

# THE ANGLICAN POSITION TOWARDS ROME AND THE PAPACY

Church Association Tract 429

The question of re-union with Rome having now been brought to the front by the Archbishop of Canterbury's belated disclosure of the secret confabulations at Malines, there seems good reason for stating a strong argument against such *rapprochement*. If the English Reformers are to be believed, and the official language of the Church of England for a couple of generations at least after the Reformation is to be accepted, the Church of Rome is the Apocalyptic "Babylon the Great," and the Pope that "Man of Sin" delineated by the Apostle, as one of the manifestations of Anti-Christ.

The Archbishop desired that the Anglican position "as set forward by the great theologians of the XVI. and XVII. centuries" should be "unmistakeably set forward" (the emphatic repetition is used by his Grace) at the conferences with the Romanists. Is it fair to ask whether the judgment of the Church of England concerning the Church of Rome, as recorded in the Homilies and attested by all the Reformers and by the first half-dozen Archbishops of Canterbury after the Reformation, was even hinted at, not to say "set forward" at the Malines confabulations?

Whether this interpretation of Prophecy is correct is of course open to legitimate question, and since the XVII. century many good and sincere Protestants have been led to accept the varying expositions which the Jesuits for the most part devised in order to exculpate Rome from this fearful charge. Yet it is to be doubted whether anything that has been written on the subject has really refuted the main contention of such men as Joseph Mede, Robert Fleming, Richard Hurd, and George Stanley Faber, to say nothing of such later writers as Professor Birks, E. B. Elliott, Dr. Grattan Guinness and Christopher Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, the last great leader of the historic High Church party.

However this may be, we think that even staunch Protestants often are hardly aware of how deeply our Reformed Church is committed to this indictment of Rome and the Papacy. Thus Bishop Harold Browne, commenting on Article XIX. says that "Some might expect the Article to have denounced the Church of Rome, not as a Church in error, but as the synagogue of Anti-christ, an Antichristian assembly, not an erring Church. No doubt at times such is the language of the Reformers, who in their strong opposition to Romanist errors, often use the most severe terms in denouncing them. But in their most sober and guarded language, not only our own, but Luther, Calvin, and other Continental Reformers speak of the Church of Rome as a Church, though a fallen and corrupt Church." (*Exposition*, p. 455; sixth edition.)

The Reformers would have been surprised at the ingenuity which could find any contradiction of their unvarying assertion of the proper Antichristian of Popery in their concurrent insistence that Rome is in a sense a Christian Church. In their mind the utterly damning circumstance in the guilt of Rome consists precisely in this, that she is outwardly a Christian Church, which insults and blasphemes the God she pretends to serve, and compasses the ruin of the souls of men whom she professes to save. The idolatry and superstition of the heathen who have never known God are venial in comparison to the wilful apostacy of a Church having the Gospel of God, professing all the articles of the Christian Faith, and retaining the Sacraments though woefully perverted.

**Dean Jackson**, who was commended by Dr. Pusey as "one of the best and greatest minds our Church has nurtured" (*Letter to Abp. Cant.*, p. 160; p. 133, third edition), disposes of the objection in these words:—"All this may be granted, that the Romish Church before Luther's time, was, *and at this day is*, a true Church, *quoad hoc*: that it did and may bring forth sons and daughters unto God, that is, there are those means of regeneration in it which are not in the Mahometan or Jewish

synagogue. In opposition to both of which it may be said to be a *true* Church, though in *respect of the primitive* Catholic Church, or of Reformed visible Churches, it may truly be termed the synagogue of Satan, or seat of Antichrist; in many respects *as much worse*, as it is in some respects *better*, than the Jewish or Mahometan synagogue." (*Catholic Faith and Church*, chap. 18; Goode's reprint, pp. v., 163; London, 1843.)

No doubt some of the confusion of thought in this matter is due to the popular misapprehension of the prefix in "Anti-Christ." In Latin it is true the force of *anti* is primarily "against," but the New Testament is in Greek, and the primary force of the Greek *anti* is not "against," but "instead of," so that in combination it implies first and foremost *substitution for*, then it passes into the sense of rivalry, and so to actual opposition. Thus *hupatos*, a consul, makes *anthupatos*, not one opposed to a consul, but one who *takes the place of* a consul, a pro-consul. *Strategos* a general makes *anti-strategos*, which denotes properly one *in the place of* a general, a lieutenant-general, though it also may bear the sense of an *opposing* general.

