history, and given a fixture, so to speak, for the chronological framework in chapters 13 and 14, but, by supplying a description of Paul, you also will get a better grasp of what the second (Luther) and third messengers should be like.

“Why have the conservative Lutheran commentators said that 14:6-7 applies to Luther, then?”

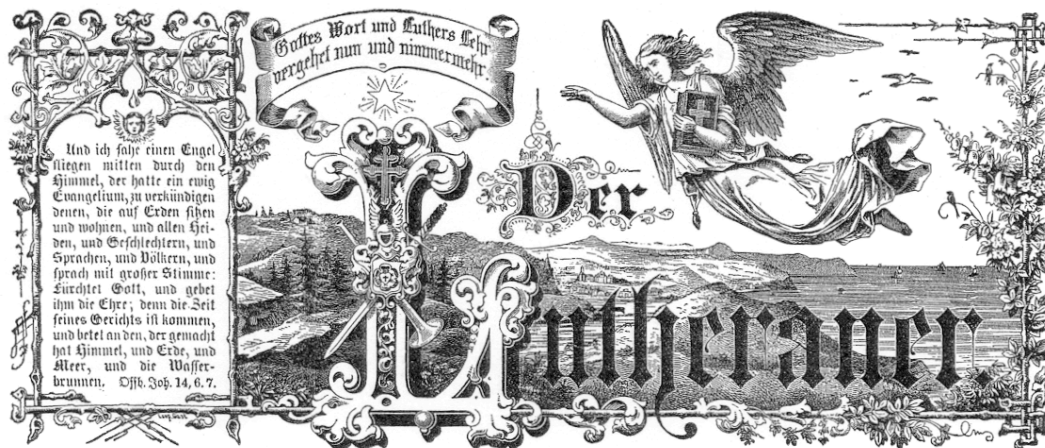


A woodcut by Hans Lufft depicting the two witnesses of Revelation 11 with fire coming out of their mouths (verse 5), and the beast (verse 7) that opposes them, wearing the papal tiara.

They may have been influenced by what their predecessors already had said. For instance, at first, while Luther yet was alive, a number of his Lutheran countrymen,

impressed by his obvious divine mission, took him and Melancthon to be the two witnesses (Rev. 11). This belief, however, eventually was dropped after it became evident that the inference could not stand. On the contrary, Johannes Bugenhagen held that the prophecy of 14:6-7 referred to Martin Luther. He stated this publicly in a sermon on 1st Thessalonians 4:13-14 which he preached in German at Luther's funeral on 22 February, 1546, in the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Later, it was contained in a Bugenhagen-influenced liturgy, for one area of Bugenhagen's endeavors had been in the field of liturgics. What is more, one of the countries where he labored for the Reformation, where his influence was mightily felt, was in his homeland of Pomerania. Thus, twenty-two years after Luther's death, in the year 1568 (Bugenhagen had died in 1558), the Pomeranians put out an Order of Worship which included a festival of thanksgiving for the Reformation to be held on 10 November, the date of Luther's birth, because, as they explained, "on that day, God, in these last times, gave the church his servant, Dr. Martin Luther, the true angel who flew in the midst of heaven with the everlasting Gospel."⁶³ The Epistle and Gospel lessons appointed were Revelation 14:6-7 and Luke 12:35-48.

Since that time Lutheran commentators have said that Revelation 14:6-7 refers to Luther. For example, Abraham Calov (1612-1686) "took the first angel to be Luther, the second Chemnitz, and since he, Calov, took a leading part as a witness of the Gospel against the Pope, he was . . . the third."⁶⁴ C. F. W. Walther, C. M. Zorn, and F. Bente regarded Luther as the first angel. P. E. Kretzmann remarks, "This passage has been understood by Lutheran commentators, and undoubtedly correctly, to apply to Dr. Martin Luther and the Reformation."⁶⁵



The heading of *Der Lutheraner* [*The Lutheran*] in 1910, a newspaper published by the Missouri Synod. Note that of all the subjects that could have been displayed in such a prominent place, the publishers chose Rev. 14:6, 7! The lengthy caption in the box at left is the words of Rev. 14:6, 7 in German in Fracturschrift font, illustrated by the angel on the right. The maxim at the top of the ornate "L" literally reads, "God's Word and Luther's doctrine passes away now and nevermore."

Thus these men may have believed sincerely what others had said before them without thinking it through, or without listening closely to the words of Scripture

instructing them about Luther in 14:8. Indeed, note Kretzmann's own remarks on 14:8-12: The "effect of the Reformation . . . brought about the exposure and the fall of Rome."⁶⁶ "Of this effect and result of the Reformation and of the fall of spiritual Babylon the next [two] angels made announcement."⁶⁷

Other commentators have given different explanations for 14:6-7 which less definitely refer to Luther. For example, George Stoeckhardt remarks that the first angel is "Luther's gospel message to the world."⁶⁸ C.H. Little declares that the first messenger is "the proclamation of the blessed gospel message through all time." Luther "is not to be identified with this angel."⁶⁹

In light of these and of other statements, a critique of all of the various commentators on Revelation, especially of the non-Lutherans, and of their remarks, would be in order. For instance, it should be kept in mind that although some commentators may be regenerate, others may not. Of those who are, some may be weak or most weak in theology. Indeed, all will be tempted not only to reflect the view of their teachers, or to repeat the current, common position (namely, peer pressure – one of the obstacles to clear thinking), but also to pursue that interpretation which would appeal most to the wishful thinking of their sinful flesh. The false doctrines to which some hold will serve as an obstacle to a right understanding, preventing the Holy Spirit from leading them down the path of enlightenment. These factors, then, would explain why some commentators have come up with the erroneous explanations which they have.

Furthermore, some have made errors in Revelation in general, and on 14:6-7 in particular, because they might have ignored what prophecies already have been fulfilled on which they could build, as onto a picture puzzle, to see how and in what relationship the other prophecies stand. For example, they might have ignored the sameness of the beast in Daniel 7 with that of Revelation 13:1-3, Revelation 17, and the man of 2nd Thessalonians 2 and 1st and 2nd John, which is the papacy. Moreover, they might have ignored the definite chronological framework which Scripture uses in Revelation 13 and 14, and the limitations which this imposes upon the actors and the events.

In regards to Paul, the commentators have ignored the evidence of his identity which 14:6-7 gives, which brings back our memories to Holy Writ's other description of Paul's purpose and preaching in Acts and Romans.

In regards to Luther, they have ignored the significant metaphor of 14:8. Indeed, some of the above quoted have remarked in regards to 14:6-7 that it represents gospel preaching in the Reformation, or gospel preaching in general. Yet who did the preaching? Did it occur by itself? Why avoid the natural explanation that Luther did it? In fact, it is not characteristic of the Bible to speak in this manner. For instance, in Malachi 3 and 4, Scripture does not prophesy of the preaching in the wilderness that would precede Christ to the exclusion of the one who would do it: John the Baptist. Neither does Holy Writ prophesy of "a great antichristian power" in 2nd Thessalonians 2, and intentionally avoid the mention of the one it has in mind.

It also has been the tendency of some Lutherans to express the following sentiment in regard to the Reformation Epistle lesson in Revelation 14:

“We shall never be able to prove, of course, that the Holy Spirit had Martin Luther in mind when He gave this revelation to St. John, nor shall we attempt to do so, for there have been other and valid interpretations and applications of this text throughout the years I like to believe with our forefathers that it can be applied also to that messenger of the pure Word Martin Luther.”⁷⁰ “The Reformation Day Epistle, our text, presenting the figure of another angel proclaiming an eternal Gospel calling all men to worship, almost forces us to identify this figure with Martin Luther. We ought to admit that while this kind of identification is not demanded by the Bible, historically it becomes inevitable when we use such a text on Reformation Day. We bow to the obvious and will view the Reformation today through the central figure of the Reformation, seeing him as ‘another proclaiming the eternal Gospel’.”⁷¹

However, when the Lord speaks in 14:8 (14:6-7, as they mistakenly have it), he is either speaking about Luther, or about something else. Hence Lutherans have no business making such statements from the pulpit as, “it almost forces us to identify this figure with Martin Luther,” or, “This one reminds us best of all of that historic moment [the Reformation] I like to believe . . . that it can be applied also to that messenger Martin Luther,” as though Revelation 14 were not clearly and unequivocally speaking of and teaching of Luther.

For example, Lamentations 1:12 (“*Is it* nothing to you, all you who pass by?”), the *Gradual* in the *Liturgy* appointed for Good Friday, has been used by some Lutheran pastors in their Lenten sermons. Some might say that this passage “almost forces us to identify this figure with Christ,” or that it may remind “us best of all of that historic moment: when Christ was on the cross.” But this passage does not speak of Christ. It speaks of Jeremiah. Thus, if a pastor would teach Lamentations 1:12 from the pulpit, rightly dividing Scripture, he must make it clear to his hearers for their faith-safety that this passage applies to Jeremiah. It is he of whom the Holy Spirit is speaking and teaching in that place, and of no one else.

Likewise Revelation 14 is either speaking about Luther, or it is not. If it were not, then pastors should have no business using it for a Reformation text and saying that it does, or telling their congregations that though this text could mean any one of a number of things, it will be used this time around to teach of Luther.

Such an approach is absurd and shames that pulpit. It fosters contempt for the Word on the part of the hearers, and on the part of the speaker himself. It violates the hermeneutical rule, and is unscriptural. “If anyone would speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God,” 1st Peter 4:11 commands (author’s translation). Since Revelation 14 does prophesy of Luther, you should preach it to your congregations with all the definitive assurance and high comfort which this text gives! Do not toy with this text!

In fact, in order to be correct, the last two quoted references only need to be contradicted, being rephrased to the positive, namely, that Revelation 14:8 “forces us to identify this figure with Martin Luther. This kind of identification is demanded by the Bible”; and “we shall be able to prove, of course, that the Holy Spirit had Luther in mind when he gave this revelation to St. John, and we shall attempt to do so, for there has been no other valid interpretation or application of this text”; for Revelation 14:8 is not a case which allows for exegetical differences as to who and to what event is meant.

The published commentators and the preachers of Revelation 14 also have failed to furnish relevant proof of their assertions. For instance, where have they gotten their ideas for chapter 14? On what evidence have their conclusions been based? What is their proof? One could understand why pious Lutherans have mistaken Luther for Paul in 14:6-7. Just the same, the biblical and historical evidence readily is available from which one could and should draw the scriptural conclusion.

Furthermore, when Scripture gives evidence in prophecy, it does not mislead. To be sure, since the fall into sin our deductive process within our intellect is unsound. Nevertheless, Holy Writ expects you to be able to draw the right inference concerning a prophecy, and will assure you of it when this has been done, for it is a lamp to your feet, and the Holy Spirit will be enlightening you.

Indeed, there are so-called dark passages in the Bible. Still the passages themselves are not dark. The darkness lies with us; that is, with our weak, unsound, darkened minds; or, as in the case of prophecy, we may be lacking the historical proof (Acts 8:34f.). For example, consider the prophecy “Out of Egypt I called My son” (Hosea 11:1)! In hindsight, with the New Testament proof (Matthew 2), the passage could and should be clear to you. But to the readers in the Old Testament, it may have been not so clear. Just the same, the solution to understanding it always has been the same: look at the evidence – either the biblical, or also the extra-biblical (historical)!

The prophecies that have been fulfilled no longer should be dark to you. Indeed, if you would fail to recognize them, they will be dark in the sense that by your fault you have made them dark. The book of Revelation has given you prophecies about the New Testament era. Some have been fulfilled; others have not. Nevertheless, you should take the unfulfilled prophecies, entrust them to your memory, be on the lookout for their fulfillment, and then, alert your children to them also, so that when they finally would become fulfilled, you could harvest the spiritual benefits which Holy Writ would give you by them! However, to understand correctly the events of 13:11-18 after they would unfold, you first must be straight about Paul and Luther in 14:6-8. How tragic it will be after Scripture has gone through all of the trouble of entrusting you with these prophecies ahead of time for your encouragement and comfort, if you would not use them! May you never be so shortsighted!

Thus the time has come to set the record straight about 14:6-7, and to maintain that “in Revelation 14:6-7 Scripture clearly teaches of Paul, and in 14:8 of Martin Luther.”

“What about C. F. W. Walther’s position that the Lutheran Reformation overthrew and destroyed the papacy, which, consequently, would never rise to its former heights again; that the prophecy of the final end of the Antichrist by the Spirit of Christ’s mouth (2nd Thessalonians 2:8b) was fulfilled in the Reformation?”⁷²

Luther held to this position. Perhaps Walther got it from him. Franz Pieper follows Walther also.⁷³

Because of the teetering political situation and other deteriorating conditions at his time, Luther thought that the Last Day would arrive shortly. In a letter to Spalatin in 1520 Luther wrote, “I am almost persuaded by many and weighty arguments that the last day is at the threshold. The kingdom of Antichrist begins to fall.”⁷⁴ “This [the end of the Antichrist] shall be commenced in my lifetime and after my death it shall be accomplished,” Luther added later in his life.⁷⁵

However, the Last Day and the end of the papacy were not to happen just yet. Therefore, Luther’s deduction was not correct. Still Walther held to it. Walther connected 2nd Thessalonians 2:8a with 8b. But 2:8b does not occur at the same time as 2:8a, nor shortly after it. In fact, it has been centuries since 2:8a has occurred in the Reformation. 2nd Thessalonians 2:8b is the same as Revelation 19:20f. 2nd Thessalonians 2:8a is the same as Revelation 13:3a and 14:8, for the first revelation of the Antichrist was not to be the end of him.

In addition, Holy Writ also indicates in Revelation 13:12 that in having “the earth and those who dwell in it” worship the papacy at some point after his revelation, the papacy would not be a shadow of its former Dark Ages’ self for the rest of its existence, but, on the contrary, it would reascend to the zenith of its pomp and power which it had enjoyed before; that in order for this to happen, the papacy first would have to become “unrevealed,” that is to say, it would have to return to a state of being unrecognized as the great Antichrist by the vast majority of the members of the Christian church.

Moreover, the wonder of the world described by Revelation 13:3b, 4 is not an amazement due to the fact that the papacy, having been struck down by Luther, barely was clinging to life. Such a situation would be expected and no cause for amazement. But it will be a cause for wonder and amazement if, after having been struck with such a deadly force, the papacy would recover to a reasonable state of health (though not yet to its full strength).

For these reasons, the revelation of the Antichrist by Luther was not the end of the papacy. According to Scripture he would recover (Revelation 13:3b). What is more, according to biblical prophecy, he would defy gravity to rise again at some point (13:12),

back to the height of his Dark Ages' power, and thus, the Antichrist would be riding into his Jerusalem.

You mentioned the third woe, namely, the papacy. Have the other two passed from the scene?

By no means. The first two woes, as Luther has commented in his remarks on Revelation, are Arianism and Islam, respectively. While these two have appeared in the past, and have wreaked great havoc on the church in their heyday, they have not passed from the scene. Time and time again Arianism has raised its ugly head in the church under different names. Also the crescent of Islam has remained a threat throughout the centuries, insisting on being the terrible scourge, as Scripture has portrayed it. Both of these curses, like the third one, will be around until Judgment Day.

When the representatives of the Lutheran congregations met at Smalcald in 1537, they confessed in a creed that the pope "is the very Antichrist." By doing so they implied that this third curse of three, as the language of Revelation has expressed it (Revelation 8:13; 9:12; 11:14), that has been sent by God to punish the worldly and unfaithful Christian church, was an article of faith, a biblical teaching. Indeed, as the Brief Statement of 1932 further confessed it, it is a doctrine "being clearly defined in Scripture" (paragraph 44).

What about the other two curses prophesied in Revelation, then? Should not they also be considered as doctrines of Scripture?

Luther, the writer who penned the sentence in the *Smalcald Articles* that the pope "is the very Antichrist," noted in his brief comments on the book of Revelation that the first of the other two curses prophesied in chapter 9:1-12 was the preachers of the Arian heresy; and that the second curse prophesied in chapter 9:13-19 was the Islamic hordes, "the oriental antichrist."

Since these three curses comprise a unique group; since all three are connected because Scripture itself has connected them, and has not left them unconnected, the reason being that the number three is the sign of the Trinity; that is to say, because the Triune God is testifying here by his own mark that he is the one responsible for these three punishments, then each of these curses will be equal to the others.

That being said, all three curses, therefore, are prophecies of Scripture, not just one of them (namely, the Antichrist). Likewise, all three of them similarly are biblical doctrines as well.

Hence it could and should be confessed in a creed that –

The prophecy of Revelation 9:3-12 has been fulfilled in Arianism, the first curse. This is a biblical doctrine that is taught clearly in the divine Scriptures. Sent by God

under various names throughout the New Testament era, Arianism will continue to be a punishment until Judgment Day on Christian nations which have “fallen away” (2nd Thessalonians 2:3) into unbelief.

Moreover, the prophecy of Revelation 9:13-19 has been fulfilled in Islam, the second curse. This is a biblical doctrine that is taught clearly in the divine Scriptures. Sent by God, Islam will continue to be a punishment until Judgment Day on Christian nations which have “fallen away” into unbelief.

In addition, the prophecies of Revelation 13:1-8 and 17:3-18 have been fulfilled in the papacy, the third curse (Revelation 11:14). This is a biblical doctrine that is taught clearly in the divine Scriptures. Sent by God, the papacy will continue to be a punishment until Judgment Day on Christian nations which have “fallen away” into unbelief.

Did Luther ever realize that he was the Second Messenger of Revelation 14?

Judging by his writings: no. While it was evident to him that God had raised him up for the mighty purpose of felling the Antichrist, Luther did not write that he was the Second Messenger in a line of three, in which the third, according to the Scripture, would follow the rise of the evil False Prophet centuries after the 1500's Reformation. Luther believed that on the heels of his revelation of the Antichrist (2nd Thessalonians 2:3) Judgment Day would soon follow.

Did Luther believe that 2nd Thessalonians 2:3 was a prophecy that referred to him and to his Reformation?

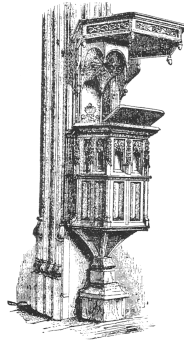
Judging by his writings: yes. However, as a true humble servant of God Luther did not demand that the people should honor him thusly, as John the Baptist knew the Old Testament prophecies concerning him (John 1), yet directed the people to his message, and not to his highly honored personage or position. The Third Messenger will follow John's and Luther's example.

Why has the doctrine of the Antichrist been in such disuse among conservative Lutherans? Many laymen have never heard that the pope is the very Antichrist?

The mighty job which Luther did in weakening the papacy centuries ago has continued down to this day in America. Hence the current feeling is: “What threat does the papacy pose?” As a result, there is a temptation today not to take Scripture's warnings seriously, either of the Antichrist or of his future revival, but to consider the evil of the papacy as a thing of the past.

Secondly, this is the age of public relations; that is, the Christian church as a whole has followed the course of the world in being afraid to speak the truth lest it come into disfavor. Thus pastors should ask themselves whether or not they are breaking the 8th Commandment in withholding the truth about the Antichrist from their congregations.

Perhaps Lutherans of late have not spoken openly and frankly about the papacy because they have been afraid of being called “hateful” or “unloving.” Logicians would call it the fear of public pressure, one of the obstacles to clear thinking. The Bible calls it being a “men pleaser” (Ephesians 6:6; see Jude 16). Are Lutheran pastors and laymen guilty of this? This is a question which they need to ask themselves this very minute.



Homiletical Treatment

The following sermons are given as examples as to how the foregoing material could be put into sermonic form. Note that these sermons contain material previously not given in this chapter.

Text: Revelation 13:1-9:

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.

So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

The book of Revelation is a book of history. As the book of Daniel in the Old Testament contained prophecies for the future, so the divinely inspired book of Revelation contains forecasts of dire events for the period until Judgment Day. Since the events spoken of in Revelation are written for the sake of the church, they do not pertain to political or social events such as the War of 1812, but to spiritual matters.

As in the book of Daniel, so here, too, the Almighty does not desire to leave his holy Christian church comfortless, but in his magnanimous grace shows in advance, for your warning and comfort, the great temptations that will befall the church and how you should escape them. Though, to be sure, many foolish men have brought back fantastic tales from Revelation that simply are not true, this does not mean that you could ignore Revelation's forecasts for the future - prophecies that have been written specifically for your benefit. Revelation was written "to show His [God's] servants - things which must shortly take place" (1:1). As the Old Testament believers looked to the prophecies of Daniel, and to the prophecies of the coming Messiah, so you should take Revelation seriously and look at its contents! You could see clearly the critical crises pointed out to you. Revelation is not the dark book which men have made it out to be. It could be read and found to have clear descriptions of those things which God wishes to reveal.

Therefore, at this time in the church season, as we look ahead to the coming festival this Wednesday of the Reformation of the church in 1517, see what God has revealed to you in Revelation that led up to the need for this earth-shaking housecleaning of the church in the 1500's; and that is:

THE RISE OF THE ANTICHRIST IN THE CHURCH

1. How the Antichrist arose.
2. Who it is.

1.

"I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of a bear*, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority" (verses 1-2). In this scene the Lord shows John a picture of a dire threat that would come upon the church. As he did in Daniel, so here, too, the Almighty wisely uses a beast, a monster to picture a threat; to impress upon your senses a fear and a dread.

The apostle sees this monster arising from the sea. The sea which God's people had known for years was the Mediterranean Sea. Looking out to sea from Palestine one will be looking toward the west. Furthermore, John saw rising to the surface ten horns, and then, gradually, seven heads. The ten horns were all on one head. As an animal's

horn symbolizes its capability to fight, its power, so the Old Testament used the horn to symbolize ruling power.

Moreover, this monster had the features of a leopard, a bear, and a lion. In Daniel these same features depicted several different empires that would rise and fall (Daniel 7). But in this monster these features indicate a dreadful being that would unite under its control all these former empires. This phenomenon occurred at Rome. P.E. Kretzmann states: "Seven heads the beast had; for the city of Rome, the capital of this great empire, is built on seven hills; and ten horns were seen by John, which refers to the ten provinces of the old empire." Thus the powerful hideous ruler that John saw was the city of Rome which rose out of the Mediterranean to his west.

In addition, our text indicates, "the dragon gave him power, and his seat, and great authority." The dragon, we find out from chapter twelve, is the devil. So it was the devil that conceived this idea, and was behind this power in Rome.

From the book of Daniel (7), to our Lord's own warning in Matthew 24:15, to Paul's prediction in 2nd Thessalonians 2:3-12, to the 1st Epistle of John 2 and 4, to the sixteenth through nineteenth chapters of Revelation, Scripture warns of a mighty menace in Rome (in Revelation 17:18, 9 for instance) rising from within the Christian church, known as the Antichrist. You all have heard of the Antichrist. It is from these texts that we get the description of this sinister spiritual power which would arise and be an office held by a succession of men until Judgment Day. So also in our text the Antichrist further is described.

What our Lord, then, depicts by the monster in the text is the rise of the dreaded Antichrist.

2.

Who is the Antichrist? It will be he who would fit the description given of him in Scripture. He and no other will fit this description. As Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah because in him and only in him is fulfilled all that had been foretold of the Messiah in the Old Testament prophecies, so the Antichrist could be identified by comparing the predictions of Scripture with his real-life words and works. It will become divinely sure that the prophecies would fit him and could not be shown to be true of any other.

"The Lutheran Church has learnt to recognize the Antichrist in the Papacy of Rome from the description given by Paul in 2 Thess. 2. And what we know of the Papacy from history well agrees with what John tells us here. The Pope exercises the greatest power on earth. He wields greater power than any other single ruler or potentate in the world. And the chief mark of the Papacy is to this day blasphemy. For over a thousand years the Pope has engaged in this blasphemy by representing himself as a the Vicar of Christ [in the place of Christ on earth], and he

plays himself up to men as though he were Christ Himself. Such a behavior certainly spells blasphemy.

“It is shown here how this beast blasphemes. It is the devil who lays the blasphemies into its mouth. It blasphemes God. The Pope pretends to be God who has power over heaven and hell. He canonizes, declares a saint and lifts up into heaven whom he will. And the Pope anathematizes and damns down to hell whom he will. The Pope as a ravenous beast has already killed countless Christians” (George Stoeckhardt).

In fact, it has been estimated that through past persecutions, inquisitions, and religious wars, 50 million Protestants have been murdered.

Luther remarks in the *Smalcald Articles*, one of our Lutheran Confessions: “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” (*Triglot Concordia*, page 475).

A theologian has commented: “There can be no greater enemy of the Church of God than the Papacy. In and by the doctrine of justification the Church lives . . . and this very doctrine, which is the breath of life to the Christian and brings us the fruit of the death of the Son of God, this very doctrine the Pope not only tries to root out of the hearts of the Christians by seducing them through his false worship to trust in their own works and in the works of the saints, but he expressly curses it Can anything worse befall the Church than being robbed of the doctrine of justification, by which alone she lives and exists? When the enemy takes my earthly life, he can do me no greater harm in earthly matters. And when the Pope has taken away the spiritual life of the Church by robbing her of the doctrine of justification, the climax of harm has been reached” (Franz Pieper).

“The Seer beholds that one of the beast’s heads is wounded unto death, but then presently the wound is healed, so that the beast does not die The Papacy did receive a mortal blow from the Reformation. But from this wound it did recover, insomuch that its antichristian rule goes on, and the greater part of the world runs after the beast in wonder and amazement. And the dwellers on earth worship the beast. They say, ‘Who is like unto the beast?’ We see to this day that the greater part of the world pays homage to the Pope” (George Stoeckhardt).

In the Dark Ages the papacy was virtually the ruler of the earth. With his enormous clout he controlled the courses of nations, the lives of millions, and did so not

to their godly benefit, but to their great hurt. Because of the ungodly doctrines and practices of the papacy, the Dark Ages were not ideal but a virtual hellhole. But here in our text our almighty Helper kept his promise to defend and rescue his dear followers by giving a deadly wound to the source of their hurt. So in 1517 God raised up the deliverer he had promised (Revelation 14:8), Martin Luther, to bring back to the world the neglected gospel of forgiveness and of an open heaven to all, if only people would trust the soul-saving work of Christ on Calvary. As a result, the papacy could not help but be exposed as a hoax, cruelly foisted upon Christendom for centuries to their damnation. Thus it was the deadly rise of the Antichrist that led God to begin a tremendous housecleaning of the church.

