

THE REAL CHRIST
and
THE ANTICHRIST

By

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PREFACE

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This book has its origin in the love and concern of Jesus that, through knowing Him, we should also know His Father as the only true God. This alone is eternal life. (John 17,3)

At the outset I want to assure my readers that it is not my desire to offend anyone or to condemn this present generation for what was done, long ago, by the spiritual ancestors of the 20th century church. I plead for your love towards me and your patience with me, when it is necessary to mention certain unpalatable aspects of the history and tradition of the church in ways which may challenge, or even threaten, the position of its modern adherents.

I do belong to that stream which, in the history of the church, has been labelled "Anabaptist". It will become obvious that my sympathies lie with those inspiring witnesses who, down through the centuries, have been misunderstood, persecuted as "heretics" and even martyred, by the mainstream church.

Because I write from this perspective, it is inevitable that there will be some who read this book and conclude that I hate Catholics.

I do not.

Others may accuse me of bigotry towards other Protestants, whose religious views are different to mine.

It was not bigotry, but love, which led Jesus to claim that HE was the ONLY way to God. It is not bigotry to insist, still, that there is no other way. The desperate need of all of us, is to find and follow the REAL CHRIST who made that claim.

If we claim to be Christian, all of us must answer for ourselves, the vital question about the true identity of the Christ we profess to serve. If we fail to answer that question honestly and, instead, follow a false Christ, we will be guilty of rejecting both the Father and the Son.

ALLON MAXWELL

Chapter 1 - THE FORGOTTEN TRUTH

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It is a sad fact that most of the modern church has lost the real meaning of the term, "ANTICHRIST".

For those who really want to know the truth, there is no need for this ignorance. At the end of the first century, the Apostle John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, identified the Antichrist of his day. John's warning to the first century church also left a key of understanding which has enabled others, in all ages, to correctly identify the working of the "Spirit of Antichrist" in their own time.

However, not all have listened carefully to the Spirit of God. As a result, in virtually every generation of the continuing history of the church, there have been men who have missed the mark by being too ready to identify the Antichrist as some prominent figure, associated with significant events in their own local history. For example, earlier this century, during World War 1, many British Christians were convinced that the German Kaiser was the Antichrist. In the late 1930s Mussolini was named. After the commencement of World 2 it was Hitler. When those prophecies failed without the arrival of either Armageddon or the Second Coming, other teachers soon found new targets for speculation. In recent times. Henry Kissinger and Saddam Hussein have both been proposed as contenders. We may be certain that there will be more. There is no shortage of false prophets in a generation of "children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine".

Over the last few decades an enormous number of popular books have been published, containing many spectacular and fanciful theories. These books hide the truth by concentrating attention on the supposed sudden appearance of a mysterious, evil and powerful world ruler, in the almost immediate future.

These many books have been widely accepted and have played a major role in shaping the attitudes of the 20th century church. However, there are still some serious students of the Bible, for whom these modern theories are far from satisfactory. They require a little too much speculation to fill in the obvious gaps and they ignore the great weight of evidence from past history.

In this small book we shall explore an interpretation of the prophecies about the Antichrist, which is no longer popular.

It was, however, until only a few decades ago, the common understanding of most of the Protestant church. It was taught by well known Protestant leaders such as Luther, Bunyan, Huss, Wycliffe, Calvin, Tyndale, Knox, and Wesley. It was also the conviction, born in bitter experience, of that often forgotten minority who down through the centuries, have suffered so terribly for their refusal to conform or submit to the Catholic mainstream.

We shall identify the Antichrist, not in the future, but in the history of the Papacy.

I do acknowledge that, for many, this plain and direct statement may be hard to accept.

I do not know how to say it in a way which will make it acceptable for everyone.

All I can do is urge readers not to take offence at this point, but to read all the way to the end and prayerfully consider the evidence presented.

By properly identifying the Antichrist we shall also more clearly understand the .

Chapter 2 - THE LITERAL MEANING OF "ANTICHRIST"

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in the Bible, the term combines the Greek word, "anti", with the title commonly given to Jesus. The main meaning of this word is, "instead of" or, "in place of".

"Antichrist", therefore means, literally, "someone who stands instead of, or in place of, the real Jesus Christ".

It could be someone who bears the actual name, "Antichrist".

It could be someone who falsely claims to be Christ.

It could be a false Christ, promoted by others, in place of the real one.

It could be someone who falsely claims authority to speak for and exercise the authority of the real Christ.

Less obviously, but nevertheless equally valid, it could describe a religion with the outward form of Christianity, but using the Bible and the name of the real Jesus, to disguise a Christ whose teachings and standards are quite different to those of the real one. Such a Christ would also be, really, a false Christ and those who preached about him would be false prophets.

All of these possibilities imply an apostate, counterfeit Christianity and, in fact, all are relevant to our recognition of the identity of Antichrist.

In John's first epistle we are told that the prophecies about Antichrist do not speak of one person, but many; are not for a remote future, but already begun; and they speak of men who claim to be Christian, but are not.

This is our starting point. We do not need to indulge in speculation about the future. This will only cloud our vision of the truth about the past and the present. Instead, we need to identify the counterfeit forms of Christianity, which clearly bear the identifying marks found in the word of God and have existed almost since the beginning of the church.

Chapter 3 - THE PROPHECY BY JESUS

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Although neither Jesus nor the Old Testament prophets specifically mentioned the word "Antichrist", the term was used by the Apostle John in his epistles, in a way which shows that it was a familiar subject for the church at the end of the first century. It had been prophesied, John said, and now the prophecy was being fulfilled.

For John to say this, there must be a recognisable prophecy, somewhere in the Bible, which predicts the appearance of men who fit both John's description and the literal meaning of the word, described in the previous chapter. Since the term, "Antichrist", does not appear elsewhere in the Bible, it will be a prophecy which uses other words to describe the same thing.

This leads us directly to the prophecy, made by Jesus himself, in Matthew 24: 4-5,11 & 23-24.

Here Jesus foretold the appearance of false Christs and false prophets, who would lead their followers into deception. These counterfeits, Jesus said, would not be obvious, but sometimes so subtle and so hard to distinguish from the real thing that even true believers would find it difficult to recognise the deception.

The prophecy is not limited to one single person. Jesus said that MANY would come in his name, claiming to be Christ. Nor is the prophecy limited in time. We may expect MANY at DIFFERENT TIMES.

The prophecy is about many counterfeit forms of Christianity, adopted by many counterfeit Christians, following counterfeit Christs and using the name of Jesus as a cloak for their deceptions.

The history of the fulfilment of this prophecy is the history of "Antichrist".

Chapter 4 - THE ANTICHRIST IN THE FIRST CENTURY

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Paul's letters to Galatia and Corinth both refer to the existence of "other Gospels". In the letter to Corinth, Paul also refers to a "different spirit" and "another Jesus".

These terms find parallels in John's letters to the church of the late first century, where he is the only New Testament writer to use the term, "Antichrist", (and then only four times). John wrote these letters to deliver a strong warning to the church about some false Christians who, he says, are a fulfilment of the prophecy they have heard, about the coming of Antichrist. These false Christians spoke of a Jesus who bore the right name, but, in other ways, was quite different to the real one. Their Jesus was so different that he was, in fact, a false Christ. This is why John calls them "Antichrist"

Firstly, he says, "*you have heard that Antichrist is coming*". (1 John 2:18).

This, of course, is a reference to the prophecy, spoken by Jesus himself, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

John also says, "*many Antichrists have come*". (1 John 2:18).

The prophecy was not for some distant future. It was already being fulfilled.

Then John describes clearly the difference between real Christianity and the false teaching of the Antichrists, so that those early Christians and their spiritual descendants, will be equipped to "test the spirits".

1. Their false Jesus was neither the Son of God nor the prophesied Christ. (1 John 2:22).
2. Their false Jesus was not really a man. (1 John 4:2 & 2 John 7).
3. They did not abide in the teaching of Christ. (2 John 9).
4. They loved the world and were of the world and what they said was of the world. (1 John 2:15 & 4:3-5).
5. They were deceivers. (1 John 3:7).
6. Their false Christ condoned sin and they continued in sin. (1 John 1,6 : 2:4 & 3:10).
7. They were haters and murderers. (1 John 2:10-11 & 3:11-18).
8. They refused to listen to the real Christians. (1 John 4:6)

The mark of these Antichrists of John's day was not simply wrong theology about the humanity of Jesus. The bigger problem was their sinful lives and their hatred for the true believers to whom John wrote this epistle.

