



The Sword & The Plow

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The Angels of the Bottomless Pit

by Kurt M. Simmons

A previous article discussed the identity of Revelation's great red dragon. There we concluded that the dragon had a dual identity, first, as a metaphor for the prince of this world - sin and death - and, second, the embodiment of sin and death in the world civil power as the enemy of God and his people (*viz.*, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon) or, more specifically for purposes of Revelation – Imperial Rome. In this article we want to discuss the identity of the angel who bound the dragon and shut it up in the bottomless pit.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after

that he must be loosed a little season. Rev. 20:1-3¹

Not the Lord Christ

A common error in interpreting this passage has it that the angel is Christ. This is the basic assumption of Postmillennialism. Consider the following comments from Gentry:

¹ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr, *Three views on the Millennium and Beyond* (1999, Zondervon, Grand Rapids MI), p. 52. Cf. Keith A. Mathison, *Postmillennialism - An eschatology of Hope* (1999, P&R Publishing, Philipsburg, PA), p. 155; David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance* (1987, Dominion Press, Tyler TX), pp. 499-506.

In Revelation 20:1-3 John portrays the negative implications of Christ's triumph over Satan, when "the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan (v. 2)" is spiritually bound (Gk. deo). This binding restricts him from successfully accomplishing his evil design in history. The angel from heaven who binds him evidently is Christ himself. (1) Christ appears under angelic imagery elsewhere in Revelation (cf. Rev. 10:1 with 1:13-15). (2) The struggle of the ages is ultimately between Satan and Christ (Gen. 3:15; Matt. 4:1-11; John 12:31-32; Acts 26:15-18), making it most appropriate for Christ to bind Satan. (3) Matthew 12:28-29 informs us of Christ's binding of Satan during his ministry and in relation to the struggle between Christ's and Satan's kingdoms: "If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up [Gk. deo, same word as in Rev. 20:2] the strong man? Then he can rob his house" (Matt. 12:28-29; see preceding context for reference to Satan's kingdom).

Gentry's arguments that Christ is depicted by the angel lack meaningful analysis. There is nothing about the present imagery that is uniquely applicable to Christ and cannot with equal validity be applied to any number of other historical personages. That Christ may appear elsewhere under angelic imagery does not prove that he so appears here. Numerous other figures appear under angelic imagery. For instance, in chapter nine, the Roman Emperor, Nero, is figured as an angel given possession of the key to the bottomless pit to loose its armies; four angels "bound at the River Euphrates" are subsequently loosed, which are variously interpreted as Roman legions used in the war against the Jews, or else the Idumeans and four Zealots leaders who brought destruction upon the Jews by pursuing war with Rome (Rev. 9: 1, 11, 14). If these "angels" are earthly figures connected historical events, what makes the angel in Rev. 20:1-3 divine?

According to Gentry, the dragon is Satan, hence the angel that binds him *must* be Christ. However, that the

dragon is a demonic being is itself very doubtful. Revelation is a book of symbols. The passage veils spiritual and historical realities in the garb of symbolic imagery. Reference to the dragon as the "devil and Satan" is no more literal than reference to its being bound with a chain and cast alive into the bottomless pit. Thus, to place a literal construction upon the image is to violate the first rule of interpretation and confound our understanding. The better view is that the dragon is the world civil power poised as the adversary of Christ and his church, not a demonic being. Since any number of earthly figures might bind and loose the power of earthly kingdoms, there is no basis upon which to conclude that Christ is the angel who binds the power here.

II Peter 2:4 Probable Source

According to Postmillennialists, the imagery of Revelation 20:1-3 is adapted from Matt. 12:28, 29 and speaks to the whole gospel dispensation, beginning with Christ's earthly ministry, concluding just before the purported end of time. Although there is a superficial similarity between the texts, careful analysis will show that the points of contact are so few that they cannot justify the conclusion that the one is the source of the other's imagery or that there is an identity of subject matter between them. Jesus' parable in Matthew does not mention casting down, the bottomless pit, chains, a thousand years, *etc.* Other than the image of binding the strong man, there is no further correspondence at all between the texts. With so little similarity between them, upon what are we to base the conclusion that Matthew is the source of Revelation's imagery or that the texts speak to the same spiritual and historical events? Shouldn't something more substantial be required upon which to base this conclusion? Because the similarity between the texts is so insubstantial, the better view is that the imagery of binding the dragon in the bottomless pit is derived, not from Matt. 12:28, 29, but from II Pet. 2:4 and various Old Testament sources: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (Gk. *tartarus*), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." (II Pet. 2:4)

Comparison of this passage with Rev. 20:1-3 shows the following points of contact:

Revelation 20:1-3	II Peter 2:4	Matthew 12:28, 29
The Dragon	“Angels” that sinned	The “Strong man”
Cast down	Cast down	
Shut up in bottomless pit	Shut up in tartarus	
Bound with a chain	Bound with chains	Bound
Imprisoned for a thousand years	Reserved unto the judgment	

Angels are not subject to fleshly lusts and therefore are not tempted with sin. Hence, the “angels” mentioned by Peter should not be construed as heavenly beings, but the righteous “sons of God” (children of Seth) who apostatized before the flood by marrying the unbelieving daughters of men (Gen. 6:1-4). For their sin, these men perished in the flood and were confined to Tartarus² under chains of darkness. Evidence that these angels are a reference to the sons of Seth in the antediluvian world may be seen in the fact that Peter’s argument follows the record of sacred history. Beginning with the “angels” that sinned, Peter next proceeds to the flood of Noah, and finally to Sodom and Gomorrah. (II Pet. 2:4-8) This tracks precisely the order of the cataclysmic judgments recorded in Genesis. The flood narrative opens with a recital of the apostasy of the “sons of God” by marrying unbelieving daughters of men and the violence these men wrought in the earth (Gen. 6:1-4, 11), of which of the deluge was God’s answer, lest the righteous perish entirely from the earth. (Gen. 6:9-9:29) The judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah follows a few chapters thence. (Gen. 18, 19) Since Peter’s argument mirrors the order events set out in Genesis, we may well conclude it is to these events he refers when he mentions the “angels” that sinned. And for confirmation that the "sons of God" in Genesis refer to the descendants of Seth, we need only consult Josephus, who says the sons of Seth lived righteously for seven generation then apostatized,

² Tartarus is the realm of the lost “dead,” the place of binding over until execution of judgment and sentence.

