

## Revealed, not removed: The Antichrist in Revelation

The Holy Spirit does an exemplary job warning the Church about danger. Throughout Old and New Testaments the Spirit waves red flags so that the Church is without excuse. "Be self-controlled and alert," Peter writes. "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).<sup>1</sup> "Watch out for false prophets," Jesus preaches. "They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matthew 7:15). Jesus again, "Be on your guard against men" (Matt. 10:17). Here, and elsewhere, God identifies threats against the Body of Christ. The devil. False prophets. Men. The Spirit features these same enemies in His revelation of "what must soon take place" (Revelation 1:1).

Just one of those enemies concerns us in this brief essay: false prophets. Not just any false prophet, but THE false prophet (Rev. 16:13, 19:20, 20:10). He goes by other names: "the little horn" (Daniel 7:7-8, 11, 19-28), "the king" who "will do as he pleases" (Dan. 11:36), the "man of lawlessness" (or sin; 2 Thessalonians 2:3), "the deceiver" (2 John 7), the "beast...coming out of the earth" (Rev. 13:11), "the great prostitute" (Rev. 17:1), "Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5). He may also be the first horseman of the apocalypse, the

white rider bent on conquest (Rev. 6:1-2). Finally, we come to the name by which he is most famously known: Antichrist (1 John 2:18).

Though there have been, are, and will be a multitude of lawless false prophets (cf. Matthew 24, 2 Peter 2-3), and even many antichrists (1 John 2:18), Scripture says that all this lawless, antichristian harlotry culminates in one place. "The antichrist is coming" (1 John 2:18). The "man of lawlessness will be revealed" (2 Thess. 2:3). There will be a little horn that speaks boastfully and wages war against the saints (Dan. 7:20-21). A king will come and "do as he pleases" (Dan. 11:36). Until he is stopped. "He will come to his end, and no one will help him" (Dan. 11:45). "The Lord Jesus will overthrow [him] with the breath of his mouth and destroy [him] by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:8). The Antichrist will be ruined and left naked, flesh eaten and burned by erstwhile allies (Rev. 17:16). He will be "thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur" (Rev. 18:20).

The confessional documents of the Lutheran church identify this lawless one, this great Antichrist, in the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup> Basing their identification on the words and actions of the so-called successors of Peter, our

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version (1984).

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<sup>2</sup> For example: Apology VII-VIII:24, XV:18-19, XXIII:25, XXVI:97-98; Smalcald Articles II:II:25-29, II:IV:1-14; Treatise 40-41, 57-59

church confesses that “it is necessary to oppose him as the Antichrist” (Treatise, 57) and that “the pope is the true Endchrist or Antichrist” (Smalcald Articles II:IV:8).<sup>3</sup>

Many agree that the Reformation “revealed” (2 Thess. 2:7) the Papacy as the lawless one, Satan’s tool and ally (Rev. 12-13). While it’s clear from history that this revealing only “ended” at the Reformation (for a couple centuries before Luther, various groups and individuals had been identifying individual popes and the papacy as the Antichrist), what must be equally clear is that the Reformation only revealed the Antichrist. It did not remove him. He has not been cast aside now that we know who he is. He is not a bit player or harmless crank. The Antichrist still rides bent on conquest (Rev. 6:1), masquerades as the Lamb (Rev. 13:11), and tries to ride the world for his own benefit to the destruction of the saints (Rev. 17:1-6).

But this message is muted today. Some think of the Antichrist as both revealed and removed, that the Reformation somehow neutered the Papacy and made it irrelevant, a harmless, doddering old man play-acting in his postage-stamp sized fiefdom. That many Lutherans feel (or have felt) this way is clear. Some examples:

- The debate that led to the statement on the Antichrist by the

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<sup>3</sup> Quotations from the Book of Concord are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord*, edited by Paul McCain, Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, MO (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2006).

Synodical Conference at the end of the 1950s centered around whether the Scriptures prophesied the Papacy as the Antichrist or if that identification is a revisable historical judgment.<sup>4</sup>

- Some have called identifying the pope as the Antichrist a “theological catastrophe.”<sup>5</sup>
- Theological dialogues (and their results) between Lutherans and Roman Catholics over the past century signal that many hold a far less grave view of Rome than Luther and the Book of Concord.

Come closer to home for some possible examples of a similar view within the Wisconsin Synod.

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<sup>4</sup> Recall that this debate did not begin in the Synodical Conference. Rather, the identity of the Antichrist was one of the four points debated by Lutherans in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though, not surprisingly, given the ecumenical fervor of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially Missouri’s drift from orthodoxy into heterodoxy leading up to declaring fellowship with the ALC and Seminex, these four points made their way into the Synodical Conference.

