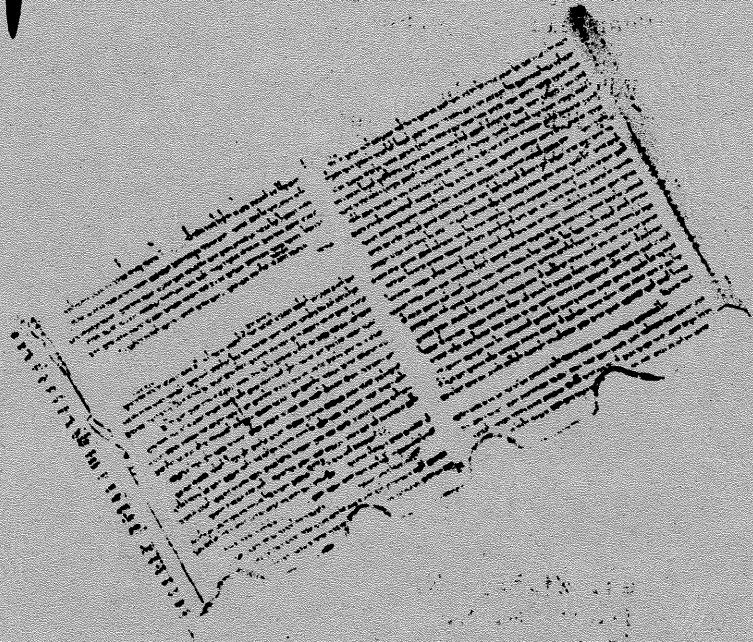




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FOREWORD

For some years the March issue of the Lutheran Synod Quarterly has presented the Reformation lectures delivered at Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary the preceding fall. However, this past Reformation season the lectures were not given due to the unexpected illness of the lecturer and it was too late to make other arrangements.

We are offering, though, an essay that certainly reflects Reformation theology, namely, the doctrine of the Antichrist. It was written by senior seminarian, David Thompson, as his independent study project. This doctrine has not been studied in depth in our circles of late and therefore we feel that a review can serve to re-inforce us in what we have confessed. We might also mention that the writer struggled with this doctrine for some time, but after a thorough study he came to the conviction that the Lutheran Confessions do indeed faithfully and correctly exhibit what the Holy Scripture teaches in this matter.

The second article in this issue of the Quarterly supplies our readers with some background material evaluating the cults, which are so numerous and dangerous in our society. The author, Pastor William Kessel, who is an authority on religions among the native Americans, has also done much study in this area and we are pleased to share his findings with you.

We also take this opportunity to wish our readers a blessed Lenten Season and a joyful Easter in the Name of Him "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

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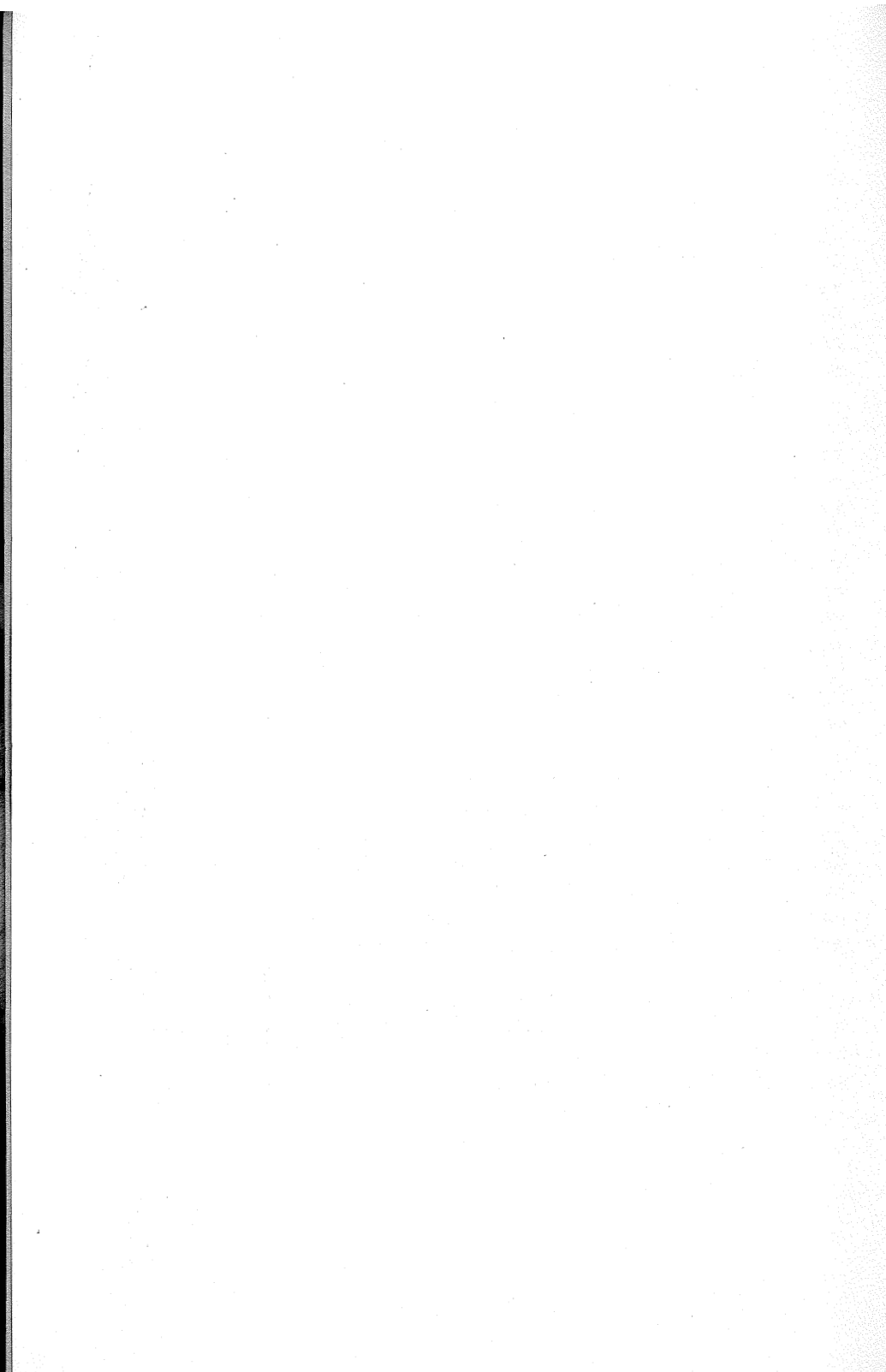


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THE ANTICHRIST AND THE PAPACY

1. The subject of the Antichrist is one that does not excite many people today. And to claim that the Pope is the Antichrist seems even more unpopular. To most Lutherans (including those within our circle) the Pope constitutes one of the factors which help them define what they are not. Other than that, it is generally a matter of indifference. The word "Pope" does not trigger danger signs or hostile verbal descriptions such as "Antichrist," as it once did. And yet the Lutheran Confessions have little good to say about the Papacy in their day, and claim it to be the very Antichrist.

2. It would be wrong for Lutherans to close their eyes to this teaching, as if it did not exist or did not matter. For whatever stance is taken toward this teaching is a stance taken, in part, toward the Lutheran Confessions. If the Papacy never was the Antichrist, then the Confessions err; if the Papacy was the Antichrist, but is not now, then the Confessions in one teaching are not applicable for today; and if the Papacy was and still is the Antichrist, then there is that much more support for the unity and truth of the Lutheran Confessions.¹

¹Seeing that the Confessions do not claim to be the source and norm of our faith, but rather, the correct exegesis of the only source and norm (Holy Scriptures), it becomes necessary for those who confess to be truly Lutheran to carefully compare the exegesis of the Confessions with the Bible in order that their subscription be a "quia" and not a "quatenus" subscription. In this way, confessions contrary to the Book of Concord will be guarded against and the Lutheran Church will be truly Lutheran.

3. So the question is whether or not the Papacy is the Antichrist. To answer this question three areas have to be discussed: the marks of the Antichrist found in the Bible; how the Lutheran application to the Papacy is arrived at; and objections to this application.

I. The Marks of the Antichrist

4. When dealing with the marks of the Antichrist, it first has to be decided which areas of the Bible the marks will be drawn from. II Thessalonians, I and II John, Daniel, and Revelation are the books generally recognized as those areas. The marks found in II Thessalonians (2:3-10) and in I and II John (I John 2:18,22,23; 4:2,3; II John 7) are obvious references to the Antichrist. However, the marks in Daniel and Revelation are not always so obvious.

5. Both Revelation and much of Daniel are concerned with prophecies of the last days,² and for this reason it would be natural to find references to the Antichrist in them. But these same prophecies, because of inherent qualities, make it difficult to discern clear references to the marks of the Antichrist. For one thing, the prophecies are in figurative language which have led to various interpretations. Also, the prophecies in both books have a tendency to leave the reader hanging in midair since they are sometimes baffling or very general. Finally, some of these prophecies in Daniel are no doubt typological, in which case there is a problem in deciding which traits apply to both the type and the antitype,

²"Last days" or "last hour" does not refer to a short time directly before the second coming (as the millennialists interpret it) but rather it refers to the period beginning with the N.T. and ending with Judgment Day (cf. I John 2:18).

and which apply only to the type.³ So when using passages from Daniel and Revelation to add to the discussion of the Antichrist, it is safest to draw out marks from them only when they can be used to support or help explain marks already derived from John's epistles and II Thessalonians. That is, when reading through the prophetic parts of Daniel and Revelation, and a statement is made which concurs with those marks listed in I and II John and II Thessalonians, it should be assumed that these statements support and/or help explain the clearly designated marks in those epistles. In other words, the unclear passages should be viewed in light of the clearer passages.

6. With this hermeneutical principle in mind the specific marks can now be discussed under several categories.

The Person of the Antichrist

7. (1) The most obvious starting point for defining the Antichrist is in the name itself. The name "Antichrist" is found only in I and II John. The Greek is ἀντίχριστος, composed of the noun χρίστος and the preposition ἀντί. ἀντί originally meant

³Keil in his commentary on Daniel disagrees with a strict typical interpretation and instead claims that the circumstances in Daniel 11 "much rather show that in the prophetic contemplation there is comprehended in the image of one king what has been historically fulfilled in its beginning by Antiochus Epiphanes, but shall only meet its complete fulfillment by the Antichrist in the time of the end," Commentary on the Old Testament: Ezekiel, Daniel, Vol. IX (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprinted 1980), 462 - 463. However, the problem is exactly the same.

"in the place of," and later on "against." The New Testament usage of the preposition when it is used by itself supports the former translation. But when it is combined with a noun, it is more likely to mean "against" or "opposed to."⁴ If the meaning is "in the place of," this would still indirectly imply "opposed to," since one cannot seek to replace Christ without opposing him. This alternative is supported by the fact that the other marks state that the Antichrist both replaces and opposes Christ.

8. (2) In II Thessalonians 2:3 the Antichrist is called ὁ ἄνθρωπος (the man). Thus it can be concluded that the Antichrist takes the form of a human being.⁵ It can only be said to take the form of a human being, and not a human being in and of itself, since its life span will surpass that of any known human life. The Antichrist had its beginning at least by the time of Paul's and John's writings: "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work..." (II Thess. 2:7); "...the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world" (I John 4:3); "...many deceivers went out into the world...this (group) is... the Antichrist" (II John 7). And its ending will not be until Christ comes again: "...the lawless one) whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming" (II Thess. 2:8, NASB). This means that the Antichrist is already over 1,900 years old. If there

⁴R. Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), appendix p. 60.

⁵The word ἄνθρωπος never refers to anything else in the N.T. besides human beings (R. Young, appendix p. 60.).

were any such person still alive, he would quickly be suspected of being the Antichrist. But since no such person exists, and keeping in mind that it has to take human form, there seem to be left only relatively few possibilities.

9. One possibility is a succession of leaders within one specific establishment, whether that establishment be a sovereign state, a business company, an institution, a household, or any other type of organized establishment which calls for some sort of leadership. A second possibility is an orderly movement of the Antichrist from one person to another, depending on how long a certain person is useful (or alive) as the human form of the Antichrist. With this method the Antichrist is not necessarily connected with any one establishment. A third possibility is a combination of the first two, where the Antichrist would make use of one establishment and its leaders for a time, and then would move on to another.