In denying Jesus as the Christ, they also rejected God as their Father, losing all access to faith and the love of God. (1 John 5:1-2)

In denying Jesus as the Son of God, they lost the key to victory over sin. (1 John 5:3-5)

In denying his humanity, they rejected his call for all other humans to mould their own human obedience to conform to his perfect human example. (2 John 7-9 : Matt 5:48 : 1 Pet 1:15-16)

In their failure to abide in his teaching, they became unfruitful, fit only to be thrown into the fire and be burned. (John 15:6)

In their love for this world, they lost sight of the eternal values of the world to come. (1 John 2:15-17)

As deceivers, they identified themselves as children of the Devil, the father of lies. (John 8:44)

Condoning sin and continuing in sin, they lived in wilful disobedience. They claimed to love God, but their disobedience revealed the truth that, actually, they hated both the real Jesus and also the Father who sent him. (John 14:24 & 15:22-23 & 1 John 4:20 & 5:2)

As haters and murderers they lived in darkness, shut off from the light of truth and eternal life. (1 John 3:15)

In refusing to listen to the real Christians, they revealed that they were not of God, but still of the world. (1 John 4:5-6)

Chapter 5 - THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

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The term, "Spirit of Antichrist", used by John, refers to the teaching of the antichrists. They were false prophets. What they said about their false Christ was not from the Holy Spirit. It was the work of a false spirit.

The many Antichrists are to be identified by their false teaching and the sinful behaviour which it condoned.

John's identification of the first century Antichrists shows us what we should look for to identify other Antichrists who we will find in the continuing history of the church. For our purposes we can condense what John says to four significant marks which reveal the Spirit of Antichrist at work in all ages of the church, including that in which we live now.

MARK NO 1 - THE NAME

John gave the name "Antichrist" to those in his day who fulfilled the prophecy of Jesus. It should not surprise us, therefore, to find that this name is actually used by men who continue to fulfil the prophecy.

MARK No 2 - THE CHRIST WHO IS NOT REALLY A MAN

Heretical opinions about a Jesus who was not completely a man continued to invade the church. As we shall see later, one of these man made opinions eventually gained such supremacy that it became the test of Orthodoxy in most of the church.

MARK NO 3 - THE PERSECUTING CHURCH

The third mark of Antichrist is hatred for the followers of the real Christ. This hostility dates back to the beginning of time, when Cain murdered his brother "because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous". (1 John 3:12).

This third mark of the Antichrist is clearly visible in the recorded history of the church which, in the name of the false Christ it serves, has persecuted and murdered those it calls "heretics".

MARK NO 4 - CONTINUING IN SIN

This is THE MARK which, more than any other, identifies the false Christianity of "Antichrist".

Those first century Antichrists claimed to be Christian, but in reality they had substituted a counterfeit Christianity in place of the real thing. Their heretical theology about the nature of Jesus was certainly a problem, but that was only a symptom of a deeper sickness of the human spirit. The real problem was that they were unwilling to hear the uncompromising call to repentance which is a non negotiable condition of the of the Gospel of the real Christ. Instead, they had invented a different Christ who allowed them to ignore his teaching or explain it away. With this false Christ, they could remain comfortable with the lie that they could continue in sin and still be saved.

It is, of course, just one more subtle variation of the ancient lie told to Eve by the Serpent in Eden. Since the beginning of time, the human race has wanted to believe that God does not really mean what He says and that sin does not really matter.

THE MARKS OF ANTICHRIST IN THE CONTINUING HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

The influence and teaching of those first century men, which John calls "the spirit of Antichrist", (1 John 4,3), has indeed continued, in various forms, throughout the history of the church.

- The name has been, and still is, used openly.

- Salvation is promised without genuine life changing repentance.
- Continuing sin is tolerated, justified, or even encouraged.
- Hatred of true believers is manifested in frequent persecutions
- and murder.

In the following pages we will discuss, briefly, the history which reveals the presence of the false Christ and the Spirit of that false Christ, in the mainstream church. The bibliography in Appendix 1, lists sources from which this writer's summary has been obtained and can be confirmed, by anyone interested enough to read history in more detail.

Chapter 6 - MARK NO 1 IN HISTORY - THE NAME

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For nearly 15 centuries, an unbroken succession of men has claimed the title "Vicar of Christ", leading countless millions astray after the false Christ, in whose name they claim authority.

To the end of the 4th century, the Bishops of Rome called themselves "Vicars of Peter", but at the beginning of the 5th century this came to be regarded as not enough. Gelasius, the then current Bishop of Rome, assumed the title "Vicar of Christ" and this title has been claimed by every Pope since. The supreme position of the Pope as Vicar of God and Vicar of Christ on earth, was reaffirmed by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and was central in the Tridentine Confession of Faith, issued in 1564. To this day, all converts to the Roman church must confess submission to the Pope, as the Vicar of Christ.

"Vicar" is a Latin word which has the same meaning as the Greek word, "anti". Our English "Vicar of Christ", the equivalent Latin title used by the Pope and the New Testament Greek "Antichrist" are one and the same!!

For centuries, ever since this title was first adopted, faithful servants of the real Christ have found the Antichrist in this Papal title and in many other Bible prophecies, which they also applied to the Roman church.

What we have to say, in what follows, about the Papacy and the Roman Catholic church, may not be popular in this ecumenical age, but it should surprise no one with eyes to see and ears to hear.

Chapter 7 - MARK No 2 IN HISTORY - THE CHRIST WHO IS NOT REALLY A MAN

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The subject of the nature of Jesus has been a matter of controversy almost since the beginning of the church. This should be no surprise. One of the falsehoods of that first century "Spirit of Antichrist", described in John's epistles, centred around the question of whether or not Jesus is really a man.

All too often, the question of who was right or wrong, (if any one was right at all), was far less a problem than the spirit in which the various opponents dealt with each other. Many of them managed to prove that they did not love one another at all. Jesus and John are both definite that those who do not love one another are not disciples at all. (John 13:34 & 1 John 1 &9).

The most notable of these controversies began in the early years of the 4th century. The leading opponents on this occasion were Arius and Athanasius. The theological warfare centred around the question of whether Jesus was a created being, subject to his Father, (Arius), or uncreated, co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial with his Father. (Athanasius).

The hostility between the two parties was so great that it was considered by the Emperor Constantine to be a major threat to the political stability of the Roman empire. He began to exert pressure on the church for a speedy resolution of the conflict. This led to the calling of a council of the whole church at Nicea in AD325. The council was attended by 318 bishops, but was not truly representative of the whole church since these were only about one sixth of all bishops in the empire at that time. Further, only about 10 of these were from the Western half of the Empire. Those who did attend, soon found that Constantine assumed a dominant role to force the adoption of the decision which he favoured.

Although Constantine is claimed by the church, to this present time, as the first "Christian" emperor, his personal Christianity was clearly more political than real. The historian, Gibbon, describes him as a "cruel but dissolute monarch" combining "the vices of rapaciousness and prodigality". He became emperor by making war to destroy his opponents. He murdered one of his sons, his brother-in-law, his nephew and, possibly his second wife.

Although favouring Christianity, he retained the title and role of high priest of the pagan religion. At the time of the council, he was unbaptised and, in fact, refused to be baptised until on his deathbed, on the theory that he could thereby continue to sin and be finally cleansed of all at the last moment.

Those bishops who allowed Constantine any role at all in the decision of the council and the affairs of the church, bring the credibility of their own Christianity into question. The events which led to the final vote and the subsequent behaviour of the victors, are convincing evidence that the council itself and any decisions reached, completely lack the seal of the Spirit of God. (By their fruits you shall know them).

To resolve the dispute, a creed was proposed which favoured Athanasius and condemned Arius. Although most of the bishops present were not Arian, many of them were equally opposed to the wording of part of the creed which defined the nature of Jesus as of "one substance" with the Father. Over sixteen centuries later, the theologians of the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Western Churches, of Roman origin, are still divided over this issue.

After a prolonged and inconclusive debate, the impatient Constantine intervened to force an end to the conflict by demanding the adoption of the creed. The vote was taken under threat of exile for any who did not support the decision favoured by Constantine. To avoid the

consequences, a number of bishops found excuses to leave the council and return home before the vote was taken.

The majority voted in favour, although many were motivated by fear or politics, rather than conscience. Two stood firm to their conviction and voted against the proposed creed. They were subsequently exiled, along with Arius. The writings of Arius were condemned to be burnt and a death sentence decreed for any found in possession of them.

It is worth noting, in passing, that the council of AD325 and the creed which it produced, did not attempt to resolve the question of the personality of the Holy Spirit. In that respect, the original version of the Nicene Creed is not truly Trinitarian. The nature of the Holy Spirit was, at that time, still open to differing views. There were some who did affirm the personality and deity of the Spirit, but there were also those (including Arius) who taught that the Spirit was a created being. Others held that the Spirit was an influence and not a person at all. The wording of the creed did not clearly address this issue.

The scandalous "majority" vote of the Nicene Council did not really settle anything and controversy continued unabated. Within a few years the Arians had regained so much ground that Constantine found it politically expedient to change sides and Arianism was restored to favour. (This writer suspects that this sudden reversal also made for peace at home, between Constantine and his Arian wife!)

