

**Martin Luther, the Devil,
and the True Church**

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Martin Luther refers to the Devil more than any other Reformer. Since the 1960s, historians have been more attentive to the role of Satan in his theology and polemical writings. But the place of the Evil One in Luther's outlook goes beyond the typically medieval emphasis on the Fiend's "private" function in tempting individual consciences. It is argued here that Luther integrated the Devil into his view of history and the two churches, the true and the false. The Reformer closely associated Satan with the persecuted church and its Catholic oppressor, as well as with the Jews, Turks, wayward Lutherans, and the Anabaptists.

It was a dark and stormy night when the Old Enemy appeared to the young monk in his cold upper room of the castle. When the Devil told the monk that he was wasting his time translating the New Testament, the monk responded with insults. Infuriated, Satan picked up the monk's inkwell and hurled it at him. The monk ducked and it splattered against the wall. About 80 years later, some of the monk's followers told the story, which was soon transposed into a reversal of roles: it now was the *translator* who threw the inkwell against his protagonist. The tale reached its classic form by 1650, when it was widely accepted as one of the iconic episodes in the career of Martin Luther, along with the 95 Theses, the burning of the papal bull, and his appearance before the Diet of Worms.

The story suggests that the Devil tried to prevent Luther from translating the Bible into German. More broadly it signifies the battle against the Evil One who tried to prevent the gospel from being preached, a battle which consumed the Reformer for the rest of his life. Prior to the 1960s the Devil in the writings of the early

Luther (and Lutheran) has received little scholarly attention. Earlier studies concentrate on the anecdotes in Luther's Table Talks,¹ with only cursory remarks on his comments in his biblical commentaries and anti-papal tracts. The focus has been on his personal encounters with the Demon, often tied to pastoral advice on how to cope with diabolical temptations. This relative neglect of the Devil is surprising, since Luther alluded to the prince of devils more often than did any other Reformer. Some of Luther's admirers, embarrassed by his frequent references to the Devil, simply dismissed them as symbolic or metaphoric, obliquely related to the scriptural Satan. More often, Luther's allusions to the Adversary were taken literally, but dismissed as merely "medieval" leftovers in the authentic Luther,² who was the forerunner of the "modern" age. Thus, the presence of the prince of darkness was but a quaint residue of the Dark Ages, when popery and superstition ran amuck. The modern Luther of the 19th-century German historians had little time for such anachronisms.

But as Luther historiography after World War II matured, it became clear that the historical Luther was truly concerned, even obsessed, with the Enemy of God. So too, there was now a greater tendency to insert the Wittenberger in the wider context of pre-sixteenth-century Catholicism, the German Reformation along with the other Reformations of the time, the polemical techniques of Luther and his disciples, the symbiotic interaction of Luther and the Catholic controversialists, and his differences with Lutherans and the various sects. The tendency was to move away from Luther's "private" confrontations with the Devil toward his broader social and political thought. The pioneer work of Heiko Oberman³—building on the

1 Hazlitt, *Table Talks*, chaps. 574-632, pp. 247-68; LW 54, pp. 16, 24, 29, 34, 51, 78, etc.: WATr6, nos. 6808-6835.

2 So too, his cosmology was medieval. Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 14-45; Roos, *The Devil in 16th Century German Literature*, chap. 1.

3 Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* and "Teufelsdreck," 435-50; Hamm, "An Opponent of the Devil and the Modern Age: Heiko Oberman's View of Luther."

earlier studies of Obendiek,⁴ Buchrucker,⁵ Roos,⁶ Edwards,⁷ Adam,⁸ Barth⁹—gives closer attention to his polemical and homiletic treatises. It is becoming clear that Luther’s Devil was as much a “public” figure as a “private” one, as the Reformer exchanged words with his infernal Opponent. Yet in all these recent investigations of diabolology little attention is paid to Luther’s ecclesiology, the subject of this article.

I will argue that Luther called upon the Devil to define the true church and its nemesis, the false church. This is of course not to deny the existential reality of Satan in Luther’s daily life. But as his conflicts with the Lutherans (as his followers were often called, to Luther’s dismay, albeit he reconciled himself to its use), papists, and sectarians intensified, he came to realize that now and throughout history, the action of the son of perdition has served to clarify how God engages the true church.

