Comprehensively Reformed Christianity

Third Edition
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Comprehensively Reformed Christianity

Book III

Pentecost to the Eternal Ages

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"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely… Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus."

Revelation 22:16–17,20

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Introduction to Book III

Book III, the final book of this series, covers the history of the new covenant church from the day of Pentecost to the present, and then passing through the present, it attempts to provide a practical insight into the far future as well, as mankind is prepared to enter the eternal ages when time comes to an end.

Some of a strong covenantal bent may argue that the history of the Church began in the Old Testament with the nation of Israel. We find however that in Christ "old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (2Co.5:17). Just as those who are in Christ are members of a new creation, so it was that God's people had a new beginning in the new covenant Church. So much so, that the Gentiles that had been excluded under the old covenant as God's chosen people are now his people — even "the children of the living God" — alongside the redeemed Jew who accepted Jesus as their Messiah (Ro.9:25,26). For that reason, we begin our study with the new covenant Church that Christ through the Holy Spirit called into being on the day of Pentecost.

The history of the living Church is a fascinating story. To see God at work through the leading of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals and nations is awe-inspiring. As in most stories, there is a villain as well — as we see Satan working behind the scenes to thwart the efforts of God and his elect through direct persecution and by the injection of error. We also shall consider the ungodly men who propagate Satan's lies. Conversely, the heroic efforts of godly men to attain to the high calling in Christ Jesus in the face of persecution and death is a witness to the power of faith and the verity of the Gospel.

From the very beginning, the Church has been in a continuous struggle to define, hone, and retain the true faith delivered by Christ its cornerstone along with the teaching of the apostles who formed its unchangeable foundation. We shall find in this study that the Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone without any human works being added to it has been at the very center of the conflict from the very beginning. It would appear that sinful human pride and mankind's lust for authority that is rightfully God's alone is

the motivation behind it all as Satan orchestrates mans' continuing rebellion against God long after the fall of Adam. Accordingly, the doctrine of the imputation of original sin to the entire human race is erroneously denied as being unworthy of mans' sophisticated position as captains of their own souls.

We shall see how the central Pauline doctrine of grace was very quickly replaced by sacramentalism in the second century in order to usurp authority from Christ, who was physically absent on earth, and give it over to mortal leaders of the growing temporal church. That same doctrine was later smothered under Pelagianism that sought to replace it with a works salvation that denies grace altogether. Semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism, still so relentless in various so-called reformed church doctrines of today, essentially denies God's power to exercise his grace as He alone sees fit, giving that authority instead to man who it is thought can lift himself up by his own moral boot straps.

Gnosticism and other false doctrines concerning the person of Christ, his death, and his resurrection essentially sought to deny Christ's power to reign in order to nullify the redeeming feature of grace in order that mans' works may prevail. Faith therefore over time became a mere synonym for human effort, not the wondrous gift of God that transforms us spiritually such that we come to believe that which our sin-sick soul could never embrace on its own. The new birth became seen only as acceptance of church dogma and the exercise of moral rectitude, not a spiritual transformation that God unilaterally causes to take place in the hearts and minds of his own that they may embrace the Truth.

Over the centuries, the Church on earth has weathered many trials concerning both error of doctrine and error of practice that centered on the refutation of basic Scriptural truths. Because church history is largely ignored and rarely compared with biblical doctrine, many of those erroneous teachings repeatedly creep into today's churches as "new" innovations to poison sound doctrine and practice as the temporal church today only replicates the errors of the past.

Therefore, it is very important that we have an understanding of church history if we are to have any hope of sorting out the diverse

array of temporal churches and denominations that we see about us today. Second in importance only to Scripture itself, we must understand how our local churches are related to other movements, denominations, and churches both today and in the past in order to assure ourselves that we are allied as closely as possible to the true doctrine of faith. Otherwise, we may find that we have just given in to mindless Churchianity in which one church is much like any other.

The average Christian's view of early church history is mostly limited to that which is found in Scripture, primarily from the book of Acts and a few portions of the epistles. We can be assured that the information regarding the early church has been authenticated by God Himself through the imprint of the Holy Spirit upon Scripture. Even so, a believer's view of the early church is often filtered through the paradigm of their present local church and denominational teachings. Their own church becomes the de facto standard by which they fabricate an understanding of historical events and practices that took place in the early church, when the converse should be true. We shall attempt to avoid that error in this study by taking a broad non-sectarian approach relying instead upon Scripture alone. Rather than starting with today and working our way back to the past, we must start with ancient times and work our way forward into the present.

A major reason for studying medieval church history in some detail in this book is to lay the foundation for understanding the significance of the Reformation Movement that followed it. Protestant denominations can best be understood in the light of the Reformation Movement with a background understanding of the medieval church period that made extensive reform imperative. A large section of this book is devoted to exploring that era that extends into the present day.

As difficult as history often is to verify as factual and the events of the future to interpret from Scripture alone, the events of the near present are often even more difficult to analyze correctly. We are so very close to the events that it is often difficult for us to see how they properly fit into the total continuum. Yet, they must be understood in the light of both the entire flow of history and what Scripture has to say about things that are yet to happen. We must realize that the past, present, and future is a single completed work in

the mind of God. In that eternal sense, even present and future events are history since they cannot be altered. While the past makes the present and the future more clear, it can also be said that the future puts both the present and past in the context of the full scope of God's completed work throughout time.

The brief analysis of contemporary events presented in this book unavoidably requires speculation based upon sanctified common sense in order to create a working rationale framed within a Christian worldview. Although we make every effort to view recent events from a spiritual and religious Christian perspective, we find that they have unavoidably become political in nature. Politics is the means by which human authority and power is exercised over human society. If that power and authority is exercised by godly men and women, it aids and supports God's will, but if exercised by the ungodly it directly opposes his will such that it must ultimately result in divine judgment. Current political events must be viewed as a snapshot taken of a narrow slice out of the entire continuum of time. From that snapshot, we have struggled to construct future projections based upon recorded human history and prophetic Scripture. Therefore, it cannot be dogmatically claimed that the analysis of current events found within the pages of this book is unfailingly accurate; the finite human mind always falls short of understanding the infinite wisdom of God.

The projections resulting from worsening world and national conditions presented in this book are not very pleasant to contemplate from a human standpoint. A humanist worldview that is based upon supposed progressive human wisdom is diametrically opposed to the Christian worldview, which is fixed and dependent solely upon God's Word contained within Holy Scripture. It has been said that God's will is the hand that works within the glove of history. This analysis is intended to be an assessment of how God's hand is presently working out his sovereign will within current events to ultimately bring the present world to its preordained end.

The Scriptures do not end with a record of the past, but contain many unfulfilled prophecies that pertain to the far future as well. This work takes an eschatological perspective beyond what most today consider the accepted "reformed" view of Christianity. The early

reformers were rightly more concerned with the core doctrines of Christianity that directly affected Soteriology (the doctrine of faith and salvation) and the practices closely associated with it. For that reason they did not explore the doctrines of the last days to any extent. We note for example that John Calvin wrote commentaries on every book of the New Testament ***except*** the book of Revelation. Therefore, the re-exploration of prophetic texts undertaken in this work required some expansion of their preliminary views of Eschatology to conform to all of Scripture while still maintaining the essential reformed view of Soteriology that was presented in Book I of this series.

Of the four major interpretative methods of the events contained in the book of Revelation that we shall later discuss, this work takes the Futurist view. That is, it is to be understood that the prophecies of the book of Revelation described in Chapters 4–22 are yet to be fulfilled in the future. The view regarding a millennial age or thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth is considered to be a future and literal one as is required by the Futurist position. Accordingly, it is necessary to assert that Jesus will return to earth at the beginning of the millennial age to rule a tangible earthly Kingdom that He will personally establish upon the debris of mankind's failure. Although that pre-millennial position is firmly held throughout this study, we shall also briefly discuss other perspectives regarding millennialism as well.

The word "rapture" has become a lightning rod to many Covenantalists who oppose any suggestion of the Visible Church avoiding a future time of Great Tribulation or avoiding God's final wrath poured out upon a sin-filled earth prior to a millennial age. Nevertheless, the English word "rapture" is actually derived from the Latin word *rapere* that only refers to the "rapid" transport of the believing Church from the earth to be with Christ in the air, as was clearly described by the Apostle Paul in First Thessalonians 4:17. For that reason, it was decided not to swim against the stream of common usage in this work by attempting to use another word to replace "rapture" just to avoid controversy.

A careful comparative analysis of prophetic Scripture has persuaded this author to depart from the traditional pre-tribulation

timing of the rapture, held by so many others — especially Dispensationalists. The rapture will instead be depicted as occurring shortly after Jesus breaks open the sixth seal of the scroll in Heaven (Re.6:12). That analysis is based upon a careful consideration of the appropriate passages in Daniel, the Olivet Discourse, and the Revelation itself, as will be clearly explained.

Every effort has been taken to avoid spiritualizing prophetic texts in the book of Revelation into vague symbolic references outside the understanding of any factual events. It is firmly believed that all of Scripture is given of God to man to be understood and not relegated to the oblivion of vague or useless prose. Because the language of the book of Revelation is highly symbolic, this interpretative approach is to accept a "literal sense" of the verses in both context and prophetic style. It is assumed that various metaphors are being used to build important allegories of ***real*** future events that would have been difficult or impossible for John to describe to us in any other way.

Introduction to the Third Edition

The Second edition of this book was the first edition ever released for public reading and purchase in late 2008, with very minor revisions, corrections, and additions being included in January of 2009. Since that time, a thorough review and re-editing of the entire book has been undertaken to incorporate various topics that had not been previously included in the first and second editions, but which were ultimately believed to be far too significant to ignore even in this brief historic overview. While integrating those additional topics into the book, some chapters were re-edited, reorganized, and in some instances rewritten to improve overall flow and clarity of the text. Several new chapters were added where required.

Additionally, it was felt that some early historic subject matter could be made more understandable through the inclusion of simple maps. Additional timelines and other illustrations were also added where it was believed that their inclusion would prove to be helpful to the reader. The general index as well as topical cross-references in the texts were greatly expanded to help locate and connect important

events and topics that were historically separated by a span of time together with the goal of making the book more cohesive.

Anyone who has read previous editions will find no drastic changes in the basic tenets of thought expressed in them that would render them obsolete. Nevertheless, it is sincerely hoped that the alterations and additions made to this new expanded edition will aid the reader in following church history with still greater ease and interest. They should then be better able to comprehend the underlying sociopolitical issues that have brought about current conditions on the world scene and their implications for the future. All chapters in the Eschatological section of this book have undergone extensive review, re-editing and clarification wherever possible to aid the reader in his understanding of the complex topics of the apocalyptic end times.

Book Name Abbreviations

Old Testament

Genesis…Ge.
Exodus…Ex.
Leviticus…Le.
Numbers…Nu.
Deuteronomy…De.
Joshua…Jos.
Judges…Jud.
Ruth…Ru.
1st Samuel…1Sa.
2nd Samuel…2Sa.
1st Kings…1Ki.
2nd Kings…2Ki.
1st Chronicles…1Chr.
2nd Chronicles…2Chr.
Ezra…Ezr.
Nehemiah…Ne.
Esther…Est.
Job…Jb.
Psalms…Ps.
Proverbs…Pr.
Ecclesiastes…Ec.
Song of Solomon…Song.
Isaiah…Is.
Jeremiah…Je.
Lamentations…Lam.
Ezekiel…Eze.
Daniel…Da.
Hosea…Ho.
Joel…Jl.
Amos…Am.
Obadiah…Obad.
Jonah…Jona.
Micah…Mi.
Nahum…Na.
Habakkuk…Hab.
Zephaniah…Zep.
Haggai…Hag.
Zechariah…Zec.
Malachi…Mal.

New Testament

Matthew…Mt.
Mark…Mk.
Luke…Lu.
John…Jn.
Acts…Ac.
Romans…Ro.
1st Corinthians…1Co.
2nd Corinthians…2Co.
Galatians…Ga.
Ephesians…Ep.
Philippians…Ph.
Colossians…Col.
1st Thessalonians…1Th.
2nd Thessalonians…2Th.
1st Timothy…1Ti.
2nd Timothy…2Ti.
Titus…Tit.
Philemon…Phm.
Hebrews…He.
James…Ja.
1st Peter…1Pe.
2nd Peter…2Pe.
1st John…1Jn.
2nd John…2Jn.
3rd John…3Jn.
Jude…Jude.
Revelation…Re.

Those abbreviations are used throughout this work followed by the chapter number, and a colon, followed by a verse number. (i.e. Jn.7:13 means the book of John, Chapter 7, and verse 13). If multiple verses are being referred to, a comma is placed between non-consecutive verses while a dash is placed between the first and last verse of a continuous text. (i.e. Jn.7:13,15 would refer to verses 13 and 15, but not 14). (Jn.7:13–18 would refer to verses 13 through 18). If the notation includes more than one reference, a semicolon is used to separate references. (i.e. Jn.7:13; Mt.2:1 refers to John, Chapter 7, verse 13 and Matthew, Chapter 2, verse 1). In addition, one may occasionally find the abbreviation cf. that means to confer or compare the verses that this abbreviation separates.

At various places throughout this work, one will find a word or short text within quotations of Scripture or other quoted text that is enclosed in brackets []. It should be clearly understood that this text is not a part of the original text that is being quoted, but is an annotation that was added by the author to amplify or clarify the meaning of the quoted text.

Section 17 Early Church History

Introduction to Church History

Early Church in Jerusalem

The Missionary Church

The Church at the End of the Apostolic Age

The Sub-Apostolic Period

The Post Sub-Apostolic Period

The Roman Political Transition

Early Theological Issues

The Papal Church Period

The Byzantine Empire

Global Expansion of Roman Catholic Churchianity

Chapter 17.1 Introduction to Church History

While the study of church history may not be on a par with the Gospel and the subject of biblical doctrine, it is very important that we consider the historic background as well as the essential teachings of any local church or denomination to which we may become affiliated. To do that, we must understand precisely how that church is related to other churches both today and in the past. Now that we have defined the Church in Book II of this work and have an understanding of both the invisible and visible attributes of the Church within the Kingdom of God, it is time to begin a serious study of the nearly two thousand years since the new covenant church came into view on the day of Pentecost.

Historical Timeline

This history is necessarily abridged. While it is not possible in this work to completely discuss every thread in the great tapestry of church history, topics in this section followed by the next two sections are intended to provide a basic overall understanding of this important issue. We shall begin at the day of Pentecost and trace the church's trials, tribulations, and joys chronologically that can be generalized into various categories much as follows:

Apostolic Age (A.D. 30– 100)
Sub-apostolic Age (A.D. 100–150)
Post Sub-Apostolic Period (A.D. 150–313)
Roman Imperial Period (A.D. 313–440)
Papal Church Period (A.D. 440–1200)
Age of Reform (1200–1648)
Age of Revival (1648–1861)
Age of Decline (1861–present)

Those dates and associated topics are somewhat subjective and are merely an attempt to divide the history up into manageable lengths of time that are identified by the basic characteristics of that era for ease of study. Since it is not known at what date in the future this present work will be read, it is not possible to bring this written history of the church up to that date. Recent history, because it is always in a

continuously changing state of flux, must always be incomplete in any written work. However, we can easily determine from Scripture that a decline of doctrinal purity will take place as the temporal church approaches the time of the final and total apostasy prior to the return of Christ (Lu.18:8b). The future age of the visible Church and the temporal church that we may refer to as post-history will also be discussed at length in the section on eschatology (Section 20). Therefore, a rather loose timeline may be drawn between the last recorded date of history and the return of Christ for his Church.

History is to some extent an indication of future events as well — especially so since the facts concerning the end of the age are well known through a careful study of the book of the Revelation concerning those times. Therefore, at least some of the events that must take place along the timeline between currently recorded church history and the end of the church-age on earth are somewhat predictable although not in any specific form as to detail and date. Since there have already been many turns of direction along that timeline in the past, it is impossible to predict any specific events occurring in any particular order; we have but a general outline to work with.

For instance, we do not know if or when God may halt this rapid present-day decline into church apostasy by means of a widespread spiritual awakening and period of reform as He has done in the past in the United States and in other nations as well. Furthermore, the remaining length of that timeline could be years, centuries, or even several millennia. For that reason, this work does not attempt to make dogmatic statements about future events that may or may not be imminent within that interim period between past and future as some expositors have today. Only past history and those future events, which are clearly pre-recorded in Scripture as yet unfulfilled prophecy, will be discussed in this work with speculation kept to an absolute minimum regarding specifics along the timeline between the present and the end of the Church age.

Christian Doctrine and Church History

Doctrinal issues must always be taken into consideration in any valid approach to the history of the temporal church. The church in any age must always be studied with regard to its relationship to proper Scriptural doctrine. To do otherwise, would merely make this work another mundane recording of events, places and dates that totally neglects the vast spiritual dimension of the temporal church. While the secular approach does record the events of the past, it does not attempt to explore the facts of those events as they relate to important doctrinal truths. Only by studying the history of the church against the backdrop of sound biblical Truth can the real history of the invisible universal Church be seen as an essential element working in and through the subordinate temporal churches.

The purpose of Book I of this work was to provide the reader with a basic knowledge of essential Christian doctrines while Book II provided a guide to proper Christian practice based upon those doctrines. To study church history without first having any knowledge of the major doctrines and proper exercise of Christian thought and practice can be very confusing, dry, and uninteresting since there is no real understanding of what is at stake at each turn of events. In this study, we shall attempt to parallel the historical events with the major doctrinal conflicts that were at issue at the time. However, no attempt has been made to go deeply into the proof for the validity or error of each of those doctrines. That would have consumed too much space and would only have been repetitious of that which was covered previously in considerable detail in the first two books of this work.

We shall see how circumstances and outside pressures often had an effect upon the struggle for establishing sound doctrine in the early church. Frequently, the institutionalized temporal church unwisely reacted to outside pressures by compromising sound positions or conversely by establishing erroneous reactionary doctrines that were often seen by the church leaders at the time as being expedient in order to maintain order through the exercise of their own unique authority. At times, the future of the church as a viable institution was actually seen to be at risk. The attempt to maintain a

tight reign and control over church congregants both spiritually and temporally often adversely modified sound doctrine and practice leading finally to extreme doctrinal and moral corruption that necessitated the volatile movement toward reform in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

Consequently, it would be all to easy to take an extreme Protestant view that nothing of value was accomplished by the church before the time of the Reformation, but that is hardly true. Due to many spurious writings of the time being given the same weight as the writings of the New Testament authors, it early on became necessary to establish a list (canon) of all the writings that would eventually make up the Holy Scriptures. By failing to do so, the formulation of major doctrines would be undermined by considering erroneous texts or by excluding reliable documents. The church eventually established the list of Scriptural writings that carefully excluded erroneous works as being heretical or even blasphemous since they often tried to pass themselves off as God's Word. From that diligent effort came the Bible that we now have in our possession through its many translations from the original languages into the vernacular of the day. As we examine the history of the church, we shall also see the development of major Christian doctrines slowly taking place as believers struggled with the total context of canonical Scripture in the effort to establish those doctrines. To have the Scriptures available was one thing, but what they meant when taken together as a whole was still another matter. It became a problem not only of ***how*** they were to be interpreted, but also for that matter ***who*** had the authority to interpret them.

The Doctrine of Christ and the Godhead

One of the first conflicts that had to be dealt with was the doctrine of the person of Christ and the apparent conflict with monotheism. It was not until the fourth century that the doctrine of Christ, as being fully God and fully man, was authoritatively articulated. With the doctrine of Christ finally established, it then had to be determined how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit existed as three distinct personalities without dividing the Godhead into three

separate Gods. That was finally accomplished when the doctrine of the Trinity was established. Those two doctrines, the person of Christ and the Trinity, are universally accepted today and provide one of the basis for separating true churches from cults.

Soteriology

Soteriology is the study of salvation, and the means by which that salvation is attained. That involves us with the age-old conflict of grace versus works and the absolute sovereignty of God in how the redemption of a lost race comes about. As important as the establishment of the doctrine of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity were, two other major doctrinal conflicts eclipsed all others as the church continued in her attempt to establish sound doctrinal standards from the whole context of Scripture. Those same two doctrines remained at the center of most all conflicts throughout church history from the early beginning and continue even to the present day.

The Doctrine of Grace

The first of those is the Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone, which is central to the Gospel message. That doctrine, however, was and is in conflict with man's aspiration to shape an institutionalized church into his own vision for it through his own works. The Pauline doctrine of grace weakens the view of the church as a powerful sociopolitical institution and undermines its temporal as well as its supposed spiritual authority by placing an emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ through faith rather than through a corporate relationship with a church that is maintained by strict obedience to church ordinances. If salvation that is obtained through simple faith in Christ alone is properly understood, the church as an institution loses its absolute authority over the hearts and minds of believers.

As a means to gain and sustain absolute control, the temporal church quite early on turned the simple Christian privileges of baptism and the Lord's Supper into "sacred church vows" that only the institutionalized church and its appointed agents could administer. Redemption from sin, therefore, was seen as impossible apart from a

supposed spiritual regeneration through church administered ritual baptism (baptismal regeneration), and a believer's continued standing was impossible to maintain apart from partaking of the Lord's Table that was also within the exclusive control of the church. Faith was no longer seen as a serious issue in gaining assurance of salvation, since salvation came only through continued obedience to the ordinances of the temporal church. Even rank unbelievers were baptized and declared Christians without any valid profession of faith. Furthermore, since both of the sacraments must be administered by the institutionalized temporal church alone to be valid, an individual's salvation apart from membership in the temporal church was declared invalid. The totalitarian power that afforded misguided and evil men within the church power structure cannot be overestimated. We shall see how that power was so often exercised and abused to foster the growth of the temporal church throughout this study.

The Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God

The second major conflict that we shall find throughout this historic study is over the Pauline doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God in choosing his elect. Since salvation is received by God's grace alone, it follows that only He can administer it as He chooses to do so. The highly institutionalized temporal church as well as various individuals have continually refuted that important doctrine over the entire history of the church since it leaves God fully in control of the destiny of men and leaves Christ in full authority over his Church. Man prefers to decide the matter of salvation through his own supposed "free will," and also build and control the church himself. It is almost as though some still think that man can by human effort save himself and through like means save others by constructing the Church — which Jesus said that He himself would construct upon the rock of simple faith in Him (Mt.16:18). In attempting to do it themselves through works, simple God-given faith is effectively denied. After the death of Paul, the doctrine of the saving grace of our sovereign God was almost immediately submerged under church-directed

sacramentalism[1]. However, it was not dead and was occasionally reiterated by such men as Augustine in the fourth century and then a thousand years later by men like Luther and Calvin during the Protestant Reformation.

Biblical Church History

We shall begin our study by looking into the history of the early church in the next two chapters. It would appear that a careful study of Luke's excellent writing in the entire book of Acts quite easily accomplishes that. For that reason, this work shall closely follow Luke's historical account. In addition to the historic dialog of Acts we also have the many epistles or letters written to various churches in the Mediterranean area that add further historical insight into the development and operation of churches at that time. Therefore, while the book of Acts provides an historical chronological background, it does not go deeply into many doctrinal matters. We must look to the many epistles that were written to the churches to discern important matters of doctrine and practice.

It is imperative that we apply the prevailing attitude and spirit of the apostles' teaching that motivated proper practices of the early church to our assemblies today. No fundamental truth of doctrine must ever be sacrificed to the expediency of a modern world of thought. We must be very sure that any innovation of practice in our church gatherings is brought about solely by benign differences of the times and culture in which we live, and that it is not brought about by fundamental doctrinal neglect or a falling away from the true faith.

Extra-biblical Church History

We can rest assured when studying the history of biblical times that the information we have at hand has been authenticated by God Himself through Holy Scripture. Unfortunately, we can hardly expect to find all of church history up to the present date recorded in the New

[1] Sacramentalism is the false doctrine that salvation is to be received exclusively through the administration of church sacraments.

Testament of our Bible since all of the books of the New Testament were completed before the end of the first century. Therefore, we must resort to the study of secular or profane history from the second century forward to determine how the visible Church and the temporal church that encased it has fared down through the ages to bring us up to the present. We find that we must walk on the soft ground of problematic historic records in doing so rather than the bedrock of Scripture. To be sure, we must exercise extreme caution each step of the way, but we must proceed nevertheless while still holding firm to the essential doctrinal principles and precepts expressed in Scripture and interpreting church history in their light.

As someone has said, "[As] faith is the evidence of things not seen, history is the evidence of things half known." In studying "extra-biblical" church history, we find that we must rely on information as recorded by fallible men over the centuries. Many of those men were in the temporal church and some were no doubt members of the visible Church as well. Even so, their writings lack the apostolic authority of the biblical authors. Furthermore, those men were trapped in a paradigm of thinking reflecting the superstitious paganism of their times as well as various dogmas and errors that had deeply infiltrated the Roman church quite early on and continued through the Middle Ages. Much of our knowledge of church history comes from many of those men who were not of the reformed faith and did not — indeed could not — interpret facts with that necessary insight.

Additional information was recorded by rank unbelievers who may or may not have inserted anti-Christian bias into their reporting. Their historic information as to events is not necessarily inaccurate and for that reason may be useful, but we must realize that some of the supposed facts surrounding those events may be tainted through misinterpretation. Historians always interject their own opinions and suppositions into their recording of facts even if they do not intend to do so. That is not always a result of intentional bias, but merely a matter of personal perspective since witnesses of the same event will often come up with very different descriptions of what has happened.

Nonetheless, if we do not accept extra-biblical information as having some degree of validity, we must admit that we can know

nothing of the two millennia that have passed since the time of the early first century church. We therefore have no choice but to weigh the evidence and accept the greater part of it as true in order to determine how the many denominations and individual churches of today are related to the original new covenant churches founded in the New Testament by the apostles. We must ascertain how their varied doctrines compare with those great doctrines that are set forth in Scripture. We must then attempt to determine the true basis of each of their beliefs and practices, and how the contemporary churches and denominations have come into being from what was once a singular first-century Church with Christ truly at its head.

Positive Effects of Christianity upon Civilization

Because of the necessarily critical study of the institutionalized temporal church taken in this book, it at times may appear that Christianity was having little or no positive effect upon civilization at large. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Even as the Holy Spirit living in the hearts of individuals was changing them one by one, regions around the world were being positively affected from within everywhere that Christianity took root. Governments, institutions, and civil laws were slowly being altered by the Christian ethic that Jesus taught regarding how men and women were to properly associate one with the other.

Even in its most corrupt state, the institutionalized Roman church itself was producing positive change as it continued to intrude into the lives of fully degenerate pagan peoples — subjugating them to Christ in name if not in fact. Much of the positive work of the Roman church was accomplished through the teaching of monastic orders that were established in the far reaches of the Roman church estate. Those orders took an interest in improving farming methods and in developing various other enterprises that were passed on to the populace. From Jesus' healing ministries, hospitals sprang up that valued patients more as children of God. The nursing profession in particular was positively affected as nuns of various women's orders took that on as their mandate. In the wake, civilizations were blessed with increased wealth and an increased state of well-being.

As positive as all of that was, the Reformation Movement was to make an even greater advance in civilization, as the Word of God was finally being printed and dispersed among the laity. No longer was the indwelling Holy Spirit inhibited by fallible church dictates and tradition that only veiled the Truth. God's very Word was imprinted directly upon the hearts of chosen men that God called out of the medieval darkness. So effectual was the text of the Bible upon those who could read it, there was a great desire to teach many others to read in order that they too could have God's Word to guide them. To accomplish that, schools were formed to teach reading to young children who would grow up to take their place in a fully Christianized reformed society. As a direct outgrowth of the Reformation, nations began to immerge whose governments were increasingly seen to be servants of the people. That movement ultimately culminated in the creation of a nation that was "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal"[2] in the eyes of God.

As we now move into this study, we shall look into both the doctrines and events that make up the church's past both good and bad. We must not study church history with the illogical hope of returning to the past — which after all was not that superior in many respects — but in order to discern as much as we can the proper manner in which the church should conduct its assemblies today in the light of that history. This study is particularly intended to aid the newborn in Christ that he may come to understand the physical attribute of the invisible Church into which he was spiritually born when he accepted Christ as his savior. It is further hoped that he will be more able to cope with the extreme array of local churches of which he is faced, and may make a sound decision about taking his proper place in the corporate worship and ministry of a local church to the glory of God.

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[2] Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*, 1863

Chapter 17.2 Early Church in Jerusalem

The beginnings of the new covenant Church took place against the backdrop of a powerful Roman empire led by Tiberius Caesar. During that time, Rome had extended its dominance throughout all nations and lands that bordered the Mediterranean Sea and had put under their dominance the lands that are now referred to as Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Spain, Germany, and France. That area extended to the entire civilized western world that was known at that time including the land of Palestine and the city of Jerusalem. Along with that dominance came the rule of Roman law, the expansion of commerce, and improved transportation through a vast network of guarded roads. The world was at peace, albeit a forced uneasy peace, under the unyielding heel of the powerful Roman military.

In this chapter, we will be examining the New Covenant Church at its very beginning during the time that all of the apostles were still living. The Apostle James, brother of the Apostle John, was put to death by Herod Agrippa I soon after the Church was born (Ac.12:2). The Apostolic Age ended with the death of John, who lived to an old age. All of the other apostles, including Paul, also died in the first century between the death of James and John. That early time when the apostles walked on the earth is, indeed, the cradle of the Christian Church from which all that is known as Christianity today is derived.

The Birth of the New Covenant Church

We have seen that Christ died on the cross, was buried, and that He arose bodily from the dead on the third day. For some forty days, He appeared and talked to his disciples at various times (Ac.1:3). Then, He ascended to the throne of God ten days before the day of Pentecost (Ac.1:9). During those ten days, the apostles were told to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus would send to them in order to enable them to witness effectively with supernatural power (Ac.1:4,5,8). During those ten days, Matthias was chosen by lot as an apostle to replace Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Jesus; that, again, brought the number of apostles to twelve (Ac.1:26).

The total number of followers was about one hundred and twenty before the day of Pentecost (Ac.1:15).

On the day of Pentecost, the apostles were indwelt and filled with the Holy Spirit, and were enabled to speak with great power in many languages as we have discussed before (Book II, Chapter 12.1; Ac.2:4). With the commissioning of the Holy Spirit of Christ to reach out to a lost mankind, the Gospel took on supernatural power beyond the mere statement of the facts of the resurrection by mortal men. That is, the Holy Spirit did more than indwell the twelve apostles on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit also went out before the preaching of the Gospel, breaking up the "hard soil" in those who heard — whose hearts were hardened by sin to the Truth. He convicted men of their sins and made them receptive to the Good News of redemption in Jesus Christ.

So powerful were the words that Peter spoke on that day of Pentecost (as the Holy Spirit enabled him) that a great number of Jews became convinced of the Truth and were convicted of their sins before God. They finally realized that they had crucified their Messiah! They were overwhelmed with grief and fear, and surely believed that they were condemned of God for that terrible act and were hopelessly lost forever with no hope of redemption! Notwithstanding, Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Ac.2:38).[3] On that day, three thousand souls were added to the Church and the promise of redemption was extended to untold others as well. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Ac.2:39).

[3] We have concluded before that the baptism spoken of here means that they were to identify themselves with the name of Jesus — He in them and they in Him — not ritual water baptism (see Book II, Chapter 15.1).

Composition of the Early Church

It is important to understand that the infant church was made up entirely of Jews who were given the realization that Jesus was truly the Son of God and their long awaited Messiah. We see that not all of the Jews were blinded to that fact; rather, there was a remnant that was enabled to see that their Messiah had truly come. Nor would those newly converted Jews immediately see Christianity as something that required them to leave their old religious practices behind; the name "Christian" was not even applied to them at that time (cf. Ac.11:26). In the infant church what we now refer to as Christianity was referred to simply as "the way."[4] As Jesus had said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn.14:6). It would not have occurred to early Jewish believers to see the way as something outside the bounds of mainstream Judaism.

Most unbelieving Jews, Gentiles and other outsiders such as the Samaritans viewed the way as another peculiar Jewish sect much as they did the Essenes, Zealots and other such groups. It would appear that Gamaliel, the Pharisee, believed that they were another sect similar to the Zealots when he recommended that the apostles should be released from Jewish custody:

> **"…Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed." (Ac.5:35–37).**

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[4] In recent years various groups on the fringe or outside mainstream Christianity have adopted the term "the way" for the name of their own organizations. It should be understood that we are not making any reference to any of these groups here.

In Jesus Christ, the redeemed Jews saw the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (Mt.5:17). It was the ***inevitable*** event that had been foretold in Hebrew Scripture, and for which they had long been waiting. When "Peter and John went up together into the temple…" (Ac.3:1), surely their thought was to bring the Good News of salvation to ***all*** their fellow Jews, not to establish a new Jewish sect or establish a religious order apart from Judaism. After all, Jesus was the Messiah that the Hebrew nation had long awaited, and the early believers saw themselves as Jews that had received the Messiah that the nation of Israel as a whole had rejected.

Unity of the Early Church

The living members of the church in that day were not divided in any way. Rather, "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common" (Ac.4:32). Not only were the believers of one accord spiritually, but they shared their material goods as well.[5] That necessity was forced upon them by circumstances, and the sharing of personal possessions was voluntary. Now that they could no longer partake of the national common wealth of their fellow Jews in the storehouse of the Temple, it was necessary that they become an independent self-supporting body in order to survive. To that end, many freely brought their private possessions to establish an initial fund for the common good.

> "**Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."** (Ac.4:34,35).

In connection with the bringing of personal wealth to help fund the fledgling church, we read about Ananias and Sapphira (Ac.5:1–

[5] Obviously, God does not advocate socialism or some form of communism as a rule of life for Christian believers inasmuch as He emphatically protected the right to personal ownership of property in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:15, 17).