10. In order to come to a conclusion concerning these possibilities, it first has to be decided whether or not an establishment is implied by the texts. In II Thessalonians 2:6,7 there is shown to be a development of the Antichrist, for it is "held back"⁶ for a time until "the one who holds it back...is taken out of the way," "in order that he may be revealed at the proper time." Several passages in Daniel also support this development:

⁶This word, "hold back" (κατέχω), has various meanings, but here it has the idea of hindering the Antichrist's progress. The times when this restraining force is taken out of the way is not necessarily the same time the Antichrist will be revealed, rather the restraining force is taken out of the way for the purpose of revealing (εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι) the Antichrist.

"...out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and the east and toward the Beautiful Land" (8:9, NIV); "It prospered..." (8:12, NIV); "He will become very strong..." (8:24, NIV). It has been suggested that such a development could take place only within one establishment. That is, if the Antichrist does not move from one leader to another within the same establishment, the immense development demanded by the marks to the Antichrist could not be reached.

11. There is also an argument from history which would not seem to allow for movement from one person to another apart from one establishment. But such an argument would be circular at this time.⁷

12. But most convincing is the revealing of the identity of the Antichrist that is to take place. Both the grammar and the context of II Thessalonians 2:6-8 show that there will be only one revealing (or disclosure) of the Antichrist which will last until the Lord's coming: "And now you know what holds him back in order that he may be revealed at the proper time...And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will...destroy by the splendor of his coming."⁸ When this revealing takes place, the Antichrist can be known from that time on through the eyes of faith with certainty. If the Antichrist were to move randomly from person to person apart from one establishment, it seems to follow necessarily

⁷This argument is developed in par. 158.

⁸"Revealed" (2:6) is an aorist infinitive and therefore punctiliar; that is, a one-time event. This event will happen at "the proper time," not "times" or "from time to time." Also, the "lawless one" who is "revealed" is the same one who is to be destroyed at the Lord's coming.

that more than one revealing would then be necessary. And since Scripture allows for only one revealing, a random movement from person to person, or even from establishment to establishment, would not be allowed. Nevertheless, an article from Present Truth opts for this possibility: "As history moves on, the church is challenged to see the configuration of antichrist in his most current form of opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The antichrist beast of the Revelation has seven heads, which symbolize the different forms he has assumed in his opposition to God's truth from one age to another."⁹ The problem with such a view is that it has a tendency to mix "many antichrists" with "the Antichrist," which are clearly distinguished in I John 2:18. The result can be identifying the Antichrist with something that is not as definite as the marks demand, e.g., a certain philosophy, heresy, or simply de-emphasizing the central doctrine of justification in one's own life.¹⁰

13. (3) The next question to be answered is whether the Antichrist will take the form of one or many persons at the same time.¹¹ The majority of the passages speak of the Antichrist in the singular with such phrases as, "the man," "the lawless one," "he," "the liar," "this one," "the Antichrist," and others. However, in II John 7 (and possibly I John 4:3) there is a mixing of the plural and singular which would most literally give this translation:

⁹"Antichrist 1975," Present Truth, 4 (April 1975), 15.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 15-16, 19-20.

¹¹Scripture does distinguish between "many antichrist" and "the Antichrist" (I John 2:18). However, I am not speaking of these two classes, but only of the Antichrist.

"...many deceivers have gone out into the world... This (group of many deceivers) is the Deceiver and the Antichrist."¹² The many individual members of this group, unlike the succession described in the previous mark, all make up the Antichrist at the same time.¹³ Identifying the Antichrist with "many" who are active at the same time, does not seem to harmonize with those sections which imply a single person. Most articles and commentaries on this subject make no mention of the problem, or deal with it in such a way so that the details of the Greek are ignored.¹⁴

¹²The NIV translates οὗτος ἐστίν...: "any such man is..." They do essentially the same thing with the exact same Greek phrase in I John 2:22b ("Such a man is the Antichrist"). The words translated "any such man" and "such a man" are misleading because it leaves the statement somewhat indefinite, i.e., it could be this man or that man as long as he was "such a man." The Greek οὗτος, however, is very definite and can only refer to "this man" (compare with other usages of οὗτος). In order to translate it "such a man," the correlative pronoun τοῦ οὗτου would have been used.

¹³In II John 7 the Greek does not allow the "many deceivers" to follow one another in succession so that only one of the many deceivers is active at a time; rather they all seem to be active at more or less the same time. The Greek reads: ...πολλοὶ πλάνου ἐξῆλθον ἐς τὸν κόσμον... οὗτος ἐστίν ...ὁ ἀντίχριστος (literally: "...many deceivers went out into the world, ...this is...the Antichrist"). The verb ἐξῆλθον ("went out") is aorist, meaning that the many deceivers had already gone out prior to the writing of this epistle (dated sometime in the latter half of the first century). This would mean that there would not be enough time for deceivers to exist one at a time so that they could be classified as "many."

¹⁴Cf. I. H. Marshall, Lenski, Westcott, Ross.

14. Taking into account five facts already mentioned, one can come to a simple and probable harmony. First, on the basis of all the sections speaking of the Antichrist (with the exception of one and possibly two verses), one would come to the conclusion, and rightly so, that the Antichrist will exist in the form of one person at a time (II Thess. 2:3-9; I John 2:18,22; Daniel 7,8,9,11; Rev. 13,17). Second, according to II John 7, the Antichrist is described as a group of "many deceivers" prior to the time the epistle is written.¹⁵ Third, the Antichrist is described as "coming in the future" (I John 2:18; 4:3). Fourth, the Antichrist is described as having already come (II Thess. 2:7; I John 4:3, II John 7). Fifth, there will be a development of the Antichrist (II Thess. 2:6-7; Dan. 8:9,12,24). Putting them together in a sequence, the harmony would be described in this way: The Antichrist prior to the time of John's second epistle takes the form of a group of "many deceivers." There is a development and evolving of the Antichrist until it takes the form of one person, wielding to the full extent the marks of the Antichrist.

15. The sections on the Antichrist do not state exactly that it would be soon after the N.T. period since, according to the writings of John and especially Paul, Christians are instructed to be looking for the one-person form of the Antichrist, and not a group. If the Antichrist remained a group for centuries, it would be difficult for Christians to identify it because they would most naturally be

¹⁵The οἷτος most naturally and only can refer back to πλάνου ("many deceivers"). Attempts have been made to refer it to one person (e.g. by Hamann, Lenski, Marshall, Westcott, Ross, and others), but there is no one person in the context or epistle to whom it could refer. The same objection holds to the NIV translation (see footnote 12).

• looking for one individual, and Paul obviously intends his writings of the Antichrist to be used for the purpose of identification.

The Work and Teaching of the Antichrist

16. (4) He will be one who "...will sit in the sanctuary of God..." (II Thess. 2:4). Paul uses the word "sanctuary" (ναός) in two senses. First, he uses it to refer to the individual bodies of believers in which "...the Spirit of God dwells.." (I Cor. 3:16,17; 6:19,20; II Cor. 3:16). Second, he uses it to refer to the Church ('una sancta'): "...you are fellow-citizens with the saints and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord" (Eph. 2:19-21). The meaning, "heathen sanctuary," is not used by Paul, neither would it make any sense.¹⁶ So either the Antichrist takes up residence within the body of believers, which rightfully belongs to God; or he sets up his kingdom among or in the midst of believers. As for the first possibility, there is no evidence within the context that suggests such a spiritual indwelling. The context only speaks of the Antichrist performing external acts.

¹⁶As Lenski points out in his Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Col., to the Thess., to Tim., to Titus and Philemon (Columbus: Wartburg, 1946), p. 411: "The whole action would thus transpire in the world of paganism. And since there is a large number of pagan sanctuaries, the Antichrist would occupy only one of them and would dwindle down to one in the pagan pantheon." The following phrase in the verse also supports this--"showing himself to be God"--for he would certainly not be showing himself to be the God if he was in a heathen sanctuary, but only a god of the heathens.

17. There is one argument found against the second possibility that the Antichrist rules in the midst of believers. Leon Morris suggests that this concept would make the Church cease to be a Christian Church.¹⁷ But this argument assumes that the Antichrist would be a part of the temple, which of course could not be since it is genuine believers (those who do not oppose Christ) that are or make up the temple. The Antichrist is only said to be "in the temple," not a part of it. It is perhaps best to understand "in the temple" in the same sense that tares are among the wheat (Matt. 13:24-30); or better yet, in the sense that false prophets "have crept in unnoticed" among believers (Jude 4; cf. also Gal. 2:4). In this case the only difference would be that the false prophets (or antichrists) have done to a lesser extent what the Antichrist has done to the maximum among Christians or the Church.

18. (5) The Antichrist will be "demonstrating that he himself is God" which he will do by "opposing and exalting himself against everyone called God and against every object of religious worship" (II Thess. 2:4). Paul makes this statement as general and comprehensive as possible. Thus, the Antichrist will condemn the false gods of other religions, whether they be deified emperors and pharaohs, or Zeus, Allah, and Buddah. "He will exalt and magnify himself above every god...He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but exalt himself above them all" (Daniel 11:36,37, NIV).

19. "Every object of religious worship (σέβασμα) includes those things which are worshipped by every religion. In the Hellenistic culture this

¹⁷The New International Commentary on the N.T.: The First and Second Epistle to the Thessalonians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 223.

included idols, cults, gods, and the laws ordained by them.¹⁸ In other words, false gods are also contained within objects of religious worship. It is interesting to note that the Antichrist opposes and exalts himself over those things which are not to be worshipped, as does the one true God.

20. But most importantly, the Antichrist will oppose and exalt himself against the one true God and his word, which alone are to be worshipped. The text here in Thessalonians implies this for the simple fact that the one true God is among those who are "called God," and God's word is among those things which are called "objects of religious worship." Furthermore, the Antichrist would hardly be "demonstrating that he himself is God" unless he opposed and exalted himself against God. Daniel and Revelation clarify this very definitely: "He will speak against the Most High..." (Dan. 11:36, NIV); "He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and dwelling place..." (Rev. 13:6, NIV).

21. In view of the teaching that it is by the Word alone ('sola Scriptura') that God reveals himself, it follows that the Antichrist will either have to confound or destroy God's word. And if the Antichrist is to demonstrate himself to be God, he will have to come with a substitutionary (and false) revelation. That is, some other source besides Scripture will be set up along side of, above, or in place of Scripture as God's word. For all these reasons the Antichrist is called "the man of lawlessness."

¹⁸W. Günther, New International Dictionary of N.T. Theology, ed. Colin Brown, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), II, 92.

22. (6) More specifically, the Antichrist manifests its lawlessness in several ways. The one being most prominent is described in John's epistles: "Who is the Liar if not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist..." (John 2:22); "Every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not from God, and this is the spirit of the Antichrist" (1:2,3); "...the ones who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh; this is...the Antichrist" (II John 7).

23. There is no doubt that John is at least referring to a false view of the person of Christ. Cerinthus, who lived in the second half of the first century, promoted such a false teaching which Luther recognized: "Accordingly, John smites Cerinthus who was denying the divinity of the nature of Christ."¹⁹ And again: "That man, of course, is Cerinthus. And there are more, those who follow, in his footsteps. Christ is made up of the humanity and the divinity. Those who deny His humanity deny the whole Christ. Likewise those who deny His divinity."²⁰ Cerinthus believed that Jesus was the son of Joseph. The "Christ" descended upon Jesus at his baptism, but then departed from Jesus before his suffering and crucifixion. Hence, the personal union was denied. It is recorded by Irenaeus that John utterly opposed Cerinthus and would not even bathe at the same bathhouse in Ephesus with that "enemy of the truth" for fear that the roof might cave in.²¹

¹⁹Luther's Works: The Catholic Epistles, ed. J. Pelikan, Vol. 30 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1967), 221.

²⁰Luther's Works, 258.

²¹Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 3:3:4.

24. An important question that must be answered is what does it mean to say that one denies or does not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh? More specifically, can one who subscribes to the correct teaching on the person of Christ, but denies some other essential doctrine (e.g., the work of Christ), be labeled as one who denies Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, and hence the Antichrist?²²

25. A closer look at the Greek will help. The two passages which speak of Christ coming in the flesh are I John 4:2 and II John 7. Both words translated "coming" are participles.²³ This construction with the participle gives a different thought from that of an indicative or infinitive. "It does not express the acknowledgment of the truth of the fact but the acknowledgment of One in whom this fact is fulfilled and of whom it is predicated."²⁴ In other words, the emphasis is on the one who has come in the flesh more so than on the means of denying that one.

²²This question arises over the fact that the Roman Catholic Church basically holds to the same position as the Confessional Lutheran Church on the doctrine of the person of Christ, but strongly disagrees on the doctrine of the work of Christ.

