# Development of Antichrist - Preface

**by Andrew Bonar**

**00- Preface**

The principle of interpreting the prophetic portions of Holy Scripture as literally as the historical is recognized throughout the following pages, and it is upon this ground alone that the writer builds his hope of escaping a charge of presumption in submitting them for consideration, as he has ventured to do. They are meant to be a protest against the confusion which has been introduced by metaphorical indulgences, and not as an additional fancy to increase the bewilderment felt by many who, like himself, are honestly seeking to know the truth of what concerns us all so deeply.

The rule laid down is that Scripture language is to be taken literally in every instance where the context does not, clearly and unmistakably, show it to be metaphorical. There surely is nothing unreasonable in such a position, and if there were, it is for those who dispute to prove it so and also to define, with equal distinctness, the principle on which they would proceed, showing, to begin with, why words occurring in one part of Scripture are to bear a different construction from what they do in another.

We have its own authority for saying that in it are things "hard to be understood," and a knowledge of this may well deter any from dogmatizing upon details; but can it be said that this is to interfere with the principle of a literal interpretation itself or the leading deductions which, if words have any meaning at all, follow inevitably from it? Can it really be deliberately believed that God's Word is so darkly and unintelligibly expressed as to have left the prophetic portion of it an open field for every wild and unbridled speculator to enter upon, or that men may venture to assign to terms occurring there a meaning altogether different from what truth and soberness assign to them elsewhere?

If the great enemy of all truth can no longer bury prophetic truth, as till of late years he has pretty nearly succeeded in doing, it would seem as if his efforts were now directed to deluge the world with false suggestions, so as to bewilder and perplex men's minds, and it would therefore be well for us to recall, in the deceivableness of our days, how our Lord Himself met the delusions in His. Was it not by a constant and consistent appeal to the inspired literality of Scripture? "It is written," was His answer, and it is to the same refuge His followers must betake themselves, if they would escape the increasing confusion in which the neglect of this great principle is involving prophetic as well as all other Scripture investigation.

That prophetic study, in an especial degree, should have been attended with so little practical benefit, might well of itself create a suspicion that the prevailing system has been, and is intrinsically wrong. By it the inquiry has been directed chiefly, as it would seem, to gratify a vain curiosity as to dates, etc. on which it was not to be expected any blessing could rest: nor indeed has it rested nor will rest, until the same consistent principle of fulfillment, recognizable in prophecies declared by Scripture itself to have been already fulfilled, is acted upon in respect to those that are not.

But besides all this, let us bear in mind there is something else to be attended to. Our principle may be right, and yet there be no practical benefit to ourselves individually from the study after all. The question is not how much we are interested or how correct our conclusions may be, but how are we profiting by the disclosure we shall find of such terrible, and, at the same time, such glorious realities as the "sure word of prophecy" declares to be coming upon the earth? Without a corresponding result on our life and conversation, we are but trifling with this as with other Scripture, for all there is bound up in indissoluble harmony together, prophecy as well as doctrine being alike declared to be profitable for our correction and instruction in righteousness (see 2 Timothy 3:16) by the same inspiration which has taught and commanded us to "search the Scriptures," without separating them as we have been doing.

The different portions, when so taken, will be found to be all in explanation and support of each other, whilst the comfort given by an assurance of ultimate triumph will indeed be found distinctly helping God's people into a "patient waiting," as the knowledge imparted will keep them from being "shaken in their minds," if not altogether overborne by those things which, as they will see, are coming upon the earth.

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**Chapter 1. The Personality of Antichrist**

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Christians are called to tread nowhere with greater circumspection than when dealing with unfulfilled prophecy, and it is owing to want of due caution here that so many a humble inquirer has been left, amidst the confusion that is within and ridicule without the Church, in painful uncertainty as to what his duty in regard to the prophetic portion of Scripture really is. The things there, "hard to be understood," have been so twisted and perplexed by each enthusiast in pursuit of his own favorite theory of interpretation, as seemingly to have left the whole question of what is fulfilled and what is not, more doubtful and unsettled than ever, and hence with many, a not unnatural doubt has arisen as to whether it might not be better to leave the whole subject alone.

