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The Biblical
And
Confessional
Doctrine
of the
Antichrist

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The Biblical and Confessional Doctrine of the Antichrist

**Essay presented by Rev. Francis Q. Schupmann to
the Convention, August 23, 1953.**

There appears In Scripture an institution called the Antichrist. God gives us all the necessary marks whereby we can positively identify him that we should “beware and desert him” (*SA, Appendix*, p. 346, 41-43), “*mark and avoid him,*” Romans 16:17.

The Antichrist also appears in our *Lutheran Confessions* in the *Book of Concord of 1580*. Luther, and all true orthodox Lutherans after him, saw the marks of the Antichrist in Scripture, and in the Roman Papacy recognized these marks and accordingly identified the Antichrist of Scripture as the Pope of Rome.

The title of the present paper is: “The Biblical and Confessional Doctrine of the Antichrist.” “Altho the Papacy has no foundation in Scripture, yet the Papacy appears in Scripture. (Hoyer, *Abiding Word, Vol. II, P.747.*) The Papacy appears in the Biblical doctrine of the Antichrist, and the orthodox Lutheran Church has unanimously agreed that “The Pope is the very Antichrist.” (*SA, Part II, Art. IV, par.5, Trig. 475.*) This is also the position correctly taken by the Brief Statement , which clearly, confidently and unequivocally subscribes this clearly revealed doctrine, identifies the Roman Pope as the Biblical Antichrist, and agrees throughout with both the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. We of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference have taken our stand on Scripture; we have also pledged ourselves to teach all doctrines taught in the Book of Concord and in no wise to depart from them because they are drawn from and are firmly grounded in the Word of God. Both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions teach that the Pope is the Antichrist. We of the O.L.C. teach it because the Bible does; we confess it according to the Lutheran Confessions because “the doctrinal decisions of the

symbols...are the doctrinal decisions of Holy Scripture itself.” (*Brief Statement*, Par. 46.) A review of the Biblical and confessional doctrine of the Antichrist will demonstrate the correctness of the orthodox Lutheran position, and will serve as a reminder to be on guard against this “man of sin and son of perdition” - The Roman Papacy. It will also help us to hold fast this doctrine with the conviction of faith in the face of its denial by many, including the once orthodox Missouri Synod.

Let us examine this doctrine according to the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions, including the Brief Statement, together with pertinent testimonies from orthodox Lutheran theologians from Luther to the present. We shall also consider and answer certain objections that have been raised against this Biblical and Confessional Doctrine.

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Antichrist in the general sense, as when Scripture speaks of “many antichrists”, (I John 2:18), denotes all false teachers who oppose Christ and His Word. Christian teachers follow Christ’s command to “*Teach them all things whatsoever I have commanded you,*” Matt. 28:20; and they heed the admonition to “*Continue in My Word*” John 8:31–32. Antichristian teachers proclaim their own wisdom, preach “*another Gospel*”, Gal. 1:8, and are thereby opposing God. All such false prophets are antichrists in the general sense.

In the special sense, Antichrist “denotes that power and institution in which the spiritual enmity against Christ and His Word reaches its supreme development and perfect embodiment, “the mystery of iniquity” working in his forerunners finally affecting the “falling away” *kat’ exocheen, hee apostasia der Abfall*, II Thess, 2:3. The Antichrist *Kat exocheen*, the great Antichrist in the special sense is the one about which we are concerned in this paper. (See *Dogmatics notes*, sub *Antichrist*, p. 10; Theodore Engelder.) The Chief Bible passages which give us the marks and descrip-

tion of the Antichrist are found In II Thessalonians 2:3–12; Daniel 11: 36ff.; I John 2:18; and Revelation 13 and 17.

II Thess. 2:3–12: ³ *Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. ⁵Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? ⁶And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. ⁷For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. ⁸And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: ⁹Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all powers and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. ¹¹And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie, ¹²that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

When St. Paul makes reference to his previous instruction concerning the Antichrist, he doubtlessly pointed them to the prophecy of Daniel. We shall refer to this later and refrain from quoting that lengthy section here.

Speaking of the falling away and the great seducer Antichrist, Paul writes to Timothy, 4:1–3: “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their consciences seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.*”

In I John 2:18 the apostle speaks of many antichrists, but foretells

that one special Antichrist shall come and this is a sign that the last day is upon us and the end of all things is at hand. He writes: “*Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time.*”

In Revelation chapters 13 and 17, hypocrisy, seduction, wonders, persecution of the saints, glamour and riches are designated as various marks of the Antichrist.

God has told us the Antichrist would come. He said that the antichristian “*mystery of iniquity*” was already at work in Paul’s day. This doctrine is given to us as warning; and in order that the warning be effective and we forearmed against the “*man of sin,*” lest we be among those misled by his signs and wonders, lies and delusions, God also tells us that the Antichrist shall be revealed manifested, unmasked and exposed to the light of day.