calling them "angels" when they took wives of unbelieving women.³

However, questions regarding the identity of these angels aside, an impartial analysis will own II Pet. 2:4 as the probable source of the John’s imagery before Matt. 12:28, 29. There are no fewer than *five* points of contact between the imagery of Revelation twenty and II Peter two – more than twice the number of Matthew twelve. Moreover, there is a correspondence in the basic imagery of Revelation twenty and II Peter two that is missing from Jesus’ parable in Matthew. Matt. 12:28, 29 speaks merely to the *binding* of the strong man and is silent about him being cast down and shut up in the bottomless pit. Revelation’s imagery contemplates more than the mere *restriction* of the dragon’s power postulated by Postmillennialism and Matthew 12:28, 29; it contemplates his *imprisonment* and *internment* in Hades Tartarus or the bottomless pit for a specific time. The disparity between the imagery of Revelation and Jesus’ parable in Matthew militates against assigning the latter as either the source or substance of the former.

Being cast down to the bottomless pit is not unique to II Peter 2:4 and the “sons of God” or Rev. 20:1-3 and the dragon (Rome). The same figure is encountered numerous times in the Old Testament prophets. According to the *usus loquendi* of the prophets, casting down to the bottomless pit is a figure of personal or

³ Josephus, *Ant.*, I, iii, 1.

national defeat and debasement so complete as to all but equal *death*.

Concerning the fall of Egypt, Ezekiel provides the following description:

"Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down to the pit." Ezek. 32:18

It also occurs in reference to Tyre:

"They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas." Ezek. 28:8

Concerning Assyria Ezekiel said,

"I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit." Ezek. 31:16

Nations described by Ezekiel as being cast down to the pit also include Elam, Meshec, Tubal, Edom, and Zidon. (Ezek. 32:22, 24, 26, 29, 30; *cf.* Isa. 14:9-23) Isaiah uses similar imagery to describe the fall of Assyria. (Isa. 30:27-33) The point of Revelation's imagery is that, as the "sons of God" who perished in the flood were confined to Tartarus, and as various world civil powers had gone down to the pit in defeat, so the dragon suffered defeat in its war against the woman and the Christ child. (Rev. 12:16, 17) This mortal wound (Rev. 13: 3, 14) caused the dragon to go down to the pit in defeat where it was symbolically confined for a time, only to be loosed for a little season to make a final assault upon God's people (Rev. 11:7; 17:8) before dawn of the Messianic age and the new heavens and earth.

The Angel as Emperor of Rome and King of the Locust Army

As already noted, the angel in Rev. 20:1-3 is not the only angel in Revelation possessing the key to the bottomless pit. In chapter nine, another angel is similarly depicted.

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were

darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power...And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless it, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." Rev. 9:1-3, 11

In chapter seven, the four winds are restrained to blow upon the land (Palestine) until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads (Rev. 7: 1-3). Once all who would obey the gospel had done so, the winds of war would be loosed to sweep across Palestine, destroying Biblical Israel forever. The imagery of chapter nine depicts the invading armies of Rome in the form of a locust army from the bottomless pit (the "abomination of desolation"), which denudes the land, subjecting it to sword and famine. The king over the army is the angel of the bottomless pit, the emperor Nero. The bottomless pit answers to the sea in Revelation; both serve as descriptive terms for *heathendom*. The sea is a *geographic* description and refers to the Great Sea, a symbol of the Gentile nations of the Mediterranean (Isa. 11:10-12). This was the land occupied by Gomer, Magog, Tubal, and the other sons of Japheth after the flood (Gen. 10:2-5).

The "sea" is set in contradistinction to the earth or land, the place of God's people. The bottomless pit (*Tartarus*) is a *spiritual* description based upon heathendom's association with sin and death. In proof that the angel of the bottomless pit is the Roman emperor we note that the angel is described as a "star" (Rev. 9:1); stars are among the ruling orbs and are a common figure for ruling powers (*cf.* Isa. 14:12-14; 34:4; Matt. 24:29).

The angel possesses the key to the bottomless pit; keys are figures in token of governmental authority (*cf.* Isa. 22:22). The angel is called the "king" of the locust army (Rev. 9:11). The locust army swarms across the land, denuding it, not of trees and vegetation, but men who do not have the seal of God (Rev. 9:4). The "seal of God" is obedience to the gospel, and in chapter seven it is placed upon the remnant from the Jews who received Christ as Savior (Rev. 7:1-8; *cf.* 14:4). Allowing that the locust army are Roman legions employed by Titus in the Jewish war, it naturally follows that the angel who is king over them is the Roman emperor. At the beginning of the Jewish war, when the locust army was loosed, the emperor was Nero. But if the angel in Rev. 9:1 *looses*, in Rev. 20:1 another angel *binds*. And if the angel with the key to the bottomless pit in Rev. 9:1 is the Roman emperor,

Nero, does it not follow that the angel who binds in Rev. 20:1 is yet *another* emperor? Indeed, we believe it does.

II Thessalonians and “He who Letteth”

There is a general correspondence between II Thessalonians two and Revelation twenty such that we believe that the latter is a symbolic representation of the essential facts underlying the former. Rather than reproduce the whole section, we give a brief synopsis of the relevant points:

The Thessalonians were looking for the second coming of the Lord and the gathering of the church into the kingdom of the Messiah. However, Paul warns that that day was not immediately at hand; first there was to be a falling away, a renunciation of Christ and return to Judaism by many believing Jews and the full and final rejection of Christ by national Israel. This final rejection would come in the form of a persecution instigated by Jewish intrigue, conducted by the authority of Nero Caesar, the “man of sin” and “son of perdition.” Although this “mystery of iniquity” was already at work and the Jews were actively seeking to procure official censure of the church that they might destroy it, they were unable as yet to accomplish their objective: The ruling emperor was unsympathetic with Jewish calumnies against the church and acted to protect it by the *religio licita*, decrees affording the protection of law to the religious observances of the

Jews and different peoples. This is the meaning of Paul’s language to the effect that “only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, who the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy by the brightness of his coming” (II Thess. 2:7, 8). To “let” is to hinder. “He who letteth” was Claudius Caesar. Claudius was unsympathetic to the Jews and actually banished them for their continuous rioting against Christians. (Acts 18:2; Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Claudius, XXV, iv*) However, Claudius would be “taken out of the way” – Nero would take him off by poison, ascend the throne, and be revealed as the man of sin with “all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.” (II Thess. 2:10). Nevertheless, Christ would destroy both Nero and the Jews at his coming: Nero would commit suicide and the Jewish nation and temple, which stood in denial of Christ’s divine Sonship, would be forever destroyed.