Now to the Reformers the Pope (of course not the individual man, but the official head of the Roman Church) was "Antichrist," as claiming himself to be the place-holder or Vicar of Christ, whose only Authorised Vice-gerent is God the Holy Ghost. The Pope's claim to be the "Father" of all Christians equally constitutes him *Antitheos*, the substitute for God; so that the Papal Claims are in effect a denial of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. To admit the one living and true God and then to usurp the Office of each Person of the Holy Trinity is a worse offence than simply to reject the Christian Faith. In the same way, the guilt of Judas, that son of perdition representative of the Man of Sin, was not denial of Christ, that was the fault of Peter who found forgiveness, but the betrayal of Him whom he hailed as "Master" and so doing "kissed Him much." Betrayal of Christ is impossible to an open foe, it can only be perpetrated by a false Apostle.

Another difficulty in the way of interpreting the prophecies as the Reformers did, is the mistaken idea that it necessarily involves the damnation of all Roman Catholics. This absurdity is fully refuted by Hooker in his *Second Sermon on Jude*; but the quickest answer is to refer to the words of Rev. xviii. 4, "Come out of her my people," a clear proof that some of the people of God are in her unhallowed communion. We must leave it at that and pass to what our Reformers have to say for themselves in vindication of their position.

**Ridley's** statement of their contention is particularly valuable because he is rightly taken as the very personification of that "sound learning" and wise moderation characteristic of the English Reformation; and he refutes completely the plea sometimes advanced that the Reformers only applied the vituperative prophecies to Rome in the heat of acute controversy and under stress of persecution. Addressing the "lords of the temporality" he writes thus before his martyrdom:—

"And lest, my lords, ye may peradventure think, thus barely to call the Bishop of Rome Christ's adversary, or (to speak it in plain terms) to call him Antichrist, that it is done in mine anguish, and that I do but rage, and as a desperate man do not care what I say or upon what I do rail; therefore, that your lordships may perceive my mind, and thereby understand that 'I speak the words of truth and sobriety' (as St. Paul saith unto Festus) be it known unto your lordships all, that as concerning the Bishop of Rome, I neither hate the person nor the place.

"For I ensure your lordships (the living God beareth me witness before Whom I speak), I do think many a good, holy man, many martyrs and saints of God, have sat and taught in that place Christ's Gospel truly. . . . And therefore as truly and justly as that See for the true trade and consanguinity of doctrine with the religion and doctrine of Christ's Apostles was called *Apostolic*; so as truly and as justly, for the contrariety of religion and diversity of doctrine from Christ and His Apostles, that See and the Bishop thereof *at this day* both ought to be called, and are indeed, *Anti-christian*.

"The See is the seat of Satan, and the Bishop of the same, that maintaineth the abominations thereof, is *Antichrist himself indeed*. And for the same causes this See at this day is the same which St. John

called in his Revelation Babylon, or the whore of Babylon, and spiritually Sodoma and Egyptus, the mother of fornications and of the abominations upon the earth . . . that is (of the innumerable multitude of them to rehearse some for example's sake) her dispensations, her pardons and pilgrimages, her invocation of saints, her worshipping of images, her false and counterfeit religion in her monkery and friarage, and her traditions whereby God's Laws are defiled; as her massing and her false ministering of God's Word and the Sacraments of Christ, clean contrary to God's Word and the Apostle's doctrine. . . . That doctrine and faith which this whore of Babylon, and the Beast whereon she doth sit, maintaineth at this day with all violence of fire and sword, with all spoil and banishment (according to Daniel's prophecy), and finally with all falsehood, deceit, hypocrisy, and all kind of ungodliness—are clean contrary to God's Word as darkness is unto light, or light to darkness, white to black, or black to white, or as Belial unto Christ, or Christ unto Antichrist himself." (Works, pp. 414-6.)