But against the propriety of such a decision the natural thought will arise, if no practical benefit was intended for the church from the study, why does what is confessedly prophetical occupy so large a portion of that sacred volume which all are enjoined to "search" (John 5:39), and how comes it that there should be a distinct blessing to him who readeth and understandeth the prophecy of this Book? Why should the example of such an one as Daniel be recorded with approval (Dan. 9:2-3), who set himself by prayer and supplication to understand by books the number of the years? Or that such advantage should be indicated to those of God's people who give heed to the sure word of prophecy, as of a light shining in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19)?

And farther, are we not presented with a tangible proof of such advantage having actually been secured to those, who in faith of prophecies recorded, were waiting for and expecting such events as marked the first coming of the Messiah, and the destruction thereafter of Jerusalem when they should see it "compassed by armies," as they did at the approach of Titus, so escaping in Pella the calamities of that terrible overthrow?

Had each recorded prophecy been unquestionably already fulfilled in the church's past history, there might perhaps have been some excuse for those who stand back from the study. But when confessedly this is not the case, as shown amidst other things by the very discrepancies which exist among interpreters themselves, we cannot escape from a commanded duty unless prepared to forfeit the blessing with which the study of prophecy is distinctly connected.

Again, if that study is to have reference (as some would have it) only to the past, how is it that Scripture itself says concerning it, "ye do well that ye take heed in your hearts as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise"? Surely it cannot be said that this has reference to the past, for even our own senses will lead us, when journeying home in a dark night, to observe the lights before us more anxiously than those we have passed. "Ye do well that ye take heed," is the simple and sufficient reply to those who counsel us, because of the perplexity in which men have involved the subject, to leave it henceforth alone, whilst at the same time the failures of the past ought no less to make us cautious as to how, in future, we allow ourselves to take so many unproved assertions for granted.

In prophecies already fulfilled (such as those relating to our Lord's first advent—the crucifixion, etc.), there is one striking characteristic to which we would do well to attend, as about it there can be no difference of opinion. It is this, that in whatever way men might previously have been regarding the prediction, and however their fancy might have wandered as to what it might mean, when the fulfillment took place it was distinctly found that Scripture had been speaking literally, as shown by a literal accomplishment. Alas! for the expositors of our day if their declarations are to be tried by that rule. Who among us would, for a moment, place the satisfactory simplicity of past fulfillments on a level with those which we are called to consider as over and gone already, by the easy and fanciful system in fashion now?

It is a dangerous thing to underrate the extent of Satan's agency in the world, raising as he has ever done from the day of his first perversion and misinterpretation of God's words in the garden of Eden, mists of delusion and error to distort or conceal what God intended His people should be aware of for their warning as well as for their comfort. He knows well in our day that his time is fast shortening, and he knows too of the increasing power he is to be permitted to exercise in the time of the end (Rev. 12:12; and 13:2).

So whilst the "sure word of prophecy," if given heed to, would have been and still be "a light" shining in the dark passages through which the course of events is leading, his efforts have been constantly and successfully directed to darken and perplex the future, by hiding the simplicity of the truth under fanciful coverings, and so leading even God's people to be looking in wrong directions, that, if possible, they may be deceived or overthrown, even as His ancient people themselves were, when the issue itself is really at hand.

The idea of a personal literal Antichrist is what he seems especially to have sought to render ridiculous, or rather, to banish altogether, in these days which to all appearance so closely precede his being revealed: and yet if such an embodiment of evil (as it is desired to show) is really to be, to what ought the attention of the church be directed more seriously than to this? The fanciful and metaphorical interpreters already referred to, have worked hard to make the pope or the papacy (it is difficult sometimes to know which) answer the description given in Scripture of the man of sin when he is seen. Some plausibility has been given to their attempts by the occurrence of certain points of resemblance, for all forms of error and evil will be found summed up in the embodiment which is to be at the end, "when the transgressors are come to the full" (Dan. 8:23). But the great and distinguishing marks themselves are not, and will not be seen till he who is to carry them all is revealed.

One of these has been specially defined by inspiration, "he is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22), which it is vain to say that either the pope or the papacy have ever done. On the contrary it is sufficiently evident to any one who is not determined to deny it at all hazards, that their whole strength to deceive and rule as they have done, has rested on the (wicked and unfounded) assumption that the pope is the vicar of God upon earth. His bulls have accordingly been issued in the name of the Holy Trinity, which so far from denying, he claims to represent.