Antichrist has come. He has been revealed. And “the marks (all the vices) of Antichrist plainly agree with the Kingdom of the Pope.” (SA, 515, 39 Trig.) In his essay on the Papacy, Dr. Hoyer writes: (P. 750): “The Question, Who is the Antichrist? is answered in Scripture. The prophecies of Antichrist designate, not only in general, but in detail, the characteristics and works of Antichrist; the marks of antichristian times are given. For what purpose? Evidently that future generations of Christians who would, live in the time of Antichrist might recognize this evil foe and escape him. This prophecy of Antichrist is fulfilled. We have it before our eyes. The Papacy alone bears all the marks of the prophecy. A man who otherwise stands high in church history, Th. Harms, once called this opinion ‘*Sine Missouriische Schrulle*’, a crotchet of Missouri. Well, it must then be called a Lutheran *Schrulle*. It would be queer if they who learned to know the Papacy so well should have been mistaken. No, the error is on the side of those who have left the ways of the Fathers. The Papacy is the Antichrist !” Let us see.

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The first mark of the Antichrist described in II Thess. 2:3 is the great apostasy. This does not refer to any political rebellion and tyranny, or social havoc and ruin, but apostasy from the Christian truth, as we also see from verses ten to twelve. Nor does this refer to “casual intrusion of error.” to weakness in Christian knowledge, or to so-called non-fundamental doctrines. The great apostasy is a falling away from the central doctrine of Scripture, a repudiation of the “most fundamental doctrine” of Justification by faith alone. This falling away is connected in verse 3 with the “*man of sin and son of perdition;*” and in verse 10f. the falling away is again connected with “*him whose coming is after the working of Satan,*” who by his lying power and signs and wonders and deception leads people to believe the lie that man is not justified by faith alone. Not loving the truths but believing this lie of Antichrist, men fall away from Christ, His truth and His salvation and are damned. The falling away is then not a rejection of single doctrines, but a repudiation of the essence of all Christian doctrine, from Christ, from the vicarious atonement, and from Justification by faith alone. It is a falling away from that doctrine “which alone begets, nourishes, builds, serves and defends the Church of God and without which the Church of God cannot subsist for one single hour”—justification by faith. It is a rejection of all three *SOLAS*: Scripture alone, faith alone, and grace alone.

This mark tallies perfectly with the Papacy which curses and employs all its power to destroy the chief article of the Christian religion, Justification by faith. (Engelder, *notes*, p. 11.) The official condemnation of this doctrine of Justification by faith is stated in the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, Session VI, Canon 11*:

“If anyone saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace whereby we are justified is only the favor of God; — Let him be damned.” And canon 12 says: “If anyone saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits

sins for Christ's sake, or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified — Let him be damned.” And in canon 20 : “If anyone saith that the man who is justified, and how perfect soever, is not bound to observe the commandments of God and of the church, but only to believe; as if indeed the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life without the condition of observing the commandments — Let him be damned.”

The heart of the Bible is justification by faith; the heart of the papacy is the cursing of justification by faith.

Very aptly, Ewald Plass refers to the 12th canon as “the most fateful ever passed by Rome.” He quotes the text of it and says:

“The die had been cast. Placed squarely before the cardinal doctrine of Christianity, the Roman hierarchy cursed it. Hence forth Rome was to be a sect and judged solely by her official pronouncements, the church of the very Antichrist.” (*This Is Luther*, P. 27.)

In his classic “*Law and Gospel*,” (p. 74) Dr. Walther quotes the 11th canon of Session VI and comments:

“Unless you are utterly blind and know nothing of the Christian religion, I believe that a plainer proof that the Pope is the Antichrist cannot be offered you.”

Concerning this mark of the apostasy, the denial of justification by faith alone, and the teaching that salvation is dependent on man's own works, which leads men away from heaven, Dr. Pieper writes:

“The Papacy is above all guilty of this offense; for it seeks to allure men with the promise that it will safely guide them to heaven. It maintains in fact that it is the alone-saving church on earth. But when men, attracted by this impressive promise, entrust themselves to its spiritual guidance, they are instructed to depend for salvation, not on Christ crucified, but on their own works and on those of the saints, so

that the multitudes are actually misled into hell by the teachings of the Papacy. If some nevertheless are saved in the church of Antichrist, and there are such, it is only because in their distress over sin and the prospect of death they turn to Christ as their only Savior. Just because the papacy veils its pagan doctrine of work righteousness so cunningly under the cloak of godliness, it is in truth the greatest imposition in the world.” (*What Is Christianity?* from book of the same name, p. 13.)