Yet our text also indicates that the papacy recovered from the deadly blow given to it by the Reformation. That blow should have knocked it out; the papacy should have ceased to exist. Indeed, at one point in time the papacy had lost all of its lands and the pope was a virtual prisoner in the Vatican (1870). But due to deceived men the papacy has kept enough credibility to have the power to survive. He will be around for forty-two months, our text says. This means, according to scriptural language, a time of tribulation. However, our text also comforts us by relating that those who are written in the book of life, those who believe to their dying day in justification by grace, by Christ, by faith, would be safe from the Antichrist's power.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” In the book of Revelation of all the dire events he could warn about, our Lord selects one, the greatest of them all, the Antichrist. Moreover, instead of just leaving it at “be warned of this great menace,” the Lord takes pains to picture to you just how dangerous this threat is. Therefore, he helps your poor weak minds grasp the seriousness of the situation by picturing to you a hideous monster, something from which you should run away and protect yourself at all costs. Thus you should consider the Antichrist as God considers him. You should speak of him as God speaks of him. If you would say: “There is nothing to fear,” there will be the danger on Judgment Day of God demanding of you: “Why did you call clean what I called unclean? I warned of the severe danger of him whom I would throw into hell's lake of fire. Why did you not agree publicly with me? Why did you consider me to be exaggerating or lying, and treat this fellow as just another Christian in good standing?” Therefore, you must agree to the judgment which God hands down on the Antichrist. You must not be shy, afraid, or swayed by a pope's popularity, publicity photos, or charms. Either you follow God's condemnation of him, or become deceived yourself.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Be warned! Listen to the things which have been written in Revelation for your learning! “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He *is* the one who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Text: Revelation 14:6-7:

Then I saw another messenger flying in mid heaven, having the eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth: to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying

with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment has come; and pay homage to him who made the heaven and earth and sea, and the springs of waters” (author’s translation).

Over the years various military units such as the Marines, the Seabees, and other organizations have taken on certain mottos by which they intend to announce their commitment to duty. One of these mottos, for instance, has been the inspiring statement: “Can do!” By this uplifting announcement the speaker is going on record before all that he just will not make an attempt, but that he will do whatever it would take to get the job done.

On the contrary, how many will display a lack of this commitment when it would come to their duty! For example, in last Sunday’s Epistle lesson, Ephesians 6:10-17, all Christians were told urgently to “take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (verse 13). Yet how many will not be on the lookout for temptation, will not take care to resist it, but will end up caving in to temptation! Instead of putting on the whole armor of God and rising to the challenge, and proclaiming, “Can do!” far too many will respond, in effect, “Cannot do!” and will give in to the devil, and will suffer shame, hurt, or even a loss of faith.

The apostle Paul, on the other hand, had the opposite attitude. Even though he suffered beatings, imprisonments, and death threats in his life as a Christian, he still did not give in but held onto the “Can do!” attitude of the regenerate Christian who takes his sanctified life seriously.

This morning we will look at the terrific job which Paul did in carrying out our marching orders to make disciples of all nations. What is more, we will see how our most gracious God did not leave millions of souls to perish, but sent forth a powerful missionary unlike anyone the church had ever seen before, who went out and preached the gospel to thousands, confessed Christ to kings and rulers, and helped to start up many Christian congregations. For God’s glory and your comfort, study -

THE FIRST MESSENGER, PAUL

1. Learn of whom our text speaks; and
2. Take to heart why it does so.

The book of Revelation is a historical book. It is a book of church history. It graciously has been given to you by your Savior for the purpose of informing you of what will happen to the church after the Lord’s ascension. This is done in order to warn, to prepare, and to comfort you for the spiritual events which will happen. As Noah was warned of the coming Flood, so also New Testament Christians graciously have been given a glimpse into the future so that they will not be surprised nor scared when crucial or dire events would threaten the church; so that Christ’s followers will be warned ahead

of time as to what to look out for; and so that his disciples will take comfort in knowing that their heavenly Father, who does not let anything happen without his consent, and has not left you defenseless, will send exceptionally gifted men, special messengers, to provide relief for his besieged and suffering church.

1.

“Then I saw another messenger flying in mid heaven, having the eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth: to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment has come; and pay homage to him who made the heaven and the earth and sea, and the springs of waters.’” This is a description of one of the special messengers which our Lord kindly has sent to his church.

How could one say that this passage refers to the apostle Paul? You could infer it from the message which Paul preached, and the extent to which his message spread.

Whenever God has given his church a prophecy it will be fulfilled in time. Furthermore, his followers could and should see it fulfilled from the evidence which will be plain to see. For instance, God gave the Old Testament believers the prophecy that he would send forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law. Consequently, the Old Testament believers were in duty bound to be on the lookout for the Messiah, and to identify him when he would come.

How could they possibly do this? How could they be sure that a certain person would be the Messiah? How did the crowds come to faith in Jesus? They believed his Word. They compared what the Old Testament prophecies had said the Messiah would say and do with what Jesus of Nazareth said and did. As a result, they came to the valid and God-pleasing conclusion that this was, indeed, a righteous man; this was the Son of God. What is more, Christ commended the believers who did just that (John 4:28, 29, 39, and 41; Luke 16:29). Rarely in the days of our Lord’s walk on earth did the heavenly Father himself give direct testimony from heaven as to which person was his Son (Matthew 3:16-17; John 4:26). Rather he wanted sinners to find out who his Son was by having them look at the evidence, that is, at what Jesus said and did; and by inferring that Jesus and no other was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Just so in our text God gives his New Testament church a prophecy. This prophecy, too, will be fulfilled. Furthermore, the Almighty will expect you to recognize it when it would be fulfilled. In this prophecy the Lord says that there will be a special angel or messenger. The word for “angel” in the Greek simply means “messenger.” It could refer either to an angelic messenger or to a human messenger, such as John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10-11) or to a pastor (Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, and 18; 3:1, 7, and 14). Moreover, the Master tells you what this messenger will say and the extent to which his message will spread. Therefore, in order to figure out who is meant by this prophecy, note the description of him given in the prophecy, and then, look at the evidence which is plain to see! If this prophecy already has been fulfilled, then there will be a sufficient

amount of evidence to see this. Furthermore, you could and should come to a God-pleasing identification of the messenger.

For example, is a heavenly angel the one that is described by our text? What instances do we have in which angels preached the gospel? We know, for instance, of the angel on Christmas night who announced to the shepherds the good news of our Savior's birth, and of the ones that appeared earlier to Mary and Joseph. However, these did not preach "the everlasting gospel . . . to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people," but just to these people. By far the gospel has been preached most often by God-sent pastors and missionaries. Thus, for example, John the Baptist and other pastors are called "messengers" (or "angels" as some Bible versions misappropriately have translated).

Would a preacher such as John the Baptist, then, be meant by our text? no. Even though he stood head and shoulders above many other preachers, he, too, did not spread "the everlasting gospel . . . to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people."

How about Peter? Is this famous apostle the one about whom our text is speaking? no. The accounts which we have in Scripture regarding his preaching indicate that Peter mainly was concerned with the Jews in Palestine, and with convincing them that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they crucified, was their promised Christ. For this reason the other apostles are also excluded from serious consideration.

On the other hand, the case of the apostle Paul is different. First of all, he was, indeed, a special messenger to be noted above all others. God handpicked him in a remarkable conversion to carry out a mighty missionary job. As Paul himself later admitted: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all [apostles], yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me*" (1st Corinthians 15:10). Only a messenger on the order of a Moses or an Elijah will God prophesy about, as he did, for instance, when he prophesied about John the Baptist in the Old Testament (Malachi 3:1). Therefore, if we would line up all of the famous preachers which God has sent his church, the apostle will rank right up there with Moses, Elijah, and John the Baptist. Indeed, without Paul, his influence, his missionary journey, and his thirteen epistles, the early New Testament church would not have had the phenomenal growth and size it had by the grace of God by the end of Paul's life. Paul plays such an outstanding part in the spread of the gospel that he is mentioned in nineteen out of twenty-eight chapters in the book of Acts. Thus of all the apostles, prophets, and preachers which God raised up for his church, the apostle Paul is one of the most important, and would, therefore, qualify as being a special, significant, and mighty messenger of God's gospel, indeed.

Moreover, Paul had what our text describes as a "loud voice." In contrast to a quiet voice which only a few would hear, many people heard Paul's voice. That is, whereas only a few people by comparison heard the preaching of the rest of the apostles, many more heard the preaching of Paul.

In addition, whereas Peter and the other apostles generally preached to the Palestinian Jews about the Messiah whom they had crucified, Paul mainly spoke to the gentiles, and preached about Judgment Day, repentance, and God the Father almighty, maker and ruler of heaven and earth. For instance, by taking some typical examples of Paul's preaching from the book of Acts and by comparing them to the description in our text, we find that in Acts 14:15 and 17:24, 31 Paul preaches: "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them." "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands." "He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man [Christ] whom He has ordained." Now compare this with the text in which the messenger says this: "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of his judgment is come; and pay homage to him who made the heaven and the earth and sea, and the springs of waters"! This fits the apostle Paul's preaching like a glove.

It also should be noted in this connection that our text is not so much concerned with describing Paul as the great defender of justification by faith. As the late President Lincoln is not referred to always as the famous Civil War leader, but as the great emancipator, so also our text just wishes to describe Paul according to the primary duty for which God selected him: as a mighty missionary.

What is more, when we compare the terrific spread of the gospel which God accomplished through Paul with what our text says, we will see again that it is Paul of whom our text speaks. Paul himself reports on this missionary success in Romans 15:15, 16, and 19, relating, "Because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God . . . in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (see also Romans 10:18; 16:26). Our text prophesies that the messenger will have "the eternal gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth: to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people." Thus when we compare this description with what the apostle accomplished with his four missionary journeys throughout the civilized world, we could and should come to the conclusion that our text is speaking of the apostle Paul. No other preacher fits the description of our text.

2.

Why does the text focus your attention on Paul? First of all, it does so because the Lord wants to do so. Paul's missionary success is a most significant event in God's eyes, hence it is a significant event in church history, and you would do well to take note of it.

Secondly, through the wonderful missionary accomplishments of Saint Paul God fulfilled his Old Testament promise to increase his holy invisible Christian church from a tiny size to a huge size (see Isaiah 60:1-14; Amos 9:13). By the time Paul suffered martyrdom just thirty years after our Lord ascended into heaven, the gospel had been

spread to all of the countries along the Mediterranean Sea, from Palestine throughout present day Turkey, Greece, the Balkans, Italy, Cyprus, and Crete, and likely also in France, Spain, and the northern coast of Africa. Whereas in the Old Testament the gospel generally had been confined to the tiny nation of Israel, in the New Testament the Holy Spirit let loose with a mighty surge of gospel power, evangelizing and converting multitudes to the saving message that Christ has come to save sinners. Thus it is no exaggeration when Scripture reports in Romans 10:18 that Paul filled the world with the gospel.

Indeed, by founding Christian congregations all over the Mediterranean the apostle established so many radiating centers for the gospel that it soon penetrated all of the corners of the various countries. Before Pentecost the apostolic church numbered perhaps only in the hundreds (1st Corinthians 15:6). Sixty years later “at the end of the first century A.D. there may have been some 200,000 professed Christians, and at the time of Constantine, A.D. 325, the whole Roman Empire already was dotted with Christian churches, there being possibly some eight million Christians” (“Missions,” *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, L. Fuerbringer, Th. Engelder, and P. E. Kretzmann editors [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1927], page 481). A heathen Roman ruler (Pliny the Younger) who governed the province of Bithynia fifty years after Paul had labored nearby wrote that he saw “the temples abandoned, religious festivals long since discontinued, while the priests have stopped selling the meats from the sacrifices, which no one will purchase anymore Not the cities merely, but the villages and all the countryside as well” have become Christian (William Dallmann, *Paul* [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1929], page 184).

In the third place, the Lord wants you to give your attention to Paul in order to show you the mighty strength which the Lord has. When you notice today all the unbelievers and scoffers and wonder how you ever are going to bring them to faith, you could remember that God has promised to pour his Spirit out upon all flesh. Furthermore, with him nothing shall be impossible; and that as “a door was opened to” Paul “by the Lord” (2nd Corinthians 2:12) and many became converted, so also wherever you testify of Christ, that testimony will not return to the ears of God void, but it will accomplish what he pleases, and will turn hearts to faith (Isaiah 55:11).

Furthermore, the missionary success which the Lord accomplished through Paul should spark within you the urge to do missionary work. It should encourage you to volunteer for it and to pray for it; to pray also that your sons will become missionaries and pastors; that your daughters will become Christian day school teachers, wives, or mothers of pastors; and that you will be a blessing to the unbelieving souls in our community.

Moreover, God wants you to note his special messenger Paul for your comfort. When you see your God raising up Paul and sending him off to Europe to convert your benefactors, who, in turn down through the ages, ultimately saw to it that you would be baptized and brought to faith, you mightily should be convinced that your Lord has not cast you off forever and left you comfortless, but has sent his Holy Spirit to gather his elect to himself.

Thank and praise the Lord for having such great love toward you by sending the mighty apostle Paul!

A gentleman by the name of Adolphe Monod once wrote of Paul, saying: “Should anyone ask me to name the man who of all others has been the greatest benefactor of our race, I should say without hesitation, the Apostle Paul. His name is the type of activity the most endless and at the same time the most useful that history has cared to preserve” (Dallmann, page 344).

It has been pointed out that over the vast extent of the Roman Empire Paul everywhere projected his shadow.

“Yes, very emphatically, yes. Paul brought Christ from the East to the West, and since Luther freed Christ in Paul’s letters, Christ has been brought to America” (Dallmann, page 347).

Praise the Lord for blessing you with the services of his special messenger, the apostle Paul!

Text: Revelation 14:8:

Another messenger followed, saying, “Babylon, the great city, is fallen, is fallen, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink” (author’s translation).

Our text mentions the name “Babylon.” Babylon was a city in the Old Testament that was the seat not only of a civil kingdom, but also of an ungodly religious power. Thus Babylon was not only a city/state, but it also exercised religious authority as well. This city/state was hostile to the Triune God, to his true worship, and to his orthodox doctrines, as evidenced by the episode of the three men in the fiery furnace. Moreover, and this is the main point, this city-state made war on God’s saints in the Old Testament and took them away captive. In the year approximately 606 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of that city/state of Babylon, invaded Judah, warred against God’s people, killed many of them, and took many of the remainder back to Babylon. This was known as the Babylonian captivity. This was a dire and hazardous crisis for the church members. No longer could they worship the Lord in freedom in the house of God in Jerusalem. The temple was torn down, and the church members were led away in bondage against their will by an antagonistic ungodly power.

The old Babylon long since has died away and its walls have crumbled into ruin. So what is this new Babylon about which our text speaks? What role will it play in regards to the New Testament church? This is what we will examine this morning when we consider -

THE SECOND MESSENGER, LUTHER

1. Learn of whom our text speaks; and
2. Take to heart why it does so.

1.

Last Sunday we heard that God had raised up a mighty missionary for his church in the person of Saint Paul, in which the early church was given a solid start and a tremendous increase in numbers. This, subsequently, set the stage for an even greater number of souls to come to faith, and resulted in the gospel being able to spread all over the then civilized world.

However, not long after God sent his first mighty messenger to the New Testament church, an ominous and odious threat soon appeared. By and by the New Testament church was enveloped and taken captive by a force hostile to it and to the gospel, just as the Old Testament church had been besieged, beset, and put into bondage by the old Babylon.

Just the same, the Lord had warned his church in Revelation 13, 17, and 18 of this hostile New Testament version of Babylon. Moreover, in our text our Redeemer comforted his church by promising already back in the days of the apostles when our text was written that he would send yet another special messenger on the order of the first, who would deal with this terrible threat, give it a deadly blow, and deliver the elect out of their slavery.

Thus in our text God gives his church in the New Testament a prophecy. This prophecy would be fulfilled. Furthermore, the Almighty will expect you to recognize it when it would become fulfilled. In this prophecy the Lord says that there will be a special angel, or messenger. The word for “angel” in the Greek simply means “messenger.” It could refer either to an angelic messenger or to a human messenger, such as John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10-11) or to a pastor (Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, and 18; 3:1, 7, and 14). Moreover, your Master tells you what this messenger will say and do. Therefore, in order to find out who would be meant by this prophecy, you must first note the description of him given in our text and then look at the evidence which is plain to see! If this prophecy has been fulfilled, then there will be a sufficient amount of evidence to see this. Furthermore, you could and should come to a valid God-pleasing identification of this messenger!

For instance, would an angel be spoken of here? What instances do we have of an angel making an announcement to believers about the fall of a new Babylon? We have instances in Scripture of angels announcing the birth of the Savior to the shepherds, and to Mary and Joseph prior to that. But we have no instances of an angel announcing the fall of a new Babylon to anyone on earth; neither are there any recorded instances in church history of an angel announcing a fall of Babylon. By far God has used special pastors or preachers for such missions.

Is a famous apostle, then, such as the apostle Peter described by our text? no. Even though Peter did speak of the New Testament Babylon in his first epistle (1st Peter 5:13) he did not speak of its fall nor do anything to cause a fall.

What would be this new Babylon, and who would it be that would speak of its fall and precipitate its fall? Revelation speaks to the Christian church of this New Testament threat not by calling it by name, but by nicknaming it “Babylon,” which should recall the church’s memory of the old Babylon. As in former times the old Babylon had harmed and enslaved the elect, so also a new power like it would arise in the New Testament times, harming and enslaving the church once again. This new Babylon would be similar to the old one, that is, it also would be a city/state having not only civil power, but also ecclesiastical authority, bringing God’s church under its control.

What regime in the New Testament has done all this? What evidence do you have? If you would look at the Moslems, for instance, they have caused a great deal of harm to the Christian church, but they really do not have their seat of power in a certain infamous city such as the former Babylon. The holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia is simply a place which pilgrims visit. The Buddhists and Hindus also are hostile to the Christian church, but they also do not rule out of a certain city.

Looking back at Scripture, the serious biblical student will note that the New Testament Babylon will be the headquarters of the Antichrist (Revelation 17:5, 9, and 18). As the office of the United States’ presidency is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and either word “presidency” or “Washington” can be used interchangeably to describe the same things, so Scripture reveals that the Antichrist will be an office filled by a succession of men like the presidency, having its seat in a certain world city. Moreover, according to 2nd Thessalonians 2:4 these men will sit in the temple of God, that is, they will be found within a visible Christian church. They will not be found outside it as the Moslems, Buddhists, or Hindus are without the Christian church. What office of succession, then, found within the visible Christian church, located and having its seat in a world city, is there? What evidence do you have that is plain to see? Let us examine church history.

If you would look into church history, you will come across the Greek Orthodox church, for example. This body is considered to be within the visible Christian church, though the gospel is seldom preached in it. However, the Greek church does not have one office which rules it but several called “Patriarchs” (in Istanbul, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem). Nor has it enslaved the church with anti-Christian shackles such as the Antichrist would be doing. Furthermore, another church body, the Church of England, likewise does not have just one office ruling it but two: one archbishopric in Canterbury England, and the other in York, England. Like the Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches, the Church of England, too, has its unscriptural creeds, but it has nothing as blatantly antichristian as the office of the Antichrist is prophesied to have (1st John 2:22).

What other religious power has there been in Christendom? There has been the papacy at Rome. In fact, in the papacy at Rome all of the different descriptions contained in Scripture of the new Babylon with its ruler, the Antichrist, come together and fit perfectly as pieces of a puzzle.

First, the papacy is headquartered in a world city on the famous seven hills of Rome, on which hills, Scripture prophesies, the new Babylon would sit (Revelation 17:9). Moreover, the papacy pretends to sit in the temple of God (2nd Thessalonians 2:4), that is, the papacy is found within the Christian church, not outside it. In addition, it has been very antichristian. What is antichristian? What is Christian? It is the belief in the pure gospel of Jesus Christ: justification by faith alone without human works. Thus antichristian is not something such as a Moslem creed which would simply disagree with the Christian gospel. A true antichristian belief will be a creed which would hold that justification by faith alone is not Christ's gospel, but would, instead, substitute a lie and call it Christ's gospel. Such a sinister and insidious move would be the most complete definition of antichristian. Indeed, this is what the papacy has done.

“In the Papacy we have the most pronounced and greatest imaginable ‘falling away’ from the Christian religion. Christians know that man is justified and saved only by faith in Christ, without the deeds of the Law. This is the article ‘which . . . alone begets, nourishes, edifies, preserves, and defends the Church and without which the Church cannot exist even for one hour’ What the air is for the natural life of man, the doctrine of justification by faith without any merit of man is for his spiritual life. But this doctrine is officially anathematized by the Papacy, and the entire machinery of the papal Church is geared to oppose and destroy this doctrine The Pope is truly the worst enemy of Christ and His Church, all the more since he masquerades under Christ's name. Because the Christian Church consists of people whom the Holy Spirit has brought to believe that they have a gracious God without their works, solely for Christ's sake, therefore the Pope, under the cloak of Christ's name, hurls his ban at this Christian Church and is ever intent on destroying it” (Franz Pieper, translator Walter W.F. Albrecht, *Christian Dogmatics* [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1970], III, page 465).

Furthermore, the office of the papacy has ever arrogated to itself civil power, that is, the rulership over all civil authorities, and to this day insists that secular governments acknowledge its supremacy and serve it with their powers.

We may think that the disgusting exploits of Jim Bakker as revealed in the press are horrible, such as the defrauding of contributors, the lying, the amassing of millions, and the neglect of souls. Yet under the papacy before the Reformation this sort of thing went on constantly. Sex scandals abounded, uncalled pastors enriched themselves; bribery and power struggles were the norm. What is more, since the gospel was banned by these papal authorities, religious liberty did not reign. Instead there was persecution and death in the name of the church to those true Christians who remained. Indeed,

hoodlums and gangsters gained control of the church and enslaved the true believers with brutality, as did the Old Testament Babylon.

What does our text mean when it prophesies; “Babylon is fallen, is fallen?” It means that the Lord is aware that his church would be cruelly treated and would finally do something about it. Has he already done something? For the answer to that you again will have to look at the evidence to see if this prophecy has been fulfilled.

The papacy, that has been ruling out of Rome in the Middle Ages and before, made the nations drink “the fury of the wine of her adultery.” This is biblical language taken from Jeremiah (51:6-7) meaning that the Antichrist, like old Babylon, would lead people away from the gospel truth. It would force the Christian church to take part in idolatrous antichristian worship. As God considers those who take their love away from him and give it to another to be committing a sort of fornication or adultery, so by forcing the greater part of the civilized nations in the Middle Ages through persecution, extortion, wars, and false teaching to give up on the pure gospel, the papacy has made the nations drink themselves senseless with the damning doctrines of the church at Rome.

In addition, because the Roman papacy did this, our text prophesies that God would judge Babylon and give it a deadly blow. Has this already happened? Again, examine the evidence to see if this part of the prophecy also has been fulfilled!

Our text says: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen.” As a wall that has fallen down flat has come to nothing, so also the Greek word for “fallen” means that something has fallen down flat; it has been destroyed. The verb “is fallen” is repeated in our text for emphasis so that there will be no doubt that the New Testament Babylon has been given a deadly blow.

Looking through the pages of church history, has there been an instance when the papacy has been given a deadly blow? Yes, there has. When did this happen? at the Lutheran Reformation. A Lutheran writer has written:

“Many individuals and whole councils tried to reform the corrupt Church, but failed. In 1517 the Lateran Council asked for ‘a universal reformation, and thorough, from the head to the feet’. But [Pope] Leo X triumphed over all opposition Doellinger writes: ‘The last hopes of a reformation were carried to the grave’ Geiler: ‘Since Pope, kaiser, king, and bishop will not reform, God will send one that must do it’. What the whole world could not do in ages, Luther, by the grace of God, did alone; and he did it by one stroke of the ax laid to the root” (William Dallmann, “The Reformation,” *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, editors L. Fuerbringer, Th. Engelder, and P .E. Kretzmann [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1927], page 637).

In 1520 Luther wrote a booklet entitled

“*On the Babylon Captivity of the Church*. In it he attacked the very heart of the whole papal system. He pointed out that, as the ancient King Nebuchadnezzar once held the children of Israel captive in Babylon, so the Roman Church had held the Church captive by a sevenfold chain, the doctrine of the seven sacraments. In doing so, Rome had invented sacraments never ordained by Christ and had corrupted those which He did establish. The Romanists had added all sorts of needless vows and works by which to merit grace, given freely in Baptism. They had taken the cup from the laity in the Lord’s Supper and had transformed the Sacrament into an unbloody sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead” (W.G. Polack, *The Story of Luther* [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1941], pages 54-55).

By such writings Martin Luther caused the downfall of the mighty Middle Ages’ papacy, which was not only a terror to kings, but to the whole world as well. Luther caused its downfall simply by preaching the gospel; by pointing out that the papacy was a cruel hoax foisted upon the church by power-hungry, lust-filled, and hellish-minded gangsters; that no one need fear the papacy’s bans, excommunications, or threats, because they totally were invalid. God did not consent to them but opposed them.

“Luther has unmasked the Papacy, so that today anyone may know it and guard against it. In truth, the Reformation consisted in the discovery and exposure of the Pope as the Antichrist. That was the turning point in Luther’s work when preparing for the Leipzig Debate [in 1519], he came to the conviction that Antichrist sat in Rome and from that seat on the seven hills spread his tentacles over all lands. So this doctrine that the Papacy is the Antichrist is most closely connected with the Reformation; it was then and by that work that Antichrist was revealed. He is not killed, not entirely destroyed; but he is continually being consumed by the Word of our God; he has lost his power except over those who willingly submit to him”. (Theodore Hoyer, “The Papacy,” *The Abiding Word*, editor, Theodore Laetsch [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1947], II, page 761).

“Through the Reformation, God definitely broke the power of the papacy, and since then, despite all efforts of the Jesuits and others, papal power has been only an emaciated [thin] shadow of its former self” (“Antichrist,” *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, editors L. Fuerbringer, Th. Engelder, and P. E. Kretzmann [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1927], page 564).