11). Perhaps, it was the generous gift of Joses (Ac.4:36,37) that prompted Ananias and Sapphira to pretend to do the same with their land. They were not giving to the Lord, but to their own pride. We should make note of the fact that they were not required or commanded to give the price of their land to the church, nor would they have been judged in any way for not having given a prescribed portion of the money. Rather, they were judged because they had lied to the Holy Spirit — lied to God. They could have given of their wealth — all, a portion, or none as they wished: "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Ac.5:4). Here we see how God dealt, as an example to others, with the first hypocrites in the church; we should well take heed today in the manner in which we worship and give.

The Church's First Elected Officers

Due to difficulties encountered in the administration of food for the poor, and the inability of the apostles to oversee that as well as devote their efforts to the full-time ministry of the Word of God, seven men were chosen from the believers to resolve that problem. Here we see difficulties associated with temporal matters interfering with spiritual necessities even at that early date in the church. The Grecian Jews felt that their widows were being neglected in the distribution of food (Ac.6:1). Accordingly, it should be noted, all of the men that were chosen by the people had Greek-sounding names. That incident also demonstrates the extent to which Hellenism (Greek thought and culture) had continued to have a major influence over all the people of Palestine that included the Jews (Ac.6:5,6).

The primary mission of the church is to get out the Gospel — the Good News of Christ — not to act as a welfare agency for its members. We still see the disastrous results that come from reversing those priorities in many of our liberal churches today to the extent that the Gospel is not preached at all being replaced instead by humanism.[6]

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[6] See Humanism, page 220

While many churches today rightly have a benevolent fund for needy members, that work must not ever be allowed to overshadow the primary mission of the church. For that cause, the apostles said, "it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables" (Ac.6:2). Therefore, we see that the ministry to physical needs was given over to deacons ("servants") so that the widows would not be neglected, and the collected Christian commonwealth would be distributed according to genuine need. Those seven men saw to the temporal needs of the fellow believers and may be thought of as the first church officers that were elected by the people.

Some would see the apostles as being the first elders (or bishops) of the church, but we should realize that the apostles were actually emissaries of Christ making every effort to bring the Gospel to every Jew and later to all Gentiles as well. They held the unique title of "apostle" and their role was to establish correct foundational doctrine and practice for the Christian faith. They were not limited to being "church" officials in the same manner that elders were later, nor were they elected of men but they were appointed by God to perform their special task.

Early Worship Services

The customs of the people within the church at the very beginning were notably Jewish in character, such that much of the worship liturgies that were practiced in the synagogues would have been carried over to be included in early church gatherings as well. There were no buildings specifically set aside for worship in the early days of the church, and there is no evidence that any were even contemplated.[7] In the very beginning, believers continued of one accord to worship in the Hebrew Temple much as they did before their conversion (Ac.2:46).

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[7] In later periods prior to the edict of toleration by the Emperor Constantine (see page 134) in the early forth century, it is quite possible that furtive primitive meeting places were selected and perhaps even erected for the purpose of corporate worship. However, they of necessity must have been carefully disguised to prevent their destruction during times of intense persecution first from Jews and later by Roman authorities.

Believers also went from house to house, breaking bread in fellowship with other believers (cf. Ac.2:45). It is apparent that the Lord's Table was the primary focus of the early church as they met in small groups. Prayer was also common in infant church liturgy much as it had been in the liturgy of the Synagogue.

As groups of Christians gathered together, they reaffirmed the Gospel message, and they examined and approved the apostle's doctrine as it was being delivered to them. We must remember that in the early days of the church the apostles were still formulating doctrine that would form the foundation of Christianity for the many centuries yet to come. Speaking various Scripture texts aloud in unison was most likely a common practice as well, but a sense of unison would not always have been easy to attain. Some sense of timing needed to be added to keep everyone together and to aid in memorizing the text. The first of those efforts would most likely have been in the form of chants, which were comprised of a single tone repeated with consistent repetitive timing.

Personal witnessing outside Christian meetings was quite fervent as the disciples praised God and told of their salvation in Christ to all of their fellow Jews who would listen to them. Although witnessing commonly took place in the streets and on the byways of Jerusalem, much of the witnessing took place within the Temple itself. "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Ac.2:47).

Early Church Music

Other than the poetic monophonic chanting of Scriptural verses, there is no indication that early church worship services included music in any advanced form. Jewish Temple music of that day consisted of responsorial antiphonal psalmody in which choruses were chanted back and forth between groups of men to simulate an echo, though the echoed voices need not have been identical in words or form.

Psalms were commonly recited everyday in Temple worship wherein Levite leaders would chant a "verse" and the attending congregation would in turn recite a "respond." It cannot be assumed

that synagogue worship services varied greatly from that standard. The 150 Psalms of the Old Testament, including seventy-three specifically bearing the name of David, easily made the transition from Judaism to Christianity because of the common foundation that Christianity had with Judaism. Many of the Psalms can be seen to have a messianic reference to Jesus Christ. The current form of their recitation would have been transplanted into early church gatherings unchanged.

We also know that musical instruments of various sorts were frequently added to the Psalms at the explicit direction of King David, though exactly how they were integrated into the text itself is not evident. The Hebrew word *Selah* that is found within various Psalms apparently was a simple early form of notation requiring a contemplative pause in the recitation of the text much as a musical rest is used today, though it could also have indicated an instrumental interlude.

Only later would a simple melody be added to recitations in support of religious text, and it would be much later still before harmony and counterpoint would be employed.[8] There is no evidence of a systematic method of written musical notation[9] being utilized in the church until perhaps as late as the fifth or sixth century, so that any melodic enhancement to the words of the Psalms or the hymns adapted from them were most likely being performed from a memorized style. The first written chants as well as the cataloging of various other chants of the church are attributable to Pope Gregory I, the Great[10] who reigned in the late sixth and early seventh century.

Unlike Old Testament Scripture, New Testament texts make little reference to music being used in a congregational gathering. The Apostle Paul referred to "***Speaking to yourselves*** in psalms and hymns

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[8] See Transformation of Christian Worship, page 136

[9] Some rudimentary form of music notation recorded on cuneiform tablets can be found back as far as 2000 BC, and musical notation that specified pitch and duration was being used by the ancient Greeks as early as the 6th century BC.

[10] See First Pope of the New Order, page 179

and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ep. 5:19; text enhancement added), but it is far from certain that he was referring in any way to liturgical music performed within a church setting. Paul used the same phrase "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" again in much the same way in Col. 3:16. Earlier in First Corinthians 14:15 Paul spoke of singing with the spirit as well as with the understanding, but what actual form this "singing" would have taken is unknown inasmuch as Paul is admonishing the Corinthians regarding the abuse of glossolalia in this epistle.

In Hebrews 2:12, the author is referring to Jesus Christ giving praise to God when he uses the word "sing" in a form of poetic hyperbole such that we cannot directly infer anything about congregational singing from this verse (cf. Ps.22:22). We read in Mark 14:26 that the apostles had sung a hymn before they went out to accompany Jesus to the Mount of Olives. That hymn was most likely a poetic recitation of a Psalm of praise to God from the Old Testament "Book of Praises." It is not known whether it could have had a melodic line of varying pitch and duration or not.

Rapid Growth of the Jerusalem Church

The "word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests [i.e. those Jews serving in the Temple] were obedient to the faith" (Ac.6:7). Here we see that even many of the Sadducees who served in the Temple and had before denied any possibility of the resurrection of the dead were also coming to Christ. That says much for the abundant evidence available for the resurrection at that time. Those priests had also seen the rent veil in the Temple opening the way into the Holy of Holies at the time of Jesus' crucifixion.

The Pharisees, who had always believed in the resurrection of the dead, were naturally more receptive to the Gospel than were the Sadducees, but the majority of them still did not believe. That tells of a rapid growth and concentration of the church within the city of Jerusalem springing out of old covenant Judaism. However, it had not yet spread out to any other parts of Judaea or even yet into Samaria as the Gospel mandate called for (see Ac.1:8).

The Beginning of Persecution

Soon after Peter gave his fearless address to those in the Temple, he and John were arrested by the religious rulers of the Temple (Ac.3:11–4:22). The persecution had begun at the hands of their own people, not from Romans. The Sadducees took exception to the fact that Peter preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead (Ac.4:1,2). Since the Temple was their jurisdiction, the priests who served there as well as the captain of the Temple put them in the hold overnight until they could be formally charged. John and Peter were released after being examined and threatened because it was not possible for the Sadducees to find any more serious fault with them — especially seeing how all of the people glorified God because of the obvious and public physical healing of a lame man (Ac.3:2–11; 4:21,22).

After Peter had told the church about the things that had happened to them while they were being held, the church became concerned about the continuing threats of the Temple rulers and sought the council of God in prayer. They prayed "of one accord" and said "behold their threatening: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word…" (Ac.4:29). Again the Holy Spirit "in-filled" them, and they were enabled to speak the Word of God with boldness and without restraining fear (Ac.4:31). One cannot help but wonder that if today such threats were made against a church, the church would first pray that they would avoid persecution so that they could then preach the Word freely! The early church asked only that they would be enabled to preach the Gospel in the midst of continuing persecution.

God brought forth through the apostles many miracles and a healing ministry that drew people from all around Jerusalem (Ac.5:12–16). That was done as a sign of the resurrection of Jesus and it demonstrated that Jesus was truly the Messiah and God Himself. So many were coming that the Sadducees, who were the rulers of the Temple, "were filled with indignation" (Ac.5:17). Again, it was the issue regarding the resurrection of the dead (without which there could be no Gospel) that antagonized the Sadducees. Now ***all*** of the apostles

were put into the public prison (Ac.5:18). However, they were soon released by an angel of the Lord, and they spoke in the Temple again as they were instructed by the angel — freely expounding "all the words of life" (Ac.5:19,20).

For the second time, they were arrested and brought before the ruling council of the Sanhedrin who took council among themselves this time to kill them (Ac.5:33). There was in their midst, however, a Pharisee, whom we mentioned earlier, whose name was Gamaliel. The Pharisees, unlike the Sadducees, did not deny the resurrection of the dead. Gamaliel was a noted and respected teacher among all of the Jews of both parties. Saul of Tarsus, later named Paul the Apostle, was one of his students (Ac.22:3). He recommended that the apostles be left alone saying, "if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught: but, if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Ac.5:38,39). The Sanhedrin finally agreed with Gamaliel, but the apostles were still beaten and only after that were they released (Ac.5:40).

The First Martyr of the Church

Stephen, one of the seven deacons, was brought before the Sanhedrin because of his preaching of the Gospel and the wonders and miracles that were done by his hand (Ac.6:8,12). We observe that Stephen was falsely accused of committing blasphemy against the Temple and the Law of Moses. However, we must realize that the Temple ***would*** later be destroyed in A.D. 70, and that all the Jews who worshiped in the Temple would no longer observe the ceremonial Law of Moses. Stephen, therefore, could not flatly deny that he had said those things. However, the charge of blasphemy was false inasmuch as Stephen preached Christ as the fulfillment of the old covenant ceremonial law — all of which was true. In his defense, Stephen summarized the Hebrew Scriptures leading up to the coming of Jesus. In so doing, he showed how that God did not actually dwell in the Temple there at Jerusalem[11], and that even the Jews, themselves, had

[11] Inside the Holy of Holies there was no ark and no Shekinah glory. Both had been lost centuries before. Some have speculated that there was only a low raised platform

not kept the Law of Moses or the words of the prophets (Ac.7:48,49,53)! When Stephen directly rebuked the unbelief of the Jews (Ac.7:51,52), the council became mad with anger (Ac.7:54). Moreover, when Stephen described his vision of Jesus standing on the right hand of God (i.e. placing Him equal in glory with God), it was more than they could endure. Stephen was rushed out of the city and stoned to death. The church had its first martyr.

Saul of Tarsus

Present at the stoning of Stephen was a young man who showed great promise in the ranks of the Sanhedrin "whose name was Saul" (Ac.7:58). Saul had been born and reared in Tarsus, an ancient city of Cilitia (Ac. 21:39). There the wisdom of the Greeks had mingled with Roman order as well as oriental mysticism. Saul was a well educated Jew and was also a devout follower of Pharisaic Judaism and a student of Gamaliel. "And Saul was consenting unto [Stephen's] death"(Ac.8:1). There came a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem at that time even as the church continued to grow in numbers. "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church entering into every house, and hailing men and women committed them to prison" (Ac.8:3). There is some indication that the main thrust of Saul's efforts was against Hellenistic Jews who had become Christian believers.

It would appear that the apostles were able to remain in Jerusalem without excessive persecution because of their more fundamental Pharisaic Jewish roots. In addition, the Sanhedrin council had decided earlier against persecuting them when they agreed with Gamaliel. That agreement provided them a degree of protection against persecution. Saul was leading the persecution against the young church in his mistaken zeal for God. As we can see, just being sincere about what one believes does not make it right, since one can be sincerely wrong, as was Saul.

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where the ark should have stood.

Persecution Results in Expansion into Samaria

The great persecution against the church in Jerusalem came at the same time that the Jerusalem church continued to grow in numbers. Because of severe persecution, many disciples were scattered abroad outside of Jerusalem. Those believers who were driven out of Jerusalem preached the Word everywhere they went (Ac.8:4). Persecution had resulted in forced expansion by believers who probably would have been quite content to stay in Jerusalem and have fellowship with the apostles and among themselves. Philip, who was also numbered with the seven deacons (not Philip the Apostle; Ac.6:5), preached from Gaza to Caesarea, beginning first at the city of Samaria itself (Ac.8:5; See map Figure 1 below). A great outpouring of the Holy Spirit was seen in Samaria and then in all of the land of the Samaritans (Ac.8:6–8; 8:25). As a result, multitudes came to the knowledge of Jesus Christ in Samaria.

We must recall that Jews had no previous association at all with Samaritans considering them unclean because of their intermarriage outside of Judaism during the time of the Babylonian captivity (Jn.4:9). The first recorded contact that the people of Samaria had with Jesus was as a result of his direct encounter with the woman at the well as Jesus passed through on his way north (Jn.4:4–26). Those men that she brought back with her to see Jesus witnessed of Him in such a way as to set the stage for the Gospel that was to arrive after his resurrection.

> **"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world"** (Jn.4:39–41).

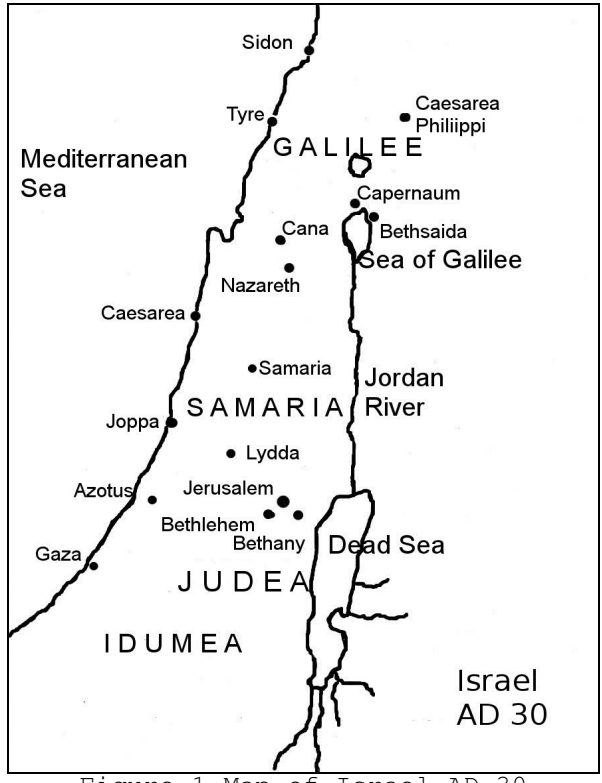

Figure 1 Map of Israel AD 30

The Gospel spread from Samaria down into Ethiopia when Philip was told by an angel to go down into the desert of Gaza. There, the Ethiopian eunuch was converted and baptized (Ac.8:26–39). The eunuch went on his way and carried the Gospel message down into Ethiopia. Philip was later found at Azotus (Ashdod) and he then continued up the coast through many cities until he came to Caesarea (Ac. 8:40).

Gentiles Come into the Church

The church then continued to grow outside of Jerusalem, but was still composed entirely of Jews (Ac.9:31). Samaritans were also brought into the church at that time and must be included under the broader heading of "Jews." The ancestors of the Samaritans were the

poorer class of Jews that were left in the land when Nebuchadnezzar carried the more intellectual ones into captivity in Babylon. The Jews that had returned from the captivity would have nothing to do with the Jews of Samaria because they had intermarried with Gentiles. Considered outcasts, they were forbidden to worship in the Temple, but then so were Jewish Christians by that date.

It was through Peter that we first read about Gentiles officially being accepted into the new covenant church. We are told in Scripture of Peter healing Aeneas (Ac.9:34), and of the restoration of Dorcas to life (Ac.9:36–41) that resulted in many believing in the Lord Jesus (Ac.9:35,42). We can trace Peter's travels (See map Figure 1 page 41) from Jerusalem to Lydia (Lydda) on to Joppa on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea (Ac.9:32,38). It was while Peter was at Joppa, staying with Simon the tanner, that Peter was enlightened concerning the acceptability of Gentiles in a vision (Ac.10:9–16). Gentiles were brought into the church as a direct result of Cornelius' summons of Peter requesting that Peter visit him at Caesarea. Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile, had experienced a vision wherein an angel of God told him to send men to Joppa to summon Simon called Peter (Ac.10:1–8). As we can see, God Himself arranged that meeting.

At Caesarea, before witnessing Jews, the Gentiles were given the same visible gift of the Spirit as the apostles had received on Pentecost as a sign to convince the Jewish believers that Gentiles had also been indwelt by the Holy Spirit the same as they (Ac.10:44–46). As Peter was to say, "who was I that I could resist God?" (Ac.11:17). (Read Peter's full sermon to the Gentiles in Acts 10:34–48). By that means, the church was made to see that the Gospel was indeed Good News for all — Jew and Gentile alike. Salvation had also come to the Gentiles — unto those who before had walked in darkness, a great light had suddenly shown (Is.9:2). The believing elect of God now consisted of both Jew and Gentile, yet they were united into one faith in Christ. The earlier wall that God had placed between the Jew and Gentile was beginning to dissolve as the Gospel of Christ created a new people for his namesake. Through a miraculous intervention God would now raise up an apostle specifically sent to the Gentiles — Paul.

The Spiritual Birth of the Apostle Paul

Perhaps as long as a full seven years after the crucifixion of Christ, Saul was carrying his persecution beyond Jerusalem and into the surrounding cities so that none of the dispersed believers would escape retribution. It was on just such a mission to Damascus that a great light blinded Saul such that he was not enabled to see with his eyes again until he clearly saw the Truth with his mind (Ac.9:3–9). If ever God's irresistible grace has been demonstrated, surely the transforming of Saul of Tarsus into Paul of the New Testament is a paramount demonstration. The very man who for years had spearheaded the persecution of the church with fanatical zeal soon was discovered preaching the Gospel of Truth at Damascus (9:19–22). The blind had truly been made to see.

In one grand swoop God first used Saul to spread the Gospel to the surrounding country through his energetic persecution of the church in Jerusalem, and, then, God removed that agent of persecution by transforming him into Paul, an apostle of Truth. After Paul escaped from Damascus over the wall in a basket from his own persecutors, Paul was isolated from all other believers for a time (Ac 9:25; Ga.1:17,18). During that time, Paul was taught great truths by the Holy Spirit in the desert of Arabia that formed the basis for his ministry among the Gentiles and his many epistles, which were to be written later. In the words of Paul,

> **"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ"** (Ga.1:11,12).

Paul's later attempt to aid in the preaching of the Gospel in Jerusalem proved impossible for two reasons: First, he was distrusted and feared in Jerusalem by fellow believers. One must understand that the church there could have no genuine love for him after the many persecutions he carried out with such fanatical zeal against them, their friends, and their families. It was also very difficult for them to fully trust the fact of his conversion to the faith. Only Barnabas whose name means "son of consolation" befriended Paul. Secondly, Paul's

enlightened teachings regarding Jesus Christ so enraged the Jewish religious authorities that he had to leave Jerusalem and go to his homeland, far up north in the city of Tarsus (Ac.9:29,30). It is possible that Paul spent his time there by preparing the way for the Gospel that he carried into that region on one of his later missionary journeys. However, we do not know of a certainty that Paul openly preached the Gospel in his homeland since it would appear from Luke's writings that God had put Paul on a "back burner" for a period of time as the emphasis shifted to the missionary work of other apostles.

Chapter 17.3 The Missionary Church

Antioch, the capital of Syria, was founded by Seleucus Nicator I in 301 B.C. near the beginning of the Seleucid era. Seleucus was a general of Alexander the Great that had inherited the Syrian area upon the death of Alexander. Antioch was one of 16 cities of that same name Seleucus Nicator founded in honor of his father.[12] Seleucus also founded cities in a number of metropolitan regions in addition to Antioch. Jews owned large tracts of land that Seleucus had given them as a reward for their aid in the battle of Ipsus, which had opened up Asia to his control. Still more importantly, Seleucus offered equal citizenship to the Jews along with Macedonians and Greeks.

When Rome took control of the area in 65 B.C., Antioch became the capital city and military headquarters for the entire Asian province. During that time, the Gentile population grew in Antioch. Antioch soon became a cosmopolitan city with philosophical and religious interests, social diversity, and with civil order enforced by police protection. Ashtaroth was the primary deity of the majority of the general population of half a million, and with that exaggerated praise came extremely immoral activities associated with the worship. Although other residents of Antioch pressured the authorities to revoke the citizenship of Jews, their pleadings went unheeded by Rome and Jews retained their privileged status in Antioch. Rome was merely following the same policy that had been established in other provinces as well. Thus, it is almost certain that the Apostle Paul, a devout Jew, could claim legitimate Roman citizenship as a resident of Tarsus because of that same occupation strategy.

Although Rome vigorously suppressed Jewish insurrection in Jerusalem and the surrounding province of Judea, Roman citizenship was freely enjoyed by the Jews who were in the minority at Antioch. A large number of Greek-speaking Jewish Synagogues had been established at Antioch by the middle of the first century A.D.

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[12] The Bible also mentions a second Antioch near Pisidia in Phrygia of Asia Minor (Ac.16:6; 18:23). Paul passed through this city on all of his missionary journeys.

Therefore, we see that the Christian Gospel could be spontaneously received and propagated in relative safety at Antioch under Roman protection even as the Jerusalem church continued to decline under increased local persecution.

Establishment of the Church at Antioch

The believing Hellenistic Jews that had been driven out of Jerusalem during the persecution began "missionary" work in Phenice, Cyprus and Antioch of Syria among the Jews living there (Ac.11:19). As some of them from Cyprus and Cyrene spoke to the Greeks in Antioch, many Greeks believed in the Lord Jesus (Ac.11:20,21). Soon Barnabas was singled out by the church at Jerusalem to be sent to Antioch in order to aid and establish them firmly in the true doctrines of the faith (Ac.11:22–24). There, Barnabas found many receptive to the Word. So much so, that he sent to Tarsus for Paul whom he had befriended when Paul was in Jerusalem (Ac.9:27). While Paul could not very well enter Jerusalem again to preach the Gospel, Antioch was opened to him (Ac.11:25,26).

The assembly at Antioch was to become a strong local church. However, the church in Antioch was becoming increasingly Gentile in composition. It was here at Antioch that the name "Christian" was first applied to believers in Christ (Ac.11:26). Before that time, believers were largely considered a sect of the Jews who had embraced Jesus as their Messiah, and no particular name was applied to them. Their faith simply was referred to as "the way." It is probable that those who opposed the faith first coined the name "Christian" as a derisive term, but the name took hold and soon all that believed in Jesus were to be known as Christians even until this day.

The Missionary Outreach

Believing Jews had spread the Gospel from Jerusalem, into all of Judaea, and on into Samaria under the pressure of persecution. During that time at Jerusalem, Herod Agrippa killed James the brother of John, and Peter was imprisoned and miraculously released by an angel of God (Ac.12:1–11). The Jerusalem church was hard-pressed to reach out while it reeled under persecution that threatened its own

survival. We see the first recorded Christian "relief effort" being sent from Antioch to the persecuted Christian poor in Jerusalem during that time (Ac.11:27–30).

Paul taught for a year at Antioch and greatly strengthened the church there. Through Peter, Philip and others, God had already opened the door to Greek Gentiles, but now we find the great commission being extended geographically by the young church at Antioch. Thus, the regions beyond Judaea and Samaria were reached with the Gospel that began the outreach "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Ac.1:8). The primary missionary thrust now rested on the new-found church at Antioch where Paul and Barnabas were set aside as missionaries (Ac.13:2) — first, again, to reach Jews with the Gospel (Ac.13:4). Although Paul's commission was to reach Gentiles, he still held a special place in his heart for fellow disbelieving Jews (cf. Ro.9:1–5). In three notable missionary journeys, Paul was sent from Antioch (of Syria) to spread the Gospel throughout the surrounding countries.

Paul's journeys were most often traversed on foot, though he sometimes took passage on ship to bring him more rapidly to a mission area. He covered an estimated fifteen hundred miles on his first journey alone, about twenty-eight hundred miles on his second journey, and another twenty-seven hundred miles on his third journey. It has been estimated that Paul traveled a total of nearly fourteen thousand miles in his lifetime, which included many shorter journeys in addition to his three long missionary trips. That total would of course include the trip to Rome that itself was over two thousand miles traversed by ship.

Everywhere that Paul traveled, he preached the Gospel, and in so doing, he established groups of believers that were formed into local congregations. Therefore, while there is one Church, the individual assemblies were also referred to by the same name as the Church of which they were living constituents. Many churches were set up in many different cities throughout the Mediterranean area as Paul continued his travels. Miracles were combined with Paul's preaching as a sign that testified to the truth of his words in order to bring many to Christ.

Paul's First Missionary Journey

Paul's first missionary journey (See map Figure 2 below) began when he and Barnabas along with John Mark as their assistant took sail from Seleucia Pieria to make landfall on the eastern coast of the island of Cyprus at Salamis.

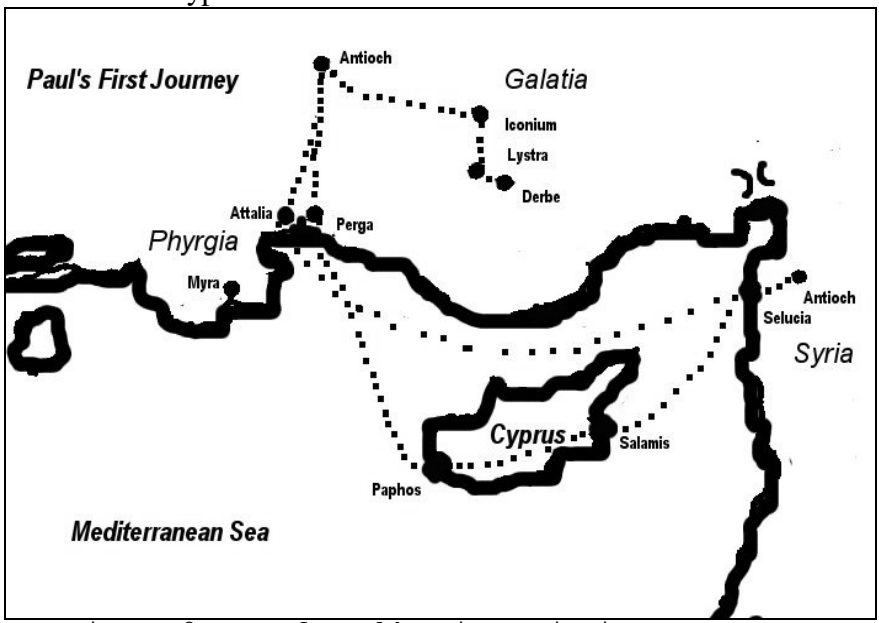

Figure 2 Map of Paul's First Missionary Journey

At Salamis, Paul "preached the Word of God in the Synagogues of the Jews" (Ac.13:5). From Salamis, he traveled on foot across the island of Cyprus to the city of Paphos where as Paul witnessed to Sergius Paulus, a Roman Proconsul, he encountered opposition from a sorcerer. The sorcerer was subsequently blinded and the Roman Proconsul became a believer. From there, Paul, Barnabas and Mark boarded a ship and sailed to the coast of Pamphylia and on to Perga. Perga was actually an inland port city located about 12 miles from Atallia on the river Cestris.

John Mark apparently left their company at the river inlet to Perga and returned home by ship (Ac.13:4,5,13). Luke makes no critical remarks about John Mark in the book of Acts as he left the

company of Paul and Barnabas. Mark was a very young man and was probably not yet up to the many hardships that needed to be endured in order to place the Gospel message before his personal comfort. Perhaps he was homesick for his family and Jerusalem as well. In any event, he was not ready spiritually or physically to continue with the effort and returned home (Ac.12:25). When John Mark reached maturity, he wrote the Gospel of Mark and he was considered valuable by Paul for other work in the ministry (2Ti.4:11).

After the departure of Mark, Paul and Barnabas traveled on land to Antioch in Pisidia (Ac.13:14). This Antioch was another city of that name founded by Seleucus Nicator and should not be confused with the Antioch of the home church in Syria. It had become a Roman garrison city constructed to suppress various wild tribes soon after it was made a part of the Roman province of Galatia in 25 BC. When Paul spoke before the Jews there, the Gentiles received the Gospel with joy, but the Jews rejected it out of jealousy and resentment of the many Gentiles who believed (Ac.13:42–45). Because Paul and Barnabas preached a universal Gospel available to all men, they were driven out of Antioch and then they hurriedly traveled eastward to the Galatian city of Iconium. Again, the Gospel was given first to the Jews where many Jews as well as Gentiles living there believed. Nevertheless, unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and together they sought to stone Paul and Barnabas (Ac.14:5).

Paul and Barnabas then traveled to Lystra and Derbe of Lycaonia as they continued onward in Galatia toward Cilicia. At Lystra, Paul was indeed stoned by Jewish zealots that had followed him from Lystra and Iconium, and he was left for dead (Ac.14:1–19).[13] At Derbe, many were converted (Ac.14:20–22). Paul and Barnabas then returned back through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, to Attalia (in Pamphylia across the river inlet from Perga) where they boarded a ship home toward Antioch of Syria (Ac.14:24–27). Local assemblies of

[13] Whether Paul was dead or only mistaken for dead is a matter of some dispute. Some see an allusion to Paul's restoration to life from death in connection with this incident in 2 Corinthians 12:2–4.

believers were established in each of the cities that Paul visited as a consequence of the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul's first missionary journey ended with their return to the sending church at Antioch.

The Jerusalem Council

After Paul's return home, men who saw Christianity as a subordinate sect of Judaism came to the church in Antioch from Judaea teaching that salvation required that all men be circumcised according to the ceremonial Law of Moses (Ac.15:1). That was a direct attack against the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Due to the strife that this caused in the church, a company consisting of Paul, Barnabas, and others of the church at Antioch went to Jerusalem to make their case before the apostles (Ac.15:2). Many converted Pharisees in the church at Jerusalem insisted that the Law of Moses must be universally kept by all the disciples of Christ in all respects (Ac.15:5).

However, Peter addressed the council saying that they should listen to Paul and Barnabas, relating how they, themselves, had before been made to understand that the Gospel was directed to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews (Ac.15:7–11; Ac.11:5–18). Then, Paul and Barnabas told of the miracles and wonders that God had brought forth among the Gentiles who were saved totally apart from the Mosaic Law (Ac.15:12). Gentiles never had a temple, never brought sacrifices, never worshiped in a synagogue, never observed the Sabbath day, never had any dietary restrictions, were never circumcised, never observed the Law of Moses in any way, yet God Himself had graciously gathered them into the same fold!

James, hearing those things regarding the redemption of Gentiles and heeding Peter's words, suggested that they not trouble the Greeks and other Gentiles to keep the Law of Moses seeing that God had already chosen them without making that distinction, but that they should take care to abstain from four things in which the pagans participated (Ac.15:13–21).

- the worship of idols
- fornication
- eating strangled meat

- drinking the blood of animals

The council accepted James' suggestion, and letters of greetings and selected men were sent back with Paul and his company to confirm those things with the church at Antioch (Ac.15:22–29). The believers at Antioch rejoiced that they were thus reconciled to the believers at Jerusalem by that decree, which they were more than glad to honor because their new-found faith in Christ had already convinced them to give up their pagan ways and traditions (Ac.15:30,31).

The Second Missionary Journey

Both Paul and Barnabas continued to teach in the church at Antioch until Paul finally believed that it would be good if he and Barnabas visited the churches that were established on their previous journey (Ac.15:36). Due to a strong difference of opinion regarding whether John Mark should accompany them, Paul and Barnabas separated their missionary efforts. Paul apparently believed that John Mark was not yet mature enough to endure the hardships required of such an extended journey. The direction of travel that Paul was advocating was on foot over a rugged mountain range in Cilicia west of Tarsus, through a pass known as the Cilician Gates (See map Figure 3, page 52), and then on to Derbe to the west of the mountains. Therefore, Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed toward Cyprus while Paul took Silas who had arrived from Jerusalem and began on foot toward the north through the cities of Issus in Syria, and on to Paul's home city of Tarsus in Cilicia (Ac.15:37–41).

After crossing the mountain range into Lycaonia, Paul again visited the churches at Derbe and Lystra. As they visited the churches, they also delivered the decree from the apostles at Jerusalem, which was the directive of James regarding the conduct of Gentile Christians (cf. Ac.15:20; Ac.16:4).