On the basis of the first mark given in God’s Word, we already say with certainty that the Pope is the very Antichrist. With Pieper we equate the Papacy and Antichrist. With Walther, we believe “no plainer proof can be offered that the Pope is the Antichrist of Scripture than his denial of justification by faith”. And we therefore subscribe to every word of the *Smalcald Articles* (*Part II*, 320, 10 - Jacobs ed.) on this point:

“This article clearly shows that the Pope is the very Antichrist, who has opposed himself against Christ because he does not wish Christians to be saved without his power, which nevertheless is nothing and is neither established nor commanded by God. This is properly speaking to ‘*exalt himself above all that is called God*’, as Paul says, II Thesalonians 2:4.”

The Antichrist is also called “*that man of sin and the son of perdition.*” He is one who originates sin and causes others to sin; he removes the Gospel of salvation and all that remains is perdition. Does not this adequately describe the papacy which binds consciences, with its laws, makes laws where God has made none, and makes sin where there is no sin? Fast days, abstention from meat on Fridays, the auricular confession with attending evils, celibacy are samples of some of the laws which Antichrist binds on men. Cf. I Timothy 4:1-3. Thru the mass and the veneration of saints and relics, the Pope teaches the people idolatry. He teaches a false service to God when he says good works win God’s favor and grace; and again when he calls things not commanded by God good works. The false works the idolatrous worship of saints, the

blasphemy and idolatry of the mass, pilgrimages, fasts, vigils and monasticism—all these marks of the papacy are the marks of the Antichrist, “*that man of sin and the son of perdition.*”

The *Apology*, p. 220, 13 (Jacobs ed) says:

“On this account our consciences are sufficiently excused, for the errors of the kingdom of the Pope are manifest. And Scripture with its entire voice exclaims that these errors are a doctrine of demons and of Antichrist. Idolatry in the mass... papal doctrine of repentance... the doctrine of sin... of satisfactions... invocation of saints... celibacy...vows... transferred the benefit of Christ to human traditions, and have altogether extinguished the doctrine concerning faith...Neither are these errors to be regarded light, for they detract from the glory of Christ and bring destruction to souls, neither can they be passed by unnoticed.”

Luther writing to Emser explains:

“This is the reason why St. Paul calls antichrist the man of sin and the son of perdition, because thru his precepts and laws he will turn all the world from God and prevent God and the world from coming together; he shall be master in sin and all iniquity, and yet he will retain the name and appearance of Christ and call himself *Sanctissimus*, and *Vicarius Dei*, and *Caput Ecclesiae* (the most holy one, the Vicar of God, and the Head of the Church), and persecute all who will not obey him. It is easily recognized that the Pope more than fits the description.” (Holman, *III*, 368)

And in his Babylonian Captivity,

“Who is ‘the man of sin and the son of perdition’ but he that with his doctrines and his laws increases sins and the perdition of souls in the Church, while he sitteth in the Church as if he were God? All this the papal tyranny has fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, these many centuries; it has extinguished faith, obscured the sacraments and oppressed the Gospel; but its own laws, which are not only impious and sacrilegious,

but even barbarous and foolish, it has enjoined and multiplied world without end.” (Holman, *II*, p. 236.)

To deny justification by faith alone and teach that good works are necessary to salvation, contrary to Holy Scripture; to make laws of his own and to set a side the laws of God—what is it but “*to oppose and exalt himself above all that is called god?*” 2 Thess. 2:4. Dr. Engelder states:

“This mark stands out prominently in the Papacy. The Pope sets the divinely instituted authorities on earth in family and state (John 10:34f “gods”) at naught and claims supreme dominion. And he “supersedes the authority of God putting his own in its place” (Hodge *III*,817), authority over the faith and conscience, authority over Scripture, infallibility.” (Notes, p. 11, C)

These marks of the Antichrist receive emphasis in the prophecy of Daniel (11:36ff), as also the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* observes:

“Daniel (11:38) indicates that new human services will be the very form and constitution of the kingdom of Antichrist. For he says thus: ‘But in his estate he shall honor the God of forces; and a God whom his fathers knew not he shall honor with gold and silver and precious stones,’ He describes new services, because he says that such a god will be worshipped as the fathers were ignorant of. Compare also the *Apology* p. 168, 23-24, Jacobs ed.

All the previous marks are now connected with what follows: “*So that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*” The “*man of sin and son of perdition*” who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped is IN the Church, in the temple of God, and playing the role of God. Who is this Antichrist but the Pope! who sits in God’s temple, in God’s place, and pretends to be God. He exalts himself above all authorities and claims supremacy in the Church and the world. He claims Christians cannot be saved without him.

He claims his commands are divine. He assumes divine attributes, divine power, divine honor, and divine names Cf. *Apology* 168, 23-24, Jacobs.

