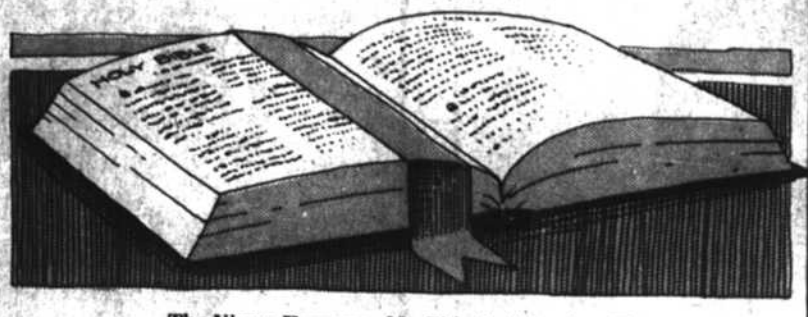


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VIEW FROM THE PULPIT



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Christianity Versus The Anti-Christ

By Rev. G.E. Gilmore, Pastor Temple Chapel M.B. Church



Rev. Gene E. Gilmore

Anti-christ is a power or person opposed to Christ. The Bible says that the anti-christ will rise to power before the last judgement. The term appears only in the first and second epistles of John. It is mentioned in one sense as an evil power working against Christ in many persons and places. It is also used to refer to the one who will oppose Christ in the final battle between good and evil.

Anti-christ is an antagonist of Christ who denies that Jesus is the Christ, but who will be conquered for all time by the second coming of Christ. Although mentioned by name only in I John 2:18; II John 1:7; it is thought to be referred to as "man" in II Thessalonians 2:1-2 and as "beast" in Revelations chapters 13 and 17.

The concept of a conflict between the forces of good and evil appeared in a very early Babylonian myth, became a dominant part of Persian thought, and made its way into Jewish beliefs and Christian doctrine concerning the Second Advent. Early Christians associated anti-christ with false teachers and disciples and with apostasies and impious denials of God. Some students have identified anti-christ with the Roman Empire or with such rulers as Nero (the last of the Julian line to sit on the throne of the Roman Empire) Caligula (the great-nephew of Tiberius, his formal name was Gaius, he was incompetent, highly extravagant and insane before he died), and Titus (son of Titus Flavius Vespasian founder of the Flavian dynasty - Titus defeated the Jews at Jerusalem in 70 A.D. which marked the end of Israelite independence and unity as a people until the founding of Israel in 1948). Other students interpret II Thessalonians to show the Roman Empire as a force restraining the anti-christ.

First in series

others saw anti-christ at the head of the church in Popes Boniface VIII and John XXII. It was a common practice for opponents, including popes and emperors, to call each other the anti-christ. Many preachers spread warnings of the coming of the anti-christ in order to call the people to repentance throughout the 14th and 15th centuries.

The Reformers during the Reformation did not attack individual popes as such but the papacy itself as being anti-christ. This idea that evil was embodied in the head of the church itself, with the clergy as the "body of the anti-christ", became the most powerful weapons to discredit and denigrate the papacy. The emphasis placed on the anti-christ figure gradually diminished, after the Reformation. Among some modern protestant theologians, the anti-christ can be interpreted as whatever resists or denies the lordship of Christ.

THE ANTI-CHRIST MOVEMENT TODAY

The most popular of the anti-christ as they exist today are:

1. The Jews who don't believe in Jesus Christ. They are still waiting on the Messiah to come.
2. The Jehovah's Witnesses

don't believe in Jesus Christ. They adhere to the theocratic rule of God. That is, they deny the existence of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

3. Atheist who believes there is no God.

4. Agnostic does not deny the possible existence of God but holds that this existence and the origin of the universe are not known and probably cannot be known.

5. Cults are: a) formal religious veneration, b) enthusiastic and usually temporary devotion to a person, idea or thing.

CULTISM TODAY

Cultism is the adherence to major doctrines which are pointedly contradictory to orthodox Christianity yet which claims the distinction of either tracing their origin to orthodox sources or of being in essential harmony with those sources. A cult, then, is a group of people polarized around someone's interpretation of the Bible and is characterized by major deviations from orthodox Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, particularly the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ.

The most prominent among the cults are Jehovah's Witnesses, Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God, Mormonism, Christian Science, Unity, and Baha'z Baha'I. All of these deny both the biblical doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ.

Cultism thrives principally upon two factors: ignorance and uncertainty; where these abound, there cultism will also be found in force. The cults consistently appeal to "reason" and "rationality," which many times they use as their sole guide in evaluating the character of God and His revelation. Hell is "unreasonable," eternal punishment is "irrational" consciousness after death is a "pagan theory" and therefore these doctrines could not be true, argue the cults.

Continued next week.

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