Lystra

At Lystra, a young man named Timothy joined Paul and Silas. Timothy's mother was a Jew, but his father was a Greek. It is possible that Timothy's mother, Lois, and grandmother, Eunice, had received

the Gospel on Paul's first missionary journey. Timothy was circumcised so that no unnecessary offense would be given to the Jews in the synagogues they were to visit. As we have seen, any requirement for the circumcision of Gentile Christians was already denied by the Jerusalem council (Ac.15:1,19-20). Some have criticized Paul for circumcising Timothy, but the choice was surely that of Timothy. He made that decision in order that the local Jews who knew that his father was a Greek would not be offended by the preaching of the Gospel. That was done as a matter of grace, not of law.

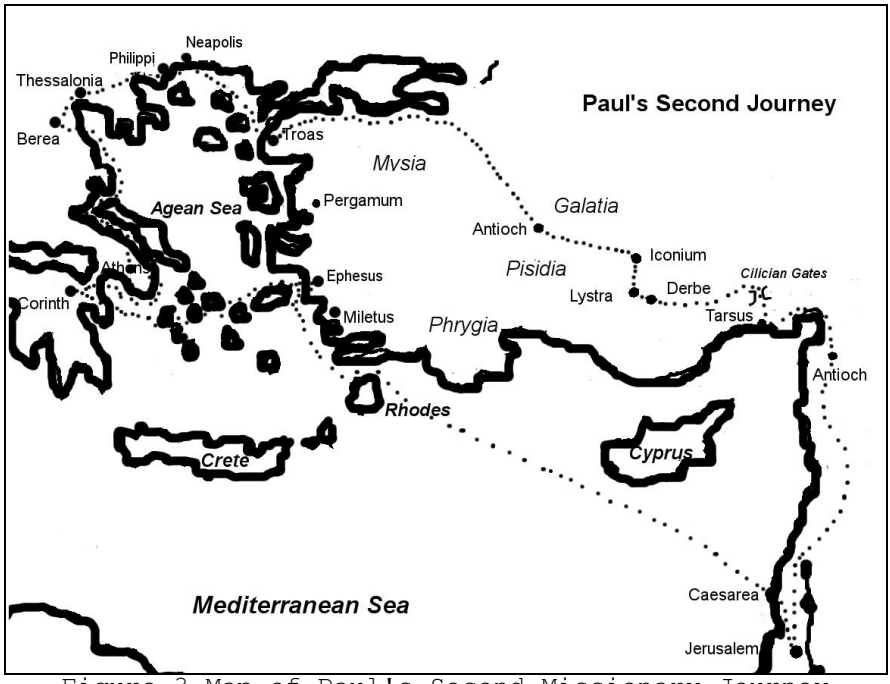

Figure 3 Map of Paul's Second Missionary Journey

The three missionaries, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, then traveled westward through the regions of Galatia and Phrygia into Asia — not the continent of Asia of today, but what is now western Turkey. Perhaps, Paul had intended to follow the main road into Ephesus, but the Holy Spirit forbad them to preach the Gospel in that region at that time (Ac.16:6). Therefore, they turned northward at Antioch of Pisidia

toward the land of Bithynia by the Black Sea, but the Holy Spirit denied them entry into that area as well (Ac.16:7).

Troas

Turning to the west through Mysia, they eventually came to the Alexandrian city of Troas on the coast of the Aegean Sea (Ac.16:8). In Acts Chapter 16, verse 10 we take note that Luke, who had chronicled the journey of Paul, Silas, and Timothy in the third person, now uses the pronouns "we" and "us" with reference to the endeavor to go into Macedonia to preach the Gospel. From that we can reasonably assume that Luke, the physician, was at Troas when Paul and his companions arrived and that he joined them there in their efforts. From then on, Luke recorded the journey with first hand knowledge, where before he likely would have depended upon first-hand accounts given to him by Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

At Troas, through a vision, Paul and his company were directed to cross the sea and to enter into the land of Macedonia (Ac.16:9,10). This they did, coming by the island of Samothrace and landed at the seaport of Neapolis (Ac.16:11). Macedonia is a region consisting of the Balkan peninsula located north of ancient Greece and including parts of present-day Greece, Bulgaria, and, until more recently, the nation of Yugoslavia. Therefore, through that means, the entire European continent was opened to the Gospel as the Holy Spirit had directed Paul.

Philippi and Thessalonica

From Neapolis, Paul, Silas, and Timothy traveled to the major city of Philippi. Philippi was founded in 358 BC by Philip II who was the father of Alexander the Great. A noted school of Greek medicine was founded there leading to some speculation that Philippi was also the home city of Luke who had earlier joined Paul in Troas. In that city, a congregation was established in the "house of Lydia" (Ac.16:14,15,40). Lydia was a seller of an expensive purple dye for which her native city of Thyatira was renowned. This dye, known as "turkey red," was derived from the madder-root. Lydia apparently was quite wealthy owning a large home in Philippi where she invited Paul

and company to reside during their stay. While there, at Philippi, Paul and Silas became imprisoned and were miraculously released by an earthquake (Acts, Chapter 16). We next read of the establishment of another congregation at Thessalonica, where again we read of strong Jewish opposition to the Gospel such that the believers at Thessalonica had to quickly send the missionaries on toward Berea out of harms way (Ac.17:1–10).

Berea

The Jews at Berea being more studied than those at Thessalonica searched the Scriptures regarding the truth of the Gospel, and many believed including many Greeks (Ac.17:10–12). However, when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that Paul had been hurried away to Berea, they sent a company of men to stir up the people of Berea against the missionaries (Ac.17:13). Paul was separated from Timothy and Silas, put on board a ship by concerned brethren, and sent southward to Athens with the understanding that Silas and Timothy would follow him later (Ac.17:14,15). Timothy and Silas apparently were not considered in great physical danger, since Paul was the "lightning rod" of the group. No doubt, the Jews had heard about Saul of Tarsus, now called Paul, who in their opinion had abandoned and totally betrayed Judaism that he had once defended with great zeal. They were doubly offended by him whom they saw as a trader to Judaism. Therefore, Timothy and Silas remained for a time to preach the Gospel and establish local churches.

Athens

Athens was named for its patron goddess Athene (or Athena) who was the Greek goddess of wisdom that was also identified with the Roman goddess Minerva. It was the noted center for Greek art, science and philosophy. While waiting for Silas and Timothy at Athens, Paul was stirred in his spirit regarding the city being completely given over to idolatry. Here Paul encountered philosophers who were always interested in telling or hearing something new (Ac.17:18–21). Because of that prevailing interest in acquiring additional wisdom, Paul was allowed to preach the doctrine of the one

true God as well as the resurrection of Jesus Christ in an oration on Mars hill (Ac.17:22–31). Mars Hill was a barren 370 foot high hill dedicated to Ares, the god of war, northwest of the famous Acropolis. We are told in Scripture that there were few results from the preaching of the Gospel in Athens (chiefly because of opposition to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead), though there was still a small number that believed (Ac.17:34).

Corinth

Paul, finding little purpose in remaining in Athens after that miniscule response, decided to move on westward to the city of Corinth, capital of the Roman province of Achaia. There, Paul worked at his craft as a tentmaker for a time with Aquila and Priscilla, as he waited for Silas and Timothy to arrive in Corinth from the cities of Macedonia (Ac.18:5). Aquila and Priscilla were Jews that had been ordered, along with all other Jews, out of Rome by Claudius Caesar (Ac.18:1–3).

Before the arrival of Silas and Timothy, Paul had carefully reasoned with the Jews and Greeks in the synagogues every Sabbath — laying the groundwork for the Gospel. However, when his companions had arrived, Paul testified in the spirit that Jesus was the promised Messiah (Ac.18:5). When the Jews refused to accept the truth regarding Christ, they openly blasphemed. Because of their strong reaction against the Truth, Paul left the company of the Jews and went directly to the Gentiles. Under the express promise of protection from the Lord, Paul continued to teach the Word of God among the Gentiles for more than a year and one-half in that pagan city (Ac.18:9–11).

Out of deep concern for the Thessalonian church, from which he was driven away before he could fully establish them, Paul at some point in that stay sent Timothy back to Thessalonica with two epistles that he wrote while still in Corinth (1Th.3:1,2). In those epistles, Paul sought to clarify the doctrine of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The Return Trip to Jerusalem

Paul then set sail from Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla intending to go on all the way to Jerusalem. When his ship came to Ephesus in Asia (where he had been forbidden before by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel), he then preached in the synagogue there, but he could not be persuaded to stay longer because of a vow he had taken to soon be in Jerusalem. He promised to return to them if God willed, but he left Aquila and Priscilla to minister to them and continued his journey toward Jerusalem (Ac.18:18–21).

The keeping of a "feast" mentioned here in the *King James Authorized* text is not found in some of the better Greek manuscripts. Some texts indicate that he wanted to attend a festival at Jerusalem, which may have been either Passover or Pentecost. It may also have had something to do with a personal vow he had taken. That may have been the Nazarite-like vow since he had his hair cut at Cenchrea (near Corinth) as we read in Acts 18:18. That may have been done to accommodate critical Jews much in the same way that Timothy had submitted to circumcision. Acts 21:20-26 states that Paul did a similar thing in Jerusalem at a later time.

Paul arrived in Jerusalem, greeted the church there and then returned northward[14] to the church in Antioch of Syria (Ac.18:22). In that manner what is referred to as the second missionary journey of Paul ended. Paul then spent some time at Antioch teaching and strengthening believers (Ac.18:23).

The Efforts of Apollos

After the departure of Paul, we are told that a man named Apollos, a learned Alexandrian Jew, arrived in Ephesus who spoke with knowledge of the Scriptures and knew of the baptism of John (Ac.18:24,25). Therefore, this man knew of the soon fulfilling of the

[14]The Bible text says that Paul went "down to Antioch" (Ac.18:22). In those days, Jews always referred to Jerusalem as "up" and any direction from Jerusalem as "down." Therefore, "down" does not mean "south" as is the modern convention with maps oriented with northern areas at the top.

promise of the Messiah, but was apparently unaware of the fact that it had actually already been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. It was Aquila and Priscilla who expounded to him the Gospel of Jesus Christ. After that, Apollos went over into Achaia (Athens and Corinth — i.e. Greece) and mightily convinced Jews, by the Scriptures, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (Ac.18:24–28). Therefore, we see how the church was firmly established in Ephesus by Aquila and Priscilla and in Corinth by Paul and Apollos.

Paul's Third Journey

Paul's third missionary journey (See map Figure 4, page 58) began at Antioch of Syria as before. He went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen those believers who lived in the land (Ac.18:23). As we shall see, however, Paul also journeyed again into Macedonia and Greece (Achaia). While Apollos, who had spoken of John's baptism in Ephesus, had returned to minister in Corinth Paul came again into Ephesus (Ac.19:1).

Ephesus

It would appear that there were many disciples in Ephesus that had heard the earlier teaching of Apollos regarding the coming of the Messiah (John the Baptist's message), but they had not yet heard that Jesus was the resurrected Christ. Paul asked them whether they had received the "Holy Ghost" (Ac.19:1,2). When Paul explained to them that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance in preparation for receiving the Messiah that would come after him, he then revealed to them that Jesus was He of whom John had spoken. We read that when the disciples heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus whereas before that they had only been identified with the ministry of John (Ac.19:3–5).

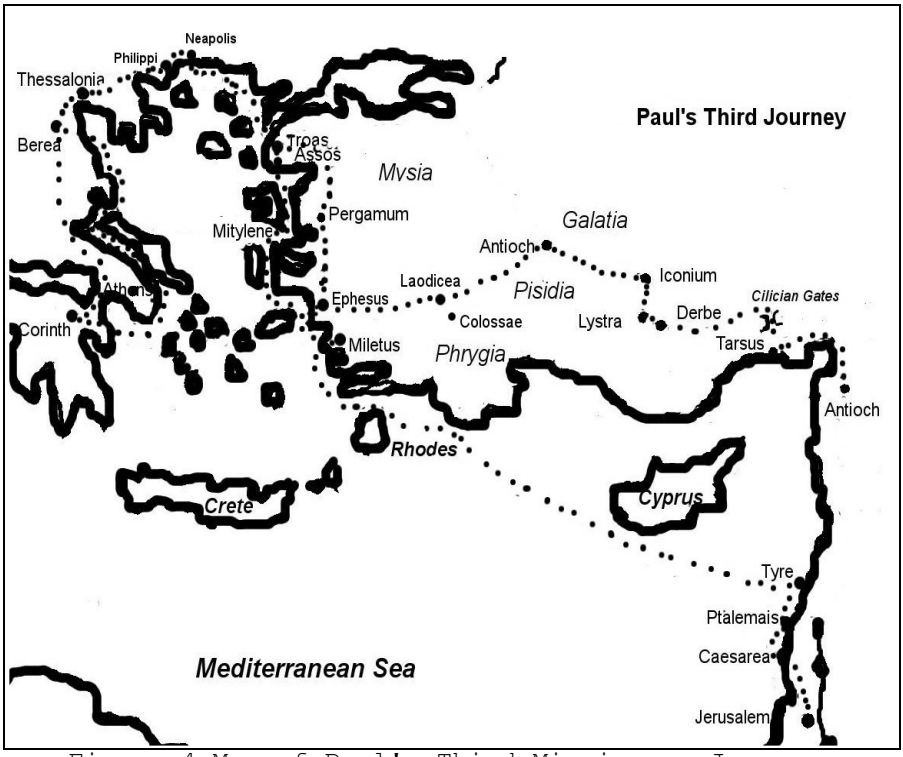

Figure 4 Map of Paul's Third Missionary Journey

While at Ephesus, Paul taught for two years in the school of Tyrannus (the school of a Greek teacher) because the hardness of the Jews would not allow him to be heard in the synagogues (Ac.19:8–10). Ephesus soon became a great center in the region for the Gospel, which extended into all of Asia (Ac.19:26). God preformed many miracles at Ephesus in confirmation of Paul's message (Ac.19:11). Many who had practiced works of sorcery, burned their books from which they had learned such vile practices (Ac.19:19). That movement continued until the success of the Gospel began to seriously affect the silversmith trade that fashioned idols of the goddess Diana made of silver to sell for a profit. The silversmiths were losing business rapidly as the Gospel spread and people turned to God from idols (Ac.19:27).

Those who benefited financially from the temple of Diana raised a mob up against Paul's Gospel (Ac.19:28). It was two men

Gaius and Aristarchus, who had come from Macedonia to accompany Paul back to Macedonia, that were caught up by the mob (Ac.19:29). Other disciples restrained Paul from going to their defense before an angry assembly of the town's people (Ac.19:30,31). A worldly-wise town clerk dismissed the assembly calling for order and proceeding according to Roman law, not the rashness of a mob (Ac.19:32–41).

Macedonia and Greece

When Paul was reunited with Gaius and Aristarchus, he departed with them to continue into Macedonia as he had previously planned (Ac.19:21;20:1). After traveling again through Macedonia including the cities of Philippi, and Thessalonica, Paul continued southward into Greece (Achaia) again as he had planned to do (Ac.20:2). After three months in Greece, Paul decided to return again to Syria and on to Jerusalem, but Jews laid in wait for him preventing him from doing so. He, therefore, decided to return on land through Macedonia once again, rather than set sail directly for Syria. Paul was accompanied by men from Berea, Thessalonica, Derbe, various Asians, Timothy, and most probably Luke himself (Ac.20:4). Leaving from Philippi, Paul arrived in Troas (in Asia minor) after five days journey, and he stayed there for one week speaking before them (Ac.20:6–12).

Miletus

While his companions set sail from Troas, Paul walked the shorter twenty miles to Assos where he met them and sailed with them to Mitylene or Mytilene (Ac.20:13,14). In as much as Paul wished to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, he did not stop at Ephesus on the return journey, but stopped instead farther south at Miletus (Ac.20:15,16). At Miletus, Paul sent word to the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet with him there (Ac.20:17). Paul told them that he was warned of the Holy Spirit that bonds and afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem (Ac.20:23). Paul, therefore charged the elders to feed the church of God (Ac.20:28) and to watch for and guard against apostates that would most assuredly come to seduce the flock (Ac.20:29–31).

After prayer together, Paul was accompanied to the ship that sailed toward Patara (Ac.20:36–38).

Tyre

After stops at Coos, Rhodes, and Patara, another ship was boarded that was headed for Phoenicia, which planned to unload at Tyre (Ac.21:2,3). Paul stayed with disciples at Tyre for seven days (Ac.21:4). Discounting the concerns of the disciples in Tyre for his personal well being, Paul continued southward on ship toward Jerusalem through Ptolemias to Caesarea where once again Paul was warned of coming afflictions at Jerusalem (Ac.21:9–14).

Jerusalem

Believers at Jerusalem greeted Paul, and he reported to them about all his work abroad (Ac.21:17–20). Because it was reported among the Jews at Jerusalem that Paul had taught other Jews dispersed among the Gentiles that they should forsake the Law of Moses regarding circumcision and other Jewish customs, the disciples urged Paul to take a vow showing that he also respected the Law of Moses. This was to be done to conciliate the Jewish Christians and to placate the Jews (Ac.21:20–24). This Paul did, but even so, the Jews became a mob falsely accusing Paul of polluting the Temple by taking uncircumcised Greeks into the Temple with him (Ac.21:28;cf. Ac.21:23). The mob would have put Paul to death, except that Roman soldiers rescued him from their hands and took him into their custody (Ac.21:31,32).

When Paul was granted the opportunity to speak before the Hebrew crowd, he told them of his earlier life and his conversion (Ac.22:1–21). Because he spoke in Hebrew, they at first gave him audience. However, at the mention of his mission to the Gentiles, the mob raged against Paul so fiercely that the chief captain decided he would scourge Paul to get him to reveal the truth of the matter; whereupon, Paul revealed that he was a Roman citizen against whom such treatment was illegal (Ac.22:22–29).

The chief captain, still trying to determine the material charges against Paul in a more orderly fashion, set him before a council of the

Sanhedrin (Ac.22:30–Ac.23:8). The Sanhedrin, composed as it was of Pharisees and Sadducees, could not agree on any charges because of their own division over belief in the resurrection of the dead (Ac.23:6–9). Again, Paul was taken into the Roman stronghold for his own protection (Ac.23:10), but when a conspiracy against Paul's life by the Jews was discovered, Paul was sent away under Roman guard to Caesarea to be judged there (Ac.23:12–35). Paul was unjustly kept in prison at Caesarea for two years without any charges (Ac.24:27). Because Paul finally appealed to Caesar, as was his right as a Roman citizen, he was sent to Italy and to Rome (Ac.26:32; Ac.27:1).

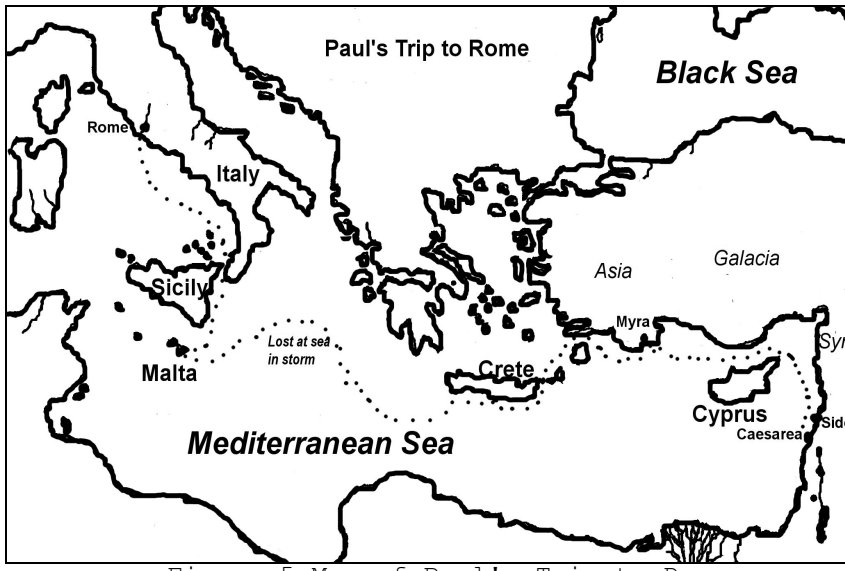

Figure 5 Map of Paul's Trip to Rome

Paul's Trip to Rome

On the trip to Rome by ship (See map Figure 5 above), we read of Paul's eventful journey, and the shipwreck on the island of Melita (i.e. Malta; Acts, Chapters 27 & 28). After reaching Rome, Paul was allowed the freedom to live by himself with one soldier as guard so that he was still able to preach the Gospel to the Jews in Rome (Ac.28:16,23). Again, some of the Jews believed, but most did not (Ac.28:24). Paul was allowed to receive and converse with as

many as came to his lodgings for a period of two years. During that time, he was allowed to preach the Gospel with no restraint by Roman authorities (or by the Jews) as he awaited his appeal to Caesar regarding the vague charges brought against him in Jerusalem (Ac.28:30,31). During that time of incarceration, Paul also wrote the "prison epistles" of Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians.

The Death of Paul the Apostle

Luke's account in the Book of Acts ends at this point. It is believed that Paul was released from prison after the two years mentioned, probably in early A.D. 63. After that, it is thought that Paul again revisited Ephesus and Macedonia (1Ti.1:3), and possibly went on to Spain as well. During the rein of Nero when a great Christian persecution got underway in late A.D. 64, Paul was again taken prisoner. It is thought that the second letter to Timothy was written during this imprisonment. In that letter, we read that Paul was kept in chains (2Ti.1:16), and was imprisoned as an "evil doer" (2Ti.2:9) unlike during his first incarceration. From the wording of portions of that letter, it is apparent that Paul knew that he had reached the end of his work and of his life here on earth (2Ti.4:6–8; 2Ti.4:16,17,18). Through secular sources, we have reason to believe that Paul was beheaded by Roman authorities at Rome either in the latter part of A.D. 66 or early A.D. 67.

Extra-biblical Accounts of the Apostles

We know little of the evangelistic efforts of most of the other apostles, their advanced lives, or their deaths. As Rome would later grow in prominence within the church, many other cities desired to claim an apostle for themselves much as Peter had been adopted by Rome. Alexandria claimed that John Mark founded the church there. In a similar manner, Constantinople claimed that Philip had preached there when it was still referred to as Byzantium, and Spain claimed that James the Apostle (Santiago) evangelized there before his beheading in Jerusalem by Herod Agrippa I. Spain also claimed later visits from Peter and even Paul after his Roman imprisonment and before his death. Thomas is claimed to have visited India from

accounts of a rather fantastic story that appeared in the spurious writing known as *The Acts of Thomas*. The chronology behind most of the accounts in that latter writing is completely unworkable.

Adding to the confusion is the fact that so many men of that era had similar names such as James and John. Notwithstanding, there is every reason to believe that the apostles' travels likely extended beyond the accounts that we have recorded in the book of Acts. Luke personally associated himself with Paul and company, while other events could have occurred of which he had no personal knowledge or that he considered was beyond the scope of his text.

The Apostolic Age of the church is defined as that time when one or more of the twelve apostles were still living. They were both eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of Jesus during the time that He walked here on earth both before and after his crucifixion and before his ascension. Uniquely added to that number is the Apostle Paul who was converted by the vision of Christ so that he was taught first-hand of those things by Christ Himself through the Holy Spirit (cf. Ga.1:11,12). During their lifetimes, those men not only established the fundamental doctrines of the faith through their teaching and writings, they also oversaw the organization and operation of various temporal churches as they came into being.

Chapter 17.4 The Church at the End of the Apostolic Age

As the end of the first century approached, all but the Apostle John had left the scene through death mostly due to severe persecutions of the Church by Roman authorities. Due to the far-reaching spread of Christianity to the Gentile world, the extreme difficulty of practicing the Christian faith in Jerusalem, and its eventual destruction, that city was no longer the center of the Christian faith by the latter part of the first century. The final destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 not only ended Israel's practice of the ceremonial law, it had made the city desolate and largely abandoned by Christians.

John, the Last Apostle

John would have lived through the time of the final siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of the Romans under the command of Titus.[15] If John or any others of the Jerusalem church had still resided in Jerusalem at that time, it is reasonably certain that they would have fled to other regions before the city fell, since the destruction of Jerusalem had been clearly foretold by the Lord Jesus along with his instruction for them to flee when the armies gathered (Lu.21:20–22).

We cannot know whether John actually fled Jerusalem at that time or was already away on a missionary effort during the time of Jerusalem's destruction. However, it is generally believed that John

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[15] Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus (AD 40 - 81), the ruthless son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, was placed in charge of the military operation against the Jews in Judaea in AD 69. In AD 70, Jerusalem fell to his troops after a lengthy siege. Titus' treatment of the surviving Jews was terribly brutal. He had the Great Herodian Temple of Jerusalem destroyed. Not one stone remained upon another. Only a portion of the wall outside the Temple proper remained standing, which is known today as the "Wailing Wall." It has since become a holy artifact where prayers are offered up by Jewish residents of the city. Titus became Emperor of Rome upon the death of his father in AD 79, but soon died under suspicious circumstances in AD 81.

left Jerusalem for Ephesus about A.D. 65 to 68 where he became the pastor of the church there.[16] Through the presence, influence, and oversight of the Apostle John, Christendom had become concentrated within seven churches of Asia Minor that are prominently mentioned in the book of Revelation: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, with Ephesus as the main Christian population center. (Re. 1:11).

John continued to disciple believers at Ephesus until about the year A.D. 95 when Roman authorities exiled him to the island of Patmos. That rather short exile is thought to have taken place during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian who instituted a brief but very severe reign of terror against Christians in A.D. 95 to 96. After his release from captivity about A.D. 96, John resumed his work at Ephesus until his death very near the end of the first century (cf. Jn.21:20–24)..

John's Three Epistles

John the Apostle wrote his three general epistles, numbered in our Bible as John 1 through John 3, most likely from Ephesus as circular letters to the congregations (or individuals within those congregations) of the six other churches that were all within a one hundred twenty-five mile radius of Ephesus. Those epistles were most likely written sometime within the ten-year period between A.D. 90 and 100, but the precise date and order of them is unknown. They are merely arranged in our Bible from the largest first (1John) to the shortest (3John) last.

The general theme of the three epistles was the need to walk in the light of the presence of Christ, love expressed within the context of

[16] Following the death of the Apostle Paul at or about this time, Ephesus was left without any direct apostolic oversight. This may have prompted the Apostle John to move to Ephesus, or perhaps he was directly called by elders of the Ephesian church to move there. If, as many believe, Mary the mother of Jesus was still living, she would most likely have still been in John's care (cf. Jn.19:26,27). It is therefore reasonable to assume that Mary was taken to Ephesus by John, and that she died and was buried there as tradition holds.

Truth, and life in the assurance of eternal salvation. His first epistle has no addressee specified and was most probably intended to be an open letter to all the churches within his jurisdiction. The second epistle is addressed to "the elect lady" begging the question of whether the elect addressee is a woman named *Electa*, a title for a woman, or a metaphor for a church congregation. Perhaps John needed to address it in a nebulous way to avoid identifying the recipient should the letter be intercepted by authorities. The third epistle is addressed directly to Gaius, and it includes specific comments regarding Diotrephes who loved to have the preeminence with malicious evil intent, and Demetrius who had a good report of all men regarding the Truth and could therefore be trusted. It is apparent that discerning those who were true believers from those who were not was essential in the face of the intense persecution of the times as will become apparent as we soon move into a further discussion of the seven churches of Asia.

The Revelation Document

Soon, the Apostle John himself would no longer be present on earth to oversee the churches, leaving them without any direct apostolic guidance. However, when John departed the earth through death, in addition to his aforementioned epistles he left behind a document that we now refer to as the book of Revelation — the very last book of our Bible. It was while exiled on the very rugged thirteen square mile island of Patmos, located about sixty miles southwest of Ephesus, that John received the vision recorded in Scripture as the book of Revelation. Although the substance of the document was the consequence of a vision received while John was imprisoned there, it was most likely written in its final form in his home city of Ephesus in or about the year A.D. 96 after his release from imprisonment.[17]

[17] It cannot be determined with certainty if John wrote down the vision while on the island, or later in Ephesus after his release, but the tense of the verb "was" in Chapter 1 verse 9 would seem to indicate it was finalized after he was released.

Vision of the Glorified Christ

In the very first part of the Revelation document, its entire subject matter was authenticated by a vision of the glorified Christ Himself who had directed its contents through angelic dictation and revelation (Re.1:10–18). What John saw was not the gentle Jesus as he had known Him when He walked and talked with John and the other apostles prior to his crucifixion. Nor did He appear in form as did the resurrected Christ prior to his ascension to Heaven. There was no doubt in John's mind that he was viewing deity in the person of Jesus Christ who had been exceedingly glorified and transformed. What John saw was glory and power beyond any human comprehension. So much so, that John fell down at his feet as if he were dead (Re.1:17). The vision had the same effect on him as it had on the prophet Ezekiel when the heavens opened up by the river Chebar and he saw the incredible glory of God. There, Ezekiel likewise fell on his face (Ez.1:4–28). As the prophet Malachi asked, "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire…" (Mal.3:2).

The Directive to Write

We find that John was then instructed by Jesus Himself to "write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Re.1:19). In Section 20 of this book, we shall discuss the "things which shall be hereafter." In this chapter, we shall discuss the things that John had already seen, which was the vision of the glorified Christ, and the "things that are" in John's present day and which has important implications for our present day as well. The "things that are" as John wrote them was the spiritual condition of the church on earth as described by Jesus Himself in seven brief messages to seven churches.

Seven Messages to Seven Churches

Within the vision of the glorified Christ we saw that Jesus stood in the midst of seven candlesticks representing the totality of the churches (Re.1:13,20). (The number seven in Scripture designates

fullness or completeness). In his right hand, He held the messengers (angels/stars) to the churches. Surely, those represent the elect that cannot be plucked from his hand (cf. Jn.10:28,29). The light, which comes forth from those messengers, is the fire-filled light of God's perfect glory; the oil that fuels them is the Holy Spirit. In all of this, we find that Jesus is both the creator and source of light for all the church assemblies that reside upon earth. The validity of temporal churches exists only in their close relationship with Christ through their visible Church members who illuminate them from within. When that relationship is lost or forgotten, and men try to usurp his authority for themselves, Christ removes that temporal church from his presence as its light is extinguished (cf. Re.2:5).

In Revelation Chapter 1, verse 20, Jesus speaks of the seven churches in the present tense: "…the seven candlesticks which thou sawest ***are*** the seven churches" (Emphasis added). John writes of the things that ***are*** in Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation — the present church age. Here we find brief messages dictated to seven churches, each in turn.

Those seven churches located in seven cities of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey; see map Figure 6, page 69) represented an accurate cross-section or microcosm of all of Christianity, as it existed on earth near the end of the first century. For that reason, we find that Jesus made no direct mention of the missionary church at Antioch of Syria or of any of the many other churches such as Paul's beloved church at Philippi that he established during his missionary journeys. It is likely that the church at Jerusalem had been dispersed before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but many other temporal churches likely existed that are not directly mentioned. Therefore, we must conclude that Jesus chose the seven that remained under direct apostolic oversight to represent all churches everywhere.

Some would think that the churches of the first century, being under direct apostolic guidance, were all perfect and that we should emulate them as models of what a sound church should be. Such, however, is not the case. Error and worldliness was rapidly creeping into the churches as they became increasingly institutionalized. Furthermore, greater numbers of unbelievers were infiltrating their

ranks such that the visible Church was already being encased within a larger more formal temporal structure.[18]

Figure 6 Map of the Seven Churches of Asia

The seven churches were early-institutionalized ***temporal*** churches. Therefore, we must realize that Jesus did not address his elect alone. He addressed the temporal assemblies of ***professed*** believers in each of seven cities of Asia Minor that claimed his name at the time John wrote the book of the Revelation. They represented seven factions of the larger institutional church that made up the whole

[18] The larger more complex temporal church, which is largely controlled by unbelievers, was compared with the much less complicated and fundamental visible Church, consisting only of true believers, in Book II of this work.

of Christianity. Inasmuch as each of the churches was uniquely different in character from the others, we know that there was already a lack of unity in the true faith — at least as far as practice was concerned. We find that fact clearly revealed in Jesus' own words recorded in the seven messages. Jesus is the true head of the Church created through his blood, and He must be the first and final judge of his own creation. Although two churches received no condemnations from Him, two others received no commendations. The other three churches received highly mixed reviews.

Inasmuch as each of those messages are part of the larger document that would ultimately be read by all the churches, we find that each of the individual messages were also directed, in general, to all the churches on earth. Commendations were intended to be encouragements to those churches who strived for perfection in the faith, the warnings were to those that had fallen away that they should repent, and the mixed reviews were for those churches who though yet sound in the faith were nonetheless still in danger of sliding into the open abyss of apostasy if they did not hold fast to the Truth.

Moreover, we cannot merely assume that those brief messages were written only for the purpose of encouraging and warning the churches of the first century, since they have been carefully preserved that we may also read them and readily compare them with our own assemblies today. Therefore, we can reasonably assume that those messages also represent a descriptive cross-section of the church existing in every age including all present-day churches.

We observe that Jesus consistently addressed ***individuals*** in those churches as "he who overcomes," and "he who can hear." Those were most surely the elect. They were individual believers that were within those various churches yet were set apart spiritually from the larger organization itself. The warnings given are to the institutions while the encouragements are given to individuals who faithfully lived for Christ within the confines of those churches.

We also notice that each of the messages was specifically directed to an "angel" of each church. The word "angel" can be more generally translated as "messenger." In context, therefore, those "angels" would most probably have been human couriers who would

carry forth and read aloud the messages contained in the document to the congregations of each of the churches. If so, those messengers were without doubt specifically chosen elect believers that John sent forth with a copy of the document and which Jesus held in his hands for that express purpose, as we saw earlier in the vision of the glorified Christ (Re.1:20). Jesus begins each individual message by first identifying himself to each of the messengers with certain unique attributes taken from the vision of his glorification in Revelation chapter 1.