Arius was recalled from exile and declared innocent of heresy. The exiled bishops were reinstated and the Arian party conspired to have Athanasius banished! Constantine's reversal was so complete that, nearing the end of his life, he received his baptism from the Arian bishop of Nicodemia. After Constantine's death, his Arian son deposed the Trinitarian bishops and replaced them with Arians.

Over the next few decades the balance of political power changed several times, backwards and forwards, from one party to the other. As opportunity presented itself, the Arians and their foes both misused their temporary periods of favour with the secular power, to persecute and exile the opposition. The Arians, when they were in power, proved to be no more Christian than their foes. They were, if anything, even more vicious, intolerant and violent. It is open to speculation that an Arian dominant orthodoxy would have produced a history of persecution even more terrible than it has been under Catholicism.

The controversy produced vicious politics in both church and state and much bloodshed. Finally in AD381, under the Trinitarian emperor Theodosius, a further council was held in Constantinople, to which only Trinitarians were invited.

Not surprisingly, the 150 Trinitarian bishops who attended managed to carry a vote which altered the Nicene Creed to its present form. The deity of Jesus was confirmed (with minor amendments) and a statement was added which affirmed both the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity became law for both church and state.

The destiny of the church was now in the hands of men whose dogmatic intolerance still shapes the attitudes of their successors.

Bishops who disagreed, were expelled from their pulpits and excommunicated from the church. The "victors" combined with the secular authorities to suppress the Arians by force of arms and exile. Enforced assent to abstract propositions about the nature of Jesus, rather than obedience to his teaching, became the test of Orthodoxy. The church, which in former times had been so terribly persecuted for its faith, was now unashamedly using persecution as a weapon for the protection of the "faith"!

This majority "victory" is one of the great tragedies of the history of the church. Those who really know the Jesus of the Gospels, will never be able to believe that he would impose his will on the church by threats, force of arms, or political and religious pressures. Even a democratic vote which requires the minority to abandon their conscience, must be suspect.

How can we really believe that these men were followers of the real Christ, or that they were led by the Spirit of God in their decisions? How can we trust their confused theology?

The "victory" at Constantinople was far from complete. Controversy continued until, 70 years later, at the council of Chalcedon, the church found it necessary to further "explain" the Nicene Creed. This new definition is known as the "Chalcedon Creed". However this Trinitarian statement undermines its own credibility since it also defines the virgin Mary as the "Mother of God", threatening excommunication for those who dare to differ.

Somewhere around the same time, the "Athanasian Creed" made its appearance. Although it bears the name of Athanasius, it is actually of unknown origin, possibly first appearing in South Gaul, in the middle of the 5th century. (Some authorities place it much later than this).

The wickedness of the servants of the False Christ of the Nicene, Chalcedonian and Athanasian creeds, eventually produced a decree by the Emperor Justinian, in the 6th century, which imposed the death sentence for all who did not accept the doctrine of the Trinity.

For more than a thousand years this evil law was used by evil men, in an evil church, to justify the murder of "heretics". They actually claimed to serve God in what they did, fulfilling the prophecy by Jesus which warned his disciples to expect the appearance of such men! (John 16:2).

The Athanasian Creed is, without doubt, one of the most illogical, contradictory and confusing documents ever written. In addition it denies salvation to those who refuse to believe its confusion and decrees that they "shall perish everlastingly".

The problem with all three of these creeds is that they use confusing language, to describe abstract concepts, far beyond the understanding of the ordinary men and women who comprise the majority of the church. They pay lip service to the humanity of Jesus, while at the same time effectively denying it by making him much, much, more than any other man who has ever existed.

No other man has ever been of one substance with God. No other man has ever existed eternally before his birth. No other man has ever possessed an infinite mind in a human body. No other man has ever combined two natures in one body.

No matter how we rationalise it, it is beyond all reason and logic to say that the Jesus of these creeds is really a man.

This awful contradiction is presented as a "mystery". This clouds the issue in confusion, and is supposed to silence awkward questions for which there is no logical answer. The real truth is that these creeds are a cleverly contrived variation of that first century "Spirit of Antichrist", which denied that Jesus had come in the flesh as a real man.

The consequences of this for the church have been disastrous. Even though theologians, still, can neither agree totally among themselves about the meaning of these creeds, nor explain them in simpler words suited to the understanding of ordinary men, verbal assent to this "incomprehensible mystery" is a major test of orthodoxy. Salvation, the church says, requires that men profess faith in a form of words, without understanding their meaning.

The subtle casuistry, by which men come to terms with this sort of religion, reaches into many

other areas of the lives of those who surrender themselves to it. Theology which pays only lip service to the real humanity of Jesus, is universally associated with a religion which also pays only lip service to obedience to much of His teaching about the way of life which pleases God. Too often it is either explained away or totally ignored.

Chapter 8 - MARK NO 3 IN HISTORY - THE PERSECUTING CHURCH

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In the long history of persecution, most of the persecuted church correctly identified the Pope and the Roman Catholic church as the Antichrist of their day.

The shameful history of the Catholic church in the Inquisition, and its fierce persecutions of such groups as the Arnoldists, the Paulicians, the Bogomils, the Huguenots, the Albigenses, the Waldenses and the Anabaptists, is well known. These suffering believers saw the Roman church as fulfilling the prophecy of Rev. 18:24, which describes a woman who is a persecutor of God's people, guilty of the death of martyred prophets and saints. Clearly, the Jesus portrayed in the many heretical teachings of the church, and in whose name these terrible deeds were done, was a false Christ. The Pope, who represented him on earth, was the chief Antichrist.

Persecution has been such an integral part of the mission of the Roman church, that it was built into the ordination oath of bishops who were required to swear to persecute and fight against heretics to the utmost of their power. In England this terrible oath continued until 1850, when public outcry finally forced its removal.

Even in the early part of the 20th century, prominent Catholic theologians were still justifying the church's slaughter of the martyrs as a just punishment for heretics who deserved the same treatment as the worst sort of criminals. It was not until the third session of Vatican 11, in 1965, that the church officially turned away from the position, held since the time of Constantine, that it had the right to impose its religion on men, by force.

The long history of this persecuting church identifies its origin. It is of the Devil, who was a murderer from the beginning. It has continued in the tradition of Cain, who was also of the Evil One and murdered his brother, because his own deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous.

There was an occasion when the people of one Samaritan village rejected Jesus, refusing him entry to their village. (Luke 9:51-55)

His disciples were ready to punish and destroy, seeking permission from Jesus to call down fire from Heaven, to consume them.

Jesus rebuked the disciples, saying that they had completely failed to understand. If they had understood, they would have known that his mission was not to destroy, but to save. By their persecution of "heretics", the Roman church also revealed their own failure to understand.

The real Jesus is not a persecutor, nor is the true church which serves Him. Instead, he has warned HIS followers to expect to BE the victims of persecution. (John 15:18-21) The persecution would come from men who claim to serve God, but do not really know either the Father or the Son (John 16:2). No one who is a murderer has eternal life (1 John 3:15). No one who hates his brother in this way, can possibly know God or love God. (1 John 4:8,20).

Chapter 9 - MARK NO 4 IN HISTORY - CONTINUING IN SIN

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One of the significant marks of those first century Antichrists was that although they claimed to know Jesus, they continued in sin. The Catholic church, also, has developed a system of religion which denies completely, the meaning of the teaching and example of the real Christ. In many ways the Church directly contradicts the plain words of Jesus, leading its followers into open disobedience instead of costly submission.

Although the Catholic Church does use the words "repentance" and "obedience", they have been rendered almost completely meaningless. Catholic "obedience" is, in fact, blind and unquestioning submission to the Pope, the church and its false Christ. Individual conscience is enslaved. For centuries, Catholics were denied the freedom to read the Scriptures in the common language. Even today, those who read it, must interpret it in the light of Catholic teaching. The ordination service for priests includes an OATH, that they will never interpret the Bible in any way opposed to church tradition handed down from "the Fathers".

Listed below are some of the ways in which the church condones and even encourages disobedience to the teaching of the real Christ.

1. The doctrine of Purgatory is a false Gospel, which presumes that prayers PURCHASED from the church by the living, can somehow balance the "merits" (good works) of long dead "saints" against the sins of the the unforgiven *dead, to atone for them!* This iniquitous invention of the Devil, offers a deliverance from the penalty of sin, which is not based on true repentance and which is not taught anywhere in the Bible.

2. Infant baptism denies the teaching of Jesus that baptism is for believers. True baptism expresses conviction of sin and genuine repentance. It requires faith in the sacrifice of Jesus as the means by which forgiveness has become possible. All of this is manifestly impossible for infants who do not yet know what sin is and can neither believe nor repent.