Has the prophecy in our text, then, been fulfilled? Indeed, it has! Who, then, is the special messenger whom God raised up to accomplish this? The evidence points to Martin Luther. The second messenger must be on the order of an apostle Paul. Whom do you know from church history that was of that caliber? Who has there been of the stature of Paul who talked so much about the New Testament Babylon and who caused its downfall through a mighty preaching of the gospel? When you would compare the text to what Martin Luther said and did to cause the fall of the Roman papacy, you could

and should come to the conclusion that our text is speaking of Luther. No other man fits the description of our text.

2.

Why does our text focus your attention on Luther? First of all, it is because the Lord wants to do so. Luther's Reformation is a most significant event in church history, and you would do well to take note of it.

Secondly, from the defections which you see going on today in the Lutheran church, and from what you know from past history it seems that the forces of evil so often seem to win battles against you. But as Scripture takes pains to report that Christ descended into hell for a victory parade and rose on Easter morning to announce his victory over the forces of sin and death, so also God makes the effort in our text to show you that the forces of evil are not in control, but that his will shall prevail.

Thirdly, our Savior kindly has given you this prophecy in our text in order to comfort you. He wants you to be reassured that he has not left you comfortless, nor left you at the mercy of the wolves in sheep's clothing; but your dear watchful heavenly Father once again has risen to your need, and brought freedom and salvation to his elect who were long held in confinement by wicked men in the darkness of antichristian teachings.

Fourthly, God has sent you his second messenger, Luther, in order to bless you with all kinds of other freedoms as well. Where the gospel is preached and believed, not only is there freedom from sin and fear, but there also proceeds all sorts of social and civil liberties as well. For instance, not the Renaissance movement, not the Magna Charter, not humanism, but the Reformation of Luther introduced the principle of civil liberty into our wilderness of North America, said the great American statesman Daniel Webster. The Lutheran Reformation is the great benefactor of all our modern liberties, and because of it you now enjoy the freedom of the press, education, prosperity, and religion.

Moreover, because of the God-sent Reformation you have been brought to faith. Without the gospel that was brought to light again in the Reformation, you probably would be worshiping the Virgin Mary as your co-Redeemer. Furthermore, you would be kept in doubt as to your salvation: you would fret over how many works of penance it would take to please the Almighty for your temporal sins; and you would shake at the thought of spending years in purgatory. But because Luther with the help of God brought back the old apostolic gospel, your fathers have passed it down to you, and now you also are blessed with the faith once delivered to the apostolic saints (Jude 3).

As you heard last Sunday: “Paul brought Christ from the East to the West, and since Luther freed Christ in Paul’s letters, Christ has been brought to America” (William Dallmann, *Paul* [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1929], page 347).

What is more, with this revelation in our text, you have an obligation to identify God’s second messenger as Martin Luther, and to recognize that the prophecy in our text has been fulfilled. You are in duty bound to acknowledge that Luther has been sent to the church for your comfort and instructions. You dare not neglect such a gracious gift from God!

“God demands of men that they recognize His gifts, and when they are not recognized, judgment follows. God wanted Pharaoh to know His prophet Moses. Pharaoh would not, and we know what befell Pharaoh. Saul refused to recognize David, and utter ruin for time and eternity overtook Saul. The Jews hardened their hearts against the preaching of Jeremiah, and Jeremiah had to sing his Lamentations. Worst of all, the Jews refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and destruction came upon Jerusalem and the curse upon the Jewish race. God expects every one of us to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, and He expects the modern world to accept the message of Martin Luther” (Martin S. Sommer, “The Difference between Reformed and Lutheran Preaching,” *The Concordia Pulpit for 1932*, editor-in-chief Martin S. Sommer [Saint Louis: CPH, 1931], page VI).

Because the divine mission of Martin Luther was so obvious the churches in the Pomeranian district of Germany recognized a prophesy of him many years ago in Revelation 14. In fact, the earliest reference to a celebration of the Reformation is in the Pomeranian Order of 1568. However, instead of the current date of observance, 31 October, they had set aside 10 November, Luther’s birthday, as their observance of the Reformation, because, as they explained, “on that day, God, in these last times, gave the church his servant, Dr. Martin Luther, the true” messenger (Henry Eyster Jacobs, “Reformation, Celebrations of,” *The Lutheran Cyclopedia*, editors Henry E. Jacobs and John A.W. Haas [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899], page 405A).

As the Pomeranian Lutherans centuries ago recognized Martin Luther as being a gift from God to the church, so also may you praise your dear Lord!

Text: Revelation 14:6-8:

I saw another messenger flying in mid heaven, having the eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth: to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment has come; and pay homage to him who made the heaven and the earth and sea, and the springs of waters.” And another messenger followed, saying, “Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink” (author’s translation).

In the book of Malachi (4:5) it was prophesied that just before the great Messiah would come a messenger (3:1) would appear to prepare the hearts of the people ahead of him (4:6). This prophecy says: "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Of course, God would not send the prophet Elijah back from heaven, just as he does not send the Virgin Mary today to talk to people. Nevertheless, this was a common belief in Jesus' day. Even Jesus' own disciples did not understand this prophecy. When they finally asked the Lord who was meant, they learned that the prophecy meant John the Baptist (Matthew 17:12). John the Baptist would be the prophet similar to Elijah. He would sound like Elijah, preach mightily like Elijah, and testify fearlessly like him. This is why the Holy Spirit in Malachi chose to describe John the Baptist in this way. The briefest description of John simply would be to call him another Elijah.

There have been other pious men, raised up by God, who resembled each other in character and talent, though they lived centuries apart. We will look at just such a pair and study why God raised up the latter person to be so much like the former. At this time of year, when we soon will be commemorating the Reformation, and the birthday of Martin Luther shortly afterwards, note how much Luther resembled Paul in preaching, in writing, and in duty!

THE RESEMBLANCE OF LUTHER TO PAUL

1. How?
2. Why?

The resemblance of Luther to Paul does not concern us so much with his looks, as it does with his preaching and writings. Among God's called prophets, apostles, and ministers, there have been many differences in preaching styles, emphases, and methods. Though all would preach the glorious gospel of Christ's wonderful deliverance of the human race from damnation, not all ministers will sound alike or act alike. For instance, Peter did not act like Paul, Apollos did not sound the same as Philip, and John the Baptist had a different role to play than Elijah. Indeed, even if someone were to imitate a preacher like Paul, and were to try the best he could, he still would not be able to do it, for it is God who gifts us to be the way we are. For example, some years ago a number of pastors tried to imitate the style of the popular and successful radio preacher, Walter A. Maier. Their imitations did not work, because the style was out of character for them. The only way such a thing could be done is if it would be done naturally, that is, if God would raise up a man with a similar personality and gifts as the first. This is exactly what the Almighty did in the case of Martin Luther. Luther resembled the apostle Paul very closely.

For instance, Ewald Plass in his book, *This is Luther* [(St. Louis: CPH, 1958), page 163], said this about Luther:

“He so entirely agreed with Paul that Julius Hare called the Apostle a ‘Luther before Luther.’” “Luther’s defense of such cardinal doctrines was Pauline The spirit of the early Church had revived in Martin Luther. His entire approach to theology was apostolic. There was the same emphasis upon the great cardinal doctrines of sin and grace Though almost fifteen centuries had passed since the martyrdom of Paul, Martin Luther was raised to continue his work. One may call him a post-Apostolic Church Father. If not in point of time, he certainly was such in point of doctrine. Julius Hare says of the Reformer: ‘Though Luther was not what is technically termed a Father and could not be so from the period when for the good of mankind it was ordained that he should be born, yet it has pleased God that he, above all other men since the days of the Apostles, should, in the truest and highest sense, be a Father in Christ’s church, yea, the human father and nourisher of the spiritual life of millions of souls, for generation after generation’ ” (Plass, pages 57-58).

In Paul’s day, who was there that could equal him in his great missionary efforts and successes? no one, not even the best of the apostles (1st Corinthians 15:10; 2nd Corinthians 11:23). Who since that time has been able to equal the capability of Paul? no one, except Martin Luther. For example, “a glance at the catalog of almost any great library - that of the British Museum for instance - will show that more has been written about Luther than about any man, save one, who ever lived [Christ] Few writers have been more prolific. In all Luther published over 350 works The still incomplete Weimar edition of his works now contains approximately 100 volumes, each averaging 700 pages” (Plass, page 4).

Paul and Luther have been two unique messengers from God. They are unique in the fact that one easily could tell them apart from the many other pastors, missionaries, and reformers sent from God. Though both were similar in character, each emphasized the same doctrines, each proclaimed the gospel message with a loud voice, and many people in many lands heard them, Luther and Paul had their own separate missions. Holy Writ describes their different missions in our text. Paul was sent to evangelize the gentile nations (Romans 15:15-17, 19; Acts 14:15; 17:24, 31). Luther was sent to weaken the papacy through a Reformation (compare Revelation 14:8 with 17:3-5, 9, and 18; and with 13:1, 3).

For each of these two highly critical missions, God raised up similarly well-equipped champions for the task. For example, with the Lord’s blessing working with and through him, Luther resembled Paul in that both caused the gospel to be spread worldwide. Both were powerful preachers and writers; they were heard and read by thousands, yes, millions. This is the “loud” voice which our text mentions in verse seven. Both came from a mainline church of their day that had been orthodox once, but, over the years, had become corrupt completely, even though it claimed still to be faithful and true. Paul had been a Pharisee. Luther had been a Catholic. In addition, Luther and Paul had been well indoctrinated in the teachings of these churches. Thus when later they exposed the destructive doctrines of these bodies, they knew very well of what they spoke.

Indeed, both, by God's grace, underwent a conversion into the true Christian faith. Subsequently, they fought the prevalent idea of work righteousness, and brought back to light, for all to see, the glorious salvation of God, by grace, for Christ's sake, which is possessed by faith.

Both Luther and Paul had to appear before mighty rulers, as you could see from the bulletin. Paul appeared before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa in Palestine, and probably also before the emperor's court in Rome. Luther confessed Christ before the European Emperor Charles the Fifth, 28 dukes, 11 provincial governors, 30 bishops, 200 minor representatives of government, and many others at Worms, Germany, in 1521.

What is more, Luther felt very kindly toward the epistles of Paul, especially the ones in which the Holy Spirit talked about justification without works. In fact Paul's letter to the Galatians was so dear to Luther, he called it "My Katie," that is, his wife.

While Paul warned the churches of the coming monumental deadly web of the Antichrist (2nd Thessalonians 2), Luther dealt with him, exposed his hoax, and thus gave him a deadly blow (Revelation 14:8; 17:3-5, 9, and 18; 13:1, 3).

The preaching and writings also of Luther and Paul convey to us the impression of how closely both resembled each other. In both we perceive the warmth of their natures, the deeply affectionate disposition, the courtesy of their bearing, the fearlessness, the heroic endurance; we perceive a practical wisdom, and a tolerance for others seldom associated with one with strong convictions. When these two come before our view, we see twins of intense energy, firm decision, iron resolution, and uncompromising zeal. Their God-given mental abilities were of the highest order. Both had an exceptional grasp of the big picture, great clearness of understanding, the power to arrange thoughts in their proper logical order, and, subsequently, to put them in fitting and forceful language. There are passages in both their writings that could only have come from the pen of a poet. Moreover in both there is sincerity of speech, humility, a generous regard for the welfare of others and a tender sympathy with those whom they loved. Furthermore there is an absence of everything mean or selfish, and a noble devotedness, at whatever cost, to the interests of the gospel. Those who judge Luther and Paul simply as they would any other outstanding man would be compelled to declare unanimously that they have been two of the greatest spirits of all time. While those who recognize Paul and Luther as two of God's greatest messengers sent to aid the New Testament church in its two most dire periods, they stand in awe as they study the high gifts which Heaven endowed them for their unequalled tasks (adapted from McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia*, volume VII, page 822).

Hence our text first describes Paul, the mighty messenger, with his mission of preaching strong law and gospel, to evangelize the heathen Mediterranean world. As a result of which, the church, beginning with only 500 believers before Pentecost (1st Corinthians 15:6), grew astoundingly to 200,000 in just 70 years. Our text then speaks of another messenger coming after the first, the second in a series. His mission was to reform the church that had grown so large. He would do this by revealing the great evil

that slyly had led it away from the faith: the papacy and its damnable doctrines. Though our text uses the English word “angel,” the Greek word simply means “messenger.” From the context it will need to be determined whether this messenger would be a man or an invisible spirit. From the context and also from the relation of our text to events and subjects in chapters 13 and 17, our text is referring to human messengers here: to Paul and to Luther, and to no one else.

2.

Why did the Lord raise up Martin Luther to resemble Paul? so that he would be highly gifted and fitted out with all the necessary mental endowments; to be equipped with the unique special talents which were needed for the extremely hard work ahead in the Reformation.

For instance, others had tried to bring about a reformation of the church, but could not. Wycliff, Huss, Jerome of Prague, Savonarola and others before Luther all had tried, but failed. To be sure, intellect and ability alone could not bring about a reformation, but we notice from biblical history that whenever God would raise up a Moses, an Elijah, or a Paul for a tremendous task, he likewise would bless such men with mental powers and spiritual gifts far beyond what anyone else had.

Indeed, the Lord enlightened Luther “to the extent that according to the unanimous testimony of learned men of God who arose after him he understood and could interpret the Scriptures more thoroughly than any teacher in the church before or after him, not even excluding Augustine and other highly learned Fathers. A man by the name of Erasmus, who was recognized even by the papists as the most learned and respected man of the time, confessed: ‘A more skillful expositor than Luther has not been found among all the writers in the Church’. The famous sainted theologian Brentz writes: ‘Luther alone lives in his writings; in comparison to him all of us are as a dead letter’. The great Dutch linguist Masius confessed: ‘On one page of Luther’s writings there is often more sound theology than one finds in a whole volume of the Fathers’” (C. F. W. Walther). Through the Reformation Luther freed Christ in Paul’s epistles.

Why did the Almighty raise up Martin Luther, another great messenger like unto the first? Not long after God sent his first mighty messenger, Paul, to the New Testament church, an ominous and odious threat soon appeared. By and by the church was enveloped and taken captive by a force hostile to the gospel, just as the Old Testament church had been besieged, beset, and put into bondage by Babylon.

Yet this did not happen by surprise. The Lord warned his church in Revelation 13, 17, and 18 of this hostile takeover by the New Testament version of the old Babylon. Moreover, our reassuring Redeemer comforted his church in our text by promising already back in the days of the apostles when our text was written, that he would send yet

another great messenger on the order of Paul, who would deal with this terrible treachery, give it a deadly blow, and deliver the elect out of their spiritual slavery.

Because of this God-sent 16th century Reformation, you have been brought to faith. Without the gospel that was brought to light in the Lutheran Reformation, you probably would be worshiping the Virgin Mary as your co-Redeemer. But because Luther brought back the old original apostolic gospel, your fathers have been able to pass it down to you, and you also have now been blessed with the faith once delivered to the apostolic saints (Jude 3).

Furthermore, your kind Savior has raised up Martin Luther in order to comfort you. By it he would reassure you that he will not let his church cry for help very long before coming to its aid; he will not leave you forever to the wolves in sheep's clothing, but will be watchful, and will rise to your need, bringing freedom and salvation to his elect who were held in confinement by wicked men in the darkness of antichristian hellish teachings.

What is more, you are in duty bound to recognize Martin Luther as a gracious gift from God.

“God demands of men that they recognize His gifts, and when they are not recognized, judgment follows. God wanted Pharaoh to know His prophet Moses. Pharaoh would not, and we know what befell Pharaoh. Saul refused to recognize David, and utter ruin for time and eternity overtook Saul. The Jews hardened their hearts against the preaching of Jeremiah, and Jeremiah had to sing his Lamentations. Worst of all, the Jews refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and destruction came upon Jerusalem and the curse upon the Jewish race. God expects every one of us to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, and He expects the modern world to accept the message of Martin Luther” (“The Difference between Reformed and Lutheran Preaching,” Editor-in-chief, Martin S. Sommer, *The Concordia Pulpit* for 1932 [Saint Louis: CPH, 1931], page VI).

The divine mission of Martin Luther has been so obvious that centuries ago the churches in the Pomeranian district of Germany recognized a prophecy of Luther in Revelation chapter 14. Consequently, they commemorated Luther's birthday, 10 November, for “on that day,” they explained, “God, in these last times, gave the church his servant, Dr. Martin Luther”. Let us do likewise as we approach Luther's birthday and the thirty-first of October. As the Pomeranian Lutherans centuries ago recognized Martin Luther as being a special gift from God to his beloved church, so may you praise your dear Lord for having such great love for you that he would raise up a highly gifted man in the church on the order of an apostle for your benefit!

Text: Revelation 14:8:

Another messenger followed, saying, “Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink” (author’s translation).

Again and again many different witnesses from different backgrounds have come to the same conclusion: God raised up Martin Luther. That is, God prepared Luther to be his human instrument in bringing back the glorious gospel to a hopelessly lost, sin-saturated, damnation-darkened world.

Because the divine mission of Martin Luther was so obvious the churches in the Pomeranian district of Germany centuries ago recognized a prophesy of him in Revelation 14. In fact, the earliest reference to a Reformation festival is in the Pomeranian church order. However, instead of the current date of observance, 31 October, the Pomeranian churches set aside 10 November, today, which is Luther’s birthday, as their date of observance, for, as they explained, “on that day, God, in these last times, gave the church his servant, Dr. Martin Luther.”

As these Pomeranian Lutherans years ago recognized Luther to be a gift of God to his beloved church, so also may you praise your merciful Lord on this anniversary of Luther’s birth for showing such great love for you that he would send you a special messenger, Martin Luther, to restore the soul-saving gospel to you!

GOD RAISED UP MARTIN LUTHER

1. For what reason?
2. In what way?
3. For what blessed result?

1.

Why commemorate the birthday of Martin Luther? Why assign such importance to a man? Because, as one person has put it, “Every man in western Europe and in America is leading a different life today from what he would have been had Martin Luther not lived” (Preserved Smith). “Luther has done more to change the history of the world than any other man since” the apostle Paul (Francis Clark).

After Christ’s gospel had been preached and spread far and wide, it soon was covered up with a rubbish pile of ruinous faith-killing false doctrines. Luther is the one whom God sent to recover his precious gospel, and to restore it once again to a down-trodden world steeped in sin, lost in darkness, and doomed to damnation. Therefore, this

was a monumental act of God's grace. In fact, its effects still are being felt today by you in the free course of the gospel which you enjoy, and in the religious and political freedoms which you have.

Since the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven over nineteen centuries ago, his church on earth has gone through three phases: a formation, a deformation, and a reformation. First of all, the New Testament church was formed. Christ's church consists of those sinners whom God has saved.

“When God saw that mankind through the deception of Satan had fallen into misery and was hopelessly lost in sin and guilt, death, and damnation, His love to mankind was not extinguished, but was rather fanned into an incandescent flame. God did not turn away from fallen man; on the contrary, He now came much closer to him. He made His eternal Son, God of God and Light of Light, to become incarnate, to assume the human nature, and to become a member of human society, so that before the Father He might represent and plead the cause of the whole race of man. He placed upon His incarnate Son the obligation to fulfill in man's place that divine Law which He had given to man, Gal. 4:4-5. He obligated Him also to take upon Himself the whole guilt of sin with which mankind was burdened, Gal. 3:13. And all this the incarnate Son of God has done, Ps. 40:9, 13; 69:6, thereby opening the portals of paradise fully and completely unto all men without exception” (Franz Pieper).

Thus the eternal mercy that God has prepared in order that sinners might see heaven is this: First of all, God has laid aside his anger against the world because of the high sacrifice of his Son; secondly, God announces and distributes this pardon and peace through the gospel, baptism, and communion; thirdly, the Holy Spirit works on the minds of men through the gospel and sacraments to believe and to possess God's pardon and peace. If a sinner would try to get to heaven in any other way, he will not get there; heaven will be closed to him. Thus any change that man would attempt to make of any of these three parts of God's salvation will prevent him from reaching heaven.

The danger of changing God's way of salvation is what our Lord warned about time and time again in his New Testament. Through his Bible the Almighty admonished all to leave his gospel alone, and let it do its work. Time and time again Scripture has warned: Do not add your ideas of holiness to God's way to heaven! This would only ruin it, as salt mixed with sugar will ruin the sweetness. But this is exactly what happened. Several centuries after Christ the well-formed church became deformed.

This deterioration had been a gradual process. It had begun with seemingly insignificant things, seemingly small deviations from the gospel. Yet these salvation-denying, gospel-hiding, heaven-closing deviations by corrupt clergy and unfaithful church officials took the Christian church captive, so to speak, for about 1,000 years. As the Old Testament church had been carried away captive to a place of unbelief by the forces of the antichristian city/state power of Babylon, so the New Testament church was

led away captive by false preachers and their pompous views. Though the men who did this, the glory-seeking theologians, self-seeking pastors, and money-minded church officials, did not deny Christ's work, they argued that it was not enough; man himself had to work out part of his salvation. With the idea taught to the people in the pews, corrupt men hid the gospel of grace, and the false gospel which they created in its place had no saving effect; it could not get a single soul to heaven. No longer were unrighteous sinners pointed to Christ as their only hope from the wrath to come, but were pointed to their own holy works. Eventually, it was forbidden in the churches even to preach the original gospel. Those who tried were persecuted or put to death by church officials. How far the church had been led away! How captive to a corrupt hellish creed had the church been confined by a new version of the Old Testament Babylon! Truly, as history calls it, this was the Dark Ages!

But at last the time had come when it pleased our great God in his grace and mercy to remember his captive church, to cripple the power of the corrupt clergy and officials, and to restore his gospel to hell-bound church members. As a means to this end God brought about the Reformation in the 1500's. He accomplished this through his use of sinful mortals, one man, in particular, being his chosen servant.

God selected the time and place, provided the man, and so ordered the circumstances as to provide for his gospel entrance once more into the hearts of men, to dethrone the misleading priest, and to puncture the power of Babylon, that is, the gospel-wreckers in Rome.

2.

It would be instructive for you to trace the main stages of development by which God trained and prepared his chief instrument of the Reformation, Martin Luther. At first Luther was not a Christian, though he was a member in good standing in a church calling itself Christian. Hence if Luther would have died while he was young, he would not have entered heaven. After a friend of his died, and after he almost was struck by lightning, Luther joined a monastery to relieve his guilty conscience. "Never a man went into a monastery with purer motives. Never a man went through the duties, drudgeries, and humiliations of the novitiate of convent-life with more unshrinking fidelity. Never a man endured more painful mental and bodily agonies that he might secure for himself an assured spiritual peace. Romanists have expressed their wonder that so pure a man thought himself so great a sinner. But a sinner he was, as we all are; and to avert the just anger of God he fasted, prayed, and mortified himself. Dr. Staupitz found him a walking skeleton, more dead than alive. And yet no peace or comfort came. He says of that time: 'If these things had continued, I would have tortured myself to death. The more I sought to support my doubting, weak, and troubled conscience by human ordinances, the more its doubt and weakness and trouble increased from day to day'" (K. S., *Homiletic Magazine*, IV [Saint Louis: CPH, 1906], page 173).

This new way to heaven, which the corrupt clergy had introduced, gave the lie that not the crucified Christ outside of us, hanging on the cross, rising from his Easter

tomb, is what has opened heaven for us completely, but a religious experience inside us makes that happen. It was on account of this church teaching that Luther could find no joy or peace no matter how hard he tried. This came to him only after he was enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the reading of Scripture to learn the meaning of the gospel: Being justified by God's grace we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24; 5:1). This clear gospel beamed upon Luther like the morning sun. Through this gospel the Holy Spirit converted Luther into a true Christian. This high promise of God produced the reformation in Luther, and the Reformation by Luther.



As a young man, Luther finds a copy of the Bible for the first time. He shows a lack of interest in the other popular books of his time: Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Scholastic theology. A woodcut by Gustav König.

It was this great biblical truth that so fired up Luther's soul when John Tetzel came near Luther's pulpit in 1516, selling entrance to heaven to his parishioners. As a result, Luther published his *95 Theses* on 31 October, 1517, to get a public airing of this matter. But when the church officials did not want to do anything about this matter, and, furthermore, told Luther that he was wrong and should take back what he had written, Luther was stunned and wondered why the church hierarchy had taken such a stand. He then started to examine with his Bible all the other things that the Catholic church taught, and discovered a whole cartload of corrupt antichristian errors which the apostles had never preached, and which had closed the gates of heaven for the last ten centuries.

As Luther revealed more and more of his findings to the public, these startling revelations gained a wide audience. Luther's gospel findings were hailed with delight by both peasant and prince alike. They were acknowledged as being God's authentic truth by millions who had been deluded by the cruel hoax of a phony gospel all this time. Consequently, one false doctrine after another of the papal system was exposed until finally all of God's truth had been brought to light again, and millions became converted.

Thus Luther had not been told by God in a dream: “Cleanse my church; begin a Reformation!” Luther had had no idea into what he was getting himself. The Reformation, the return of many church members to the truth, came about in a gradual process. Yet God used that local dispute about indulgences to set in motion the gigantic wheels of a comprehensive housecleaning of his church.

What is more, Luther accomplished this not by passing new laws, not by running for high office, but simply by preaching the pure gospel. Others heard it, the Holy Spirit converted them, and they rejected the hoax which they had been taught.

For instance, in 1520 Luther wrote a booklet entitled, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. In it he pointed out that the Christian church had been held in a Babylonian-like captivity for 1,000 years by soul-misleading teachings promoted by the powers in Rome. By these and other writings, along with the clear pronouncement of the old apostolic gospel, God cleaned house, made a reformation in his church, gave a deadly blow to the corrupt powers and theology in Rome, and caused this Babylonian captivity to end. It should have ended, but, unfortunately, some have hung onto this creed to this day.

Without Luther there would be no free hearing of the gospel today. Yet there are people who become offended when, in referring to the Reformation, these great facts of history are repeated. What kind of church members these must be!

3.

What were the blessed results of the Reformation under Martin Luther? First of all, it is the fact that we have the privilege to hear Christ’s original gospel, the only way in which we could be saved. In addition, the restored gospel came to others.

In 1519 it came to Sweden, then to Finland and to Lapland; in 1520 to Denmark, then to Norway and to Iceland; in 1521 to Estonia and to the surrounding Baltic countries; then to the eastern European countries; it also spread to France, even to Italy and to Spain, but was quickly suppressed by force. In 1531 Lutherans signed the Augsburg Confession in the New World, in Venezuela.