The City of Ephesus

The city of Ephesus[19] had been built near the shrine of an Anatolian fertility goddess that was subsequently adopted and converted by the Greeks for the worship of the goddess Artemis or Diana of the Romans. The sensuous worship of the goddess in her temple was quite similar to that of the worship of Aphrodite in Corinth both having a host of attending priestess prostitutes. About the temple, acts of the basest forms of immorality were performed in riotous drunken orgies. Diana of the Ephesians, also recognized farther inland as Cybele, was arguably the most worshiped of the many female idols of the ancient world.

A large meteoric stone found near by the city was said to be the image of Diana "fallen from heaven." The crude shape of this stone evolved into an ugly multi-breasted image of Diana that held a club in one hand and a trident in the other. This lewd image was located behind a purple curtain within the temple of Diana, which became one of the wonders of the ancient world. This temple was four times the size of the Parthenon at Athens and its roof was supported by more than 100 external columns nearly 50 feet high of which many were hand carved. Within the Temple was an art gallery as well as a bank depository for large amounts of the city's wealth.

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[19] The information upon which brief composite descriptions of ancient cities contained in this book were written was accumulated from multiple historic sources.

A large silversmith trade had developed around the manufacture of various shrines and images of Diana to be sold in gift shops to the many tourists who visited Ephesus on religious pilgrimages. At times there were as many as two million people gathered in Ephesus. There was a theatre that seated twenty thousand people and an amphitheater that seated over one hundred thousand. Paul arrived in Ephesus on his third missionary journey.[20] When the Gospel arrived in full force through the teaching of Paul in the school of Tyrannus, the silversmith trade was decimated as the populace turned from idols to the living God. The Apostle John later arrived in Ephesus shortly after the death of the Apostle Paul,[21] most probably somewhere around A.D. 68, whereupon he took charge of the church there and from which he oversaw the other six churches addressed in the Revelation document.

The Message to the church of Ephesus

> **"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;** (Re. 2:1)

Here Jesus identifies himself to the messenger as the one who holds seven stars in his hand and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (Re.1:20). Jesus apparently felt the need to remind them that He alone is the head of the Church that holds their leaders in his hand and walks about in their midst to guide it. Although this is in one sense a note of assurance, it is also a warning that they must concede to his authority.

> **I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not**

[20] See Paul's Third Journey, Ephesus, page 57

[21] See The Death of Paul the Apostle, page 62

fainted. (Re.2:2,3)

Jesus knew of their hard work and how they had patiently struggled for the purity of the faith. They had carefully heeded the warning given to them by the Apostle Paul at Miletus to carefully test those who claimed to be apostles. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Ac.20:29–31). In all of this they had persevered and had not given in to falsehood.

> **Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."** (Re.2:4,5)

It is the love of Christ that constrains us in all that we do. Firm desire to hold to orthodoxy can instead make one cold and indifferent to the needs of others and for that matter move us farther away from our love relationship with Christ. Just as human marriage can be founded in wondrous abounding love, that initial love can fade once the day-to-day effort of living the married life in the practical sense continues over the years. The diligent efforts of the Ephesian church had likewise smothered their first love.

> **"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.** (Re. 2:6)

Nicolaitans are mentioned only in this letter to the church at Ephesus and again in the letter to Pergamum. It is possible that this faction was founded by an apostate deacon named Nicolas, but that is far from being certain (cf. Ac.6:5?). They apparently were a corrupted self-indulgent priesthood that sought to elevate themselves above the laity of the church (perhaps through exclusive sacramentalism). They sought after their own gainful reward as did Balaam of old and taught the people by example to commit adultery with the world through unrestrained gratification of the flesh in the manner of the epicureans.

Even so, many in the Ephesian church hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans as did Jesus.

> **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."** (Re.2:7)

The individual believer in the churches who overcomes all these difficulties in faith shall "eat of the tree of life" and shall dwell in "the paradise of God."

Contemporary Ephesus Cross-section

The church in Ephesus was quite similar to many of our strict fundamentalist conservative churches today. They are certainly active and are careful to emphasize correct doctrine, but because of their rigid wariness of error, they have in the process lost the spiritual fervor that is born of heart-felt love and instead have adopted a form of petty legalism to guide them.

Those churches patiently provide good works, but they appear to lack genuine concern for the lost or those who do not ascribe to their form of Churchianity. They firmly hold to strict moral discipline and fiercely hate evil, but in doing so, their love for Jesus has waned over the years. They hold to rigid traditions in their church services that appear quite proper in all matter of doctrine, but, if Jesus should appear in their midst, they would continue on in their liturgy as if nothing had happened. They have so soon forgotten their love for him personally and their love for one another in the body of Christ as well.

The City of Smyrna

The city of Smyrna was a beautiful port city at the head of the Hermus River with a well-sheltered harbor. In addition, it was the terminus for an overland trade route from the east. Smyrna was particularly famous for its science and medicine. It was known as the "crown city" because it had many beautiful public buildings that ringed the summit of Mount Pagos like a crown. The acropolis also located on Mount Pagos was encircled with flowers, hedges, and

myrtle trees. Smyrna housed a temple of Zeus, a temple of Cybele,[22] a temple of Aphrodite, a temple of Apollo, and a temple of Aesculapius.[23]

The Message to the Church in Smyrna

> **"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;** (Re. 2:8)

Here Jesus identifies himself with the earlier vision of the glorified Christ as the first and the last (Re.1:11) and the one who was dead, but is now alive, and reminding them that He has the keys to the grave and to death itself (Re.1:18). This reminder is most pertinent to this church that was in the midst of great testing leading to martyrdom. He reminds them that though they may needs die for their faith, they will live on in Him for all eternity.

> **I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.** (Re.2:9)

Although poor in material goods, perhaps as a consequence of intense persecution, Christians in Smyrna were very rich spiritually. Jesus also knew about their persecutions by the Jewish community. The Jews hated Christians because they worshiped Jesus as Christ. In that sense they were not truly Jews having rejected their own Messiah. They were most probably reporting Christians to the Roman authorities. Jesus referred to them as the synagogue of Satan, rather than the synagogue of Jehovah as they blindly claimed.

> **Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.** (Re.2:10)

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[22] See Diana of the Ephesians page 71

[23] Also see more regarding Aesculapius on page 77

Smyrna was the center of emperor worship that began in A.D. 25 when the Roman Senate authorized the building of a temple to honor Tiberius Caesar. Once a year every citizen was ordered to offer up incense to Caesar in the temple. If they refused to do so they were given 10 days to repent or suffer the pain of death. Most Christians would not give in even as a political gesture, which resulted in many Christians being martyred particularly within the years A.D. 81 to 86 during the reign of Domitian. Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna[24] was martyred and burned alive in the stadium located at Smyrna years later in A.D. 156.

> **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."** (Re. 2:11)

Contemporary Smyrna Cross-section

The church in Smyrna is representative of the many churches that are even today hated and persecuted for the innocence of their belief. While some few exist in the United States, they exist in abundance throughout the world, particularly so in Islamic nations. Not many pseudo-Christians fill their pews, having already deserted, no longer being interested in being persecuted for a cause that was not their own to begin with. In times of persecution, the false professor always flees, while those that remain behind continue to experience severe trials of their faith.

That church, no longer held together with the wealth and influence of its worldly members, commonly finds itself in poverty. Yet, that impoverished church also finds itself purged of the make-believer and are therefore filled with the Spirit of mutual hope. Although they are poor, yet they are rich: not in the wealth of this world, but in heavenly treasures and in spiritual strength. They fear none of the things that they suffer in love, since they eagerly look forward to the "crown of life" that is promised to all who believe on the name of Jesus. Blessed are those, for though many have been put

[24] See *Polycarp* (A.D. 69–156), page 100

to death over the years for their persistent faith they shall never taste of eternal death.

The City of Pergamum

The city of Pergamum (also spelled Pergamos) was a city of Mysia located on a mountain near the River Selinus about 15 miles inland from the Aegean Sea and around 60 miles to the north of Smyrna. It was both a beautiful and wealthy city. It reportedly had a library containing over two hundred thousand volumes.[25] It was a center for ancient Babylonian Sol (sun) worship, and it had an altar to the Greek god Zeus as well as several temples dedicated to cultic emperor worship. Science was worshiped, and satanic healing supposedly took place through the symbol of the serpent. The Temple which was dedicated to Aesculapius, (or Asklepios or Asclepius) the Greek God of medicine and healing was reportedly overrun with thousands of non-poisonous snakes.[26]

The Message to the church in Pergamum

> **"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;** (Re.2:12)

Here Jesus identifies himself to the messenger as He whose words are as a two-edged sword (Re.1:16). The two-edged sword was a powerful weapon in those day since it cut on both the fore stroke and the back stroke. Perhaps Jesus was pointing out that when he attacked

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[25] Mark Anthony later gave the library to Cleopatra who lugged the volumes off to Alexandria in Egypt to be placed in the much-revered library located there.

[26] The rod of Aesculapius has been carried down to the medical profession of our times as a staff entwined with a serpent. Nevertheless, another less objectionable origin of the medical emblem is suggested from Nu.21:6. This symbol is quite often confused with the caduceus, which is the rod of Hermes having two serpents entwining around it. Hermes was the Greek god of cunning and theft. Inasmuch as the caduceus is also associated with Mercury, the Greek god of speed, wings are often added to the symbol. Variations of those two symbols over time have become nearly interchangeable as emblems used within the medical profession.

his enemies in their city, they too could be cut by the back stroke if they allied themselves in any way with the Nicolaitans, engaged in fornication, sacrificed to idols, or accepted the doctrine of Balaam. (cf. Re.2:16)

> **I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.**(Re.2:13)

Jesus knew all about their struggle against evil since they lived where Satan dwelled and was worshiped through the idol of the serpent. Nevertheless, they had held fast to his name, continuing to call themselves Christians when that was extremely dangerous to do so. Even in the midst of severe persecution they had held fast to the faith. Nothing is known about Antipas except that his name means "against all" and that he was martyred by the pagans in the city because of his faithful witnessing.

> **But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.** (Re.2:14–16)

Jesus was very disturbed because they had allowed men that adhered to the doctrine of Baalam in their congregation. Such men loved money more than the faith, which caused them to put stumbling blocks in the way of their maturity through advocating that they should participate in idol worship, commit fornication literally or by marrying outside their faith. This was in full accord with the epicurean practices of the Nicolaitans that we discussed earlier when we studied the message to the church at Smyrna. If they did not repent from such ungodly compromise, Jesus said He would come against them with the sword of his own Words.

> "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith**

unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (Re.2:17)

Jesus offered to feed individual believers who would overcome with hidden food (manna). The purity of the food He offers contrasts greatly with putrefied food offered to idols. Furthermore, He would also give him a place in the Temple of God. A "white stone" with his own special name on it awaits the over-comer in that spiritual house; he will be acquitted of any wrongdoing with which he may have been entangled unwittingly that was not of his own making.

Contemporary Pergamum Cross-section

The church in Pergamum is representative of churches that are founded in very corrupt worldly surroundings. While they steadfastly adhere to the name of Jesus and do not openly deny the faith, they compromise with the evil around them and give in to satanic doctrines and to the acceptance of vile professors into their ranks. They see this as being necessary in order to survive. This corruption is seen today in the church that accepts falsehood in order to perpetuate its institutional existence. Compromise and error are deadly enemies of Truth which ultimately renders them devoid of faith.

The City of Thyatira

The inland city of Thyatira was famous for its weaving industry and for the dying of cloth. The dye that was known as "turkey red" was particularly popular in making robes for the very wealthy. The dye though exceedingly red was distributed by Lydia who was called a "seller of purple" (Ac. 16:14). The Apostle Paul met her in Philippi on his second missionary journey, and she was converted to the faith.[27] The city also was noted for its other guilds that produced pottery and leather goods. The primary deity was Tyrimnos who was worshiped there as the sun god. The city was well fortified despite

[27] See Philippi and Thessalonica, page 53

being located in a vale inasmuch as the elite Roman guard was stationed there.

The Message to the Church in Thyatira

> "**And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;** (Re.2:18)

Here Jesus identifies himself to the messenger as the Son of God and then goes on to say that He has eyes that are as a flame of fire and his feet as fine brass burning in a furnace (Re.1:14,15). His eyes of fire indicates his righteous indignation, and his feet of burnished brass expresses his holy determination.

> **I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.** (Re.2:19)

First, Jesus makes clear that He fully understands their acts of charity, service, faith, and patience. Furthermore, he sees that it has greatly increased such that it is now more than it was at first. All that would be to the good except that it is seriously flawed.

> **Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.** (Re. 2:20–23)

Jezebel was the Canaanite wife of Israel's evil king Ahab. She had led Ahab to worship Baal as well as leading large numbers of others in Israel astray due to her high position. This Jezebel calls herself a prophetess, which means she was an occult diviner, and she had been elevated to a high position in the church. Her teaching was

most likely similar to that of the Nicolaitans and the Balaamites. She led other members of the church to commit fornication as well as eat certain foods as a sacrifice to idols. This most likely took place as a sensual ceremony similar to the orgies of Cybele, although it could also have been connected to emperor worship.

Jesus warns them that He will greatly increase the tribulation of those that commit adultery with her, and that those who follow her (her children) will be killed (perhaps with venereal disease). Jesus had long given her the opportunity to repent, but she had not. All of the other churches about will come to realize that Jesus knows their most secret thoughts and activities and He will recompense them according to what they do.

> "**But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.** (Re.2:24,25)

Could a remnant exist even there — even within an occult-filled church? It would appear that even there some had kept themselves separate from error, yet were still in constant danger of giving in to it through association. Jesus promises those that had not held to those satanic doctrines, that no additional burden would be placed on them, having survived thus far against that falsehood, but that they should nonetheless "hold fast till I come."

> **And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** (Re.3:26–29)

Contemporary Thyatira Cross-section

Many of today's contemporary cults can be compared to the church of Thyatira. That church followed the false prophetess referred to as Jezebel. Many modern-day cults have been founded by women

and have members that work very arduously for the perpetuation of their "church." Outwardly, they have love for one another and patiently and faithfully strive to convert others to their way. Yet, they have gone astray regarding sound biblical doctrine and the Truth that comes forth from it. None of the zeal that has been mentioned can compensate for their wayward relationship with God. Their extreme doctrines carry along with them their own consequences: true repentance cannot come, and falsehood breeds still more error. He who is caught up in that spiritual whirlpool will find himself within a downward spiral to oblivion. They will be judged of their works.

The City of Sardis

Sardis was an inland city about thirty miles south of Thyatira and the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. It was famous for its many skilled artisans and craftsmen. It contained a mint that produced high quality coins made of gold and silver. Like other cities about them, it contained a temple to Apollo as well as a temple to Cybele, and was notable for its acropolis and temple of Artemis (or Cynthia) that was closely associated with Cybele. The acropolis was on a high crag with very steep walls that allowed it to serve as a bastion in time of siege by an enemy. It was also noted for a nearby cemetery with more than a hundred mounds in which the dead were buried.

The Message to the Church in Sardis

> **"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;** (Re.3:1)

Here Jesus identifies himself to the messenger as He who has the seven spirits that are before the throne (Re.1:4) and He who holds the seven stars in his right hand (Re.1:16,20). If Sardis remains alive it is because He maintains his Spirit there.

> **I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.** (Re.3:1b–2)

Although they claim to be a robust Christian church that is full of life, they are actually as spiritually dead as are the bodies of those who lie in their cemetery under huge mounds of dirt. For those in whom the breath of life yet remains, he warns them to strengthen what little faith they have left, since He has not found their religious activities to be fruitful.

> **Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."** (Re.3:3)

They had long forgotten the sound doctrine that they had once received but now they are admonished to wake up and remember them anew. If they do not repent from their slumber and watch, He will come upon them as a thief in the night in an unguarded hour to take away everything that remains.

> **"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.** (Re.3:4)

Yes, even here, a remnant of the elect existed in their midst. Even in the coldest and most dead of all churches a spark of light still remains; God has never left any church without a witness even if they will not hear.

> **He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** (Re. 3:5,6)

To the overcomers within the churches, Jesus promised to "dress them in white raiment" and not to blot out their names from the book of life along with others, but rather to confess their name before his Father and before his angels.

Contemporary Sardis Cross-section

Far worse than the cold orthodoxy of the church of Ephesus was the church of Sardis. Sardis is representative of many of the cold and highly formal churches today. Like Sardis they are a dying or

already dead church, because it has ***neither*** genuine orthodoxy nor spiritual fervor. It just continues onward in extreme ***formalism***. It goes through rote rituals and ceremonies with automaton-like consistency. In doing that, it exhibits motion without genuine spiritual impulse. Its members no longer remember the Truth that called them together, and they take no notice of the love of Christ that should bind them together into one body. When the hour comes that they are visited, they will most certainly not be ready unless they repent.

The City of Philadelphia

The city of Philadelphia was founded by Attalus II. The city got its name as a consequence of Attalus's love for his brother Eumenes who was the king of Pergamum. The name Philadelphia, meaning "the city of brotherly love," was given to the city by Attalus out of loyalty to his brother. Philadelphia rests upon a serious geological fault in which there is considerable seismic activity. So much so that in A.D. 17, the city was reduced to ruins. Though later overrun by Muslim invasions, it still maintained a Christian witness well into modern times.

The Message to the Church in Philadelphia

> **"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;** (Re.3:7)

Here Jesus identifies himself to the messenger as He that is holy and true (cf. Re.6:10). He also has a master key like that of David in the days when he was king of Israel. Like David of old, the greater Son of David, the Messiah, has the power to open and shut a door of witness that no one can keep closed or open again against his will.

> **I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.** (Re.3:8)

Jesus said to them that He was aware of their activities, and as a consequence had set before them an open door that no one could

shut. Though weakened by persecution, they still had a little strength left which they used to witness of the Gospel to others. They had kept his Word and had never denied his name inasmuch as they openly declared that they were Christians.

> **Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.** (Re.3:9)

Here Jesus calls those that profess to be Jews satanic. They are not truly Jews because they have denied Him who is the king of the Jews, and persecuted those who had accepted Him. This is quite similar to the language that Jesus used concerning the Jews at Smyrna. Once the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed a generation earlier, unbelieving Jews had wandered off into meaningless rabbinical debate that had led them increasingly farther astray from their Jewish roots.

Jesus expresses his love for them such that He would make the apostate Jews come and worship at their feet.

> **Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."** (Re.3:10,11)

The church at Philadelphia had patiently guarded the purity of the Gospel and had kept all the words of truth that the apostles had delivered. As a consequence, they would not need to be tested as will many others who have not solidly held to the Truth. Nevertheless, He warns that He will come very suddenly; "hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

> "**Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** (Re. 3:12,13)

He who holds fast to the Truth shall be as a "pillar in the temple of my God" — not merely a white stone within the walls, but a pillar standing alone, which supports the very cap of the roof. Furthermore, the over comer's name will be engraved upon the "new Jerusalem", a "new name" that Jesus will give him that he alone will know. That new name suggests a special intimacy and familiarity between the believer and Jesus Christ. Even in their human weakness God gave them strength so that they have "kept his word, and hast not denied his name."

Contemporary Philadelphia Cross-section

The church of Philadelphia is typical of many loyal churches today, whose members discern the spiritual above the material. They are engaged in arduous missionary efforts to reach the lost souls of millions around the world through an open door. Jesus has also opened the door to spiritual Truth, and to those that believe and remain faithful, He promises never to shut it.

The City of Laodicea

The city of Laodicea was founded by Antiochus II about 260 B.C., and it was named for his wife Laodice. It was located on the Lycus River about 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia and because it was also located on a much-traveled Asian trade route, its residents became very wealthy. Great camel caravans came out of the east through the "Gate of Phrygia" and then through Laodicea on the way westward to Ephesus and Miletus on the coast of the Aegean Sea. It became a center of industry, and along with it there developed a large banking operation.

There was an Anatolian temple to the Phrygian god, Men Karou. Like Pergamum, Laodicea had a highly acclaimed heathen medical school. A much sought after salve for the eyes was developed there, which was made from clay taken from the hills about to which spikenard was added. Although the salve actually had no medicinal value, it was widely sold throughout the Roman Empire.

While there is no direct record of the Apostle Paul ever visiting Laodicea, he may have passed through there on his third journey while

enroute to Ephesus (See map Figure 4, page 58). We do know that he wrote an epistle to the Laodicean church that is no longer extant (Col. 4:16), and that he was greatly concerned for their spiritual well being (Col. 2:1).

The Message to the Church of the Laodiceans

> **"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;** (Re.3:14)

Here Jesus identifies himself to the messenger as the faithful and true witness. He is both the Amen (the perfect will of God) and the Alpha (the beginning) of the creation of God (Re.1:11).

> **I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.** (Re.3:15,16)

Like barely-warm soup, Jesus said He would "spew them out of his mouth." From this we cannot conclude that Jesus would prefer the church to be cold, but only that the fact that they were lukewarm was a miserable situation in which a genuine church should find itself. They just did not much care about their tepid faith at all.

> **Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.** (Re.3:17,18)

Laodicea suffered from spiritual blindness and could not see Truth. All of this blindness in a city that claimed to have a salve to treat ailments of the eye. Jesus admonished them to buy with their gold spiritual ointment for their eyes that they may see their lost condition. Impoverished of spiritual insight, they rooted it out of all others as well. They took no stand for Christ, but they did not particularly care to spoil a "good thing" that they found in their meaningless religious

activity. Being rich in material wealth, they saw no need to be involved in spiritual matters.

They were wretched because they were still wallowing in their sins. They were miserable because they lacked hope. They were poor because they have no treasure stored in heaven. They were blind because they had no faith with which to see spiritual things. They were naked, because they were not clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Jesus counseled them to exchange their worldly gold for heavenly things. They should "buy of Him gold tried in the fire" that they may have true riches, and to buy of him "white raiment" that they not be spiritually naked and ashamed when He returns.

> **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."** (Re.3:19)

They should not think that they were favored of God because of their riches and health, since God regularly chastens and rebukes those that He loves rather than indulge and spoil them.

> "**Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.** (Re.3:20)

They had not only locked Him out of their churches but also out of their hearts. He stands at the church door and knocks, but they do not even hear Him nor would they admit Him into their sanctuary if they did.

> **To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** (Re. 3:21,22)

Even so, there is again that small remnant that will open the door and commune with Jesus; they will look to the Holy Spirit and hear his voice. Those who do so will be invited to the very throne of God.

Contemporary Laodicean Cross-section

Would that many liberal progressive churches today could recognize their own reflection in the verses of this revelation and repent, but they are far more interested in social issues, in political

activism, in swelling their ranks, and in pursuing the pleasures of the world. They no longer consider Scripture authoritative, but instead choose other literature to prepare flowery speeches from their pulpits that is mostly psychobabble. Worship has become so overwhelmed with the loud decadent music of the age that the church is the place for the unsaved to go to be entertained. Church lobbies are filled with fast food venues to fill their stomachs even as their souls starve for the bread of life.

They are wretched because they are still wallowing in their sins. They are miserable because they lack genuine hope. They are poor because they have no spiritual treasure stored in heaven. They are blind because they have no faith with which to see spiritual things. They are naked, because they are not clothed in the white righteousness of Christ. They are hungry because they have no spiritual food to satisfy their need.

Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Messages

Inasmuch as we must soon leave canonical church history and continue onward through later eras of the church in the following chapters, we should keep this brief description of the seven churches of Asia readily in mind as an aid to the interpretation of various significant events as they occur. Christendom in every age had conflicting sects within it that was similar to those present in the first-century churches as we have been careful to point out. However, we can also recognize the dominance of each particular church in kind, as we move through various church periods beginning with the early first century church and leading up and into the present day. In that respect, John's Revelation document also gives us a preliminary overview of church history that was to extend past the biblical accounts that abruptly ended with the book of Acts. A general timeline presenting the prophetic aspect of the messages to the seven churches is represented in Figure 7 below, as we begin to preview each period in turn.

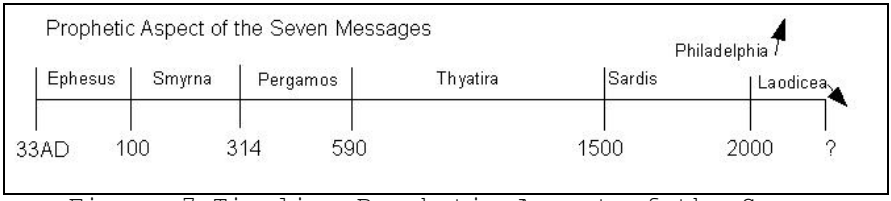

Figure 7 Timeline Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Messages

The Early Conservative Church

The Ephesus church in type was dominant in the early first century church that had the directly spoken teaching of the apostles, which they at first had received with such fervor in an overwhelming love for Christ. Yet, by the end of the first century A.D., their battle against the evil forces of that day had greatly thinned their ranks through persecution. Persecution had so occupied their minds that they had concentrated their efforts toward opposing evil rather than doing that which was good. They were also so preoccupied in eradicating evil in each other that their love for fellow believers was largely lost and with it their love for Christ as well (cf. Mt.7:3–5).

The Persecuted Church

The church at Smyrna represented the dominant type of the martyred church of about A.D. 100 to 314. The church of that age was heavily persecuted by the Roman Empire until an "edict of toleration" [28] was issued in A.D. 313 by the Roman emperor Constantine. By that time, their ranks had been severely thinned of many precious souls that had gone on to be with Christ. Ten waves of persecution had been predicted by Jesus when He said, "and ye shall have tribulation ten days" (Re.2:10). Those ten "days" of persecution are exemplified by ten periods in which the church was persecuted by the Roman Empire between the years 64 and 314. By the time the message to Smyrna was written, two of those periods had already passed. Below is a list of the periods of persecutions numbered chronologically and by the Roman Emperor that initiated them:

[28] See Edicts of Toleration, page 132

1. Nero 64–68 (Paul beheaded, see page 62)
2. Domitian 95–96 (John exiled to Patmos)
3. Trajan 104–117 (Ignatius burned at the stake, see page 96, and page 114)
4. Marcus Aurelius 161–180 (Polycarp martyred, see page 100)
5. Severus 200–211, (Irenaeus and Clement martyred; see page 125)
6. Maximinius 235–237 (See page 125)
7. Decius 250–253, (see page 126)
8. Valerian 257–260 (See page 126)
9. Aurelian 270–275 (See page 126)
10. Diocletian 303–313 (most intense persecution of all; see page 128)

The Compromised Church

The church at Pergamum is seen to be representative of the dominant church during the period A.D. 314 to 590. During that time, persecution of the church was exchanged for an embrace as the Roman Empire took over the operation of the institutional church from within (See Chapter 17.7 The Roman Political Transition, page 134). As multitudes of the unsaved were forced into the church, paganism and worldliness became incorporated into church practice, and it began to change the church itself into a corrupt and evil organization. Truth was repeatedly compromised. In time, many of those corruptions became traditions that gained dominance over matters of true faith and Truth itself.

The Cult-filled Church

The church of Thyatira can be seen to represent the dominance of Romanism at its height during the period of A.D. 590 to 1500 (See Chapter 17.9 The Papal Church Period, page 176). As a result of paganism invading the martyred church, militant Romanism became firmly established. Christianity was overwhelmed by various pagan practices and cultic philosophies. This is a time that the Romanist often refers to as the "golden age of the church," but which historians

refer to as the "dark ages" because of its intellectual depravity. That was also a dark time for the Gospel as the Roman church reigned supreme in awful splendor.

Protestants do not ordinarily consider the Roman Catholic Church, as it exists today, a cult because we have so much in common regarding many essential core doctrines. Even so, most early cultic errors still exist in Roman church ***tradition*** such as the veneration of Mary as an intercessor (if not in fact deity), the veneration of saints and the Pope, the clerical priesthood, the use of statuary in worship, the use of a talisman for protection, the occult mysticism involved in the "sacrifice" of the Lord's Supper etcetera. Much of that occultism may not be so outwardly apparent to those living in the United States, but in various other countries, paganism and mysticism is quite visible. Romanism puts on many faces as it adapts to its locality.

The Formal and Dead Church

The church at Sardis can be seen to represent the early beginnings of the Protestant movement. (See Chapter 18.1 The Reformation Movement, page 214). Though the yoke of Rome was slowly being thrown off, the populace saw it as much a political movement as a spiritual one as the parallel Renaissance moved onward in great force. As intellectual darkness abated, many became quite willing to toss out spiritual Truth along with Romanism and its many superstitious errors.

State churches were subsequently formed that had many of the same traditional trappings and even most of the rank paganism of the Roman church. Much of their worship services continued without major modification and without enlightenment during that time. Reform was certainly not accomplished over night nor was it, in fact, ever truly completed, as we have asserted in this work, but the spark of light began during that time among the elect.

The Loyal Church

The church at Philadelphia is indicative of the type of loyal church that will be caught up to meet Christ when He calls down for his own to join Him in the air (See The Great Multitude, page 568).

Many such gatherings were found during the Reformation period. They realized the power of "Jesus alone" apart from the established institutional church. They understood the tyranny of the established Roman church and found it to be false. This exemplifies the church today that takes advantage of the "open door" to get the Gospel of salvation out to a lost and decaying world above all else. This message states the necessity to "hold fast to the truth," "keep his Word," and never "deny his name."

The Rich Liberal Church

Could the fact that Jesus spoke of the church in Laodicea last say anything about the times in which we are now living? In the last century, and even more so as the decades continue to go by, looms the growing likeness of that church: the materially rich liberal church that must eventually fall away from the faith altogether (See The Final Apostasy, page 533). We can look at the many popular, self-satisfied, and worldly churches around us today and easily compare them to the church of Laodicea. Nonetheless, even in today's most liberal churches, the elect are still being called out through the narrow door.

Knowing that only the elect make up the true body of Christ, his Church, we can read the addresses to the seven churches with greater understanding. Certainly, the elect were present in those temporal churches, yet they were only an underlying remnant within a larger association even as they are today. Many ministers and preachers will candidly admit privately that their congregations consist of a large number of unbelievers. Some estimate the number of born-again believers to be in the range of 25 to 50 percent. Depending upon the standards set and the spiritual integrity of the minister himself, this may even be a very lavish estimate. As we approach the final apostasy[29] to come, we can expect the number of true believers to be severely reduced.

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[29] The final apostasy will be discussed fully in Chapter 20.1 of this book.

Chapter 17.5 The Sub-Apostolic Period

The period between A.D. 100 and 150 is usually referred to as the Sub-Apostolic period since church leaders of that era were one step below the apostles in spiritual authority. That is, they were not themselves eyewitnesses to any of the events contained in the Gospels, but they had been trained in all matters of doctrine by the apostles themselves. Both the Apostolic church and Sub-Apostolic church were threatened by severe religious persecution — first by Jews and then by the Roman Empire. The greater period AD 100 to 314 is prophetic in type of the first century church at Smyrna (See The Persecuted Church, page 90) which type prevailed through both the Sub-Apostolic period and the Post-Sub-Apostolic period, which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

Roman Religious Persecution

As we approach our study of the Sub-Apostolic Period, it first becomes necessary for us to understand the political root cause underlying Roman persecution. We must realize that the Roman Empire was actually a very religious state and that its rule and control was largely achieved through the tolerance of its ***many*** pagan gods. There was no separation of religion from the civil political state in the Roman Empire, and one could worship any god or gods they pleased. Most individuals worshiped an array of gods and saw no difficulty in including the emperor in that group as well. Emperor worship was not only encouraged, but also demanded. Although Romans believed in various gods, there was no concern about the religious plurality of its people affecting the unity of Rome, since Rome thrived on that plurality.

Therefore, as Rome conquered other nations, they did not generally interfere with their religious beliefs and because of that tolerance soon gained their allegiance to Rome. In Israel, Jews were still allowed to worship as they pleased in the Temple. Rome desired a peaceful atmosphere in Israel and tried not to interfere as long as their political authority was not challenged. However, an influential Jewish sect known as the Zealots would not bend to Rome's external political

control and resorted to violence. The wide influence of the group among the populace was the main irritant that the Roman army fought to overcome during the time of Christ. Consequently, many Jews were killed, captured, and crucified as an example to others.

Tolerance was, at first, given even to Jews living in Rome regarding their worship of Jehovah. That was in keeping with the empire's liberal view of religion. Although the Hebrews believed in the existence of only one God, the Romans merely saw this as another god in their larger community of gods as long as Jehovah was exclusively the God of the Hebrews. The Hebrew God was probably seen as a little strange inasmuch as the Jews had no physical representation (idol) to depict Him. The God of the Hebrews caused little difficulty within the Roman state, because they were a minority people and their beliefs did not spread extensively among the populace in Rome. Jews did not mix socially with Gentiles in Rome, and little effort was made to persuade non-Jews who worshiped false gods to accept Jehovah. Jews were more interested in separatism than in gaining converts.

Christianity, however, broke down that national and racial barrier. Jesus Christ was declared the exclusive Lord and savior of both Jew and Gentile without distinction or limits. Therefore, the main reason the Roman Empire persecuted Christians to begin with was that the strength of Christian monotheistic religious truth jeopardized the growth and continuance of the Roman political state. The fervor of Christian believers to reach the entire populace both Jew and Gentile with the saving Truth, and their belief in the ***one*** true God of the Jews with the absolute ***exclusion*** of any other deities, struck at the very heart of the Roman Empire. Christians refused to recognize the emperor as a god, thus denying his supreme authority. Persecution was inevitable and from the Roman perspective absolutely necessary in order to maintain Roman unity and status. Christianity, considered a sect of Judaism at the time, brought persecution on the community of Jews as well.