3. Prayers to Mary and other long dead "saints", have their foundation in a blasphemous misconception of the love of God. In addition, these attempts to communicate with the dead are a thinly disguised form of spiritism. God calls it "abomination". (Deut 1:12)

4. The church practises idolatry, sorcery and witchcraft. These are found in the following practices which have been substituted for the reality of the Bible :-

- repetitious prayers
- the use of statues and relics in worship
- the use of "holy" water
- the burning of candles
- sale and use of charms (medals, scapulars, etc)
- sale of indulgences
- absolution of the dying
- anointing of the dead
- the sign of the cross

These things are white magic, sorcery and idolatry. Those who practise them, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. (Gal 5:19-21)

5. The church's historical role in:-

- approval of war,
- politics and intrigue,
- imposition of its religion by force,
- oppression of the poor,

- persecution of Jews, infidels and heretics, - accumulation of wealth,

is ALL in direct opposition to the teaching and example of the real Son of God.

6. The church's practical application of the Sermon on the Mount is a travesty. Nothing is closer to the heart of what it means to be a child of God than the insistence of Jesus that we love our enemies, do good to them, pray for them and bless them. In the teaching and practice of the church, however, this has all been set aside.

In place of the plain words of Jesus, the church has introduced the devilish lie, which justifies war for "just causes".

In the interest of defending the church, the state which protects the church, one's own self, loved ones or possessions, it has become acceptable to do evil, praying against enemies, calling down curses from Heaven and striking back to destroy. The Christ who told Peter to put away his sword, is replaced by another who commands his disciples to fight and kill as a service to God.

This has led to many wars where Christians in opposing armies have confronted one another in fear and hatred, destroying and being destroyed. In these wars, priests follow soldiers on the battlefield, to encourage valour in battle and comfort the dying with a false hope of eternity. There have even been occasions (such as the Crusades or campaigns against "heretics") where the Pope of the day promised absolution from all sin and instant admission to heaven for those who were killed in battle while disobeying the commandment of the real Christ to love their enemies.

7. The church publicly stands opposed to divorce but privately substitutes the word "annulment" for the process by which it claims license to separate what God has joined.

8. Oaths, forbidden by the real Christ, are not only condoned, but, in some circumstances, justified, encouraged or even required. For example the ordination oath of bishops, or the vows required of priests and nuns, ignore the teaching of Jesus that all such swearing is of the Evil One.

9. The use of legal processes to obtain justice, defend rights, protect property, reputation or personal safety, or to recover what is lost, are all forbidden to disciples of the real Jesus. In the false Christian world of the Antichrist, this use of the law is permitted to the church and its members. Indeed there are too many Christian lawyers who make their careers and earn their bread by assisting other Christians to disobey.

10. Catholics may tell lies for a "just cause", which includes advancing the cause of the church, or "preserving good things for the spirit, or useful things for the body". Such lies may even be reinforced by an oath, without sin! It is also permissible to commit some lesser sin, in order to prevent a greater. For example, it is acceptable to commit theft or fornication to prevent murder.

All of this disobedience to the words of Jesus is the work of a church which claims to serve him, but, in reality, denies him before men. This is a counterfeit Christianity. It sets aside the Gospel call for repentance and obedience to the way of life revealed by the the real Son of God.

To its followers, it offers the delusion of a false hope of salvation through a form of religion which, by its deeds, denies the power of the Gospel to transform the hearts of men in a real way.

Chapter 10 - ANTICHRIST IN THE PROPHECIES BY JOHN AND PAUL

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The writings of the Apostle John are greatly influenced by his desire to protect the church from those first century Antichrists.

His Gospel is written to refute their false teaching on all fronts. The Jesus who was personally known to John, was both human and also the divinely begotten Son of God. His resurrection body is as real as the one which suffered on the cross. His miracles are real. His disciples prove their love for him by their obedience to his commandments. The love of disciples for one another is the test by which the world is invited to judge the reality of their claims to be disciples.

We have already seen that his epistles are written to identify the differences between the "Spirit of Antichrist" and real Christianity.

It is not surprising, therefore, that a significant part of his prophecy in the Revelation, contains information which allows the true church, in all ages, to identify the working of the same Spirit of Antichrist in their own time.

THE BRIDE WHO BECAME A HARLOT

Rev. chapter 17 describes a woman who is called a "whore". This epithet is used in the Old Testament to describe the apostasy of Israel, when she turns to other gods or makes political alliances with the kings of other nations. In this New Testament prophecy the same epithet is a fitting description for an apostate church which has turned away from God in similar ways, to follow a false Christ, worship idols, and make many shameful alliances with the kings of the earth.

A WOMAN IS A CITY?

This same woman is described as a city, who exercises authority to rule over the kings of the earth. For more than a thousand years, Rome claimed and usurped and abused power over the kings of the "Christian" world. Even in our day, with direct power lost, Rome still exercises, by sheer weight of numbers, a less visible, but extremely powerful, political influence.

The Pope is still the single most influential political leader on earth.

THE CITY OF THE SEVEN HILLS

The city is further identified by her geographic location, on seven mountains. There are few who have not heard of Rome as the "City of The Seven Hills".

BABYLON LIVES ON

In Rev 17:5 and also in Rev 18, the woman is called by the name, "Babylon". This name is well deserved by the Roman church, for there are many similarities between the religion of Rome and that of ancient Babylon. This is a subject in its own right and we will not attempt to cover it here. For a comprehensive study of this subject, refer to the book, "THE TWO BABYLONS", by Alexander Hislop, first published in 1916, and still in print. It contains a wealth of information which clearly identifies the Catholic church as the woman of this prophecy.

THE PERSECUTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

John's prophecy predicts persecution for the church and uses symbols to disguise the names of the persecutors.

Revelation chapters 12 & 13 describe two beasts, representing two kingdoms, one succeeding the other in authority to rule over the earth, both of whom persecute the saints. Other descriptive information is provided which add to the conviction that, behind the symbols, John has concealed, firstly, the pagan Roman empire and then, the "Christianised" Roman empire which replaced it.

Revelation 17:6 & 18:24 accuse "Babylon" of the murder of prophets, saints and martyrs. We have already identified Rome as the "Babylon" of John's prophecy.

History confirms Rome's role as the persecutor of God's people.

THE NAME WITH A NUMBER

Another beast is described in Rev 13:11-18. Behind this symbol is a false religious system, which deceives its followers and has authority to force men to worship. Those who will not submit to this false religion, are slain. The beast also has a name which is identified by its number.

The power of the Roman church to compel men to worship and the abuse of that power in persecution of "heretics", has already been discussed. The name with a number also points to the church.

There have been many ingenious attempts to identify the man whose name numbers 666. However it is the Latin title, "VICARIVS FILII DEI", usurped by the Pope, which stands out above all others as significant.

The table below shows this Latin title, with the roman numeral equivalent alongside each letter.

V - 5	F - 0	D - 500
I - 1	I - 1	E - 0
C - 100	L - 50	I - 1
A - 0	I - 1	R - 0
I - 1	I - 1	V - 5
S - 0		
112	53	501
112 + 53 + 501 = 666!		

The Latin translates into English as "In place of the Son of God". it is an obvious Latin equivalent for the Greek "ANTICHRIST". The POPE, has both the name and the number which confirms it!!!!

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

The same reference, in Rev 13:11-18, which identifies the beast by the number of its name, also says that the followers of the false religious system receive a mark in their right hand, or on their forehead, without which they cannot buy or sell.

There have indeed been many occasions in history where the Catholic church has applied "economic sanctions" against those she has called heretics. Those who stood against the corruptions of the church have often been denied the privileges of trade or the right to purchase the basic necessities of life. However this remarkable prophecy is referring to something much more significant than these obvious denials of the love of Jesus.

In the Roman church, many "spiritual goods" are sold for money. These "spiritual goods" include such things as christenings, wedding ceremonies, prayers for the dead, funeral services, indulgences and specially blessed medals etc., all of which attract a compulsory fee in return for the service provided by the church.

However, the mark we are looking for is *invisible*. It is nevertheless, very real. It is the sign of the cross, made with "holy" water on the hand of the priest, or on the forehead of the infant, during the Roman church's ceremonies of ordination and christening.

This mark on the hand of the priest, entitles him to sell these "spiritual" goods. The same mark, on the forehead of the christened church member, entitles him to buy. The unchristened cannot buy and the unordained cannot sell.

THE MAN WHO CLAIMS TO BE GOD

In 2 Thess 2,4 the Apostle Paul predicted the appearance of a mysterious "man of sin" who would usurp the place of God. This man is easily identified with the church ruler who has assumed the title "POPE", since about the year AD500.

This title is simply an anglicised version of the Latin word for "FATHER", which, Jesus himself says, we may give to no man on earth. (Matt 23:9) It belongs to God alone.

An even more blasphemous claim is found in editions of the Canon Law of the church from 1316-1612, which assign to the Pope the incredible title, "LORD GOD THE POPE". After that time, Protestant exposure resulted in the word "God" being suppressed. Nevertheless suppression of the word does not change the claim of the church that the Pope exercises the authority of God over all men.

