

The "Man of Sin"

The "Man of Sin" or the "Antichrist" is a teaching which was first brought to the attention of Christians by the Apostle Paul. The Apostle John added more information. From the early days of church history, Christians of various mind sets would throw the accusation at other Christians that they were the fulfillment of these prophecies. However, with the growth in power of the Church of Rome following the Council of Nicea (about 325 A.D.), most Christians who did not care to be under the domination of Rome agreed that the "Holy Roman Church" was the antichrist of Scripture. The Roman Church, of course, returned the favor and applied "antichrist" to all who were not in harmony with her teachings.

All of this reached a climax at about the time of the Great Reformation (1521 and following) when Protestantism clearly proclaimed that the Roman Church was the Scriptural antichrist and the Papal office was the "man of sin."

While many late 20th century editions of the King James Bible (apparently in an effort to be "politically correct") have omitted "The Epistle Dedicatory" from the front of the Bible, its six long paragraphs plainly show the vehement clarity with which the translators identify the Papal system as the Man of Sin.

How then have things changed so that many Protestants no longer accept this interpretation? Why do so many evangelical denominations not believe that the Roman Church fulfilled these prophecies but look forward to a FUTURE antichrist and man of sin? Actually, the new view held forth by contemporary Christian movements is an old view proposed by the Jesuit Order of Roman Catholic priests centuries ago in order to take the onus off of the Papacy. In other words, the traditional (and Scriptural) view of Protestants has successfully been supplanted by the false view propounded by Catholicism. What a victory for Satan's beguiling arts!

THE BIBLICAL INFORMATION

(We will use the King James Version [KJV] in this discussion even though its 1611 English beclouds some important ideas.)

We first meet "the man of sin" in II Thessalonians 2:3. In this chapter, Paul summarizes about 2000 years of church history. Verses 1 and 2 caution the Thessalonians not to jump to the conclusion that the second advent of Jesus was near—no matter who or what might suggest to them the contrary. Verse three allows Paul to begin his explanation of what must happen BEFORE THAT DAY. The first thing he lists is a "falling away." This comes from the Greek word we often use in English—"APOSTASY." Paul is warning the church that there would be a great migration away from the true faith they had learned at the

Apostles' feet. He next shows that this falling away would lead to the revealing of a great (but false) religious leader who would dominate the apostate Christian world. Paul adds another name for this symbolic character, "the son of perdition (destruction)." The Bible uses this name only for one other character, Judas, who betrayed his master for money. Thus, son of perdition not only describes a characteristic of the man of sin, but also his ultimate fate. When Paul says this "man" will be "revealed," he means that he will be available for recognition BY THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND. Such was the case in church history. Once the apostasy (the Roman Church) grew, the Roman emperor, Justinian, gave the Bishop of Rome a title that only emperors had held—"PONTIFEX MAXIMUS"—chief Religious Ruler. This happened in the 530s A.D., and there was "revealed" that "man of sin." He still is called "The Pontif."

It is important to note that NO INDIVIDUAL POPE is the man of sin. It is the OFFICE of the Papacy which is this symbolic "man." It is such because it falsifies its authority. It claims things for itself which only belong to the true Christ. It is sinful not because of evils it might commit (although there is good record of these), but it is sinful or anti-Christ because it is a COUNTERFEIT. Note also that it is a "man." Symbolically the Bible uses female terms for the church: harlot, virgin, etc. (depending on whether the church is true or apostate). But for the head of the Church (Christ or the Pope) it uses masculine terms: he, man, Michael, etc.

In verse 4 Paul carefully describes the usurped power of this imposter claiming to be head of the church in Christ's place. First, it is necessary to know that the word "god" in the Bible applies to any MIGHTY ONE (particularly one with real or assumed spiritual authority). It is, Old and New Testaments, applied not only to the true God, but to angels, prophets, Satan, and powerful men.

Thus, the Papacy (verse 4) set itself to oppose all other religious authority and to exalt itself to the very pinnacle of power in the religious world (Chief Religious Ruler—PONTIFEX MAXIMUS). He thus seated himself in the seat of Christian religious authority (the "temple") displaying himself as the infallible interpreter of all things religious.

Paul explains (verses 5 and 6) that he had talked to the Thessalonians about these things and that they know what is DELAYING ("withholdeth") the revealing of this Papal office. Paul could not openly explain in writing what was delaying matters because it would have created unnecessary political troubles for the church. What was delaying the development of the Papacy was Rome. The emperor in Paul's day was still considered divine—a god himself. It would not be for over 400 years before the Roman Empire would step out of the way and leave the Pope in charge of Western Europe with his new title of Pontifex Maximus. But (verse 7), Paul explains that the apostate MINDSET—that which would eventuate in the Papacy—was ALREADY AT WORK in Paul's day. He calls it the "mystery of iniquity." It was iniquitous because it was an enemy of the true Christ. It was a mystery because it

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could exist right in the midst of the Christian community and not be recognized by many sleepy Christians.

The word "letteth" in this verse is an old English word which means "hinders" or "holds back." Thus Paul says, "The Roman Empire now holds back the Papal development and it will continue to hinder its development until Rome is taken out of the way"—an event which occurred in 539 A.D. when Justinians's troops left Italy, leaving the Pope in charge. And THEN, Paul says, (verse 8), THEN you will see the reign of Popes until the Lord Jesus weakens it by truth, and ultimately destroys it.

That is the Biblical and historical truth of the matter. In I John, the Apostle helps to identify this antichrist movement "already" working in John's day, thus agreeing with Paul that the Man of Sin concept is not for the end of the age, but through most of the age.

This topic is covered in considerably greater detail in Volume 2 of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, available through this website. (See [Available Literature](#) Link.)

Modern concepts of a literal man deceiving the world at the end of the age are both unreasonable and untenable in the light of Scriptural testimony. Martin Luther and reformers before and after him correctly identified the man of sin, the antichrist. They were correct. The incredible fantasies taught today are fiction for those wanting their ears tickled. (II Timothy 4:3, 4)