We have every reason to believe that most of the apostles were martyred during the many persecutions of the church by Rome in the latter part of the first century. However, we know from Scripture that

James, the son of Zebedee, was killed by Herod Agrippa I before A.D. 44 (Ac.12:2). We can ascertain from secular records that Paul was beheaded as a Roman citizen about the year A.D. 66 or 67 during the reign of Nero. Roman tradition states that Peter was crucified head downward by the Romans in the city of Rome (cf. Jn.21:18,19). If so, that also would most probably have been during the reign of Nero and would place the date of Peter's death before A.D. 69.

Christian Persecution under Pliny and Trajan (ca. 111–117)

Pliny, the younger, was appointed governor of Bithynia, which was located on the northern shore of what is now the nation of Turkey in A.D. 111. Christianity by this time had been declared subversive and therefore illegal throughout the Roman Empire. However, so pervasive was Christianity in converting the Roman populace to the Christian faith, pagan temples were largely abandoned affecting both the Roman economy and society. When a list of those accused of being Christians was brought before him, Pliny attempted to investigate the religion of Christianity in detail that he may know how best to deal with it.

In order to ferret out those who were truly Christians, Pliny came up with a formula. The accused would be required to repent upon the penalty of death. In addition, they would be required to pray to other gods, burn incense before an image of the Roman emperor, and finally they must openly curse Christ. While some Christians may consent to giving lip service to other gods and even burn incense, the requirement that they curse Christ was something that Pliny understood a true Christian could never do even in the face of death. If after being given three opportunities to recant, one failed to comply, they would be executed. We may well wonder about the depth of the Christian faith by many in those days since large numbers of the accused readily declared that they were not Christians, while others stated that they had already abandoned the faith.

The sentence of death was not carried out so much because they were Christians, but because they obstinately defied Roman authority. Finally, Pliny wrote to the emperor Trajan for further instructions. The ***legal*** difficulty to be overcome was that there was no

concrete evidence that Christians were committing any crimes other than the fact that they were practicing Christians. Secret meetings had already been outlawed, and Christians were complying even though in doing so Christian communion was nearly discontinued.

Trajan's conclusion was that the state should not waste time and effort hunting down Christians. If they were accused and would not recant, then they could be punished, but anonymous accusations were not to be allowed since it set a bad ***legal*** precedent. As long as they were willing to worship other gods as well as Christ, they should be set free. Trajan's logic was that Christians by the mere fact of being such did not commit any crimes against the state. They would need to exercise their faith is such a way that it threatened Roman order before they could be punished. If they were caught in any such acts and then refused to recant, they were being contemptuous of Roman courts and law. If they refused to worship the Emperor, they were denying his right to rule. Either would be just cause for punishment.

Those rather nebulous policies established by Pliny and Trajan continued to be followed throughout the second century and well into the third. Some emperors followed Trajan's recommendation that Christians not be hunted down specifically because they were Christians, while others were more aggressive toward rooting them out. That accounts for varying periods and degrees of Christian persecution by the governors and emperors that followed them.

Effects of Roman Persecutions

This general persecution of the church continued as other Roman emperors came to power in succession. Under some, the persecution was extremely severe while under others it was less so. As a result of continued persecution, many believers lost their lives until, under the Emperor Diocletian, an extreme, systematic, and determined effort was made to exterminate all Christians and eliminate the Christian faith. (We shall have more to say about Diocletian later).[30]

[30] See Diocletian (A.D. 284–305), page 128

Despite those severe persecutions, however, Christianity continued to grow and flourish. Furthermore, persecution had a positive effect upon the continual purification of the churches. No one who was not a true believer would associate himself with the church and the extreme persecutions that it suffered. The continued persecutions also had the overall effect of solidifying believers into one body that was spread out over the entire Roman Empire.

The Church in the Sub-Apostolic Period

It cannot be assumed that all the churches immediately fell into a state of total degeneration at the close of the Apostolic Period. All of the apostles had trained other disciples to take their place, continue the spread of the Gospel, and see to the needs of all of the believers in their charge. Those men are most often referred to with the title of "bishop," although as we can see the title of bishop merely means an "elder" that is an "overseer." Although those men were well trained, they were already beginning to compromise the Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace alone through individual faith alone even as the apostles left the scene.

Sacramentalism

Replacing the Pauline doctrine was a system of sacramentalism[31] that gave the church exclusive authority to administer saving grace through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism would soon be seen as the only means of obtaining salvation and the Lord's Supper would become the necessary means of maintaining one's standing in grace. Since only the church was seen to have the authority to administer grace through the sacraments, it would soon exercise extensive power that would ultimately lead to its corruption.

The sacramental system was to prevail and grow as a predominant doctrine of the medieval church until the time of the

[31] See Chapter 13.2 of Book II of this work for a thorough discussion of sacramentalism.

Reformation era.[32] It is most probable that the initial rise of sacramentalism had to do with a pragmatic response to organize believers against persecutions from the Roman Empire of that day. However, the long-term consequence of sacramentalism was to provide the means for a massive Roman takeover and control of the church from within, as we shall discuss later in this study.[33]

Martyrdomism

Due to the Roman persecution that had already created many martyrs, submitting oneself to martyrdom was increasingly being seen as a means of adding personal merit to assure salvation. Many who had martyrdom forced upon them by Roman authorities because they would not deny the faith, faced death bravely through no choice of their own. While that without doubt encouraged others who were faced with death because they could not deny their faith, still others actually welcomed death as a means of making themselves "worthy" of Christ. Such a notion denies the sufficiency of grace since willingly offering oneself for martyrdom in the hopes of gaining a reward is an act of human works that denies the sufficiency of Christ's death. It is fair to say that martyrdomism did not characterize the aim of the large majority of those who died under Roman persecution who ultimately only submitted to the will of God.

Sub-apostolic Bishops

The most prominent men of the Sub-apostolic Period are three who were the students of John the Apostle. Those were Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias.

Ignatius (A.D. 35–107)

Ignatius, the Bishop at Antioch of Syria, was condemned to death by Roman authorities in A.D. 107 when he was well over the age of 70. The emperor Trajan had him arrested at Antioch, sentenced

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[32] See Chapter 18.1 The Reformation Movement, page 214

[33] See Chapter 17.7 The Roman Political Transition, page 134

him to be taken to Rome, and there to be thrown to the lions. When Ignatius learned that Christians in Rome were going to attempt to free him from the sentence of death, he did not look upon that with favor. Apparently, in his old age he had begun to see martyrdom as a means of sealing his personal goal of witness and salvation. In Ignatius' letter to Roman Christians we read,

> **"I fear your kindness, which may harm me. You may be able to achieve what you plan. but if you pay no heed to my request it will be very difficult for me to attain unto God. If you remain silent about me, I shall become a word of God. But if you allow yourselves to be swayed by the love in which you hold my flesh, I shall again be no more than a human voice."** (Ignatius, *Romans,* 1:2-2:1)

Whether Ignatius wanted his words to live after him as an aid and encouragement to others, or whether he embraced martyrdom as a means of making himself worthy of Christ is difficult to determine. Regardless, Ignatius must be considered an exemplary Christian of his time having written a total of seven letters to several churches and individuals, copies of which are still in existence. He was finally martyred in Rome to amuse the masses during the celebration of a military victory.

Polycarp *(A.D. 69–156)*

Polycarp was the Bishop of Smyrna (See map Figure 6, page 69), the church that was poor after the ways of the world, but rich in the Gospel and in faith (Re.2:8–10).[34] At first, Polycarp followed the advice of his congregation and hid from the authorities when they came for him. However, after he had been discovered several times and suffered narrow escapes, he finally came to believe that martyrdom was God's will for him. Because of his advanced age, the judge was willing to set him free if he would swear by the emperor and curse Christ. Polycarp's response was, "For eighty-six years I have served him, and he has done me no evil. How could I curse my

[34] See The City of Smyrna, page 74

King, who saved me?" At his trial, he was ordered by the Roman authorities to cry out, "down with the atheists." Christians were considered atheists inasmuch as they did not believe in the deity of the emperor and the panoply of pagan gods of the state. Polycarp obliged them by shouting, "down with the atheists" as he pointed to his accusers. Polycarp was burned alive in the amphitheatre at Smyrna for his refusal to curse Christ.

Papias *(A.D. 70–155)*

Papias was the Bishop of Hierapolis that was located about one hundred miles east of Ephesus near Laodicea (See map Figure 6, page 69) and Colossae (Co.4:15). Papias had written a 5-volume work entitled *Interpretations of the Sayings of the Lord* that no longer exists. All that we have are fragments of his work that was quoted by various other authors to attest to its existence at all. Papias also suffered martyrdom at Pergamum at about the same time as Polycarp and Ignatius.

Those three men connected the Apostolic Age with the later church that began to increasingly stray away from the teachings of the apostles. Nonetheless, even upon the death of the sub-apostolic elders, the churches continued in relatively capable hands of men such as Justin and by Iranaeus[35] who was a student of Polycarp and Papias. Those men, of whom we shall have more to say later, also died as martyrs for the cause of Christianity as the Roman persecution continued.

Struggle for the Faith

Throughout the many persecutions, the faith suffered from a lack of credibility as many errors and rumors about the faith were being expounded as a means of justifying the deaths of so many Roman citizens. For instance, it was the custom of Christians to gather each week for a "love feast," which was always held in private rather than in public view. The church practiced closed communion in those

[35] See Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165), page 105 and Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–200?), page 114

days such that only those who had been baptized were admitted. It was already believed by many that spiritual regeneration came about through the act of ritual baptism. In addition to closed meetings, Christians referred to each other as "brother" or "sister." It was further observed that some referred to their spouses in that manner as well.

From known facts, and assumed constructs, the imaginations of many outsiders invented a picture of a degenerate and immoral celebration in which Christians ate and drank to excess, put the lights out, and gave in to their lustfulness upon each other. The common use of "brother" and "sister" was seen as condoning random and even incestuous unions. From what was known by outsiders about Christian communion — that it consisted of eating bread and drinking wine — a strange initiation rite was imagined. In that supposed rite, Christians took a newborn baby, referred to it as the "Christ child," hid it in a loaf of bread and ordered a new convert to cut the loaf. Then, they all were envisioned as joining in the eating of the warm flesh of the infant and drinking its blood.

With such outrageous notions prevailing in the Roman populace, there is little wonder that Christian persecution was supported by the masses. Those who took the time to investigate Christianity soon realized that such notions were false, but they still considered Christianity as foolishness. They considered its basic tenets self-contradictory and lacking any intellectual credibility. To support their case, many treatises were written ridiculing Christianity and were widely distributed abroad throughout the populace.

Effects of Gnosticism

Adding to the confusion over Christian beliefs and practices were the Gnostics that infused it with strange mysticisms. The word, "gnosticism," is derived from the Greek word *gnosis* that means "knowledge." Gnostics claimed to have a special mystical intuitive knowledge that was reserved only for those possessing true understanding. That secret knowledge was the key to salvation that was thought to be given only to a few unique individuals.[36]

[36] Various aspects of Gnosticism were analyzed in Chapter 6.2 of Book I of this work

False doctrines regarding the work, deity, and person of Jesus Christ as well as many other heresies prevailed within the Gnostic movement. Gnosticism generally asserted that all reality was essentially spiritual. Therefore, the material world was but an illusion. Gnostics envisioned that a messenger was necessary to awaken the spiritual being in man from the deep sleep or illusion of materialism. In the attempt to reconcile Christianity to their views, they deduced that the spiritual messenger was Jesus Christ. That view denied the humanity of Christ and only allowed the possibility that He had a spiritual body of some sort.

The Gnostics greatly revered art. Perhaps their Greek and Italian origins dictated that they carry their ethnic inclinations over into their religious beliefs. Gnostics also sparked a general interest in art that extended beyond their own depictions of Christianity that were used within their own religious groups. Later, as the church was absorbed by the Roman Empire, both art and architecture became prevalent elements in Christian worship. Christian art was not created from whole cloth as we can see, but was borrowed from various pagan art forms of the Greek and Italian cultures.

Defining and Defending the Christian Faith

We cannot deny that doctrinal error was already creeping into the church body long before the end of the Apostolic Period. Gnosticism and negative Hellenistic teachings of philosophy were already invading the churches. The Apostle John's Gospel substantiates that very fact in the first chapter. We must realize that in the first century, Scripture though available had not yet been canonized, and no body of orthodox theology yet existed. The assembling of the New Testament canon would become a gradual process over time until its official acceptance by the church at the end of the fourth century A.D. The vast diversity in the backgrounds of Christians enriched the early church, but that same diversity also led to serious differences in the interpretation of Scripture and in the definition of the Christian faith.

Because of the many wild notions being spread and accepted about the Christian faith, it was soon imperative that Christianity be

accurately defined. It was also important to make comparisons with the pagan culture of the time to determine in what ways Christianity differed and what activities of the underlying culture must be avoided by Christian believers. Christians soon found a problem with studying the classic literature of the time because of the many pagan characterizations and events they contained. In addition, it must be determined how the teaching of the philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics[37] were to be viewed.

It was immediately apparent that certain civil ceremonies needed to be avoided by believers since during them certain sacrifices and vows were routinely made to pagan gods. Since becoming a Roman soldier required a sworn allegiance to the emperor as a god to be worshipped, it became impossible for Christians to serve in the military. However, the strong pacifist position of most Christians in that day also excluded them from fighting in the military in any event. How could they accept any of those activities and ideas of their culture since being a Christian required exclusive allegiance to Jesus alone? That problem alienated them from much of their own cultural base. Their faith also denied much of what the Roman society stood for, and the state immediately saw this as subversive activity.

In response to the great need to specify and clarify the faith, various men wrote theological works that were remarkable for their times. Unfortunately, Christianity was being treated by many in that day merely as another philosophy — a philosophy that was superior, but not notably different in kind than that taught by the early Greek philosophers. Many of the early apologists who defined and defended the faith are unknown to us today. However, we do know that a man named Airsides wrote a Christian apology sometime before the year A.D. 138. At least parts of that apology are still extant. That brings us to Justin about whom considerable is known.

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[37] Stoics were philosophers that denied a valid role for emotions in human thought.

Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165)

Justin was born in Flavia Neapolis (now Nablus) in Palestine. Justin wrote one of the more significant defenses of the faith. Three of Justin's works are still available for us to read today including two apologies. The first of those was an attempt to clear up any misunderstandings that branded Christians as atheists, immoral, and irrational. The second was an objection to the preemptive execution of Christians who had committed no crimes, but merely confessed the name of Jesus.

We also have available a respectful dialog and debate between himself and Trypho who was a Jewish rabbi. The center of the debate was over Trypho's objection that Christians broke the sacred law (the first commandment) and worshiped a mere man. In that dissertation, it becomes questionable whether or not Justin had a somewhat Gnostic view of the person of Christ pertaining to his deity and his unity in the Godhead as we read in his own words,

> **"There is, and that there is said to be, another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things who is also called an Angel, because He announces to men whatsoever the Maker of all things, above whom there is no other God, wishes to announce to them.... I shall endeavor to persuade you, that He who is said to have appeared to Abraham, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and who is called God, is distinct from Him who made all things, I mean numerically, not in will."** (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 56).

Justin saw a consistency in Christianity that was lacking in human philosophy. However, rather than rejecting the teaching of the philosophers outright, Justin sought to assimilate their teachings into the tenets of Christianity. Accordingly, he considered himself a "Christian philosopher" as he attempted to demonstrate a connection between the two disciplines. To do so, Justin emphasized the philosophical concept of the *logos*, which could mean in his opinion both "word" and "reason." The basic Scriptural text for that comparison is found in the Gospel of John, Chapter 1 wherein it is clear that John is referring to Jesus Christ — God who was made flesh

— in verse 14, not merely a projection of divine reason down from God into mankind.

Nonetheless, Justin successfully emphasized that to be a Christian did not mean mindless acceptance such that human reason and rational thought must be tossed out as worthless. The essential things that Christianity and the teachings of the philosophers had in common were stressed in his writings:

- The best philosophers spoke of a supreme being from which everything was derived.
- Both Socrates and Plato spoke of life beyond physical death.
- Plato spoke of realities beyond those of the present world.

This point-by-point comparative approach persuaded many Christians to glean what was deemed useful from ancient philosophical teaching while still fully embracing sound Christian doctrine. Classic logic could then be used to defend the faith on the same rational ground that others used in their attempt to refute it. That approach tended to give Christian apologetics authority that came across as more intellectual in the Greco-Roman world.

Such classic apologetics would not prevail for Justin himself however as he was martyred in Rome about A.D. 165 in the prime of his work. The term, "martyr" (meaning witness) is derived from Justin whose death was remembered by others as they also gave their lives in witness for the faith.

The Canon of Marcion (ca. 140)

The first known attempt to put together a canonized New Testament was a list of texts put together by Marcion, a man of considerable wealth, in the mid second century (about A.D. 140). Marcion was a native of Sinope (modern Sinop, Turkey) on the Black Sea whose radical teachings had been rejected resulting in his separation from the established Roman church. In general, the conflict was over the validity of various tenets of Judaism with respect to

Christianity. However, Marcion had drawn away many believers with him and had established his own churches of Marcionites. [38]

Up until that time, the word "scripture" had been used to refer to the Old Testament texts exclusively. Those texts were further bolstered as being inspired from the texts contained in 2nd Timothy 3:16 and 2nd Peter 1:21, though it must be noted that the New Testament texts had not yet been canonized themselves. Of course, the four Gospels were widely recognized as canonical by that time and copies of most of the epistles were commonly available and in use as well. All were considered by most Christians to be equivalent to Old Testament Scripture in authority. Even so, no official canon of texts existed at that time.

Marcion objected to any allegorical approach of reconciling Old Testament texts to the Gospel texts. He chose to take the Old Testament texts quite seriously and did not like the God that it revealed. Consequently, he saw the God of the Old Testament as being a different God than the one he found in the Gospel records of Christ. This dualistic view was similar in some ways to the Gnostic view of the Demiurge.[39] Accordingly, he rejected completely the God of the Old Testament, whom he saw as being hateful and inferior, in favor of the God of love revealed in the New Testament. He saw the God of the Old Testament as the God of Judaism, and saw the true Supreme God revealed only through Jesus Christ. The God of the New Testament gave his life to save men from the clutches of the God of the Old Testament.[40]

In his zeal to regain the Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace alone, Marcion had drawn the line so sharply between law and grace that he would have nothing to do with the Old Testament texts and

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[38] *A History of Christianity*, Volume 1, page 126

[39] See Chapter 6.2 in Book I of this work for a description of demiurge.

[40] In fact, Jesus died to free us from the bonds of Satan – the prince of darkness and the god of this world, not Jehovah of the Old Testament whom Jesus consistently referred to as his Father.

even eliminated large parts of the New Testament that he saw as advocating any form of legalism. We still find that extreme position of Marcionism echoed in the tenets of hyper-dispensationalism[41] held by many today.

Marcion's list included only the Gospel of Luke and ten of the epistles of the Apostle Paul from which he had removed all references to Judaism or the Hebrew Scriptures. Marcion considered that those were legalistic texts that had been added to Luke and Paul's manuscripts at a later date by a corrupted church to further its institutional ends. Marcion also formulated doctrines of creation, incarnation and resurrection to fit his own views. In many ways Marcion was a greater threat to Christianity than were the Gnostics through his faulty canonization of Scripture in spite of his zeal to restore the Pauline doctrine of a totally gracious salvation to an institutionalized temporal church that by that time had discarded it.

The Apostles' Creed (ca. 150–724)

In response to Gnosticism, Marcionism, and various other obvious heresies, the early church in Rome assembled the basic elements of a creedal catechism[42] that was the precursor to the *Apostles' Creed*.[43] Any that could not confirm this early creed[44] were seen as being either Gnostics or Marcionites. The basic text is commonly referred to as the *Old Roman Symbol* that was formulated about the year A.D. 150.

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[41] See Chapter 11.2 of Book II of this work.

[42] A catechism is a series of questions with prescribed answers put to an individual to determine their position regarding the faith.

[43] It may well be that the basic three elements of this creed were being recited as early as AD 64 as a profession of faith centuries before the canon of Scripture was finalized.

[44] The word "creed" is derived from the Latin word c*redo* that means "I believe."

The basic elements of the *Old Roman Symbol* were commonly recited as answers to questions put to those who were candidates for ritual baptism. The prescription for ritual baptism was to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which also comprise the three major divisions of the creed. (This was determined by speculation from the text of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19). As the neophyte would say, "I believe in God the Father," the candidate would be immersed once. Subsequent immersions would follow the remaining two statements "I believe in Jesus Christ his Son," and "I believe in the Holy Spirit."[45]

The text of the earlier catechism was later modified and expanded to conform to the *Nicene Creed* of 325 and 381. However, the Latin text that underlies the *Apostles' Creed* that is in common use today only emerged still later in 710–724. As we can clearly see, the apostles did not write this text at all, but the creed sought to incorporate the combined teachings of all the apostles thus giving it its name. The text of this Latin creed translates into English as follows:

> **"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, which was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into hell [abode of the dead]; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from hence He shall come to judge the quick [living] and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic [universal] church; the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen."**

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[45] Some of the reformed faith are surprised to find the early church practicing baptism by immersion, but baptism by affusion did not come into common practice until the Roman church began baptizing infants at a later date. See the topic: Modes of Ritual Baptism and related topics in Chapter 15.3 of Book II of this work.

We should note that there is no mention in this creed of God's grace, as being the source of salvation, or of faith as being the means by which it is appropriated. That is largely because the very important Pauline doctrine of grace had already been submerged by the time the creed was reformulated, and partly because it was only intended to be a statement of belief concerning the Godhead. It was never intended to be a comprehensive text that extended into the doctrines of salvation. This creed, then, is not complete in defining the Christian faith in every respect.

It should also be noted that earlier versions of this creed that were in use until 390 did not contain the phrase "He descended into Hell," nor did it contain the word "catholic." [46] This creed is still being widely used with minor variations in churches across denominational lines today to define what all Christians believe because when properly interpreted it contains only the essential doctrines of Christian faith aside from any denominational specifics.

[46] The origin of the word "catholic" as it is used by the Roman Catholic Church will be discussed within the broader topic of Apostolic Succession in the next chapter, page 111

Chapter 17.6 The Post Sub-Apostolic Period

After the Sub-Apostolic period ended with the basic formulation of the *Apostles' Creed*, we enter a new period that can best be referred to as the Post Sub-apostolic period extending from A.D. 150 to 313. The need to determine who had the authority to define Christian doctrines and creeds soon became quite evident. Many groups had claimed that authority for themselves to the exclusion of others. It therefore became necessary for the main body of the church to deal with that problem in order to eliminate error and maintain the purity of the faith. Although the *Apostles' Creed* had dealt with Gnostic heresy, it soon became important to determine with finality who had the authority to decide what was and was not heresy. Against Marcion and the Gnostics, the church at large had already claimed to be in possession of the true teachings of Jesus. Unfortunately, that necessary claim would itself have a negative impact upon sound doctrine as time passed, as we shall see.

Apostolic Succession

Arising from the need to establish authority in the main body of the church came the faulty doctrine of apostolic succession. If as some of the Gnostics claimed, Jesus had imparted certain secret knowledge to his disciples, church leaders insisted that He would have entrusted that teaching to the same apostles to whom he entrusted the foundational doctrines of the institutionalized church. Therefore, that succession of knowledge would have been passed down directly from the apostles to future leaders of the church serially, not from isolated mystic revelations apart from the main body of the church.

Actually, prominent leaders of the church themselves at that time unanimously denied the existence of any such secret knowledge. In order to deny the existence of such knowledge, however, it was necessary for the church leaders to ***prove*** their ***own*** authority to state this through a succession of knowledge from the apostles — circular reasoning to be sure. Originally, apostolic succession was seen as ***inclusive*** of all the apostles over and against the ***exclusive*** teachings of the Gnostics that narrowed their supposed source of apostolic truth to

only one of the apostles against all the others. Later, however, the notion of apostolic succession itself became exclusive giving supreme authority only to those who could claim apostolic succession from the apostle Peter. Abuse of that rule continued to grow until we eventually find the final corruption of it in the office of the Roman Catholic Pope.

Another way in which the church sought to separate itself from gnosticism was by the use of the term "catholic." Catholic means "universal," and that is generally the way we translate it today. However, it also means "according to the whole," that is, the ***total*** witness of ***all*** the apostles.[47] That definition was the original application of this word, not "ecumenical." The various Gnostic groups were not catholic because they could not claim that broad foundation — essentially claiming that secret knowledge was passed down from one individual apostle or another.

Ironically, the meaning of the word "catholic" as the church used it evolved over the centuries until it also centered on a single apostle. The phrase "according to the whole" now refers to the entire succession of bishops and popes that have succeeded Peter through the centuries. Thus, the term finally came to support the very thing that it had originally refuted. It was also at this point that elders and bishops began to be erroneously characterized as two distinct offices. Only bishops were granted authority over doctrine and worship; all other offices were seen only as subservient to the bishops.[48]

Instead of elevating Christ, the Roman church began to elevate itself as being a "holy church" that claimed inherent authority to establish Christian doctrine through the Roman Pope occupying "the office of Peter." The power that it gained by doing so began to corrupt the resulting institution from the inside through a long succession of fallible popes, as will become evident as we continue this study. The highly institutionalized temporal church on earth began to supplant Christ as the church began seeing itself as the "mother-church" outside

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[47] *The Story of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 66

[48] *A History of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 132

of which there was no means of redemption. Simple Christianity was being rapidly replaced with Institutional Churchianity. This would ultimately lead to the necessary banning of individual Scripture reading and study lest faulty church doctrine established by fallible men should be exposed, thus undermining Roman church authority altogether.

Early Church Teachers

Various Christian writers of the period addressed single issues currently at conflict rather than attempting to formulate an entire system of theological doctrine that would encompass all Christian thought. We have already discussed the letters written by Ignatius of Antioch that addressed particular doctrines or issues. There were also others. Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthian church that covered much the same subject matter, as did the Apostle Paul's earlier epistle.

A more recently discovered document that is generally known as the *Didache* (meaning teaching) addressed Christian morality, discipline, worship, and church order and organization. It is still accepted by those who seek specific rules of Christian conduct as having considerable value today. In it are procedures for conducting baptism and the Lord's Supper as well as various rote prayers to be used on certain days.[49] The *Didache* is supposed to have been a compilation of the teachings of the twelve apostles (*Didache ton Dodeka Apostolon*), but there is no evidence that the apostles actually wrote them or in any way contributed directly to the text. It was most likely written by an unknown Christian perhaps as early as the late first century, but its origin as to time and place are quite doubtful. Much of the text appears to be of Jewish form carried over into Christianity, and the document is without doubt extra-biblical.

Other documents of that era dealt with urgent problems concerning persecution and none of them attempted to address Christian doctrine systematically. While the church addressed

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[49] *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity,* pages 125,126

individual doctrines, the Gnostics had developed their own systems of thought that were vast in scope. That soon called for an equal response by Christian leaders in the church to develop a systematic theology of their own.

Unfortunately, that necessity would often give birth to erroneous dogmatism that was the result of reactive errors in response to gnosticism. It would also serve to bolster the effort to transform the church from a living organism dependent upon Christ alone as its head into a human institution subordinate to human willful dictates.

Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–200?)

Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor, most likely in Smyrna (See map Figure 6, page 69), around the year 130. Irenaeus had a grandiose view of history seeing the divine purposes of God unfolding through it. He saw history as a process whereby the divine Shepherd leads his creation toward the final goal of perfection beginning with Adam and Eve's supposed childish act in disobedience to God and ending with man's glorification attained when mankind reached final maturity. The focal point of that history was in the incarnation. From his erroneous philosophical perspective however, the incarnation was not seen as being required by man's sin, but was merely God's means of re-uniting man with Himself after Adam and Eve's foolish breach of trust. In all of that, Irenaeus minimized the terrible disaster of Adam's fall as well as the wonder of the atonement brought about through the suffering and death of Christ.

It was under Irenaeus that the teachings of the church first began to be equated on a par with Scripture through the error of apostolic succession — about which we spoke earlier on page 111 of this chapter. His position no doubt came about in part because of his personal zeal in the refutation of Gnosticism. His view was that the Gnostics did not have the apostolic authority to interpret Scripture since that body of traditional teaching had been handed down specifically through the apostles to the institutional church alone.

Men of the established church often wrongly interpreted Scripture, whether because of error in interpretation or through intentional deception to achieve a personally favored conclusion. False

doctrines consequently became part of a "body of truth" through tradition that claimed the same unalterable authority as the Scripture from which it had been interpreted whether correctly or incorrectly.[50]

Two of Irenaeus' writings have survived the centuries: *Against Heresies* (a document refuting gnosticism) and *Proof of the Apostolic Teaching* that demonstrates how the Christian faith fulfills the requirements of Old Testament law and the prophets (in opposition to Marcionism). He stressed a series of covenants through which God progressively revealed his will to mankind culminating in the final covenant of the Christian Gospel. That is of course the basic tenet of covenantalism.[51] He also saw Christ as the second Adam retracing Adam's steps with very different results, and he envisioned a parallel between the Virgin Mary and Eve wherein Mary's faithfulness offset Eve's unfaithfulness.

Irenaeus also had rather specific views of the end of the age that would occur after Rome had been broken into ten parts (related to the ten horns of Daniel 7 and Revelation 17), and the antichrist (man of sin) had finally come forth. He briefly considered the mysterious number 666 though he could make no specific statement regarding how the number would be used in identifying the antichrist. He viewed the literal coming of a millennial age in the future (then commonly known as chiliasm) in which Christ would return and reign on earth for a thousand years with his resurrected and translated saints — ending with the coming of the New Jerusalem down from heaven to begin the eternal ages.

He refused to allegorize prophetic texts, as many of his day did, instead considering them literal statements. Although some of his thoughts would appear to be similar to modern-day millennialism, Irenaeus discounted any possibility of a kingdom being restored for the Jews inasmuch as he saw the Church as having replaced Israel in

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[50] The *Westminster Confession of Faith* is often equated with Scripture by many of the reformed faith when in fact it is but a reasonable interpretation of Scripture. We shall discuss this document further in Chapter 18.2 of this book, page 257.

[51] See Chapter 11.2 of Book II of this work

the mind of God as the spiritual descendents of Abraham and were therefore the new Israel.

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215?)

The early years of Clement are sketchy at best. Clement was probably born in Athens, the city well known for its philosophers. His parents were both pagans, but Clement was converted to Christianity — though the details of that conversion are not known. Upon the death of his instructor, Pantones (a Stoic philosopher who had professed Christianity), Clement took his place as an instructor in the city of Alexandria, Egypt. In Alexandria, the doctrines of the Roman Church met head-on with various Hellenistic speculations. Clement would later be forced to leave the city in A.D. 202 when severe persecution against Christians broke out — likely instituted by the Emperor Septimius Severus.[52]

Clement was not a systematic theologian. Rather he was more a moralist who seeing God as being both transcendent and incomprehensible directed his efforts in the direction of humanism[53] rather than theism. Therefore, Clement was both a critical thinker and a researcher whose desire and purpose was to aid believers in obtaining a deeper understanding of Christian truth through the means of ancient philosophy. He employed his own intellect in an effort to convince pagan intellectuals that Christianity was not irrational nor was it the ridiculous superstition that some had claimed it to be.

Nonetheless, his main efforts, it would seem, were more directed toward exhorting Christians to accept the teachings of Plato than having philosophers opening up to the truth of Christ. Clement followed the general reasoning of Justin[54] in referring to the Logos as an allegory of reason rather than the incarnate Word in the Person of

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[52] *See* Lucius Septimius Severus (ca. 193–211)*, page 125*

[53] See Humanism, page 220

[54] Justin was recently discussed in Chapter 17.5, page 105 of this book.

Jesus Christ. Like Tertullian[55], he believed that man had a "free will" to either respond to God or to reject Him, and appeared to affirm Tertullian's "seven deadly sins" of which only one infraction was allowable for a Christian to remain in a state of redemption.

His interest in converting pagan intellectuals is seen in his *Protrepikos* or *Exhortation to the Pagans*. Like Justin before him, he tried to reconcile the truth of Plato's teaching with that of Jesus Christ. Clement treated Scripture allegorically meaning that in his view the sacred text contained more than one implication. Long before Christ, the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria had used the same allegorical method in an attempt to reconcile Judaism with the Greek thought of their day. While allegory can be useful at times, it can also lead to some very strange conclusions, such as when Christians today try to reconcile evolutionism with creationism thus developing the oxymoron "Creative Evolution." Although Clement's theology was twisted compared to our more mature understanding of theology today, his general thought process would prove to be significant for the development of Christian theology in the future. Unfortunately, that did not always work out to be for the good.

The Sign of the Fish

The fish as a symbol of Christianity dates back somewhere into the first three centuries of the church, perhaps as early as the first century. However, Clement of Alexandria is most often attributed with standardizing the fish and the dove[56] as Christian symbols saying that they should be affixed to official seals. Many men were fishermen in New Testament times, and several of Jesus apostles such as Peter were fishermen. Jesus often

[55] See Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160–213?), page 119

[56] A symbol of the dove is often used to represent the Holy Spirit, especially when it is depicted as swooping downward, or as a sign of peace particularly so when it has an olive branch in its mouth (cf. Ge.8:11).

used the word "fish" in a symbolic way such as a depiction of his own burial as the sign of Jonah that is found in Mt.12:39,40 and as an illustration of the manner in which the believer was to become fishers of men (Mk.1:17). For that reason, it could be easily assumed that the symbol of the fish would have been a logical symbol for early Christians to use.