The points of contact between Rev. 20:1-10 and the historical setting underlying II Thess. 2:1-12 include the following:

Revelation 20:1-10	II Thessalonians 2:1-12
An angel with the key to the bottomless pit	Roman emperors Tiberius, Caius, Claudius
Casts down to bottomless pit	Persecution that arose over Stephen suffers defeat
Binds the dragon	Claudius restrains persecution, protects church
Dragon loosed to deceive nations and institute persecution of church	Claudius taken off by poison, Nero ascends throne, persecutes church at instance of Jews
Fire falls from heaven, consuming enemies of Christ	Nero and Jews destroyed by breath of Christ’s mouth and brightness of his coming

The reader will observe that the emperors Tiberius, Caius (Caligula), and Claudius occupy the place in the above chart that answers to the angel of Rev. 20:1. This is because it is not strictly necessary to construe the angel as a single individual; as head of the empire, the throne of the emperor had a life and continuity of its own that existed independent of any particular occupant, and itself may be understood by the angel.

During the reigns of Tiberius, Caius, and Claudius, the Jews were under imperial displeasure, Tiberius and Claudius both banishing them from Rome or Italy,⁴ and Caius threatening to destroy the nation if they did not allow his image to be set in the Jerusalem temple and worshipped as a god.⁵ Because of these emperors' animosity toward the Jews, after the collapse of the persecution that arose over Stephen, the Jews were unable to obtain imperial assistance in their war against the Lamb. Hence, these emperors, but Claudius in particular (for it was during his reign that II Thessalonians was written), "bound the dragon," not allowing its powers to be enlisted against the church. However, upon the ascent of Nero, the Jews found imperial favor and gained access to the throne: Nero's wife, Poppaea Sabina, was a Jewish proselyte who ingratiated the Jews to Nero and obtained favors from him on their behalf on several occasions.⁶ To gratify the Jews, and to divert suspicion that he had ordered the burning of Rome, Nero thus became the first emperor to persecute the church, loosing the dragon from the bottomless pit. (Rev. 20:7-9)

Conclusion

The angels of the bottomless pit were the Roman emperors, specifically Nero (Rev. 9:1) and Claudius. Nero loosed the locust army to begin the invasion of Palestine and destroy Jerusalem; Claudius restrained

⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII, iii, 4, 5; Tacitus, *Annals*, II, lxxxv; Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Tiberius*, XXXVI; Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, LVII, xviii, 5a; Acts 18:2; Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Claudius*, XXV, iv.

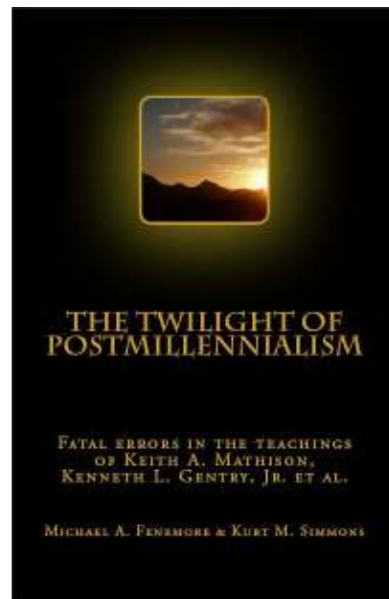
⁵ Philo Judaeus, *Flaccus*, X; Yonge ed; cf. *On the Embassy to Gaius*, XVI-XX; Yonge ed. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII, viii.

⁶ Josephus, *Life*, 3; *Antiquities of the Jews*, XX, viii, 11.

Roman officials from persecuting the church at Jewish instance (Rev. 20:1-3). As long as Claudius was upon the throne the dragon was bound. However, the mortal wound to the beast's head, suffered in the defeat of the persecution that arose over Stephen, would heal. Nero would come to power, the Jews would find imperial favor, and enlist the emperor in the war against the Lamb. Nevertheless, the battle belonged the Lord: Nero and the Jews would go down in defeat and the church enter into its blessed rest in the eternal kingdom of the Son.

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The Reason Why Ken Gentry and Keith Mathison have not Sleeping Nights....



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The Man of Sin

Kurt Simmons

Futurists have long believed that II Thessalonians “man of sin” is an arch-evil world leader who will appear before the world’s end. Preterists maintain that this individual appeared once for all on the world scene centuries ago. In this article we want to solve the riddle of the “man of sin” and the events described by St. Paul.

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 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; who 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, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 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: 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. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thess. 2:1-12).

Four issues rise from this passage: 1) What is the “falling away;” 2) who is the “man of sin;” 3) who and/or what restrained him; and 4) who would be destroyed? Examination of these will show that St. Paul’s man of sin was Nero Caesar and the events he described culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. We will take these in reverse order in which they appear.

The Objects of Christ’s Wrath

The first thing we should note is that the coming of Christ and day of the Lord would result in the destruction of those who “received not a love of the truth.” Thus, the coming of Christ in wrath was in wrath upon a *specific people*. This is an unmistakable reference to the Jews.

In his first epistle, Paul mentions that the Thessalonians had “received the word in much affliction” (I Thess. 1:6). He says that they had “become followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (I Thess. 2:14-16). Here is specific reference to the wrath that was to come upon the Jews for crucifying the Lord and persecuting the church. This is the same wrath described in Paul’s second epistle. Although Paul indicates the Thessalonians had suffered from their own countrymen, it is clear the Jews were ultimately responsible.

In Acts, we learn that the Jews of Thessalonica set the whole city in an uproar, assaulted the house of Jason, and brought him and others forcibly before the city rulers (Acts 17:1-9). The brethren then sent Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, but the Jews of Thessalonica

were so strident in their opposition to the gospel that they followed Paul there and stirred up the people of Berea also (Acts 17:10-13). Paul was thus forced to depart to Athens, and it is from there that he wrote his epistles to the Thessalonians by the hand of Timothy. It is in this context that Paul thus writes “it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess. 1:6-8). The gospels also make abundantly clear that the day of the Lord would come upon the Jews (Matt. 3:11, 12; 8:12; 10:23; 16:27, 28; 21:33-46; 22:7; 23:34-39; 24; Mk. 13; 14:62; Lk. 19:41-44; 20:16; 21; *etc.*). Luke sums it up well when he says, “For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people” (Lk. 21:23). This does not mean Christ’s coming was confined to Judea and the Jews, for the whole Roman world came under wrath (recall the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream). However, it does identify the time of Christ’s coming, linking it to “that generation.”