Other blessings resulting from Luther are these: In 1529 Luther introduced his *Small Catechism*, which has been called “the gem of the Reformation” (McGiffert). The marvelous explanation of the Second Article may be the greatest sentence from a pen not inspired. One man, Justus Jonas, a contemporary of Luther, was firmly convinced that the writing of the *Small Catechism* was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

In addition, Luther translated the Bible out of the original languages into the common language of the people. The Scottish writer, Thomas Carlyle, declared: “The period of the Reformation was . . . when all the nations were presented with an open Bible, and all the emancipation of heart and intellect which an open Bible involves.”

President Little of Garrett Biblical Institute stated: “Compared with our English Bible, Luther’s translation seems like a miracle.” One contemporary of Luther remarked: “Even shoemakers and women become so absorbed in its study that they are able to debate with Doctors of Theology” (John Cochlaeus).

Before Luther’s time, a choir of priests had been doing all the singing in church. The congregation had been reduced to silence. But Luther followed the example of the psalmists and of the early church fathers, and made hymns for the laity to sing, so that “the Word of God may be kept among the people through the song” (Luther). In 1524 the first Protestant hymnal appeared, a booklet of eight hymns - four by Luther. Grove’s *Dictionary of Music* says: “Luther is the establisher of congregational singing. The chorale originated by Luther cannot be surpassed for dignity and simple devotional earnestness.” In a book of his, the Reverend F. Landon Humphreys remarks: “Luther was the founder of the new school of music The *chorale* of Protestant Germany furnishes us with the best illustrations of perfection in metrical tunes Those *chorale* are so elevated, and at the same time so simple and devotional, that they are beyond question the most perfect model of hymn-tunes.”

Indeed, in the Reformation “Luther’s teaching of justification by faith,” which was the central doctrine of the Reformation, “changed the face of the whole world” (Berger, *Kulturaufgaben der Reformation*). He “freed religion, and by that he freed all things” (Adolph Harnack). “Through the Reformation alone men of all creeds have become free and enlightened. And this is the reason why not only the theologian, but also the political and literary historian hails the work of the Reformation as one of the greatest blessings ever bestowed on mankind” (Dr. Buchheim, professor in King’s College, London). All this is owing to the faith of one man - Martin Luther.

Even in regard to the freedoms which you enjoy in our country, it has been correctly pointed out that “the inalienable rights of an American citizen are nothing but the Protestant idea of the general priesthood of all believers applied to the civil sphere” (Philip Schaff, *Creeds*, page 219). “No country has more reason than this Republic to recall with joy the blessings Luther assisted to secure for the world, in emancipating thought and conscience, and impressing the stamp of Christianity upon modern civilization” (The Honorable John Jay at the Luther Celebration, Academy of Music, New York, 13 November, 1883).

“The Reformation of the Church is, indeed, a marvelous act of the grace of God, and Martin Luther truly was a precious gift of God to His Church. Through the service of Luther the Lord restored to His people His saving Word, of which they had been deprived Let us ever thank Him for this manifestation of His love, and, prompted by a feeling of gratitude toward Him who gave to us Martin Luther, let us gladly bear the name *Lutherans*” (W. Wegener).

Text: Galatians 5:1:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage!

If there ever would be a day which Lutherans should remember, it will be this coming Thursday, the 31st of October. On this day the homes of all Lutherans should be marked with humble thanksgivings and swellings of great joy. Nothing should stop loyal Lutherans from hurrying to the house of God that day to praise the Lord in unison for all the great mercies which he has shown in restoring to us our precious freedom from eternal punishment.

What happened on this day? 474 years ago, Martin Luther, a preacher and professor in Wittenberg, Germany, posted 95 theses, or proposals, on the bulletin board of the town against the use of indulgences. Without Luther suspecting it, however, his hammer blows, which nailed the theses up, under the direction and blessing of God, were the peals of a liberty bell which announced the dawn of a new bright age of liberty for sin-enslaved souls which cruelly had been chained to unbelief due to Medieval church heresy. The clouds of spiritual unbelief, which had kept the Christian church in darkness for more than 1,000 years, began to scatter. Radiant as the sun the glorious gospel began to rise and to shine again over a surprised yet happy Christendom.

What a blessing that day turned out to be! Nothing like it had been seen since the day of Pentecost 1,500 years before. Beginning on 31 October, 1517, the gospel began to be poured out once more in ever greater measure throughout the world (adapted from C. F. W. Walther, *Old Standard Gospels*, translator Donald Heck [Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1984], page 378).

Souls that had languished long in the captivity of sin, death, and the devil were liberated by the gospel with which Christ had made us free. Therefore, not so much the 4th of July as 31 October should be remembered as our Independence Day above all others. Moreover, the best way to observe this day of freedom is to –

STAND FIRMLY IN THE LIBERTY OF THE GOSPEL!

1. The early Christians did not stand firmly and lost their faith's freedom.
2. You should stand firmly lest you lose yours.

1.

Our text gladly announces the exciting news that should thrill any sin-burdened heart: “Christ has made you free!” He bought you with a price. Yet that price did not come cheaply. What was the price of your release? The holy God himself had to leave his high throne in heaven, come down to earth, become a man, and suffer a shameful terrible death on the cross. The eternal almighty Son laid upon himself all the pain and

punishment which your sins had deserved. He endured the eternal torment you had earned, since all your life you had been a rebellious and selfish sinner. When on Calvary's terrible timbers of torture the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed you from all sin, Christ removed the guilt and punishment of your iniquities from you as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12), and has cast them all behind his back (Isaiah 38:17).

What is more, the resurrection of Christ broke the deadly grip which sin, death, devil, this sin-loving world, and your own flesh had held over you, keeping you bound and tied in transgressions. Christ set you free from all this. Moreover, wherever this gospel report is published Christ gives power that men may become the free sons of God. As Abraham Lincoln announced the abolition of civil slavery on 1 January, 1863, and all who heard it were so blessed, so the gospel has announced the abolition of spiritual slavery, and your liberation from sin's dominion, sin's condemnation, and sin's consequence: eternal death.

Subsequently, what does our text urge all newly freed followers of Christ? "Stand fast . . . in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage!" In other words, do not treat the gospel lightly; do not lay it aside; otherwise you will lose your glorious liberty and backslide all the way into awful slavery once again!

Yet what happened not long after the apostles fell asleep in their graves? The Christian world for the most part laid aside the gospel, preferring instead to turn their hearts to the things of this world, such as, getting a job, getting married, getting a house, getting a better life, and getting richer, all the while maintaining a Christian front, yet ignoring the humble repentant sin-confessing Christ-clinging trust that only would deliver them from the damnation to come. Thus the prophecy in 2nd Thessalonians 2:3 came true. A great apostasy occurred, that is, a great falling away occurred, a falling away from the old gospel, which not only sent millions back under the dominion of sin, but also subjected them to an additional cruel slavery under a twisted and hell-run Christian clergy. A Lutheran pastor has commented:

"It cannot be denied that previous to that 31st of October almost a millennium of spiritual night had rested upon practically all Christendom. By the craftiness of Satan and the sluggishness and thanklessness of men, the lamp of the pure Gospel had been lost almost everywhere and had been removed from its place Furthermore, it is undeniable that previous to that October 31st all Christendom lay under a yoke of slavery. The servants of the Church had set themselves up as lords over the Church, and, instead of shepherding the sheep of Christ, they only fattened themselves on the peoples' goods. . . . Christendom had languished in terrible despair and terror of conscience. In vain thousands had formerly asked in anguish over their sins: What shall we do to be saved? No answer was given. Awakened and anxious souls had been referred to the departed saints, to works of men, to their own . . . satisfactions and merits.

There was silence concerning Christ and his perfect merit, and the Word of faith was hushed” (C. F. W. Walther).

This is true. The 1,000 year period before the God-sent Lutheran Reformation was a terrible time. It has been referred to aptly as the “Dark Ages.” It was not at all as Sir Walter Scott (1772-1832), the Scottish author of the last century, described it in his many romantic novels. The era of gallant knights in shining armor doing laudable deeds, of picturesque castles inhabited by kindly kings, and of a mellow idyllic era of peace and harmony in a slower-paced society, could be traced back to the imagination and influence of Walter Scott. Yet the fair picture which he has painted of this age is false, utterly false. The costumes, the scenery are accurate; but the actions, the plain speech, and the behavior are all wrong. These totally go against the plain facts of the period. The Dark Ages were a hellhole. No worse period existed in human history excepting that before the Flood; for not only were there the typical consequences of an unbelieving society, but to this were added the crushing cruelties of a corrupt church. For instance, during this period the clergy had become entirely worldly; nothing was overlooked. The clerics were “full of idolatry, superstition,” schemes, “tyrannizing over the consciences, and other anti-christian abominations” (Caspar Starke). As a whole they committed every kind of vice known to man without fear or shame, and even boasted of their sins. As a result, the lay people suffered the most horrifying abuse at the hands of a corrupt and greedy clergy and church officialdom. The legend was circulated that the devil thanked the church’s officials for sending almost all of Christendom to hell.

During this time society as a whole had been ground down into the hardest existence imaginable. As late as the 12th century the landowners had absolute rule over the peasants. Even after that the peasants were little above the grade of absolute slavery, oppressed by their cruel masters, the princes, knights, and land-owning church officials. Taxation was unjust and high, while the morals of this age were the lowest possible. The states of Europe were torn by endless feuds and civil wars. These were conducted with utmost cruelty and violence as almost would surpass belief. Society itself was little removed from total chaos and anarchy in its lawlessness. Criminals marauded everywhere; none would assist the victims of their crimes to obtain justice. Ignorance was common. Poverty was widespread. For example, out of a population of 90,000, Florence, Italy, in the 1300's had 21,000 beggars (Symonds). On land or on sea there was no security of life or property. Consult: Theodore Graebner, *The Dark Ages* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1917)! Astonishingly, it was the corrupted Christian church that was the cause of most of this; for where the gospel would have free course, and liberty to the captives of sin would be proclaimed, all other lesser freedoms will exist and abound, for instance, the freedoms of speech and of conscience; also peace, prosperity, and good treatment will be the norm in society. However, where the gospel would be buried under the rubbish of hellish hoaxes, false doctrine, and greed for worldly gain, all these lesser blessings also will disappear.

How did the Dark Ages come about? They came about because the people would not stand firmly in the liberty by which Christ had made them free. They let go of the gospel. Just the same, God did not let mankind perish forever because of this foolishness,

but showed his overabundant mercy once again, and acted to deliver sinners out of spiritual slavery. Heaven raised up a mighty man to begin a thorough housecleaning of the church. The church of the Dark Ages needed a reformation, and this was accomplished through the simple means which we heard about in last Sunday's sermon: The Word of God. The pure and free gospel of liberty from hell for men through Christ's saving blood was proclaimed loudly far and wide. It was a hard task, though. Many at first refused to repent and to be converted. Enemies within the visible church lashed out at the threats to their power. Much labor and even blood was spent to bring the buried gospel back to light. Stand firmly, therefore, today, lest you become entangled again with a yoke of bondage!

2.

“Stand firmly!” This was the urgently needed exhortation which Paul addressed to the Galatians. Once he had brought them the gospel and all the counsel of God in its pure form, so that he could say to them concerning this missionary activity among them: I preached the gospel to you at the first. You received me as a messenger of God. Where is, then, the blessedness of which you spoke? For I testify that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me (4:13-15). But then false teachers, Judaizers, with their errors, infiltrated the congregation. They said, “The gospel is fine, but there is more to salvation than that. Some more things need to be tacked on to the gospel for you to be saved.” The Galatian Christians listened to this, and began to lose sight of the sole-standing gospel. In doing so they were falling back into the chains of unbelief out of which the apostle previously had rescued them. The Judaizers were churchly people outwardly. They had not asked the Galatians to leave the church for heathendom; far from it. Yet what these pious-sounding, religious-acting errorists were advocating, no matter how subtle it may have sounded, in plain black and white, was a justification by human hands which would cause the justification by God alone to come crashing down, and to be driven from the heart. This is why Paul rang the alarm bell, and warned the Galatians in fast order: “Stick with the original gospel! Stand firmly in it!”

So it is today. Today there is an urgent need for the visible Christian church, that is, for all those denominations who call themselves Christian, “to stand firmly,” to stand squarely on the saving gospel, because right now, with such widespread neglect of this gospel taking place in the church, with such widespread pursuit of worldliness, and with an increasing falling away from the orthodox apostolic truth, Christendom is on its way to a second trip to the Dark Ages. When everything depends on a real repentant return to the Father in Christ, we hear in the churches in our area “the Bible challenged and contradicted, His Virgin Birth and His atoning death publicly ridiculed and rejected. If no nation has been able long to survive the continued attack on the Redeemer, how can America, in past generations the citadel of Scriptural Christianity, surrender its loyalty to the Lord without preparing itself for double disaster?” (Walter A. Maier). Therefore, whoever would forsake the Reformation doctrines, which agree exactly with the Word of God, will be heading back into the nightmare of the Dark Ages.

For instance, at their conventions major Christian denominations have been caught up more with American politics and civil injustice than with proclaiming Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. In others: repentance is out, and entertainment is in. If a church would want to be rich and well spoken of, it will have to give its worshipers what they want, under the label of churchliness, of course. In still other bodies a health-and-wealth gospel is being proclaimed, that is to say, that God loves you so much and does not want to see you in misery, that if you would pray for that new car or a fine house, and would not doubt, but only believe, he will give it to you. Name it and claim it! Even in so-called Lutheran congregations today any insistence on staying with all of God's revealed Word is met with resistance. The feeling that is taking over more and more congregations is this: "Believe what you want! Do whatever you want! We must keep in step with any current craze that the other churches are doing, lest we look like the Amish." But Scripture scolds such faithlessness, and declares: "This *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *who* will not hear the law of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'Do not see', and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits'" (Isaiah 30:9-10).

Yet more fearful than the injection of all this worldliness and covetousness into the church, however, is the rising popularity of a faith-killing error that was first absorbed into the body of theology in the Dark Ages in the church, and that only could lead back into the Dark Ages. Simply stated, it is this: Not the Christ outside us, hanging on the cross and rising from the tomb, will save; rather a religious experience inside us will do it. This dark error is the basis, the foundation, the underlying premise, indeed, the heart and soul of the new charismatic movement. Remnants of the Roman Catholic church in Luther's day which resisted God's church cleaning and refused to return to the pure gospel survive to this day. The charismatic movement, which now has infiltrated every Christian denomination, including the Lutheran, agrees in principle with the Roman Catholic, Dark Ages' emphasis of the experience inside us, not the Christ outside us, and is wittingly or unwittingly orchestrating a return of all Christian denominations to the Dark Ages' theology of Rome. Hence today we are sadly witnessing the beginning of another great falling away by the church from the pure gospel into error's eclipse, unless Christendom quickly looks to the Lord's truth, comes to its senses, repents, and stands firmly on Christ's blood-bought, liberty-bringing forgiveness. If Christendom would not turn aside from its current course, a sure thing will happen: the Almighty will keep his promise to do the following: "'Behold, the days are coming', says the Lord God, 'that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread . . . but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find *it*'" (Amos 8:11-12).

Do not let this happen! Cling to the old gospel, and stand firmly in the liberty with which the almighty Son has freed you, graciously freeing you from the judgment of the Last Day, the torments of hell, and the pangs of an unforgiving conscience! Know and love this liberty! Speak of this liberty to others, and live it! Stand firmly in the liberty with which the compassionate Christ has made you free!



Homiletical Helps:
Illustrations and Quotations for Sermons on the Papacy.

Apothegms: The papacy is a spiritual-secular kingdom embracing the whole world, whose head and master is the pope at Rome (*Moritz Robert Engel, in Lehre und Wehre, XIII, 1867*).

Infallibility in matters of faith is one of the fundamental principles of popery (*M. R. Engel*). The papacy still loves its god Mauzzim, Daniel 11:39 (*Theodore Graebner*).

Similes (metaphors, comparisons): The papacy is the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned upon its grave (*Thomas Hobbes*).

The papacy is not a lame duck.

The papacy will defy gravity to rise again.

The Antichrist is riding into his Jerusalem.

The church of Christ was robbed of its highest right, she was disfranchised, led into captivity, made the slave of a man. She, the free one, was robbed of her liberty, of her nobility, and of her glory. Without means of protection she was surrendered to the wolf, and on all sides the gates were opened wide to every form of sin, vice, and error. The pope could do as he pleased - who would stop him? The watchmen of Zion were silenced, they were to remain silent regardless of what might take place. One fortress after another crumbled and was captured, in the midst of the Holy Place stood the greatest show of right and in the name of true Christianity. Christ's name, God's Word were misused to give these endless outrages the appearance of holiness; sin was to be sin no longer, unbelief was to be faith, Satan's kingdom was to be the kingdom of heaven, the church of the pope was to be the church which alone could save, and the pope was to be the Holy Father (*M. R. Engel*).

True, the Romanists still have the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Absolution, Baptism, Holy Communion, at least in part, and certain other remnants of Christian doctrine. But what are these few grains among the mass of chaff piled mountain high? What are these few drops of balsam for the many within the walls of Babylon who have been wounded unto death? What are these faint signs of life in the midst of that death prevailing everywhere? What are these few crumbs from the richly laden table of the great supper of our Lord? (*M. R. Engel*.)

Quotations: There is no contention exegetically more unfounded and arbitrary than that 2nd Thessalonians 2:3-4 could fit only a single concrete person (*Ferdinand Philippi*).

The things recorded of the Antichrist . . . are of such a nature that they cannot be completed by one man nor in the life span of one man (*Johann Buddeus*).

It is however, a sad, but, in the history of missions, a usually overlooked fact, that the very period at which so much had been gained, and from which so much was to be hoped for in the legitimate extension of Christianity, witnessed the development of agencies and influences that antagonized the peculiar aims of the Gospel and marred its missionary character, sowing throughout the extended field of its influence the seeds of premature and almost fatal decay. The circumstance of these influences being more or less antagonistic to each other did not relieve their evil effect, but rather increased their power, as multiplied diseases sooner reduce the vital energies of the human system. Had there been no previous departures from the true spirit of the Gospel, and had the Christians of the 4th century been content to rely on spiritual agencies for the promotion of Christianity, the advantages which followed the professed conversion of Constantine might in all probability have tended to extend and consolidate a pure kind of Christianity. But, unhappily, insidious influences had already been initiated, which, in the sunshine of apparent prosperity, grew with the rankness and rapidity of noxious weeds. Of these influences, allusion can only be made summarily to doctrinal errors, monasticism, and worldly conformity . . . So when, in the 2nd century, the doctrine of a Christian priesthood began to be developed with an attempted imitation of the Jewish, the evil was not merely the diversion of ministerial talent from the one work of preaching and teaching in the name of Christ to a burdensome routine of ritual ceremonies, but a direct step towards conformity with certain pagan theories and practices which in later periods were put forward as elements of Christianity itself (*McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia* under "Missions").

We have no fear that bias will cause us to paint too dark a picture. What we can and will say will rather fall far short of what the Papacy actually is. Rome can congratulate herself that no human pen is able to do her justice and that all who since the days of the apostles and prophets have written and testified in this matter have in spite of their best intentions fallen short of what the Spirit of God in Scripture says concerning this abomination of all abominations (*M. R. Engel*).

The Popes exalted themselves even above the angels in heaven. In his exposition of the 11th and 12th chapters of the prophet Daniel, Luther writes: "Clement VI, posing as a god not only on earth but also in heaven, issued a bull in which he commanded the angels in heaven that they should at once take into Paradise and into eternal joy the souls of those who while making a pilgrimage to Rome in quest of indulgence might die along the way. To hell and to the devil he gave the following orders concerning such souls: We object to have these souls subjected to the pains of hell. Thus this cursed abomination has seated himself not only in the temple of God here upon earth, but also in heaven, ruling over the angels, over heaven, over Paradise, over hell, etc." (*M. R. Engel*).

By means of indulgences, masses, annates, commendams, the tithes exacted from all clerics, the Peter's pence, by means of the most shameless usury the Roman Church was enriched while the people were stripped. Those who dared to protest were branded as heretics. The greatest scoundrels were looked upon as holy men, the most faithful witnesses had to endure every imaginable torture and insult. Sane reason and science were despised and disgraced; the universities were on the pay roll of Rome and were subjected to enforced silence. The councils degenerated into tools of the Popes, struggling in vain against the Antichrist to regain the influence which they had at one time possessed. Princes and people sighed under the burden of this tyranny. A frank expression was a crime, crusades were urged against those who dared to resist, heresy courts were instituted, funeral pyres were erected, and every form of torture was invented against the witnesses of Jesus. The whore was made drunken with the blood of the saints, she drank of it to excess, and she drinks of it still. To cap the climax, the commands of the Pope were issued as in the name of the Triune God, as in Christ's stead; on pain of losing salvation people were commanded to believe in the errors and inventions of the Pope, and thus the consciences were tortured, often in matters altogether silly and impossible to carry out (*M. R. Engel*).



The morning sun of this St. Bartholomew's Day, in the year 1572, saw the streets of Paris and other cities in France running red with blood. Countless thousands of Protestant Christians had been massacred by order of the French King, Charles IX, who wrote to Pope Gregory XIII that he had slain 70,000 "heretics." In his unholy joy the Pope celebrated a solemn festival of thanksgiving, and commanded a medal to be struck in commemoration of the butchery known as the *Massacre of St. Bartholomew's*.

Has not the very foundation of faith been destroyed and rejected in the Papacy, that foundation of which Paul says: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1st Cor. 3:11? The Papacy knows of no original sin. While the name of that sin is used among them, it has been emptied of its Scriptural meaning. The doctrine of justification by faith was condemned by the Council of Trent. The Romanists exalt love above faith. They have changed faith, this work of God, into a work of man, and a very significant work at that. Instead of two Sacraments they have seven, and they are supposed to be effective even without faith. The means of grace, Baptism and Holy Communion, have been distorted and mutilated. They exalt the vows of monks and their penance above Baptism and have changed Holy Communion into a sacrifice in which the priests everywhere offer Christ again and again as an unbloody sacrifice, an offering for the living and the dead (*M. R. Engel*).

And what shall we say of all the other doctrines of devils which prevail in the Church of the Pope among young and old; about purgatory, about praying to the saints, about penance and confession, about monastic vows, about the rosary, and many other matters? Is it really possible? Is it true that Rome teaches, confesses, and defends all these abominations? Yes, these stones and scorpions the “Mother Church, without which there is no salvation,” gives to her hungry children in place of the bread of life, which she keeps from them by force! She has led thousands upon thousands of those whom the Lord has redeemed by His precious blood along the broad road to hell, groaning under the yoke of her bondage. And she has plunged other thousands into fierce temptations and agonies, so that only in their later life, perhaps only in the hour of death they recovered themselves out of the snare of the devil and learned to rely altogether on the grace of God alone. She has persecuted Christ’s witnesses and drunk their blood and made the earth desolate for no other reason than to enjoy temporal luxury and to be permitted to rule for a short season in this transient world. This is the truth, and no one can deny it, least of all Rome herself. It cannot be otherwise, here must be Antichrist. The Mass alone, this continual blasphemy, brands Romanism as the Antichrist (*M. R. Engel*).

All other evils combined: the unbelief of Voltaire, revolution, Mohammedanism, the Talmud, Mormonism, are not the Papacy. In Rome we find all the hostility against God and His kingdom concentrated. She is the great arsenal of all evil spirits; the mother of harlotry and every abomination upon earth. We have escaped her clutches. Shall we look back as did Lot’s wife? Dare we underestimate what the Lord has done for us? Dare we deny the danger out of which we have escaped? Dare we forget the distress out of which we have been delivered? Or dare we grow carelessly secure because . . . centuries have now elapsed since Luther nailed his theses to the Castle Church in Wittenberg? A relapse would be worse than the first falling away (2nd Peter 2:21-22). Dare we permit ourselves to be misled by the good things which the Pope may have done now and then? Is it not Rome which, though not openly, yet in fact takes the position: “Let us do evil that good may come,” and do good in order that we may engage in sin all the more? No, let us call white white, black black, sour sour, sweet sweet; let us call the Papacy the Antichrist; doing so, we will be giving the Papacy its due, we are but following the word of the Lord: “Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven,” Matt. 10:32-33 (*M. R. Engel*).

Now, it is a strange thing that most people are very ready to judge another one in matters in which it is forbidden, but are not as ready to judge of doctrine; and yet just that is commanded. God commands us to judge the doctrine which any one teaches. Some think that we ought to be very slow to judge what is taught. But God has told us that we are to be very exact and severe in judging doctrine. No teacher is above being judged by his hearers. St. Paul said to his congregation: “Judge ye what I say,” 1st Cor. 10:15, and thereby called upon rather inexperienced Christians to judge of the things which he taught them. And everywhere in his letters St. Paul demanded of his hearers that they

judge of the doctrine. Aye, even in the Old Testament all the Jews were told that they must judge of the teachings of their teachers, even of such teachers as could perform the greatest miracles, Deut. 13:1-3. Jesus was very kind to those who had fallen into sin, readily forgave them when they were penitent, and restored them. In the parable of the Prodigal Son He condemns one who wished to treat the returned prodigal less generously than the Father treated him. But He was very severe with those who taught false doctrine. No matter how respectable, how decent, how godly in appearance, was the life of the Pharisees, who were blind leaders of the blind, Jesus exposed them and condemned them in the most severe terms. God wants us to judge of the doctrine. Those who sin against us we are to treat with leniency, but the mouths of those who speak against the majesty of God's Word must be stopped. Every false teacher slanders God and belies Him. We dare not be lenient with such a false teacher. God's Word is not our property, which we may expose to perversion or surrender at will. Here judging is in place. Let us therefore learn to be very gentle with those who have sinned; let us seek to restore such in the spirit of meekness; but let us oppose with all earnestness and severity every one who teaches contrary to God's Word (*M. Sommer*).