Luther summons Satan in seven ways:

1

Luther extended the location of the Devil (where he directs his operations in “his” world, the latter being under his dominion) from the individual believer to entire groups: papists (Luther’s general term for Catholics), Turks, Jews, sects, misguided Lutherans.

Now and in the past (going back to the Garden of Eden!) the Devil works his schemes through the papal church. Since the time of Pentecost the prince of lies uses the pope and the papists to introduce human doctrines into the Catholic church by means of papal decrees, canon law, scholastic

4 Obendiek, *Der Teufel bei Martin Luther*.

5 Buchrucker, “*Die Bedeutung des Teufels*.”

6 Roos, *The Devil in 16th Century German Literature*, chaps. 1, 4.

7 Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, chap. 5.

8 Adam, “*Der Teufel als Gottes Affe*.”

9 Barth, *Der Teufel und Jesus Christus*, chap. 3.

theology, and novel practices.¹⁰ Popes have subverted the gospel by inventing private Masses, purgatory, clerical celibacy, pilgrimages, sacraments (beyond baptism and the Lord's Supper), communion in one kind, religious orders, indulgences, cult of the saints, separate clerical status, and papal supremacy, including supremacy over secular governments, even the Holy Roman Empire. The Evil Spirit and his earthly idol, the pope, have tyrannized the church with their reliance on good works, to the exclusion of justification by faith.¹¹ Note that Luther links diabolical activity to his baseline theological notion of justification by faith.

Luther's complaint is less with individual pontiffs than with the papacy itself, which was perverted by the Devil long before its current debasement. The Adversary tricked the emperor into making the pope (Boniface III in 608) the supreme head of the universal church.¹² The Destroyer has been particularly active in the church in the last 400 years and *a fortiori* after 1517 (or 1417, if one dates the "reform" to the death of John Hus, as Luther sometimes does).¹³ Now that the gospel is again being preached, the Evil One has intensified his machinations within the papal church in the face of the imminent End Time. Luther was pleased that the recent diabolical assaults had been so severe, since these were evidence that the gospel is really being proclaimed. God is now preparing to destroy the papist church and allow the persecution of the true church.

2

The diabolical attacks of the false church upon the genuine church, now the recipient of persecution (by papists, radical

10 LW 8: 251-60; LW 39: 70-104, 189-223; LW 41: 210-28.

11 LW 5: 242, 257-59; LW 26: 155-68, 223, 307-11; LW 41: 110-14.

12 LW 41: 90, 292; Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, 186.

13 LW 2: 31; Fudge, "The Shouting Hus,"; Pelikan, "Luther's Attitude toward John Hus,"; Batka, "Jan Hus"; Oberman, "Hus and Luther"; Hendrix, "We are all Hussites?"; Haberkern, *Patron Saint and Prophet*, 149-210.

sects, Turks), are particularly acute because the Antichrist sits in the center of the church, the papal throne, worshipped as a god.¹⁴ The Antichrist, as foretold by Daniel,¹⁵ now dwells in the Temple of God, the papal curia, working his mischief with his perverse teaching of salvation by good works. For Luther the Antichrist is not some present or future vicar of Christ, but the papal institution itself, which disseminates blasphemous doctrine and practices at variance with the scriptures. When Luther refers to the pope as the Devil he is not simply name-calling, as if he were simply labeling him evil or engaging in the then-popular technique of invective. The pontiff is the opposite of Christ, the *anti*-Christ. Artists such as Lucas Cranach¹⁶ contrasted the humble Christ with the pompous pope and his curia. But whatever the popular appeal of the early Luther's rants against the corruption and exploitation of the German churches, the main point for the Wittenberger is that the bishop of Rome is Satan's disciple because he threatens the salvation of souls by disseminating false doctrine (a term Luther uses much more broadly than did contemporary theologians), which lead to spiritual complacency.¹⁷ This combat between the Antichrist in the Vatican and the true believers is not (at least not primarily) some cosmological event beyond this world, but an ongoing clash here on earth. Luther has little interest in late medieval extra-terrestrial wars (based on Rev 12) or the then-current tales about the fall of the angels prior to God's creation of humans.¹⁸

14 LW 2: 38, 61, 101, 181, 213, 229; LW 37: 37, 368; LW 39: 60, 84, 134, 173, 193-94, 203, 279-80; LW 40: 353-59; LW 41: 205, 209-12, 339, 363-64, 371. Pettibone, "Martin Luther's Views on the Antichrist"; Russell, "Martin Luther's Understanding of the Pope as the Antichrist"; Oberman, "Teufelsdreck," 440; Stadtwald, "Antichrist"; Russell, *Schmal-kald Articles*, 83, 85, 91-4, 198.