He Who Lets

The time for fulfillment of these things was definitely fixed by the Lord, saying, “This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled” (Lk. 21:32; *cf.* Matt. 24:34). However, as St. Paul indicates, the “falling away” and “man of sin” had first to come upon the scene. This could not occur until “what withholdeth” and “he who now letteth” was taken “out of the way” (II Thess. 2:6, 7). This has long been recognized as referring to Claudius Caesar and the restraining power of the *religio licita*. Tertullian (A.D. 145-220) was among the earliest to comment that the restraining power of the Roman state is alluded to by Paul in these verses, saying “What obstacle is there but the Roman state.”⁷ This is echoed by several patristic writers. Victorinus, in his commentary on the Apocalypse, states:

*“And after many plagues completed in the world, in the end he says that a **beast ascended from the abyss...that is, of the Romans.** Moreover that he was in the kingdom of **the Romans**, and that he was among the **Caesars**. The Apostle Paul also bears witness, for he says to the Thessalonians: Let him who now restraineth restrain, until he be taken out of the way; and*

⁷ Tertullian, Concerning the Resurrection of the Flesh, XXIV; *cf.* Apology, XXXII.

*then shall appear the **Wicked One**, even he whose coming is after the working of Satan, with signs an lying wonders.’ And that they might know that he should come **who then was the prince**, he adds: ‘He already endeavours after the secret of mischief’ – that is, the mischief which he is about to do he strives to do secretly; but he is not raised up by his own power, nor by that of his father, but by command of God.’⁸*

Victorinus here connects the “beast” from the abyss with the Roman empire and the “Wicked One” with the one who was prince when Paul wrote (Nero), and would follow his father (Claudius) to the throne. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) is even more explicit:

*“Some think that these words refer to the **Roman empire**, and that the apostle Paul did not wish to write more explicitly, lest he should incur a charge of calumny against the Roman empire, in wishing ill to it when men hoped that it was to be everlasting. So in the words: ‘**For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work**’ he referred to **Nero**, whose deeds already seemed to be as those of Antichrist.”⁹*

The late Canon of Westminster, F.W. Farrar, wrote:

“St. Paul, when he wrote from Corinth to the Thessalonians, had indeed seen in the fabric of Roman polity, and in Claudius, its reigning representative, the “check” and the “checker” which must be removed before the coming of the Lord.”¹⁰

J. Stuart Russell, in his classic work on the Parousia of Christ, states

“At that time Nero was not yet ‘manifested;’ his true character was not discovered; he had not yet succeeded to the Empire. Claudius, his step-father, lived, and stood in the way of the son of Agrippina. But that hindrance was

⁸ Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse, ad 11:7; Ante-Nicene Fathers, p. 354; emphasis added.

⁹ Augustine, *City of God*, XX, xix; *cf.*, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, xxv-xxviii; Lactanius, *Divine Inst.* VII, xxv; emphasis added

¹⁰ F.W. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity* (1891, Columbian Publishing Co, NY), p. 13; *cf.* *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, Excursus XIX, (1879, Cassell and Co. ed), p. 726.

soon removed. In less than a year, probably, after this epistle was received by the Thessalonians, Claudius was 'taken out of the way,' a victim to the deadly practice of the infamous Agrippina; her son also, according to Suetonius, being accessory to the deed."¹¹

Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. is among modern writers reaching the same conclusion:

*Apparently something is presently (ca. A.D. 52) 'restraining' the Man of Lawlessness: 'you know what is restraining [katechon; present participle], that he may be revealed in his own time' (2:6). This strongly suggests the preterist understanding of the whole passage. The Thessalonians themselves know what is presently restraining the Man of Lawlessness; in fact the Man of Lawlessness is alive and waiting to be 'revealed.' This implies that for the time-being Christians can expect some protection from the Roman government. The Roman laws regarding religio licita are currently in Christianity's favor, whole considered a sect of Judaism and before the malevolent Nero ascends the throne.*¹²

A final consideration worth noting is that the Greek "ha katechon" ("he who lets") may be rendered in Latin "qui claudit." The similarity of *claudit* and *Claudius* has led many to conclude that Paul cryptically referred to Claudius Caesar by this allusion in a manner similar to St. John's reference to Nero by the number six hundred threescore and six.¹³

Beginning with Tiberius, the Jews were under intense imperial disfavor, which continued through the reigns of Caligula and Claudius. Claudius restrained the Jews from persecuting the church, extending it the protection of law under the *religio licita*, even banishing the Jews

¹¹ J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia* (1887, London, T. Fisher Unwin; republished 1983, 1999 by Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 182, 183.

¹² Kenneth L. Gentry Jr, *Perilous Times* (1999, CMP), p. 104-106 (emphasis in original).

¹³ F.W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, Excursus XIX, (1879, Cassell and Co. ed), p. 727; *Darkness and Dawn* (1891), pp 73, 74; Kenneth L. Gentry Jr, *Perilous Times* (1999, CMP), p. 104-106.

from Rome for rioting because of "Chrestus."¹⁴ As long as Claudius was at the head of Rome, the Jews were prevented to openly persecute the church. However, Claudius was taken out of the way when he was poisoned by his wife, Agrippina, Nero's mother. This brought Nero to the throne, opening the way for the Jews back into imperial favor; Nero's wife, Poppaea, was a Jewish proselyte. The antichristian movement ("mystery of iniquity") that had thus been hidden and repressed under Claudius was loosed and revealed under Nero.¹⁵

Man of Sin

Tradition among primitive Christians identified St. Paul's "man of sin" with St. John's "antichrist" and Revelation's "beast," many holding that these were references to Nero. Victorinus and Augustine we already heard from, above. In his fourth homily on II Thessalonians, St. Chrysostom (A.D. 347 to 407) states,

"For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work." He speaks here of Nero... But he did not also wish to point him out plainly: and this not from cowardice, but instructing us not to bring upon ourselves unnecessary enmities, when there is nothing to call for it."¹⁶

Lactantius (A.D. 260-330) writes:

"And while Nero reigned, the Apostle Peter came to Rome, and, through the power of God committed unto him, wrought certain miracles, and, by turning many to the rue religion, built up a faithful and stedfast temple unto the Lord. When Nero heard of those things, and observed that not only in Rome, but in every other place, a great multitude revolted daily from the worship of idols, and, condemning their old ways, went over to the new religion, he, an execrable and pernicious tyrant, sprung forward to raze the heavenly

¹⁴ Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Claudius*, XXV, 4. Cf. Acts 18:2.