The *Neue Freie Presse*, of Vienna, thus summarizes the history of the popes: - "Since St. Peter (supposing that he ever was in Rome), there have been 297 popes, of whom 24 were anti-popes and one female pope. Nineteen popes quitted Rome and 35 reigned abroad. Eight papal reigns did not exceed each a month's duration, 40 extended over one year, 22 over two years, 54 over five years, 51 over 15 years, 18 over 20 years, and only nine exceeded that duration. Of the 297 popes, 31 were declared usurpers and heretics, and of the remaining 266 legitimate occupants of the Holy See, 64 met with violent deaths, 18 having been poisoned and four strangled. Independently of the Avignon popes, 26 were deposed, expelled from Rome, and banished; 28 others were maintained in power by foreign aid" (W. H. Bidwell, editor, *The Eclectic Magazine* [New York: E. R. Pelton, 108 Fulton Street, 1870], XI, page 126).

Biblical References. - Daniel 7:8, 11, 20-22, 24-26; 9:26, 27; 11:36-45; 12:10-12; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2nd Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1st John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2nd John 7; Revelation 13; 14:8-11; 17:1-18; 18:1-24; 19:20; 20:10; Psalm 10; 110:6; Isaiah 11:4; and 1st Timothy 4:1-3.

The following illustrations and quotations could be incorporated into a sermon on Martin Luther.

Martin Luther

Apothegms: After Luther nothing new was added to the Reformation. (*Johann Bengel*.) Luther freed religion, and by that he freed all things. (*Adolf Harnack*.) God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure shall to eternity endure.

Similes: In breaking away from Rome, Luther restored the bond of union with the original, the Apostolic Church, the Bible Church, the Gospel Church, the Grace Church, the true Church of Christ. Luther was the first to walk over the Roman hierarchy, grasp

the hand of Paul, and mingle with the band of disciples who continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers, Acts 2:42. Luther is not a mere reformer among others, but *the* reformer of the Church. He is the Moses of the New Testament age. He hit the trail, he found the path, he blazed the way, he cleared the road through the swamps, mountains, and jungles of medieval Papacy. He led the Church back to Christ, back to the Bible, back to apostolic purity. (*F. Bente.*)



Friederich Bente

Luther led the Christian church out of an Egyptian darkness.

God through the instrumentality of Martin Luther exposed the great antichrist and broke the yoke which he had laid on the necks of the Christians. (*Frederick Kuegele.*)

Quotes: I ask you to refrain from using my name and rather to be known as Christians, not as Lutherans. Who is Luther? The doctrine which I preach is not mine, nor have I been crucified for any one. Paul the Apostle did not permit the Christians at Corinth to call themselves by his own name or that of Peter. What is there in me, poor, decaying bag of corruption that I am, that should induce the children of Christ to be called after my worthless name! Not so, my friends. Let us put away these partisan names and be called Christians. But if you believe that Luther's teaching is Gospel-truth, while that of the Pope is not, you cannot altogether disown Luther; for in so doing, you would also disown his doctrine, which you know to be the doctrine of Christ Himself. Rather say thus: Be Luther a knave or a saint, it does not matter; his Gospel, however, is not his, but Christ's. (*Luther.*)

Blessed by the day of Martin Luther's birth! It should be a festival second only to that of the nativity of Jesus. (*Southey.*)

Luther has done more to change the history of the world than any other man since St. Paul. (*Francis Clark.*)

Luther has been the restorer of liberty in modern times. (*Michelet, French Catholic writer.*)

Every man in Western Europe and in America is leading a different life today from what he would have been had Martin Luther not lived. (*Preserved Smith.*)

Had Calvin or Erasmus or Knox been at the head, the Reformation would have been a failure; but Luther was the chosen hero. He was the man with the requisite gifts of leadership, whom God appointed to bring about the Protestant Reformation. (*H. Van Dyke.*)

Others had assailed the pretensions of Antichrist, and had been destroyed. There was Savonarola, burned at the stake in Florence. Hus, burned at the stake at Constance. Lord Cobham, the Wycliffite, burned at the stake in London. Their courage was equal to Luther's. Intrepid souls, martyrs of the Truth, who went to an ignominious and horrible death for the sake of conviction. If Luther escaped a like fate, it was because God's time for the overthrow of Antichrist had now come. The clock struck twelve. The hour of salvation was at hand. And through the work of a Saxon monk the shackles were knocked off that night unto a thousand years had held the minds of men bound in superstition and ignorance. (*Theodore Graebner.*)

The traces of that one mind are to be seen today in the mind of the modern world. Had there been no Luther, the English, the American, and the German peoples would be thinking differently, would be acting differently, would be altogether different men and women from what they are at this moment. (*James Anthony Froude.*)

Luther at Worms "broke the chains of Christendom, started the magnificent procession of the Protestant nations, and introduced a new era of mental activity, industrial energy, political expansion, and universal progress." (*Peter Bayne, LL. D., in Martin Luther, Vol. II, 117.*)

The only fit commentator on Paul was Luther . . . almost as great a genius. (*Samuel Taylor Coleridge.*)

Luther was the greatest preacher and theologian since the days of the great Apostle Paul. (*J. H. Hartenberger.*)

There is something of the apostolic in that man (that is, Luther). (*C. F. W. Walther.*)

Among the great prophets . . . the last of world-wide importance, Martin Luther, has taken his place. (*Preserved Smith.*)

Luther was the first one who, in the powerful manner of Paul, experienced anew the saving truth of justification by faith in Christ alone. (*F. Bente.*)

The reformation of the Church was a task which called for a special instrument of God. And when His own hour had come, God prepared and sent a man who was able to do His bidding. Luther was God's chosen instrument, who, in divine endowment, in

spiritual ability, in heroic courage, in wonderful knowledge, in evangelical spirit, in loving zeal, and in self-sacrificing superhuman labor, towered above all his contemporaries, as well as above all his successors and predecessors since the days of the apostles. Luther was not a self-made nor a self-appointed reformer, but an instrument prophesied, ordained, and prepared by God and born of His spirit. Luther is *the* Reformer of the Church. (*F. Bente.*)

God raised up Luther. (*Charles Spurgeon.*)

What was Luther's work when he undertook the Reformation? His great work consisted in exposing, dethroning, and putting out the pope who had made such havoc in the Church of God. (*Henry Sieck.*)

John Calvin knew the age and the crisis, and this is his testimony: "If any one will carefully consider what was the state of things at the period when Luther rose, he will see that he had to contend with almost all the difficulties which were encountered by the apostles. In one respect, indeed, his position was worse and his condition harder than theirs. There was no kingdom, no principality against which they had to declare war, whereas Luther could not go forth except by the ruin of that empire which was not only the most powerful of all, but regarded all the rest as obnoxious to itself." That empire was popery. (*Theodore Graebner.*)

Luther rose against the "holy father" with a pitilessness and courage such as hitherto no mortal had ever dared show. Pitilessly he tore the hypocritical mask of his counterfeit holiness from his face and showed him to all the world in his true form, in all his horribleness. (*C. F. W. Walther.*)

That is Luther's first claim on our gratitude, that he took the truth from the shelves where it had reposed, dust-covered, through centuries, that he lifted the truth from the bier where it had lain, smothered with sacerdotal garments, and called with a loud voice, "I say unto thee, arise!" and that now the commonplace of Christianity is this: All men are sinful men, justice condemns us all, our only hope is God's infinite mercy, that mercy comes to us all in Jesus Christ, who died for us. (*Alexander Maclaren.*)

Civil independence . . . we owe to the Saxon Reformer. . . . To Martin Luther, above all men, we Anglo-Americans are indebted for national independence and mental freedom. (*Frederic Hedge of Harvard, Mass. Hist. Soc., 1883.*)

Our civil liberty is the result of the open Bible, which Luther gave us. (*Beecher.*)

The Reformation of Luther introduced the principle of civil liberty into the wilderness of North America. (*Daniel Webster at Bunker Hill.*)

Luther is the father of modern civilization. He emancipated the human mind from ecclesiastical slavery. He proclaimed that freedom of thought without which it is easy to see that despite the great modern inventions the spirit of the Dark Ages must have been

indefinitely prolonged and the course of modern civilization must have been essentially different. (*Geo. W. Curtis.*)

No country has more reason than our American Republic to recall with joy the blessings Luther assisted to secure for the world in emancipating thought and conscience and impressing the stamp upon modern civilization. (John Jay.)

All modern Christian liberty may be said to be the outcome of the protest made at Spires (1526) and Augsburg (1530) by the Evangelical members of the German Empire. The attitude of these Christian princes and others was again only possible in the light of the great struggle which had been maintained during the twelve previous years by one man. The Diet of Worms and Luther's memorable words alone explain the subsequent diets at Spires and Augsburg. The courage of a single man as he faced on that great occasion the mailed chivalry of Germany gave the courage which inspired the famous protest and laid the foundation of all Christian and ecclesiastical liberties. (*John Tulloch, in Nineteenth Century.*)

Lest we forget what it has cost to preserve to us and to our children the faith once delivered to the saints, let us study the history of the martyred thousands who gave their blood and their lives in order to transmit to us an inheritance which fadeth not away. This is no time to be indifferent and to sleep securely. The fire is still smoldering under the ashes, and here and there tongues of fire shoot out that will start another conflagration. "The old Evil Foe now means deadly woe." Let us be prepared to face him with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Let us instill into the hearts of our children from early youth at home, in church, and in school the fear of God, implicit obedience to His Word, love for the Lutheran Church, the great historic Bible-church, and watchful fidelity to her unto the end. Let us in the spirit of Martin Luther and Gustavus Adolphus renew our vow to the Lord in the words of ancient Israel: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." (*N. J. Bakke.*)

Biblical References: Revelation 14:8; 2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8; Revelation 13:3a.

The following illustrations and quotations could be incorporated into a sermon on Roman Catholicism.

Roman Catholicism

Apothegms: Rome is always the same. Roman Catholicism is a plagiarism on paganism. Roman Catholicism is a plagiarism on Semi-Pelagianism.

Similes: Protestant faithlessness to the divine standard of teaching is ever paving the way for Rome to return to the house whence it came out (Matthew 12:44), and Rome is ready to make full use of every such opportunity. (*W. H. T. Dau.*)

Antiochus Epiphanes ordered the scribes of the Law to be torn to pieces wherever they would be found, and those with whom sacred books or rolls were found were cruelly put to death. What Antiochus, the type of the man of sin and son of perdition, did for a few years, the antitype has practiced on an infinitely larger scale for almost a thousand years, and even today not a single layman would be permitted to read the Bible if he could prevent him from doing so. The Pope still declares the Bible to be a dangerous book. (*J. Hoeness.*)

Quotes: The most bigoted religious organization in the world is the Roman Catholic Church. Its policies have been unalterably fixed, and summarily reiterated not so long ago in the Syllabus of Pius IX. Even such an “enlightened and liberal” Pope as Leo XIII has deemed it necessary to declare that his Church must be given preferential rights in the United States. (*W. H. T. Dau.*)

In the first of his Ninety-five Theses Luther says that “our Lord and Master Jesus Christ” is the authority whom men should respect. In the place of this authority the Roman Catholic Church puts its “infallible” Pope. Over against the *sola Roma* . . . Lutheranism puts the *sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fides*. (*J. H. C. Fritz.*)

Romanism, built upon lies, feeds on lies, welcomes lies, and employs lies as the principal means of its propaganda. There never has been a greater liar than Rome. This historic fact Protestants must always bear in mind. (*J. T. Mueller.*)

A greater part of modern Christendom admits neither repentance nor saving faith in its Scriptural meaning. The achievements of the Reformation in its heroic struggle with Rome have been thrown aside as worthless, and Protestants have had to suffer themselves to be reminded by Romanists that their teaching no longer warrants their calling themselves Protestants, as it is nothing but Romanism. (*W. H. T. Dau.*)

The fierce racial jealousies that are tearing humanity asunder by their unparalleled and unblushing selfishness are shot through with religious instincts and aspirations. In the midst of this surging tide stands silently the Roman Church, plainly the greatest beneficiary, among representatives of religion, of the present upheaval. Skilled in every art of diplomacy, she has seemingly succeeded in making herself looked up to as the one appreciable element of stability and solidity in these times. She has received unusual homage in recent years. Her claims of authority are treated with unmistakable respect in the public press, the utterances of her leaders as oracular, and her interests as sacrosanct. (*W. H. T. Dau.*)

Mgr. Le Roy finds that the ultimate religious ideas and practices of the primitives agree with those of Catholicism. To the reader the point of congruity is clear, at least as far as the method of obtaining salvation is concerned. Paganism and Catholicism agree in securing salvation for sinners by work-righteousness. Accordingly, the converts to

Catholicism from primitive tribes have ever remained essentially paganistic. (*J. T. Mueller.*)

Violence and cunning, the two instruments of the Roman church policy which John Gerhard described in his *Confessio Catholica*, are still the efficient tools of Rome. Luther called them “Gross’ Macht und viel List,” and beheld in them the cruel panoply of the Man of Sin. (*W. H. T. Dau.*)

It is impossible to describe the amount of superstition prevalent among these [Brazilian] people. The depths of this mental vice are simply unfathomable. It is undeniably an offspring of hell, and we must regard it as our main obstacle. I cannot believe that even the blindest of pagans can sink to lower depths than this. And this is the work of Rome! I am absolutely convinced that Rome has forfeited her right to these people. If it was Paul’s purpose to win as many people from heathenism as possible, we, too, should place no limit on our endeavors to rescue from the claws of Romanism as much as can be rescued. No one who has not done missionary work among the Catholics can comprehend the mystery of iniquity as we find it there. (*R. Hasse.*)

In practice the Roman Catholic Church is mainly guided by the principle of seeking its advantage. Whatever may serve the glory of the Catholic Church is good ethics, according to the Jesuit code of morals. (*J. T. Mueller.*)

Catholicism fattens under constitutional protection, tolerance, and general connivance at its practice and never pretends to change its teachings in order to accommodate itself to those who treat it with tolerance. It is willing to take all that is offered it, and some things that are not offered, and gives nothing in return. (*W. H. T. Dau.*)

The cement which holds the Catholic Church together is not the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, but the identity of selfish interests in the bonds of greed. (*W. H. T. Dau.*)

We admit that Luther’s work was a revolt against papal authority. However, the Reformation was not essentially an economic movement. It is unfair to charge to Luther the sweeping changes that occurred socially and politically in Europe after the restoration of the pure Gospel. During the many centuries preceding the Reformation the Roman Catholic See, by its tyrannical political policy, caused the social and economic revolt for which Luther is now blamed. Spiritually and temporally the Roman See advocated a czarism which could not stand forever. That the end came when Luther freed the world from the spiritual tyranny of Rome only proves how great the work was which Luther by the grace of God accomplished. (*J. T. Mueller.*)

Both the Romanists and the Protestants of Germany are outside of the Scriptures. The difference is only this, that Romanism has more skillfully disguised its defection from Scripture. Its reverence for the Bible is just as much camouflage as the reverence of some higher critics who have destroyed the Scriptures. The Pope is sitting in the

Scriptures just as he is sitting in the temple of God pretending that he is God: The Pope decrees what Romanists must believe or not believe, the Bible to the contrary notwithstanding. Pity the poor duped souls who take refuge in Romanism from modern Protestantism because they expect to find something stable, unchanging, reliable there on which to anchor their souls! They will anchor to a puny, erring mortal, who has had the maniac impudence to declare himself infallible. (*W. H. T. Dau.*)

It will certainly require more than the declaration of one man to allay the fears of many students of history who have known of the political entanglements and aggrandizements of that Church, the official utterances of its supposedly infallible head, its open claim of “supremacy above all states,” its intolerance toward all other forms of ecclesiastical organization, its antidemocratic structure and practices, and other unsavory and tyrannical pages in its long record. (*Reformed Church Messenger.*)

The Catholic Church knows how to deal efficiently with the difficulties her teachings present to her thinking sons. It requires them to make the *sacrificium intellectus* - and all difficulties vanish. (*E. Eckhardt.*)

Present-day Catholicism has as little Christianity in it as the Catholicism of Luther’s day. Luther used the terms Catholic religion and pagan religion as synonyms. (*E. Eckhardt.*)

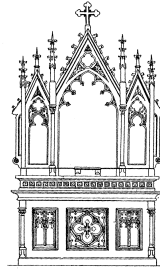
Rome is clinging to all her old errors in doctrine, even though here and there she is shrewdly adapting herself to changing conditions in some of her practices. (*William Arndt.*)

Liberty is the one thing that Rome is ever demanding for itself where it is weak and in the minority and that it is ever refusing to others where it is strong and in the majority One of its leaders said, in autocratic *pronunciamento* on this subject, “Wherever power is in the hands of others, the Roman Catholic Church demands recognition and equality, because it ought to have them. Wherever it is in power, it refuses these to others, because no one has a right to them but the one Holy Church.” If he [the pope] admires religious liberty, let him show it by seeing that it is granted in countries which he controls. He is flatteringly trying to make the ignorant ones think that he wishes it. He wishes it for himself and his own organization alone. If he had the power to do so, he would clamp down the irons on Protestantism as effectually and as rigidly as in the day of the Inquisition. Let us not forget it. (*Presbyterian.*)

The Tridentine Canon on the Mass reads: “If any man shall say that the sacrifice of the Mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving . . . and that it is not propitiatory, or that it profits only the receiver, and that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for their sins, . . . let him be accursed.” Such is the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the Mass; such is its perversion of the exceedingly comforting and assuring doctrine of the Holy Supper. From this it is clear that the Church of Rome cannot love those who appeal to it for help and salvation. For them it has no Gospel of grace in Christ Jesus, who “was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Heb. 9:28. The

sinner who approaches the altar of the Mass must do it with fear and trembling, knowing that he there faces an angry God, whom he must satisfy by his work. The Cross of Christ, which bids all sinners rejoice in salvation, is hidden under the veil of paganistic philosophy, so that it terrorizes rather than consoles. The dying sinner is not told the assuring message of Calvary: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise!" The Church of Rome damns all those who assert certainty of salvation through faith in Christ. The religion of Rome, therefore, is a religion of gloom and fear, of terror and horror. Its demand is that the sinner must work out his salvation by his good works, even by such diabolical contrivances as the sacrifice of the Mass and purgatory; but he is never told that he has done enough, or that he can ever do enough to atone for his sins. All is suspense, agony, and brutal uncertainty. Heathenism holds no greater terror for the dying sinner than Rome. (*J. T. Mueller.*)

Biblical References: Luke 11:27, Galatians 1:6-9; 2nd Thessalonians 2:3; 1st Timothy 4:1-5; Revelation 17; 18:4.



Liturgical Components

To complement a sermon on the papacy, the following liturgical components could be used in the service:

Introit: Use the one for the 23rd Sunday after Trinity, *The Lutheran Hymnal* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), page 82!

Gradual: 23rd Trinity.

Collect: Consult the Collect printed in the Liturgical Components of chapter 1!

Hymns: 251, 260, 500, 283.

Old Testament lesson: Daniel 11:31-39.

Epistle: Revelation 13:1-3.

Gospel: Matthew 24:15, 24.

Additional sermon text: Revelation 17:3-5, 9, 18.

After-sermon prayer: Consult the prayer printed in the Liturgical Components of chapter 1!

For a sermon on the apostle Paul:

Introit: Use the one for Apostles' Day, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, page 87!

Gradual: Use the one for the Conversion of St. Paul, *TLH*, page 90!

Collect: Use the one for the Conversion of St. Paul, *TLH*, page 90!

Hymns: 494, 503, 508, 179.

Old Testament lesson: Isaiah 60:1-6.

Epistle: Revelation 14:6-7.

Gospel: Matthew 19:27-30.

Additional sermon texts: Acts 17:24-31; Romans 15:8-12; 15:15-19.

For a sermon on Luther:

Introit: 23rd Trinity

Gradual: 23rd Trinity

Collect: Consult the Collect printed in the Liturgical Components of chapter 1!

Hymns: 249, 262, 267, 387.

Old Testament lesson: Isaiah 60:1-6, or Daniel 11:31-39.

Epistle: Revelation 14:8

Gospel: Matthew 24:15, 24.

Additional sermon texts: 2nd Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1; 2nd Thessalonians 2:3, 6, 8.

After-sermon prayer: Consult the prayer printed in the Liturgical Components of chapter 1!

When Rome had shrouded earth in night,
God said again, "Let there be light!"

And Luther with the gospel came
To spread the truth in Jesus' name.

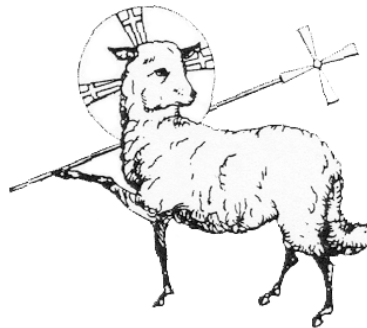
When Rome the saints of God oppressed,
And burdened souls could find no rest,
Through Luther God deliv'rance sent
By his pure Word and Sacrament.

Though hosts against us stand arrayed,
Christ bids us still, "Be not afraid;
Though all its powers the truth assail,
The gates of hell shall not prevail!"

Today with joyful hearts we sing
The guardian care of Christ our King,
Who through his chosen instrument
To us has this salvation sent.

O Lord, whose mercies still endure,
Preserve to us your gospel pure;
Let it alone within us reign,
That yours the glory may remain.

(By Matthias Loy, altered)



Devotions

The following are examples of a few devotions that could be made on the subject matter in this chapter.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2nd Corinthians 3:17).

Some centuries after our blessed Lord ascended into heaven, his gospel was purposely hidden under a rubbish pile by a corrupted church. As a result the Dark Ages

occurred, in which life on earth was made into a virtual hell-hole. Though the Western nations involved were the highest culturally, and the most advanced; though there had never been so many Christian churches, clergy, and services held before, because the grace-alone gospel had been hid, substituted, and perverted, people suffered tremendously. For instance, Europe bordered on anarchy. There were international wars, civil wars, and local feuds. Traveling was unsafe. Robber bands struck everywhere. There was hardly any protection left for the citizens. The land lay unplowed. Villages lay in ashes. Cruelty, poverty, and slavery were the norm. Injustice abounded. The courts were administered by crooks. Lawsuits dragged on.

Rather than being highly enlightened and liberated, as some romantically have pictured the Renaissance period, society in the Dark Ages had run down in all areas as hellishly as any could. But when God graciously raised up Martin Luther, and the old apostolic gospel was preached in its purity once again to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, a new age of civil blessings also followed. Indeed, even centuries later our North American continent was still blessed by it. For example, the great 1800's American statesman, Daniel Webster testified, "The Reformation of Luther introduced the principle of civil liberty into the wilderness of North America."

Realize, then, that wherever the Spirit of the Lord has been excluded, civil liberties likewise have been denied. Whereas, where the Spirit of the Lord has flourished, widespread freedom in the civil, political, and social spheres also has flourished. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Where the gospel of freedom from sin rules, other liberties consequently follow, for as the Spirit puts love, mercy, justice, and consideration into the hearts of those who follow him, so they will display these things in their everyday lives toward their fellowmen in social, civil, and political matters.

May God give us prayerful citizens like you, and officials in our government with the biblical insight like former Secretary of State, Lewis Cass, who once declared: "I believe the fate of a republican government is indissolubly bound up with the fate of the Christian religion; and that a people who reject its holy faith will find themselves the slaves of their own evil passions and of arbitrary power."

Therefore, pray and work that the old, authentic gospel may still be heard in our land, and prevail in the hearts of many! Do not let our land lapse into another Dark Ages! Keep the light of the soul-freeing, guilt-removing gospel ever shining throughout our land!

Reformation - October 31

And another messenger followed, saying, "Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink." Revelation 14:8 (author's translation).

The text bears out that Martin Luther was a chosen vessel of God, for he was raised up at a critical time to clean house in the church, and to restore the cheering gospel to a troubled, peace-robbed, and guilt-burdened world.

“Babylon” refers to the papacy at Rome, a New Testament power similar to that of the city/state, world power Babylon of old that captured the church of God, and enslaved it for years. Indeed, the papacy had made millions over the centuries become unfaithful to the gospel by getting them drunk with its wine, that is, by deceiving, tempting, and spiritually seducing them with clever false doctrines and an act of godliness, with the result that God’s wrath was kindled against them for their unbelief and blasphemy. As punishment for leading so many captive into damnation, the Almighty struck the papacy a mighty blow.

Consequently, this new version of Babylon fell mightily, namely, its power and hold over millions of church members through its clever, godless hoaxes were broken when it was exposed (2nd Thessalonians 2:8) as a hoax by the Lutheran Reformation. This tremendous turning point in church history, this remarkable, earth-moving reform was accomplished by Martin Luther, who, through his writing *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in 1520 and other writings, got millions to see the faith-killing fraud of the Roman Catholic system, and the true path to heaven.

Subsequently, the gospel took off like a shot across Europe and beyond, to the extent that whole nations were converted in a matter of years. What a success for the gospel! How was it that the Lutheran Reformation spread so far? It was because God had raised up Martin Luther.

Hence the second angel, or messenger, predicted by our text, who caused and then announced the results of Rome’s disastrous demise, was none other than Luther. For nothing in church history fits our text’s prophecy but the Lutheran Reformation.

How should you respond to it? by imitating Luther’s faith and virtues, by strengthening your faith, and by thanking God for mercies shown to save you through men like Luther.

So strengthen your faith in the gospel which he has liberated for you! Be reassured that the Lord has not left you comfortless, nor to the mercy of preachers that are wolves in sheep’s clothing, but has risen to your need, and seen to it that you shall not perish in darkness, but has brought pardon and life to light through Luther!

*O God, our Lord, your holy Word
Was long a hidden treasure
Till to its place
It was by grace
Restored in fullest measure.
For this today
Our thanks we say*

*And gladly glorify you.
Your mercy show
And grace bestow
On all who still deny you.*

(The Lutheran Hymnal, hymn 266, stanza 1 altered)

9 October

“Fight seriously for that faith delivered to the saints for all time,” Jude 3b
(author’s translation).

On this date in 1939 Friedrich Pfotenhauer, the last orthodox president of the Missouri Synod, died. With his death the end of orthodoxy in the Missouri Synod also was in sight. The hundred-year golden age for that synod, indeed, for all of Christianity in this country, had neared its completion, and had started its fall. What caused this to happen in the Missouri Synod? Something known as the “pioneer syndrome.” For instance, when a pioneer settles down in a dense wilderness, he has to sacrifice a great amount of effort to clear the land even to make modest headway. Yet, as a result, he appreciates the fruits of his labors highly. Even the second generation that watched as a child what dad did for them grew up to appreciate highly what he handed down to them. In fact, because of the preliminary work which their father had done, they were able to use that as a springboard and expend their efforts on further improvements, such as move out of a log cabin into a clapboard house. Subsequently, the third generation is born into a nice home with electricity, indoor plumbing, and all of the niceties of life without ever having to rough it. The third generation never saw nor experienced the difficult struggle which their forefathers had to go through to pass down great blessings. Hence, the third generation is tempted to take for granted the effortless blessings which they merely have inherited. They are lured to be unappreciative, lazy, even reckless with the priceless heirlooms that have been handed down to them.