²³The only essential difference between these two verses is that I John 4:2 uses a perfect tense, ἐληλυθότα, where II John 7 uses a present tense, ἐρχόμενον. The former stresses the past, present, and future fact of the incarnation, while the latter emphasizes the progressive nature of coming in the flesh.

²⁴B. F. Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 141.

26. The context of I John 4:3 also confirms that it is the person of Christ and his work which are denied, and not just one statement about the person: "...and every spirit which does not confess Jesus, is not from God." I John 2:22 also supports this: "...the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ: this is the Antichrist..." Here it cannot be just a specific statement about the person of Christ that is denied, but also the work of Christ; for to be the Christ means that he is the one who has saved the world from their sins, not only by being true God and true man, but also by his active and passive obedience. With this in mind, the phrase "Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh" can be seen altogether as a compound direct object of "the ones who deny" (II John 7), and of "every spirit which does not confess" (I John 4:2). That is, they (the Antichrist) do not confess him, whose nature and work is described by the phrase, "Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh."²⁵

27. To put this back in the context of John's message for that day, it can be said that Cerinthus chose one mode of not confessing Christ, namely, by denying that Christ was born, died, and lives again in the flesh. This mode of denying Christ was the most prominent one in the history of the early Church. If, for example, the most prominent mode at that time would have been denying the sinless nature of Christ, the verse would have read, "the one who denies Jesus Christ as coming sinless is the Antichrist."

28. So it is maintained that one denies "Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh" because Christ himself is rejected. At this point, however, the objection can be made: why is it not the other

²⁵Westcott, 141.

way around? That is, perhaps one denies Christ himself because "Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh" is rejected. Or more simply, just because one "denies" the work of Christ does not mean that he "denies" the person of Christ; and hence, even if one "denies" the work of Christ but not the person of Christ, he could not be the Antichrist since the person of Christ is still "confessed." This would be true only if the words "confess" and "deny" deal with mere outward confessions and are not in any way synonymous with saving faith and unbelief, respectively. If this is assumed however, one runs into a sticky problem. Since I John 4:2,3 classifies those who "confess Jesus as having come in the flesh" as "from God," this would mean that even those who deny the work of Christ and the formula "by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith" could be from God as long as they "confess" Christ coming in the flesh. Everybody from hypocrites to the authors of the Council of Trent could be classified as "from God."

29. Furthermore, the work and person of Christ are so intimately connected that it would be impossible to deny one without denying the other. Christ came in the flesh for one reason only: to be the complete sacrifice for the sins of the world. If children were seen dressed up in costumes and going from door to door on October 31, it would only be for one purpose: for tricks or treats. One could not reasonably deny the purpose for which they came and at the same time confess that they were dressed up on October 31. If so, they would be saying something like this: "I believe they came to my door dressed up in costumes with bags full of candy on Halloween night, but I don't believe they were here for tricks or treats." Absurd. If one confesses Christ came in the flesh, one is confessing his work. Otherwise, it is a case of mistaken identity.

30. I. H. Marshall captures and explains John's thinking:

To some extent confessions are formulated in the light of the need to exclude particular errors, and existing forms of words, true in themselves, may need to be reformulated more precisely in order to bring out the full intended meaning and to guard against their being used in a sense which is felt to be inadequate or even incompatible with their intended meaning. The full implications of "Jesus is Lord" are incompatible with many heresies, both ancient and modern. The framers of this formula would not have accepted "I regard Jesus as my ultimate concern (but not as having the metaphysical status of 'Son of God')" as correct exegesis of the formula; but in order to exclude such wilful twisting of the meaning it may be necessary to express the confession that John's opponents thought that they could confess Jesus as Lord but without accepting the fact that he was the Word incarnate, and therefore John had to stress that the confession be made in this particular form.²⁶

31. The Antichrist must, therefore, lead his followers away from the belief that the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world is the vicarious atonement. The result is that this burden of sin is ultimately cast back on to the shoulders of those who follow the Antichrist. As Daniel 8:11, 12 puts it: "It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of the sanctuary was thrown down...and it will fling truth to the ground..." (NASB).

²⁶The Epistles of John, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 206.

32. (7) Another specific mark of its lawlessness is its use of power: "...whose coming is in accord with the work of Satan, in all power and signs and miracles of falsehood..." (II Thess. 2:9).²⁷ All three of these words are used in Christ's miracles (John 4:48; Luke 5:17). The first term (συνάμειν) denotes the supernatural force which creates the miraculous works. The second term (σημεῖους) is a miraculous sign pointing out that the worker of these miracles is supposedly from God, just as the miracles of Christ were "signs" that he was the Son of God. The third word (τέρασιν) denotes the awesome unexplainable nature of such works.²⁸

²⁷The last word of the verse, ψεύδος ("of falsehood"), is probably best taken with all three nouns, "power and signs and wonders." There are two possible understandings of this verse. One is that the power, signs, and wonders are not real but fake, counterfeit, for the deception of the senses. Or, they are real, not deceiving the senses, and are "from falsehood" or "for falsehood." The second is preferred for two reasons. There are many places in the Bible where Satan and his instruments are capable of super-natural events. Also, parallel passages in Revelation (13:2,13,14) support the reality of such miracles: "...and the dragon gave him (the beast) his power...And he (the beast) performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform..." There is probably no difference in effect between the two possibilities since the people are deceived by what they think they see whether it is reality or not.

²⁸Leon Morris, 231.

33. (8) The purpose of the Antichrist's work is to cause a great apostasy and deceive those who are perishing: "...it (the Day of the Lord) will not come unless the apostasy comes first" (II Thess. 2:3a). The rest of this verse and the following seven verses speak of the Antichrist. Some suggest that the apostasy will come apart from the work of the Antichrist. Even though the verse by itself would permit this, the context following and parallel passages only allow for the accomplishment of the apostasy by the work of the Antichrist. First, in Daniel it is written: "And he...will wear down the saints of the Highest One...and they will be given into his hand for a time..." (7:25, NASB; cf. also 8:24b; 9:27a). These verses were fulfilled quite obviously by the type Antiochus Epiphanes as recorded in I Maccabees:

34. In those days there came forth out of Israel transgressors of the law who persuaded many, saying, let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles that are round about us...And they made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the Gentiles, and sold themselves to do evil...And many of Israel consented to his Antiochus Epiphanes worship, and sacrificed the idols, and profaned the sabbath...And the king's officers, that were enforcing the apostasy, came into the city of Modein to sacrifice. (1:11, 15, 43; 2:15)

35. Even more explicit is Revelation: "And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them..." (13:7, NASB).

36. Apostasy in the Bible refers only to a falling away from the true faith (cf. Acts 21:21). With the article it designates a falling away that is the only one of its kind. And since the existence of the Antichrist is of great duration, it cannot be said that the apostasy is limited to a very short

period of time. It seems more likely that he would be involved in such a work throughout his career, from beginning to end, considering his "power" and the very nature of his work.

37. Along with the apostasy comes a deception of those who are perishing. "...whose coming is in accord with the work of Satan, in all power and signs and miracles of falsehood, and with all the deception of unrighteousness for those who are perishing..." (II Thess. 2:9,10). Those who are perishing include those who have fallen away. He will gather a following (Rev. 13:3b) along the broad way and attempt to keep them there by his power and deception. "And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform..." (Rev. 13:14, NASB).

The Timing of Certain Events

38. (9) The beginning of the Antichrist has already been touched upon briefly and there is not much more to say about it. According to II Thessalonians 2:7, I John 4:3b, and II John 7 the Antichrist existed in one way or another at the time of these epistles.²⁹ But his identity had not yet been revealed.

39. (10) The Antichrist will be "revealed at the proper time" (II Thessalonians 2:6b). To be revealed (ἀποκαλυφθῆναι) does not necessarily mean that he will be known or obvious to all. In almost every case when this verb is used in a theological sense it is preceded and/or accompanied by faith, so that it is not the senses that by themselves perceive this revealing, but rather faith based on

²⁹II Thessalonians was written about 52 A.D.

the words of Scripture.³⁰ And the only words in the Scriptures on which to base one's faith when it comes to the Antichrist are those marks mentioned in these epistles. When faith accepts the marks of Scripture, it makes use of its senses to identify the Antichrist. This is analagous to the situation when John the Baptist asked how he could be sure that Jesus was the Christ. Jesus answered by saying he was the one who fulfilled the prophetic words concerning the Christ which John already believed; therefore, he was to be believed on as the Christ (Matt. 11:2-6).

40. The Antichrist then will not be revealed necessarily in some extraordinary way so that it will be absolutely clear to every single Christian. Rather, the revealing will be perceived by Christians who believe the marks, as the Antichrist fulfills the marks, no matter how subtle they are.

41. The timing of this revealing follows after, and is caused by, the removal of a restraining force. "And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed..." (II Thessalonians 2:6,7,8b, NASB).

42. The only hint in the text as to who the restrainer could be is the gender of the two participles, κατέχων (neuter) and κατέχων (masculine). Lenski suggests this concerning the two different genders: "This thing and this one are evidently a unit, a certain power (thus neuter), a certain person exercising this power (thus masculine)...the collective or general sense of the

³⁰Cf. I Cor. 2:10; Lk. 10:21, Jn. 12:38; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:23, I Pet. 1:12.

neuter (here το κατέχον) refers to all the elements or powers in the hands of the person involved who are here named by the masculine ὁ κατέχων."³¹

43. The traditional interpretation of this restraining force has been the Roman Empire with its rulers. Tertullian promoted this early in the third century. Other possibilities which continue to be less popular are the Holy Spirit, an angel, Satan or a worker of his, and even Paul himself. These, however, do not as easily allow for the two different genders.

44. (11) The end of the Antichrist corresponds to Christ's second coming: "And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming" (II Thess. 2:8, NASB). This mark is probably the only one which can convince everyone who the Antichrist really is. Unfortunately, for many, it will be too late by then. This verse should not lead one to believe that the "revealing" and "slaying" of the Antichrist take place at approximately the same time. There are no dates given, but only a succession. The interval of time between the revealing and the end is wanting.

³¹Lenski, 418-419

An Epitome of the Marks:³²

45. (1) "The Antichrist" is opposed to and replaces Christ.
46. (2) He has a human form (probably a succession of men in one establishment) which will have only one revealing lasting until the second coming.
47. (3) There is a development and evolution of the Antichrist until it takes the form of one person, wielding to the full extent the marks of the Antichrist.
48. (4) He is among or in the midst of believers.
49. (5) He demonstrates that he is God by opposing and exalting himself against every false god and the true God, and against objects of religious worship. This necessitates confounding and/or replacing the Bible with another so-called revelation.
50. (6) More specifically, he denies that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior from sin. This involves in one way or another the denial of the central teaching of justification by faith.
51. (7) He works with power, signs, and miracles of falsehood.

³²The marks listed in this paper are not necessarily a complete list of all the marks, nor is the classification the only correct one. The list and classification are, however, practical and accurate in the opinion of this writer. Also, one does not necessarily have to be aware of every single mark listed in this paper in order to make a positive identification of the Antichrist. E.g., one could probably identify the Antichrist with a knowledge of marks four through six.

52. (8) His purpose is to cause a great apostasy and to deceive those who are perishing. This involves a large following.
53. (9) The Antichrist had its beginning during the New Testament period.
54. (10) He has been revealed (to those who believe and apply the marks in the Bible to him) after the restrainer is taken out of the way.
55. (11) He will be destroyed on the last day.

II. The Lutheran Application

56. Assuming that the beliefs of Lutherans are to be in agreement with the Lutheran Confessions, the simple question has to be asked: does The Book of Concord make any specific claims concerning the identity of the Antichrist? Does it specifically say that the Papacy is the Antichrist?
57. Starting with the Apology we have these implications: "He (the Pope) must have plenary power in both the temporal and spiritual realm. Now, this definition of the papal kingdom rather than of the church of Christ has as its authors not only the canonists but also Dan. 11:36-39."³³ The section referred to in Daniel is probably the most striking section concerning the Antichrist in Daniel.
58. Several other places in the Apology also make reference to the Papacy and the Antichrist. Article XXIV says:

³³Theodore T. Tappert, ed. and trans., The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 172 (VII & VIII:23,24).