The *Concordia Self-Study Bible* note on 2 Thessalonians 2:4 reads: “Lutheran tradition sees the papacy as ‘the man of lawlessness.’ But this tradition must remain a historical judgment, not a scriptural truth” (p1843).

<sup>5</sup> “REL 230, Luther in Wittenberg: Intensive Introduction to the Theology of Germany’s Great Reformer, a May Term Program which took place May 15-June 2, 2001,” (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Wittenberg Center, accessed Feb 19, 2006); available from <http://www.elca.org/wittenberg/mayterm.html>.

- The four lectionaries provided in our hymnal appoint only one of the classic texts describing the Antichrist (1 John 4:1-11, Easter 6, Year B).
- It is more than likely that Luther's prayer is not heard from very many altars or Bible class lecterns, "O God, fill us with hatred for the papacy" (*Our Great Heritage*, III:602).
- When we sing, "Lord, keep us steadfast" (CW 203) we no longer sing "restrain the murderous Pope and Turk" (*und steur des Papsts und Tuerken Mord*; *CW: Handbook*, p229).
- Most recently, when former WELS member Michelle Bachman ran for Congress (2006), newspaper articles mentioned her church's doctrinal position that the Pope is the Antichrist. Confronted in a televised debate (Oct. 28, 2006), Bachmann said that her church "does not believe that the Pope is the Anti-Christ, that's absolutely false.... I think it's patently absurd and it's a false statement" ("Michelle Bachmann," Wikipedia article, accessed July 7, 2011).

Perhaps it is tempting to feel that this particular enemy, by being revealed, is essentially removed. We won the battle. We've got bigger fish to fry. But Paul makes the Antichrist's revelation and destruction the key event of the end times. It is not a stretch to see the Papacy as the greater enemy, over against the beast from the sea. And Revelation portrays in vivid colors this great (greatest?) enemy of the Church. And

Revelation, in the words of Monty Python, reminds us, "He's not dead yet." The Antichrist has not been removed, only revealed.

Revelation paints three portraits of this still-deadly enemy: in chapters 6, 13, and 17. The first:

*I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest (Rev 6:1-2).*

It is fair to note the disagreement about whether this refers to Christ or Antichrist. Christ rides the white horse in Revelation 19. Arguments can support both cases equally well. One wonders if the Holy Spirit purposely left this rider ambiguous to allow both views. On the one hand, Jesus prophesies clearly that the Gospel rides victoriously as a testimony throughout the earth, conquering souls with the sword of the Spirit (Matt. 24:14, Hebrews 4:12, Isaiah 55:6-11). On the other hand, Jesus prophesies equally clearly that the New Testament era is characterized by false prophets and false Christs, and especially one, the abomination causing desolation, looking to conquer the elect – if that were possible (Matt. 24:4-5, 15, 23-25).

If it's the Antichrist, it's a fine view of him who sits in God's temple and takes the place of God (2 Thess. 2:4). He rides in white, like Christ, but not (cf. Rev. 13, where the beast looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon!). He wears a crown,

claiming (even having for a time) power. He is “bent on conquest” (Rev. 6:2). This liar deceives to gain power and authority.

History leaves us without doubt that this is a major feature of the papacy. Read many papal histories and they are heavy on politics, light on theology. The popes led the call for crusades. The popes seized thrones and deposed emperors. The pope divided the world between Spain and Portugal. The popes bound consciences on issues like celibacy, purgatory, vows, indulgences, Marian dogmas, and the personal power, primacy, and infallibility of the pope. The pope sent out the inquisitions. The pope today still acts as a political figure, sending out and receiving ambassadors, styling himself a head of state, stepping in to bring political solutions. Likewise, consciences are still bound on the doctrinal issues mentioned above, if anything more tightly, especially the doctrine of the primacy and divine authority of the pope.

That doctrine of the papacy split the eastern and western churches and keeps them divided. Defending the papacy stands behind the 2000 document, *Dominus Iesus*, signed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) which admitted that the Church exists in some ways outside of the Pope’s control, but only in weak and defective ways, and in so far as they are in some sort of communion (even if only by having the apostolic succession) with the pope.

That doctrine of the papacy stands behind all the “dialogue” that has occurred between Rome and other

churches in the last century. For years it was Rome’s way or the highway. Rome argued for religious freedom in countries that were non-Catholic, but trampled on religious freedom in Catholic countries. Now in the ecumenical era where talks take place, it is still Rome’s way, or the highway. As canon law (revised in 1999) teaches, “There is no appeal beyond the pope” (cf. Canon 332, §3).