15 Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, 100-01; Headley, *Luther's View*, 197-98, 202, 211, 228; Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures*, 180-82, 192, 211.

16 Dykema, *Luther; Cranach*; Buck, *Roman Monster*, 160-68.

17 LW 1: 159, 179, 250, 253-54, 271-72. Hendrix in *Luther and the Papacy* argues that by 1520 Luther was convinced that the pope was the Antichrist because he had ignored his pastoral duty to preach the gospel. See also Hendrix, "The Turk, the Pope, and the Devil," 256-73; LW 39: 93, 149; LW 41: 291, 296, 301, 338-39.

18 Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 37-42.

3

While the pope is the Devil's favorite, the Turks and the Jews are not far behind. Although these two topics have been extensively examined in recent scholarship, the common denominator is that the Ruler of this world drives both groups. In the first instance God uses the Turks¹⁹ to punish Germans for their weak faith and scandalous behavior, especially drunkenness and usury. Yet God nonetheless summons good Christians to resist the Muslims and protect the empire. We Germans must rally behind our emperor—however antagonistic he is to Lutherans—not as a holy war or crusade, but because of our duty to obey the legitimate secular government. God permits the infidel to attack Hungary and to teach Germans how to react to adversity. For Luther, the pope is worse than the Turk because the former poses a greater threat to the spiritual welfare of Christians. The Ottomans harm the body; the papists, the soul. Luther did not demonize the Turks, as was common in Germany at the time. And the Turks, after all, possess some good moral qualities, and are only “followers” of the Devil.²⁰ Luther showed no interest in the then-common artistic and theatrical depictions of the Devil and devils as grotesque half-animal monsters.

While Luther's teaching on the Turks is easy to discern, his views on the Jews are less so. Historians disagree on the reasons for the change in his attitude from tolerance to hostility, from patience with their errors to calls for their destruction after 1538.²¹ Our concern here, however, is with

19 LW 43: 215-44; LW 46: 157-205; Lee, “Luther on Islam and the Papacy,”; Henrich, *Martin Luther—Translations of Two Prefaces on Islam*; Forell, “Luther and the War against the Turks”; Francisco, *Martin Luther and Islam*, chaps 5, 7, 8; Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church 1532-1546*, 351-57.

20 LW 46: 176-78, 180-82, 195, 200.

21 “On the Jews and their Lies” (1543), LW 47: 137-306; LW 58: 458-59; Wendebourg, “Luther, Jews, and Judaism”; Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews*, chaps. 4, 5; Evener, “The Enemies of God”; Osten-Sacken, “Martin Luther's Position on Jews and Judaism,” 323-30; Brecht, *Luther: The Preservation of the Church*, 334-51.

the role of the Devil in Luther's idea of the Jews in these Last Days. Certainly, he blames the Tempter for hardening the Jews' hearts so that they will not convert before the Final Judgment. Luther may have believed that the End will not come until this mass conversion, as Augustine had intimated. But this does not suffice to explain the ferocity of Luther's vilification. More likely he came to believe that the Jews in Germany were interfering with the spread of the gospel. He suspected that Christians were Judaizing (or even converting to Judaism) by adopting more good works (or with the wrong motives) and accepting Jewish readings of the Old Testament. His heavy involvement with Genesis after 1534 made him more aware of Jewish renderings of Israelite history.²² With witchcraft and magic widespread in Germany, the Reformer may have suspected Jewish hands—guided by the Devil—behind these practices. In some way the Jews were contributing to the disorders in the empire, always the result of diabolical doings. Perhaps the simplest explanation of Luther's assaults is that God is punishing the Jews for refusing to counter the wiles of Satan and converting to the true faith. Luther may have viewed his own role as God's prophet to accelerate this punishment to usher in the End Times. Not unexpectedly Luther accuses the popes for not treating the Jews more kindly throughout the centuries. The papists are to blame for making the Jews hostile to the Word.