Candles, golden vessels, and ornaments like that are fitting, but they are not the peculiar adornment of the church. If our opponents center their worship in such things rather than in the proclamation of the Gospel, in faith, and in its struggles, they should be classified with those whom Daniel (11:28) describes as worshipping their God with gold and silver.³⁴

So in the papal realm the worship of Baal clings--namely, the abuse of the Mass, which they apply in order by it to merit the forgiveness of guilt and punishment for the wicked. And it seems that this worship of Baal will endure together with the papal realm until Christ comes to judge and by the glory of his coming destroys the kingdom of the Antichrist.³⁵

59. And Article XV says this:

If our opponents defend the notion that these human rites merit justification, grace and the forgiveness of sins, they are establishing the kingdom of the Antichrist. The kingdom of the Antichrist is a new kind of worship of God, devised by human authority in opposition to Christ...So the papacy will also be a part of the kingdom of Antichrist if it maintains that human rites justify...In his eleventh chapter Daniel says that the invention of human rites will be the very form and constitution of the kingdom of Antichrist.³⁶

³⁴Tappert, 259 (XXIV:51).

³⁵Tappert, 269 (XXIV:98).

³⁶Tappert, 217 (XV:18).

60. These quotations from the Apology stop just short of directly calling the Papacy the Antichrist. Such words as "if" and "seems" indicate that perhaps the author and signers of the Apology were waiting to see how the Papacy would react and thus either confirm or deny their suspicions that the Papacy was the Antichrist.

61. The Apology was followed by the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope. Luther, author of the first of these, and lacking the irenic nature of Melancthon, spares no punches. Starting with Part II, Article II, Luther writes: "The invocation of saints is also one of the abuses of the Antichrist."³⁷ This is followed by an even more direct attack in Article IV:

62. This is a powerful demonstration that the pope is the real Antichrist who has raised himself over and set himself against Christ, for the pope will not permit Christians to be saved except by his own power, which amounts to nothing since it is neither established nor commanded by God. Neither the Turks nor the Tartars, great as is their enmity against Christians, do this...

Finally, it is most diabolical for the Pope to promote his lies about Masses, purgatory, monastic life, and human works and services (which are the essence of the papacy) in contradiction to God, and to damn, slay, and plague all Christians who do not exalt and honor these abominations of his above all things. Accordingly, just as we cannot adore the devil himself as our lord our God, so we cannot suffer his apostle, the pope or Antichrist, to govern us as our head or lord,

³⁷Tappert, 297 (II:II:25).

for deception, murder, and the eternal destruction of body and soul are characteristic of his papal government...³⁸

63. Melanchthon, though not as direct as Luther, gets the same message across in The Treatise:

But it is manifest that the Roman pontiffs and their adherents defend godless doctrines and godless forms of worship, and it is plain that the marks of the Antichrist coincide with those of the pope's kingdom and his followers. For in describing the Antichrist in his letter to the Thessalonians Paul calls him "an adversary of Christ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God" (II Thess. 2:3,4). He speaks therefore of one who rules in the church and not of the kings of nations, and he calls that man "an adversary of Christ" because he will devise doctrines which conflict with the Gospel and will arrogate to himself divine authority.³⁹

64. Melanchthon continues by saying Christians "ought rather abandon the pope and his adherents as the kingdom of the Antichrist."⁴⁰ He then concludes the section on the Pope with this: "Accordingly, even if the bishop of Rome did possess the primacy by divine right, he should not be obeyed inasmuch as he defends impious forms of worship and doctrines which are in conflict with the Gospel. On the contrary, it is necessary to resist him as Antichrist."⁴¹

³⁸Tappert, 300, 301 (II:IV:10,11,14).

³⁹Tappert, 327 (39).

⁴⁰Tappert, 327 (41).

⁴¹Tappert, 330 (57).

65. The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord also substantiates its conviction that the Papacy is the Antichrist by quoting two of the above sections from the Smalcald Articles in an approving manner.⁴² Thus, half of the Confessions in The Book of Concord confirm that it is a truly Lutheran belief that the Papacy is the Antichrist.

66. The Lutheran Confessions do not attempt to prove systematically that all the marks outlined in this paper fit the Papacy. Rather they stress almost exclusively what are the overriding marks in II Thessalonians and John's epistles, those marks listed as numbers five and six in this paper, viz. that the Antichrist will demonstrate that he is God by opposing and exalting himself against all gods, the true God and objects of religious worship which includes replacing and/or confounding the Bible; and he will deny the central teaching of justification by faith. The following quotes are from the Confessions which argue that the Papacy fulfills these marks.

67. Perhaps our opponents demand some such definition of the church as the following. It is the supreme outward monarchy of the whole world in which the Roman pontiff must have unlimited power beyond question or censure. He may establish articles of faith, abolish the Scriptures by his leave, institute devotions and sacrifices, enact whatever laws he pleases, excuse and exempt men from any laws, divine, canonical, or civil, as he wishes. From him the emperor and all kings have received their power and right to rule, and this at Christ's command; for as the Father subjected everything to him, so now this right has been transferred to the pope.

⁴²Tappert, 614, 615 (X:21,22).

Therefore the pope must be the lord of the whole world, of all the kingdoms of the world, and of all public and private affairs. He must have plenary power in both the temporal and the spiritual realm, both swords, the temporal and the spiritual.⁴³

68. They also quote the Epistle to the Hebrews (5:1), "Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." From this they conclude that since the New Testament has priests and high priests, it must also have some sort of sacrifice for sins. This is a very convincing argument for the ignorant, especially when the pomp of the Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices is spread before their eyes. The analogy deceives them, and they think that we should have some ceremony or sacrifice for sins, just as the Old Testament did. The services of the Mass and the rest of the papal order are nothing but a misinterpretation of the Levitical order.

Though the main proofs for our position are in the Epistle to the Hebrews, our opponents twist passages from this very epistle against us--like this one, which says that "every high priest is appointed to offer sacrifices for sins." The Scripture itself adds immediately that Christ is the high priest.⁴⁴

69. The invocation of saints is also one of the abuses of the Antichrist. It is in conflict with the first, chief article and

⁴³Tappert, 172 (Ap. VII & VIII:23).

⁴⁴Tappert, 259 (Ap. XXIV:52,53).

undermines knowledge of Christ. It is neither commanded nor recommended, nor does it have any precedent in the Scriptures.⁴⁵

70. This is a powerful demonstration that the pope is the real Antichrist who has raised himself over and set himself against Christ, for the pope will not permit Christians to be saved except by his own power, which amounts to nothing since it is neither established nor commanded by God. This is actually what St. Paul calls exalting oneself over and against God. Neither the Turks nor the Tartars, great as is their enmity against Christians, do this; those who desire to do so they allow to believe in Christ, and they receive bodily tribute and obedience from Christians... He had to set himself up as equal to and above Christ and to proclaim himself the head, and then the lord of the church, and finally of the whole world. He went so far as to claim to be an earthly god and even presumed to issue orders to the angels in heaven.⁴⁶

A footnote in Tappert attributes claims to being an earthly god to the writings of Augustinus de Ancona (d. 1328), Zenzelinus de Cassanis (d. ca. 1350), and Francisus de Zabarellis (d. 1417).

71. Finally, it is most diabolical for the pope to promote his lies about Masses, purgatory, monastic life, and human works and services (which are the essence of the papacy) in contradiction to God, and to damn, slay,

⁴⁵Tappert, 297, (S.A. II:III:25).

⁴⁶Tappert, 200 (S.A. II:IV:10,11,13).

and plague all Christians who do not exalt and honor these abominations of his above all things.⁴⁷

72. On the other hand, the doctrine of the pope conflicts in many ways with the Gospel, and the pope arrogates himself a three-fold divine authority. First, because he assumes for himself the right to change the doctrine of Christ and the worship instituted by God, and he wishes to have his own doctrine and worship observed as divine. Second, because he assumes for himself not only the power to loose and bind in this life but also the jurisdiction over souls after this life. Third, because the pope is unwilling to be judged by the church or by anybody and exalts his authority above the decisions of the councils and the whole church. Such unwillingness to be judged by the church or by anybody is to make himself out to be God.⁴⁸

73. They have obscured the teaching concerning sin and have invented a tradition concerning the enumeration of sins which has produced many errors and introduced despair. They have also invented satisfactions, by means of which they have further obscured the benefit of Christ. Out of these arose indulgences, which are nothing but lies devised for the sake of gain. Then there is the invocation of saints--how many abuses and what horrible idolatry it has produced! How many profigate acts have sprung from the tradition

⁴⁷Tappert, 301 (S.A. II:IV: 14).

⁴⁸Tappert, 327 (Treatise 40).

of celibacy! With what darkness has the teaching about vows covered the Gospel! Here they have feigned that vows produce righteousness before God and merit forgiveness of sins. Thus they have transferred merit from Christ to human traditions and have utterly extinguished the teaching concerning faith.⁴⁹

74. The Roman bishop arrogates to himself the claim that he is by divine right above all bishops and pastors. Then he adds that by divine right he possesses both swords, that is, the authority to bestow and transfer kingdoms. Finally, he declares that it is necessary for salvation to believe these things, and for such reasons the bishop of Rome calls himself the vicar of Christ on earth.⁵⁰

75. Wherefore the constitution of Boniface VIII, Distinction 22 of chapter "Omnes," and other similar statements which claim that the pope is by divine right lord of the kingdoms of the world are false and impious. This notion has caused horrible darkness to descend over the church, and afterwards great disturbances to arise in Europe. The ministry of the Gospel was neglected. Knowledge of faith and of a spiritual kingdom was extinguished. Christian righteousness was thought to be that external government which the pope had set up.⁵¹

⁴⁹Tappert, 328 (Treatise 45-48).

⁵⁰Tappert, 320 (Treatise 1-3).

⁵¹Tappert, 325 (Treatise 33,34).

76. The other marks are assumed, not mentioned, or briefly touched upon. For example, the second mark, that the Antichrist will take human form, is more than likely assumed because it is so plain that this is the case from Scripture. In one section, *The Treatise*, referring to II Thessalonians 2:3,4 shows that a mark is fulfilled because of where the Pope is situated: "He (Paul) speaks therefore of one who rules in the church and not of the kings of nations..."⁵² The eighth mark (the purpose of the Antichrist being to cause apostasy and to deceive those who are perishing) is implicit in the other marks mentioned except for one reference made to it in *The Treatise*: "...for when proper judicial process has been taken away the churches are not able to remove impious teachings and impious forms of worship, and countless souls are lost generation to generation."⁵³

77. Francis Pieper's Christian Dogmatics is one of the most highly respected dogmatical works among orthodox Lutherans and should therefore be dealt with concerning the topic of the Antichrist (III, pp. 462-469).⁵⁴ It is similar to the Confessions in its emphasis, but at the same time it differs from the Confessions in its approach, being somewhat more systematic. Pieper starts out by listing five marks: 1) the Antichrist will cause the apostasy from the Christian religion; 2) he has his seat in the Christian Church; 3) he acts as if he were God himself and claims to be superior to all authorities in the world; 4) though not Satan himself, his coming is after the working of Satan

⁵²Tappert, 327 (39).

⁵³Tappert, 329 (51).

⁵⁴(St. Louis: Concordia, 1953).

"as his work is built and backed by all manner of lying powers and signs and wonders;" 5) the Anti-christ will remain until Judgment Day.⁵⁵

78. Next Pieper shows how the Papacy fulfills these marks. 1) "In the Papacy we have the most pronounced and greatest imaginable 'falling away' from the Christian religion."⁵⁶ Justification by faith is anathematized and the "entire machinery" of the Papal rule is geared against this doctrine. Those who came to faith within the Catholic Church, e.g., through infant baptism, are induced to forsake Christ and trust their own works. 2) The Papacy is found within the Christian Church since within the domain of the Papacy are many children regenerated in Baptism and adults who believe in spite of the "seductive environment."⁵⁷ 3) The Pope insists that he is supreme in both realms, spiritual and temporal. He alters God's Word, refuses to be judged by anyone, and asserts his infallibility. 4) "It is likewise common knowledge that the Papacy, past and present, employs all manner of lying powers, signs, and wonders to bolster its rule."⁵⁸ (Pieper adds no further support to this mark except some brief comments in a footnote). 5) The Papacy exists now as it has always.⁵⁹

⁵⁵Pieper, 463-464.

⁵⁶Pieper, 465.

⁵⁷Pieper, 465.

⁵⁸Pieper, 465-466.

⁵⁹Pieper seems to be simply saying that he does not foresee any possibility of change within the structure and teachings of the Papacy, and therefore it will continue as the Antichrist.