Now let us hear Ridley's fellow-martyr, **Latimer**:—"In this let us learn to know Antichrist, which doth elevate himself in the Church, and judgeth at his pleasure before the time. His canonisations and judging of men before the Lord's judgment is a manifest token of Antichrist." (*Sermons*, p. 148. see also p. 173.) So, too, the martyr, **John Bradford**, "The Bishop of Rome is undoubtedly that great Antichrist of whom the Apostles do so much admonish us." (Works, ii., 142, also 146, 329, and vol. i. 390, 435-443.) **Archdeacon Philpot**, another martyr, answers his persecutors thus,

"Now as concerning your offer made from the synod which is gathered together in Antichrist's name . . . Are ye not ashamed to persecute me and others for your Church's sake, which is Babylonical and contrary to the true Catholic Church?" (*Examination*, p. 428, also 152, 244, 338.)

To these we may add the martyr, **Bishop Hooper**:

"The very properties of Antichrist, I mean of Christ's great and principal enemy, are so openly known to all men that are not blinded with the smoke of Rome, that they know him to be the beast that describeth in the Apocalypse, as well as the logician knoweth that *risibilitate distinguitur homo a ceteris animantibus*." (*Early Writings*, p. 24.)

This may be sufficient to prove the prevalence of the opinion amongst the Reformers so that for the sake of reasonable brevity, not for lack of materials, we may confine ourselves to a succession of the English Archbishops for the first fifty years after the Reformation, beginning with our martyred **Cranmer**, who in his *Confutation of Unwritten Verities*, chapter xi., writes thus:—

"In the seventeenth chapter (of the book of Revelation) St. John lively setteth forth the Pope in his own colours under the person of the whore of Babylon being drunken with the blood of the saints; pointing as it were with his finger, who this whore of Babylon is and the place where she shall reign, saying: "The woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." Now what other city reigned at that time or at any time since, over the Christian kings of the earth, but only Rome? Whereof it followeth Rome to be the seat of Antichrist, and the Pope to be very Antichrist himself." (*Remains*, p. 63.)

We could not expect the same doctrine from Cardinal Pole, Cranmer's immediate successor, but it reappears in **Matthew Parker**, the first Elizabethan Archbishop of Canterbury; who says:

"It is the pride, covetousness and usurpation of the Bishop of Rome, and of his predecessors, which hath made the princes of the earth to defend their territories and their privileges from that wicked Babylon and her Bishop." (*Correspondence*, p. 109.)

His successor, **Edmund Grindal**, was translated from the See of York. He wrote to Bullinger concerning the establishment of the "true religion of Christ" in Scotland, that the first provision is that the "impious traditions" and tyranny of the Pope are abolished, "and it is provided that all persons shall in future acknowledge him to be the very Antichrist and the son of perdition of whom Paul speaks." (*Zurich Letters*, i., 198-9.)

Grindal's successor at York was **Edmund Sandys**, who writes:

"Christ is obscured by that great enemy Antichrist, the Man of Sin, who hath set himself in Christ's peculiar place and will be exalted above all that is called God. To make any other mediator between God and man, saving only Christ Jesus, which is not only man but also God; to seek elsewhere remission of sins, justification, redemption, sanctification, than only in this Jesus, and in Him crucified, doth darken and make dim both Him and His merits. And of this treason the Romish Antichristian Church, which they term Catholic, is found guilty. For the children of this harlot labour by all means to obscure the Son of God, to rob Him of the glory of His deserts in our salvation." (*Sermons*, p. 358, see also pp. II, 389.)

Grindal's successor at Canterbury was **John Whitgift**, who warns contentious members of the Puritan party, "It behoveth you to take heed how you divide the army of Christ, which should *unanimiter* fight against that Antichrist." (Works, ii. 182, also iii. 495.) The successor of Whitgift was **Richard Bancroft**, a thorough "High Churchman," wrongly credited by Hallam with having upheld the absolute necessity of episcopacy. Bancroft presided at the Convocation of 1606, which, as we shall see, passed a Canon censuring any who should deny the Pope to be the Man of Sin. His successor, **George Abbot**, was consecrated by him Bishop of Lichfield in 1609. But, as Dean of Winchester, Abbot was a member of the Convocation of 1606, and so is yet another Archbishop of Canterbury who held the Pope to be the Man of Sin. Abbot died in 1633, just a century after Cranmer's consecration.