4

God punishes Christians by having Satan infiltrate the sects which spread pernicious doctrine and cause disunity in the church. Luther's concern for their doctrines is revealed not only in his polemical tracts, but also in his letters²³ and Table

22 Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis*, 39-60, 65, 164; Schramm, *Martin Luther, the Bible, and the Jewish People*, 10-21; Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews*, chap. 5; LW 15: 265-352; LW 47: 176-254.

23 Tappert, *Luther: Letters*, 34, 39, 40, 46, 48, 59, 85-9, 98, 102, 115, 117f, 206; LW 48: 152, 166, 168f, 235, 265-67, 269, 273, 278, 295, 307f, 328, 333, 354-55.

Talks.²⁴ He is particularly hard on the Zwinglians, Anabaptists, and sacramentarians for spiritualizing the Lord's Supper, and the Antinomians²⁵ for undermining sound ethical behavior. In every case Luther accuses the Devil of perverting the Word of God, who uses the spread of the radical sects to punish Germans for their drunkenness, laziness, indifference to the gospel, quarrelsomeness, passion for luxury and money, and adultery. So too, the Devil incites the peasants (1525) to rebel against legitimate secular authority. The father of lies stirs the princes to mistreat their peasants and suppress the revolts mercilessly.²⁶

5

What makes the Devil so dangerous for Christians is that he entices them to deviate from true doctrine. He directs his attacks toward the central belief of the Christian religion: justification by faith alone. Satan seeks to subvert this *sola fide*, the foundation of true doctrine. The papists are the most insidious transmitters of works-righteousness with their traditions of canon law, scholastic theology, and widespread practices throughout Europe.²⁷

6

The later Luther gradually worked out an ecclesiology which assigned to the Evil-doer a central role in the history of salvation. The Reformer never gave the primitive church the function of being normative for Christian thought and action,²⁸ as did many of the sects such as the Anabaptists. The

24 WATr 6: 6808-35; Eire, "Bite this Satan!"; Janz, "Devil," 37-40; Rogers, "Deliver us from the Evil One."

25 LW 41: 113-14, 143, 147, 150, 153; LW 54: 233, 308f, 313f; Lohse, chap. 19; Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren*, chap. 7; Brecht, *Luther: Preservation of the Church*, 156-71.

26 LW 26: 52, 130, 142-44, 176, 192-94, 395-96; Edwards, *False Brethren*, chap. 3.

27 LW 26: 222-26; LW 41: 110-14, 302-22, 338-39.

28 Headley, *Luther's View of Church History*, 162-81.

apostolic church was, to be sure, a time of exemplary living and teaching. Yet it was also a time of diabolical scheming and at least a minimum of human additions to the Word. And there were even in those days some goats among the sheep. The church was not perfect as it struggled to assert itself as the community of believers. In some sense Christ founded the church as an institution, although it was not centralized around the holy see. But on a deeper level the “church” dates from the time of Abel, the real founder of the true church.²⁹ The “church” of Cain is the forerunner of the later papists, with its human institutions, tyrannical pope, hierarchy of prelates, indulgences, and monastic orders.³⁰ The head of the church of Abel is Christ: the head of the church of Cain is Satan.³¹

Note that Luther developed his theory of the two churches at the time he was combatting the Antinomians (who threatened to spiritualize the church and weaken ethical standards)³², instructing the Lutheran leaders on how to defend the church in the upcoming general councils and imperial diets, and was writing his anti-papal polemics. He was under pressure to clarify his teaching on the constitution of the Lutheran churches and the confession of the “Lutheran” community, his alleged permissiveness on moral behavior, his defense of Christian participation in the wars against the Turks, the relationship between the true church and the church universal (Luther never relinquished the quasi-legitimacy of the Roman church), and his principles for the new ministers of the Word.

29 LW 1: 243-47, 254, 257-59, 261-92, 323-33; Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis*, 157-63.

30 LW 1: 241-312, 319-29, 338-39; Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 277-85; Headley, *Luther's View*, 64f, 117-20.

31 LW 1: 140, 142-44, 149, 180, 183-200, 242, 271, 273, 275f. 281, 291-92, 300f, 311-12, 321-23, 340, 344, 346, 349; Gane, “Luther's Views on Church and State,” 120-24.