79. Pieper closes his section on the Antichrist by answering four objections to the Lutheran application.
80. "1. It has been argued that the Antichrist prophesied in II Thessalonians 2 is a single person, one individual,"⁶⁰ thus not allowing for a succession of Popes. Pieper answers this by pointing out that the life span of the Antichrist exceeds any imaginable human life span, and that the great apostasy performed by the Antichrist also suggests a longer period of time than one human life span.
81. "2.this teaching does not rest on Scripture, but on history and that one, accordingly, cannot be divinely assured of having the right answer."⁶¹ But again Pieper correctly points out that the same objection would then have to be made concerning Christ himself, for the Jews of Jesus' day had to compare the words and work of Christ with the predictions of Scripture in order to know that he was the Christ.
82. "3. It has been argued that the Papacy still confesses 'fundamental articles' of the Christian faith, such as the article of the Trinity and the theanthropic Person of Christ." Pieper answers: "Without the article of justification all other doctrines are empty husks."⁶²
83. "4. Some say that there have been several personally honorable, even 'pious' Popes."⁶³

⁶⁰Pieper, 466.

⁶¹Pieper, 467.

⁶²Pieper, 468.

⁶³Pieper, 468.

Such an objection, remarks Pieper, misses the point that even 'pious' Popes operate the machinery that removes Christ and his work from Christianity.

84. Pieper, although correct in his arguments and conclusion, perhaps has several shortcomings. When giving support for the accusation that the Pope employs all manner of lying powers, signs, and wonders, Pieper comments that such things are "common knowledge." He points out in a footnote that this "common knowledge" is the tremendous power invested in the office of the Papacy;⁶⁴ he barely mentions "signs and wonders." It is true that the immense power of the Papacy points to some supernatural origin, but the three words together, "power, signs, and wonders," direct the believer mainly to the supernatural miracles performed by the Antichrist, just as the same words were references to the miracles of Christ (see par. 32). Such miracles may have been "common knowledge" to many years ago, but it seems that such events are not well known among people today. For this reason, more thorough support is needed for this mark.

85. Pieper also seems to be too brief when answering the third objection (see above). Even though it is true that "all other doctrines are empty husks" without the article of justification, it can be rather troubling for a Lutheran to know that the Papacy acknowledges the doctrine of the theanthropic Person of Christ and then read in II John 7 that the Antichrist is one who does "not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh." Without a more thorough explanation of II John 7 and the other verses which suggest the same, one could quite easily conclude that the Pope is not the Antichrist.

⁶⁴Pieper, 466 (footnote 34): "Luther is right in pointing out that the power exercised by the Papacy can be accounted for only by its diabolical origin."

86. There is a section in which Pieper perhaps goes too far, even farther than the Confessions: "All the marks enumerated in II Thessalonians 2 fit all Popes."⁶⁵ Whether this is true or not is difficult to ascertain. The Smalcald Articles describe what may be an exception: "When writing to the patriarch of Alexandria, Gregory objected to having himself designated as universal bishop. And in the records he states that at the Council of Chalcedon the primacy was offered to the Bishop of Rome but he did not accept it."⁶⁶ Gregory even went as far as to say, "'Whoever calls himself Universal Bishop, in his presumption is a forerunner of Antichrist.'⁶⁷ It should be pointed out that Gregory may not have practiced what he preached (see par. 124). But even if it is true that some of the earlier popes did not manifest all the marks of the Antichrist, that is not to say that they were not the Antichrist since it could be argued that the Antichrist was still in an age of development.

87. One of the more lengthy Lutheran articles on the Antichrist is by Theodore Hoyer entitled "The Papacy" (Abiding Word, vol. II, pp. 709-766). It was written in a period when the Missouri Synod was experiencing internal strife over several doctrines, one of which included the doctrine of the Antichrist. Hoyer, arguing from three different perspectives, holds to the orthodox Lutheran

⁶⁵Pieper, 468.

⁶⁶Tappert, 323 (Treatise 19).

⁶⁷Quoted by Theo. Hoyer, "The Papacy," in The Abiding Word, ed. Theo. Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia, 1947), II, 723.

position. First, he discusses the history of the Papacy, showing the continual development of the primacy of the Popes from the first century on up to the 15th century. Next he presents Rome's teaching on the Papacy, revealing their faulty exegesis of Scripture for the primacy of Peter and their flimsy and many times fictional historical proofs that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of the first Pope, Peter. Finally, he demonstrates that the Pope is the Antichrist by fitting different aspects of the Papal history into several marks of the Antichrist.

88. But here, in his last part, Hoyer basically follows and expands Pieper's outline, and in so doing displays some of the shortcomings shown by Pieper. He does not go into enough depth when discussing the mark mentioned in II John 7; neither does he discuss the "power, signs, and wonders" any differently or to any greater extent than does Pieper. Hoyer does however disagree with Pieper's remark that "all marks fit all popes." Hoyer says, "In this series of persons we find all the marks which Scripture ascribes to the Antichrist, even though we do not find all the marks which Scripture ascribes to Antichrist in every individual of the series."⁶⁸

89. A somewhat controversial paper was written by Henry Hamann for the Concordia Theological Monthly.⁶⁹ After describing various marks of the

⁶⁸Hoyer, 764.

⁶⁹Henry Hamann, "A Brief Exegesis of II Thess. 2:1-12 with Guidelines for the Application of the Prophecy Contained Therein," CTM 24 (1953), 418-433.

Antichrist and discussing guidelines for making an application he makes several conclusions about the Lutheran application. He describes, for example, the two "difficulties" with the Lutheran application:

90. Does the Pope deny the Son, more particularly, that the Son has come into the flesh? Is the usual explanation, that the Pope through the anathematization of the doctrine of justification by faith virtually denies Christ's coming into the flesh--does this explanation do justice to the words of St. John?

Do the claims of the Roman Pontiffs actually amount to an exalting of themselves over everything that is called God and is worshipped?⁷⁰

The assertion that these are difficulties is the result of faulty exegesis on the part of Hamann. This will be seen more clearly in the next section.

91. At the same time, however, Hamann subscribes to the Lutheran position:

However, we also recognize the fact that to make the identification Pope-Antichrist today is to make an essentially new judgment. We make this identification today because we see the essential marks of Antichrist most clearly in the Papacy...⁷¹

92. The problem with such a statement can be seen in the words "most clearly." By making this identification Hamann is implying that the Antichrist has been revealed. But, the identification of the Antichrist since the time it was revealed (II Thess. 2:6-8) is not to be one of relativity: it is not a

⁷⁰Hamann, 432.

⁷¹Hamann, 432.

matter of who or what comes closest to fulfilling the marks. If one does not fit all the marks after the revealing, then one is not the Antichrist. If Jesus only "most clearly" fulfilled the essential marks of the Messiah he could not very safely or assuredly be called the Christ. If the Papacy fulfills all the marks, it is the Antichrist; if it does not because of some "difficulty," it is not the Antichrist.

93. There is one other shortcoming not yet mentioned which is found in the majority of Lutheran writings on the subject of the Antichrist, including the Lutheran Confessions. It is a shortcoming only because such writings are not capable of foreseeing the changes that have occurred within the Roman Church within the last twenty-five years. Both Pieper and Hoyer quote Luther as saying that nobody loves the Papacy, not even its own adherents, but all fear it.⁷² Such, of course, is the case if one realizes the burdens placed on souls by the doctrines of the Papacy in order to obtain eternal life. But today, in many places, there seems to be a pervading love for the Pope which crosses many denominational lines.

94. There are several reasons for the Pope's new appeal to the masses. One is that the Roman Church, beginning with Vatican II, opened its doors to those outside the Roman Church, going so far as to call non-Catholic Christians "brethren" and accept them into their fellowship.⁷³ It even provides a means of salvation for those who continue

⁷²Hoyer, 759-760. Pieper, 466.

⁷³John A. Hardon, S.J., The Catholic Catechism (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1975), 242.

to remain outside the pale of Christendom.⁷⁴ Secondly, there has been a de-emphasis on stressing doctrine.⁷⁵ There will not be found any "anathemas" of other doctrines in the documents of Vatican II as had been the case in other councils. And perhaps most importantly, many liberal Christians who deny "the Word alone, grace alone, faith alone" (e.g., universalists) and who have no concept of what the gospel really is (e.g., those who preach a social gospel or a "liberation theology") have interpreted the above two changes in light of their own theology; hence, they see the Pope as the one to carry out their theology and no longer as one who creates burdens for souls.⁷⁶ Whether such a change within the Catholic Church constitutes an essential change so that the Lutheran application of the Antichrist no longer applies to the Papacy is another question which will be taken up in the next section.

⁷⁴The Documents of Vatican II, gen. ed., Walter M. Abbott; tr. ed., The Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph Gallagher (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 35.

⁷⁵This can be seen in many Roman Catholic books with the "Imprimatur" and the "Nihil Obstat"; e.g., God's Saving Presence, ed., Rev. Gerard P. Weber and others (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1966) and Keeping Up With Our Catholic Faith, ed., Jack Wintz, O.F.M., (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1975).

⁷⁶A good example of this is a man who strongly disagreed with me over the doctrine of "faith alone" and who refused to believe that "good neighbor Sam" who was not a Christian would go to hell. After looking into the Catholic Church, he told me he had decided to join it because "the Catholic Church teaches what I want to hear."

III. Objections to the Lutheran Application

95. Of course, many arguments have been voiced in opposition to the Lutheran belief that the Papacy is the Antichrist; some worthy of consideration, some not. The arguments presented in this section are considered by this writer to be the ones which carry the most weight and would most easily cause doubts over the Lutheran application. Some of the objections presented here have been touched upon in the first two sections. There are also some objections which will not be listed here which might be considered worthy of discussion. These, however, are easily answered by the plain words of the marks of the Antichrist and probably have been dealt with and settled in the first two sections of this paper.

96. (1) Revelation 13:7b, 8 reads, "And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life..." (NIV). Therefore, it is said, since every tribe, people and nation are not under the authority of the Pope, and since there are many non-Christians who do not worship the Pope, the Pope cannot be this beast (the Antichrist) described here in Revelation 13.

97. But several things have to be kept in mind when drawing such conclusions from these two verses. First, as mentioned before, the book of Revelation is almost entirely a prophecy of future events expressed in figurative language. To draw doctrine from such a source without any support from any other book would be dangerous.

98. Furthermore, there seems to be good evidence that the words "every" and "all" should be taken hyperbolically. If the large number in Revelation

(e.g., "144,000," "1,600 stadia," "1,260 days," "a third of the stars") are to be taken figuratively, then the words "all" and "every," which also represent large numbers would very likely be taken figuratively. Also, the phrase "every people, tribe, language and nation" is found in 11:9. Here the passage reads, "For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies /the bodies of the two witnesses/..." To take "every" literally in this verse would present problems involving time and space, hence it is best to take it hyperbolically. There is no evidence that the same phrase in 13:7 has taken on a different meaning than the hyperbolic one in 11:9.

99. But most important is the fact that no such all inclusive "worship" and "authority" has taken place since the beginning of the Antichrist. That is, if the verses in Revelation 13 are to be taken literally there should be a totalitarian rule over every single country, tribe, etc. by the Antichrist, and there should be a worship of the Antichrist by one hundred percent of the people in the world who are not the elect. These results would have been more than obvious if "every" and "all" were to be taken literally.

100. (2) Since the Papacy confesses that Christ is true God and true man, and since I and II John plainly state that the Antichrist will not confess the same, it cannot be said that the Papacy is the Antichrist.

101. A short summary of the sixth mark (par. 22ff.) will suffice to answer this objection. The structure of the Greek in both verses (I John 4:2; II John 7) does not express the means of denying Christ (i.e., denying the fact that Christ has come in the flesh), but rather expresses denying Christ in whom this fact is fulfilled.

102. Furthermore, verses such as I John 2:22 confirm that it is a denial of the work of Christ that is involved: "...the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ; this is the Antichrist..." If the Papacy, therefore, does not acknowledge that the work of Christ is enough to completely clear sinners of their guilt before God, but that other payment of some sort is required, then he denies that Jesus is the Christ. To confess that Jesus is the Christ is to say nothing less than one is saved by grace alone, for Christ's sake alone, and through faith alone. This the Papacy fails to acknowledge (see par. 136ff).

103. Finally, to somehow believe that the Papacy confesses Christ came in the flesh is to put oneself in the horrible position of saying that the Papacy is "from God;" for I John 4:3 claims that those who confess that Jesus has come in the flesh are from God. And since the Papacy does not consist of the person alone, but also the office, one would also have to be saying that the office of the Papacy is from God. The office includes all that office. This will be discussed in more detail in objection No. 4.

104. (3) Perhaps one of the strongest objections to the Lutheran position is the claim that since the Lutheran application is drawn partly from history, it is a doctrine not based on the Word alone, and therefore, it should not be subscribed to. Furthermore, while the description of the Antichrist in Scripture is perfect, human reason which must apply this description is fallible and could err. This description in Scripture implies that a judgment be made; but to say that the human judgment is on the same level with the infallible Word would contradict several essential Lutheran doctrines.⁷⁷

⁷⁷E.g., total depravity, grace alone, the Word alone, and others.