Nevertheless, Ikhthus (ΙΧΘΥΣ) is the ancient classical Greek spelling for the word "fish" the letters of which forms an acrostic for "Jesus Christ God's Son, Savior." *Iota* (I) is the first letter of *Iesous* which is Greek for Jesus; *Chi* (kh) is the first letter of *Khristos* for anointed or Christ; *Theta* (th) is the first letter for *Theou* which means God's; *Upsilon* (u) is the first letter of *huios* which is Greek for Son; and *Sotar* (s) is the first letter of S*oter* which is Greek for Savior.

The acrostic, ΙΧΘΥΣ was found written in the catacombs[57] of Rome as well as drawn pictorially as the fish symbol itself. The symbol is commonly drawn with two opposing curved lines that meet at one end forming the fish's mouth, and which cross over and extend from the other end forming the tail. During times of persecution, it was dangerous to identify yourself to any stranger that you may meet out on the byways. Tradition states that when a Christian met a stranger in the road he would draw the upper half of the symbol in the dust. If the stranger then drew the lower half to complete the fish, each knew that they were in the company of a believer.

The ancient symbol made a comeback in 1965. We often see the symbol of the fish displayed on bumper stickers and as a small emblem on the rear of automobiles since 1973 as well as find them fashioned into various forms of personal jewelry today as an open declaration of a believer's Christian faith. Sometimes, the Greek acrostic ΙΧΘΥΣ or the word "JESUS" or a cross is placed within the body of the fish.

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[57] See The Catacombs, page 129

Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160–213?)

Tertullian was most probably a native of Carthage in North Africa and was converted to Christianity in Rome when he was about 40 years of age. He wrote various Christian apologies and refutations of pagan heresies. He argued that since Scripture belonged exclusively to the church, the heretics had no right to base their arguments upon them. He saw Scripture as being clear and authoritative, but that the traditions of the apostles had also established a "rule of faith" (*regula fidei*) that was equivalent to Scripture. That general "rule of faith" had been handed down to the church, though it was not yet formalized. As we can see, this is a continuation of Irenaeus' position regarding the equality of church tradition with Scripture itself through apostolic succession, which was discussed on page 111. It is interesting to note that this basic argument of Tertullian against pagan heresies was later used against Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century who refuted faulty formalized Roman church tradition as being on a par with Scripture.

With his legal mind, Tertullian was able to formulate a doctrine of the Godhead in which God is of one singular substance but existing in three *persona* or "persons."[58] However, he also stated that God is alone. He saw God as being a monad — a rational being that had logos existing within himself that Tertullian equated with reason. (This equating of reason with logos was also expressed by other early philosophical teachers as we have seen). Reason became flesh when Jesus came into the world. Therefore, there was a time when the Son of God did not exist until God's wisdom and reason were placed in Jesus at his birth or perhaps at the time of his conception. The Holy Spirit came from the Son only as the Father exuded it through Him. Therefore, the Son would be subordinate to the Father, and the Holy Spirit would be subordinate to the Son, a view that is somewhat similar to the error of demiurge. We find that Tertullian was often spontaneous and inconsistent in his reasoning and quite easily trapped by his opponents. Not surprisingly, his unusual view of the Godhead

[58] *A History of Christianity,* volume 1, page 145, 146

would not long stand though the words "substance" and "person" would be retained in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Tertullian also originated various conflicting innovations in Christian practice such as the formula for triple baptism by immersion, which was later applied in the baptism of Augustine. In accordance with supposed baptismal regeneration in which a person baptized could no longer sin (but still did), Tertullian made a list of what he referred to as the "seven deadly sins." Those sins were "idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, fornication, false-witness, and fraud." Committing more than one of these sins after receiving baptism was considered unforgivable. The prohibition of kneeling on Sundays and at Easter as well as the tradition of making the sign of the cross across the chest is often attributed to Tertullian as well.

Perhaps we should not be surprised that this steadfast defender of Christianity as existing only within the confines of the established church later joined the Gnostic Montanist movement (see below) in A.D. 207. Tertullian eventually became disillusioned with Montanism and its multitude of bishops and went on to found his own sect outside the mainline church.

Montanism (ca. 172–250)

Montanism is named after its founder, Montanus a "converted" pagan priest from Phrygia in Asia Minor. Montanus reportedly "spoke in tongues" when he was baptized. He claimed that the Holy Spirit was speaking through him as He did on the day of Pentecost. Montanus and others of his movement began prophesying that their movement marked the beginning of a new age. The early church clearly understood that a new age had begun with Jesus Christ. Montanism claimed that the last age was beginning 200 years after the events of the New Testament, which were being relegated to an intermediate age.

Tertullian could not ever explain continuing sin in the lives of Christians that he saw as being inconsistent with redemption. Montanism was characterized by an extremely rigid adherence to a moral life style much along the line of the Stoics. Therefore,

Montanism apparently appealed to Tertullian because of its sense of the need for perfect order and the striving for human perfection.

Many of the Montanist prophetic leaders reportedly fell unconscious as they prophesied. That manifestation is quite similar to the swooning associated with modern-day Pentecostalism.[59] Likewise, the Pentecostal notion of a "second Pentecost" marking the beginning of the last days compares with Montanus' claims of a last age beginning 200 years after Pentecost. Those similarities along with the common Stoic-like striving for personal perfection or holiness in the two disciplines have led many to refer to Pentecostalism as neo-Montanism.

Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–254)

Origen was Clement's disciple, but in contrast with Clement, he was born of Christian parents. Origen, when very young, wanted to offer himself for martyrdom as did his father, but his mother forced him to stay at home by the simple act of hiding his clothes! From this episode, we can see that martyrdomism was still quite prevalent at that time. Origen's literary output in his lifetime was voluminous:

- Commentaries on various Bible books
- A parallel translation of the Old Testament in six columns
- A Christian Apology
- Attempts to reconcile Christianity to neo-Platonism, but giving weight to Scripture over philosophy
- Speculation as to the particulars of how the world was created as seen in the two Genesis accounts of the creation of mankind. That is, God actually created man first as a purely spiritual being that fell from his high estate thus prompting God to create bodies to serve as a temporary shelter for them.

Origen essentially viewed the Godhead as a triad consisting of three separate yet eternal persons or beings. In as much as Jesus was

[59] We shall discuss Pentecostalism in Chapter 18.6 of this book, page 364

begotten of the Father (cf. Jn.1:14,18; 3:16,18; He.11:17;1Jn.4:9) in eternity, his divinity was seen as being dependent upon the Father and so in that sense He was viewed as a subordinate or "secondary God" though not in any way inferior. The Holy Spirit he saw as another superior eternal being originated by the Father through Christ. In that sense Origen was incorrectly stating, as many do today, that Jesus is the number two person of the Godhead and that the Holy Spirit is the number three person. Although separate in being, Origen yet determined that the three persons of the Godhead were acting in harmony through a united mind and moral will. Obviously, many of Origen's views are more Platonist than they are Christian, though he did reject the errors of Marcion[60] and the Gnostics[61] that the material world itself is the creation of an inferior being.

With those early teachers: Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, and Origen we see the first attempts to formulate from Scripture an overall system of Theology that puts the various texts of the Bible in a single understandable order historically and logically. Unfortunately, the Hellenistic philosophy of the time interfered with the formulation of a sound biblical view.

The Symbol of the Cross

Crosses were most commonly crude hastily assembled wooden constructions that were used to execute criminals or enemy combatants in times of war by the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, and many others as a means of cruel punishment.[62] There is considerable evidence that crosses were used symbolically by other than Christians including the ancient Egyptians, Buddhists and even Mexicans long before the Spanish invasion. After all, in the simplest form a cross is merely made up of two lines that intersect each other. The origins of those crosses were diverse having

[60] See The Canon of Marcion (ca. 140), page 106

[61] See Effects of Gnosticism, page 102 as well as Chapter 6.2 in Book I of this work

[62] See Japan, page 314

no connection with Christianity and their meaning could be variously interpreted as either a blessing or a curse. The Romans understandably saw the cross as a shameful object since only the worse criminals were crucified on crosses of their making.

Nevertheless, the cross also became one of the oldest symbols of Christianity, probably originating sometime in the second century, and for that reason it seems appropriate to discuss it here. Christians generally viewed the cross as a symbol of redemption attained through suffering. It would not automatically follow that it referred to Christ's sufferings, but could even refer to the suffering of Christians during times of persecutions as many suffered martyrdom for their faith.

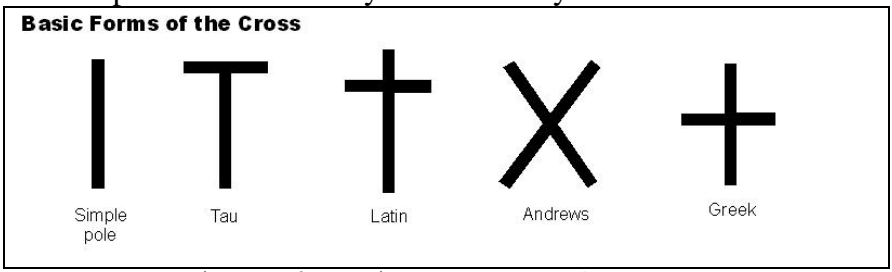

Figure 8 Basic Forms of the Cross

Early Crosses were drawn like the letter "T", the letter "X", or the Latin cross that is the one in common use today (See Figure 8 above). If we toss unreliable tradition aside, the exact construction of the cross on which Jesus died is a subject of considerable debate since Roman executioners were known to have used various constructions from materials at hand, and Scripture provides no exact description of Jesus' cross. From the account of Jesus' crucifixion that is related in Psalm 22, we may conclude that it could have been a simple upright pole corresponding with a metaphorical "horn of the unicorn" (Ps.22:21).[63] Nevertheless, the Latin cross is the most common symbol used to represent Christianity today as tradition dictates.

[63] See Chapter 4.4 of Book I of this work wherein the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is discussed in some detail.

The first Christian symbols to appear were simple crosses drawn without adornment of any kind. Later, the cross was often embellished with the Greek letters Alpha and Omega representing Christ as the Beginning and the End, and sometimes with an anchor representing hope, or a palm branch representing peace on or next to it. Over many centuries, the simple cross was embellished with various aesthetic enhancements to its basic shape as well.

The Crucifix

The most probable development of the Roman crucifix began with a simple symbol of a cross with a lamb depicted along side it, subsequently followed by Christ holding the lamb, then a lamb placed upon the cross, and finally with the crucifix itself, having an engraved image of Christ affixed to it. Although the symbol of the cross first appeared in the second century, the crucifix did not appear until sometime in the sixth century. Even then, it was thought of as being such an extreme depiction that it was ordinarily veiled with a curtain to be opened only upon special occasions to be viewed by a select few of the faithful.

The Cross Used as an Amulet

The drawing of the "sign of the cross" across the upper body probably began in the second century as well and is commonly attributed to Tertullian of Carthage.[64] It was used extensively by the superstitious as an always-available amulet to protect them from harm as they engaged even in the most mundane tasks such as rising in the morning, bathing, eating, and finally retiring at night. There seemed to be a growing dependence upon the magical qualities of the symbol of the cross. So much so, that Christians were accused by many of actually worshiping the cross instead of Christ who died upon it.

Christians always border on idolatry when they see the need for a tangible or visible symbol or gesture to represent religious truth. Some today see the need to display a cross as a personal witness to the

[64] See Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160–213?), page 119

fact that they are Christians. However, abuse of the cross is still quite common. Many wear a cross or a crucifix as a protective charm around the neck in the same superstitious manner as those who wore various amulets in the second century — though it is also often thought of as mere decorative jewelry today having no meaning whatsoever — and are commonly worn in that way by Christians and non-Christians alike. In addition, some unbelievers may wear it as an in-your-face rejection of Christianity altogether. An inverted Latin cross is often seen as a satanic symbol in opposition to Christianity.[65] Still others may wear a crude cross as a demonstration of the hypocrisy of some supposed Christians who wear it unworthily as a symbol of their "faith."

Third Century Persecution

Lucius Septimius Severus (ca. 193–211)

The Emperor Septimius Severus ended the civil wars that had weakened the Roman Empire as the third century began. In order to gain greater unity through religion, he proposed bringing all of his subjects together in worshiping the Sun (Sol) as the major deity under which the worship of other gods could still be recognized subordinately (This is commonly referred to as syncretism). That effort resulted in increased persecution of both Christians and Jews. Perhaps Irenaeus and Clement[66] suffered martyrdom during that period of persecution. Following Severus, the next two emperors generally continued the same policies, but did not try to force Jews or Christians to accept syncretism. As a result, the persecution of Christians was not widely pursued for several decades except under Emperor Gaius Maximinius within the period 235–237.

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[65] The inverted cross is also used symbolically for the death of the Apostle Peter who according to legend did not consider himself worthy to die upright as did Christ.

[66] See Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–200?), page 114 and Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215?), page 116

Decius (A.D. 249–251)

Decius, proclaimed emperor against his will, took the throne in A.D. 249 and he is generally known to have been a cruel ruler. During that time, the barbarians increasingly made incursions into the Roman Empire. Decius probably saw this as a consequence of betraying the old Roman gods under which Rome had become great. He was probably more interested in creating converts to syncretism to prop up the old gods of the state rather than making martyrs, yet he vigorously persecuted Christians.

Nonetheless, those who even gave lip service to syncretism would be given a certificate that identified them as being obedient. Many Christians, now having become unused to martyrdom, eventually complied, or they obtained fraudulent certificates without actually worshiping Sol or any of the other Roman gods. As a result, those that were actually martyred were few, though there were continuous predictions and threats often accompanied by torture in an attempt to force Christians to abandon their faith. The two years of persecution under Decius ended in A.D. 251 as he was succeeded by Gallus. The church then enjoyed a period of about six years of peace until he was succeeded by Valerian (A.D. 253 – 260) who began another brief and furious persecution in 257 followed by still another time of persecution by Aurelian in 270–275.

The Difficulty Concerning the Lapsed

Up until the period of persecution under Decius, almost all Christians that had been called before the Roman authorities had held fast to their faith and had been summarily martyred, but now there were many who had denied their faith under torture that were still living. Therefore, the church now had two classes of believers known as the "confessors" and the "lapsed." The major question centered upon whether and how the lapsed that had weakened for a moment or more under torture could or should be restored to the communion of the church. The second question centered on the authenticity of church members who had avoided persecution and the possibility of martyrdom by presenting various false documents to the Roman

authorities. Although they had not denied the faith vocally, the false documents had spoken for them.

Some thought that only the confessors, who had not denied the faith in any way, should be allowed to determine who if any among the lapsed should be readmitted or remain in the church, while still others thought that the bishops should have that sole responsibility. Moreover, considerable doubt arose as to whether the lapsed should be accepted merely upon a statement of their repentance, having once denied the faith by the same means, and if so, how their repentance could be judged honest. Some insisted that the lapsed be accepted only upon their deathbeds when they no longer had cause or inclination to give false testimony.

The issue of the lapsed further begged the greater question of what should be done with all of those members who had been baptized and yet had committed sin in any way inasmuch as the prevailing doctrine of sacramentalism insisted that baptism was judged to have brought about the individual's complete deliverance from all sin. Could any of them be restored upon making a personal atonement for sins, or was sins committed by a baptized member no longer sin at all? As we shall see, the erroneous doctrine of sacramentalism established a basis for the erroneous doctrine of penance that would follow later.

Church Leadership

As early as the second century there were three distinct positions of leadership in the church. Those were Bishop, Presbyter (or Elder), and Deacon. As we saw earlier, elders had been demoted to a role subordinate to the bishops. While some claim apostolic origin for these three titles, we in fact do not find all three listed in the New Testament text as separate offices: the title of bishop and elder are synonymous in Scripture. As various heresies increased, the emphasis upon the authority of bishops and apostolic succession increased in response. That resulted in the title of "bishop" being equated with that of "apostle."

By the end of the second century, the leadership of the church was entirely masculine. Women had been excluded as the church centralized authority at the top. Rather than a proper application of the

Pauline doctrine prohibiting women from holding a position of spiritual authority over a man as an overseer or bishop (1Ti.2:12), it would appear that women were primarily excluded from top leadership in affirmation of the mistaken notion of male apostolic succession from Peter as the head of the church.

Several New Testament texts would indicate that some women might have held unofficial positions of leadership as "deaconesses" serving through various functions in the early church. Furthermore, many godly women were martyred along with their husbands during various persecutions by the Romans while many others were widowed. Women's subservient role in the church subsequently increased because of the church's policy of caring for widows who in turn volunteered their time in positions of service to the church that supported them.

The Great Persecution

Diocletian (A.D. 284–305)

When Diocletian (Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus) came to power in 284, he reorganized the empire under a team of four emperors with the ultimate power resting in himself. Each had the title Caesar, but two had the additional title of Augustus. In the west, there was Maximian (Augustus) with Constantius Chlorus as a junior emperor under him. In the East, there was Diocletian (Augustus) himself with Galerius as a junior emperor under him. The time of Diocletian was a time of peace and prosperity for the Roman Empire. Diocletian's wife, Prisca, and daughter, Valeria, were professing Christians and it would seem that the church would enjoy an extended time of peace.

The first clash between Christians and Rome began with the junior emperor Galerius over the issue of military service for Christians. Perhaps he sought to appease the Military in the hopes that he could later enlist their might in deposing Diocletian. Most Christian leaders of the time opposed military service for Christians due to the widespread doctrine of pacifism within the church. Pacifism was viewed as a serious problem by Rome for those believers already in

the military since Christians may refuse to obey orders at a crucial time on moral or religious grounds.

Most Christians had been merely discharged from military service, but officers that did not want their ranks thinned attempted to force Christians to deny their faith in order to retain them. The result was more widespread suspicion, torture, and death for those soldiers who refused to turn over any of their "sacred documents" that identified them as believers. When fire broke out twice in the royal palace from unknown causes, Galerius blamed the Christians. This, he said, was done by them in revenge for the burning of their churches and books.

Diocletian eventually became convinced that Christians were conspiring against him as well and ordered Christians to sacrifice to the Roman gods under penalty of death. His wife and daughter apparently complied with his command and they were therefore spared any difficulty, but for sincere Christians the forced capitulation was impossible to abide by. Although many escaped, the majority into Persia, a very great number were cruelly tortured and slain by various means.

The Catacombs

Consequently, under Diocletian and Galerius the last and worse Roman persecution broke out that was exceedingly severe indeed. Many Christians, who had not been able to escape into Persia, hid in caves and underground excavations generally known as catacombs to avoid certain death.

The origin of the term "catacombs" is uncertain, though it is primarily applied to subterranean cemeteries. They are primarily excavations that were dug by Christians during the first three centuries for the express purpose of burying their dead; though some may have also been prior excavations dug out in the process of mining stone or perhaps abandoned underground aqueducts that were utilized for that purpose. In some instances, natural caves could have been used where they were available. Those crypts are quite extensive in Rome, although they are also to be found in other cities such as Alexandria, Malta, Naples, Paris, and Sicily as well. Romans were in the habit of

burying their dead in earth for sanitary reasons; only the very rich among their citizens were entombed in sepulchers.

Along with burial chambers, small adjacent rooms were also excavated for the families use at the time of burial. However, none of those chambers was very large, holding only a couple of dozen people at the most. Some catacombs formed a network of underground chambers. During times of great persecutions, small groups of Christians would meet in various catacombs for worship services as well as for burial services, though it is unlikely that they were ever intended to be used extensively as places of worship. Nonetheless, during times of severe persecution, there would have been frequent burial services held in the catacombs that would have taken on the character of regular worship services.

Within the catacombs are to be found various pictures or symbols ornamenting the walls that depicted texts of Scripture. A portrayal of the Good Shepherd (Jn.10:11–14) was the most common, although as Kenneth Latourette points out, the art form is almost certainly modifications of pictures of Orpheus of Greek mythology.[67] The symbol of the fish or the acrostic ΙΧΘΥΣ was commonly found.[68] A dove (Mt.3:16) was also widespread representing the Holy Spirit or perhaps the innocence of the dead martyrs. A ship and an anchor were also typical. The ship probably represented the Christian voyage through this life and on to the next life, while the anchor was the symbol of the Christian's hope (He.6:19) of rest in the final harbor of Heaven. Other symbols were the palm branch, the lyre, a deer (that panted after the water brook; Ps.42:1), a peacock (symbolizing immortality)[69], and the vine likely from Jesus' parable of the vine (Jn.15:1–8). Also borrowed from heathen mythology, a phoenix[70] was

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[67] *A history of Christianity, Volume 1, page 251*

[68] See The Sign of the Fish, page 117

[69] The ancients believed that the peacock had flesh that did not decay after death.

[70] The phoenix is a fabled bird of Phoenician, Egyptian, and Greek mythology having a 500 to 1000 year life cycle. When it nears death at the end of each life cycle, it

sometimes also depicted as a symbol of regeneration or resurrection. Even here, we notice how paganism had early on crept into the church.

Since it is almost impossible to believe that the catacombs were hollowed out of solid rock without the knowledge of Roman authorities, they almost certainly were extensively excavated during the less frequent times of Roman toleration. However, Romans were always exceptionally lenient when it came to the burial of the dead — even for their enemies. Christians were rarely pursued into the tombs, although at least one account indicates that a group of believers had died by suffocation after having been sealed up in a tomb.

During the Nicene age of the fourth century, those tombs were frequently visited for devotional purposes in connection with the Roman church's veneration of martyrs. At that time, small chapels were also built nearby to enhance the experience.

Chaos Facilitates a Transition

By the beginning of the fourth century, it became apparent to Satan that persecution would not stamp out the believing church and destroy Christianity; it only spurred it on to greater heights of faith. Already, as much as half the population of the greater empire professed Christianity. If it continued unabated, it would eventually overcome the Roman Empire from within. Therefore, Satan decided to utilize the Roman Empire in a somewhat similar manner to that which Saul of Tarsus had been used of God. Saul had persecuted Christians, and then he had been transformed into Paul, an apostle of light — going forth to proclaim the Gospel and build up believers in the faith. While Paul was genuinely converted to Christianity, Rome would not be. Satan decided to seduce the Roman Empire into embracing Christianity, and having done so, completely absorb it. By that means, the secular Roman Empire would eventually live inside the temporal church institution and could then control both believers and doctrines.

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builds a nest that bursts into flame consuming both the nest and the bird, but the bird is capable of rising again to life from its own ashes to begin a new cycle.

That transition would take place during a time of confusing political chaos that would help facilitate it.

Galerius had long aspired to wrench control of the Empire from Diocletian. During that time, he had also amassed a superior army loyal to him through appeasement. His opportunity finally came when Diocletian (page 128) became seriously ill in 304. Although Diocletian survived, he was left physically weak and mentally weary. Through Galerius' various entreaties and eventually threats of force, Diocletian finally abdicated in 305. Maximian also was forced to abdicate in the same year by threats of invasion. That left Galerius in the east and Constantius Chlorus in the west both with the title of Augustus. Galerius kept Constantius Chlorus in line by taking his son, Constantine, as a hostage — though Constantine eventually escaped and returned safely to his father's household.

Galerius appointed two inferior Caesars, Severus and Maximinus Daia, to rule under them. As the ineptitude of Galerius and Constantius Chlorus along with their subordinates persisted, Constantine and Maxentius, their sons, increased in popularity. When Constantius died, Constantine was proclaimed Augustus. Maxentius took Rome away from Severus, Galerius' puppet Caesar, thus forcing Galerius to invade Maxentius' territory. However, many of Galerius' troops defected to the other side forcing him to withdraw. His late hour appeal to Diocletian to come out of retirement and take the reins of the realm to restore order was to no avail — though Diocletian did agreed to negotiate a settlement through which Licinius, a close friend of Galerius, was made Augustus in the west to rule with Galerius in the east in 308.

Edicts of Toleration

Satan's first move toward the transition began when after years of Christian persecution, Galerius, painfully ill and near death, issued a decree reversing his earlier order for the persecution of Christians. This edict of toleration was drafted in 311 in close association with Constantine and Licinius. All Christians were immediately pardoned and the doors to the prisons that held them were opened — though many having the best minds and more resolute faith had already died

through torture and neglect. Therefore, those who survived were of less ability intellectually and included many who had already compromised their faith. Those were the most malleable for Satan's purposes as the political chaos continued.

Upon the death of Galerius in 311, the empire was shared between Licinius and Maximinus Daia with Maxentius and Constantine as under Caesars. Of the four, only Maximinus Daia began anew the persecution that the decree of Galerius had previously halted. Maxentius was considered a usurper by the other three rulers who at first respected each other's right to authority.

Licinius married Flavia Julia Constantia, who was the half sister of Constantine, in 313 at Milan during which time a second edict of toleration was signed by Licinius and Constantine restoring confiscated property to Christians. Constantine at first was content with diplomatic maneuvering to obtain the mastery of the group, while Maximinus soon went to war against Licinius. When Licinius counterattacked Maximinus, Licinius gained a decisive victory over Maximinus and established himself as sole ruler in the east, leaving Constantine, his brother-in-law, supreme master in the west. With the death of Maximinus, the way was paved for the Roman Empire to nominally embrace Christianity.

Chapter 17.7 The Roman Political Transition

Now that institutionalized persecution had effectively ended, Satan's next move was to induce Roman authority to move beyond passive acceptance to actually favoring Christianity. Although the church on earth could not be destroyed through persecution, it would be gradually transformed into a worldly system that would live quite naturally side-by-side with error and paganism under an outward guise of Christianity.

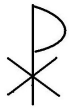
This worldly takeover was quite similar to what has happened to many of our contemporary churches as unconverted men and women have joined and altered them to satisfy their own worldly desires. As a result, many churches that were once sound in the faith are liberalized to the point that they are of no benefit to Christ whose name they no longer deserve to claim. There is far more danger to the church from the covert activities of even a few unconverted members on the inside, than from all of the more numerous overt attacks by atheists that are on the outside. This church period was dominated by a church of the type of the first century church at Pergamum (See The Compromised Church, page 91).

Constantine the Great (306–377)

Tensions mounted between Licinius and Constantine because of Licinius' jealousy of Constantine's popularity. Civil war broke out when it was discovered that Licinius plotted treason to replace Constantine with Bassianus. Twice defeated in battles, Licinius finally affected reconciliation with Constantine in 316, but the tensions remained. Constantine eventually declared war on Licinius due to what he saw as his increasing senility and vile vices, imprisoning him in 324. Licinius' imprisonment was followed by his assassination when he attempted to raise troops from amid the barbarians at Thessalonica where he was under house arrest.

The Roman espousal of Christianity had its origin in a supposed vision or dream of Constantine. Legend states that Constantine saw a flaming cross just above the setting sun and above it the words "In This Sign Conquer." Constantine affixed the symbol or

"sign of the cross" to the shields of his armies and won the decisive



battle of Milvain Bridge, near Rome. Still another account says that Constantine had a dream in which he saw Christ and he was shown the monogram "XP" (Chi, Rho, which are the first two letters in Greek for the word "Christ"). He then had the monogram affixed to his armies' shields. All legend aside, Constantine was indeed victorious in the battle and subsequently adopted the monogram as his imperial standard. In so doing, the church had now ***apparently*** gained a powerful secular and military ally.

Whether or not Constantine was actually a regenerated Christian is highly debatable since he was every bit as ruthless an emperor as those before him. Some believe that by the time he presided over the ecumenical church council of Nicaea in 325, he had become a fully converted Christian; others say that his conversion only occurred on his deathbed when he was finally baptized. However, that "deathbed conversion" may only serve to emphasize the prevailing erroneous church doctrine of "baptismal regeneration," not the condition of Constantine's heart.

In his early life, Constantine had worshiped the Roman sun god (Sol), which relates curiously with the supposed vision of the cross above the setting sun. Even after his vision and victory, he continued to worship the "Unconquered Sun" as it was referred to. Throughout his lifetime, he seemed to believe that the "Unconquered Sun" and the Christian God were compatible thus practicing a form of syncretism. He would participate in various pagan ceremonies, functioning as a high priest, and frequently consulted the oracle of Apollo for answers to his questions. His later "faith" therefore may have been founded more upon superstition than true trust in Christ.

We do know that there was a very dark side to Constantine inasmuch as while he was in a rage he had his eldest son, Crispus, put to death for plotting against his throne. Too late, he discovered that the evidence against his son had been completely fabricated. He also had his second wife, Fausta, executed in 326 for reasons that are not completely clear. That rash and brutal treatment of his own family was not in keeping with the behavior expected of a converted Christian. It

is apparent, considering the result of his favoritism shown toward Christianity, that Constantine's vision or dream of Christ and the cross was almost certainly inspired by Satan, which is why it must be reiterated that not all dreams or visions are consistently reliable as being God-sent. This is especially so when dreams or visions are experienced by the unsaved that do not have the Holy Spirit living within them.

Edicts of Espousal

Regardless of what Constantine really believed, his actions represented a major turning-point in the history of Christianity. Through the earlier edict of toleration, which he cosigned along with Licinius at Milan in 313, Constantine had already granted freedom of religion to all his subjects as well as restoring the property rights of Christians throughout the Empire. However, after his exclusive rise to power following his complete victory over Licinius, which he saw as being aided through adopting the symbol of the Christian God as his monogram, Constantine went far beyond the earlier edicts by favoring Christians in many other ways fully aligning and espousing both himself and the empire to Christianity. He helped Christians erect church buildings, ordered Scriptures "printed," established Sunday as a day of rest that provided a specified time for regular Christian worship, abolished the practice of crucifixion, and granted certain reforms for the benefit of slaves and so forth.

Because of what he determined to be the completely pagan beliefs of the Roman elite, Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire out of Rome to Byzantium in 324. Byzantium had been founded by Greek colonists about the year 600 BC, and it fell into Roman hands when Rome conquered Greece and Asia Minor in the year 100 BC. It was therefore a Roman city at the time of Constantine and was often referred to as "New Rome." It would be renamed Constantinople eighteen years after the death of Constantine.

Transformation of Christian Worship

Up until the time of Constantine, temporal churches were mostly simple gatherings of believers, which allowed them to worship

and pray together in small corporate bodies whenever and wherever they could do so safely. Nevertheless, paganism and Gnosticism had already infiltrated their ranks by the turn of the first century such that erroneous teaching was quite prevalent. False doctrines were barely being held in check by the Apostle John within the seven Asian churches that were directly under his oversight as we clearly discovered in Chapter 17.4, page 64. Other churches scattered throughout the Roman Empire having no direct apostolic oversight most likely would have fared far worse. In the next two centuries under sub-apostolic and post sub-apostolic leadership, Christianity was already deviating increasingly farther away from the true faith that is centered upon Christ toward a faith that is centered instead upon the supremacy of the temporal church, as we observed in the two preceding chapters of this section.

Strict church authoritarianism was most likely construed as being necessary early on to protect fragile Christianity against the persistent infiltration of pagan teaching and practices. The delusive tradition of sacramentalism[71] had already given local church leaders considerable authority over their immediate charges by threatening to withhold the sacraments from those who deviated from established church standards. Nevertheless, periods of strong Roman persecution had kept temporal churches from growing into massive authoritative religious institutions. That was about to change abruptly in the early forth century as profoundly unadorned Christianity would soon be transformed into complex dictatorial Churchianity presided over by a powerful Roman head of state.[72]

Roman Churchianity

Under the rule of Constantine, there was a great injection of imperial protocol into the church as worship took on the form of

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[71] See Sacramentalism, page 98; also see Chapter 13.2 of Book II where sacramentalism as a practice is discussed in considerable detail.

[72] Churchianity wherein the temporal church is worshiped over and above Jesus Christ was discussed at considerable length in Book II, Section 13 of this work.

majestic Roman pomp and ceremony. The burning of incense was brought into the church much as it had been offered to the Roman emperor and pagan gods of the state before. There was an enhancement of clerical garb, matching that of Rome's elite, to elevate the clergy's importance over the laity. Those favoring Constantine saw this enhancement as a very positive change because it increased Christianity's stature in the eyes of the unbelieving pagan Roman populace that had long derided Christianity as being an inferior religion based upon an irrational philosophy.

Processionals similar to Rome's splendorous military victory parades were introduced along with formal choirs to further enhance the grandeur of the processionals. It was only during and after the Roman political transition of the church, that worship music became polyphonic containing both harmony and counterpoint. This was due in part to a previous injection of Greek and Syrian musical forms. Composers continued to tinker with the music making it increasingly more splendorous and complex over time. This was in keeping with the grandeur of Rome and its exclusive church.

At some point, the congregation found it impossible to participate in singing the difficult music, with the consequence that only professional singers could directly engage in the liturgy. Worshipers then became passive spectators in any musical worship even as the Mass[73] increasingly became a complex performance of conjuration conducted solely by clergy. The words also became blurred within the intricate musical forms utilized in choral music as well as being hidden within the Latin language such that any message they were to convey to the laity was lost in a sea of traditional complexity.

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[73] Mass is the word used by Roman Catholics to describe the liturgy surrounding the celebration of the Eucharist (bread and wine), as well as the series of prescribed clerical prayers and the choral music surrounding it. Also see the topic Error of Transubstantiation in Book II Chapter 15.5 where we discussed various abuses surrounding the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Systemic Church Corruption

Up until the time of Constantine, the church was not monolithic, but consisted of a broad collection of small local autonomous churches whose only common creed was found in Scripture along with an early text of the Apostle's Creed,[74] with each congregation electing their own local leaders. Although that meant that doctrine deviated somewhat from church to church, it did not allow for a unified systematic corruption of the faith. As a consequence of the Roman absorption, the church would become institutionalized into a hierarchy of churches with top-down authority. Through that monolithic institutionalization, Scripture would soon become supplanted by various formalized creeds that were merely official church interpretations of Scripture mixed with tradition and issued as edicts. That standardization of belief discouraged individual study of the Scriptures and replaced it with memorized dogmas that were better suited to centralized church control.