This example is not just one isolated case. The entire history of the Papacy and the church contains a succession of similar blasphemous and self exalting claims. For those who care to search, there is a wealth of information available in books published by scholars who have made a careful study of the history of the Roman church.

A STRONG DELUSION

The chapter in Thessalonians also refers to *pretended* signs and wonders, which enable this "man of Sin" to deceive many to follow a system which abandons truth and in which there is no salvation. (2 Thess 2:9-12).

It is not hard to relate this to the many "miracles" attributed by the Roman church to long dead saints, or to the "miracle" of Transubstantiation, regularly performed by priests celebrating the Mass. Nor is it difficult to see in these verses, a reference to the many other false teachings of the church through which those who believe the lies are brought under strong delusion about their true condition before God.

FORBIDDING TO MARRY

In 1 Timothy 4:3 Paul said that the Holy Spirit foretold the coming of men who would forbid marriage. The teaching of Jesus does have a place for celibacy (Matt 19:12). However this is another area in which the Roman church has distorted the truth. In the year AD1079 Pope Hildebrand (Boniface VII) issued a decree requiring bishops and priests to remain celibate. Men who are already married are not considered suitable for these positions in the church hierarchy.

In contrast, the teaching of the apostle Paul is quite clear that although celibacy is the calling of some, (1 Cor 7:25-35), it is NOT for bishops or deacons. The Holy Spirit's qualifications for these men include the requirement that they MUST be married, with children. Their wives and children must also be believers. Men who are not successful in managing a Christian family are not qualified to care for the church. (1 Tim 2:2,12 & Titus 2:6)

It is plain, from what Paul says, that for much of its history, the Roman church has been ruled over and led by men who do not have God's qualifications for office!

ANOTHER JESUS, ANOTHER SPIRIT, ANOTHER GOSPEL

In the "charismatic" church at Corinth, there was much in need of correction. Some of the members had received another Gospel which was about another Christ, not the real one. They had received "another spirit", not the real Holy Spirit, which can only be received from the real Jesus, through faith in the real Gospel, by those who obey Him.

There were false apostles, preaching this false Christ, who made slaves of their followers. Of course, Paul was not referring specifically to the Catholic church, or making a prophecy about it. He was identifying and dealing with the problem of false charismatic experience in the Corinthian church.

However, it is true that these same marks of the false spirit at work in the Corinthian church, have also been a part of the history of the Catholic church, and are still with us today, not the least amongst those Catholics who call themselves "Charismatic", and still remain faithful to the false Christ and false Gospel of their church.

Chapter 11 - A NEW ANTICHRIST FOR A CREDULOUS CHURCH

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It is a fact of history that many well known Protestant leaders of past centuries have unhesitatingly denounced the Pope as the "Antichrist" and the Roman Catholic Church as the "Whore of Babylon". These include Martin Luther, John Bunyan, John Huss, John Wycliffe, John Calvin, William Tyndale, John Knox, John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards. The publishers of some old German editions of the Bible, circulated in the 15th century, went so far as to include illustrations which showed the Pope amongst the devils of Apocalyptic Hell. Old records of the Anabaptist churches include countless other lesser known names which could be added to this list; names of men and women whose testimony could not be silenced by oppression, persecution or even martyrdom.

In this Ecumenical age, it has become most unpopular to speak about the Catholic Church in this way. It is even less acceptable to identify the present Pope, who is so popular with all men, as the one who currently sits in the chair of Antichrist.

The descendants of the persecuted church have closed their eyes and ears to the lessons of history.

This change in attitude, has its origin early in the 19th century, when a number of prominent teachers began to promote another interpretation of the prophecies about the Antichrist, which took the spotlight off the historical Catholic Church. Instead, the Antichrist was presented as a mysterious evil man of the future, who would appear just prior to the second coming of Jesus. This man would gain power over the whole world and force all men to worship him as God. This clever fabrication was joined with other teaching about a "pre-tribulation rapture", which would remove Christians from the Earth prior to a series of terrible events, called the "Great Tribulation", associated with the rule of the Antichrist.

This is called the "FUTURIST" school of interpretation of prophecy, and stands opposed to the traditional "HISTORICAL" school.

For most layman in the 20th century, the sources of the "futurist" theories are clouded in mystery and lost in history. However, for those who care to search, it was widely known and well documented by many writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the futurist teaching is of Roman Catholic origin.

The first prominent scholar to publish the futurist teaching in something like its modern form, was the Spanish Jesuit, Ribera, somewhere around 1580-1585. Ribera took up and developed aspects of teaching which is found in the writings of some church "fathers", as far back as the second and third centuries.

These men were trying to interpret the prophecies about Antichrist without reference to John's epistles and in ignorance of the future development of the Papacy. Ribera's goal, however, was to cloud the record of history and direct attention away from the Papacy.

The teaching was quickly accepted by other prominent Roman theologians, but for the next 250 years was confined almost exclusively to the Catholic church.

Then, in the late 18th century, Lacunza, a Chilean Jesuit of Spanish descent, wrote a "futurist" book entitled "The Coming of the Messiah in Glory". In order to conceal its true origins and (presumably) to make it more acceptable to Protestants, the book was dishonestly attributed to the authorship of a "Rabbi Ben Ezra", supposedly a learned Jew, converted to Christianity. It was finally published in England (although still in the Spanish

language) in 1816, a few years after Lacunza's death. In a further step of duplicity, the book was placed on the list of works forbidden to Catholics, thus guaranteeing a Protestant readership!

The next link in the chain was Edward Irving, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, who became the founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, an early forerunner of the Pentecostal movement. In 1827 Irving published a complete English translation of Lacunza's book. A very popular, cheap, abridged version followed in 1833. It was Irving who discovered the truth about the real identity of the author of the book, while searching for information about "Ben Ezra". This information was published in the preface of Irving's translation, along with other details of Lacunza's life and work.

Not surprisingly, the futurist teaching soon made an appearance in some Pentecostal style "prophetic utterances" made during meetings of the Irvingites, thus giving it, for the unwary, a deceptive appearance of approval by the Holy Spirit.

Within a few years it had been taken up by the High Church school in the Anglican church and also by many popular preachers in the Evangelical party in the same church. By around 1830, it had spread to the early leaders of the emerging Brethren movement, who made it a central feature of their prophetic teaching, and writing.

Further publicity came in the early 20th century, when a man named Schofield included it in the footnotes of a "Teachers Bible" which became quite popular and is still widely circulated.

From these small beginnings, it gradually gained wider acceptance, until, eventually, it was taken up by the popular authors of the last two or three decades. Their books have been widely read and accepted by gullible Christians all over the world. Now, at the end of the 20th century, although there are major differences about whether the timing of the "rapture" is "pre", "mid", or "post" tribulation, the acceptance of the identity of the Antichrist as a future evil ruler, appears to be almost universal .

Chapter 12 - THE HIGH COST OF CREDULITY

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Christians of this present time are paying a high price for their credulity and lack of discernment. The fantastic theories of these modern authors, conceal the true identity of the Antichrist behind a maze of deception and speculation. We now live in an age where Catholicism is regarded as just one more acceptable form of Christianity and where church unity between Protestants and Catholics is almost a certainty, in the foreseeable future.

The Ecumenical churches have lost the vision of the Reformers and no longer recognise the Antichrists for who they are. Instead they accept them as equals, giving them recognition as "children of God" and bidding them "God speed" in their mission.

Worse still, there are influential loud voices in the ecumenical World Council of Churches, who have so far lost their vision of the real Christ, that even Hindus, Buddhists and Moslems are also regarded as following their own acceptable alternative ways to God.

It is all a far cry from the Jesus of the Bible, who claims to be the ONLY way to God {John 14,6) and the only Saviour. (Acts 4:12)

Chapter 13 - MANY ANTICHRISTS WILL COME

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For the persecuted church, down through the centuries, the identification of the Catholic church as Antichrist, was beyond question.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH! The prophecy by Jesus is that MANY would come. Our identification is valid but it is not the only one we need to make. It was easy for those in earlier times and it would be too easy for us also, to make this identification and look no further.

THE DAUGHTERS OF BABYLON

John's prophecy, in Rev. 17:1-5, describes a woman who is "a city", a "harlot" and "Babylon". This woman, who we have already identified as the Roman Catholic Church, was to be the mother of other harlots and of earth's abominations.

The use of the words, "harlot" and "abomination", suggests the appearance of other churches, whose behaviour would be inherited from their Roman mother and just as offensive to God. The daughters of this prophecy are the State churches. It is a fact that, to this day, Rome speaks of herself as the "MOTHER CHURCH" and that she claims as her daughters, both the State Protestant churches and also their dissenting fellow travellers. Like their mother, they have broken their betrothal promises to the King of Kings and defiled themselves, committing spiritual fornication with the kings of the earth.