¹⁵The correspondence between II Thess. 2:1-12 and Rev. 20:1-11 suggests that the binding of the dragon in Rev. 20:1-11 refers to Claudius' reign and the loosing of the dragon to the persecution under Nero; the reign of the martyrs answers to those that had fallen asleep in I Thess. 4:13-18. See Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages* (2003, Bimillennial Preterist Assoc.), pp. 362-388.

¹⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on II Thess., Nicene-Post Nicene Fathers*, Vol. XXIII; emphasis added.

*temple and destroy the true faith. He it was who first persecuted the servants of God; he crucified Peter, and slew Paul; nor did he escape with impunity; for God looked on the affliction of His people; and therefore the tyrant, bereaved of authority, and precipitated from the height of empire, suddenly disappeared, and even the a burial-place of that **noxious wild beast** was nowhere to be seen.*"¹⁷

Reference to Nero as a "noxious, wild beast" is generally understood to be an allusion to the beast of Revelation; reference to Nero's attempt to raze the temple of God (the church), to Thessalonians' "man of sin" taking his seat in the temple of God. Sulpicius Severus (A.D. 360-420) makes similar comments:

*"In the meanwhile Nero, now hateful even to himself from a consciousness of his crimes, disappears from among men, leaving it uncertain whether or not he had laid violent hands upon himself: certainly his body was never found. It was accordingly believed that, even if he did put an end to himself with a sword, his wound was cured, and his life preserved, according to that which was written regarding him,-"And his mortal wound was healed," -to be sent forth again near the end of the world, in order that he may practice the **mystery of iniquity.**"*¹⁸

Although Sulpicius Severus erroneously concludes that Nero's life was somehow wondrously preserved and would appear again at the world's end, he correctly identified Nero with the "beast" and "man of sin" (cf. Rev. 13:3; II Thess. 2:7). Other evidence that Nero was the "man of sin" will be discussed below.

The Falling Away

During the Reformation, many believed that the "man of sin" was the pope and the "falling away" spoke to Catholicism's corrupt forms of worship and doctrine. However, few scholars can be found who take this seriously today. The present tense of the verbs indicates that the "mystery of iniquity" was *already* at work, and he who "*now letteth*" would let until taken

¹⁷ Lactantius, *Of the Manner in which the Persecutors Died*, Chpt. II; *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII, p. 302; cf. *Divine Institutes*, VII, xvii; emphasis added.

¹⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Sacred History*, II, xxviii-xxix; emphasis added.

out of the way (II Thess. 2:6, 7). This can hardly describe the papacy, which did not grow up until centuries later. Instead, the better view is that Paul is describing the full and final rejection of Christ by the Jews through their participation in the persecution under Nero and apostasy from the church and a return to Judaism. This is the crux of Daniel's prophecy of the seventy prophetic weeks (*viz.*, 490 yrs) which would end in the destruction of the city and temple (Dan. 9:24-27).¹⁹ It was also spelled out at length by the prophet Isaiah. First, Isaiah describes God's anger and contempt for the Jews' idolatrous devotion to the temple:

"Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word (Isa. 66: 1, 2).

Then, he shows his abhorrence for the continuing temple cultus, which stood in denial of Christ's substitutionary death and atoning sacrifice:

"He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not (Isa. 66:3, 4).

Next, Isaiah speaks to the persecution of Christians by unbelieving Jews and the promise of Christ's coming:

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the

¹⁹ "And when did this happen? When were prophecies completely done away with?...Daniel makes it clear that he is not talking about the destruction of the temple under Antiochus but the subsequent destruction under Pompey, Vespasian, and Titus." St. John Chrysostom, *Fifth Homily Against the Jews*.

Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed (Isa. 66: 5).

And finally, Christ's coming in wrath to destroy the city and nation:

"A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, as voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies...For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire" (Isa. 66: 5, 15).

Here is explicit reference to the coming of the Lord to destroy his enemies in the events culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, predictions repeated by Christ in his Olivet discourse (Matt. 24, 25; Mk. 13; Lk. 21).²⁰ This would come, as suggested by the Hebrew writer, after forty-years, like their fathers' in the wilderness (Heb. 3:7-4:11; cf. Num. 14:34). The church's persecution and apostasy from the faith by a return to the temple cultus is the dominate theme of the epistle to the Hebrews and attests to the fact the apostasy Paul spoke of was then underway. The writer is at pains to demonstrate the provisional nature of the temple service and Christ's imminent return to put his enemies beneath is feet by destruction of the city and nation, warning his readers from apostasy by returning to Judaism:

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries...For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:26, 27, 37-39).

Conclusion

St. Paul's "mystery of iniquity" and "man of sin" spoke to the apostasy of the Jewish nation by its full and final rejection of Christ and persecution of Christians under Nero. The restraining power of Claudius was taken out

²⁰ St. Stephen quoted Isaiah in this place (Acts 7:49) when accused of teaching that Jesus would come and destroy the temple (Acts 6:13, 14), to show that he was merely teaching what the nation's acknowledged prophets had said all along.

of the way when he was poisoned by Nero's mother, Agrippina. Nero then came to the throne and was revealed as the "man of sin," setting the stage for the final drama in God's eschatological purpose, which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

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THE PAROUSIA IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

By

James Stuart Russell

Editor's Note: The writer here mistakenly applies the "end" to the Jewish age, rather than the world-epoch marked by the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (which naturally included the Jewish nation and economy), but he is quite correct in noting that the time of the end was upon that generation.