While all the actions taken and edicts issued by Constantine may have seemed to many pragmatic believers in that day to be positive and even God-sent, it was not to turn out that way for the ***spiritual*** health of the church. Affluence of church bishops increased and moral laxity followed. It has been said by many historians that Christianity and the church defeated the Roman Empire and transformed it into a Christian society that was ruled by the church. Nothing could be further from the truth; the converse is true. Whereas during the time of Diocletian, the church had been severely persecuted outwardly, it was now being surreptitiously altered internally by the imperial state. The enemy was within the gates. The state began to infuse its authority into the church by interfering with Christian practice and by dictating Christian doctrine as well.

There was a rapid overall decline in the role of the congregation in the state institutionalized form of Christianity as the

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[74] The early text of the creed did not yet contain the word "catholic" that was added later by the Roman church in support of their doctrine of apostolic succession. See The Apostles' Creed (ca. 150–724), page 108 and Apostolic Succession, page 111

clergy began to preside over every aspect of worship.[75] Since bishops were appointed by the emperor, that effectively meant that the state ruled in every corner of the newly institutionalized church. Although Christianity as a state-sponsored religion had some positive influence on Roman society, the secular empire had an even greater negative impact upon the church. Therefore, we find that when systematic persecution ended systemic church corruption began.

Reactions of the Church to Constantine

Through his becoming the champion of the church by favoring and even promoting Christianity, the Roman emperor Constantine had become, in effect, the head of the Roman church through the exercise of his vast political power. There were three basic reactions to the rule of Constantine as the de facto church head. The first of those was total ambivalence such that the whole event was effectively ignored as being insignificant as to its effect on the Christian faith. After all, the Roman Emperor had no spiritual authority inside the church. Many local congregations simply continued as before and enjoyed the newfound benefits of the edicts of toleration and espousal, but did not see Constantine as either a personal patron or a great threat to the church. He was merely another Roman emperor to be reckoned with — albeit a benevolent one at present.

The second reaction was to consider Constantine a Godsend by many such as Eusebius of Caesarea. That position was probably taken by the more sophisticated elite in the church. Eusebius, one of the most learned Christians of his time and an ardent admirer of Constantine and his work, saw the edicts of toleration and espousal as divine intervention. Just before Constantine had become the sole emperor, Eusebius had been appointed Bishop of Caesarea. Eusebius was particularly interested in maintaining peace within the church —

[75] This impenetrable wall of clergy separating the laity from Christ was in large part identical to the deeds of the Nicolaitans that Jesus said that he hated (Re.2:6). This faction would now be able to work its way into the rigid hierarchy of the Roman church largely unopposed. See page 73 where Nicolaitans were briefly discussed in connection with their failed attempt to corrupt the church at Smyrna.

something that was in short supply during the previous persecution under Diocletian. Although peace is certainly to be desired, choosing peace over Truth is always a bad choice. Being focused more on the externals of Christianity, he later took the wrong side in the Arian controversy — probably never understanding what was actually at stake. (Arianism will be discussed in the next chapter: The Arian Controversy, page 156). His most important work was his *Church History* that has proven invaluable for later historians in determining facts surrounding various events of his time.

The third reaction to Constantine by many others was to withdraw from participating in any church congregation that recognized him as having any kind of church authority. The reaction of many individual churches was to see the rule of Constantine as the beginning of the "Great Apostasy" — even equating Constantine with the antichrist. Roman pomp and ceremony was seen as being offensive to humble and reverent Christian worship.

Theodosius (ca. 378–395)

If Constantine led Romanism to espouse Christianity, the Emperor Theodosius, who followed him in 378, put the "strangle-hold" on it. Theodosius made Christianity the exclusive state religion of the Roman Empire! Christianity had not conquered the Roman Empire, but rather the Roman Empire had first absorbed and then encased Christianity to make it over in Rome's own image. Theodosius forthwith ordered all pagan religions abolished and had their temples torn down resulting in much bloodshed. ***All*** Roman citizens without exception or condition were immediately ordered into the Roman church.

Since by that time salvation was seen as being administered directly through the sacrament of baptism, even blatant pagans were baptized through the use of force if necessary, declared to be Christians, and therefore obtained full standing in the church. The consequence of that imperial order was two-fold: First, the Roman Empire injected its full imperialism, militancy, and pomp into every corner of the church by edict, as it became a creature of the state. Second, all of the pagans and unregenerate masses brought error and

pagan practices into the church with them. That was the worst disaster that could have fallen upon the temporal church, because it was now fully identified with a worldly Imperial Rome, and became filled with pagan notions and practices.

Pagan Integration of the Church

The church was no longer growing in numbers as the result of the gentle persuasion of the Gospel and a spiritual change in the hearts of men to follow Christ by the wooing of the Holy Spirit, but as the result of a forceful demand of the Roman political body. The temporal church had now become the society, government, and army of Rome, and the image of the church was now one of stately ceremonialism, political power, and rank heathenism. What three-hundred years of persecution could not do, Satan now had accomplished in just a few short decades. The temporal church, though alive in name, was now an institution and tool of the Roman political state.

It must be understood that true believers still existed within the corrupted framework of the Roman domination of the church. The visible Church still existed on earth in the hearts of men, but the corrupted temporal church controlled their mortal lives and their corporate worship. The Roman church became the sole authority that dictated every aspect of Christian practice, replacing the express Word of God with error and pagan tradition. Humble pastors soon became "priests," a term that was perhaps borrowed from Judaism but more probably came from prior pagan religions. As priests, they alone could claim access to God, which effectively denied any adequacy in the prayers of the laity. Believers were trapped physically within the Roman church and later many others were subverted spiritually by formal edicts and by continual association with inbred paganism.

The old Roman plurality of gods was also merged into the church but in a different form. Martyrs of the persecutions were venerated elevating them to a point very near, if not in fact, being worshiped as deity — effectively replacing the practice of worshiping the many pagan gods of the Roman state. In praying through them, martyrs were being made to usurp the office of Christ as the only mediator between God and man (cf. 1Ti.2:5). Mary, as the human

mother of Jesus, was also venerated as a special mediator in much the same way as the martyrs but with more ability to persuade God. That injected the female principle into Christianity with Mary replacing the female goddesses of the old Roman and Greek religions such as the ancient Greek deities of fertility, Astarte, Diana of the Ephesians, Cybele, and Aphrodite. It would later grow into a virtual cult of Mary[76] within the greater church.

Christian Art

Christian art most likely dates back well into the first century following the resurrection of Jesus Christ though little is known about its quantity or its initial forms. Art was probably utilized early on as a means of communicating Christian concepts and matters of faith among those who were unable to read or write. Unsubstantiated legend states that Luke, the author of the Bible Gospel bearing his name, painted a picture of the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus, as well as having created paintings of Peter and Paul in the first century. Although there is no credible proof that Luke was a painter, he is commonly recognized by Romanists in particular as the "patron saint" of painters. Due to early persecutions by Jews and later by the Romans, much of that early art was almost certainly destroyed soon after it was created. The ravages of the elements would over time have taken its toll on any residue that remained.

The oldest Christian paintings still surviving are located near the site of ancient Megiddo[77] that dates back to about the year AD 70, and the oldest existing Christian sculptures were found on stone coffins dating back to the beginning of the second century. Later examples of Christian art date back to the third century as drawings found painted upon the walls of the Catacombs[78] of Rome. One of the more prominent paintings to be found there is again a painting of the

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[76] See Mariolatry, page 161

[77] See Armageddon footnote 492, page 640

[78] See The Catacombs, page 129

Virgin and child. Those wall paintings take on the general style of secular Roman murals that already decorated the walls of both private and public buildings in that era.

After Constantine espoused Christianity in the early fourth century, the production of Christian art exploded because of a mutually beneficial relationship that developed between Roman church officials and various prestigious painters of the day. Soon, paintings were being commissioned by the enriched church, and many painters jealously sought after those commissions by developing art that was based as much or more upon imagination and paganism as it was upon rational and sound biblical faith. This was particularly so after the Emperor Theodosius ordered all pagans throughout the empire into the church,[79] and Spanish religious art especially exemplifies it. Soon paintings became recognized as being as sacred as the subject matter they purportedly represented. Art influenced the establishment of tradition every bit as much as standing tradition influenced art. By this means, pagan fantasy became deeply imbedded within greater Roman church tradition that was (and still is) considered to be on a par with Scripture in authority.

Byzantine Christian art (of the eastern church) later took a radical turn away from any sense of realism in the depiction of biblical events toward an abstract representation only to convey religious ideas and thoughts. Standardized conventions were used to convey people and events geometrically, completely disregarding any sense of natural perspective, proportion, color, or direction of light. This was in large part necessitated by their use of engraved images painted upon small wooden panels (icons) in their worship services. This was being seen by many as being in direct violation of the Second Commandment prohibiting the worship of any graven images (Ex.20:4). This led to what is referred to as the Iconoclastic Controversy between the eastern and western churches to be discussed later.[80]

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[79] See Theodosius (ca. 378–395), page 141 and Pagan Integration of the Church, page 142

[80] See Leo III (717–741), page 192

Popular subjects of painters in Constantine's day and thereafter within the western church were portrayals of various events in the life of Jesus, with an emphasis being placed upon his suffering and crucifixion. Highly exaggerated imaging of various saints that had been officially canonized by the Roman Catholic Church also prevailed. Earlier paintings of Jesus had depicted his life and ministry as an adult. However, paintings were now predominantly being inspired from supposed events that had occurred within the childhood years of Jesus. Because little is told of his childhood years in the Bible texts, much of the background for those paintings came from various apocryphal documents. Those paintings also included surreal images of the Virgin Mary that depicted her in a supreme deified position of glory and authority as a result of her having brought Christ into the world. Many of those early paintings were supposed emulations of Luke's early painting of the Madonna holding baby Jesus, but Mary herself was often depicted alone or with angels. Before long, paintings of Mary were being very highly romanticized in order to bolster church supported Mariolatry.

As succeeding popes of the Papal Period would propose new and quite often extra-biblical innovations to carve their own individual niches into the office of Peter, the artists of their day accommodated those dictums by producing paintings that fully supported and expanded upon their edicts. Christian art was used as a very effective propaganda tool by the Roman hierarchy to promote even the most radical of doctrines. It also served to keep parishioners under control through development of a romantic attachment to the art.

Much of this so-called "sacred" artwork found its way into massive Roman basilicas, which had begun to be constructed as churches in the times of Constantine and that continued later under succeeding emperors and popes. Because church sanctioned Christian art was well protected by the powerful Roman church, much of it is still exists today. Both Christian architecture and the art that adorned it would continue to expand until the period during and following the Protestant Reformation whereupon its production in Europe would diminish perceptibly.

Early Development of Freemasonry

Architecture was also elevated to a high level of importance in Christian worship much as it was highly esteemed in earlier Roman religions and culture. Masonry as a craft dates back into antiquity long before the Judeo-Christian era began. Somewhere back in the dark beginnings of mankind, a man began to gather stones to build various simple structures. The earliest structures were most likely simple fire rings. However, later constructions could most likely have been religious altars that may have consisted of nothing more than a pile of irregular stones arranged in a particular shape. Over many centuries however, stone masons began to use tools, which enabled them to perfect their trade such that they were able to build altars that were more elaborate as well as simple stone buildings in which they could live protected from the elements. From such simple structures, stone masonry continued to grow until in Egypt the great pyramids were constructed. The techniques and human methods used in their construction are so intricate as to be nearly unfathomable today. Even with modern machinery, their construction would be extremely difficult to duplicate.

Following the Egyptian pyramids came various Greek stone temples dedicated to various pagan deities including the Acropolis and the Parthenon in Athens. The Temple in Jerusalem was built by Solomon through the applied skills of stone artisans. As the Roman Empire expanded upon earlier Greek skills, they built edifices that were even more massive. In 313, the Emperor Constantine ordered the construction of the first church building in his township that was destroyed in 361 by a later Emperor, Julian (also known as "the apostate"). The building of great Basilicas took place under Constantine in complete contrast with the simplicity of earlier meeting places. During the span of years from about AD 500 to 1700, the Roman Catholic Church ordered the building of massive cathedrals to which many masons were required to apply their skills. For that noble reason masons were granted the right to cross any boundaries and move about freely from place to place. From that right came the term "freemasons" that was thereafter applied to them.

Not surprisingly various fraternities or worker guilds were formed by those who practiced those skills that were in such high demand. The master masons that oversaw early Masonic fraternities were responsible for the training as well as the moral fiber and conduct of their apprentices. Various religious catechisms and dramatic enactments were employed to teach, symbolize, and demonstrate various moral principles. Consequently, the fraternities also soon became religious organizations that shadowed the Roman Church with various rites and rituals of their own that were derived from their own moral teachings. Due to the construction of various castles, hospitals, churches, and other religious buildings in the Holy Land over a period of a century and one half, there is reasonable evidence of considerable cooperative efforts between Freemasons and the Knights Templar[81] at least during that period.

The already close religious association between the Roman Catholic Church and Freemasonry was firmly cemented in place by the building of various Gothic style Cathedrals in France in the early twelfth century, such as the Notre-Dame in Paris, which featured flying buttresses to hold up the main isles of the church building — a construction feat unimagined earlier. All of this mysterious construction elevated the Masonic lodges of their day to a religious pinnacle of their own making alongside the Roman Catholic Church, which they would vehemently oppose in later years as an even more mystical transformation would take place.[82]

The Crumbling of the Roman Empire

Once Roman adaptation of Christianity had been achieved, the practices involved in the worship of Pagan gods were also easily merged into a general Christian-appearing framework. Pagans may have been ordered to become Christians, but since their lives were not changed, they only continued their pagan worship inside the church.

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[81] See The Knights Templar, page 196

[82] See The Religion of Speculative Freemasonry, page 424

The simple truth of the Gospel was rapidly becoming a web of lies. Thus, all the pagan deities and practices would now continue within the Roman church under the guise of being Christian. The emperor, himself, would continue to maintain his pseudo-deity by merely proclaiming himself the head of the church on earth. Eventually, as political Rome crumbled, that office would manifest itself in the office that is now referred to as the "Pope" which means, "father" (cf. Mt.23:9).

At the turn of the fifth century, the Roman Empire was already on its last legs politically because of internal societal and moral decline and by the invasion of various northern tribes (Goths, Vandals, and Huns). Endorsing Christianity did not reverse that. The Roman Empire survived in essence by concealing itself and operating within the temporal church when Rome finally fell in 410. Although the Roman Empire, itself, appears today to have fallen into rubble, it continues to survive submerged within the Roman Catholic Church whose authority extends over the earth. The old Roman Empire has not been destroyed, but it is only broken into fragments like the ten toes of the image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay that the prophet Daniel interpreted (cf. Da.2:40–43). Although the Roman Empire seems to be dispersed among the "clay" of many separate political nations today, its "iron-like" structure is not dispersed, but it continues to exercise central control of them through its religious dictates.

Church Persecution of Jews

During the first three centuries A.D., Christians had been persecuted first by Jews and then by the Romans. After the Temple had been destroyed in A.D. 70, Judaism had hardened into a rigid form of Rabbinical Pharisaic Judaism. This is exemplified by the *Talmud*, which is a chaotic assemblage of Jewish thought and rabbinical debate. It is believed that the first part or the *Mishna* (repetition) containing an oral interpretation of the Scriptures was completed near the end of the second century and the *Gemara* (completion), which is a commentary on the *Mishna,* was finished sometime in the fourth century. The *Talmud* expresses the inflexible and stagnant condition of Judaism existing in that era. It is decidedly anti-Christian, as one may

reasonably expect, and it contains a terrible curse against any Jew that would consider converting to Christianity. The fact is that many Jews had already become Christians during the early Christian centuries further reducing the viability and effectiveness of the Pharisaic remains of pre-Christian Judaism.

After the Roman state aligned itself with Christianity, the Jews found themselves at a total political disadvantage. Now, the Jews found themselves persecuted and oppressed by Christians, which the new Roman government favored, as well as the Roman authorities. It was soon forbidden by law for Christian slaves to be circumcised, intermarriage between Jews and Christians was prohibited, and by the fifth century, Jews were denied any civil or political rights in any of the Christian states of the empire. The result of this was that a further dispersing of their population took place to regions far removed from Rome and from Jerusalem. Those early persecutions were but forerunners to the continued persecutions that have followed the Jews in their wanderings. The terrible persecutions that took place in Russia under the Czar and in Germany under Adolph Hitler during the Holocaust are but more recent examples of their terrible torment. Sadly, even today as they occupy their own national homeland once again, their enemies give them no peace from within or without.

Monastic Separatism

Although we shall discuss monasticism here in context as a reaction against Constantine and the rule of emperors over the church, monasticism had begun long before Constantine's time. Monasticism is found in various non-Christian religions and even in disorganized paganism. It was to be found in eastern religions including Brahmanism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Judaism, not even considering the ancient Nazarite sect (Nu.6:2–21) whose separatism was often temporary, had its Essene communities in Palestine and its Therapeutae in Egypt whose way of life was essentially aesthetic monasticism. Even Mohammedanism[83] (now referred to as Islam),

[83] See The Rise of Mohammedanism (A.D. 632), page 180

through imitation of Christian and pagan examples, has its own cloisters.

Christian monasticism was regarded in the early days of the movement as a means of providing a "more perfect" service to God through personal sanctification. That was to be accomplished by complete isolation from the world with all of its evil influence. The requisites of monasticism were to lead a life of poverty, chastity, and solitude. Extreme asceticism that denied the flesh was the rule, though it varied in intensity from one monk to another. There were those known as "pillar saints"[84] who spent their entire life exposed to the elements on top a stone pillar, subsisting on little, and drinking rain water. Having no means of material support, many monks lived without food for days at a time while others reportedly lived on grass that they cut with crude sickles on their infrequent excursions out of their cramped cells or caves. Those that later lived in monastic communities faired somewhat better, but their lives were still very austere.

Christian monasticism may have had its origin in Egypt in or about the year 285 in a man named Anthony (A.D. 250–356). However, we can not be absolutely sure who was the first monk or nun of the desert since "monasticism" merely means "living alone" and could even be applied to hermits who choose to live in solitude for non-religious reasons. Two men, Paul and Anthony, are named in the writings of Jerome and Athanasius.[85] They were referred to in that time as "monks" that merely means "solitary."

Anthony began his solitude along the bank of the Nile River at the age of 35 (ca. 285). Finally, he was persuaded to guide and instruct others who had attempted to emulate him by setting themselves in their own "cells" near by to his own. Anthony often had to flee from the large number of people seeking his guidance in order to continue

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[84] *The Story of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 228

[85] See Jerome (ca. 341–420), page 165 and Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296–373), page 157

the truly monastic life that he contemplated. Soon communities of cells were to be found dotting various desert areas.

Under a monk named Pachomius, walls were first constructed around those communities. The walled communities, which we now refer to as Monasteries were commonly found in Europe. The monasteries excluded women and they were populated by celibate men only, thus adding another layer of separatism to their quest to withdraw from worldly life. As monasteries evolved, a hierarchical order was eventually established with monks obeying their superior known as an abbot. Each abbot chose the man who would succeed him after his death thus continuing the community.

Reactive Communal Monasticism

Monasticism began to appeal more and more to those who reacted to the moral decline in Christian living as a result of the masses of pagan people who now considered themselves Christians — first under Constantine and still later under Theodosius. The narrow gate that is Jesus Christ was then seen as having been broadened into the wide gate to destruction by Romanism. Multitudes sought personal position and privilege in the temporal church and did not give serious regard to true Christian service or living in the light of the cross. Now that active persecution had ceased, Christians had become soft and spiritually weaker as many enjoyed the luxuries of mortal life.

For that reason, anything beyond the barest necessities was viewed as a snare of Satan by many believers. They often sought escape into monastic life — leaving everything behind and so denying the flesh that so easily gave way to temptation. In a sense, the motives behind monasticism resembled the various holiness movements[86] that took place much later in the United States in that its primary goal was the same: personal sanctification. Monasticism in a modified form was to continue throughout the medieval period of the church.

Beginning as solitary living by individuals in cells, the large numbers of people adopting the way of life and desiring instruction,

[86] See The Holiness Movement, page 361

soon gave way to communal monasticism. That was particularly true during the time of the Constantine separatist movement. Not only were those men and women attempting to separate themselves from the world, they were even more intent on separating themselves from the direct influence of the Roman church. Those communities were probably similar in organization to the Qumran or various Essene communities that had predated the Christian era. The Christians who lived in those communes, still called themselves "monks" (meaning solitary), but now actually meant only that they lived in solitude from the world at large, not from each other.

It therefore became necessary for communal Monasteries to establish a set of rules referred to as “orders” to maintain the desired sense of organization and discipline required by a large number living together, thus institutionalizing them much like the Roman church they sought to escape. After a time, some travelers declared that the desert was more populated than the cities because of the democratic withdrawal from Imperial Church life. Some spoke of twenty thousand women and ten thousand men living out a monastic lifestyle in a single area of Egypt.

Donatistic Separatism

In contrast to the Monastic reaction in which no official break was made with the Roman church, others openly declared that the church had become corrupted throughout and that they now represented the remnants of the true church. While there were various congregations that took this position, one of the larger groups making an open declaration of church corruption were the Donatists. Donatist had been ***elected*** Bishop of Carthage and was their leader for nearly fifty years.

However, Caecilian was ordained as Bishop of Carthage in 312 by a largely upper class Romanist population that sided with Constantine in Rome. The controversy had political roots — as to whether Rome or Carthage had the power to appoint bishops. The controversy also had economic roots in as much as Constantine was issuing tax exemptions for church clergy that would exclude the

bishops of Carthage if only Roman appointed bishops were recognized as legitimate.

The theological controversy began in North Africa in the year 311 and it was centered once again upon the question of the lapsed and how or if they were to be restored. This issue always came up as to who had the authority to restore the lapsed after each wave of persecution, and the extensive wave of persecution in 303–305 had been especially brutal. The problem became even more serious when the question regarded the restoration of a bishop who had lapsed. Included among the lapsed bishops, were those who had not worshiped the Roman gods, but had turned over sacred Scripture to be destroyed. Some had actually turned over pagan documents that the Roman authorities were unable to recognize as not being sacred Scripture.

As the Roman church opposed Donatism, they were forced to face a major dilemma over the administration of the sacraments. When the church restored lapsed bishops, they in turn appointed priests who presided over the sacraments. If the church opposed Donatist by claiming that the sacraments were valid regardless of the spiritual state of the priest administering them, they would open the door to rank heathen and heretics administering the sacraments. If on the other hand they agreed with Donatist regarding the necessity for moral certainty of the priests, it would undermine the sacramental authority of the Roman church since no one could ever be sure that the sacraments they received were spiritually effective. The final position of the Roman church was that "the church is an institution whose sanctity is derived from the sacraments, and not estimated from the pride of persons. … The sacraments are holy in themselves and not through men." Through this circuitous reasoning, the church claimed that it attained its sole authority to administer the sacraments through the sacraments themselves — which only they could administer.

The bishops of Rome insisted that Donatist was a usurper and that Caecilian was therefore the true bishop of Rome. The Donatists argued that the consecration of Caecilian was faulty because one of the appointing bishops had been a trader to Christianity — having lapsed in some way. Therefore, Donatist argued that engaging in communion

with members of the Caecilian party was sinful and that all their sacraments and ordinations were invalid. Consequently, when a member of the Caecilian party joined the Donatists, they needed to be re-baptized. However, when a member of the Donatists came over to the Caecilian party, they were ***not*** re-baptized because it was necessarily argued that baptism was valid regardless of who had administered the sacrament. The Donatists were not primarily so much opposed to Rome as they were to the world. However, Rome was seen as being very worldly!

About the year 340, an illiterate peasant group called the Circumcellions (origin of the term is debatable — it probably just means they had their headquarters in martyr's shrines) rose up within the Donatist party and they resorted to violence. Although officially the Donatists tried to disassociate themselves from that militant group, they often had recourse to rely on them for their own military needs. Rome finally had no recourse but to force their submission through persuasions, persecutions, massacres, and military occupations but was unable to stamp out the sect completely. Only after the Moslem conquests[87] in the seventh century did both the Donatists and the Circumcellions finally disappear from the scene leaving the Romanists in full control of the earthly institution of the temporal church.

[87] See The Rise of Mohammedanism (A.D. 632), page 180

Chapter 17.8 Early Theological Issues

Jesus had written no book, nor had he spoken in such a way as to mold every aspect of the Christian faith into one entity, but He instead spoke into the situation at hand. The apostles often found themselves addressing problems concerned with persecution and individual Christian conduct that prevented them from formulating Christianity systematically as a whole. Even the Apostle Paul's masterful dissertation on Soteriology so clearly organized in his epistle to the Romans, failed to link the doctrine of salvation with every other facet of the faith in a systematic way. There was only so much that could be addressed in a short epistle. Consequently, Christianity from the very beginning had been embroiled in various theological controversies as we observed earlier with the teachings of men such as Justin, Marcion, Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, and Origen.

Although the early church had the New and Old Testament Scriptures, the interpretation of those Scriptures integrated into a commonly recognized system of theological truth was lacking. Even major doctrines such as the Trinity did not yet exist as such in those days. Without an established canon, some texts were also considered to be of questionable origin and authority thus hindering that effort. The canonicity of the books of the New Testament as we now have them would not be officially validated until the year 398 by the Council of Carthage.

Christianity in that early age was much like a jigsaw puzzle with clearly defined Scriptural pieces to be sure, but pieces that had not yet been assembled to present a cohesive overall picture. Many would merely choose from various Scriptures sundry texts to formulate a limited patchwork system that satisfied their own views and philosophical inclinations. Men such as the Gnostics even attempted to force foreign pieces together with Scriptural pieces where they did not fit thus creating a false and distorted picture of their own making.

In Paul's time, theological controversy had centered on Jewish and Gentile converts. In the Sub-apostolic period, the insidious erosion of the clear Pauline doctrine of grace through faith had already come

about —without any serious theological opposition. Various Gnostic controversies arose in the second century that could not be refuted systematically. In the third century, the major controversy was centered on the lapsed, as they were called.

In the fourth century, as the edicts of Constantine effectively ended all Roman persecution, various important doctrines began to emerge, and as those doctrines were assembled together, an overall system of theology slowly began to take shape. Controversies centered upon defining the nature of Christ, and how He fit into a monotheistic eternal Godhead. Because a canon of Scripture had not yet been officially established, spurious texts and deeply-entrenched Gnostic thought forced its way in along side valid Scriptural consideration. Moreover, serious theological debates that took place were most often overshadowed by Roman political intrigue. When especially heated theological controversies arose, they were most often put down by the powerful Roman state to restore civil order. For that reason, early systematic theology did not immediately develop in full conformity to Holy Scripture.

The Arian Controversy

The Arian controversy began as a local conflict in 318 between a priest, Arius, and the bishop, Alexander, of Alexandria, but it soon grew to the point where Constantine personally intervened. The main issue at stake was whether the ***Word*** of God (Jesus) was co-eternal with God.

Arius (ca. 250?–336)

Arius was likely of Berber or Libyan descent, whose father's name is recorded as Ammonius. His teacher was Lucian of Antioch who died as a Christian martyr. Arius was appointed presbyter of one of twelve parishes in Alexandria, named Baucalis in 313. He was highly regarded as a preacher and writer and was often quoted. All that is known of Arius' views are to be found in the written statements of his opponents since all of his personal writings were destroyed by them as being heretical.

Arius argued that Jesus was not God, but only the first of all creatures, and since Jesus was a created being, there was a "time" when He did not exist.[88] According to Arius, Jesus did not have the quality of immortality, sovereignty, or any other attributes that could be claimed by deity alone. Jesus, seen as a mortal man, had only received the favor of God to reveal the Father to mankind. He believed Jesus to be sinless in practice, but not as a consequence of his perfectly sinless nature. Arius contended that Alexander was denying Christian monotheism by his insistence that both the Father and the Son were deity.

Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296–373)

The place of Athanasius' birth is unknown, but he was believed to have been born in a small Egyptian village along the Nile. He spoke Coptic and was of dark complexion indicating that he himself may have been Copt. He was also short in stature causing his foes to refer to him as the "black dwarf." Athanasius served as a deacon of the church in Alexandria Egypt under his bishop, Alexander, succeeding him as bishop in 328. Even before the Arian controversy broke out, Athanasius had written *On the Incarnation of the Word* in which he stated that the Word, Jesus Christ, became flesh (i.e. fully human; Jn.1:14). In a second work, *Against the Arians*, he stated that Jesus had to be fully a man in order to bring about the renewal of mankind through a perfect sacrifice yet fully God to accomplish the reconciliation of God and man.

Athanasius was often overbearing because of his great zeal in defending his doctrinal position. Arian leaders, seeing Athanasius as a formidable foe, accused him of dabbling in magic, illegal taxation, and of exercising tyrannical authority over the Christian flock in Egypt. He was brought before the Synod of Tyre, but was found innocent. Athanasius decided to go before Constantine to personally plead his

[88] This error still arises from time to time from the misinterpretation of Colossians 1:15, which only states the preeminence of Christ over mortal men by virtue of the fact that He "is the image of the invisible God" imprinted in mortal flesh.

case in an attempt to settle the Arian issue once and for all. Unfortunately, due to false accusations and Constantine's own Arian leanings, Athanasius was banished from Alexandria — leaving the issue unsettled. Only after the death of Constantine was Athanasius returned to Alexandria by Constantine's three sons who had divided the empire among themselves. Unfortunately, Arianism had gained influence in his absence to the extent that church leaders banished him again three times before at age 70 he finally came home to stay in 366.

The Nicene Creed (AD 325)

Constantine eventually intervened in the Arian conflict by calling a council of Christian bishops from all parts of the empire to assemble in 325 in Nicaea, a city within easy reach of Constantinople in Asia Minor. Athanasius attended this assembly as a deacon along with his bishop Alexander, who headed up the council. In addition to considering the Arian controversy, the council also approved methods of dealing with the lapsed,[89] procedures for the election and ordination of presbyters, bishops, and etcetera. After many controversies and discussions, the council finally approved a formula that clearly rejected Arianism and stating that his views were heretical. Of the 300 bishops that had attended, all but two agreed on this approach. The controversy became public when Alexander removed Arius from all his posts in Alexandria. The full text of the *Nicene Creed* that was approved by that council, is translated as follows:

> **"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also**

[89] See The Difficulty Concerning the Lapsed, page 126

for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

This creed, along with the *Apostle's Creed*,[90] is still in use in many of our Protestant churches today, since for the most part, it is a clear statement of what the church has always believed from the beginning. We should note, however, that the first phrase of the last sentence states that sins are remitted through the ritual act of baptism. Although it could be construed to mean baptism in the Holy Spirit, the erroneous doctrine of baptismal regeneration was well accepted in those days, as we have discussed previously, and it is therefore most probably the intended meaning.

Opposition to the Nicene Creed

The *Nicene Creed* of 325 expressly stated that the Father and Son were of the ***same*** substance (Gr. *homo-usios*). Now however there were many saying that the Father and Son were only of ***similar*** substance (Gr. *homoi-ousios*).[91] It was argued that using the term ***same substance*** erased all distinction between the Father and the Son making them one and the same without distinction. Furthermore, none of those words was found in Scripture. In an apparent attempt at

[90] See Chapter 17.5 page 108 for the history and full text of the Apostle's Creed.

[91] The close spelling of these two Greek words does not help us. At first glance the two words may even seem to be spelled the same.

compromise, Athanasius convinced many that it was proper to refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as being of ***one substance*** as long as the distinction was not obliterated. Likewise, it was okay to speak of the three as being of ***three substances*** as long as it was understood that there were not three Gods. This later statement clashes directly with the Reformed position, which is that the Godhead is of one ***substance*** (*ousia*) subsisting in three ***persons*** (*hypostases*). The difference between "substance" and "persons" is a very important issue as we discussed in Chapter 6.3 of Book I of this work. Argument over the use of those two words continued in various quarters until the doctrine of the Council of Nicaea was eventually ratified at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in A.D. 381.

The Person of Jesus Christ

Even after the Arian controversy concerning the Godhead was all but settled in the *Nicene Creed*, there was still much controversy over how to reconcile the two phrases "very God of very God" and "was made man." How could both the human and divine "natures" coexist together in Jesus Christ? Can the infinite exist in temporal human form that is finite? It is apparent that God cannot sin, but could Jesus have sinned in his human mind and body? What does it mean that God was ***made*** man?[92] All this and more was at issue. Invariably, one side stressed Jesus' divine nature and the other side his human nature such that it would appear that Jesus was two separate beings.

That confusion inevitably led to an open discourse voicing various erroneous Christological notions.[93] Eventually, a general council was called at Ephesus in 431 to deal with the problem because of the heated controversy that seriously threatened peace. The war of words continued within the council along with various depositions and excommunications until appeal was finally made to the Emperor who forced the two sides to reconcile their differences. That reconciliation

[92] Emmanuel ("God with us") in human form was discussed in Chapter 6.1 of Book I of this work.

[93] Many of these errors were discussed in Chapter 6.2 of Book I of this work.

took place as John of Antioch sent Cyril, leader of the opposition, a creed that declared Jesus Christ to be "true God and true man, consisting of a reasonable soul and body."[94] To that John appended that since Jesus was "very God of very God," then Mary was the "Mother of God" (*Theotokos*) a term already in use by many. Cyril agreed to this language though the issue itself was far from being settled.