Among the titles the Pope has assumed or which have been given him and accepted, Dr. Hoyer gives the following: “The Pope was called GOD by the pious emperor Constantine...The Pope is an ANGEL of God, yea, more, he is the successor of the apostles and the VICAR of CHRIST: aye, I should rather say he IS CHRIST...Pious IX applied Christ’s words: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” to himself!

Matthew Henry comments on this mark (*Vol. V, ad loc.*):

“So the antichrist here mentioned is some usurper of God’s authority IN the Christian Church, who claims divine honors; and to whom can this better apply than to the bishops of Rome, to whom the most blasphemous titles have been given as *Dominus deus noster papa* - Our Lord God the Pope; *Deus alter in terra* - another God on earth; *Idem est dominium Dei et papae* - The dominion of God and the Pope is the same.”

Luther violently disagreed and called the Papacy “the slaughterhouse of consciences and the very kingdom of the devil.” (*Galatians*, p. 346, Graebner transl.) In the face of such blasphemy, little wonder Luther let go this blast at the Pope in his letter to the Christian Nobility

“Hearest thou this, O Pope, not most holy but most sinful? Oh, that God from heaven would soon destroy thy throne and sink it in the abyss of hell! Through thy throat and pen the wicked Satan doth lie as he hath never lied, before. Thou dost force and wrest the Scriptures to thy fancy. O Christ, my Lord, look down, let the day of Thy judgment break and destroy the devil’s nest at Rome! Here sitteth the man of whom St. Paul said that he shall exalt himself above thee, sit in Thy Church and set himself up as God — the man of sin and son of perdition.” (Holmann *II*; p. 139, quoted by Plass, *This Is Luther*, p. 124.)

When Luther called Rome the “devil’s nest,” that was in accord with Scripture, for the Antichrist is in league with Satan, II Thess. 2, 9-11:

“Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.” The Pope is in league with Satan. The monstrous lies of the papacy seduce through the power and diabolical influence, so that men who loathe it still cling to it, Satan also performing lying wonders in their behalf. Luther 18, 1529; quoted by Engelder, *notes*, page 11,D.

The false doctrine of the papacy is matched by the false works, lying power and signs and wonders. The apparitions of the Virgin Mary, the miraculous cures at certain shrines, the show of power in the world, — in fact, the whole business is a fraud and a fake. The Pope’s coming is after Satan. His power, signs and wonders are produced by Satan. His kingdom is supported by delusions, fake, fraud, and false doctrine; all of which are part of that realm of lies whose father is the devil, cp. John 8:44.—Again, these marks fit the papacy to a “T”. There is no doubt. The Pope is the Very Antichrist.

The antichristian mystery of iniquity was already at work in Paul’s day, but something hindered its development and retarded its growth. It was when Christians began to take it easy and when they slept that the enemy sowed his tares and the papacy developed. (Hoyer, *AW, II*, 761.)

According to the prophecy, that man of sin would not always be concealed; he would not always be a mystery of iniquity, for in God’s good time he would be fully exposed and, revealed. In II Thess. 2:8, we read: *“And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.”*

This prophecy concerning the unmasking of the Antichrist was fulfilled in the Lutheran Reformation.

“Luther has unmasked the Papacy so that anyone may know it and guard against it. In truth, the Reformation consisted in the discovery and exposure of the Antichrist....So this doctrine that the papacy is the Antichrist is most closely connected with the Reformation; it was then and by that work that Antichrist was revealed.” (Hoyer, *AW, II*, 761.)

And the prophecy that the Antichrist will remain till the second coming of Christ — (“*Whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming*, 2 Thess. 2:8b) — IS being fulfilled in the papacy, which, though the Reformation broke its absolute power and away over Church and State, continues to seduce and harass the nations. (Engelder, 11, E) — We shall have to return to this feature of the doctrine of the Antichrist when we consider objections leveled against it.

The Antichrist is, according to Revelation 17, drunk with the blood of saints, has for centuries ravaged against the confessors of Christ with fire and sword, and avowedly will again, power and opportunity given, employ physical force against all who oppose the antichristian, papistical abomination (*S.A.* 475, 14.) J.T. Mueller comments on the kingdom of God, (Mark 4:26–29, *Thomasius Gospel Selections*, p. 383) and contrasts it with the Roman Catholic Church with a visible head, the Pope, and a great body of laws established by the popes and the councils.

“Its means are coercion and temporal power, and it claims the right of persecution with reference to all who refuse to bow to its dominion. It has an insatiable desire for temporal possessions and political influence. So quite manifestly the Kingdom of God in the Roman Catholic sense is not the kingdom of God of which Christ here speaks, but the kingdom of Antichrist, antipodal in every way to the spiritual kingdom of Christ.