32 Edwards, *False Brethren*, chap. 7; Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 178-84; Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, 261-66; note 25 above.

This advice for the pastors was the occasion of his lectures on Genesis (1535-45), where he elaborated on his two-church ecclesiology.³³ If all these concerns were not compelling enough, he strove to coordinate his view of the church with his ongoing commentary on Galatians.³⁴ (After 1530 Luther felt less need to reply to the Catholic controversialists, given his desire to respond to the sectarians and the wayward Lutherans.) It may be that Luther intended his lectures on Genesis to be his final statement on the two churches, in lieu of a formal tract on the nature of the church, and as a sort of continuation of John Hus' *De ecclesia*.³⁵ It was typical of the Wittenberger to develop his ideas piecemeal in the heat of polemical exchange. While he never wrote a compendium on the church, his mature thoughts on the nature of the *ecclesia* are revealed in his final commentaries and his tracts against the papacy.³⁶ The history of the two churches pivots on the actions of both God and the Devil. The work of both God and Adversary are symbiotic, always in response to the other. God is in control and sets limits to his nemesis' freedom of action. Yahweh incorporates the Demon into his providential plans for the cosmos and humankind. The Devil acts against the visible church as well as against individuals in the hidden church.³⁷ He employs the Serpent to punish members of the papist church as well as the members of the true church.³⁸

33 LW 1: 237-331. Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor*, LW Supplement, chap. 5; Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures*, 147-63; Headley, *Luther's View*, 59-69; Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 281-83.

34 LW 26: 50-53, 57f, 65-71, 113, 140, 378, 498-99.

35 Headley, *Luther's View*, 224-40; Haberken, *Patron Saint*, 156-63, 199-217; note 13 above.

36 LW 41.

37 Spitz, "Luther's Ecclesiology," 123-24; Rupp, *Righteousness of God*, chap. 14.

38 LW 26: 195-97; LW 41: 11, 34f, 161-72, 177f, 217-29, 241-51, 284-86, 295-96, 301-07. "The church of Satan [papists] is everlastingly at war with the church of God"; LW 2: 27.

The Devil tries to convince private consciences that they are not among the predestined.³⁹ God does not simply permit Satan to practice evil in the world; he actually wills evil.⁴⁰ The Bible makes the history of salvation the tale of the interactions between the true and false churches.

The makeup of the two churches is not rigid. There are true Christians in the papist church, and there are fraudulent Christians in the true church.⁴¹ The Devil does not restrict his activity to the Catholic church. While he has free reign in “his” church (papist), he is ever-present in the true church. The reprobate in both churches can always repent of their ways and heed the preaching of the gospel. In a sense both churches “need” the Devil, a virus which punishes Christians in both the true and false churches. Yet one should not press Luther for a comprehensive theory of the church with its “imbedded” Devil. His allusions to the work of Satan are scattered around the lengthy commentaries on Genesis and Galatians and anti-papal tracts.

7

Although God will triumph in the end, the Devil runs loose in world by instilling doubt in the hearts of believers. Luther’s Devil is more menacing than the affliction of private consciences; he disrupts the whole world with his promotion of war, social rebellions, domestic turmoil, diseases, demonic possessions, natural disasters, and despotic governments. Satan’s main instrument in these doings is the pope. Since the time of John Hus, the Devil has intensified his assaults, since he is perturbed by the recovery of the preaching of the Word. “The hidden, stern will of God can appear to be the Devil’s will.”⁴²

39 Table Talk, WATr 6: 6809, 6816, 6817, 6827; Schneider, *I am a Christian*, 30-34; LW 54: 29, 34, 78, 82, 93-4, 96, 105, 128f, 241, 275f, 279f, 298, 318, 379, 452; Brosché, *Luther on Predestination*, 136-40.

40 Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 37-42.