So, after Vatican I, when a number of the fathers left the council early in protest (and to avoid voting against infallibility), Pius IX forced every bishop to submit to him, and even those who voted “no” were forced, over time, to give their affirmatives to a decree they did not desire .

So, at Vatican II, when the fathers wanted to discuss birth control, Paul VI sent a note saying no. And when his post-council special commission decided to render a decision in favor of birth control, the pope overruled them and reinforced the traditional teaching.

So, in 1999, when representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed the epochal “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” one finds some nice things, some pretty things, but for all that, Rome keeps its terminology and the meaning behind them (read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [1994]). And at the same time, the pope authorized a year 2000 jubilee plenary indulgence, jabbing a stick into every Lutheran eye.

As the Anglican Communion dissolves over ordaining women, ordaining

homosexuals, and the authority of Scripture, Benedict XVI has graciously opened the doors to allow members, priests, and bishops into the Roman Communion. But, as usual, on his terms. This leads to the second main portrait of the Antichrist in Revelation, Revelation 13:11-18.

*Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon (Rev. 13:11).*

The pope wraps himself in the mantle of the Lamb. "Vicar of Christ," he calls himself. With one billion Christians under his spiritual leadership, the pope remains the chief spiritual leader of world Christianity. Yet listen to his words. Read his Catechism. The Pope alone brings unity and interprets Scripture (85<sup>6</sup>, 882). Justification is a process in which man takes part (1989, 2001-2002). "We can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life" (2010; cf. 1434, 1437, 1452). The Eucharist is a work offered on behalf of the living and the dead (1371, 1414). You must still get through purgatory (1030). Indulgences are still made available for your soul and the souls of those in purgatory (1498). Mary is placed next to (above?) Christ as Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix (969).

And compared to the words of preceding councils and popes, these are tame. The Council of Trent damned to hell whoever

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<sup>6</sup> References to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are by paragraph numbers.

holds that we are saved by faith alone through Christ alone. Vatican I thundered that the pope is the supreme arbiter of doctrine. He can speak infallibly and irreformably from himself. Vatican II spoke more peacefully and yet affirmed Vatican I. Though Vatican II went disgustingly farther when it opened the doors of heaven to those who do their best as they are able, whether they know Jesus or not – in other words, Muslims, Jews, and pagans of all shapes and sizes (*Lumen Gentium*, 16; quoted in the Catechism, 847).<sup>7</sup>

He who looks like a lamb, dressed in his liturgical finery, also reveals his true identity as a servant of the dragon. At Vatican I, Pius IX affirmed his belief in everything Trent said about original sin and justification. In his encyclical, *Ubi Primum* (1849), Pio Nono wrote, "The foundation of all our confidence, as you well know...is found in the Blessed Virgin Mary.... [T]hrough her are obtained every hope, every grace, and all salvation." In 1854, "All our hope do we repose in the Blessed Virgin Mary" (*Ineffabilis Deus*). In 1904, Pius X decreed: "...and since it is through Mary that we attain to the knowledge of Christ, through Mary also we most easily obtain that life of which Christ is the source and origin.... Hapless are they who neglect Mary under pretext of the honor to be paid to Jesus Christ! As if the Child could be found elsewhere

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<sup>7</sup> When you combine *Lumen Gentium* with *Dominus Iesus* (see p3) you discover that according to the Pope you are better off being some sort of non-Christian or pagan than to be a non-Roman Catholic Christian. Ironic, no?

than with the mother" (*Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*). It was two Pius's, IX and XII, who used their infallible power so that they could decree that Mary was immaculately conceived and bodily assumed into heaven. It was John Paul II whose personal heraldic shield included an "M" for Mary that pushed the cross of Christ off-center. It's the current pope, Benedict XVI, who issued a plenary indulgence in 2005 requiring the faithful to pray, "O Queen, conceived without original sin, pray for us" (*Urbis et Orbis, A Plenary Indulgence on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*). Revealed? Yes! Removed? No!

*He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed (Rev. 13:12-15).*

Understanding the first beast from the sea (Rev. 13:1-10) to be secular governments under the sway of, used by, and corrupted by the devil, we understand this to mean that there is an unholy alliance between the two beasts, between the church and the state. Again, even a cursory reading of history admits this. Who did the pope use to carry out

his crusades? The state. Who was a greater defender of the *status quo* in European politics for centuries than the pope? Who constantly played off countries against each other (especially France, England, and the Holy Roman Empire)? Who demanded, and used fraud to sustain, his own papal kingdom?