Commentators are much divided on the questions, When, where, by whom, and to whom, this epistle was written. There is no evidence on the subject except that which may be found in the epistle itself, and this gives ample scope for difference in opinion. Lange, who doubts the authenticity of the epistle, says that it 'has quite the air of having been composed before the destruction of Jerusalem;' and Lücke, who maintains its authenticity, is also of the opinion 'that it may have been written *shortly before* that event.' We think any candid mind will be satisfied, after a careful study of the internal evidence, first, that the epistle is a genuine production of St. John; and, secondly, that it was written on the very eve of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is impossible to overlook the fact, which everywhere meets us in the epistle, that the writer believes himself on the verge of a solemn crisis, for the arrival of which he urges his readers to be prepared. This is in harmony with all the apostolic epistles, and proves incontestably that their authors all alike shared in the belief of the near approach of the great consummation.

**THE WORLD PASSING AWAY: THE LAST
HOUR COME.**

1 John ii. 17, 18.---‘And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof. . . . Little children, it is the last time’ [hour].

We have frequently in the course of this investigation had occasion to remark how the New Testament writers speak of ‘*the end*’ as fast approaching. We have also seen what that expression refers to. Not to the close of human history, nor the final dissolution of the material creation; but the close of the Jewish aeon or dispensation, and the abolition and removal of the order of things instituted and ordained by divine wisdom under that economy. This great consummation is often spoken of in language which might seem to imply the total destruction of the visible creation. Notably this is the case in the Second Epistle of St. Peter; and the same might also be said of our Lord’s prophetic language in Matt. xxiv. 24.

We find the same symbolic form of speech in the passage now before us: ‘the world passeth away’ [ο κόσμος παραγεται]. To the apprehension of the apostle it was already ‘passing away;’ the very expression used by St. Paul in 1 Cor. vii. 31, with reference to the same event [παραγει γαρ το σζημα του κοσμου τουτου] ‘the fashion of this world is passing away.’

The impression of the Apostle John of the nearness of ‘the end’ seems, if possible, more vivid than of the other apostles. Perhaps when he wrote he stood still nearer to the crisis than they. In this view it is worthy of notice that there is a marked gradation in the language of the different epistles. The last *times* become the last *days*, and now the last *days* become the last *hour* [εσξατη ωρα εστι]. The period of expectation and delay was now over, and the decisive moment was at hand.

THE ANTICHRIST COME, A PROOF OF ITS BEING THE LAST HOUR.

1 John ii. 18.---‘And as ye have heard that [the] antichrist cometh, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know it is the last hour’ [ωρα].

In this passage for the first time ‘the dreaded name’ of *antichrist* rises before us. This fact of itself is sufficient to prove the comparatively late date of the epistle. That which appears in the epistles of St. Paul as a shadowy abstraction has now taken a concrete shape, and appears embodied as a person,---‘the antichrist.’

It is certainly remarkable, considering the place which this name has filled in theological and ecclesiastical

literature, how very small a space it occupies in the New Testament. Except in the epistles of St. John, the name antichrist never occurs in the apostolic writings. But though the *name* is absent, the *thing* is not unknown. St. John evidently speaks of ‘the antichrist’ as an idea familiar to his readers,---a power whose coming was anticipated, and whose presence was an indication that ‘the last hour’ had come. ‘Ye have heard that the antichrist cometh; even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour.’

We expect, then, to find traces of this expectation---predictions of the coming antichrist---in other parts of the New Testament. And we are not disappointed. It is natural to look, in the first place, to our Lord’s eschatological discourse on the Mount of Olives for some intimation of this coming danger and the time of its appearance. We find notices in that discourse of ‘false christs and false prophets’ (Matt. xxiv. 5, 11, 24), and we are ready to conclude that these must mean the same evil power designated by St. John the antichrist. The resemblance of the name favours this supposition; and the period of their appearance,---on the eve of the final catastrophe, seems to increase the probability almost to certainty.

There is, however, a formidable objection to this conclusion, viz. that the false christs and false prophets alluded to by our Lord seem to be mere Jewish impostors, trading on the credulity of their ignorant dupes, or fanatical enthusiasts, the spawn of that hot-bed of religious and political frenzy which Jerusalem became in here last days. We find the actual men vividly portrayed in the passages of Josephus, and we cannot recognise in them the features of the antichrist as drawn by St. John. They were the product of Judaism in its corruption, and not of Christianity. But the antichrist of St. John is manifestly of Christian origin. This is certain from the testimony of the apostle himself: ‘They went out from us, but they were not of us,’ etc. (ver. 19). This proves that the antichristian opponents of the Gospel must at some time have made a profession of Christianity, and afterwards have become apostates from the faith.

It cannot indeed be said to be impossible that the false christs and false prophets of the last days of Jerusalem could have been apostates from Christianity; but there is no evidence to show this either in the prophecy of our Lord or in the history of the time.

On the other hand, in the apostolic notices of the predicted apostasy this feature of its origin is distinctly marked. We have already seen how St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John all agree in their description of ‘the falling

away' of the last days. (See *Conspectus* of passages relating to the Apostasy, p. 251). Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that the *apostates* of the two former apostles are identical with the *antichrist* of the last. They are alike in character, in origin, and in the time of their appearing. They are the bitter enemies of the Gospel; they are apostates from the faith; they belong to the last days. These are marks of identity too numerous and striking to be accidental; and we are therefore justified in concluding that the antichrist of St. John is identical with the apostasy predicted by St. Paul and St. Peter.

ANTICHRIST NOT A PERSON, BUT A PRINCIPLE.

1 John ii. 18.---'Even now are there many antichrists.'

In the opinion of some commentators the name 'the antichrist' is supposed to designate a particular individual, the incarnation and embodiment of enmity to the Lord Jesus Christ; and as no such person has hitherto appeared in history, they have concluded that his manifestation is still future, but that the personal antichrist may be expected immediately before the 'end of the world.' This seems to have been the opinion of Dr. Alford, who says:---

'According to this view we still look for the man of sin, in the fulness of the prophetic sense, to appear, and that immediately before the coming of the Lord.'

There is here, however, a strange confounding of things which are entirely different,---'the man of sin' and 'the apostasy;' the former undoubtedly a *person*, as we have already seen; the latter a *principle*, or *heresy*, manifesting itself in a multitude of persons. It is impossible, with this declaration of St. John before us,---'Even now are there *many* antichrists,'---to regard the antichrist as a single individual. It is true that in every individual who held the antichristian error, antichrist might be said to be personified; but this is a very different thing from saying that the error is incarnate and embodied in one particular persona as its head and representative. The expression 'many antichrists' proves that the name is not the exclusive designation of any individual.