If he is worshipped, as asserted, it is simply and undeniably by those who believe him to be what he pretends he is, the authorized representative of the God Whom both they and their pope himself profess to worship. Is this not manifest when, at his death, like the meanest of his followers, he has to be prayed out of purgatory to fit him to appear in the presence of Him Whose representative he was held to have been on earth, where nevertheless he had personally been contracting sin like others? So far from denying either the Father or the Son, each pope in succession has professed to derive expressly from Them the usurped authority so fearlessly and fearfully exercised.

Again, if the pope or the papacy be the beast, as maintained by that class of expositors, according to Revelation 13:8, all must be worshipping him whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of the Lamb slain. In other words, Antichristianism in that case, would simply be limited to those who adhere to the pope, with the unavoidable conclusion that such professed atheists as Hume, Gibbon, and Thomas Paine, who showed as little faith in his as in any other name, were written in the book of that adorable Redeemer Whom nevertheless they blasphemed!

Moreover, if the pope is the beast, as it is pretended he is, and all the world wondering after him, his followers to accord with Scripture (Rev. 13:3-4) must be, without mistake worshipping the dragon (who is elsewhere declared to be the devil—Revelation 20:2) as giving to him the power he possesses. But surely, however misled we may think them to be, none among us will venture to affirm that either as a community or individually, papists do this, which would evidently imply a state of hopeless reprobation.*

*(1 Corinthians 10, showing that where idols are worshipped devils are, is not overlooked. All we mean to assert is, that fearful as the delusions of the papacy as a system are, papists individually cannot be said to worship the devil, as men in the end will avowedly do under Antichrist, to whom they see him giving his power and authority— Revelation 13:4).

To escape from such a conclusion, all that can be said must resolve itself into this, that the precise language of Scripture referred to does not mean what it says, for there is not even a place for repentance left to them inasmuch as it is written, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented" for ever and ever (Rev. 14:9-10).

It must not, however, be imagined that there is with all this, the slightest intention here of insinuating anything in favour of the pope and his false and impious pretensions. From the days of the apostles there have been "many antichrists" in the world, as we learn from one of the very passages which tells us (1 John 2:18) that "The Antichrist shall come." And among these the pope and the papacy must take their place, not only as forbidding men, in opposition to God's command, to "search the Scriptures," which testify of Christ (John 5:39), but as having introduced doctrines and commandments which are contrary to His honor and subversive of His alone mediation as well as sufficiency for the sin of the whole world. To lift a man in one way or other into the place and honor which Christ alone should possess, is the grand aim of antichristianism in all its different states and degrees.

A family likeness is therefore to be traced through them all, to be more strongly marked, perhaps, in the last days, which are so strikingly referred to in 2 Timothy 3:1-13, when evil men and seducers are to wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, and when as we learn elsewhere (Dan. 8:23-25), transgressors having come to the full, "a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power;* and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace (prosperity) shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes."

*(It is hoped as we proceed to be able to show that the king here spoken of is identical with the beast who acts "not in his own power" but by that of the devil, whom all the world worships, as giving "power to the beast" (Rev. 17:13), that identity being proved by there being one act, one era, and one destruction common to these among the other names which are given to the Antichrist as characteristic of him.)

The personality of the Antichrist here contended for is no speculative theory to be adopted or rejected as suits our own fancy and about which each may form his own opinion. A very slight examination, particularly of the original, will show that so strongly is that personality declared, as to leave it as little optional with us to overlook it, as it is to deny that of the devil who will give him his great power and authority. It was evidently the belief of the early church, whilst the passages in Scripture which speak of him, if honestly taken, distinctly show that none else than a person can be meant.

He is called (and if any will examine the original, they will see how markedly it is there expressed), "that man of sin, . . . the son of perdition" who "sitteth in the temple of God"* (2 Thess. 2:3-4), the wicked or lawless one (verse 8), "the Antichrist" (above the many who will have preceded him) (1Jn 2:18; 1Jn 2:22), "a king" and "the king" (Dan 8:23; Dan 11:36), who does "according to his will," "the idol shepherd" who tears the flesh (Zec 11:17), he who is to open "his mouth in blasphemy against God" (Rev 13:6), and who is to be "cast alive into the lake of fire" (Rev 19:20).