The Missouri Synod fell victim to the pioneer syndrome after God sent them a specific test in the form of the ALC fellowship negotiations, in order to test their faithfulness, and so “that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:35). The first generation men in the 1800's struggled long and hard to keep their creed biblical, to contend against errorists, to instruct their congregations, to build up Lutheran schools (the Missouri Synod’s first college was in a log cabin), and to improve the spiritual atmosphere and opportunities for their children. The second generation saw these great sacrifices and highly honored the precious gospel which the first generation had handed down to it. The third generation, however, was born into the lap of orthodox luxury, so

to speak. Their forefathers had fought and struggled for future blessings which the third generation lived to see blossom and ripen in their generation. Yet, the third generation was tempted to be unappreciative, lazy, and unwilling to fight seriously for that faith delivered to the saints. Indeed, as a whole, the third generation of Missouri Synod members succumbed to this temptation.

Pfotenhauer began to notice this prideful spirit in a number of LC-MS pastors, and once, after a Northern Illinois District pastoral conference, urged the late A. T. Kretzmann, "Come to the front, and fight for the truth!"



Frederick Pfotenhauer

Therefore, watch out for the pioneer syndrome! Do not fall victim to it! Appreciate the high treasure of biblical doctrine which has been handed down to you so graciously! Do not become bored with the old doctrines! They are priceless. Your soul-safety depends on them. Fight for the faith once given to the saints!

25 October

"The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance," Psalm 112:6b.

On this date in 1811 Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther was born in Germany. He was a Lutheran who worked mightily for the kingdom of God in this country. It would be good to remind ourselves of the work done by this gentleman. Such a righteous person should be kept in everlasting memory, not for who he was, but for what great things God accomplished through him for the church.

For instance, Walther wished for a career in music, but his father insisted that he take up theology. After graduation he served a brief pastorate, but due to much opposition from the unbelieving church officials and government interference, Walther

resigned with a heavy heart to join a religious emigration to America where he hoped to work in peace.

It is evident that God's chief purpose for Walther had been to elaborate on the doctrines of Church and Ministry for the benefit of the church. These two doctrines are not merely a curiosity to be pursued only by finicky students of the Bible; they are the spiritual Declaration of Independence for our Christian rights. Walther championed the spiritual rights of the Christian with his book *Church and Ministry*, for he led his readers to "look upon the smallest poorest congregation with reverent awe, because the Lord of the Church has chosen her to be His beloved, beautiful spouse and invested her with glorious robes and sovereign rights and powers. To her He has entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The royal priesthood of all true believers made the most lowly and humble Christian a king in" their eyes (Julius Friedrich).

Between Walther's many helpful writings and the efforts of others in the Missouri Synod, the unscriptural doctrines which were wreaking havoc in the Lutheran church in the 1800's were greatly rooted out. To this fact other Lutherans have amply testified. For example, 'If the Missouri Synod had not so tenaciously clung to the confession of the pure doctrine, if the Lord had not taken pity on the Lutheran Church of America by placing it in her midst, we would be today an insignificant body, Lutheran perhaps in name, but otherwise the stamping ground for foxes and other wild things' 'The fact is that the greatest gain the Lutheran Church of America made came by reason of the firm and immovable stand men took, against unionism and liberalism, for the old Lutheran faith Synod after synod placed itself, with varying degrees, indeed, of insight and consistency — on the platform of the symbols [Lutheran Confessions]' 'The close unity (of Missouri), coupled with its size, exercised a powerful influence on those without' 'Their work has been of inestimable value'." (W.H.T. Dau, "At the Milestone," *Ebenezer* [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1922], pages 122-123.)

Sadly, conditions today in the Lutheran church are rapidly returning to and becoming even worse than what they were in the first half of the 1800's. The outstanding golden age of the church that began to rise at the time of Walther lasted only one hundred years, and is now gone. This is why it is important for you to look back upon the righteous Christians of old, and to take courage at how they responded to the same spiritual troubles.

As back then, so today it is not an easy task to adhere like glue to the truths of Scripture. But as Walther overcame an uncaring attitude, and hung on for spiritual life to the precious, pure gospel promises in the strength of the forgiveness of sins, so do not shipwreck your faith as so many other Lutherans today have done, but instruct them and yourself to cling to the faith once delivered to the apostles, observing all the doctrines that Christ has commanded, for Christ will be with you always, even to the end of the world!



Theological Commentary

The following is offered as an example of what could be done by way of a critique of the papacy on the basis of current events or news reports that might appear in a Lutheran theological journal under a topical heading, such as *Theological Commentary*.

A Python to Embrace. Is it the business of the Christian church to advocate a certain kind of economic system, such as capitalism, socialism, or Robin Hoodism? of course not. It is the church's business to preach the gospel, not economics, equality, ecology, or politics.

But what should be done about the poor? Because of their wicked hearts many are lazy and "will not work." "There are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all," the Holy Spirit declares (2nd Thessalonians 3:11). As a result, "he who deals with a slack hand becomes poor" (Proverbs 10:4). Just the same, it is the Lord who makes some poor and others rich (Job 1:21). Hence it is not immoral to be poor or rich by the Lord's doing. While Christians do, indeed, share what they have and do good, having pity upon the poor (Hebrews 13:16; Proverbs 19:17), God does not demand of his church or of his state that the poor must be brought up to a certain income level. If such a thing were commanded by God, we should have expected to hear about it in the accounts of the widow of Zarephath, or the widow with two mites, for instance (1st Kings 17; Luke 21:2). However, the Lord informs us, "the poor you have with you always" (John 12:8), that is to say, no matter what you may do, there always will be poor people.

Nevertheless, Pope John Paul II has a different idea. On 11 August, 1993, as he was in Mexico, touring the Western Hemisphere, the *New York Times* reported that the pope "criticized injustice against indigenous people 'from the Alaskan peninsula to Tierra del Fuego' and urged a new redistribution of wealth between the rich north and poor

south in the Americas ‘I want to launch an appeal’, the pope said, ‘to developed societies to overcome economic systems oriented solely toward profit and seek real and effective solutions to the serious problems that afflict wide sectors of the continent’s population My presence among you is meant as a decisive support for your right to space for your culture, your lives and your societies, as individuals and as ethnic groups’.”

However, this is not how the papacy has treated the indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere in the past when its priests, friars, and political clout had control of the economic system. For example, in California, in 1834, more than 30,000 Indians were settled about twenty-one missions as serfs. In 1834, the Spanish government freed these people from their virtual slavery under the Franciscan friars, and gave the cultivated lands about the missions to the Indians. About the same time in Mexico the Catholic clergy was in possession of approximately eighty per cent of the territory and the wealth of Mexico; the clergy was the banker throughout the country. Since then the situation has been alleviated, not voluntarily by the pope and his clergy, but by Mexican law.

Up north in Catholic Quebec, church members in the past were obliged to mortgage their farms to give money when the bishop or priest decided to build a magnificent church for which the people had no need. Such a mortgage became a first mortgage no matter how many preceded it, for it was recognized by the law of Quebec as security for a sacred loan. If the poor farmer could not pay, the papal church took his farm away. So much for how the papal-run church cares about economic equality!

So why, then, on his trip over here did not the pope mention these things? Indeed, why did he not apologize for them, condemn them, and outlaw them in his church? The pope hopes that the world has a short memory. In fact, how arrogant it was for him to lecture the United States about its free enterprise system, after the papal church has impoverished millions economically, not to mention spiritually, for centuries!

As a matter of fact, the *Times* article further reported that “the pope focused principally . . . on depicting the church as a defender and protector of indigenous Americans.” What nerve the pope displayed in telling such a barefaced lie! How could he claim to be a *holy* father? For not less than fifteen million natives - count them! - were put to death by Spanish Christianity during its occupation of the Americas. The Roman Catholic king of Spain, Ferdinand, in his *Requirimiento*, commanded that the natives in America be converted, ordering the leaders of his expeditions to require the people of an invaded land to submit to the Catholic faith, to the pope, and to the king of Spain under threat of war and of death or under pain of slavery and confiscation of their property.

Nevertheless, Pope John Paul II remarked that “from the first steps of evangelization, the church was the untiring defender of the Indians, the protector of their cultural values and the promoter of humanity against the abuses of unscrupulous colonizers.” He then listed by name missionaries who had protested against the conquistadors’ injustices. But the fact of the matter is that there was wholesale collusion between the papal church and the Spanish occupying forces in that Catholicism was

spread by force. The popes of the period knew very well what was happening. If they had cared so much they easily could have raised a protest. They easily could have withheld the services of their chaplains and missionaries from complicity in murder and serfdom. However, one voice that was raised in protest was that of Las Cases, a Dominican friar.

So why did the *Times* not bring this out? Do not expect any help from the media in setting the record straight, for all the backbone which the *Times* could muster up was the limp parting shot: “The question of the church’s historic role is still uncomfortable for some in Latin America who accuse missionaries of taking shelter behind Spanish and Portuguese conquerors to enforce conversions among people who already practiced their own religions.”

What is the papacy’s purpose, then, in lying about its past? The papacy has regularly used lies to cover its sins and to gain its goals. This time John Paul II has done it to convince his targeted audience that he, for one, cares; though his remarks spawn class envy, hatred, and covetousness, and imply that the U.S.A.’s free enterprise system is immoral. Another observer, more astute than the *Times*, once noted, “Rome is playing her old imperialistic game in the United States. It will suit her if the present order is wrecked; she will not be wrecked, but will build herself up more powerfully out of the ruins” (*W. H. T. Dau.*)

Hence let no one expect justice from Rome, economic or otherwise. The papacy has not proved itself a friend to embrace, but a python that, given the chance, will coil itself around its unsuspecting victim, and squeeze the life out of him. Remember: the pope is not some holy man; he is still the terrible Antichrist!⁷⁶



Sunday School Lessons

The following is an example of a Sunday school lesson that could be presented to seventh and eighth graders on the subject matter of this chapter.



A woodcut by Hans Lufft in Martin Luther's Bible of 1530 portraying the terrible seven-headed beast of Revelation 13:1-3 on the left, which is the Antichrist, the Roman papacy.



The Antichrist

2nd Thessalonians 2:3-12; Revelation 13:1-10; 14:8

God has given to his church many prophecies. For instance, in the Old Testament he prophesied to Abraham of the birth of his son Isaac. He prophesied to the land of Judah that they would be invaded and led away into captivity.

Also, for the New Testament times, God has given prophecies for which we are to be watching. One of the last of these prophecies is that of the Antichrist.

What did this prophecy say? A number of Scriptures had warned against pride among God's people, especially among the pastors, for when pride appears, humble Christ-like service to fellow Christians disappears, and severe faith-damage occurs. For example, the apostle Paul spoke out against this evil. In addition, he warned that in the future a very prominent prideful clergyman would aspire to great power in the church (2nd Thessalonians 2). At the same time, a great number of Christians would fall away from the true gospel faith. Additional Scriptures foretold that this person would be very powerful and would cause great destruction in the church, for he would be the devil's agent; he would keep the true gospel from being brought to human hearts by forcing the Christian church to accept a substitute instead.

Not long after the apostles, these things started to happen. At first the clergy in the bigger cities hungered after more prestige, privilege, and power than the pastors in the smaller country churches. Especially in the capital city of the Roman Empire did the head pastor of the large church in Rome want extra recognition, control, and obedience from the entire Christian church. Instead of obeying Christ's command, One is your Master, the Christ, and you are all brethren (Matthew 23:8), and his Word's injunction, "through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13), the pastor at Rome wanted to be in charge of all the Christians and of all their pastors. Gradually, after the devil had moved world events at this time to fuel the fire of pride, greed, and the lust for power in this line of Roman pastors, these same clergy grabbed more and more power for themselves with each successive pastor, calling themselves no longer "pastor," but "papa," or "pope."

After A.D. 440 the office of the pope in Rome became more clearly defined, and started to assume its mature shape. The pope at this time (Leo I) expected all of the scattered congregations and pastors to obey his commands. Along with this the popes expected the churches to go along with their gradual redefining of the New Testament teachings on law, gospel, and the two sacraments. For example, Pope Boniface VIII on 18 Nov., 1302, decreed that in order to be saved a person must submit to the pope. Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) sternly enforced the papal law against married clergy, and made married clergymen leave their wives and children. He insisted on the papal right to get rid of any civil ruler, also. Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) declared, "I hold the place of God on earth." Drifting further and further away from Christian truth, the popes

decreed that they had authority to rule nations, and backed these assertions up with forgeries of land grants given to them by European kings. Departing further and further away from the Bible's authority, the popes eventually decreed that they could, in effect, invent Christian teachings, and backed up this arrogant claim by asserting that the Holy Spirit could speak these new doctrines through them. Heading still further away from the gospel into its hellish opposite - salvation by works - the popes and their theologians held that what Christ did was good, but not good enough. Consequently, Christ had to be sacrificed on the cross over and over again in the Mass; and that since Christ did not remove all of our earthly punishments for our sins, we must be punished for these after death in a place called "purgatory."

The papacy became so bad and got so out of control that for six hundred years the gospel was extinguished just about everywhere. Many people, including kings, called for a reform, but the popes would not have one. They refused to allow anyone to tell them what to do.

Then, in 1517, God raised up a special messenger. His name was Martin Luther. His message was one of reform. Indeed, after Luther preached the powerful gospel, Christ accomplished a remarkable widespread housecleaning of his church. Others heard the gospel, and preached it, too, far and wide. In fact, after the gospel opened many people's eyes to the realization that the papacy was nothing more than a cruel, power-hungry hoax, forced upon the church by ecclesiastical gangsters, millions of people refused to obey the papacy's ridiculous regulations and terrible teachings anymore, and left. As a result, the papacy lost vast amounts of power, for few would obey it anymore. Whole nations listened to the gospel, and obeyed Christ instead. Consequently, beginning in the early 1500's, millions of church members in Europe finally were freed from a host of papal-made restraints and burdens of conscience, ranging from what they could not eat to what they could not think. All of these results went to prove what the Bible had pledged: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2nd Cor. 3:17), that is, the Spirit-powered gospel will free millions of souls from the damnableness of their sin, including freedom from every unnecessary, selfish, or man-made restriction which the papacy had forced on them. Indeed, centuries later in the 1800's, the American statesman, Daniel Webster, speaking at Bunker Hill, declared that we owed our latter-day, American, civil freedoms to the gospel of the Lutheran Reformation.

In 1526, Emperor Charles V with his troops, turned on his close ally, the pope, and invaded Rome, plundering the city. In 1870, the Italian ruler Victor Emmanuel also invaded Rome, and for almost sixty years the pope was deprived of his earthly land holdings. Yet these were not the conquests which caused the papacy to fall from its great, Dark Ages' power as virtual ruler of the earth. It was the gospel in the Reformation that caused the papacy to become a thin shadow of its former self. It has been the same gospel that has kept the papacy in its weakened state ever since. Nevertheless, millions of Protestants have died as martyrs at the hands of the Roman Catholic civil authorities during this same period.



However, the Scriptures have prophesied that the papacy will recover from its deep wound which the gospel gave it in the Reformation (Rev. 13:3). Not only that, but the papacy would regain the awesome, former power which it had during the Dark Ages.

In light of this, what should you do?

You should -

1. Thank God that he has given you his gospel to hear and to be saved!
2. Thank God for sending Luther to free the gospel, in order that you still may hear it in this latter day!
3. Pray God to keep you faithful to his gospel!
4. Pray God to awaken others to the gospel, and to the hoax of the papacy and its false teachings!
5. Pray God to suppress the pope's power for as long as possible through the widespread preaching of the gospel!
6. Pray God for strength to stand up boldly to and to speak out against those who would want you to go along with the papacy!
7. Pray God to send more bold champions for the gospel like Luther!

Review Questions: 1. In what city is the papacy found? 2. Did the papacy come on the scene fully matured, or did it take a long time to develop? Explain! 3. What were the aims of the papacy? 4. Were these aims biblical? 5. Was God pleased with the papacy? 6. What had God prophesied he would do about the papacy? 7. When did this happen? 8. How was this done? 9. Whom did God send to reveal the papacy as the evil Antichrist? 10. Why is the papacy so terrible, and to be feared? 11. How should you respond to the threat of the papacy?

Memory Work: Scriptural verses: Revelation 13:8-9; Rev. 14:8; or Rev. 18:4.

Catechetical paragraphs: I. What the Antichrist Is;
II. The Identity of the Antichrist;
III. The Revelation of the Antichrist; or
IV. The Proper Use of this Doctrine.

[See the *Catechetical Treatment* section below for the text of these paragraphs.]

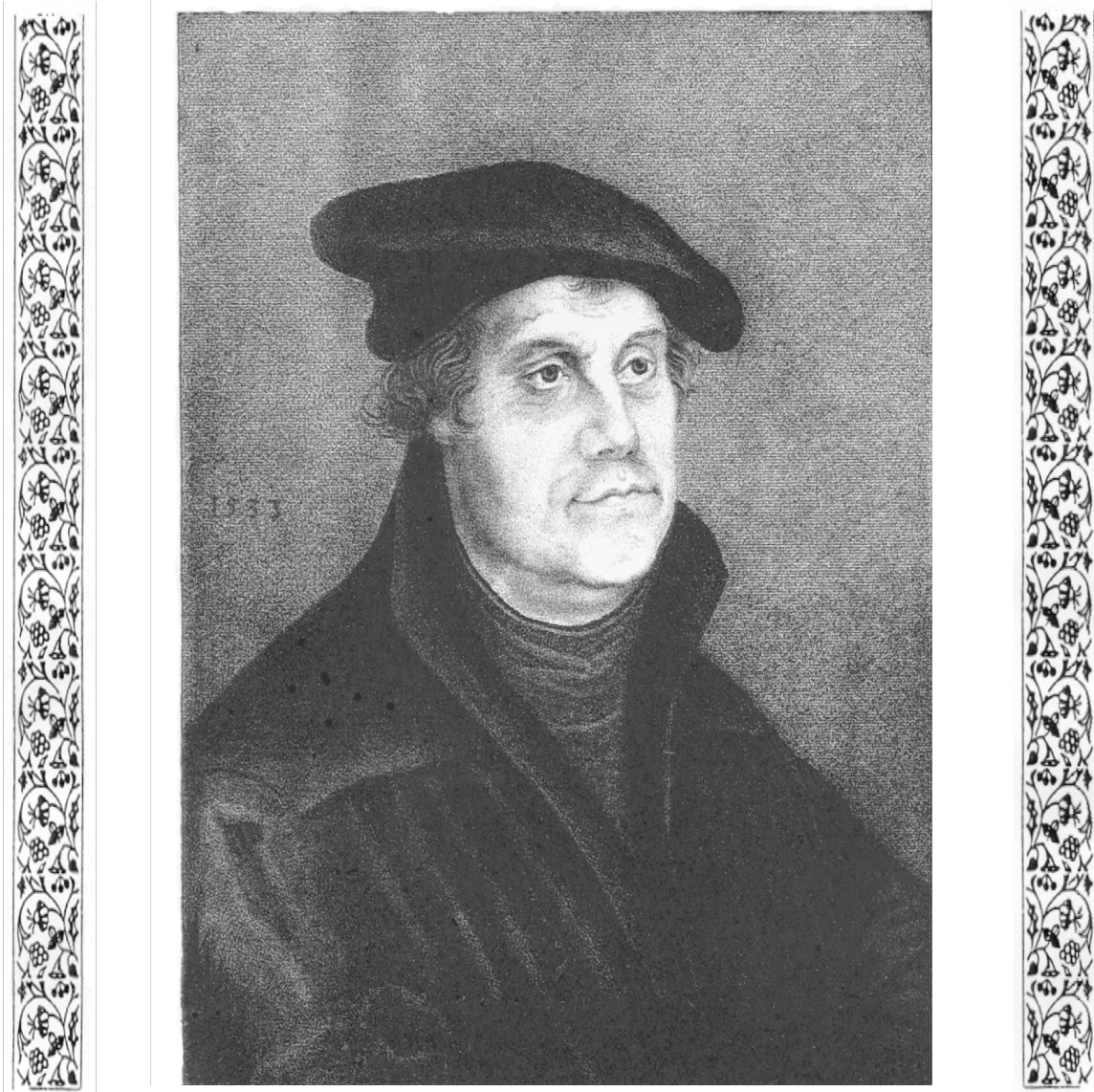
Hymn:

Defend your truth, O God, and stop
This evil generation;
And from the error of their way
Keep you own congregation.
The wicked everywhere abound
And would your little flock confound;
But you are our salvation.

(The Lutheran Hymnal, hymn 260 stanza 6 altered)

Class Participation: Read God's description of the papacy in Revelation 13:1-10, and in Revelation chapters 17, 18, and 19.

The following is another example of a Sunday school lesson.



Martin Luther



Reformation Day

Revelation 14:8

How does one go about picking a date on which a momentous movement began? For example, when could we say that the American Civil War began? Was it when the Southern States seceded from the Union, or was it when Fort Sumter was bombarded? Likewise, when could it be said that the Lutheran Reformation of the 1500's began? With good reason many have pointed to the date of 31 October, 1517. Before that time the godly effect of Luther was confined merely to the boundaries of his congregation. But after that date the Reformation entered a new widespread stage.

In fact, it could be said that the Lutheran Reformation passed a point of no return. Though Martin Luther had preached and had posted other things before, after he posted the *Ninety-Five Theses*, they were copied and found their way across the continent of Europe in two weeks. Four years later, a person could purchase them in Jerusalem. Thus you could point to the 31st of October as the date on which there was a significant start up in the Reformation; after which major events began to take place.

Why did the 31st of October figure so prominently into the Reformation? because on that day the *Ninety-Five Theses* were posted. What were the *Ninety-Five Theses*, and why did Luther post them? The *Ninety-Five Theses*, or statements, which Luther publicly posted were written in order to bring attention to the abuses connected with the sale of indulgences. Indulgences originally were penalties assigned by local congregations to those excommunicated persons who wanted to be reinstated. According to the church laws which were passed, an excommunicated person had to show sorrow for his unrepentant sin, confess it, and then, perform certain acts (determined by the congregation) to prove the sincerity of his repentance. As false prophets steered the church further and further away from the truth, the clergy gradually took this matter under their control, modified it, and soon made it a part of the seven sacramental hoax of the Roman theologians. The popes quickly realized what a powerful tool they had. They could compel people to do their will. So they began to use indulgences in various instances to gain wealth and power.

For instance, around the year 1517 the papal office was being held by Pope Leo the 10th. The extent of his faith can be demonstrated by a statement which he made to one of his bishops, in which he said: "What an immense sum we have made out of this fable about Christ!" Luther relates the following incident about Pope Leo: "He would amuse himself by having two clowns dispute before his table on the immortality of the soul. The one took the positive, the other the negative side of this question. The Pope said to him who defended the proposition: 'Although you have adduced good reasons and arguments, yet I agree with him who is of the opinion that we die like the beasts; for your doctrine makes us melancholy and sad, but his gives us peace of mind!'"



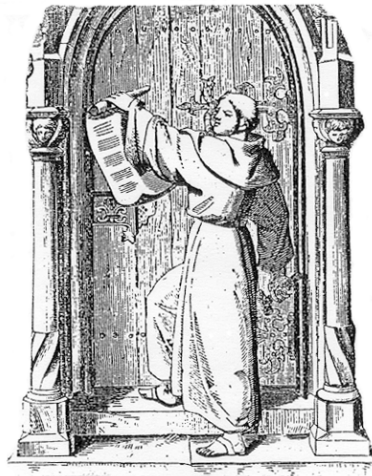
Tetzel selling indulgences from Pope Leo X. A woodcut by Gustav König.

In order to raise the necessary funds for his sinful pleasure, Pope Leo commissioned that indulgences should be granted for cash. His man in Germany, the archbishop of Mainz, engaged one John Tetzel among others to peddle indulgences among the towns. Thus no longer did anyone have to repent of his sins or to look to Christ for forgiveness. All that he would have to do would be to purchase an indulgence from Tetzel in order to get forgiveness. For all practical purposes the indulgences boiled down to this: one could indulge in any sinful pleasure, and then, buy off God. There was even a price list which Tetzel offered. For instance, for trying to contact an evil spirit, one could be excused for two ducats; for having more than one wife, it would cost six; for murder, eight; and for lying, nine. In truth it was all a hoax. But it was an excellent moneymaking scheme for the extortioners in control of the church.

In the year 1517 Tetzel came near Wittenberg and Luther's congregation. While Luther advised his congregational members to give their money to the poor instead, for he who repents receives forgiveness, those who were confessing their sins to him became less in number; those who did come to him for confession declared defiantly that they would not refrain from adultery or similar sins. They refused to repent. They showed him their indulgences. Hence Luther refused to absolve them. Subsequently, Luther wrote to higher church officials and complained of these developments. But they did nothing about it. So Luther took action. His pastoral concern for the care of his congregation's souls obliged him to do something.



On 31 October, 1516, exactly one year before the famous date in 1517, Luther already had preached against indulgences, for his local ruler, Elector Frederick, would put on display on 1 November of every year his relic collection which he had gathered, and for which the people could pay him their money in order to get forgiveness and release from purgatory. Now one year later, after John Tetzel contributed even more to the indulgence misery, Luther decided to post publicly ninety-five theses or statements as a basis for a university debate on indulgences. Luther deliberately posted these theses critical of indulgences on the door of the church on the thirty-first, because it would be the very same door through which the people would have to go the next day to shop in church at the Elector's relic collection and indulgence sale.



Martin Luther posts his *95 Theses*. A woodcut by Gustav König.