105. The principle involved in this objection is entirely true, and thus would apply to the identification of the Antichrist, unless the Word of God allowed and even expected such a positive identification to be made by people in the case of such prophecies (i.e., those which have a specific and definite fulfillment and where vagueness and imagery are lacking in the prediction).

106. Does Scripture expect Christians to make identifications for these prophecies? As Pieper pointed out, if the Bible did not allow such identifications, Christ would not have been able to have been known to the Jews of his day. Jesus clearly implies that a comparison of his words and work with the prophecies in the Scripture is essential in the account of John's imprisonment recorded in Matthew 11:2-5:

107. When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receives sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, and deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (NIV)

108. Just as striking is the account of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:18-27). Take note that the disciples first give a testimony of what they had seen and heard, and then how Christ follows this with an explanation of how their account of his words and work fulfills the Old Testament prophecies.

109. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one living in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. (NIV)

110. Of special significance in this section is verse 25: "...How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" In other words, what the disciples had seen and heard should have been recognized, through faith by the power of the Word, as the fulfillment of the Word--the Old Testament Messianic prophecies.

111. The prophecies and description of the Antichrist, though not as numerous, are just as pointed and clear as those concerning the Messiah. Therefore, this is reason enough to believe that an identification of the Antichrist is to follow the prophecies of the same and is a doctrine of Scripture.

112. If such a positive identification were not possible, the prophecies concerning the Antichrist (and even Christ for that matter) would be useless. The descriptions of the Antichrist are obviously intended for exact identification.

113. (4) The claim has been made that the Papacy does not have all the marks of the Antichrist. The validity of this objection can be substantiated or refuted simply by carefully comparing the marks of the Antichrist with the words and work of the Papacy.

114. The first mark, that the Antichrist is opposed to and replaces Christ, will be looked at in detail in the fifth and sixth marks.

115. The second mark is obvious; the Papal office is filled by human beings. Along with this one can see that the Papacy very adequately meets the longevity requirement of the Antichrist. The Papacy, as it is known in its present form, has existed for over 1,100 years.⁷⁸ Also, since it has existed as one continuous establishment, there would be only one revealing necessary, as required by the marks (see par. 12).

⁷⁸The Roman Church dates the beginning of the Papacy from the time of Peter. Among Protestant writers there is some divergence. Some claim Boniface III (d. 607) as the first Pope since he was the first to take the title "Universal Bishop." Others prefer Gregory VII (d. 1085), "because it was he who centralized power in the Church in the Roman bishop and emancipated the Papacy from the control of secular authorities" (Hoyer, 712). However, such claims also existed hundreds of years earlier.

116. The third mark, the development of the Anti-christ, can clearly be seen in the development of the Papacy. Seeds of the Antichrist can be observed planted and growing among the teachings of religious authorities and within the office of the Bishop of Rome from the earliest days.

117. In the Epistle of Clement (ca. 95 A.D.) an apostolic succession is implied. Clement writes:

Our Apostles also knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be a strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed those ministers already mentioned and afterwards gave instructions that, when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry.⁷⁹

118. Ignatius of Antioch (d. 109 A.D.) on his way to prison and martyrdom writes to Polycarp:

Be zealous to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the council of the Apostles and the deacons, who are most dear to me, entrusted with the services of Jesus Christ. Be united with the bishop and with those who preside over you as an example and lesson of immortality. As, then, the Lord Jesus was united with the Father and did nothing without Him, neither by Himself nor through the Apostles, so do you nothing without the bishop and the presbyters.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Quoted in Hoyer, 715.

⁸⁰Quoted in Hoyer, 716.

119. At the end of the first century Irenaeus acknowledges a certain gift of grace for the bishops; and those who withdraw from this "principal succession" are heretics. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (258 A.D.), agrees with the idea of an apostolic succession, and even goes to the extent of saying that bishops are authoritative interpreters of the apostolic teaching and without them the Church would be without grace and would no longer exist.⁸¹ Cyprian also believed the unity of the Church and its governance, the bishops, have their source in Peter.⁸²

120. The first recorded attempt of the bishop of Rome himself to exercise undue authority took place when Bishop Victor of Rome (d. 198 A.D.) excommunicated numerous bishops and brethren who held to a different Easter date than himself.⁸³ The next bishop of Rome, Zephyrinus (d. 218 A.D.), called himself "Pontifex Maximus, Episcopus Episcoporum."⁸⁴

121. When Constantine became emperor the Church became a state Church. But in leaving Rome to make a "New Rome" at Byzantium (326 A.D.) his Lateran Palace in Rome was given to the bishop. In the absence of the emperor the bishop was considered to be representative of the emperor, thus giving him secular authority.⁸⁵ This authority was increased when Emperor Catian in 378 A.D. "gave Pope Damasus patriarchal jurisdiction over the

⁸¹Hoyer, 716, 717.

⁸²Hoyer, 719.

⁸³Hoyer, 719.

⁸⁴Hoyer, 720.

⁸⁵Hoyer, 721.

whole Western Empire and placed the civil power at his command."⁸⁶ Bishop Siricius (384-398 A.D.) claimed himself to be the head of the body, the heir of Peter's office and that those who disagree with him separate themselves from the rock on which Christ built his Church. Innocent I (402-417 A.D.) demanded that all churches obey the decisions of Rome. His successor, Zosimus (417-418 A.D.), stated that no one may question the decision of the Roman See and that his successors inherit from him an authority equal to that which the Lord gave to Peter. Bishop Boniface I (418-422 A.M.) claimed that the Church was started by Peter; all things had been given to him prior to any council canons; the Roman Church was the head of all churches; and that those who separate themselves from the Roman Church separate themselves from the Christian religion.⁸⁷

122. The so-called founder of the medieval Papacy, Leo I (440-461 A.D.) was given this charter by Emperor Valentinian III concerning the office of the Papacy:

Then only will peace continue throughout the Church when the bishop of Rome is recognized by all as lord and master...Henceforth it shall not be permitted to dispute over church matters or to oppose the orders of the primate in Rome... What is ordered by the Apostolic See, by virtue of its authority, shall be law to all, so that, if a bishop refuse compliance with the judicial sentence of the Roman primate, he shall be compelled by the provincial government to appear before him.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Hoyer, 722.

⁸⁷Hoyer, 722, 723.

⁸⁸Quoted in Hoyer, 723.

124. Pope Hilarius (461-468 A.D.) called himself "Vicar of Peter," and claimed ownership of the keys of the kingdom. Gelasius I (492-496 A.D.) was called "Christ's Vicar."⁸⁹ Gregory I (590-604 A.D.), though calling the title "Universal Bishop" heresy, believed himself to be a successor of Peter, and claimed and exercised as far as possible authority over the whole church, even in the East.⁹⁰ But immediately after Gregory, Boniface III (607 A.D.) took the title "Universal Bishop."⁹¹

125. And so it can be seen that the development of the Papacy included an increase in the primacy, authority, and infallibility of the bishop of Rome; the distortion of Scripture; and the invention of canons and decretals.⁹² As a result, even in the early Church the Papacy was at times thought to be the Antichrist.⁹³

126. The fourth mark is that the Antichrist will take up residence in the midst of believers. Since there exists in the Roman Church millions of

⁸⁹Hoyer, 723.

⁹⁰Phillip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 223, 224.

⁹¹Hoyer, 723.

⁹²Though not all of the mentioned statements, beliefs, and movements here are wrong (e.g., the organization of an episcopate), they seem to create situations which antichristian marks could easily make use of.

⁹³See Bernard McGinn, "Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist," Church History, Vol. 47 (June 1978), 155-173.

infants regenerated through baptism and many others who retain true faith in the Gospel in spite of the work-righteous emphasis enveloping the Roman Church, the Roman Pontiff is definitely in the midst of the church ("una sancta").

127. The fifth mark states that the Antichrist will show himself to be God by opposing and exalting himself against everyone called God and against every object of religious worship. Since God and his word are to be the only objects of religious worship, anybody or anything else proclaimed to be on the same level with them would be exalting and opposing itself above God and his word. So if the Papacy, in some way or another, claims itself (or something other than itself) to be above or along side Scripture, it automatically puts itself in an exalted position over "everyone called God" and "every object of religious worship."

128. Most obviously the Papacy puts itself above Scripture by claiming the external Church to be above the Scripture:

The Church is not a fruit of the Book but rather the Book is a fruit of the Church.

Hence it is that the Catholic does not say in the first instance, What does the Book say? Rather he asks, What does the teaching Church say?... He has only one ultimate recourse, the Church herself, and the Book is accepted from her hand and with her explanation... Over the Book stands the Church, while according to the Reform conception, over the Church stands the Book.⁹⁴

⁹⁴Anne Fremantle, The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context, New York: Mentor-Omega Books, 1963), 11.

129. But not only is the Bible superseded by the Church; other so-called divine forms of revelation are placed on an equal footing with the Bible:

For the Catholic, the locus of meeting is the Church, which for its task of bringing men to God uses many means: the teaching of authorized masters, i.e., the bishops and their primate the Pope; the liturgy; books written by men of the Church under divine inspiration, the Scriptures; the common beliefs and practices of the Catholics stretched out over time and space. The inspired books...are not over the Church, but rather a part of the Church's panoply...⁹⁵

130. More specifically, this comparison is made between "Sacred Tradition" and Scripture:

For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing; under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, while Sacred Tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity...

Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Fremantle, 10-11.

⁹⁶Hardon, 47.

131. The Pope himself is put on the level of Scripture when he speaks "ex cathedra" as defined by the first Vatican Council:

The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra--that is, when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding Faith or Morals to be held by the Universal Church--by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding Faith or Morals; and therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not in virtue of the consent of the Church.⁹⁷

132. This infallibility applies to revealed and unrevealed truths:

The focal question that the Council [Vatican II] asked itself was: Do we wish to define the Pope's infallibility to include both revealed truths and such nonrevealed truths as philosophical principles and dogmatic facts?⁹⁸ Their intention was a simple affirmative...

⁹⁷Quoted in Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, trans. Patrick Lynch, Ph. D., ed. James Canon Bastible, D.D. (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 1963), 286. The four most generally accepted declarations of the Papacy that are "ex cathedra" and therefore infallible are: the last seventeen words of the "Unam Sanctam;" "Ineffabilis Deus" on the Immaculate Conception; the "Constitutio dogmatica," including the decree on infallibility; and the "Munificentissimus Deus" on the Assumption of Mary.

⁹⁸Hardon, 231.

133. The Pope possesses full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole Church, not merely in matters of faith and morals, but also in Church discipline and in the government of the Church.⁹⁹

134. Of course, to come to a conviction of the above mentioned doctrines a terrible distortion of the Bible is necessary. Some of Rome's proof passages for these doctrines are Matthew 16:18; 28:20; Luke 22:31ff; John 14:16; 21:15-17; and others.

135. Distortion of Scripture is one of the most deceptive means the Papacy uses to exalt itself above God. It is not limited to the above doctrines, but is incorporated into every teaching which is contrary to the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions.

136. The Sixth mark involves denying Jesus as the Savior from sin.¹⁰⁰ The Papacy does this in several ways. For one thing, its teachings on Mary can, and do, cause its members to look to Christ and Mary for salvation:

The implication of this is not that we are obliged to beg for all graces through Mary,

⁹⁹Ott, 285.

¹⁰⁰In order to sufficiently understand how the Papacy fulfills this mark, a somewhat thorough belief and knowledge in the Lutheran doctrine of salvation and justification is necessary. Many churches, including the Roman Church, believe that Jesus is in some sense the Savior from sin. But what they mean many times is completely opposed to what the Orthodox Lutheran Church means and teaches. That is, human merit somehow plays a part in their salvation even though they confess that Jesus forgives their sins.

nor that Mary's intercession is intrinsically necessary for the application of the grace, but that, according to God's positive ordinance, the redemptive grace of Christ is conferred on nobody without the actual intercessory co-operation of Mary... 'From that great treasure of all graces, which the Lord has brought, nothing, according to the will of God comes to us except through Mary, so that, as nobody can approach the Supreme Father except through the Son, similarly nobody can approach Christ except through the Mother...'¹⁰¹

138. ...she mediated for others, as well, by her vicarious assistance to the rest of mankind. She deserves the title mediatrix because she cooperated in a unique way with Christ in his redemptive labors on earth, and because in heaven she continues interceding for those who are still working out their salvation as pilgrims in the Church Militant or souls suffering in purgatory. The Vatican Council takes account of both types of mediation...¹⁰²

139. Their teaching of the incomplete work of Christ finds its results in the Eucharist:

The sacrifice of the altar, then, is no mere empty commemoration of Calvary, but a true and proper act of sacrifice, whereby Christ the high priest by an unbloody immolation offers himself a most acceptable victim to the eternal Father, as he did on the cross.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Ott, 213, 214.