*("The temple of God" is an expression applied in Scripture to three things, and three only. (1) to the actual temple at Jerusalem, as in 2Ch 35:20. (2) to the bodies of individual saints, as in 1Co 6:19. (3) to the Church of God, as in 1Co 3:17. Now it is manifestly impossible that Antichrist could "sit" in any but the first of these three, and the coinciding mark given by Daniel of the "glorious holy mountain" [Mount Zion being alone called so], where he is to plant himself, confirms it to be a fact which can have no accomplishment at Rome [as alleged], inasmuch as neither the temple nor mountain are or ever have been there, any more than they can be elsewhere than at Jerusalem— the holy city. Is it not strange to see Protestants so bent on their fancy of the pope being Antichrist, as not to perceive they give up the whole question by calling St Peter's at Rome "the temple of God"? For if the pope is the Antichrist, how can they call his temple at Rome or anywhere else "the temple of God," when the exception, as we have seen, is only as to Jerusalem, where alone, of necessity, the usurpation in any circumstances could be, "in the holy place,"— "My holy hill of Zion")?

Under other names which as remarked already will be found applicable to him only, his personality is as distinctly intimated on every occasion, and yet to suit preconceived notions and prejudices, terms nowhere else so interpreted are distorted to mean a "succession of men," or as others would have it, a "succession of principles," which are gradually to be consumed out of it as the world becomes converted. Why in the same way might not the third Person of the ever blessed Trinity be held to mean merely a succession of influences or governing principles? How is it that Christians will not open their eyes to the danger of sanctioning what would make plain words of Scripture mean anything or nothing, and so give the enemy ground for questioning even the Personality of the Lord Who bought them, or else the alternative of hearing themselves taunted with inconsistency?

In addition to this greater danger to our holy religion itself, there is another springing from such loose interpretation of Scripture which is, that by suffering ourselves to be led into the hope of amelioration which is gradually to usher in the day of the Lord, we may mistake the "deceivableness of unrighteousness" (2Th 2:10) with which we are warned Antichrist will introduce himself, for the beginning of that reign of righteousness which will be established only when Christ "with the spirit of His mouth and . . . with the brightness of His coming" shall have destroyed and consumed him (2Th 2:8).

It will be found in that day to have been no light matter to have been trifling with Scripture language, our tendency being to call evil good and good evil; while all Satan's art will be turned to conceal the real tendency as well as nature of his working from us. "That old serpent, which is the devil" (Rev 20:2), will at the end as at the beginning, still prove himself more subtle than any beast of the field. His "working" will be in no shape to alarm the fears or shock men with its impropriety.

On the contrary, it will be suited to the spirit and requirements of the age, with a flexibility and power of insertion best resembled to the form which he assumed when tempting Eve in the garden. The gradual character of his approaches should rouse us to think, for "many antichrists" have been preparing the way for him ever since the apostle declared in his day that "the spirit of Antichrist" was already in the world (1Jn 4:3).

The full development will surely follow when the apostasy and man of sin come to be. Meanwhile each successive step downwards seems in itself so trifling as scarcely to deserve our notice, which is in fact the danger. "Behold, I have told you before" (Mat 24:25) is the caution given immediately after our Lord Himself had been warning of the especial deceivableness of the times which shall immediately precede His coming, when will be seen how vain and unwarranted was the fond conceit with which men had been pleasing themselves of any peaceful termination of present evil, which on the contrary, if we will but listen to Scripture, must "wax worse and worse" (2Ti 3:13) until the consummation takes place under the Antichrist, emphatically called as presiding over it, "that man of sin," in a trouble "such as was not from the beginning (foundation) of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mat 24:21).

Regarding that last tribulation, it seems God's merciful design to have His church and people specially warned, so that it should not overtake them unawares any more than the day of the Lord which it is to precede, though both shall come as a snare upon all them that dwell on the face of the earth. Only admit the possibility of a future personal Antichrist (which, surely, it is not unreasonable to ask, after the Scripture terms that have been cited), and our Bibles will be found replete with allusions to such a being in this dispensation, with marks to distinguish him when he does come, from all that will have preceded him.

Is it objected that so evident a sign as he would be before the coming of Christ, would interfere with the injunction to "Watch, for ye know not the day nor the hour when your Lord cometh;" and to that extent to put off the expectant and pilgrim character which befits those servants who profess to be waiting for their Lord? Hear the answer which such a passage as 2 Thessalonians 2 supplies. In it we have the church warned not to be shaken "as that the day of Christ is at hand," whilst the very same apostle who gives the warning, had just been telling them to "watch and be sober" (1Th 5:6), for the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, — nay, what is more, a distinct intimation is given that that day should not come until the man of sin—this "son of perdition"— should be revealed.