Although Luther's theses did not attack the concept of indulgences itself, but merely its abuse, their unmistakable reference to faith in Christ as the only ground of salvation involved the heartbeat of the Lutheran Reformation. Though not all of the *Ninety-Five Theses* were scriptural, Luther had made a start. For instance, in the first theses Luther said this: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says: 'Repent', etc., he wants the whole life of the Christians to be a repentance." Other theses said this: "Every Christian truly repenting of his sins is fully free from punishment and guilt without indulgences" [36th]. "Every true Christian, alive or dead, shares in all the goods of Christ and the church without indulgences" [37th]. "They who believe themselves made sure of salvation by papal indulgences will be eternally damned along with their teachings" [31st].

When a Dr. Fleck found these theses posted in the town of Steinlausig in 1517 and had read a portion of them, he commented: "Ho! this man will accomplish it: he comes, upon whom we have waited so long." He then wrote a consoling letter to Luther and exhorted him to continue in good cheer, as he was on the right path, and God and all the prayers of the captives in the Romish Babylon would be with him.



At first the papacy considered this to be a minor matter. It was termed a “monkish squabble.” But Luther’s theses continued to gain a wide following. Consequently, the papal representative wanted Luther to take back what he had published. When Luther remarked that there was nothing wrong in what he had written, another papal official came to arrest Luther. But when he saw how many of the citizens in Germany supported Luther, he admitted that he could not have brought Luther to Rome even if he had an army of 25,000.

Public papal criticism of Luther’s position lead Luther to search the Scriptures even more, and to clarify his thinking on the way of salvation.

Finally, three years later, the whole antichristian nature of the papacy against God’s pure gospel became quite obvious to Luther, and he revealed it for all to see. He related the facts of the matter in his booklet *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. From then on the Word of the Lord grew and multiplied.

Already in 1519 the Reformation had come to Sweden, then to Finland and Lapland; in 1520 to Denmark, then to Norway and Iceland; throughout the 1520's and later to the different lands in Germany; to Hungary, Austria, Poland, France, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, even Italy and Spain. The Reformation even spread to the New World. In 1531 Germans in Venezuela signed their names to the Augsburg Confession.

Why do we observe the 31st of October? We observe it because it gives us the chance to review the doctrine which the Reformation brought back to light, namely, that your redemption is free. You could not buy your salvation, for Christ has paid for everything. “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin” (1st John 1:7).

We also observe the 31st of October because it affords us an opportunity to thank our Lord for bringing back to light the only way to heaven. Without it we would have no salvation.

Therefore, remember what took place on 31 October, 1517, and thank God that, as a result, you have come into precious possession of your free Christ-won salvation!

Note: The Lutheran churches in the Pomeranian district of Germany in 1568, were the first ones to set aside a special day for a celebration of the Reformation. However, instead of 31 October, they had set aside 10 November, Luther’s Birthday, “because on that day,” they explained, “God, in these last times, gave the church his servant, Dr. Martin Luther.” In fact, other Lutheran churches in Germany picked the day for their Reformation festival based on the day on which the Reformation was introduced into their locale. For instance, the city of Hamburg celebrated the Reformation on Trinity Sunday. The date for the region of Saxony was 31 October, for Wittenberg, the place



where Luther posted the Ninety-Five Theses, was in the kingdom of Saxony. In our country the date generally observed is 31 October, or the nearest Sunday to it. The liturgy in the front of our hymnal is silent on prescribing a specific date for a celebration of the Reformation, but we have good reason to select the date 31 October.



Luther teaches to children the three Articles of the Apostles' Creed from his *Small Catechism*. A woodcut by Gustav König from the 1800's.

Catechetical Memory: *Who was Martin Luther?*

Martin Luther was God's special messenger, raised up by God himself, to reform the Christian church, and to weaken the papacy.

The Revelation of the Antichrist:

In what did the revelation of the Antichrist consist?

It consisted in this: that Martin Luther opened the eyes of the people in the Christian church so that they could see that the papacy is the great Antichrist, realize that his teachings are a sham and damnable, and to come out from his church, as God has commanded (Revelation 18:4). This was accomplished after Luther had preached the gospel, at which time the Holy Spirit gave to the hearers the regenerated understanding to see the papacy for the awful Antichrist that it is.

Hymn:

When Rome had shrouded earth in night,
God said again, "Let there be light!"
And Luther with the gospel came
To spread the truth in Jesus' name.

When Rome the saints of God oppressed,
And burdened souls could find no rest,
Through Luther God deliv'rance sent
By his pure Word and Sacrament.

(by Matthias Loy)

Fill in the blanks.

1. In order to obtain huge sums of _____, Pope Leo X commissioned that _____ be sold. 2. Upon their purchase, these granted that the buyer could have _____ for any sinful pleasure. 3. However, the holy Scriptures teach that whoever _____ has forgiveness. 4. Indeed, in the first of the _____ Theses, Luther teaches that when Christ commands, "_____", he wants the whole life of the Christian to be a _____. 5. A Dr. Fleck wrote to Luther that the prayers of the captives in the _____ would be with him. 6. Three years later, _____ expanded on his *95 Theses*, and explained why there were so many gross abuses in the church. 7. That is to say, he exposed the antichristian nature of the pope's theology in his important booklet, "_____", which Revelation _____ prophesied he would do. 8. Thus _____ raised up Martin Luther specifically to _____ his church. 9. What is more, as a result of the Lutheran _____, the biblical doctrine has come back to light that your redemption is _____. 10. This is important, for without this teaching you would have no _____.

Answers: 1. money, indulgences. 2. forgiveness. 3. repents. 4. 95, Repent, repentance. 5. Romish Babylon. 6. Luther. 7. *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 14:8. 8. God, reform. 9. Reformation, free. 10. salvation.

For Discussion: 1. When did the Lutheran Reformation begin? 2. Where did it begin? 3. What happened on this day? 4. Why did Luther do this? 5. What terrible wrongs had come into the church by Luther's time? 6. What, supposedly, did an indulgence grant? 7. As a result, what did Luther discover about the papacy? 8. What booklet did Luther write on this matter in 1520? 9. How soon did the Augsburg Confession spread to the New World? 10. How does Revelation 14:8 prophesy of Martin Luther?



Memory Verses: (In the following verses the Holy Spirit describes in his own manner the serious blow which Luther dealt to the powerful pope's rule after Luther had preached the gospel, and it had revealed the pope's anti-gospel rule.)

And another messenger followed, saying, "Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink." Revelation 14:8 (author's translation).

"I saw one of his heads as if it had been wounded mortally" (Revelation 13:3).

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition!" (2nd Thessalonians 2:3.)

Readings from history: an eyewitness account of the fulfillment of Revelation 14:8. In the following, Luther explains how the papacy is fallen.

"At the beginning of our preaching, the doctrine of faith had a most happy course, and down fell the Pope's pardons, purgatory, vows, masses, and such like abominations, which drew with them the ruin of all popery. No man could justly condemn us; for our doctrine was pure, raising up and comforting many poor consciences, which had been long oppressed with men's traditions under the papacy, which was a plain tyranny, a racking and crucifying of consciences The papacy at this day is cast down, not by those tumults of the sectaries, but by the preaching of the article of justification. This article hath not only weakened the kingdom of Antichrist, but it hath also sustained and defended us against his violence We moreover did teach and urge nothing but this article of justification, which alone at that time did threaten the authority of the Pope and lay waste his kingdom O Pope . . . I will constantly cry out that thou art Antichrist, and declare all thy worships and religions to be not only the denial of God, but supreme blasphemy against God, and idolatry This before all must be done, that the Pope's impieties and abominations may be exposed, wherewith under the colour of holiness and religion he hath deceived the whole world By the Spirit he hath been and is still at this day cast down, that is to say, by the preaching of faith, which testifieth that Christ was delivered for our sins. Here the righteousness and the servitude of the laws of the Pope must needs fall down in ruins" (Martin Luther, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, unabridged, revised, and completed translation based on the Erasmus Middleton edition of 1807 [Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., LTD., 1978], pages 217-220).

Biblical Studies Class

For an adult biblical studies class on this subject matter, simply use this chapter.



Sacred Music

The following selections of music are recommended for your listening edification.

The cantatas by J. S. Bach:

Wär' Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit (BWV 14)
Ein' Feste Burg (BWV 80)
Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält (BWV 178)

Felix Mendelssohn:

St. Paul
Symphony no. 2, the second movement
Symphony no. 5

Heinrich Schuetz:

Symphoniae sacrae, Opus 12, number 8, "The conversion of Saul"



Catechetical

The following is offered as an example of an annotated catechetical lesson on the subject of the Antichrist.

THE ANTICHRIST

1. What is a prophecy?

A prophecy is a revelation by God's Word of some person or event which had not yet appeared when the prophecy was spoken, and which could not have been foreknown by any man without a divine revelation.

2. What is a prophecy which the Scriptures have given you for our age?

The Scriptures have given me the prophecy of the Antichrist.

¹ You have heard that the *Antichrist* is coming. 1st John 2:18.

I. WHAT THE ANTICHRIST IS

***What is the Antichrist?* The Antichrist is that offensive office in the Christian church, instituted by the devil himself, developed over time by power-crazed clergy, and filled by a succession of the same, that deceitfully works against Christ's soul-saving gospel, and sends multitudes of its deceived followers to hell.**

3. What does "Antichrist" mean?

The word "Antichrist" means "he who is against Christ."

² You have heard that the *Antichrist* is coming. 1st John 2:18.

The Antichrist would be an adversary of Christ and of his saving work, namely, the gospel, and would, consequently, lead many souls in the Christian church away from the gospel.

4. What do the Scriptures teach about the Antichrist?

The Scriptures teach that the Antichrist -

A. Is the great third woe that would come upon the Christian church;

3 The second woe is past. Behold, the *third woe* is coming quickly. Rev. 11:14

4 I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. He was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Rev. 13:1, 2, 5.

B. Would rise up in the New Testament era upon the falling away by many from the Christian faith;

5 That Day will not come unless the *falling away* comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. 2nd Thess. 2:3.

C. Would be an office filled by a succession of men, as the old office of Roman emperor;

6 That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. 2nd Thess. 2:3.

The fact that before the Last Day a falling away would occur, in which the Antichrist would build up his kingdom by deceiving large numbers to defect from the Christian faith; and that the Antichrist would be revealed as such to the church at large after this; and that the Antichrist would be around until the Last Day (2nd Thess. 2:8b), will indicate that the Antichrist will be around longer than the lifespan of one man.

D. Would rule in the church;

7 He sits as God *in the temple of God*. 2nd Thess. 2:4.

E. Would have a rule that would be illegal;

8 [He] *opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God* or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 2nd Thess. 2:4.

F. Would presume for himself divine authority;

9 *He sits as God* in the temple of God, *showing himself that he is God*. 2nd Thess. 2:4.

G. Would be sponsored and supported by the devil;

10 The coming of the lawless one is *according to the working of Satan*, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. 2nd Thess. 2:9.

H. Would be against Christ and his gospel;

11 That Day will not come unless the *falling away* comes first, and the *man of sin* is revealed, the son of perdition. The coming of the lawless one is *according to the working of Satan*, with *all unrighteous*

deception among those who *perish*, because they *did not receive the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. 2nd Thess. 2:3, 9, 10.

I. Would have a rule that would be an abomination of desolation, that is, one which would be disastrous to the Christian faith and the church;

12 “When you see the ‘*abomination of desolation*’, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, *standing in the holy place*” (whoever reads, let him understand). Matt. 24:15.

J. And would have a rule that would last until the end of time.

13 Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of *His coming*. 2nd Thess. 2:8.

5. Where would the Antichrist be found?

The Antichrist would be found in the Christian church, not outside of it.

14 He sits as God *in the temple of God*. 2nd Thess. 2:4.

The apostle Paul does not use the phrase “temple of God” to refer to any heathen temple, but to the Christian church.

6. When could the Antichrist be expected to appear?

A. He would make his appearance after the decline of the Roman empire.

15 Now you know *what is restraining*, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so *until he is taken out of the way*. 2nd Thess. 2:6-7.

The pride and the lust for power in the church was already present in the apostle Paul’s day. But the development of the papal pride and power was held back, restrained, and suppressed by the might of the Roman empire (“what is restraining”) and by its reigning emperor (“until he is taken out of the way”). “As long as ancient Rome ruled the world, there was no room in the world for the spiritual-temporal monarchy of the Antichrist. Ancient Rome must first fall before a new Rome could be built on its ruins The Roman Empire served as a barrier, for a while at least, to the appearance of the Antichrist” (Ludwig Fuerbringer).

B. He would rise to power along with the falling away.

16 That Day will not come unless the *falling away* comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. *The coming of the lawless one is . . . with all unrighteous deception* among those who *perish*, because they *did not receive the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. 2nd Thess. 2:3, 9, 10.

What is more, despite the Scriptures’ warning that Christians should let no man deceive them by any means, the fundamental doctrine of Christianity - justification by grace, for

Christ's sake, through faith - was soon discarded in the church in favor of the flesh's justification by works. This would occur, the text prophesies, because many in the church, after the time of the apostles, would refuse to love the truth. Sadly, they had pleasure in unrighteousness instead.

7. Of what did the falling away consist?

The falling away consisted of those members of the Christian church which, in the centuries after the apostles, no longer believed the gospel of Jesus Christ, and defected from, or fell away from, the true faith.

17 That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first. 2nd Thess. 2:3.

8. Why have the Scriptures warned you of the Antichrist?

The Scriptures have warned me because —

A. The Antichrist is the great third woe to come upon the church.

18 The second woe is past. Behold, *the third woe* is coming quickly. Rev. 11:14.

19 I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. He was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to *continue for forty-two months*. Rev. 13:1, 2, 5.

B. By following the Antichrist I would lose my faith, and, consequently, I would share in his terrible, Heaven-sent punishments.

20 That Day will not come unless the *falling away* comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. The coming of the lawless one is . . . with *all unrighteous deception* among those who *perish*, because they *did not receive the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. 2nd Thess. 2:3, 9, 10.

21 “*Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.*” Rev. 18:4.

A. The Antichrist would be the great third curse to come upon the church after the first curse, that is, the preachers of the Arian heresy (about A.D. 300-500's, Rev. 9:1-12), and the second curse, namely, Islam (Rev. 9:13-19). What is more, he would be around for forty-two months. The quantity “three and one-half,” whether it would be put into days, months, or years, is simply scriptural language for a period of severe hardship. By this the Lord has taken great pains to picture for you just how dangerous this woe will be, and just how grievous the period of its reign will be. Therefore, he helps your weak mind grasp the seriousness of the situation by picturing to you a hideous monster, something from which you would run and protect yourself at all costs. Thus you could and should consider the papacy as God considers him. You should speak about him as God speaks about him. — B. If someone were to say about the papacy, “There is nothing to fear,”

then there will be the danger on Judgment Day of God threatening that person by declaring, “Why did you call clean what I called unclean? I warned you of the severe danger of him whom I would throw into hell’s lake of fire, and commanded you to ‘come out of’ his church (Rev. 18:4). Why did you consider me to be exaggerating, and treat this fellow as a Christian in good standing?” Either follow God’s condemnation of the papacy, or become deceived and condemned (20, 21)! “He who has an ear, let him hear!” (32). Therefore, be warned! Listen to the words in Revelation! They have been written for your learning. “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One Who goes with you! He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deut. 31:6).

II. THE IDENTITY OF THE ANTICHRIST

Who is the Antichrist? I believe that the prophecies of the holy Scriptures concerning the Antichrist have been fulfilled in the pope of Rome and his dominion, for all of the features of the Antichrist as drawn in these prophecies are the outstanding characteristics of the papacy. For instance, the pope sits “as God in the temple of God”; he curses those who would believe the true gospel of forgiveness of sins by grace alone, for Christ’s sake alone, by faith alone.

For thus writes Luther: “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, 2nd Thess. 2:4” (*Smalcald Articles*, Article IV, paragraphs 10, 11).

Therefore I believe that the pope is the very Antichrist.

9. Who is the Antichrist?

The Antichrist is the pope of Rome.

10. How could and should you know for certain that the pope of Rome is the Antichrist?

I could and should know for certain because —

A. The Scriptures clearly teach this.

B. The Scriptures have given to me descriptions of the pope of Rome which are true of him and of no one else.

22 [He] *opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God* or that is worshiped, so that *he sits as God* in the temple of God, *showing himself that he is God*. 2nd Thess. 2:4.

23 That Day will not come unless the *falling away* comes first, and the *man of sin* is revealed, the *son of perdition*. 2nd Thess. 2:3.

24 *The coming* of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. 2nd Thess. 2:9.

25 That *great city* which reigns over the kings of the earth. Rev. 17:18.

26 The seven heads are *seven mountains* on which the woman sits. Rev. 17:9.

27 He shall plant the tents of his palace *between the seas*. Dan. 11:45.

28 [He] shall intend to *change times and law*. Dan. 7:25.

29 It was granted to him to *make war with the saints* and to *overcome them*. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. Rev. 13:7.

30 He was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and *he was given authority* to continue *for forty-two months*. Rev. 13:5.

C. The historical facts agree with the biblical descriptions of the pope, and I am obligated by God to draw this conclusion.

31 Whoever *reads*, let him *understand*. Matt. 24:15.

32 If anyone has an ear, let him *hear*. Rev. 13:9.

A. “Since a prophetic text is nothing else but Scripture itself pointing to some future person or event which the Holy Ghost had in mind when He caused the text to be written, that fulfillment is a part of that which God teaches in the prophetic text, and is, therefore, Scripture doctrine” (A. T. Kretzmann). — B. It is true of the papacy at Rome, and of no other man or office in the church, that the pope has the power of a king, has his seat in the Christian church, and acts as if he were God in regards to religious and civil authority (22). The papacy is connected with a falling away from the gospel (23); it has all kinds of lying powers, signs, and miracles supporting it (24), that is, the devil miraculously will have a Virgin Mary look-alike appear to people in visions, and will cause miraculous healings and phenomena to convince people that Roman Catholic teaching is divine. The pope is identified closely with the city of Rome which sits on seven hills (25, 26) between two seas (27), the Tyrrhenian and the Adriatic. The popes have changed laws (28), both civil and divine, decreeing, for instance, that no civil power has any jurisdiction over them, and that only the pope may interpret the Scriptures. The papacy has warred against true believers, and martyred them (29) as has happened in the wars against the Lutherans, the early Albigenses and Waldenses, the Huguenots, and others. In this and in other ways, the popes’ reign has been a time of severe suffering for those under its control (30).

11. What has been the work of the papacy?

The work of the papacy has been not only to promote another gospel that is not a gospel, but also to stamp out the true gospel with the help of the civil authorities.

33 If we, or an angel from heaven, *preach any other gospel* to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. Gal. 1:8.

34 That Day will not come unless the *falling away* comes first, and the *man of sin* is revealed. The *coming* of the lawless one is *according to the working of Satan*, with *all unrighteous deception among those who perish*, because they *did not receive the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. 2nd Thess. 2:3, 9, 10.

35 That great city which *reigns over the kings of the earth*. Rev. 17:18.

36 In *her was found the blood of prophets and saints*, and of all who were slain on the earth. Rev. 18:24.

Though the papacy promotes its way of salvation as the biblical one, on examination it is not the biblical gospel of justification by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, without works, but the old carnal idea of trying to accomplish one's salvation by works. Indeed, ever since the fall into sin man has wanted to justify himself before God either by something he does or does not do; by something he has or does not have, call it what you would: work righteousness, idol worship, Judaism, Islamism, Roman Catholicism, or lately, the charismatic's baptism in the Holy Spirit. Whoever would attempt to justify himself before the Almighty in these ways, in effect, will tear up God's certificate of justification, and will be left standing guilty, unforgiven, and damned.

12. What is the difference between what the Scriptures teach on justification, and what the papacy teaches?

The Scriptures teach that God *declares* me righteous. The papacy wrongly teaches that God *makes* me righteous.

37 [God] *justifies* the ungodly. Rom. 4:5.

38 When we were still *without strength*, in due time *Christ died for the ungodly*. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. Much more then, having now been *justified by His blood*, we shall be *saved from wrath through Him*. Rom. 5:6-9.

39 By grace you have been *saved through faith*, and that *not of yourselves*; it is the *gift of God, not of works*, lest anyone should boast. Eph. 2:8-9.

40 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever *believes in Him* should not perish but *have eternal life*. John 3:14-15.

God's way of justification is "to declare one righteous"; "to announce, to judge, to consider, or regard one as righteous." Every way in opposition to Heaven's way blasphemously holds that justification is "to make one righteous," that is to say, that something has to be done by the sinner himself or put into him that he himself could

accomplish something righteous and, in turn, settle his account with God. But the Scriptures protest against this, and point out, “By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified” (Rom. 3:20). Papal theology teaches the strange idea that God deposits grace in a person for the purpose of moving that person to do meritorious works of love; which works, consequently, make that person righteous, thus enabling him to enter heaven. The Scriptures, however, know nothing of this. Rather they teach and promise that God has declared every ungodly person to be righteous (37) on account of Christ’s obedient life, death, and resurrection (38); and that everyone who believes this will be saved (39, 40). In short, the Christ that saves is not one inside you, but outside you: hanging on the cross and rising from the tomb.

III. THE REVELATION OF THE ANTICHRIST

In what did the revelation of the Antichrist consist? It consisted in this: that Martin Luther opened the eyes of the people in the Christian church so that they could see that the papacy is the great Antichrist, realize that his teachings are a sham and damnable, and to come out from his church, as God has commanded (Rev. 18:4). This was accomplished after Luther had preached the gospel, at which time the Holy Spirit gave to the hearers the regenerated understanding to see the papacy for the awful Antichrist that it is.

13. What did the Lord do to reveal the Antichrist?

The Lord raised up a special man, and sent this man as his messenger to expose the papacy as the Antichrist.

41 That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the *man of sin is revealed*. That he may *be revealed* in his own time. Then the lawless one will *be revealed*. 2nd Thess. 2:3, 6, 8.

As in the past the Lord had raised up Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery and darkness; as he had predicted and raised up John the Baptist to ready the people for Christ through the preaching of repentance and faith, so God would now raise up another man, and employ his services for the revelation of the Antichrist. Through this special messenger the Lord saw to it that his law and gospel would be spread to millions, so that they could be regenerated and could, consequently, recognize the papacy as the Antichrist.

14. How do you know this?

I know this because God gave me and the New Testament church a prophecy of this special messenger.

42 [Author’s translation] And another *messenger* followed, saying, “Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink.” Rev. 14:8.

15. Why did God do this?

The Lord did this —

A. To free his church from the papacy’s faith-destroying control;

B. To lead his church away from a reliance on the papacy’s damnation-bringing salvation by works; and

C. To bring his church back to faith in the only true, saving gospel.

43 I saw one of his heads as if it had been *mortally wounded*. Rev. 13:3.

16. When was the Antichrist revealed?

The Antichrist began to be revealed in 1520.

17. What happened to the Antichrist after he was revealed?

His kingdom was toppled.

44 I saw one of his heads as if it had been *mortally wounded*. Rev. 13:3.

45 [Author’s translation] And another messenger followed, saying, “*Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen*, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink.” Rev. 14:8.

The Antichrist’s power and influence fell because millions of newly regenerated church members saw him for what he is, and would no longer obey him and support him. They left him for the true gospel to the saving of their souls. As a result, his kingdom fell.

18. What do the Scriptures teach about the Second Messenger?

They teach that the Second Messenger would expose the papacy as an evil enemy, and, thereby, topple it from its immense power.

46 [Author’s translation] And another messenger followed, saying, “*Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen*, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink.” Rev. 14:8.

47 I saw one of his heads as if it had been *mortally wounded*. Rev. 13:3.

48 That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the *man of sin is revealed*. That he may *be revealed* in his own time. Then the lawless one will *be revealed*. 2nd Thess. 2:3, 6, 8.

The Scriptures liken the papacy to the evil, city/state, world power Babylon, for as the Old Testament church had been cruelly overcome and lead into captivity by Babylon, so the New Testament church, not many centuries after the apostles, would be taken captive by a force hostile to it and to the gospel, namely, by the papacy at Rome. This evil, city/state, world power before, during, and after the Dark Ages made the nations drink

“of the wine of her adultery.” This is biblical language (Jer. 51:6-7) which means that the papacy would lead people away from the gospel’s truth, causing them to become unfaithful. As the Almighty considers those who take their love away from him and give it to another to be unfaithful, committing spiritual adultery, just so by forcing the greater part of the civilized nations through false teaching, extortion, persecution, and war to give up the gospel, the papacy spiritually had seduced the nations, making them drink themselves senseless, so to speak, with the damning doctrines of Rome. Because of this, the Lord’s fury was kindled against them for their spiritual fornication, and as punishment for leading so many captive into unbelief and damnation, Heaven struck the papacy a mighty blow. As Jericho was utterly exposed, weakened, and vulnerable after its walls had fallen down flat, so papal Rome’s power would be described as having collapsed just as flat (“is fallen, is fallen”). This would be accomplished by God through the efforts of his specially-sent messenger who would speak of and precipitate its fall through the powerful Word of God. In this prophecy (46) the Lord remarks that there will be a particular angel or messenger. The word for “angel” in the original Greek language of the New Testament simply means “messenger.” It could refer either to a bodiless spirit or to a human messenger, such as John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10-11), or to a pastor (Rev. 2:1), depending upon the context. In 46 a man is meant, for such things as preaching and reforming the church are the works only of men on earth.

The collapse of the Roman papacy also is described in a different prophecy of the Scriptures in another way, namely, as a mortal wound to the head; that is to say, as a blow to the head that could and should cause death (47); a blow so strong that to survive it would cause great wonder (Rev. 13:3-4). As darkness cannot exist and must be driven out wherever light has entered (2nd Cor. 6:14), so when the evil works and person of the Antichrist are revealed by the light of the truth, they cannot stand, but must fall, that is, they must decrease and go down to defeat. Such a victory would be accomplished by God’s special messenger. He would do the exposing, or revealing (48). By his speaking he would shine the light of truth on the papacy, and thereby cause its demise.

19. Whom do the Scriptures teach was the Second Messenger?

They teach that Martin Luther was the Second Messenger.

49 [Author’s translation] And another *messenger* followed, *saying*, “*Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen*, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink.” Rev. 14:8.

Nicknamed “Babylon” in order to awaken the faithful’s memory of old Babylon and to lead the same to see the analogy (49), the papacy fell mightily, that is, its power and hold over millions of church members through its clever godless hoaxes were broken when it was exposed as a fraud by the Lutheran Reformation. This tremendous turning point in church history, this remarkable earth-moving reform was accomplished by Martin Luther, who, through his writing “On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church” in 1520, and other writings, got millions to see the faith-killing fraud of the Roman Catholic system, and the true path to heaven. If the church would exist at all as the faithful gospel-believing bride

of Christ, it will have to be purified, reformed, and brought back to the true seat of authority, namely, the gospel. To accomplish this God raised up Martin Luther.