¹⁰²Hardon, 166.

¹⁰³Hardon, 465-466.

140. Because of the incompleteness of Christ's "first" sacrifice and because of the reliance on those other than Christ, salvation ultimately has to be borne by the sinner. The Catholic Church is not deficient in stating so either:

141. To obtain full remission of sins, therefore, two things are necessary. Friendship with God must be re-established by sincere conversion of heart, and amends must be made for the injustice committed against his goodness. In addition, however, all the personal and social values and even those of the universal nature that have been diminished or destroyed by sin, must somehow be repaired.¹⁰⁴

142. On the negative side it [justification] is a true eradication of sin; on the positive side it is a supernatural sanctifying and renewal of the inner man...

The sinner can and must prepare himself by the help of actual grace for the reception of the grace by which he is justified... According to the teaching of the Reformers, faith, in the sense of fiducial faith, is the sole cause of justification (sola fides doctrine). In opposition to this teaching, the Council of Trent declares that, side by side with faith, other acts of disposition are demanded...¹⁰⁵

143. The Antichrist will make use of power, signs, and wonders. This seventh mark, as previously mentioned, has not been developed in its application

¹⁰⁴Hardon, 560-561.

¹⁰⁵Ott, 250, 252, 253.

to the Papacy as could be (see Par. 84 & 88). The "power" of the Papacy, because of the vast number of people under its control and the capability shown to control those people, must have some supernatural source. And if this source is not the one true God (as can be seen by Rome's teachings) then it must be from Satan.

144. But more important are those observable phenomena known as miracles.¹⁰⁶ Unbeknown to many is the fact that the Roman Catholic Church makes miracles a common practice:

145. Throughout the course of church history there are miracles so well authenticated that their truth cannot be denied... 'The Christian Church, from the time of the Apostles and their disciples, has claimed an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers, the gift of expelling demons of healing the sick and of raising the dead'... thus miracles are so interwoven with our religion, so connected with its origin, its promulgation, its progress and whole history, that it is impossible to separate them from it... The well-attested records are to be found in the official processes for the canonization of saints.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶The Catholic Church also claims to possess non-observable miracles, e.g., when the Pope speaks "ex cathedra," when the priest changes the elements of the Eucharist into the body and blood of Christ, an act which only they can perform, the effects of touching or owning relics, and the "ex opere operato" effect of their seven sacraments.

¹⁰⁷The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. X, ed. Charles G. Herbermann and others (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1911), 345, 346.

146. One of the most famous of these miracles took place at Lourdes:

In his judgment the Virgin Mary herself wished to confirm by some special sign the definition that the Vicar of her divine Son had pronounced amid the applause of the whole Church. "Four years had not yet elapsed when, in the French town at the foot of the Pyrenees, the Virgin Mother showed herself to a simple and innocent girl at the grotto of Messabielle and to this same girl, earnestly inquiring the name of her with whose vision she was favored, with eyes raised to heaven and sweetly smiling, she replied, 'I am the Immaculate Conception.'" Following the original visions, thousands of people from every country in the world have made pilgrimages to Lourdes, where "miraculous favors were granted them, which excited the admiration of all and confirmed the Catholic religion as the only one given approval by God."¹⁰⁸

147. The Pope makes use of miracles insomuch as: he is the head of the Church in which they are performed, thus gaining "approval by God;" writes encyclicals concerning them;¹⁰⁹ and performs them himself if he has been canonized a saint.¹¹⁰

148. The eighth mark states that the Antichrist will be causing a great apostasy and deceiving those who are perishing. This is most obviously true

¹⁰⁸Hardon, 162-163.

¹⁰⁹E.g., encyclical "Fulgens Corona," of Pius XII.

¹¹⁰One of the official required processes for the canonization of saints is the performance of observable miracles (The Catholic Encyclopedia (1911), Vol. II, 369).

considering the literally millions of infants in the Catholic Church who come to faith through baptism and then are enticed to fall away by no longer trusting Christ alone. No apostasy has ever been so great, past or present. Furthermore, the millions of souls in the Catholic Church who are perishing are continually being deceived into thinking that they are in the saving church and can attain salvation by some form of human merit.

149. The early beginning and development of the Papacy coincides with the ninth mark--the Antichrist, in one form or another, had its beginning in the New Testament era.

150. The tenth mark claims that the Antichrist will be revealed after the restrainer is removed. The restrainer, which has to be classified as both neuter and masculine, is more than likely the Roman Empire (neuter) with its emperors (masculine). In view of this interpretation the Roman Empire, the restrainer, would most likely have been taken out of the way in 476 A.D., the year in which the last Roman emperor, Roman Augustulus, was deposed. The fifth century was a period in which the Popes took on the form of the powerful modern Papacy. In other words, the time was ripe for the revealing of the Antichrist. During the next few centuries the belief crept into existence that the Papacy was the Antichrist, eventually growing into a very strong conviction among Protestants at the time of the Reformation.

151. (5) The objection is made that the current Popes have a new image which is not compatible with the marks of the Antichrist. Ever since Pope John XXIII and Vatican II the Roman Church has engaged in ecumenical dialogues and has had a tendency to de-emphasize those doctrines which make the Roman Church the only external saving church. "Brethren" is now a title extended to those outside of the Roman Church, and there are even some Catholic theologians who wish

the Augsburg Confessions to be recognized as a confession not incompatible with the Roman Catholic Church.¹¹¹

152. But, to be fair to the intentions and official teachings of the Roman Church, only books and statements with the "Imprimatur" and the "Nihil Obstat"¹¹² of current printings should be used to define what such current intentions and teachings are. For this reason, the above objection only used quotations (with the exception of footnote 107) from official Roman Catholic books which have a printing date during or later than Vatican II. These books were intentionally chosen because of their authority and current printing dates, thus showing the current official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, it can be seen that the Papacy is the head and director of those teachings which are the clear marks of the Antichrist.

153. Furthermore, the official intention of Catholic Ecomenism is different than that of the modern liberal ecumenical movement to a certain degree. The Catholic Church wishes to bring their "separated brethren" into their own fold:

154. Authentic unity, according to the Pope, "can be born of but one single authority, one sole rule of faith, and one identical Christian belief."...

¹¹¹"Consider Joint Lutheran-R C Membership: Theologian." Christian News, 26 May, 1980, p. 16.

¹¹²The "Imprimatur" and the "Nihil Obstat" are defined in such books this way: "The nihil obstat and imprimatur are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal error."

Pius XII returned to the same theme, expressing his keen interest in the unification efforts in Europe and North America, but he also stressed that the Church must remain "inflexible before all that could have even the appearance of a compromise, or of an adjustment of the Catholic Faith with other confessions." His successor, John XXIII, though commonly credited with giving Christian unity its principal impetus among Catholics, was equally explicit when it came to the essentials of doctrine. He foresaw the Council he had convoked as "an admirable spectacle of truth, unity, and charity. We have confidence that such a manifestation will be for Christians separated from Rome a gentle invitation to seek and find that unity for which Christ offered to his Father such an ardent prayer."¹¹³

155. The reason given for such an "invitation" by the Papacy to non-Catholic denominations is the inadequacy found in those denominations:

These Christians are not blessed with the unity that Christ wants his followers to possess. They lack the fullness of those benefits of the New Covenant that Christ entrusted "to the apostolic college over which Peter presides."¹¹⁴

156. Of course, the official teachings and intentions are not the dogma of every Catholic theologian. Some hold a position more in line with the liberal ecumenists. But when one realizes that the underlying premise behind the ecumenical movement is secular humanism, it is not hard for him to understand why many Catholic theologians have been attracted to it and even why the hierarchy of the Roman Church has allowed them to become so

¹¹³Hardon, 241-242.

¹¹⁴Hardon, 242.

involved since both philosophies (humanism and Catholicism) are basically work righteous or human merit oriented, hiding behind such slogans as "the brotherhood of man" and "the Fatherhood of God." Even if the Papacy was to become more "ecumenically" minded, all the marks of the Antichrist, including the "Work and Teaching" marks (four through eight in this paper) could easily be kept intact.

157. (6) There is one more objection to the Lutheran position which does not, however, affect the past or even present application to the Antichrist; rather the objection asks the question whether the Papacy will continue to be the Antichrist in the future. Can the Antichrist take a different form, a form other than the Papacy?

158. From a strictly historical point of view, it would be hard to imagine the Catholic Church and its teaching to be other than what they basically have always been. There has of course been a vacillation between piety and corruption, stability and instability, fear and love, both within the Catholic Church in general and within the Papal office itself. But still, those same basic traits of the Church and its Popes have endured the centuries.

159. According to the Bible, there is to be only one revealing or disclosure as to the identity of the Antichrist, and this disclosure will last to the end of time (II Thess. 2:6-8). Therefore, it would not seem to be possible for the Antichrist to change its place of residence from the Papacy to some other establishment or person since another revealing would then be necessary. However, a change within the Papacy could take place which would not be essential to the marks of the Antichrist (e.g., an increasing "ecumenical" stance; merging with other church bodies; using new methods; or taking on a different title). For this reason

*
the 1960 Synodical Conference said, "We thereby affirm that we identify this 'Antichrist' with the Papacy as it is known to us today, which /i.e., the Papacy/ shall, as II Thess. 2:8 states, continue to the end of time, whatever form or guise it may take."¹¹⁵

Conclusion

160. The marks of the Antichrist were given to Christians in order that a positive identification of the Antichrist be made. If some office fulfills the marks, then it can conclusively be identified as the Antichrist. Only the Papacy fulfills those marks, and therefore it alone is the Antichrist. No other office, no other establishment, and no other person comes close to fulfilling the marks. What other antichristian force except the Papacy can claim all at the same time to have existed as one human being at a time for hundreds of years, rule in the midst of believers, replace the word of God, deny that Jesus is the Christ, and cause the greatest falling away from the Christian faith ever?

161. Not too long ago when the Pope was visiting the United States, there was in one newspaper a picture taken at one of the Pope's public appearances of a banner held up by Lutherans which read, "He's Our Pope Too!" This type of feeling for the Pope is not uncommon, and it seems to be growing. But if it is true that the Pope is the Antichrist what could bring about such an attitude? This type of attitude is a sign of a lack of trust, fear, and respect for the word of God. Apathy

¹¹⁵Proceedings of the Forty-Sixth Convention of the Synodical Conference (St. Louis: CPH, 1960), 44.

towards the Bible and any of its teachings, if not removed, can eventually result in forsaking the pure gospel. So it is not so much the fear that one might fall into the clutches of the Papacy if one does not accept the Lutheran teaching on the Antichrist, rather, it is the fear that such a lack of trust in the word of God may be the first step toward losing the saving gospel.

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THE GENESIS OF RELIGIOUS CULTS

INTRODUCTION

In one of His great discourses Christ warned the disciples that prior to Judgment Day, "many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:3). Again He said that before the great and terrible day "many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive them" (24:11).

Clearly this prophecy has been fulfilled. We are living in the last days. Anyone who has recently scanned the pages of a Christian publishing house catalog or browsed through a Christian bookstore is aware of the plethora of books exposing and repudiating modern cults. False prophets with sophisticated appeals and organizations are emerging almost daily and are seducing vast multitudes of easily beguiled youth. One observer (Breese 1979:7) has estimated that there are currently more than 3000 religious cults claiming more than 5 million followers in the United States alone.

In this paper we will be unable to consider the entire phenomena of religious cults. Such a coverage would require thousands of pages. Instead, here we will concern ourselves with the problem of why religious cults arise and suggest how the organized church can prevent its youth from falling victim to such organizations.

Before we proceed, however, we must first define our terms. Exactly what is a cult or religious cults? Many definitions have been offered. Breese (1979:7)

defines a cult as "an organized heresy." Braden (1949:XII) contends that a cult "is any religious group which differs significantly in some one or more respects as to belief or practice, from those religious groups which are regarded as normative expressions of religion in our total culture." Finally, Beck (1977:6) suggests a cult "takes its point of departure from the religious thought of a major religion, but twists and warps that pattern of faith until it has become something essentially new and different from what it was originally."