The only seeming confusion arises from our overlooking the broad distinction drawn in the same epistle, between the children of darkness and the children of light (1Th 5:4-5) —the one to be overtaken as by a thief in the night, the other to "know perfectly" the times and the seasons, inasmuch as "I told you these things" (2Th 2:5).

Indeed, signs of the most definite character have been constantly vouchsafed to God's people in all ages, as now, to designate the advent of events previously foretold by His prophets. Yet these, though sufficiently distinct for their warning, are invariably seen to have been overlooked by all others. Noah's preaching, whilst the ark was preparing, did not alarm the scoffers of his day, or make them know "till the flood came and took them all away." And so with the scoffers in our own (2Pe 3:3), will the coming of the Son of man be, although preceded by so signal an event as the revelation of the man of sin: a sign, nevertheless, to the children of light, for which already they would do well to be watching.

To be "seeking" a sign is a widely different thing from looking out for one already announced for warning. The sin and perverseness of seeking a sign is pointed out to us in such passages as Mat 12:39 and Mar 8:11-12. To that evil and adulterous generation—children of darkness, and not of light, according to the distinction drawn in the epistle to the Thessalonians already referred to—no sign shall be given. And why? Because of their willful rejection of the signs God Himself had been pleased to vouchsafe. And mark the consequence when the false christs and false prophets appear, as appear they will (Mar 13:22), with signs and wonders to seduce if possible, the very elect though waiting for them.

Not only shall no sign be given to the despisers of Scripture warning, but God shall send them strong delusion to believe "the lie," that they all may be damned who believed not "the truth" (2Th 2:11-12). How fearful the thought even of such a delusion! More fatal still than that in the days of Noah; for it is the delusion of him whose coming is to be after the working of Satan, and their end, like his, to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev 19:20; Rev 20:10).

If there be any truth in these remarks, enough, surely, has already been said to vindicate, in some degree to Christians at least, the uses as well as duty of prophetic study, whatever ridicule may be attaching to it. A study in which it will scarcely be possible to engage without, ere long, being forced to see that a personal "coming of the Lord" is to be undoubtedly expected, if words are to have any meaning at all, as well as a time of unequalled tribulation immediately to precede it (Mat 24:29). And equally impossible will it be found to separate that tribulation from a personal Antichrist and the leading part he has in it, as the express agent for the putting forth of Satan's energy to accomplish what God will then permit him to do.

The apostle speaks, as has already been adverted to, of antichrists in his day, but the maturity of antichristian evil (every departure from the truth in Jesus being held as antichristian) is distinctly postponed till "that man of sin be revealed" —the lawless one who, after a permitted triumph, is to be destroyed by the "brightness of His coming."

It has been already noticed incidentally, that the notion of a personal literal Antichrist with a short-lived supremacy, was held by the early Christians, without, it is believed, any recorded exception. They were living too close to the times in which a strictly literal fulfillment had been seen of all the prophecies connected with our Lord's first coming in the flesh, to doubt that "the man of sin" in his times, would prove to be also literally a man, or the 1260 days of his usurpation literal days. It was reserved for a later generation, who had fallen under the cruelties of papal oppression, to fancy it to be the unequalled trouble and predicted apostasy of the last times, and even to alter the literal meaning of words to make it so.

It was about the year 1240, that Eberhard began to think the pope to be the "little horn," and that Luther and his companions in tribulation should have gone in with such imagination, seems far less wonderful than that so many in these days should still be arguing that he is the dreaded "man of sin," when the oppression and troubles Luther saw have long since ceased. The cessation alone ought to have proved to any not willfully blind, that the pope cannot be that man of sin under whom the tribulation is to be; for it is to be terminated, not as some would have it by the gradual decline of either the pope or the papacy, but by the coming of the Lord Himself to destroy the wicked one.

"Immediately (the word in the original is emphatic) after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth (land) mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mat 24:29-30).

Those who adhere to the prevailing mode of figurative interpretation, regard all this as metaphorical language, maintaining that the sun and moon here mentioned, are political emblems. Thus they dispose of these solemn predictions of our Lord Himself, even when forced to admit that the same expressions in Scripture, when employed to describe past events, as at the crucifixion, did express what actually occurred and took place then and there. If the sun was darkened and the veil rent (Luk 23:45), surely it is worse than presumptuous to affirm that the same words applied to the future may have a totally different meaning.