All that Scripture has foretold concerning the Antichrist has been fulfilled to the letter in the papacy. On the authority of Scripture therefore, the Lutheran Confessions declare:

“*Papam esse ipsum verum Antichristum* – The Pope is the very Antichrist.” (*SA*, 474, 10 *Trig.*) There is no room for a

higher degree of antichristian wickedness. The climax has been reached in the determined and insidious warfare waged “by the papacy against the heart of Christianity, Justification by faith, waged within the Church. (Engelder, *Notes*, p. 11–12) Cf. *S.A.* 515, 39; 517, 41; *Luther* 17, 1114; 17, 2191; 18, 1529f.

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Various objections have been raised against this “biblical and confessional doctrine by those who refuse to identify the papacy with the Antichrist of prophecy. Let us look at some of them.

First, some objectors say, the Antichrist is represented in prophecy as a single individual and not as an institution. But St. Paul writes, II Thess.2:7–8, in the present tense,

“the mystery of iniquity doth already work; he predicts that it will “be fully revealed in time, which was, as we know, at the time of the Reformation; and he prophesies that it will be utterly consumed only at Christ’s second coming. This rules out any conception of Antichrist as one person. “The work of Antichrist extends over too long a period to be accomplished “by one man. Antichrist is a system, corporation, institution, an order of men, whose succeeding heads embody and represent the spirit of the system.” (Engelder, *Notes*, 12, 40A.)

(Cp. Daniel 7:17 where four world kingdoms, each under succeeding kings are represented as one. *See also Dr. P. E. Kretzmann’s article on the “*Rise of the Papal Power or of the Antichrist*” in the July, 1953 *Orthodox Lutheran*)

In identifying the papacy as the Antichrist in his “*Summary of Christian Doctrine*,” Dr. Koehler says:

“There is nothing in the history of man that so fully answers the description of the antichrist given in the Bible as the Roman papacy. Saying that the Pope is the Antichrist we are not thinking of one individual person, but a success-

sion of persons, each carrying on where his predecessor left off. It applies to the system of the papacy as it developed in the course of time and of which each individual pope is the head.” (Page 245.)

2. A second objection is raised that the papacy cannot be the realm of Antichrist because it has retained the chief articles concerning the Trinity, the person and work of Christ etc. To this Luther replied:

“Der Pabst bekennt zwar dieses Wort: ‘Christus Ist ins Fleisch kommen,’ aber er leugnet desen Frucht. Das ist aber ebensoviel also wenn man sagt: Christus Ist nicht ins Fleisch gekommen.” (8, 629; 10, 1001) Of course, the papacy retains these articles, but only the outward forms. The Pope is a wolf, but he cleverly comes in sheep’s clothing, Matthew 7:15. “In the frescoes of Signorelli we have ‘The Teachings of Antichrist’— no repulsive figure, but a grand personage in flowing robes and with a noble countenance, which at a distance might easily be taken for the Savior. To him the crowds are eagerly gathering and listening, and it is only when you draw close that you can discover in his harder and cynical expression, and from the evil spirit whispering in his ear that it is not Christ.” (Dallmann, *John*, P. 351.)

“The devil knows better than to appear ugly and black,” said Luther; “he prefers to carry on his nefarious activities in the name of God. Hence the German proverb: All mischief begins in the name of God.” (*Galatians* Graebner translation, p. 31.)

3. Again it is objected that there have been good moral popes and “pious popes.” That may be. But even though there may have been moral popes, there are no Christian popes, because “faith in Jesus and the consequent godliness cannot dwell in the heart of man who heads the organization that curses the article of justification by faith, who directs the machinery designed to exterminate it, and whom, therefore taken collectively, Scripture describes as the man of sin, the child of perdition, II Thess. 2:13

f.” (Engelder, *ibid.*) Furthermore, the morality of the popes is only the external morality of the Law. And finally, this objection loses sight of the fact that when we apply the title of Antichrist to the papacy, we do not do this because of his personal wickedness, but because he robs men of the Gospel, destroys souls, etc.

4. The last objection we shall consider contends that the doctrine that the pope is the antichrist is no doctrine, is not based on direct statements of the infallible Scriptures to that effect, “but on history as read by fallible men. This is the old “historical judgment” theory, well worn, but recently revived in the Missouri Synod, both in the *Common Confession* and in the *Report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Practice*.