**Henry Bullinger**, the Reformer of Zurich, was the foreign divine to whom our own Reformers paid the most deference, both in the days of Edward VI., when our Prayer Book was compiled, and afterwards. Under Mary he was the generous friend and protector of English exiles. Under Elizabeth he supported the Prayer Book Churchmen against attacks by the rabid section of the Puritans.

"At the Convocation of 1586 the Archbishops and Bishops agreed to certain *Orders*, of which the first was this: 'Every minister having cure, and being under the degrees of Master of Arts and Bachelor of Law, and not licenced to be a public preacher, shall before the second day of February next, provide a Bible and Bullinger's *Decads* in Latin or English, and a paper book. And shall every day read one chapter of the Holy Scriptures; and note the principal contents thereof briefly in his paper book. And shall every week read over one sermon in the said *Decads*, and note likewise the chief matters therein contained in the said paper. And shall once in every quarter show his said notes to some preacher near adjoining to be assigned for that purpose.' And by the second of these *Orders* the said preachers are to certify to the archdeacon or bishop, 'who doth perform the said exercises and how they have profited therein.' . . . And so completely were these *Orders* considered to have received public sanction, that he (Whitgift) expected that it would be enquired into in the following Parliament, how they had been observed, as he told the bishops in a circular letter sent to them in November, 1588." (Goode, *On the Eucharist*, ii., 735-6; Strype, *Whitgift*, Appendix 32; book iii., ch. 20; Cardwell, *Synodalia*, II. 563.)

In the second sermon of the fifth *Decade* departure from the Church of Rome is said to be commanded in Scripture in many places, especially where St. Paul "sheweth that there can be no agreement between Christ and Belial, light and darkness, and between idols and the temple of God. . . . To this appertaineth what the blessed Apostle John in his Revelation showed him by the Lord Christ, seeing the works of Babylon, heareth also a voice coming from heaven, and commanding after this manner: 'Go out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.' The same apostle threateneth very often everlasting destruction to those that worship the beast, but life and glory to those that flee from the beast, so that they cleave only to the only Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ. Therefore, that departure of ours from the See or Church of Rome is not only lawful, but also necessary as that which is commanded us of the Lord Himself, and by His holy apostles, unto whom unless we obey, we cannot be saved." (*Decades*, iv. 76-7.)

**The Forms of Public Prayer set forth by Authority** in the reign of Elizabeth continually impress the same lesson that the Papacy is Antichrist and the Roman system Babylon. Thus in a *Godly Admonition* on the occasion of an earthquake in 1580, the people are reminded that in the time of the Marian persecution “We vowed all obedience to God if He would vouchsafe to deliver us from the bondage of the Romish Antichrist into the liberty of the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ.” (Parker Society’s, *Liturgical Services*, p. 572.) A *Psalm of Thanksgiving* for deliverance from the Armada speaks of God’s protection of this nation from men “bewitched by the Romish Antichrist” (p. 619). The *Admonition* prefaced to “An Order of Prayer and Thanksgiving, set forth by Authority Anno 1594, and renewed 1598,” declares that the plots against the life of Elizabeth “as they have all flowed from none other fountain than from the City of Seven Hills, the See of Rome and the Seat of the Beast, not in regard of any desert of ours, but because we have abandoned the cup of spiritual abominations wherewith they have long intoxicated the Kings of the earth. So have they been continually projected, carried forward and managed by idolatrous *Priests* and *Jesuits* his creatures, the very loathsome *Locusts* that crawl out of the bottomless pit,” and the final prayer in this form beseeches God to confound “those priests of Baal, the hellish chaplains of Antichrist.” (pp. 679, 680, 688.)

The natural result of such services embodying in the prayers the Reformers’ settled conviction regarding Rome and the Papacy was its formal acceptance as the current teaching of the Church which could not be questioned by its members. When in the beginning of the reign of James I. such question began to be raised it was promptly condemned by the Convocation of 1606, which passed a **Canon** in the following terms:—

“If any man shall affirm . . . that the intolerable pride of the Bishop of Rome for the time still being, through the advancement of himself, by, many sleights, stratagems and false miracles, over the Catholic Church (the temple of God) as if he were God Himself, doth not argue him plainly to be the Man of Sin mentioned by the Apostle . . . he doth greatly err.” (Cardwell, *Synodalia*, p. 379.)