"Yet once more (again),* I shake not the earth only, but also heaven," are the words of inspiration (Heb 12:26), and by the terms applicable alone to the same mighty occurrence foretold by our Lord Himself in the passage just transcribed from Matthew, which again can of necessity be none other than that "coming" by which He destroys Antichrist— that "man of sin," whom He will encounter, not in decrepitude like the pope, but whilst he is still aided by the devil "with all power, and signs, and lying wonders," and then fully manifested to be the lawless one opposing and exalting himself above all (2Th 2:4).

*(This "once again" is alluded to in Isaiah 2, "when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (verse 21) which is distinctly to be, as the context will show in "the day of the LORD" (verse 12) when every one that is lifted up (like Antichrist exalting himself) "shall be brought low").

If Christ then destroys the "man of sin" at His coming, the destruction must take place "immediately" after the tribulation described to be "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mat 24:21). This being so, the time spoken of must be identical with that of Dan 12:1 and the events there recorded, inasmuch as there cannot be two distinct periods of unequalled tribulation; and this again identifies the king there described as exalting himself above every god and coming to his end and none to help him (Dan 11:45), with "that man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2) "the son of perdition" who is destroyed by "the brightness of His coming."

But who can pretend that there is any resemblance between such a desolation with such a destruction, and a pope powerless to do even what his predecessors did; nay, requiring the support of foreign troops to retain him on his feeble throne? Does it not appear something like mockery to say of such an one that the devil is giving him his power and great authority? Are men worshipping him and saying, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" (Rev 13:4). Where are the ten kings who "receive power as kings one hour" with him, and who are said to have one mind, and agree to give him their power till the purposes of God are fulfilled (Rev 17:12-13; Rev 17:17)?

They who call the pope the Antichrist admit he is also the beast, and yet can talk to us of the gradual diminution or drying up of his power, in face of what is written in Revelation 17, where, with the kings of the earth, he is seen in the plenitude of his power (and from what follows aided to the last by the devil), gathered to make war against Him that sat on the horse and against His army. Is it possible to think that the downfall there recorded is a gradual one? Every word in Rev 19:20 indicates the reverse. It is sudden as it is overwhelming, for then is seen the strength of Christ, the "seed of the woman," put forth against him who is the seed of the serpent; the "head" bruised then as the "heel" has already been.

It is the strength of heaven against the strength of hell, and the catastrophe is complete. "The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse" (Rev 19:20-21).

Such is the end, not of the pope or the papacy, but of an apostasy more terrible than all that has yet darkened this sin-worn earth. It is the recorded downfall of Gentile power then in unholy combination with Jewish, which alike cast off Christ as the rightful Lord, will have chosen a king of their own to the rejection of Him Who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And it is thus that His Name is seen written on His vesture and on His thigh (Rev 19:16), as followed by the armies of heaven, He comes to claim His kingdom from the usurper.

How strange to see Christians willing, by figurative perversions like these, to set aside the glorious open triumph which will then be seen, and in which they themselves are to share, for an inconsistent attempt to make the pope in the decrepitude of these last times, personate him who aided by the devil and supported to the end, as we have seen, by the kings of the earth and their armies, encounters the armies of heaven and falls by the power of a Mighty One.

People tell us that although it may be different with him at this epoch from what it once was, the pope is reviving or will yet revive, and his efforts to recover his lost authority be yet successful. But this is indulging a mere fancy, for which there is not only no warrant in Scripture, but the reverse. The Antichrist, when he is seen, comes "in like a flood" (Isa 59:19) and prospers (Dan 8:12) without intermission, and this continuance is also characteristic of the adherence given by the kings of the earth and their armies, till they share his destruction.

There are other arguments, besides these which have been already produced, to show that the Antichrist when he does appear, will prove to be neither a succession of men nor a succession of principles, but what Scripture language, in its ordinary acceptation which we have no right to reject, tells us throughout he will be—an individual man. It is somewhat unfortunate that the definite article, which appears in the original, has been omitted in our translation of 1Jn 2:18. It ought to run, Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that the Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists already in the world, whereby we know that it is the last time.

The many antichrists are thus forerunners of the Antichrist himself, and must of necessity therefore exhibit in some degree his characteristics; not the least remarkable of which (as attempted to be shown) are his personality, and also his rising out of an apostasy. In fact, many individuals have actually, from time to time, presented themselves to the notice of the world answering in various particulars the description we have of him in Dan 11:36-40 and Rev 13:5-8.