In return for the protection by the State and freedom to practise their religion, these State churches have sold themselves to support the State in its politics, wars and other activities, without which the State cannot exist. Some of these churches have become so bound to the State, that they cannot appoint a bishop without the approval of the Government, or change their constitution without an act of Parliament. In a few cases, the union between State and Church is so complete that the salaries of ministers are paid by the State.

For those who follow the real Christ, any alliance with the State is an unequal yoking, requiring allegiance to another Lord, with an impossible division of loyalties.

The values, goals, and methods of human kingdoms are in total conflict with those of the Kingdom of God. No man who serves the real Christ can, at the same time, give unreserved allegiance to a human kingdom.

The daughters of Rome have resolved this impossible conflict by adopting a false Christ whose character and teaching are compatible with the interests of the State. The Antichrists of the first century were "of the world". So too are their successors.

Christians are, of course, commanded to respect and obey the authorities of the State for, ultimately, all authority is instituted by God. (Romans 13:1-7) However, for those who follow the real Christ, there is a higher authority than the State. In the many areas where the requirements of the State are in conflict with the values of the Kingdom of God, obedience to God must come first. This also is a divine institution. (Acts 3:19 & 5:29)

From the very beginning of the church, followers of the real Christ have found a need to confront authority at this point.

Their response to the Gospel was a believer's baptism in which they declared themselves separated from the corrupting influences of the world.

Their preaching threatened the security of earthly kingdoms by its rejection of :-

- participation in war,
- the use of force,
- involvement in civil office,
- recourse to lawsuits,
- the swearing of oaths.

Their insistence on believers baptism as a sign of real repentance, was a threat to the security of a church which demanded the baptism of infants without either belief or repentance.

Their persistent call for men to forsake their sinful ways, love each other and actually live out the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, stirred consciences and stripped away excuses for sin.

In all of this they declared the complete incompatibility of the true church with the State. They stood apart from the spiritual harlotry of the church whose false Christ allowed them to join forces with the State.

For this testimony they were hated.

THE SAME CHRIST WHO IS NOT REALLY A MAN

The creeds of these daughter churches perpetuate the confusion of the Nicene and Athanasian creeds about a Christ who, on one hand, is said to be human, but whose description is so different to that of other men, that he cannot possibly be a real man.

Like their mother, they insist that belief in this Christ is necessary for salvation and that those who do not accept their Trinitarian creeds are not true Christians.

THE SAME PERSECUTIONS

In many ways, the religious world owes a great debt to those fearless men whose names are revered as "reformers" of the church. (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox) It is therefore sad to discover that some of them, and the Protestant churches they founded, have been, at times, fierce persecutors of those they called "heretics"

Calvin was directly responsible, in 1553, for the burning of the anti-trinitarian Servetus, in which he was actively encouraged and supported by other leading reformers of his day. The following year he wrote at some length justifying the death penalty for heresy. Under the Swiss reformers, who followed his lead, Anabaptists were banished, imprisoned, drowned, beheaded, hanged and burned.

In Germany it was no different. With political power in Protestant hands, religion was forced upon men by State decree in exactly the same way as had formerly been done by Catholics. Luther sanctioned the use of the sword, imprisonment and banishment against Anabaptists and in 1543 he wrote against the Jews, advocating that they be banished from "Christian" lands and that their books, synagogues and houses should be burned.

In other European countries the Lutherans and the Calvinists have also engaged in the same wicked persecution of Anabaptists, Arians, Unitarians, Jews, Catholics and other lesser known groups.

In England and Scotland, the Anglicans and Presbyterians did the same. In England it is a matter of recorded history, that from time to time laws were passed in futile endeavours to force dissenters to conform to the state religion. Some of these laws included the death penalty for those who did not obey.

Many were burned alive under Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I. The last two burnings of Englishmen for heresy, took place in 1612, under the fanatical Calvinist, James 1.

After this time the burnings ceased, but persecution continued in the form of imprisonment, excommunication or loss of employment, and it was not until 1669 that the Religious Toleration Act gave official relief to dissenters from the state religion. Even then laws against heresy which had become dormant, remained on the statute books until the Trinity Act of 1813 was passed, giving relief to Arians and Unitarians.

We remember, in passing, that the founding of what is now the United States of America, was stimulated mainly by the English religious persecutions of the early 17th century, against both Puritans and Catholics.

In the name of their false Christ, the daughters committed the same terrible crimes as their Roman mother. They share her guilt for the blood of the martyrs and they will share her judgement.

THE SAME FALSE TEACHING

It is in what men teach about obedience to God, that they reveal most clearly, the true nature of the Christ they follow. Most Protestant churches have inherited much of their teaching and tradition from Rome. They have tolerated, justified and lived by the same standards of disobedience to the real Christ. In some cases this disobedience is so obvious that it has been necessary to "explain" it away in the church's statement of its "faith"

For example, the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion at the back of the Australian Prayer Book of the Anglican church, specifically deny the teaching of the real Christ on the following fundamental points :-

- Infant baptism is substituted for believer's baptism
- The bearing of arms in war is justified
- Christians are required to swear oaths in the cause of "justice, judgement and truth".

The Anglican church is not the only church to deny the real Christ on these issues. Other churches also fail in these three things. Even amongst churches which practice "believers baptism" instead of infant baptism, there is disobedience in the other two areas. Nor is disobedience limited to these few things. In one way or another the daughters are as quick as their Roman mother to ignore, or compromise, or reject, the Sermon on the Mount and the real Christ who taught it.

It is rare to hear preaching in these churches which upholds this teaching, without compromise. It is rarer still to find honest hearts who will respond to the challenge of this high calling to absolute purity of heart; to a love which returns nothing less than the highest good in return for the worst evil; and to a perfection which is measured by that of God himself. (Matt 5:48)

THE SAME ANTICHRIST IDENTITY

The things above clearly show that the Christ of the daughters is the same as the one followed by the mother. Their Jesus does have the same name as the real one and is claimed to be the son of God. There are enough similarities to provide a cloak of authenticity. However the truth is that the differences in the things that really matter will prove to be, in the day of judgement, the differences between life and death.

The daughters are as much Antichrist as their mother.

Chapter 14 - VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF THE CHRIST WHO IS NOT REALLY A MAN

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Although the confused theology of Athanasius continues to pervade almost the whole of the mainstream church, there are other variations on the theme of a Jesus who is not really a man, also dating back to the early centuries of the church, and surviving to the present time.

THE ARIAN CHRIST

The Jesus of the Arian theology, defeated by the Trinitarians, was also *not really human!* The Arian Jesus is a created being, but he is a SPIRIT BEING who existed in Heaven before his birth, and took a human body in exactly the same way as the Trinitarian Christ. The logic of this theology is as confused as that of Athanasius. Real men do not exist as spirit beings, before they are born.

The 4th century Arians were just as willing as their opponents, to use persecution as a weapon to achieve their ends. It is unlikely that the church would have fared any better in their hands.

Although persecution ensured that Arianism virtually disappeared from most of the world, it did manage to survive as the State religion, in parts of northern Europe, for several hundred years. However, the fortunes of war, the zeal of the Trinitarians and the expediency of politics, all combined to destroy its State powers and eventually it was suppressed almost completely. Since that time it has continued to surface in almost every generation, on a scale sufficient to be noticed by historians, but it has never regained the power that it had in the 4th century.

Amongst the many diverse groups which are labelled "Anabaptist", in the 15th and 16th and 17th centuries, some appear to have been Arian. In our own time, It is found amongst a few groups outside the church mainstream, the largest of which calls itself "Jehovah's Witnesses". It is also still found occasionally (and usually in secret) amongst some members of mainstream churches, who retain their membership by concealing the truth about their beliefs.

The spirit of those 4th century men who formed the creeds prevails and the mainstream churches still view these groups through less than friendly eyes, labelling them as "cults".

THE "ONENESS" CHRIST

Another significant variation of the theme carries various theological labels such as, "Modalism", "Monarchianism", or "Sabellianism", with diverse origins dating back to the second and third centuries. It was, in fact, a source of contention at the same time as the Arian debate. However, under the pressures of political expediency, the opponents temporarily submerged their differences to join forces against the common foe.

The churches who accept it today mainly prefer the term, "Oneness". Their God is only one person, who reveals himself in different forms, or "modes", at different times. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are claimed to be all the same person, Jesus, who appears in the "mode" appropriate to the occasion.

Thus this counterfeit Christ is both Father and Son at the same time, He is spoken of as a "man", but has two separate natures, one human, one divine. He was confined to earth as a man, and yet at the same time, He was in Heaven and omnipresent as God. As Jesus he worships and prays to the divinity within himself. On the cross only his human nature "died", since in his second divine nature, as God, he could not die.

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is made into a total farce. They say that although his human nature was tempted, he could not sin at all because of His second divine nature.

This teaching survives today, mainly in a number of Pentecostal churches, and mainly in the U.S.A. The largest of these is the United Pentecostal Church, which separated from the Pentecostal mainstream over this issue in the early years of this century.