This objection is raised in the interest of unionism and chiliasm. If this is not a clear doctrine of God’s Word, but only an open question or an historical judgment, then disagreement is not a bar to church fellowship. Or it makes room for the teaching of a millennium, as it is pointed out in *Popular Symbolics*, page 369, under Chiliasm:

“To the Chiliasts, the Antichrist will not “be revealed until after “the first resurrection.” so that the church will “be spared and escape the tribulations. The Chiliasts do not identify Antichrist with the Papacy. He is STILL to appear, and his spirit is found in “the atheistic and lawless trio of socialism, nihilism, and anarchy.’ ”

That this is only an open question was the position of the Iowa Synod and is the position today of the American Lutheran Church. Dr. Deindoerfer of Iowa stated the position of Missouri, correct and scriptural ‘at that time, and their own false view (*Confessional Lutheran*, Vol. XIV, No. 2, pp. 13-14):

“The Missouri Synod demands that every Lutheran and especially every teacher of the Lutheran Church must acknowledge and “believe that the pope is the very Antichrist, that in him and his kingdom the prophecies of this last enemy of X are wholly and completely fulfilled and therefore one dare not expect a further and more complete fulfilment

of the same....Our (that is, Iowa and the A.L.C.) synod, however, wants to have the question left open, whether the final and complete fulfilment of that which Scripture prophesies concerning the Antichrist is STILL to be expected. Those who from Scripture have gained the conviction that the final fulfilment of these prophecies is STILL to “be expected in the future should have the same right in the church as those who believe that they are convinced that in the Roman Papacy everything is ALREADY fulfilled. Here it is not a matter of accepting in faith or rejecting a clearly expressed teaching of Scripture. For Scripture indeed clearly teaches the coming of the Antichrist. But Scripture does not teach that the Pope and the Papacy is the Antichrist and Antichristendom. It is rather a human application of the teaching of Scripture...which must be distinguished from the teaching of Scripture itself.”

Dr. J.H.C. Fritz describes the difference in much the same language in *Ebenezer*, page 172, in an essay entitled: “*Missouri And Iowa.*”

Dr. Stoeckhardt correctly replied to the false Iowan position; “We confidently assert that it IS the teaching of Scripture and no human application of the teaching of Scripture, that the Pope is the Antichrist. Here too, it IS a matter of accepting in faith or rejecting a clearly expressed doctrine of Scripture.”

This position was accepted by the Missouri Synod in its days of orthodoxy, and was expressed in the *Brief Statement*: “Not to be included in the number of open questions are the following,...and of Antichrist, these doctrines being clearly defined in Scripture.” (*Of Open Questions*, par.44.)

Deindoerfer’s opinion, in line with the “historical judgment- open question” objection, was that “the final and complete fulfilment of that which Scripture prophesies of the Antichrist is STILL to be expected,...that the final fulfilment of these prophecies is

STILL to be expected in the future.” Over against this he rightly placed Missouri’s position that “in the Roman Papacy everything is ALREADY fulfilled.”

The ALC *Declaration* of 1938 carried on the ALC contention and said:

“In regard to the Antichrist we accept the historical judgment of Luther in the *Smalcald Articles* (Part II, Art. IV.,:10) that the Pope is the very Antichrist, because among all the antichristian manifestations in history that lies behind us in the past, there is none that fits the description given in II Thess. 2 better than the Papacy.” This view the *Brief Statement* continued to oppose in paragraph 43: “As to the Antichrist we teach that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures concerning the Antichrist, II Thess. 2:3–12; I John 2:18 have been fulfilled in the pope of Rome and his dominion.”

Iowa and the A.L.C. taught the final fulfilment is STILL to be expected in the future, and the *Declaration* spoke only of an historical judgment based on things that lie behind us in the past. And in the face of those clearly antisciptural teachings , the Missouri Synod agreed in the *Common Confession* of 1950 to the wording: “Among the signs of the approaching return for judgment the distinguishing features of the Antichrist are STILL clearly discernible in the Roman Papacy, the climax of all human usurpations of Christ’s authority in the Church.”

This concession to the Open Question-historical judgment view was officially made by the Missouri Synod in 1950 at its Milwaukee convention. To say the distinguishing features are STILL discernible was to side with Deindoerfer, Iowa and the present A.L.C., and was a recession from and a denial of the former correct teaching of Missouri, as expressed by the Iowa theologian, “that in the Roman papacy everything is ALREADY fulfilled.”

That we read the *Common Confession* aright is attested by the report of Missouri’s *Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Prac-*

tice, which was accepted as its own “by Missouri’s praesidium and allowed standing by the 1953 Houston Convention of that body. The Missouri Synod, of course, claims to stand where she always stood on this doctrine. This is not true, and her own ACDP Report exposes her. This report states on page 38; “The teaching that the Pope is the Antichrist is not a clearly expressed doctrine of Scripture but an historical judgment based on Scripture.” This is not the old-Missouri position; this is clearly the old-Iowa and ALC position.

On page 40 the Report warns against calling things clear doctrines which are not. And as an illustration it gives this: “For example, when it is stated that the Pope is the Antichrist is a “doctrine of Scripture.”

On page 38 we are told; “Scripture does not teach that the Pope is the Antichrist. It teaches that there will be an antichrist (prophecy). We identify the Antichrist as the Papacy. This is an historical judgment based on Scripture.” On this same page; “The conflict arises in holding that this identifying is a clearly expressed doctrine of Scripture, whereas it is not.”