While these definitions are in general agreement, they overlook the fact that in current usage the word 'cult' can be made to include non-religious organizations as well. For example, the Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (1968: 358) offers this as a second definition of cult-- "devoted attachment to, or extravagant admiration for, a person, principle, etc., especially when regarded as a fad: as, the cult of nudism" (original emphasis).

Therefore, it is advisable in the present context to preface the word 'cult' with 'religious.' "The word 'religious' implies acknowledgement of and belief in the divine or supernatural and its potency" (Kessel 1976:10). A 'religious cult,' then, consists of a group of individuals oriented toward a common belief in the supernatural which differs significantly from traditional religious systems.

THE CAUSA EFFICIENS OF RELIGIOUS CULTS

There is only one true religion. That is the religion "built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). Hence, the true

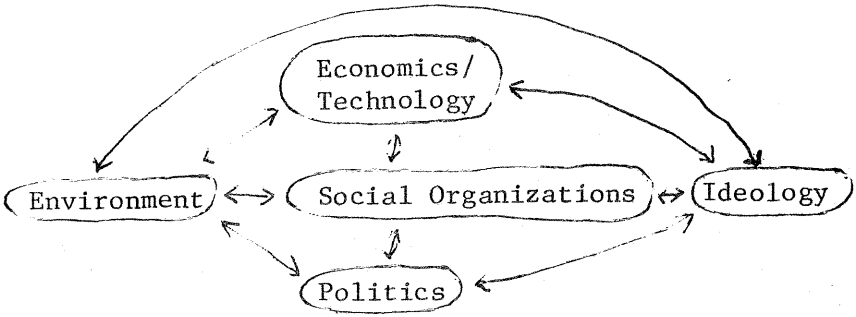
religion is squarely positioned on that bedrock which is the Bible (Luke 16:29; John 5:39; Rom. 15:4). Any teaching which is not Biblical is not true and is not to be tolerated (Rom. 16:17; I Tim. 6:3-5; I John 9-11).

What, then, is the ultimate source of all heresy? It is the Devil. It was Satan who enticed our original ancestors into denying God's Word (Gen. 3:1-6; I John 3:8), and Satan will be wooing believers from the Truth right up to the end of the world (Matt. 24:24; Rev. 19:20). The Devil is the father of all lies (John 8:44) and therefore all heresies, for all heresies are lies. Lucifer and his cohorts continually seek to destroy Christ's Church (Matt. 16:18) by snatching God's Word from the hearts of the hearers (Luke 8:12), spreading erroneous doctrines (Matt. 13:25; I Tim. 4:1-3), and persecuting the saints (Luke 13:46; II Cor. 12:7).

THE CAUSA INSTRUMENTALIS OF RELIGIOUS CULTS

While the Devil is the causa efficiens behind all heresy, he is seldom blatant in his nefarious undertakings. Instead, he works through the media of politics (I Kings 22:21-22; I Chron. 21:1), society (I Tim. 4:1-2), the family (I Cor. 7:5), and religion (Matt. 7:15; II Pet. 2:1).

In order to understand how Satan creates or capitalizes on contemporary circumstances and situations to promulgate organized heresies, it is enlightening first to see how a cultural system operates and changes. A basic social system can be diagrammed as follows:



Key:

= interaction

Every social system is made up of distinct, yet totally interrelated parts or sub-systems. The environment includes the geographic/biotic setting. The economics/technological component includes the way people make a living and control their environment. Social organization involves the way human beings in the society organize and order themselves. Politics encompasses the forms of authority and internal and external control. Finally, the ideological sub-system entails the beliefs, values, and standards (norms) held or promoted within the society.

Such a cultural or social system is never stagnant, but changes constantly. When an alteration is made in any of the sub-systems it is usually reflected and causes changes in the others as well. For example, shortly after the turn of the century the internal combustion engine was introduced to the American public. Soon tractors were able to do the work of many men on the farms. Consequently, sons, who a century earlier would have remained on the farm, were able to move to the cities. Slowly the social organization changed. Extended family units became less common while nuclear family units grew proportionately. At the same time farm bureaus and federations became political forces. Finally,

in the ideological sphere it became socially acceptable even prestigious to live and work in an urban area.

In this example when a stimulus was introduced into one part of the system gradually it was transmitted throughout the other parts as well until it affected the whole. Thus, in "chain-reaction" fashion the system changed. During this time individuals were not subjected to undue stress resulting from the change.

On the other hand, when changes are accepted too rapidly, or when they run completely counter to the accepted cultural norms the entire social system may not be able to accommodate the change. A "social uneasiness" develops and individuals are placed under enormous stress. It is precisely during such times that most religious cults arise (Linton 1943; Wallace 1956; Aberle 1959; La Barre 1971). This process can be illustrated by an example taken from Apache history.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the Apache Indians of Arizona had an economy based on hunting, gathering, farming, and raiding villages in northern Mexico. For the most part subsistence and political decisions and strategies were made by local chiefs.

However, in less than 15 years the United States Army put an end to raiding which had been an Apache way of life for over a century. The pacification of the Apache was achieved by building a line of forts adjacent to Apache Territory, patrolling the mountains and deserts confronting raiding parties, and confining the Indians to reservations.

The reservation solution to the Apache menace proved to be most disastrous. Not only were the

Indians unable to raid, they were disarmed and could not hunt, and their movement to traditional food-gathering sites was restricted. Thus, they faced starvation. In addition, epidemic diseases such as smallpox decimated their population. Meanwhile, in the space of four years the government deeded three large portions of reservation land to Anglo miners and ranchers. Finally, two of the most respected and influential Apache chiefs were killed and two others wounded in local quarrels.

This rapid, unprecedented cultural change resulted in overwhelming individual stress. By 1880 the Apaches, for the most part, were destitute, discouraged, and without leadership. Their traditional cultural system offered no immediate solutions to their dilemma. Consequently at this time a religious cult emerged offering a deus ex machina type solution.

The cult leader was an Apache medicine man who had been exposed to Anglo culture. He had attended school in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he had learned the rudiments of Christianity, and had gone to Washington, D.C. as part of a peace envoy.

In 1881, after one or more visions from "god," the medicine man announced to the Indians that he would resurrect the recently deceased chiefs who in turn would drive the Anglos from the land. This would be accomplished by harvest time. Thereafter the people would never have to worry about the white man, but could roam at will, would have plenty of food, and live free from Anglo diseases. The movement came to an abrupt end that fall when the medicine man was killed in a confrontation with the United States Army (Kessel 1974; 1976:46-73).

From this example we can see that the Apache religious cult began in response to overwhelming

societal pressures. Its doctrine proposed a solution to those very same problems, and, for a time, gave the members of the cult hope.

If this stimulus/response model for religious cults is accurate then we would expect the current religious cults to have arisen during a period of societal turmoil and should offer solutions to such problems. Such seem to have been the case.

During the 1950's the United States population began increasing dramatically. Scientists and technocrats promised all Americans a bright future--clean water and air, sufficient food, and abundant energy. However, these commitments were not kept. Pollution, increased depletion of natural resources, and reliance on imported energy sources have become the norm. The result has been a growing frustration with and mistrust of scientists and technicians. Many no longer feel secure and confident about their present or future. One author has recently written:

Reliability is one of our big concerns in life. Unreliability is the cause of so many problems in our lives. All of us have experienced that we cannot always depend on people or things. Two years ago the Secretary of the Treasury addressed the Financial Writers Association where he said: "Reliable sources are no longer reliable. Those wonderfully complicated mathematical models of the economy have turned treacherous--they offer as many false leads as correct ones" (Petersen, W.W. 1981:2).

Furthermore, while science and technology have not met many of the challenges of the world today, nevertheless they have changed at an accelerated rate. Recent discoveries and theories have overturned previously accepted suppositions. This makes

one wonder if today's "facts" will not be discredited tomorrow. Such thinking has caused many to wonder whether or not there is anything which can be believed with absolute certainty (Beck 1977:12).

Political events of recent decades have also added to societal disorganization and increased individual stress. Abroad America was involved in a war which its political leaders chose not to win. Soldiers returning to the states were unceremoniously received and expected immediately to merge back into the mainstream of society. In many cases the transition from soldier to civilian has not been easy. At home the crime rate has risen dramatically. Race hatred, for a time, threatened the very unity of the country (Petersen, W. J. 1973:4-5).

Such political crises have caused many seriously to question the balance between individual freedom and governmental authority. Many, especially the younger generation, advocate individual "rights and taking, rather than duty and responsibility" (Holte 1981:65). Other citizens insist upon greater governmental control. All Americans, nevertheless, have been caught in the pull between the two forces.

In recent years there also has been tension in the area of kinship and social organization. Dependency on family and friends has given way to self-dependency in the 1970's (Rhoads 1981:16). This phenomenon has been called "Meism" or the shift from "community ascendancy" to "individual ascendancy" (Holte 1981:65). According to Levine (1980:1-25) "Meism" has arisen in response to an inhospitable world. Television, for example, in the 1970's became "realistic" depicting domestic squabbles, economic struggles, and rising national and international violence. The general social environment has left

many with a feeling of insecurity. The individual comes to believe that he, himself, is his only refuge.

In addition, the sharp rise in the divorce rate, legalized abortion, urbanization, and increased social mobility have alienated the individual from the nuclear family, community, and personal friends. Meanwhile, the cost of "individual ascendancy" has been increased loneliness. Beck (1977:13) states, "loneliness is one of the most pervasive feelings in the people of today's world. American society in particular has placed great stress on individual achievement and the importance of individuality. The cost has been loss of a sound sense of community among people."

Finally, while great changes and tensions have developed in the areas of economics/technology, politics, and social organization, American values and standards have not provided any stability. Instead there is ambivalence as to what the normative beliefs and values of the people are or should be.

In summary, the period of the 1960's and 1970's was one of overwhelming change and individual stress. All the knowledge and logic of science and technology failed to improve living conditions, reliance on family and friends turned to self-dependence and loneliness, political instability and violence confused the balance between individual freedom and governmental authority, and a consistent definition of right and wrong was not provided.

Many individuals responded to the overwhelming stress of these decades by joining religious cults which offered ready-made solutions and welcome relief. In spite of their many differences most religious cults emphasize "feeling" over intellect. While scientific learning and logic may be called

into question, one can be sure of his feelings and personal experience. In a society where there is much uncertainty and "facts" seem relative, cults offer progressive divine revelations which, when accepted on faith, produce certainty and security. The loneliness of "individual ascendancy" is countered in the cults by a strong network of perceived "family" ties. The cult leader becomes a father or mother, and the members are the children who enjoy a full range of child and sibling dependencies. Meanwhile the cults offer unambiguous lines of authority. The cult leaders and their doctrine are absolute authorities who must be obeyed. Individual freedoms, if they exist, are clearly outlined. Finally, there is no question of right or wrong in most cults. What benefits the organization and is consistent with formal doctrine is right and all else is wrong.

Earlier we learned that religious cults have proliferated at an alarming rate in recent decades. Now we understand the reasons for their growing popularity. In the final analysis the Devil working through the sub-systems of our society has created an emotional environment which has spawned organized heresies.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion two questions must be asked: (1) why has the Christian Church failed to meet the needs of people today? and (2) what can the Christian Church do to prevent its members from joining cults? We shall consider these questions one at a time.

The Christian Church generally has failed to meet the needs of people today. Van Baalen very accurately says that "the cults are the unpaid bills

of the church." As society has been changing, instead of remaining a pillar of stability the Church likewise has changed. In an attempt to grow in numbers many denominations have become lenient in doctrinal interpretation and practice. Consequently, doctrinal positions have developed into statements of situational ethics. The Holy Bible is no longer considered the source of absolute authority, but individuals are put at liberty to regard or disregard any portions of it they choose. In addition, a spirit of ecumenism has swept most church bodies. Hence, denominational loyalties have all but disappeared. Also gone is the bond of "kinship" uniting like-minded brothers and sisters in the faith.

In short, by trying to be "relative" the church has become irrelevant to the needs of the people. It has lost its badly needed base of authority, its ability to provide certainty and security, and its bond of spiritual kinship.

Does this mean that the Christian Church can do nothing to prevent its youth from seeking comfort in religious cults? No, not at all. The organized, established church can meet the spiritual and emotional needs of people by turning or returning to sound doctrine and practice. The authority of Scripture must whole-heartedly be maintained. The Law and Gospel must be proclaimed in their correct sequence. Church discipline must be maintained. Christian fellowship must be practiced. When this is done individuals in this troubled society will find comfort, peace, and solace. Finally, like their spiritual forefathers church members will continue "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer" (Acts 2:42).

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