Hence the Second Messenger predicted by passage 49, who caused and then announced the results of Rome's demise, was none other than Martin Luther. For nothing in New Testament history fits this prophecy but the Lutheran Reformation. Passage 49 had only one event in mind when it was written over 1900 years ago. It has pointed its prophetic finger at and given clues for one person and one event. This prophecy fits Luther and his Reformation like a glove, and only Luther and his Reformation. Therefore you could and should affirm assuredly and confess that God raised up Martin Luther.

20. What was it in Luther's writings that was able to accomplish such a mighty deed?

It was God's powerful law and gospel in Luther's writings that accomplished the reformation of the church and the toppling of the papacy.

50 Where the *Spirit* of the Lord is, there is *liberty*. 2nd Cor. 3:17.

51 Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* by which *Christ* has *made us free*. Gal. 5:1.

52 They shall fall by sword and flame, by *captivity* and plundering. Dan. 11:33.

53 He who *leads into captivity* shall go into captivity. Rev. 13:10.

Holy Writ describes papal dominance as a captivity (52, 53) - a spiritual captivity. Its dominance would be so powerful that it would make the world follow it (Rev. 13:3). The only might which would be strong enough to free these enslaved minds from such a devil-designed grasp would be God's power. Again, the only source with enough light of truth to reveal the dark deeds of the papacy by bringing them to light, and, consequently, to liberate minds that had been obedient to the papacy through spiritual blindness, would be the might of God. But where has the Almighty stored his power that men may receive it and use it? in his law and gospel. Hence after Luther used the law and gospel in his writings, not only were the people regenerated and brought to a saving faith in the gospel, but other mighty works were accomplished. For instance, in the floodlight of the gospel, with Spirit-provided vision, the scales fell off millions of eyes, and the people now saw the papacy for the damnation-bringing fraud that it is. What is more, millions of captives in the church no longer obeyed the pope, but forsook him, and followed the gospel instead. Because of this they were set at liberty from the pope's oppressions of body and soul. Consequently, the papacy lost its vast power, since, like other human institutions, its strength lay in the number of people that would believe it and obey it. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (50). Since the Spirit works through the gospel (James 1:18), it was the mighty Spirit (John 3:6; Eph. 1:19-20) working through the powerful gospel (Rom. 1:16) in the Reformation that enlightened and freed millions of captives from the papacy's mind control and soul stranglehold (1st Cor. 2:10-13; 2nd Cor. 4:6).



Luther, the powerful preacher, preaches Christ crucified to his congregation. A woodcut by Gustav König.

21. Why, then, did not all men follow the old gospel as restored by Martin Luther?

All men could and should have believed the gospel, but they hardened their hearts against it, and by a mighty effort, they freed themselves from the divine power of God's gospel by rejecting it.

54 That Day will not come unless the *falling away* comes first. 2nd Thess. 2:3.

55 They *did not receive the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who *did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness*. 2nd Thess. 2:10- 12.

56 I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his *deadly wound was healed*. Rev. 13:3.

In and because of the Reformation, millions of members of the papal church, called the “falling away” by the Scriptures (54), came out in obedience to the Lord (21), believing the gospel. Sadly, however, a great number in the Roman Catholic church refused to do this. 55 explains why. The Scriptures describe this deplorable fact also in a figurative way in 56. That is to say, though the papacy received a deadly blow from the Reformation by which it could and should have died, that is, by which it could and should have ceased to exist, it recovered; it still lives on, though it is in a much weaker state than it was prior to the Reformation. In what sense could it be said that the papacy has recovered from its deadly blow and continues to live? It could be said in this way: that certain souls have continued to believe in the legitimacy of the pope, and have obediently followed his orders. Without such support, the pope could not exist. As there were such

people at the time of the Reformation, so there are such people today. Such people can resist the divine power because it works through a means, the gospel.

22. What do the Scriptures teach about the First Messenger?

They teach that he would be a special messenger who would preach the law and gospel to unbelievers worldwide.

57 [Author's translation] Then I saw another *messenger* flying in mid heaven, having the *eternal gospel to preach* to those who live on the earth: *to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people*, saying with a loud voice, "*Fear God* and give glory to him, for *the hour of his judgment has come*; and pay homage to him who made the heaven and the earth and sea, and the springs of waters." Rev. 14:6-7.

In this passage God gave his New Testament church another prophecy. This one, also, would be fulfilled. In addition, the Lord expects you to recognize it after it has become fulfilled. In this prophecy the Lord declares that there will be a special messenger. What is more, the Master informs you what this messenger will be saying, and the extent to which his message will be spread. That is to say, his biblical preaching, which would be unique, would be the law directed toward the heathen. His preaching of the eternal gospel would be directed to all nations with a loud voice, that is, with a mighty, far-reaching voice.

23. Whom do the Scriptures teach was the First Messenger.

They teach that the apostle Paul was the First Messenger.

58 [Author's translation] Then I saw another *messenger* flying in mid heaven, having the *eternal gospel to preach* to those who live on the earth: *to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people*, saying with a loud voice, "*Fear God* and give glory to him, for *the hour of his judgment has come*; and pay homage to him who made the heaven and the earth and sea, and the springs of waters." Rev. 14:6-7.

59 "We also are men with the same nature as you, and *preach to you* that you should *turn* from these vain things *to the living God*, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them." Acts 14:15.

60 "*God*, who made the world and everything in it, since He is *Lord of heaven and earth*, does not dwell in temples made with hands. He has appointed a *day* on which He will *judge the world* in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:24, 31.

61 I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the *Gentiles*, *ministering the gospel* of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that *from Jerusalem* and round about *to Illyricum* I have *fully preached* the *gospel* of Christ. Romans 15:15-17, 19.

To arrive at the identity of the First Messenger you must do as was done in the case of the Second Messenger and in the case of the Antichrist, namely, you must look at the Scriptures (58), and compare them with the pertinent and relevant evidence, scriptural or

historical. After this is done, an inference could and should be drawn by which you will have the identity with divine assurance.

The description of the First Messenger matches up with the evidence from the books of Acts and Romans (59, 60, 61). The person who is making these statements is the same person who is described by 58, that is, the apostle Paul. Passage 58 is defining Paul, his message, and the influence which he had in the spread of the gospel by his several missionary journeys. For example, Paul had a “loud voice.” In other words, compared to other preachers, more people had heard Paul’s voice to the saving of their souls than any other. Moreover, Paul spoke to the gentiles, and preached about Judgment Day, repentance, and God the Father almighty, Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth. As a result, the missionary success which the Spirit of God accomplished through the apostle was so outstanding, that it is no exaggeration when the Scriptures report in Romans 10:18 that Paul filled the world with the gospel. Thus, after you have compared 58 with what the apostle accomplished with his missionary journeys and with his New Testament epistles, you could and should reach the conclusion that 58 is speaking of and teaching of the apostle Paul and no one else.

IV. THE PROPER USE OF THIS DOCTRINE

***When do you use the doctrine of the Antichrist properly?* The Lord would have me know that damnation is in store for all those who follow the papacy. Therefore, I should listen to his warning, and avoid the pope.**

In addition, I should pray for protection from papal persecution, and do all in my power to spread the gospel, keeping myself and my children firmly grounded in the one true faith, until the Lord finally appears to destroy the papacy with the brightness of his coming.

24. Why do the Scriptures want you to recognize the papacy as the Antichrist?

They want me to recognize the papacy as the Antichrist so that I will not be fooled into falling for his cruel hoax, and lose my faith as millions of others have.

62 That Day will not come unless the *falling away* comes first. 2nd Thess. 2:3.

63 “*Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.*” Rev. 18:4.

64 “*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*” Rev. 2:10.

25. Could and should every Christian be able to identify the Antichrist with divine assurance?

Yes, every Christian could and should be able to do this, for the Scriptures have given the church this prophecy of the Antichrist for the very purpose of identifying him with divine assurance.

65 *Whoever reads, let him understand.* Matt. 24:15.

66 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* If anyone has an ear, let him *hear.* Rev. 13:8-9.

67 “Why did you marvel? *I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.*” Rev. 17:7.

26. What help has God given to assist you in identifying the Antichrist?

God has promised that the Antichrist will be revealed. God has done this through Martin Luther.

68 That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the *man of sin is revealed.* That he may *be revealed* in his own time. Then the lawless one will *be revealed.* 2nd Thess. 2:3, 6, 8.

27. Why is it that most people do not recognize the papacy as the Antichrist?

It is because —

- A. They have not seen the biblical and historical evidence, or have believed it.**
- B. They do not appreciate their justification by faith. That is, they do not know what the gospel really is, or who Christ really is.**
- C. They do not see how outrageously antichristian the pope’s false teachings and actions are.**

28. When do you use the doctrine of the Antichrist properly?

I use the doctrine of the Antichrist properly —

A. When I recognize that the pope is the Antichrist;

69 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If anyone has an ear, *let him hear.* Rev. 13:8-9.

B. When I avoid the pope’s teachings;

70 “*Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.*” Rev. 18:4.

71 *Note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.* Rom. 16:17.

C. When I teach, confess, and warn that the pope is the Antichrist;

D. When I do all in my power to spread the gospel, and thus hold him at bay;

72 Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* by which *Christ has made us free*. Gal. 5:1.

73 *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*. 2nd Cor. 3:17.

E. And when I pray that the Lord would always deliver me, my children, and his church from the Antichrist.

74 *Pray* for us, that the *word of the Lord* may have *free course* and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may *be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men*; for not all have faith. But the *Lord is faithful*, who will *establish* you and *guard you from the evil one*. 2nd Thess. 3:1-3.

29. Why did the Scriptures prophesy of Martin Luther?

They did it —

A. To comfort and to assure the true believers that divine help would be sent to lead them out of the darkness of spiritual captivity;

B. To warn and to scold the erring so that they would repent; and

C. To warn the papacy publicly that it would be punished.

75 I saw one of his heads as if it had been *mortally wounded*. Rev. 13:3.

76 [Author's translation] And another *messenger* followed, saying, "*Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink.*" Rev. 14:8.

30. Why is the scriptural teaching of Martin Luther of such great comfort to you?

It is comforting to me because this teaching shows that —

A. God knows what is going on.

B. The forces of evil are not in control, and that God's will shall prevail.

77 I saw one of his heads as if it had been *mortally wounded*. Rev. 13:3.

C. God raised up Martin Luther for my aid.

78 [Author's translation] And another *messenger* followed, saying, "*Babylon the great city is fallen, is fallen, because of the fury of the wine of her adultery which she has given all nations to drink.*" Rev. 14:8.

D. God will assist his church in times of trouble, and will not leave me comfortless.

79 “*Do not fear, little flock*, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Luke 12:32.

E. In fact, as a result of the God-sent Reformation, I have been brought to faith in time.

C. By his writings Martin Luther caused the downfall of the mighty, Middle Ages’ papacy. Luther caused its downfall by preaching the gospel; by pointing out that the papacy is a cruel hoax fastened upon the church by power-hungry, lust-filled, and hellish-minded ecclesiastical gangsters; that no one need fear the pope’s bans, excommunications, or threats because they are null and void. — D. The Lord has not left you to the mercy of the wolves in sheep’s’ clothing, but has once again, in the person of Martin Luther, risen to your need, and brought freedom and salvation to his elect who were long held in confinement in the darkness of antichristian teachings by wicked men. — E. Without the gospel that was brought again to light in the Reformation, you probably would be worshiping the Virgin Mary as your co-Redeemer. Furthermore, you would have been kept in doubt as to your salvation; you would have fretted over how many works of penance it would take to please the Almighty for your temporal sins; and you would have been shaking at the thought of spending years of fiery purging in purgatory. But because Luther with the help of God brought back the old apostolic gospel, your fathers were brought to faith, and they, in turn, have passed the glorious apostolic gospel down to you, so that you could be blessed with the faith once delivered to the apostolic saints (Jude 3). “Paul brought Christ from the East to the West, and since Luther freed Christ in Paul’s letters, Christ has been brought to America” (William Dallmann).

CHAPTER 2

Endnotes

1. “The four beasts in Dan. vii, 3, 17, 23, represent four kings or kingdoms (Ezek. xxxiv, 28; Jer. xii, 9). Wild beasts are generally, in the Scriptures, to be understood of enemies, whose malice and power are to be judged of in proportion to the nature and magnitude of the wild beasts by which they are represented; similar comparisons occur in profane authors (Psa. lxxiv, 14). In like manner the King of Egypt is compared to the *crocodile* (Psa. lxxviii, 31). The rising of a beast signifies the rise of some new dominion or government; the rising of a wild beast, the rise of a tyrannical government” (“Beast,” *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, editors John McClintock and James Strong [Ann Arbor: Baker Book House, 1981], I, page 710B).
2. Charles Frederick *William* Dallmann, “Papacy,” *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, editors L. Fuerbringer, Th. Engelder, and P.E. Kretzmann (Saint Louis: CPH, 1927), page 564A.
3. “The Letter of St. Clement of Rome to the Corinthians,” *The Fathers of the Church*, translator F. X. Glimm (New York: CIMA Publishing Co., Inc., 1947), I, page 43.



Ludwig Fuerbringer in 1938.

The two children are (left to right) Theodore and Robert Zorn, his grandsons born in India.

4. L. Fuerbringer, “Leading Thoughts on Eschatology in the Epistles to the Thessalonians,” *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Volume XIII, Number 6 (Saint Louis: Concordia, June, 1942), page 414.
 5. Tertullian, “Apology,” *The Fathers of the Church*, translator Sister Emily Joseph Daly (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1950), X, page 88.
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⁶ Hieronymus, “Hieronymus ad Algasiam,” *Patrologiae Latinae*, Tomus 22 (Turnholti [Belgium]: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii), Caput XI, pagina 1037.

⁷ Of course, the law and gospel served as a barrier; in fact, the most powerful barrier of all against the existence and rise of the Antichrist. But after God’s mighty law (for example, 1st Peter 5:2-3) was no longer generally obeyed, and his gospel (for instance, John 10:27-28) was no longer trusted during the “falling away” (2nd Thessalonians 2:3), the Antichrist was free to arise, and to conquer and to rule in people’s minds.

⁸ Frederick Meyrick, “Antichrist,” *Dictionary of the Bible*, editor William Smith (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1868), I, page 105.

⁹ Fuerbringer, *Leading Thoughts on Eschatology*, page 402. 2nd Thessalonians 2:8 “plainly refers to Is. 11:4. The words ‘Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming’ are but a free rendition of the Old Testament words: the Messiah ‘shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked’. It is plain that the wicked one referred to by Isaiah is not some specific individual, but a collective personality” (Fuerbringer, page 408).

¹⁰ Meyrick, “Antichrist,” page 106A.

¹¹ “Antichrist,” *McClintock and Strong*, I, page 258B.

¹²C. F. W. Walther aptly remarks, “In the writings of the Church Fathers we find hardly anything concerning the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. In this point most of the reformers before the Reformation were at fault. Huss preached the Gospel exceedingly well, but he did not show his hearers the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel. For that reason his work, his attempt at reformation, did not endure. The birth of the Reformer dates from the moment when Luther understood the distinction between the Law and Gospel. The tremendous success of his public activity, moreover, is due to the same cause” (F. F. Selle and Ewald Plass, *The Concordia Pulpit for 1936*, editor Martin S. Sommer [Saint Louis: CPH, 1935], page 222).

¹³ Karl George Stoeckhardt, *Exegetical Lectures on the Revelation of Saint John*, translator H. W. Degner (Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, Inc., 1964), page 51.

¹⁴ Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Revelation*, page 56.

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- 15 Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, translator Walter W. F. Albrecht (Saint Louis: CPH, 1970), III, page 466.
- 16 Theodore Hoyer, "The Papacy," *The Abiding Word*, editor Theodore Laetsch (Saint Louis: CPH, 1947), III, page 761f.
- 17 W. Dallmann, "Papacy," *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, page 564B.
- 18 John Henry Kurtz, *Text-Book of Church History* (Philadelphia: Nelson S. Quiney, 1881), II, page 184.
- 19 Frederick Gottlob Kuegele, *Country Sermons* (Crimora, Virginia: Augusta Publishing Company, 1908), III, page 322.
- 20 Kuegele, *Country Sermons*, III, page 322f.
- 21 Richard Charles Henry Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), page 427f.
- 22 James Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), I, page 135.
- 23 Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, editors W. Arndt and F. Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), page 665B.
- 24 Frederick William Herzberger, "Luther's Conduct toward the Roman Catholics," *Theological Quarterly*, Volume XXI, Number 3 (Saint Louis: CPH, July, 1917), page 175.
- 25 Henry Sieck, *Sermons on the Gospels of the Ecclesiastical Year* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1906), Part second, page 176.
- 26 Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), page 161.
- 27 P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1922), New Testament II, page 632A.
- 28 W. Peters, *The Judge is at the Door*, translator Helma Stenske (printed by the translator, 407 West Bennett, Glendora, California, 91740, 1968), page 135. Holy Writ describes papal dominance as a captivity (Daniel 11:33; Revelation 13:10).
- 29 Kuegele, *Country Sermons*, III, page 321.

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- ³⁰ K. S., “Luther’s Birthday,” *Evangelical Lutheran Homiletic Magazine*, Volume IV, Number 11 (Saint Louis: CPH, November, 1906), page 174.
- ³¹ Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *The Church of the Reformation, The typically-prophesied Second Temple of the New Covenant* [a sermon in tract form], translator E. L. S. Tressel (Baltimore: B. H. James, printer, 1876), page 10f.
- ³² Bainton, *Here I Stand*, page 136f.
- ³³ *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), page 115f.
- ³⁴ William Dallmann, “Luther’s Chief Writings,” *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, page 429A.
- ³⁵ William Dallmann, *Martin Luther, His Life and His Labor* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1917), pages 115-118.
- ³⁶ Herman Fick, *Life and Deeds of Dr. Martin Luther*, translator J. Matthias Loy (Columbus, Ohio: J. A. Schulze, 1878), page 85.
- ³⁷ Dallmann, *Martin Luther*, page 218.
- ³⁸ Dallmann, *Martin Luther*, page 219.
- ³⁹ Dallmann, *Martin Luther*, page 220f.
- ⁴⁰ Dallmann, *Martin Luther*, page 220.
- ⁴¹ “In the first chapters of the Acts Peter is the central figure; but he is soon overshadowed by the colossal figure of St. Paul, ch. 13-28. If the two epistles of Peter had been lost, no practical difference in the sum and color of Christian teaching would be noticeable Christianity is Pauline and Johannine almost exclusively. Paul’s writings are fourteen times greater than Peter’s in bulk, and unspeakably greater in literary and theological importance. So thoroughly did the early Christians realize that St. Paul is the great Teacher of the Church that whenever they speak of ‘the Apostle’, they mean St. Paul; for instance, Chrysostom says, ‘When you say *Apostle*, at once all think of Paul, just as when you say *Baptist* they think of John’ ” (William Dallmann, “The Vicar of Christ,” *Theological Quarterly*, Volume XIV, Number 1 [Saint Louis: CPH, January, 1910], page 29.
- ⁴² The Christian church started out with over 500 brethren (1st Corinthians 15:6). “At the end of the first century A.D. there may have been some 200,000 professed Christians” (“Missions,” *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, page 481A).

⁴³ The first curse (Rev. 9:1-12) is Arianism (Luther). The second curse (Rev. 9:13-19) is Islam (Luther).



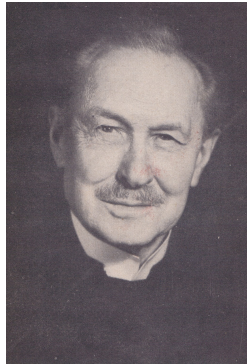
Two woodcuts by Hans Lufft from Luther's Bible: the top one showing the scene in Revelation 9:1-12: the preachers of the Arian heresy; the bottom one picturing the scene in verses 13-19: the Islamic hordes.

⁴⁴ Ewald Plass, *This is Luther* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1958), page 163.

⁴⁵ William Dallmann, *Paul, Life and Letters* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1929), page 98.

⁴⁶ Plass, *This is Luther*, page 57f.

⁴⁷ Dallmann, *Paul*, page 93.



William Dallmann

⁴⁸ Dallmann, *Paul*, page 93.

⁴⁹ Plass, *This is Luther*, page 4.

⁵⁰ “Here the Day of Wrath is further described. It is Christ here that appears as the agent In this scene of slaughter a special enemy is mentioned, called ‘the head’.” ‘He will shatter the head who is over the extensive land’. This ‘head’ is the chief among all the enemies of men. That is Antichrist. It was he who like no one else set up a world power to oppose Christ. It was his purpose to estrange those who once had come to Christ, and he did succeed with so many. So he was a formidable enemy who ruled over an extensive world territory. But now he also succumbs to the vengeance of the exalted Judge So here already we find a revelation of the judgment of Antichrist” (George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Select Psalms*, translator H. W. Degner [Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Co., 1965], pages 176-177).

⁵¹ Fuerbringer, *Leading Thoughts on Eschatology*, page 402. 2nd Thessalonians 2:8 “plainly refers to Is. 11:4. The words ‘Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming’ are but a free rendition of the Old Testament words: the Messiah ‘shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked’. It is plain that the wicked one referred to by Isaiah is not some specific individual, but a collective personality” (Fuerbringer, page 408).

⁵² Peters, *The Judge is at the Door*, pages 118, 136.

⁵³ George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on the Revelation of Saint John*, translator H. W. Degner (Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, Inc., 1964), page 51.



George Stoeckhardt is the one standing on the left. The other members of the faculty of the Missouri Synod's seminary at Saint Louis, standing from the middle to the right are: Franz Pieper and A. L. Graebner. Sitting, left to right: C. H. R. Lange and Martin Guenther. This photo was taken sometime between 1887 and 1892.

⁵⁴ P. E. Kretzmann, "The Progressive Revelation of the Antichrist," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Volume XIII, Number 2 (February, 1942 [Saint Louis: CPH]), page 124f.



A picture of P. E. Kretzmann from the year 1946 or before.

⁵⁵ Martin Samuel Sommer, “The Difference between Reformed and Lutheran Preaching,” *The Concordia Pulpit for 1932*, editor-in-chief Martin S. Sommer (Saint Louis: CPH, 1931), page VI.

⁵⁶ Martin S. Sommer, “A Leaking Ship,” *The Lutheran Witness*, Volume XXXVI, Number 24 (Saint Louis: CPH, 27 November, 1917), page 374B.



Martin S. Sommer

⁵⁷ Quentin Schultze [of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, as quoted in an Associated Press story printed in the Minneapolis], *Star Tribune*, Saturday, 20 November, 1993, page 7E.

⁵⁸ Stephen Neill, *Anglicanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁵⁹ Excerpt from a worship bulletin by John Springer, Plymouth, Minnesota, March, 1993.

⁶⁰ “Heaven,” McClintock-Strong, IV, page 125B.

⁶¹ Ernst Eckhardt, “Luther and Missions,” *Theological Monthly*, Volume VIII, Number 2 (Saint Louis: CPH, February, 1928), page 47A & B.

⁶² “Missions,” *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, page 481A.

⁶³ Henry Eyster Jacobs, “Reformation, Celebrations of,” *The Lutheran Cyclopedia*, eds. Henry E. Jacobs and John Hass (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899), page 405A.

⁶⁴ Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Revelation*, page 57.

⁶⁵ Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary*, New Testament, II, page 631B.

⁶⁶ Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary*, New Testament, II, page 632A.

⁶⁷ Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary*, New Testament, II, page 632A. Some Lutherans have, indeed, been impressed with the fact that Revelation 14:8 has to do with Luther. For instance, when the authorities set the texts for the Reformation festivals for their Lutheran churches in Leipzig during Bach's tenure there, the text, Revelation 14:6-8, was chosen for three of these years: 1730, 1738, and 1741 (Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, translators Clara Bell and J. A. Fuller-Maitland [New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992], III, page 283).

⁶⁸ Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Revelation*, page 56.

⁶⁹ C. H. Little, *Explanation of the Book of Revelation* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1950), page 146.

⁷⁰ John H. Baumgaertner, "Luther's Gift - the Open Bible," *The Concordia Pulpit for 1959* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1958), page 359.

⁷¹ Roger D. Pittelko, "Proclaim the Eternal Gospel," *The Concordia Pulpit for 1972* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1971), page 287.

⁷² C. F. W. Walther, *Old Standard Gospels*, translator Donald E. Heck (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1984), page 379f; quoted from his Reformation Day sermon on 2nd Thessalonians 2:1-12.



Franz Pieper

⁷³ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, III, page 466.

⁷⁴ Bainton, *Here I Stand*, page 161.

⁷⁵ Kuegele, *Country Sermons*, III, page 323.

⁷⁶ As this book was going to print, the pope issued a statement on Sunday, 12 March, 2000. The *New York Times* called it a “papal apology... repenting of the errors of his church over the last 2,000 years.” Would this mean that the papacy has turned over a new leaf; that all of the evil directly and indirectly caused by the papacy would be a thing of the past?

What does the Bible say? Scripture distinctly teaches that the papacy is the Antichrist; and that the Antichrist will stay the Antichrist until Judgment Day, when the Lord Jesus himself will destroy the last of the popes by casting him into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20). On the basis of this fact, the answer to the above question will be “No, the papacy has not turned over a new leaf.” Consequently, its antichristian, indeed, its hellish nature could not but continue to spawn evil toward humanity.

Secondly, the Bible teaches that after men would repent, they should bring forth acts which will demonstrate sincere repentance (Matthew 3:8; 7:20). Thus it would follow that if the Pope’s request for forgiveness were not disingenuous, but made in good faith, he would have repented for his own sins of lying. See above the *Theological Commentary*, page 166! In addition, he should have condemned previous popes by name for their documented crimes. Finally, he should have repealed all of the antichristian dogmas that have fostered these monstrous papal crimes against humanity. But the pope did not do these things, for he will not. A pope will never admit that a pope could ever sin, or that his dogmas are sin. As a result, the arrogant papacy and his sect will continue to plague humanity with tremendous evil. The only answer to the question as to how to rid humanity of this evil is the one given by Luther.