And on page 33 we find quite a mouthful when the ACDP Reporters says “All we say (!) is that the doctrines of the Antichrist...are not so clearly revealed that we have the right to condemn the views expressed as false doctrine Compare with the Iowan Deindoerfer’s remarks above.

Another item usually brought in support of this objection to the doctrine of the Antichrist, and dragged in also by the ACDP, is that “the early Christians could not have identified the Antichrist as we do. If it were (!) a clearly expressed teaching of Scripture, they must have “been able to do so.”

Dr. Engelder long ago answered this objection and said:

“The doctrine that the pope is the Antichrist is based on historical facts as interpreted by Scriptures. Since the predic-

tions of Scripture concerning Antichrist are fulfilled in the Papacy, it is Scripture that declares : The Pope is the Antichrist . The contemporaries of Jesus recognized Him as the Messiah, because Scripture, the Scriptural prophecies fulfilled, pointed him out as the Messiah. Matt. 11:2–6. And their faith rested not on their own powers of discernment, but on Scripture. Even so the identification of the Antichrist is not “a historical judgment or question” but the doctrine that the Pope is the Antichrist is an article of faith, resting not on human investigation, but on revelation . ‘*Then shall that wicked be revealed,*’ II Thess. 2:2–3, revealed by God through the application of Scripture.” All the warnings against Antichrist would be futile, if the present objection had any force, if the matter could not be known with the certainty of faith. Besides, this objection would apply with equal force in the alleged case of a later, fuller development of the antichristian wickedness. It would always remain “a historical question.”

Concerning this same objection, our own president McLaughlin wrote in 1950:

“The Holy Scripture has spoken of the Antichrist so clearly that his identity is unmistakable to anyone who knows both the Word of God embodied in our text (II Thess. 2:3–12). and the main facts concerning the papacy. The salutary use of this Scripture doctrine, however is forfeited whenever the fulfilment of II Thess. 2 is regarded not as the teaching of this passage of Holy Writ, but as a mere “historical judgment” which may be subject to revision in the course of time. It is so regarded in the *Common Confession*. Our *Brief Statement*, on the other hand, treats the doctrine of the Antichrist as a Scriptural doctrine.” (*The Scriptural Doctrine of the Antichrist*, II Thess. 2:3–12, Mimeographed sermon outline for Trinity XIII, 9/3/50)

This matter receives fuller treatment in the February, 1953 *Confessional Lutheran*; and in the second volume of *Abiding Word*, by Dr. Theo Hoyer, page 766ff

True Lutherans have never had any difficulty in recognizing the Antichrist, and they are bold to confess this doctrine that the Pope is the very Antichrist. They have read the marks, and owned their fulfilment; they have seen the Antichrist revealed by God's Word through Luther, and await only his consummation at our Lords second coming.

The *Smalcald Articles* rightly declare that the Pope is the Antichrist:

“The marks (all the vices) of the Antichrist plainly agree with the kingdom of the pope and his adherents.” The classic statement of our Confessions on this point is found in the same symbol: “This teaching shows forcefully that the Pope is the very Antichrist.”

The *Brief Statement* takes the same position (par. 43) that the prophecies of Scripture concerning the Antichrist have been fulfilled in the Pope, and adds

“All the features of the Antichrist as drawn in these prophecies, including the most abominable and horrible ones,...are the outstanding characteristics of the Papacy.” It Says: God revealed him thru the Reformation. And it concludes: “Hence we subscribe to the Statement of our Confessions that the Pope is “the very Antichrist.”

Dr. C.F.W. Walther noted the fulfilment of the prophecies and wrote (*Church Membership*, p. 20):

“The signs of the last times have come to pass. Even the last sign namely the exposure of Antichrist. Not only has the Antichrist foretold in these words (II Thess 2:3–4 appeared long ago in the person of the Pope at Rome, “but through the Reformation of Luther he has also been revealed as such to all Christendom.” In a Reformation prayer in the same book, Walther gives thanks to the Lord Jesus who “three and a half (now four) centuries ago did(st) reveal Antichrist.”

J.T. Mueller, comments on the *Thomasius Gospel* text:

“And many false prophets shall arise and deceive many,”
Matt. 24:11: “Of all these false prophets Antichrist is the
greatest, II Thess: 2:3–4. Of the false prophets, Christ says:
‘they shall deceive many’ so that the Church of Christ, per-
secuted from without and within, would sustain heavy
losses, I Tim. 4:1–3 This prophecy has “been literally ful-
filled both in ancient times and also after the Reformation.

A.L. Graebner, in *Doctrinal Theology*, p. 229, says:

The predicted second visible advent of Christ may be ex-
pected at any time, since all the signs which are to remind
us of His coming have been fulfilled or are still in process
of fulfilment, Antichrist is come and has been revealed in
the Roman pontiff, and the last times are” doubtless upon
the world.”