Because of their belief in only one person as God, these churches usually also insist that baptism "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit", (Matt 28:19), is not valid. To be acceptable to their "oneness" God (and to these men) it must be "in the name of Jesus" (only). The words, it seems, are more important than what God sees in the heart. Anyone baptised in the threefold name of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit", must be rebaptised with the right words said over them, before they can be regarded as "born again".

For honest hearts, the perverted logic of the teaching is its own destroyer, for this Jesus must surely be even less a real man than either of his Trinitarian or Arian fellows.

The insistence that the validity of baptism depends on the use of specific words by the baptiser, comes dangerously close to witchcraft.

THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

In love which speaks plainly and without hatred or bitterness, let us be clear about our position on these other variations which present a Christ who is said to be human, but who is not REALLY human at all.

There are many sincere people who follow these teachings. However the teachings are not true. They are lies invented by men devoid of the truth.

Many sincere people have been deceived by these lies.

Along with the Athanasian Christ, these other two are also the work of false spirits. All three are more than human. All three are equally a mark of the spirit of Antichrist, in those who proclaim them.

Chapter 15 - TESTING THE SPIRITS

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The Apostle John told his readers not to believe everyone who claimed to be Christian. It was imperative that they determine whether it was the Holy Spirit or the spirit of Antichrist, which inspired those who made the claim. (1 John 4:3)

We have applied John's test to the Roman church and her daughters and we have found there the marks of the spirit of Antichrist. For honest hearts there can be no doubt that this identification is correct. The Christ of these many false prophets is vastly different to the real Son of God.

THE IDENTITY TEST

This false Christ fails the identity test. His chief servant, the Pope, actually bears the name "Antichrist". The many other lesser Antichrists, while not all belonging to the church over which the chief Antichrist rules, do all share the other common identifying marks.

THE THEOLOGICAL TEST

This false Christ fails the theological test. He is said to have a human body but he is NOT REALLY A MAN.

THE LOVE TEST

The followers of this false Christ fail the test of love. They have hated, persecuted and even murdered the followers of the real Christ. Anyone who hates his brother, even secretly in his heart, is a murderer. No murderer has eternal life in him. (1 John 3:15)

THE OBEDIENCE TEST

The false Christ and his followers fail the test of obedience. They tolerate and even encourage, the darkness of sin, especially in regard to the Sermon on the Mount. Anyone who says he knows the real Christ but disobeys His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in Him.

(1 John 2:4)

Chapter 16 - APPLYING THE TESTS IN LOVE

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We have used strong language in making these very positive identifications.

However, it is the language of love.

There must be no bitterness or hatred in our hearts, for those we identify.

There must be no persecution of those we identify.

If they choose to regard us as enemies, they must be treated as the real Christ taught us to do, in the Sermon on the Mount. We must love them, bless them, pray for them and do good to them. We must not attempt to resist evil by striking back. We must overcome evil only by doing good.

We must be prepared to carry our own cross, with Jesus, for them, laying down our lives for them, if necessary, to show them the love which never fails, even under the worst oppression that carnal men can devise.

Only by this can we be seen as children of the only true God. Only by loving in this way can we demonstrate the real difference between the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist. (Matt 5:43-48 & Rom 12:17-21).

If we can show them, in us, the love of the real Christ, who died for us all while we were yet enemies of God, perhaps some of them will seek to be reconciled to God, to His Son and to us.

Chapter 17 - APPLYING THE TESTS WITH CAREFUL DISCRIMINATION

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While we have made some very general positive identifications which refer to complete religious systems and churches, we do need to exercise careful discrimination when dealing with individual members of those churches.

It is, after all, individuals who must bear the responsibility and the consequences, for their own personal decision to identify themselves with the Christ they choose to follow.

It is individuals who comprise the lost, whom Jesus came to seek and to save.

We must therefore avoid the terrible mistake of applying the label "Antichrist" to anyone, on the sole ground that they attend a particular church.

There are, I am certain, many individuals in these church systems, who **do not** deserve the label "Antichrist".

Any who do not bear the identifying marks of Antichrist, may indeed bear the marks of the real Christ.

These will be, unquestionably, our brothers and sisters.

Between us and them, there must be that love by which, Jesus says, all men will know that we are His disciples.

Chapter 18 - AFTER THE TEST

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Applying the tests is relatively easy.

Deciding what to do with those who fail the test is not nearly so easy.

John did tell his readers to have no fellowship at all with those who failed the test. They were not to receive such men into their homes, or even give them a greeting, lest they give the impression that they condoned what the Antichrists stood for. (2 John 10).

For the first century readers, the decision had already been partly taken out of their hands. The Antichrists had left. (1 John v2 &19).

In the ecumenical church world of the 1990s, the issues have been clouded. We must learn the delicate balance between taking a clear and uncompromising stand for the truth, on one hand, and exercising care not to root up the wheat with the tares, on the other.

The following is this writer's personal guideline for deciding how to apply what John said.

I will go anywhere, any time, to any individual, or to any church, or to any synagogue, or to any pagan temple, where there are people willing to listen to the truth about Jesus as Son of God, complete and perfect man, crucified and risen Saviour, Lord now over God's creation, teacher of the way of life which pleases God, future judge of the works of all men, and King of the world to come.

I will go out of my way to make peace with all men, but not at the cost of remaining silent or compromising about things which I believe are vital to salvation.

I will not speak to contend, to debate or to destroy, but will seek only to glorify Jesus; to convince men of their need for Him as THE WAY to God; to make disciples who will love Him and obey Him.

When I do speak, I will prayerfully seek to find God's words for the occasion, His wisdom, His compassion and His healing power for the needs of those who hear.

I will accept fellowship and friendship wherever it is offered by any who claim to serve the real Christ but not at the cost of pretending that salvation can be obtained without a transformed mind and heart; that Jesus can be known by those who do not obey His teaching; that faith can exist without works; or that the Holy Spirit can live within us without producing the fruit which is the visible evidence of the Spirit's presence.

I will measure the claims of all who profess to be led by the Spirit of God, by the standard of the Word of God as it is recorded in the Bible.

I will ask you to do the same for me, so that together we may come to know and experience all the fullness of the Love of God, for all eternity.

It is inevitable in this confused religious world of ours, that my best efforts to be at peace with others who call themselves Christian, will not always be enough. My love for them will not always be reciprocated. Fellowship between Christ and Antichrist is as impossible as attempting to mix light and darkness.

- For those who insist that I am not truly a Christian and cannot be saved without belief in the

Nicene, Chalcedonian, Athanasian, Arian or "oneness" Christ,

- For those who have actively joined the persecutors or who condone the actions of the persecutors,
- For those who proclaim another gospel with a meaningless repentance, which does not require real obedience to the way of life taught by the real Christ,

For all such, I will reluctantly do as John tells me I must do.

I will not be able to receive them as brothers.

I will not be able to share in either fellowship or ministry, in any way which yokes me unequally with the spirit of Antichrist.

Chapter 19 - APPLYING THE TESTS TO OURSELVES

(FINDING THE REAL CHRIST)

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John did not really write this epistle so that Christians in the 20th century could sit back in comfort and point accusing fingers at others. It was written, he said, so that his readers could know that THEY had eternal life. (1 John 5:13).

The important question for those first century Christians was not nearly so much whether **someone else** was Antichrist, led by a false spirit, but whether THEY could be sure that they had received the real Holy Spirit from the real Christ.

The same question is vital for us also.

By applying John's tests to ourselves and responding to them in a positive way, we will be able to reassure ourselves that we do believe in the real Son of God, in whom alone there is salvation; and that, believing, we do indeed have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

For real Christians, these tests are simply the reverse of those we used to identify the marks of Antichrist.

MARK NO 1 - THE REAL NAME (The Identity Test)

For those who recognise the Vicar of Christ as the one who bears the name "Antichrist" and for those who know that the Roman church and her daughters do not represent real Christianity, the Word of God has one simple but demanding call:-

"Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues".
(Rev 18:4).

Those who bear the real name, written in their hearts, will hear, understand and obey.

MARK NO 2 - THE CHRIST WHO IS REALLY A MAN

(The Theological Test)

For the Apostle John, it was vitally important that his readers should confess that Jesus was both Son of God and the Christ (Messiah) who fulfilled all the prophecies about His coming. (1 John 2:22 & 5:1,5)

It was equally important that they should know Jesus as completely man. (1 John 4:2 & 2 John 7 & also Heb 2:14)

Set out below is a series of theological propositions which summarise what the Bible says about God Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

WHO IS GOD?

The only true God is the supreme, infinite, spirit being who Jesus calls Father. He is the living God, who alone possesses immortality, who has always existed and who always will exist. He is the God who created everything and who reveals Himself to us, in the Bible and through His Son.

This is the God who has adopted me as a son.

WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus is, as he claimed to be, **the Son of God**.

Before the world began, He was formed, not literally, but in the mind and plan of God, for **future** glory.

He was prophesied in the spoken and written Word of God as the one who was to come, in fulfilment of that plan.

He is that plan accomplished, the spoken and written Word made flesh, Son of God and Son of Man, now glorified.

He was miraculously begotten by God, of the Virgin Mary, through the power of the Holy Spirit, without a human father.

He is a MAN, exactly like other men, beginning His existence with His conception, gestation and birth, tempted and tested like other men, but without sin.

He is THE man who reveals to us the nature and character of God. He is THE man who shows us how God intends all men to live, if they will love God and obey God, as Jesus does.

He is THE man who shows what it will be like when God's work is completed in us and we are filled with all the fullness of God.

He is THE man, given by God, so that those who believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

He is THE man who died on the cross, in my place, bearing the penalty of my guilt in His own body.

He is THE man who death could not hold; who rose to life again, immortal, but still a man, now and forever.

He is THE man for whom God created all things.

He is the Seed of Abraham, heir of God's promises to Abraham.

He is the heir of the throne of David.

He reigns as Lord, over The Kingdom of God.

His power and authority is subject to God alone.

He is the future ruler over this earth, when the Kingdom of God is established in its prophesied glory.

He lives in Heaven, to intercede for those who belong to Him. He will return from heaven, at a time appointed by God, to judge the works of all who are held accountable for their actions.

He has been given authority to raise the dead at the last day and confer immortality on those who believe in Him.

He is to be given the same honour as His Father.

This Jesus is my Lord.

WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

- a. The Holy Spirit is a part of the person of the One True God.
- b. It is the inner "essence" of God's mental and moral nature.

- c. It is the Divine energy through which God performs His work.
- d. It is the Holy breath through which God speaks His word.
- e. It is the means by which God gives a part of Himself so that he lives, in person, within His children.

When I began to love Jesus and obey Jesus, God gave His Spirit to live within my heart, as a guarantee of His promises.

MARK NO 3 - THE CHURCH WHICH CARRIES A CROSS

(The Love Test)

No one can be a disciple of the real Christ, who has not counted the cost of the love which leads a man to forsake all that he has and take up his own cross.

The love which led Jesus to the cross, will also be found amongst those who are His disciples. Like Jesus, they too will be prepared to lay down their lives, for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, for one another, and even for enemies.

This love does not persecute unbelievers, infidels, "heretics" or "enemies of the Faith". Instead, it dies for them. This quality of love alone, bears witness to the Christ who gave Himself as a ransom for all.

Those who have counted the cost will understand.

MARK NO 4 - JESUS IS LORD (The Obedience Test)

Jesus is THE man to whom God has delegated all power and in Heaven and earth, to speak for God and act for God.

He is the final authority to whom we must turn to understand the word of God. Even the words of Moses or the example of Elijah, may not be used to invalidate the teaching of Jesus. (Matt 17:5).

To call Jesus Lord, is to commit ourselves to obey Him, totally. To call Him Lord and not obey, is to be a liar.

The real Christ came to teach and to demonstrate the eternal qualities of the way of life that pleases God. He came to save all who believe in Him, from the penalty, power and practice of sin.

The teaching and example of this Christ leaves no place for salvation without a genuine and life transforming repentance, in which the goal for change is measured by nothing less than Gods own perfection. This standard is set and the goal is stated clearly, in the teaching of Jesus, especially in the Sermon on the Mount.

This radical teaching challenges the values of the unbelieving world, especially that part of the world which calls itself "Christian", but is not. It calls men to a change of nature in which their minds will be recreated after the likeness of God.

This new nature is THE MARK of His disciples.

To become a part of this new creation, they must listen to the words of Jesus which call men to love Him and obey Him.

They must find inspiration to love Him in the simple story of His crucifixion, in which He reaches out to all, revealing the longing of God's heart to save them from their sins.

They must forsake human wisdom and human methods of searching for God, finding instead,

His wisdom and His love in their own personal response to the cross.

They must recognise their own spiritual poverty, be convicted of their sin and their desperate need for a change of nature.

They must be prepared to mourn for their sins with the Godly sorrow that leads to repentance.

They must express their repentance, their desire for a clean heart and a clear conscience, in a believers baptism where sins are forgiven.

They must be meek; submitting tamely to the call to forsake the old ways and begin a new life under Jesus as their King.

They must hunger and thirst after righteousness to the exclusion of all other priorities.

They must extend mercy to others, in the same measure that they receive mercy from God, forgiving as readily and as often and as completely as God forgives them.

They must be totally pure in heart; pure enough to be able to see God and live.

They must be peacemakers; not war makers.

They must be prepared to rejoice under the persecution which will be the certain lot of all true disciples of the real Christ.

They must be prepared to do good in a way which allows others to see the value of a life lived in obedience to God.

They may not relax even the least of God's commandments, nor teach other men so.

They may not kill, be angry with or insult their brother, or regard him as a hopeless fool.

They must agree with their accuser outside the courts, suffering themselves to be defrauded, giving coat as well as cloak, in order to be reconciled, if possible, so far as it depends on them.

They must not entertain lustful thoughts to the point of committing the sin mentally. Purity of heart and victory over sin includes the degree of self control which rejects even the thoughts that, unchecked, lead to the deed.

They must be prepared to make any sacrifice to cleanse their lives from sin.

They will remain faithful to their marriage covenant to their partner, as long as they both live, in all circumstances, good or bad. They will keep that covenant, even to their own hurt, sacrificing themselves, even for an unfaithful partner, as Christ sacrificed himself for the church.

They will not tolerate divorce in any circumstance which separates a union which God has joined. They will regard any remarriage of parties separated by men, against the will of God, as adulterous.

They will not swear any oath at all.

They will not take revenge or resist evil.

They will turn the other cheek to the aggressor.

Under compulsion they will go the first mile and then of their own free will choice, GIVE the second.

They will give to the needy who beg aid.

They will lend, not expecting to receive back what they do lend.

When their goods are taken by force, unjustly, they will not seek their return.

They will love their enemies, pray for them, do good to them and bless them.

If the enemy is hungry they will feed him. If he is thirsty, they will give him drink.

They will be pacifists, not defending possessions, loved ones, or even life itself, at the cost of injury to the aggressor.

They will be content to give alms in the secret place, where God alone sees; pray in the secret place where God alone hears; not needing or desiring approval or honour from men.

They will give respect and honour to earthly rulers, obey the laws they make and pay the taxes they demand.

In areas where the requirements of earthly rulers are in conflict with the values of the Kingdom of God, they will obey God rather than men.

They will seek earnestly after the perfection of character which is measured by nothing less than God's own perfection.

They will seek these things until they find them. They will continue to knock on the doors of heaven until they receive them and make them their own.

They will enter the narrow gate and walk the hard way, content to be amongst the few who know that it alone leads to life.

They will hear the words of Jesus and do them.

By these things they will become children of the only true God.

By this they will reassure their hearts that they serve the real Christ and have received the real Holy Spirit.

By this they will know that they have eternal life; that they do belong to the true God and to His Son Jesus Christ.

The Christ who preached the Sermon on the Mount is the real one. It is this Christ who saves and no other. All others are thieves and robbers. {John 10,1-10}

Chapter 20 - THE REAL PRIORITY

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Of the four marks of Antichrist, which we have been discussing, the first three are indeed significant. However they are only **symptoms** of the fourth. It is that fourth mark which is the really vital issue.

If we set that right, loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength and with all our mind; and if we take up our cross to love our neighbour as ourself; and if our love for Jesus leads us to obey Him; then the Holy Spirit, which is God's gift to those who obey Jesus will soon lead us to conviction and change for the other three.

Chapter 21 - WILL THERE BE A FUTURE ANTICHRIST?

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While this present generation continues to look to the future for the mysterious "Man of Sin", it has missed the truth and perhaps, also, missed the opportunity to identify the marks of the Antichrist in themselves and repent.

We do not need to look for some mysterious evil ruler who has not yet appeared. The foundations were laid centuries ago when the first Pope occupied the throne of the Roman church.

However, the prophecy by Paul does say that Antichrist will continue until the coming of Jesus.

The chief Antichrist is to be destroyed by the breath of the mouth of Jesus and the brightness of His coming.

The prophecy also declares the final condemnation of all those who believe the Antichrist's lies; who do not believe the truth, but take pleasure in sin; who refuse to love the truth and be saved. (2 Thess 2,1-12)

We will not attempt to interpret the details encompassed in that vivid word picture, beyond saying that it represents final judgement and annihilation of everything associated with the Antichrist, the church over which he rules and her daughters.

The Pope who occupies the throne of the Roman church at the time when Jesus appears, will be the one in whom this prophecy finds its completion.

While there is still time, we need to hear the solemn warning:-

"Come out of her, my people". (Revelation 18:4)

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