

The Antichrist and the Protestant Reformation

by Steve Wohlberg

The Protestant Reformation in the 1500s literally changed the course of history. It helped move Europe out of the Dark Ages and led to the rise of true religious freedom. Its original principles eventually found expression in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America which teaches that when it comes to religion, the governments of earth have no right to control the conscience. True Protestantism teaches salvation by grace through faith in Jesus (Eph. 2:8) and the supremacy of the Bible above the visible church (2 Tim. 3:16) - above traditions, pastors, priests, popes and kings (See D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation of the Sixteen Century*, book xiii, chapter vi, pp. 520-524). It also teaches the priesthood of all believers (2 Pet. 2:9, 10) and that all people everywhere can be saved by coming directly to our loving heavenly Father through His only Son, Jesus Christ (John 14:6). "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus*" (1 Tim. 2:5).

What did the major Protestant Reformers teach about the Antichrist? Whether you agree with them or not, it's important to realize what they taught. The following quotations are not intended to foster ill will toward any human being, for this would be contrary to teaching of Jesus Christ (John 13:34, 35), but rather to simply present what some of the most influential Christian leaders who have ever lived believed about "the little horn" (Daniel 7:8), "the beast" (Revelation 13:1), and "the man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) - about Antichrist.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) (Lutheran): "Luther ... proved, by the revelations of Daniel and St. John, by the epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Jude, that the reign of Antichrist, predicted and described in the Bible, was the Papacy ... And all the people did say, Amen! A holy terror siezed their souls. It was Antichrist whom they beheld seated o-n the pontifical throne. This new idea, which derived greater strength from the prophetic descriptions launched forth by Luther into the midst of his contemporaries, inflicted the most terrible blow on Rome." Taken from J. H. Merle D'aubigne's *History of the Reformation of the Sixteen Century*, book vi, chapter xii, p. 215.

Based on prophetic studies, Martin Luther finally declared, "We here are of the conviction that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist." (Aug. 18, 1520). Taken from *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by LeRoy Froom. Vol. 2., pg. 121.

John Calvin (1509-1564) (Presbyterian): "Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman pontiff Antichrist. But those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself, after whom we speak and whose language we adopt... I shall briefly show that (Paul's words in II Thess. 2) are not capable of any other interpretation than that which applies them to the Papacy." Taken from *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, by John Calvin.

John Knox (1505-1572) (Scotch Presbyterian): John Knox sought to counteract "that tyranny which the pope himself has for so many ages exercised over the church." As with Luther, he finally concluded that the Papacy was "the very antichrist, and son of perdition, of whom Paul speaks." *The Zurich Letters*, by John Knox, pg. 199.

Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) (Anglican): "Whereof it followeth Rome to be the seat of antichrist, and the pope to be very antichrist himself. I could prove the same by many other scriptures, old writers, and strong reasons." (Referring to prophecies in Revelation and Daniel.) *Works by Cranmer*, Vol. 1, pp. 6-7.

Roger Williams (1603-1683) (First Baptist Pastor in America): Pastor Williams spoke of the Pope as "the pretended Vicar of Christ on earth, who sits as God over the Temple of God, exalting himself not only above all that is called God, but over the souls and consciences of all his vassals, yea over the Spirit of Christ, over the Holy Spirit, yea, and God himself...speaking against the God of heaven, thinking to change times and laws; but he is the son of perdition (II Thess. 2)." *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by Froom, Vol. 3, pg. 52.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647): "There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God." Taken from Philip Schaff's, *The Creeds of Christendom, With a History and Critical Notes*, III, p. 658, 659, ch. 25, sec. 6.

Cotton Mather (1663-1728) (Congregational Theologian): "The oracles of God foretold the rising of an Antichrist in the Christian Church: and in the Pope of Rome, all the characteristics of that Antichrist are so marvelously answered that if any who read the Scriptures do not see it, there is a marvelous blindness upon them." Taken from *The Fall of Babylon* by Cotton Mather in Froom's book, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. 3, pg. 113.

John Wesley (1703-1791) (Methodist): Speaking of the Papacy, John Wesley wrote, "He is in an emphatical sense, the Man of Sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is, too, properly styled the Son of Perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, both of his opposers and followers... He it is...that exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped...claiming the highest power, and highest honour...claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone." *Antichrist and His Ten Kingdoms*, by John Wesley, pg. 110.

A Great Cloud of Witnesses: "Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Cranmer; in the seventeenth century, Bunyan, the translators of the King James Bible and the men who published the Westminster and Baptist confessions of Faith; Sir Isaac Newton, Wesley, Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards; and more recently Spurgeon, Bishop J.C. Ryle and Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones; these men among countless others, all saw the office of the Papacy as the antichrist." Taken from *All Roads Lead to Rome*, by Michael de Semlyen. Dorchester House Publications, p. 205. 1991.
Taken from Chapter 9 of Steve Wohlberg's small book: *The Antichrist Chronicles: What Prophecy Teachers Aren't Telling You*, and recorded in his larger book, *End Time Delusions: The Rapture, the Antichrist, Israel, and the End of the World* (published by Destiny Image)