In their books of *Christian Dogmatics*, Pieper and Mueller both
take the position that Antichrist stands revealed and that the
marks of the Antichrist plainly agree with the kingdom of the
Pope. The Text on Comparative Symbolics (sections 160, 162,
and 173) take their stand, in agreement with the Lutheran Confes-
sions, on Scripture.

Luther literally has hundreds of passages in which he identifies
the Pope as the Antichrist, and he does it on the authority of
Scripture. It is not his own personal judgment, but “Scripture with
its entire voice exclaims that these errors are a teaching of de-
mons and of Antichrist.” *Trig.* 517.

Prof. Louis Wessel, in a sermon on justification (*Sermons on
Fundamentals*, p. 79) speaks of Rome’s cursing this doctrine,
then says: “And as for the curse of the Pope, it can harm us none;
it is but the curse of Antichrist.” In the same manner, Ewald Plass
identifies the pope as the Antichrist in “*This Is Luther*,” page 119.
Altho the new liturgy does not contain it, the older book has this
included in one of the Reformation prayers: “Beat down Satan

under our feet, and consume utterly at the last the son of perdition, the Roman Antichrist, with the spirit of thy mouth.

The Pope is the very Antichrist. This is the clear doctrine of the infallible Scriptures. It is likewise the clear confession of our Lutheran Book of Concord of 1580. And all true Lutherans have confessed and will continue to confess their faith in the Biblical and Confessional doctrine of the Antichrist.

Yet, Walther is right when he says:

“True, quite a number, in fact, the majority, of those who claim to be Lutherans, refuse to believe that the Pope is the Antichrist and the Papacy the Antichristian power,...People see the rule of Antichrist in pantheism, materialism, atheism, socialism, nihilism, and other horrible ‘isms’ to which the modern age has fallen heir. But why is it that from the aforementioned premises men will draw the conclusion that the Papacy is not the Rule of Antichrist and the pope not the veritable Antichrist? The chief reason is that people fail to consider what it means when the pope claims to be the vicegerent of Christ on earth and the visible head of the entire Christian Church.” (Pages 67–68.)

Dr. Pieper also showed why some fail to identify the Antichrist:

“If modern protestant theologians fail to recognize that the Pope at Rome is the Antichrist, it is “because they themselves do not understand what an abomination it is to reject God’s Word as the only source and standard of faith and to anathematize the doctrine of justification by faith. While the doctrine concerning Antichrist is not a fundamental teaching...God has imparted this truth to us for doctrine and reproof, II Tim. 3:16. Hence for a minister to claim he is unable to recognise Antichrist, shows a weakness and dullness in Christian discernment of which he has no reason whatever to be proud.”

An almost identical explanation is given by Dr. Engelder in his

own dogmatics notes:

“It is but natural that the modern Protestants, including the modern Lutheran, who deny salvation by grace alone and the inspiration of Scripture, reject the doctrine that the Pope is the *very* Antichrist! They are unable to gauge the wickedness that the man of sin commits in denouncing the article of justification by faith alone and substituting his authority for the authority of God’s Word; they are unable to read the marks of Antichrist. —While the doctrine that the Pope is the Antichrist is not a fundamental article of Christian faith, the theologian, who is acquainted, as he must be, with the teaching and character of the papacy, and yet fails to recognize it as the realm of Antichrist, is weak in Christian theology. One who lives in the truth expressed Rom. 1:16f. cannot but recognize and denounce the papacy as the masterpiece of Satan.”

We of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference have read the marks of Antichrist in Scripture and have seen them fulfilled in the Pope. We accept this as a clear doctrine of Scripture, without any reservations. Our faith and conviction finds expression in the *Lutheran Confessions of 1580* as well as in the *Brief Statement*.

By God’s grace and revelation we have received this conviction, by His grace we confess it, and by His grace and with his help we will continue also to defend it — this Biblical and Confessional Doctrine of the Antichrist.

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Roman Catholicism and the Papacy

The denial of justification by faith alone, and the teaching that salvation is dependent on man's own works, which leads men away from heaven, the Papacy is above all guilty of this offense; for it seeks to allure men with the promise that it will safely guide them to heaven. It maintains in fact that it is the alone-saving church on earth. But when men, attracted by this impressive promise, entrust themselves to its spiritual guidance, they are instructed to depend for salvation, not on Christ crucified, but on their own works and on those of the saints, so that the multitudes are actually misled into hell by the teachings of the Papacy. If some nevertheless are saved in the church of Antichrist, and there are such, it is only because in their distress over sin and the prospect of death they turn to Christ as their only Savior. Just because the papacy veils its pagan doctrine of work righteousness so cunningly under the cloak of godliness, it is in truth the greatest imposition in the world.

— *Dr. Francis Pieper*