According to this judgment of Convocation the **Dedication to the Authorised Version** of the Bible in 1611, tells King James that by his Anti-Romish writings he had “given such a blow unto that Man of Sin as will not be healed.”

**The Church of Ireland** in a Convocation held at Dublin in 1615 adopted the “Hundred and One Articles” as the Irish Confession of Faith. The eightieth of these runs: “The Bishop of Rome is so far from being the supreme head of the Universal Church, that his works and doctrine do plainly discover him to be that Man of Sin foretold in the Holy Scriptures, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and abolish with the brightness of His coming.” (Hall, *Harmony of Confessions*, p. 535.)

**The Westminster Confession of 1647**, accepted by the Scottish Church to this day, fell into line with the Churches of England and Ireland by asserting that “There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that Man of Sin and Son of Perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God.” (Chap. 25, sec. 6.) Thus it is the established judgment of the British Churches that the Papacy is Antichrist and that Man of Sin, to which the Church of England explicitly adds the complementary truth that the Church of Rome is the Babylonian Harlot of the Book of Revelation.

**The Books of Homilies** declared in Article XXXV. to contain “godly and wholesome doctrine and necessary for these times,” unsparingly indict the Church of Rome and the Papacy. Thus the *Homily of Salvation*, referred to by Article XI. as having a peculiar authority, says that the Romish doctrine of Justification by human merit is “the greatest arrogancy and presumption that Antichrist could set up against God” (part ii., par. 6), and that whoever denies the Protestant doctrine of Justification “is not to be counted for a Christian man, nor for a setter forth of Christ’s glory, but for

an adversary of Christ and His Gospel, and for a setter forth of man's vainglory." (par. 4). The *Homily of Obedience* (part iii., par. 3) says that "The Bishop of Rome teacheth . . . most clearly against Christ's doctrine and St. Peter's. He ought therefore rather to be called Antichrist and the successor of the Scribes and Pharisees, than Christ's Vicar and St. Peter's successor."

The *Homily for Whitsunday* after recounting the false doctrine and evil life of certain Popes, says, "Such were all the Popes and prelates of Rome for the most part, as doth well appear in the story of their lives; and therefore they are worthily accounted among the number of *false prophets and false Christs* which deceived the world a long while." And it concludes with a prayer now much needed:

"The Lord of heaven and earth defend us from their tyranny and pride, that they never enter into His vineyard again. . . . And He of His great mercy so work in all men's hearts by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, that the comfortable Gospel of His Son Christ, may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed in all places, to the beating down of sin, death, the Pope, the Devil, and all the kingdom of Antichrist, that the scattered and dispersed sheep being at length gathered into one fold, we may in the end rest all together in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there to be partakers of eternal and everlasting life, through the merits and death of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen."

The *Homily against Peril of Idolatry* (part iii., sec. 2, par 7), composed by Jewel, the recognised champion of the English Reformation, exceeds in energy of expression anything hitherto quoted, and in fact is too strong to bear verbatim reproduction to all and sundry. Suffice to say that the "godly and wholesome doctrine" of the Church of England there expressed, is not only that the "idolatrous (*sic*) Church" is to be identified with "Babylon the Great," but that if her "fond lovers" could see her as she is, they would "abhor her as the foulest and filthiest" practitioner of her loathsome trade "that ever was seen."

Would that our present Primate might repeat as his own before all the world the majestic words of his noblest predecessor, Thomas Cranmer, written at the end of the preface to his great work on the Lord's Supper:

"Moved by the duty, office, and place, whereunto it hath pleased God to call me, I give warning in His Name unto all that profess Christ, that they **flee from Babylon, if they will save their souls, and to beware of that great harlot, that is to say, the pestiferous See of Rome**, that she make you not drunk with her pleasant wine. Trust not her sweet promises, nor banquet not with her; for instead of wine she will give you sour dregs, and for meat she will feed you with rank poison. **But come to our Redeemer and Saviour Christ, who refresheth all that truly come unto Him.** . . . Hearken to Christ, give ear to His words which shall lead you the right way unto everlasting life, there with Him to live for ever as heirs of His kingdom. Amen."