But the most common and popular interpretation is that which makes the name antichrist refer to the Papacy. From the time of the Reformation this has been the favourite hypothesis of Protestant commentators; nor is it difficult to understand why it should have been so. There is a strong family likeness among all systems of superstition and corrupt religion; and no doubt much of the Papal system may be designated antichristian; but it

is a very different thing to say that the antichrist of St. John is intended to describe the pope or the Papal system. Alford decidedly rejects this hypothesis:---

'It cannot be disguised,' he remarks, in treating of this very point, 'that in several important particulars the prophetic requirements are very far from being fulfilled. I will only mention two,---one subjective, the other objective. In the characteristic of 2 Thess. ii. 4 ("who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God," etc.) the pope does not, and never did, fulfil the prophecy. Allowing all the striking coincidences with the latter part of the verse which have been so abundantly adduced, it never can be shown that he fulfils the former part---nay, so far is he from it, that the abject adoration of and submission to λεγομενοι θεοι ανδ σεβασματα (all that is called God and that is worshipped) has ever been one of his most notable peculiarities. The second objection, of an external and historical character, is even more decisive. If the Papacy be antichrist, then has the manifestation been made, and endured now for nearly 1500 years, and yet that day of the Lord is not come which, by the terms of our prophecy, such manifestation is immediately to precede.

But the language of the apostle himself is decisive against such an application of the name antichrist. Indeed, it is difficult to understand how such an interpretation could have taken root in the face of his own express declarations. The antichrist of St. John is not a *person*, nor a *succession* of persons, but a *doctrine*, or *heresy*, clearly noted and described. More than this, it is declared to be *already existing and manifested* in the apostle's own days: 'Even NOW are there many antichrists;' 'this is that *spirit of antichrist*, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and *even now already is it in the world*' (1 John vi. 18; iv. 3). This ought to be decisive for all who bow to the authority of the Word of God. The hypothesis of an antichrist embodied in an individual still to come has not basis in Scripture; it is a fiction of the imagination, and not a doctrine of the Word of God.

MARKS OF THE ANTICHRIST.

1 John ii. 19.---'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.'

1 John ii. 22.---'Who is a [the] liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is [the] antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.'

1 John iv. 1.---‘Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.’

1 John iv. 3.---‘Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come: and even now already is it in the world.’

2 John, ver. 7.---‘Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is [the] deceiver and [the] antichrist.’

Here we may be said to have a full-length portrait of the antichrist, or, as we should rather say, the antichristian heresy or apostasy. From this description it distinctly appears,---

1. That the antichrist was not an individual, or a person, but a principle, or heresy, manifesting itself in many individuals.
2. That the antichrist or antichrists were apostates from the faith of Christ (ver. 19).
3. That their characteristic error consisted in the denial of the Messiahship, the divinity, and incarnation of the Son of God.
4. That the antichristian apostates described by St. John may possibly be the same as those denominated by our Lord 'false christs and false prophets' (Matt. xxiv. 5, 11, 24), but certainly answer to those alluded to by St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Jude.
5. All the allusions to the antichristian apostasy connect its appearance with the 'Parousia,' and with 'the last days' or close of the aeon or Jewish dispensation. That is to say, it is regarded as near, and almost already present.

Doubtless, if we possessed fuller historical information concerning that period we should be better able to verify the predictions and allusions which we find in the New Testament; but we have quite enough of evidence to justify the conclusion that all came to pass according to the Scriptures. Whether the false prophets spoken of by Josephus as infesting the last agonies of the Jewish commonwealth are identical with the false prophets of our Lord's prediction and the antichrist of St. John, it is not easy to determine. But the testimony of the apostle himself is decisive on the question of the antichrist. Here he is at the same time both prophet and historian, for he records the fact that 'even now are there many antichrists;' 'many false prophets are gone out into the world.'

ANTICIPATION OF THE PAROUSIA.

1 John ii. 28.---‘And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.’

1 John iii. 2.---‘We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.’

1 John iv. 7.---‘That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.’

In these exhortations and counsels St. John is in perfect accord with the other apostles, whose constant admonitions to the Christian churches of their time urged the habitual expectation of the Parousia, and therefore fidelity and constancy in the midst of danger and suffering. The language of St. John proves,---

1. That the apostolic Christians were exhorted to live in the constant expectation of the coming of the Lord.
2. That this event was regarded by them as the time of the revelation of Christ in His glory, and the beatification of his faithful disciples.

That the Parousia was also the period of 'the day of judgment.'

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Question: Hey Kurt, hope this finds you well. Can you explain two words for me. They are found in 1st. Thessalonians 5:17, and they are clouds and air. Did Paul use aer #5594, instead of ouranos #3772, which means to breathe unconsciously. Does this mean doing things that are pleasing or displeasing to God, and he is talking about the spiritual realm as he was in Ephesians 2:2?

Also, on the word clouds. Could one compare these clouds (1st.Thess.5) with the cloud mentioned in Hebrews 12:1? Thanks

Answer: I don't think there is any mystical sense attached to the word "air" or "clouds." His only point, in my estimation, is that Christians are gathered unto the Lord one-by-one as they die. The Lord meets them in the air (spiritual realm) where they are unseen to eye of man (beyond the cloudy veil of this material realm), and are thus reunited with their loved ones that have gone on before. That's all I think he intends by the passage and words! Blessings.

Predestination According to Calvin

[Editor's note: the following is taken from the 1803 *Orthodox Churchman*, a publication of the Anglican Church, when the English clergy represented some of the world's most learned men. In this review, the author sets out the basic doctrines of Calvin regarding predestination. I suspect most Christians will find them more than a little shocking.]

The Articles of the Church of England proved not to be Calvinistic. By Thomas Kipling, D.D. Dean of Peterborough, and late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. 8vo. 1802. Second Edition.

In the supplement to our second volume, p. 414, one of our correspondents had so fully expressed our sentiments respecting this treatise, that we did not deem it necessary to notice it in our reviewing department. We think it right, however, to announce its appearance in a second edition, more especially as it is now enlarged by the addition of an Appendix.

The learned author, after premising, that all the peculiar opinions of Calvin, which are connected with the subject of his enquiry, may be comprised under the single doctrine of predestination, proceeds to prove, that the doctrines of our Church are not, as has sometimes been asserted, in unison and correspondence with those opinions of Calvin. This he does, and in the most satisfactory manner, 1st, by delineating the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination; and, 2^{dly}. By comparing this doctrine with the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England.