41 Rupp, *Righteousness of God*, chaps. 14, 15; LW 41: 194.

42 LW 54: 129; Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 37.

From one perspective, Luther's true church is the church of the Devil. The true church was born in sin, the result of the murder of a virtuous victim (Abel) by a tyrannical, proud brother. Fratricide results in a never-ending cycle of recrimination. One brother preserves the Word; the other destroys it. Yet the dichotomy of good and evil is not absolute, since the false church has always retained something of the true church's baptism, sacrament (at least in one kind), the keys of heaven, and the scriptures.⁴³ The true church contains the unworthy; it is not Hus' community of the predestined. The persecuted true church continued with the leadership of Abel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all prophets of the true church.⁴⁴ Luther seems to identify himself with these early prophets, especially Noah.⁴⁵ The head of the true church is Christ; the head of the false church is the so-called vicar of Christ. In sum, the true church keeps the Serpent on a leash by preaching the Word. The Christian community needs Satan to preserve its cohesion and common purpose. The Enemy provides a target for believers to hold to the faith in the face of suffering. The true church is and has always been persecuted by the so-called Catholic church, a powerful, wealthy organization. While the Devil does not reside *within* the true church, he stands in a symbiotic relationship to it as its relentless persecutor. The omnipresent "prosecuting attorney"⁴⁶ of God stands ready with temptation and false promises. God's Word for Luther is essentially a command experience, passed on from believer to believer. The Devil's attempts to prevent the preaching of the Word have the effect of strengthening the bonds within the Christian community.

Voltaire said that if God did not exist, humans would have had to invent him. Luther might have added that if Satan did not exist, Christians would have had to create him. Jesus on the cross reproduced a duel between God's curse (Cain) and his blessing (Abel). "God's

43 LW 1: 248-50; LW 41: 194-5 (baptism), 195 (keys), 196 (creed).

44 LW *Luther the Expositor*, 96f.

45 LW 1: 206-08, 334-58; Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures*, 148-50, 162-70, 190-91.

46 Schneider, *I am a Christian*, 47 (also 27-33, 90-1); Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, chap. 13; LW 1: 252-54.

devil”⁴⁷ does God’s work when he persecutes the faithful remnant. The papist church glories in its dominance in the world; the true church survives as the innocent foil of this worldly church. They are mirror images of each other. All the marks of the church⁴⁸ are to some extent formed by the diabolical attacks of the Catholic church, sustained not by the Word but by the Devil’s machinations to undo them. Paradoxically the Devil’s control of the world indirectly strengthens the true church. God and Devil are ying-yang versions of interdependent rivals, although the victor is never in doubt.

Conclusion

Luther was not a theologian of the church. His various remarks on the nature of the *ecclesia* were in large part polemical reactions to dissent from papists, sectarians, and Lutherans within the fold. His frequent allusions to the Devil suggest an antagonism to those who would underrate the large role the Accuser plays and has played since the creation of humankind. Luther had no “theory” of Satan, but only pastoral advice on how to deflect his assaults and how to profit from them. But increasingly after 1530 he came to realize the broader implications of the Evil One’s significance for the current plight of the believers’ church. As he grappled with the mistaken notions of the Antinomians, papists, sectarians, and his own circle, he gained more clarity about Satan’s function in the church. When he returned to commenting on Galatians and Genesis after 1534, he fell back on his Augustine-like dualism, which fit into a grand vision of history. If he had any doubts about the ecclesial role of Satan in the wide setting of historical eras, they were dispelled by his meditations on the primordial age of humankind. (Luther never tired of saying that his opinions about the Devil stemmed from his own personal experience.)⁴⁹

47 Schneider, *I am a Christian*, 33.

48 LW 41: 148-65, 194-98; Rupp, *Righteousness*, 322; Lohse, *Luther’s Theology*, 283-85; Headley, *Luther’s View*, 36-8.

49 LW 26: 164, 192-3, 196; Hazlitt, *Table Talk*, 260-66; WATr 6817; Lindberg, “Mask of God,” 87-101.

The Cain and Abel story finally disclosed its secrets as the driving force of history: the ongoing struggle between the papalist church of the Antichrist and the humble true church of the Savior. Luther had found the key to the true church, and the outsized role of the Devil for it. Luther's Devil was the private "medieval" pest lurking behind every temptation. The prince of darkness has been elevated to the rung in the divine ladder just below the Creator. The Devil's playground is no longer the heavens where the war of the angels takes place. But the symbiosis is not mutual, for the Devil's reign will end soon, since he cannot resist the promise of Christ. For now, he is permitted to torment the church in its double form, the false and the true.

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