*He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666 (Rev. 13:17-18).*

It remains papal teaching that there is no salvation outside Rome. Even the Vatican II exception clause opening salvation to Muslims, Jews, and pagans says in essence: "They would have been Catholic, if only they had known." Boniface VIII said it most crassly, "It is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff" (*Unam Sanctam*). There was a time, from about 1070-1500 when the pope could fairly claim to be a world ruler, or even occasionally, the world ruler (we think of the papal reigns of Gregory VII and Innocent III). The pope could put entire countries under interdict, and did. The pope levied taxes upon the world (e.g. Peter's pence and indulgences). And the threat of excommunication hung over many.

Today, that political power isn't so very much in evidence, but the religious

control is, even with the ecumenical activity of the last century. The pope still strips teachers, like Hans Kung or Charles Curran, of teaching authority for questioning him. The Catechism teaches no salvation apart from the pope (or the unknown desire to be a papal servant). As noted, Canon Law teaches that the pope is "the first of the apostles...head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ, and the pastor of the universal Church on earth. By virtue of his office he possesses supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he is always able to exercise freely" (Canon 331). He decides when there will be a council, what they will talk about, and then he approves what they talked about. Most bold are the words of Gregory VII in his encyclical *Dictatus papae*: "[T]he Pope can be judged by no one; the Roman church has never erred and never will err till the end of time; the Roman church was founded by Christ alone; the Pope alone can depose and restore bishops; he alone can make new laws, set up new bishoprics, and divide old ones; he alone can translate bishops; he alone can call general councils and authorize canon law; he alone can revise his judgments; his legates, even though in inferior orders, have precedence over all bishops; an appeal to the papal courts inhibits judgment by all inferior courts; a duly ordained Pope is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter."

In other words, the mark of this beast is membership. "Roman Catholic, or else."

Finally, you have the portrait of Revelation 17. The conquering rider, the beast from the earth, now is pictured as a whore

sitting on a scarlet beast with seven heads (which are seven hills, Rome), in striking contrast to the woman of Revelation 12.

*One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (Rev. 17:1-5).*

Again, we see the relationship between the two beasts, only now it is not complementary, but one of domination, via seduction. The prostitute gets the kings drunk. She tricks them, so that she may sit on them, so that she may rule them.

History agrees. Not many loved the popes. They were swayed by bribes (financial and spiritual), made drunk with power or indulgence. They turned on the popes when they could (see later verses). Meanwhile, the popes spent much of their time seeking power and influence of their own, taking kingdoms as their own and graciously granting them back as fiefdoms (England, under Innocent III, for example).

We find the most striking modern example of this attempt to dominate the world in the pope's desire to maintain total control in the raging pedophile scandal rocking the church. Though concessions have been made (forced), especially by Benedict XVI, the church still attempts to maintain that it has total control over its priests and the right to discipline as it sees fit (which has not proven to be all that comforting to those who watch how their discipline works). It is only when public opinion is so overwhelmingly against them, when governments begin to say, "If you won't act, we will," that the popes have relinquished some of their power and control and allowed states and nations to act, or even to punish their priests for these crimes.

*I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus (Rev. 17:6).*

Power alone does not satisfy this whore. Giving birth to other harlots, other false teachings and abominations (like celibacy, Mariolatry, purgatory, indulgences, infallibility, the sacrifice of the mass, etc.) does not satisfy her. She pursues the saints who disagree with her. She makes war on them, as Daniel prophesied. For years it was to the death, via the Crusades, the Inquisition, drownings, burnings, and prison abuse. Now, with far less political clout, all the pope has left is the destruction of consciences through the euphemistically named, but no less inquisitorial, Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, combined with her "Roman Catholic, or else," decree to the rest of the world. Anyone who drifts from the party line is squeezed, silenced,

removed. The pope has spoken, the cause is finished; this, John says, is a sign of the Antichrist (1 John 2:18ff, 1 John 4:1-11, 2 John 7).

*Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled. The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 17:15-18).*

But her "friends" will turn on her. Over the years this has happened time and time again. Wars and revolutions have aimed at the pope and his power. Piece by piece his kingdom was taken from him. The so-called "pornocracy" of the ninth and tenth centuries pitted secular against religious, with the secular winning for many years, putting political candidates and puppets on Peter's chair. Henry IV, though humbled at Canossa, ended up driving Gregory VII to exile and death. The great schism and Babylonian Captivity of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries gave political leaders a chance to use the papacy. Napoleon imprisoned the pope. Otto von Bismarck fought against the influence of the Catholicism in Germany. The Know-Nothings and Ku Klux Klan in America worked feverishly to limit the power of the papists. The wars for the unification of Italy drove Pius IX into self-imposed exile in the Vatican which didn't end until 1929 when

Mussolini granted the popes Vatican City. In the end, no one likes the pope.

And yet, he is not removed, only revealed. The whore has definitely fallen from her perch, slipped a little off the beast, but nothing says that she will not rise again, will not regain her solid seat. And, some of the examples listed above indicate that perhaps she is rising. Spiritually, the pope still maintains his position as chief Christian leader. Churches that want to talk to Rome must toe Rome's line. Rome does not move towards them. And while the pope's political views are not universally beloved (for example, his view on birth control, especially in the Third World), they still stand. He is still viewed as a powerful social force that can bring out crowds in the hundreds of thousands around the world.

Revealed? Yes. Removed? No. The papacy is, in many ways, as powerful as ever. Her teachings haven't changed perceptibly. Her political power (and desire for it) remains in many ways. Her spiritual tyranny, her drinking of the blood of the saints, continues, in the ways that matter, stronger than ever.

What Revelation reminds us is that there will not be a day without this great enemy, the Antichrist, until the last day. Babylon falls only in immediate prelude to the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 18-19). "In one day her plagues will overtake her" (Rev. 18:8). Only on Judgment Day is the prostitute condemned and the blood of the saints avenged (Rev. 19:2). Rome is not yet completely overtaken, totally condemned, the saints avenged. The beast and the

false prophet are thrown into the lake of burning sulfur only immediately before the devil (Rev. 19:19-21, 20:10) at the great battle against the King of kings. As Paul said, "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:7-8).

Revealed, but not removed. That is the status of this great enemy of the Church, the Antichrist. And there is no reason to think that his power cannot, and is not, growing again. Recently, the head of the Lutheran World Federation announced as a goal for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation (2017) an agreement for Eucharistic hospitality with Rome. Others have expressed their longing to be united under one head, even the Pope. While the Pope is not the only false prophet and false Christ of the end times, and perhaps not even the only one referred to in Revelation 6, 13, and 17, it remains true what Dr. Siegbert Becker wrote, "Yet in the Roman Papacy the total activity described here is manifested more clearly than anywhere else" (*Revelation: Distant Triumph Song*, p209).

Thus, we must still pray, "Lord, keep us steadfast in your word." We can also pray, "Fill us with hatred for the papacy." We can beg, as David did in psalm after psalm concerning his enemies, that this particular enemy be restrained by the Lord, confident that the Lord does such restraining work, that the elect cannot be

deceived, that He preserves His church, before, during, and after the short season when Satan will be unleashed, when the Antichrist will be renewed in one last blast of apostasy, delusion and even success (Rev. 20, Matt. 24:9-14, 2 Thess. 2:9-12). And we must, because the Scriptures show us what a brazen, and what a deadly enemy of the Church and individual Christians the Antichrist is.

And so, as Christ said, "Watch out for false prophets." He didn't say it, but He could have, "Watch out for THE false prophet." He didn't, but His prophets and apostles did, and identified that false prophet for us. And He gave us the little word to defend ourselves against this prophet and, as Luther wrote, to "fell him" (CW 200:3). That word is Christ, and the vicarious atonement of the true Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This Christ revealed the Antichrist in all his satanic "glory," and this Christ is destroying and will at the end finally destroy this enemy whom Satan uses to attack the Church. Martin Franzmann said it well, "Despite all the machinations of satanic revolt, Christ has triumphed" (*The Revelation of John*, p98-99) and George Stoeckhardt agreed: "[T]he Church shall withstand the storm and stress of the last evil days" (*Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, p56).

May Jesus strengthen us to testify boldly and clearly this doctrine that the office of the Roman Papacy is (still) the one, great Antichrist. May we live with eyes open to this truth, ready to battle this still dangerous, deadly, and deceptive foe. And may the blood of Jesus, God's Son, purify us from all sins and protect us from

all danger, just as He promises. The 144,000 are sealed and all will be taken to heaven, not one will be lost (Rev. 7:1-8, 14:1-5, John 10:27-29). "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great" (Rev. 14:8). "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on" (Rev. 14:13). "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb....These are the true words of God" (Rev. 19:9). "Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6). "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.... I am making everything new" (Rev. 21:4-5)!

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