He considers the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination as reducible to the following propositions.

1st. That omnipotent Being, who has existed from all eternity, after he had decreed to create man in his own image, and had fore-ordained his fall from original righteousness, by which fall Adam's own nature would be corrupted and depraved, viewed with the eye of prescience the whole of Adam's offspring as a mass of corruption and perdition.

2nd. Among the vast multitude of human beings composing this mass of corruption and perdition, Almighty God decreed, before the foundation of the world, to bring some everlasting salvation and to damn all the rest eternally. This decree or purpose of God is denominated by Calvin predestination, some being thereby predestined to everlasting happiness, and other condemned by it to everlasting misery.

3^{dly}. The objects of this decree are, not collective bodies of men, as *Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, Romans*, but individuals, as *John, Matthew, Thomas, Peter*, every

one of whose fate after death is fixed by it, before he is born, immutably and everlastingly.

4^{thly}. Adam, agreeably to the preordainment of God (for we are now come to the *execution* of this decree) fell from innocence; and, in consequence of this lapse, the whole of man's nature, as the Deity had foreseen and foreordained, underwent a complete change. It became corrupt, depraved, vicious; and every descendant of Adam, through his first parents' transgression, became a lost, a damned, an accursed creature, and fuel for the flame of divine vengeance.

5^{thly}. From the birth of Abraham (if not from an earlier period) to this present time, the Deity, agreeably to his eternal purpose and immutable decree, hath constantly been taking, and will continue daily to take, those individuals, whom he hath predestinated before the world began to everlasting salvation, out of this mass of corruption and perdition. All the rest, every one, whom he passeth by, and leaves in this state of corruption and perdition, he reprobates; that is, abandons to wickedness in this life, and will torture eternally in the next. Those, whom he makes choice of, selects, and segregates for salvation, are called *elect*. Those whom he leaves in their original pollution, abandons, and will eternally torment, are called *preterits* (*praeteriti*) but most commonly reprobates. By election and reprobation is executed the immutable decree of predestination.

6^{thly}. This discrimination made by the Deity between the *elect* and the *reprobates* is arbitrary; in no degree owing to any superior excellence, worth, or merit in the former, either present and actual, or future and foreseen, but wholly and solely to God's will and pleasure. He extricates the *elect* from destruction for a demonstration of his mercy and goodness. He leaves the *reprobates* in their original state of perdition for a display of his power and glory.

7^{thly}. The *elect* are put under the custody and protection of Jesus Christ; and, do what they will in this life, they cannot fail of being saved finally, being under an immutable decree, and guarded by omnipotence. The *reprobates*, how much soever they may exert themselves for the purpose, cannot attain everlasting salvation, being *hindered* therefrom, and

repelled by Almighty God. As the final salvation of the *elect* is in no degree doubtful, from their first entrance into this world to their departure out of it, but is all the time fixed and certain; so neither is the eternal damnation of a *reprobate* ever uncertain, during his passage through this world, but is even before he is born unalterably fixed and sure. That he should perish, is the very purpose, for which he was created.

8thly. Neither the best purposes, nor the best endeavors, nor the best acts, of an *elect*, even after regeneration, are in any wise *preparatory* to eternal salvation. On the contrary, as the elect people of God under the Mosaic dispensation, were commanded to desist on the Sabbath day from their worldly occupations, so, in respect of a all *spiritual* concerns, the elect under the Gospel dispensation are enjoined to bid adieu to all wills, works, and endeavors of their own, and to keep most religiously a perpetual Sabbath; that there may be free and ample scope within them for the operation of God's spirit.

9thly. God, who of his own will and pleasure predestinated the elect to eternal salvation, himself prepares and fits them for it. The means used by him for this purpose are the preaching of his word, and the operations of his Spirit; both which together constitute what is denominated special calling.

10thly. The operations of God's Spirit are manifold –

1. He forms in the elect a new understanding.
2. He destroys their natural, and creates in them a new will.
3. Every propensity they may have, and every effort they may make, to do works pleasing and acceptable to God, is his.
4. He also, it is, who begins; continues, and finishes, every good work done by them; and who makes them persevere unto the end in well doing.

In each of these operations, he does not concur or cooperate with the elect, but is the sole and entire operator; and they are his instruments or organs.

11thly. Though the elect may, for a time, resist the grace of God, they cannot finally overcome it. This grace is sovereign, and invincible in its operation.

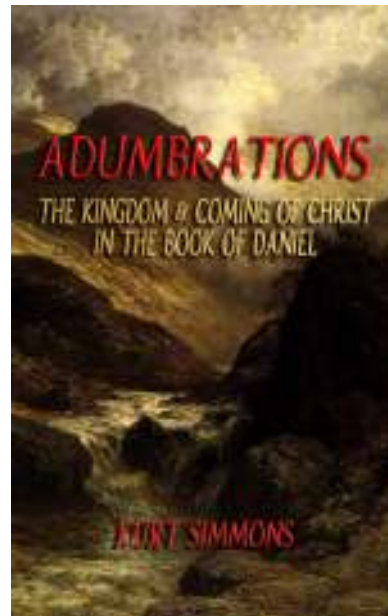
12thly. God, who arbitrarily predestinated the reprobates to eternal destruction, himself also prepares and fits them for it. He does this by blinding their minds, hardening their hearts, stupefying their intellects, depriving them of the knowledge of himself, withholding from them the influence of his Spirit, and delivering them over to the devil.

13thly. The number of the elect is very small. The reprobates, of course, are numberless.

Lastly. The reprobates, those numberless rational beings, whom Almighty God hath raised up for the illustrating of his glory, are hateful to him. He also hates, in proportion to their naughtiness, the chosen few.

When these propositions are brought together, and consider in one view, they almost induce us to think that Calvin had set himself to collect all the absurdities on the subject, which the human imagination was capable of conceiving. That the above is a faithful representation of the opinions of Calvin on the subject of predestination, is most incontrovertibly shown by copious extracts from the writings of Calvin himself. These extracts the learned reader will do well to consult; but it is not necessary for us to transcribe them here. After this delineation of what Calvinism is, we need not follow the author in his comparison of it with the Articles and Liturgy of our Church; but may safely leave it to the judgment of our readers to determine, whether the doctrines of the Church can with any propriety be called Calvinistic.

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