One of the most remarkable of these, to begin with, was Antiochus Epiphanes about 160 years before Christ, whose history is given by Josephus and also in the first chapter of the uninspired book of Maccabees, which although apocryphal, is of good repute as a history, and as such, respected by the Jews themselves.

Antiochus was the savage persecutor of the Jews in their latter times, as the Antichrist himself will be of both Jews and Christians, when, at the end, transgressors shall have come to the full. He followed or rather rose out of an apostasy then, as the Antichrist will be revealed out of the still more fearful "falling away" of which Paul speaks in 2 Thessalonians. A few extracts from the chapter of Maccabees referred to will show this, and help to give us some idea from what he did, of what the Antichrist himself will do in his times.

"In those days went there out of Israel wicked men who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow. So this device pleased them well. Then certain of the people were so forward herein that they went to the king who gave them license to do after the manner of the heathen. Whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem according to the custom of the heathen; and made themselves uncircumcised and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen."

Such is the account of that early apostasy, which may foreshadow more closely than many may be prepared to think, the "falling away" spoken of in Thessalonians. Following upon it, the enemy of the truth in that day appears as we go on to see, "after that Antiochus had smitten Egypt," (mark how Antichrist in his day will do the same, Dan 11:42-45), "he returned again and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great multitude, and took away the golden altar and the candlestick of light and all the vessels thereof, and the table of the shewbread and the pouring vessels and the vials and the censers of gold and the veils and the crowns and the golden ornaments that were before the temple, all of which he pulled off, and when he had taken all away he went into his own land, having made a great massacre and spoken very proudly."

Moreover, we are told, "King Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people and every one should leave his laws; so all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king; yea, many of the Israelites consented to his religion and sacrificed unto idols and profaned the Sabbath." Thereafter we find him doing what the Antichrist will yet do still more markedly in his day (Rev 13:15-18), condemning all to be put to death who refused to "profane the Sabbath and pollute the sanctuary and the holy people, and to set up altars and groves of idols and sacrifice swine's flesh."

Then comes the identical expression quoted by our Lord from Daniel 168 years after Antiochus, showing his allusion was to something still future: "In the month Casleu he set up the abomination of desolation on the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Judah. And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire. Howbeit many in Israel were fully resolved not to eat any unclean thing, and there was great wrath upon Israel."

Here we have one of the many antichrists whose doings wonderfully foreshadow what we read of the yet more terrible actings of him, to whom the devil will give his power and great authority; and who opens "his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His Name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven;" and to whom it is given "to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power . . . over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations," and whom all shall worship that dwell upon the earth whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of the Lamb slain (Rev 13:6-8).

Another individual Antichrist out of the many, was the apostate emperor Julian who tried to overthrow the church and bring back paganism. He too, like Antiochus, followed upon an apostasy (the Arian) which denied that Christ was God. (The Antichrist when he comes will do still more than this, for he will deny "the Father and the Son, exalting himself above all that is called God or is worshipped"). So grievous were his times, as history informs us, that the few devout and holy men who in them were testifying to the truth amidst abounding impiety, thought that Antichrist himself had come when Julian, his shadow, arose.

Another apostasy, which began by placing the traditions of man on a footing with the written word of God, introducing the worship of saints and images and assigning to the Virgin Mary an intercessory power, which holds back from the laity the Bible in which such things are forbidden, teaching, too, contrary to its requirements, a belief in purgatory, transubstantiation, justification by works, and such like doctrines of devils, has also been seen, with a person arising out of it too who claimed for himself and his successors, in the usurped place the popes have so long held, such power and authority as to entitle them to a place among the many antichrists that are in "the world."

The next great heresy which arose, the Nestorian, denied Christ's incarnation, and spreading widely in the lands round Palestine, succeeded in destroying the churches which had so long flourished there. It was out of that remarkable "falling away" that another personal Antichrist arose, Mohammed, who, denying the Son altogether, proclaimed that there was but one God and that he was his prophet. It is well known how successful he has been with many of the Jews themselves in the East.

In France, before the revolution, another well-known "falling away" occurred, following upon the doctrines taught by Voltaire, etc., when a national decree was passed that death was a perpetual sleep. The scenes which followed show us what man will dare to do if left to himself, and also called forth another individual who came in like a flood and prospered.