Mariolatry

In the early church, Mary though highly respected was never considered deity in any form while she was still living or after her death. Initially she came to be seen as a created mortal person who had brought Jesus into the world and she was seen as having a special relationship with God through that means. However, toward the last of the fourth century, Mariology (the study of Mary) took on a greater significance as Mary was soon declared the "Mother of God" (*Theotokos*). The desire for natural man to inject the female principle into the worship of deity is apparently quite strong. It is surmised by Kenneth S. Latourette that in Ephesus, the virgin Mary was worshiped in much the same way as was the pagan goddess Diana, and that she had headquarters in the Sicilian sanctuaries of Ceres and Venus.[95] Although Mary was the mother of Jesus in the human physical sense, that fact does not translate into her being the "Mother of God." By the beginning of the fifth century as the veneration of martyrs and saints reached a high level of development, she was elevated to that of chief intercessor having very special intercessory powers.

Since it was impossible to think that a mere mortal woman could become the mother of deity, it was then found necessary to deify Mary herself. Soon altars and churches were being dedicated to the "Mother of God," who was also declared the "perpetual virgin" (cf. Mt.13:55,56). The Roman perception was that she was born by means

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[94] *A History of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 168

[95] *A History of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 209

of a sinless conception (doctrine of "immaculate conception") and birth, and that she was resurrected and that she had ascended to Heaven in a like manner as Jesus. Various miracles were being ascribed to her supernatural presence during the highly superstitious Middle Ages. Mariology had gradually evolved into Mariolatry (the worship of Mary).

In the eighth century, many festivals and celebrations that were centered on Mary came into being that ran in parallel with various events in Jesus' life. The "Annunciation of Mary" occurs on March 25 of each year exactly nine months before the celebrated birth of Jesus on December 25, the supposed date of the angel Gabriel's announcement to her (Lu.1:28–35). "The Purification of Mary" is celebrated on the supposed day that Jesus was presented in the Temple (cf. Lu.2:22). Although there is no canonical way of proving either the occurrence of the event or the date, the celebration of the "Ascension (Assumption) of Mary" takes place on August 15 of each year. From the "Ascension of Mary," comes the erroneous belief that Mary never died, but that she was taken bodily to heaven in the same manner as was Elijah (2Ki.2:11) and Enoch (Ge.5:24). Still other festivals arose during the Middle Ages to commemorate her birth ("Nativity of Mary"), her visit to Elizabeth ("Presentation of Mary"), and even the celebration of her supposed sinless conception ("Immaculate Conception").

The Rosary

Prayer beads have an ancient history of being used in various religions including Islam[96], Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and the Bahá'í Faith to count repetitions of rote prayers or meditations. Beads made of various stones are also quite common within the greater New Age Movement. Furthermore, the counting of beads is commonly used

[96] Muslim bismillah prayer beads are used to count recitations of the 99 names of Allah. The Muslim's string of beads may only contain 33 beads thus requiring three revolutions of the string to complete the liturgy. This practice is an evolution of Mohammad's practice of using the fingers of his right hand to count recitations and is not recognized by all sects of Islam.

by many to relieve stress in which case they may have no religious connotations at all. Beads also can be used by many as a fetish to protect from evil powers.

The Rosary (Latin: *rosarium*, meaning "rose garden") that became closely associated with Mariolatry has a rather long and nebulous history of its own. Early desert monks had commonly used knotted ropes to count repetitious sayings of the Jesus prayer ("Jesus be merciful upon me, a sinner"). Later monastic orders used beads to keep track of a "liturgy of hours" in which each of the 150 psalms was recited. The laity themselves apparently attempted to imitate this practice by using cords with knots tied at intervals along their length and later on with beads. Because the laity of that day was almost universally illiterate, various shorter memorized recitations were substituted for the psalms.

The first specific reference to the Rosary in connection with the veneration of Mary is taken from a supposed vision by Dominic in 1221 AD. Dominic (later canonized as Saint Dominic by the Catholic Church) was the founder of the Dominican Order of monks. In his vision, Mary had purportedly told him to institute the practice of saying the Rosary as a means to overcome heresy and sin. Dominic was told if he did this faithfully, his order would grow and prosper. Not surprisingly, the Roman church itself along with the Dominican Order began to promote the Rosary as a useful religious ritual to occupy the minds of the laity. The rote recitation today commonly includes the saying of The Lord's Prayer, Hail Marys, Glory Be to the Father (Gloria Patri), as well as various other prayers, which could include the Apostle's Creed with a recitation of Hail Holy Queen at the beginning and end. The Rosary used in Mariolatry is commonly referred to as the Dominican Rosary to differentiate it from various other rosaries of beads that are commonly used by various other religious orders to count rote prayers.

Even in this enlightened age, Mariolatry is still quite prevalent throughout the world. As late as 1964, when many of the second Vatican Council wanted to move the centrality of Roman Catholic thinking back to Christ, Pope Paul VI declared the Virgin to be the

"Mother of the Church" ending all debate and further opposition. With that oblique statement, Mariolatry continues among Roman Catholics.

Bishops of the Early Roman Church

Ambrose of Milan (?–397)

By the time the emperor Diocletian[97] died, he had organized the Roman Empire into twelve regions that later became dioceses (jurisdictions or bishoprics) of the Roman church. Each of the dioceses was ruled by a powerful bishop that was appointed by the Roman emperor beginning with Constantine. Ambrose was one such bishop. Ambrose became Bishop of Milan upon the death of Auxentius who had been appointed by an Arian emperor who had exiled the previous bishop. Among the many who went to listen to him preach was a young teacher of rhetoric by the name of Augustine. Augustine, about whom we shall have more to say on page 166, was later baptized by Ambrose. According to Augustine, he was baptized by being immersed three times. That was according to the Trinitarian formula that was consistent with the recitation of the Apostles' Creed.[98] Triple emersion is still practiced by the Eastern and Orthodox churches to this day. Ambrose died on April 4, 397 on Easter Sunday.

John Chrysostom (347–407)

John Chrysostom was considered a great preacher and orator in the pulpit of the church. His given last name, actually a title, means, "The golden mouthed." John was trained in the law, but later considered himself to be a monk. John had compromised with his mother about his desire to become a monk by turning their home into a virtual monastery. After his mother's death, he spent four years in the Syrian mountains learning the monastic way of life. In 397, he became the Bishop of Constantinople where he sought to reform the debased life of the clergy. Some priests who claimed to be celibate had what

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[97] See Diocletian (A.D. 284–305), page 128

[98] See The Apostles' Creed (ca. 150–724), page 108

they called "spiritual sisters" living in their homes producing scandal for many of them. Others lived lives of luxury as potentates of the great city. In addition, Chrysostom sought to reform the lifestyle of the laity as well by calling on them to live more in accordance with the Gospel. Increasingly seen by the influential of the city as being meddlesome, he was finally ordered exiled to an unknown village along the black sea. He reportedly died in a small church of ill health, abuse, and neglect while in route.

Jerome (ca. 341–420)

Jerome was born about 341 in an obscure corner of Northern Italy. He is noted for his endless struggle with the world and himself. His character was lofty, stormy, and he deeply resented criticism. He was obsessed with sexual desire and retired to a monastic life in an attempt to rid himself of that burden, but he was not really cut out for a life of a hermit. Jerome devoted himself to the translation of the Bible into Latin with the Old Testament being a direct translation from the Hebrew rather than the Greek Septuagint. Jerome's version known as the *Vulgate* later became the standard of the Latin speaking church, but it was often criticized by the learned as well as the unlearned.

Pelagius (ca. 354–418)

Pelagius was a priest and Celtic monk of the fourth century. He was born on or about the year 354 and is believed to have been born somewhere in Britain. He was noted for both his piousness and his asceticism, and he played an important role in shaping Celtic Christianity. He was a rugged individualist and opposed the Roman Catholic Church on various issues.

Having visited Rome, Pelagius abhorred the moral laxity and church aggrandizement that he saw there. Unfortunately, he saw the cause for that as stemming from the doctrine of divine grace that he believed undermined the moral law. He detested the doctrine of original sin that declares that all men are born with Adam's sin nature. To Pelagius, sin was quite personal such that Adam's sin cannot be inherited by his offspring. He believed in the inherent goodness and

the "free will" of all men such that sin does not completely corrupt a man's will, but only alters it making godly living much more difficult.

Pelagius viewed the Christian life as a time of great struggle to overcome the personal sin in ones life. Only through extreme human effort and ascetic living could sin be conquered, and ultimately through that victory, salvation would be attained. This, of course, is salvation based on works and totally denies the Pauline doctrine that salvation is received as a gift from God by his grace through faith alone.

Although Pelagius had correctly determined that the source of evil is located in the human will, he erroneously believed that man had the ability to overcome the dictates of an evil will by determined effort. It was his reasoning that if man did not have the ability to overcome sin, God would have to excuse it since man could do nothing about it. Since God does not and cannot forgive sin, it followed that man must have the ability to overcome it. God's grace was seen to be demonstrated only in that he gave man the fortitude to overcome his sinful nature.

He wrote his *On Free Will* in 416 which resulted in his excommunication by Pope Innocent I. Having been taken to task by the Roman church as being a heretic previously, he was finally condemned by the Council of Carthage in 418. It is probable that he was killed or exiled soon thereafter inasmuch as there is no further information available about him after 418.

Augustine of Hippo (ca. 354–430)

Augustine, a strong opponent of Pelagianism, was born in or about 354 in the town of Tasgaste in northern Africa. The great theologian of his time, Augustine molded the doctrines of the church that would begin the Middle Ages. The difficulties he encountered in his early life are recorded in his autobiographical C*onfessions* that have an overall theme of the pursuing grace of God. He is often quoted as having said regarding God, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." He had been catechized from his youth in the church, but was not baptized nor had he made any confession of faith when he reached adulthood. About the only

thing that Augustine had going for him spiritually in his early life was a godly mother, Monica, who prayed for him unceasingly. He reportedly lived with a common-law wife for over ten years. He was very capable in rhetoric and dabbled in Epicureanism[99] and various other offbeat religious disciplines.

Dissatisfied with merely concerning himself with proper speech and style, Augustine began to seek after truth that would add purpose to his life and vocation. His search for truth first led him to a Persian religion that was founded by Mani in the third century. In Augustine's time, Manicheism had spread throughout the Mediterranean basin. Mani explained the human predicament as the presence in each of us of two conflicting principles. One principle is darkness consisting of matter, and the other principle is light that consists of a completely spiritual essence. Those two opposing and eternal principles somehow came to be co-mingled in the Earth and within mankind. The Manicheists attempted to explain how that admixture had come about through a series of myths.

Augustine's conversion to Christianity came about while he was reading Romans 13:13,14 as he was resting in a garden in Milan. Augustine is particularly noted for his doctrine of the depravity of man, which essentially restated the Pauline doctrine of grace. The primary controversy between Augustine and Pelagius was over the doctrine of original sin — inherited from Adam. Pelagius put his confidence in human ability to attain salvation, while Augustine placed emphasis on mankind’s total dependence on God through divine grace. Augustine is especially noted for two major topics that he developed in his writings that we shall summarize here. The first and more important of those is his teaching concerning sin and the human will, while the second is his formula for the justification of warfare.

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[99] Epicureanism is a form of hedonism that requires the pursuit of pleasure as an ethical principle.

The Power of Sin

Augustine stated that the power of sin is such that it takes hold of our will. As long as we are under sin's power, we cannot motivate our will to be rid of it. Man is still free to choose between alternatives, but sin motivates our choices. When we are redeemed, the grace of God frees us into a new state whereby we are then free to reject sin (though we still often fail to do so). Before redemption, we are not free to make a decision to accept God's grace because we lack the required faith. Therefore, an act of redemption must come before faith that in turn lays hold of God's grace. Grace is predestined by God and therefore is not resistible.

Augustine's view was a total rejection of both Pelagianism and Donatism.[100] Although Augustine was officially triumphant in that controversy, the Augustinian doctrine only received lip service into the medieval period. What actually survived was ***semi***-Pelagianism: i.e. "The will does always remain free in man and can ***either*** neglect or delight in salvation." Therefore, in some measure, the works of mortal man must be added to the works of God to achieve salvation of the human soul.

Even Augustine believed that no man could know with assurance that he was saved as one of the elect lest that would manifest itself in personal pride, which in itself is the root of all sin, and would result in the neglect of good works that were necessary to persevere to the end. It would appear that he also believed in baptismal regeneration and consequently in the baptism of infants to wash away the sins they had inherited from Adam at the earliest possible moment. Therefore, he saw both baptism and the Lord's Supper as being necessary to attain and maintain salvation, which is in direct conflict with his view of the sovereign grace of God. That thought was actually in keeping with the current erroneous teaching that apart from the institutionalized temporal church there could be no salvation of men.

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[100] See Donatistic Separatism, page 152

The City of God

After the rule of Constantine the Great, the Roman church had become increasingly identified with the Roman state. Many Christians viewed allegiance to the state and to the church as synonymous. Therefore, as the Empire continued to decay both morally and politically, the status of the institutionalized church was similarly weakened. The positive effects of Christianity working within the temporal church were insufficient to overcome the worldly decadence that was invading its own walls. The church's external influence on Roman civil society had been greatly marginalized by its close identification with morally corrupt Romanism.

Augustine perpetuated the supreme image of the temporal church when in A.D. 410 after the sacking of Rome by the Visigoths, the people of Rome began to wonder if the fall of the empire was due to the fact that they had forsaken their old pagan gods. It would appear that the Christian God had failed to protect them. In response to that charge, Augustine wrote his very catholic "*City of God*." In this writing, he sought to separate political Roman dominion from the spiritual rein of the institutional church. He envisioned the institutionalized church as being equated with the "City of God," which would one day rule over the earth in the place of the "City of Man." Thus, the sacking of Rome had nothing whatsoever to do with the institutional church. Quite the contrary, it would eventually supplant the Roman city of man.

Although his earlier writing of the "*Confessions*" had magnified the grace of God as the sole means of salvation, this later writing actually set up the foundations for the Papal system of the middle ages that would bury saving grace under church directed sacramentalism.

The Just War Formula

Of special interest in Augustine's writings is his view concerning warfare. That issue always comes up when it becomes necessary for a nation to go to war. Augustine stated that the purpose of the war must be ***just***. A war is never just when its purpose is to

expand territory or merely to exercise power for the domination of others. A nation that had been attacked without provocation always had the right to defend its self with all its available resources.

Secondly, war must be waged only by a properly instituted authority such as a sovereign nation, not by a group of individuals. That is, warfare is not just when it is waged only to satisfy personal vendettas or greed. Unfortunately, this second rule that ascribed the waging of war only to instituted authority was later abused to mean that the powerful could justifiably wage war on the powerless. Augustine's doctrine was interpreted to mean that "might makes right" and the weak must knuckle under without having recourse to defending themselves, since they had no just authority to wage war.

Lastly, even in the midst of the violence of war, Augustine saw that the greater motives of love and mercy must remain central. Therefore, after war having achieved the necessary goals finally ended, reconciliation and restoration was imperative to return a stable peace.

Augustine was the last of the great leaders of the Imperial Church in the west. His writings variously interpreted today by both Protestant and Roman Catholic, he is considered the most insightful theologian of the early church. Only much later in the time of the Reformation Movement would men such as John Calvin[101] in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* and an Augustinian monk by the name of Martin Luther[102] in his *Bondage of the Will* clearly restate the Augustinian doctrine of a totally gracious salvation.

The Athanasian Creed (ca. A.D. 475)

The *Athanasian Creed* has been commonly credited to Athanasius of Alexandria.[103] Although most modern scholars strongly refute that origin, no consensus of authorship can be attained. It has

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[101] See John Calvin (1509–1564), page 235

[102] See Martin Luther (ca. 1483–1546), page 225

[103] See Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296–373), page 157

been speculated that its origin was Southern Gaul somewhere around AD 475. Its oldest known manuscript only dates back to the sixth century in a collection of homilies. Regardless of its authorship and date, the document correctly supports the Athanasian view of the Godhead in which both the trinity and unity of the Godhead are emphasized in the first half (lines 1–28), and a Christology (concerning the person of Christ) is related in the last half (lines 29–44). Though considered a creed, it is not so much written as a statement of belief, as it is a text to be memorized and recited rhythmically line by line as a liturgy either sung or chanted. It does not begin with the words "I believe" as does the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed.[104] The rather lengthy text consisting of 44 lines may be loosely translated from the Latin to read as follows:

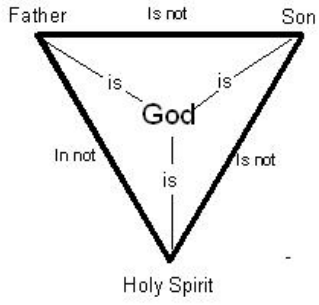
1. Whosoever will be saved must necessarily hold to the catholic faith above all things.
2. Unless such faith is kept complete and uncorrupted, he without doubt shall perish for all eternity.
3. And that catholic faith is that we worship one God as a Trinity of persons, and worship that Trinity as a Unity
4. neither confusing the identity of persons nor dividing their common substance
5. for there is one person who is the Father, another who is the Son, and another who is the Holy Spirit.
6. Nevertheless, the Godhead that is of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is all of one substance, the glory of the three persons being equal, and their majesty coeternal.
7. Such as is the Father, so also is the Son, and likewise is the Holy Spirit.
8. The Father is not created of any, the Son is also uncreated, and the Holy Spirit is likewise uncreated.
9. The Father is incomprehensible, in the same way that the Son is incomprehensible, and likewise the Holy Spirit is

[104] See The Apostles' Creed (ca. 150–724), page 108 and The Nicene Creed (AD 325), page 158

also incomprehensible.
10. The Father is eternal in his being, the Son is also eternal, and as well, the Holy Spirit is eternal,
11. Yet, they are not three separate eternal beings but one eternal being of common substance.
12. Inasmuch as there are also not three uncreated beings nor three incomprehensible beings, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible being
13. so in like manner the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, and the Holy Spirit is almighty.
14. And yet, they are not three separate almighty beings, but one almighty God.
15. Therefore, the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God
16. yet, there are not three Gods, but one God.
17. So as well, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Spirit is Lord
18. and yet, they are not three separate Lords but one Lord.
19. We are therefore bound by the Christian truth to acknowledge each Person by himself to be God and Lord;
20. yet, we are forbidden by the catholic religion to say that there are three Gods or three Lords.
21. The Father is caused of none, neither is He created or begotten of any.
22. The Son is uniquely begotten of the Father and is not made nor created.
23. The Holy Spirit is also of the same substance as the Father and the Son; not made, created, or begotten, but rather proceeding forth from the Father and the Son.
24. There is but one Father, not three Fathers, only one Son, not three Sons, and but one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.
25. Within this Trinity of persons none is before or after the other; and none is greater or less than is another
26. but the entirety of three persons are coeternal, and

coequal.
27. Therefore as before stated, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity must be worshipped.
28. Anyone who will be saved must think of the Trinity in this manner.
29. Moreover, it is necessary that he also believe rightly concerning the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.
30. For, the proper and correct faith is that we believe with our minds and confess with our tongues that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man.
31. Jesus is God of the same substance as the Father, begotten before the creation of the worlds; and He is man of the same substance as His mother, when He was born into the world.
32. He is both perfectly God and perfectly man, consisting of a reasoning soul and subsisting in human flesh.
33. Jesus is equal to the Father as pertaining to His Godhead, though inferior to the Father as pertaining to His manhood.
34. Who, although He is both God and man, yet He is not two individual persons, but one Christ;
35. not that the Godhead was converted into human flesh, but that God took our humanity into Himself through the incarnation.
36. Jesus is one in every way, not by a commingling of his substance, but by the unity of his person.
37. Inasmuch as his reasoning soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is united as one in Christ
38. who suffered the pain of physical death for our salvation, descended into the abode of the dead, wherefrom He arose again to life on the third day.
39. He ascended into heaven where He now sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
40. from where He shall one day come to judge the living and the dead.

41. Whereupon whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies restored,
42. and shall be required to give an account of their works.
43. They that have done good deeds will go into life everlasting and they that have done evil deeds will go into the fire of Hell for all eternity.
44. This is the catholic faith, which unless a person believes faithfully no redemption is possible.



Shield of the Trinity

From the first half of this creed, a graphical visualization of its text, commonly known as the *Shield of the Trinity*, was developed. Some knights of old likely carried a decorated shield shaped and graphically inscribed with this general illustration. Various unadorned adaptations of the graphical illustration (see left) are commonly used by many present-day Protestant churches to teach and demonstrate the triune nature of the Godhead in which there is no superiority or subordination of persons.[105]

The portrayal of the shield when translated from the Latin can be read as follows: From the inside of the triangle, "The Father is God, The Son is God, The Holy Spirit is God. God is the Father, God is the Son, God is the Holy Spirit." Following the perimeter of the triangle, "The Father is not the Son, The Son is not the Father, The Father is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father, The Son is not the Holy Spirit, The Holy Spirit is not the Son."

[105] It is important to take note that while it is of some value to use this simple illustration of the Trinity strictly for teaching purposes, it is ***not*** appropriate to consider the embellishment of any such pictorial representation as a devotional symbol. In doing so, we would find ourselves in direct violation of Ex.20:4,5, which prohibits the construction of any graven image that is purported to represent the likeness of God.

Although, the Athanasian Creed quite accurately states the doctrine of the Godhead and the Christology of Jesus Christ, it is nonetheless a dogmatic Catholic document that goes beyond a statement of belief to include a condemnation of those who do not agree with all its tenets as we see in lines 1,2, and 44. Moreover, it appears to support a doctrine of works as we find in lines 42 and 43. Although it does state that Jesus died for our salvation in line 38, like the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed before it, there is no indication in its text of a salvation being received totally by the grace of God through a simple act of faith.

Chapter 17.9 The Papal Church Period

The Papal Church Period can be seen as the period extending from ca. A.D. 440–1200. Early bishops were appointed as overseers over a specifically limited region of the vast reach of Christendom, though controversies often broke out between them concerning jurisdictional and theological issues. One bishop was often seen to be more influential than were the others, but all were generally seen as being equal stewards of the temporal church in a long line of succession. That is, they were each tied by a continuum of teaching to various sub-apostolic fathers from whom they derived their doctrine and from them back to various apostles who had personally taught the early overseers.

That view was soon to be altered by ranking the Apostle Peter first among the other apostles through an improper interpretation of Matthew 16, verse 18. Therefore, a bishop who could claim that he had descended in the line of Peter could claim ultimate authority over all the other bishops.[106] There were many churches outside of Rome with bishops that could have likely laid claim to that title. However, because Rome was the seat of political power in the Roman Empire, after which the church was patterned, it also followed that it would become the seat of power in the Catholic Church. Furthermore, its bishop would have the sole authority to exercise that power. Based upon a further unproven tradition that Peter had founded the church in Rome, this apostolic authority would fall automatically on the office of the bishop of Rome.

That office would later be referred to as the office of the "Pope" a word derived from "papa" or "father." The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day saw themselves as sitting in Moses' seat (Mt.23:1). Therefore, they saw themselves as gaining their position through succession from Moses much in the same way that the Roman Pope would claim his authority from Peter. In so doing, pride of office had corrupted them in the same way that it would those who would

[106] See Apostolic Succession, page 111

rule over the church. Jesus scathingly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees of his day as prideful hypocrites (Mt.23:14-38). Holding them up as an example, Jesus warned his own disciples concerning the elevation in authority of any one of them over the other saying,

> **"… call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted"** (Mt.23:8-12).

Therefore, we observe that this move to place the authority of the temporal church in the hands of one single individual as "father of the church" was an attempt by Satan to usurp Christ of his unique position as head and master of the visible Church that He alone had founded through his death and resurrection. Many of that time, and still yet today, consider the Pope to be the antichrist that is mentioned throughout Scripture inasmuch as he presumes to usurp the position of Christ. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* that was written during the Reformation period so referred to him, though that language has been dropped from most contemporary versions.[107]

In the simplest definition, anyone that works against Christ or places himself in the place of Christ is an antichrist. Even in the Apostle John's day, he stated that there were already "many antichrists" at work (1Jn2:18). Although the Pope can be reckoned as a type of the antichrist that is to come because of the authority and power his office affords, he is only one of many precursors that can be found throughout history and today as well.

The First Pope

In or about the year 395, the Roman Empire had divided into east and west. That happened soon after the reign of Theodosius.[108]

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[107] Chapter XXV, article 6 of the *Confession* still states that the Pope is not the head of the church, but that the headship belongs to Jesus Christ alone.

[108] See Theodosius (ca. 378–395), page 141

Constantine had laid the foundation for this division when he had moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium, which was soon after renamed Constantinople. German invaders kept pounding away at the western empire until Roman political control had virtually disintegrated by 410. At the time of Augustine's death in 430, vandals were even besieging the city of Hippo in northwestern Africa.

Pope Leo I (440–474)

Pope Leo I, who became the Roman Bishop in the year 440, was the first to insist that the bishops of Rome were the "successors of Peter." Accordingly, he considered himself “Lord of the church” and claimed superiority over all other bishops. Thus, he all but claimed for himself the title of Pope by virtue of the fact that he was the current Bishop of Rome. However, that claim was not recognized by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 — equal weight being given to the eastern bishop. Though lacking the title of Pope, Leo nonetheless wielded considerable temporal power. During his reign, he instituted the death penalty for heresy and established disobedience to his authority as a sure means to Hell. His actions were primarily motivated by his need to gain the absolute authority necessary to combat the many barbarian invasions taking place at the time and to secure his own position. Therefore, that first claim to the absolute authority of the office of Pope was motivated more by politics and the need for personal survival than it was religious in origin.

The Fall of the Roman Political Empire (ca. 476)

When Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus was deposed in 476, the Western Roman Empire as a political entity effectively ended. The extended Roman Empire did not actually disappear of course, nor was it destroyed, but it had been broken up into smaller pieces. Consequently, the city of Rome, continued to survive and even extend great influence through the office and jurisdiction of the Pope. With the new world order that came about with the fall of Rome, the office of the Roman bishop had become free of direct civil interference by Roman Caesars, and the power of the office increased in the political

vacuum as various Roman bishops made alliances with the rulers of several smaller kingdoms into which the western empire had broken.

Through that means, the old empire began transforming itself from a political union to a religious union — adapting itself for survival within the Roman Catholic Church. Citizens began to look to the church as the ultimate agency to maintain peace and civil order, effectively envisioning the Roman Church as the heir to the old Roman Empire with the Pope replacing the old emperor-god. Centralized political power continued to be exercised not through the edicts of emperors, but through various religious edicts and dogmas of the church ruled over by the Pope.

First Pope of the New Order

Beginning with the New Order in AD 590, the church became the type of the first century church of Thyatira (See The Cult-filled Church, page 91). Although the papal period technically began with pope Leo I, it was during the reign of Pope Gregory that the type became evident following the fall of Rome.

Pope Gregory I, the Great (590–604)

Pope Gregory I, the Great was the first Roman Bishop with any real power of office and is therefore generally regarded as the first Pope, rather than Leo I. Rejecting a career in civil administration, Gregory had become a monk of the Benedictine order and from there he rose to the position of Pope. He criticized the bishop in Constantinople for claiming the title "Universal Bishop" or "Ecumenical Patriarch," insisting that that title belonged only to the Bishop of Rome. Later, rather than share the title, Gregory dropped his own claim to it choosing rather to call himself the "Chief Servant" of God.

Although he knew no Greek and disdained the teaching of the old philosophers, Gregory was a prolific writer of textbooks and training materials, and he encouraged Catholic missionary outreach into northern Europe including the sending of a company of monks to the kingdom of Kent in Britain in 596. He was also a man that sought

to look after the poor and bring justice to the oppressed and for that reason is also considered one of the best of the Popes.

Unfortunately, Gregory also developed the twin doctrines of Penance and Purgatory[109] that further eroded the Pauline doctrine of the grace of God. As previously stated, baptism was wrongly accepted at that time as the only means of receiving regenerative grace exclusively through the authority of the church. Though that false doctrine would argue that baptism must end all sin in the recipients life through regeneration, sin nonetheless prevailed. Penance was formulated as the proper reparation for sins that were committed after baptism, and Purgatory was fabricated as the destination for those who had failed to do adequate penance for their sins in this life. Here we see how error brings forth additional errors as her children.

The Rise of Mohammedanism (A.D. 632)

In the span of years between 565 and 867, the regions of the old Roman Empire were largely dominated by three major religious thrusts:

- Pharisaic Judaism
- Christian Monasticism
- The Christian Papacy

Soon to be added to those three was Mohammedanism, springing primarily out of Pharisaic Judaism, which rose to challenge both Christianity and Judaism. Although the eastern region of the empire was already being threatened by Lombards, Avars, Bulgars, Slavs, and Persians, the greatest threat to its continuance was to come in the year 632 with the beginning of Arab Muslim conquests.

Mohammed (or Muhammad) was born in Mecca in A.D. 570, into a prominent Hashim family, but was mostly reared by his uncle upon the death of both his parents and grandparents. On a trip to Syria, he became very disturbed by the idolatry and casual religious attitudes of both Christians and Jews that he observed there. Not only were various statuary of Jesus, Mary, and various other saints being

[109] See Martin Luther, The Ninety-Five Theses, page 227

worshiped as if they were deity, the true worship of God was perfunctory and undisciplined. In reaction to their idolatry and indifference to the serious practice of religion, he set himself up as a prophet (A.D. 610) and began an all out war against Christian idolatry.

Mohammedanism is also referred to as Islam today and its adherents as Muslims. The name "Mohammedanism" comes from its founder and "Islam" from its chief religious mandate. The word "Islam" means, "submit." Here we immediately find a major difference between Islam and Christianity. While the key directive of Christianity is "believe" (Ac.16:31) and acceptance is voluntary, inasmuch as belief cannot be forced, the main directive of Islam is unconditional "submission" regardless of any intellectual or emotional response for or against its tenets.

Therefore, we find that the main asset from which the religion of Islam gets its name not only implies, but also requires, the use of force to attain its end wherever necessary to achieve its goal. That militant aggressiveness is not something that is superimposed on the surface of a peaceful Islamic religion as some today suppose, but is at its very root thus rendering peaceful coexistence of Islam with other religious faiths impossible.

The Islamic view of God as a completely monadic being completely opposes the Christian doctrine of the trinity of persons within a singular Godhead. The Islamic movement was not a commendable and much needed effort to convert people out of idolatry and indifference, but it became a militant campaign to destroy Christianity at its roots. That resulted in much bloodshed as Mohammed destroyed various idols and established his own religious beliefs by means of the sword. Over time, Islam became a deadly religion of reactive hatred that far exceeded the Roman church, even when in its most degenerate state, for the amount of evil performed. Furthermore, Islam condoned slavery and polygamy, and it degraded the roles of women to that of property, whereas Christianity ultimately condemned slavery and polygamy and elevated the worth of women.

By 651, the seven Asian churches mentioned in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 as well as the land of Palestine, which included the old Jewish homeland, were submerged under the Jihad (holy war) of

Islam, and large portions of North Africa, especially Egypt were overwhelmed by the Islamic religion. The Turks who dominated Islam at that time were exceedingly intolerant of Christians. Their conquests that had given them possession of the Holy Lands and Constantinople, and their barbarous treatment of Christians residing in Palestine, would become in large part the motivation behind the Christian crusades that will be discussed later in Chapter 17.10 The Byzantine Empire, page 191 of this book.

Islam nearly succeeded in destroying any outward evidence of Christianity as its powerful armies swept both east and west extending westward into a large area of Spain by 715. Europe, however, was saved from the swarm when Charles Martel[110] defeated the Moslem army at Tours, France in 732 thus ending the massive advance.

Roman Church Domination of Western Europe

The area that comprised the eastern realms of Christendom was all but submerged under the militant *jihad* (holy war)[111] of Islam by the eighth Century, and the Eastern Church was barely able to survive let alone expand territorially. The western regions, however, were more protected from the Turks and from Islam precisely because of the concentration of Muslim military efforts in the east, thus providing an opportunity for western church expansion into Europe. That expansion was aided by the growing influence of the office of the Pope. Two Popes, Zacharias (741–752) and his immediate successor, Stephen II (752–757), were instrumental in that effort.

The advancement northward, however, was hindered by Scandinavian Vikings or Normans (north men) who had invaded the shores of Britain, Ireland, northern France, and had advanced well into Russia, later establishing themselves in Hungary (*Magyaroc*). Those were a pagan people not yet having been converted to Christianity.

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[110] The name, Martel, was given to him and means "the hammer."

[111] See Islam, page 508

They plundered churches and overthrew monasteries every place they invaded, even as Christianity continued to decline in its efficacy.

Zacharias extended his influence to make Pepin, who was the father of Charlemagne (see below), king of the Franks. The Franks were a Germanic people that occupied northern France and western Germany. With the authority he gained from his predecessor, Pope Stephen II ordered Pepin to lead his army down into Italy where he conquered the Lombards and subsequently gave their lands to the Papacy. That area covered a large part of Central Italy. With the acquisition of physical territory, jurisdiction of the office of Pope was extended to include a physical realm, such that the Pope then had direct control over the bodies of his immediate subjects in this life as well as laying claim to control over their souls in the hereafter.

The Holy Roman Empire (A.D. 800–1806)

Leo III (795–816) and Charlemagne (800–814)

The total fusion of the church and the state came into fruition during the Papal reign of Leo III. Leo was not of noble stock and so raised the ire of the nobility that he was attacked, deposed, and exiled to a monastery in 799. Leo had earlier announced his election as Pope to Charlemagne, king of the Franks in 795, presenting him with a key to Saint Peter's Tomb, and requesting an emissary be sent. In turn, Charlemagne offered his services in defense of the church. Therefore, when Leo escaped from his imprisonment, he made his way to Charlemagne who intervened on behalf of the Pope and was able to restore him to power.

Charlemagne (in French, "Charles the Great") was subsequently crowned Emperor by the Pope in the year 800. Charlemagne was the grandson of Charles Martel who had saved Europe from the Turks and Islam, and was therefore a popular successor. Martel ruled for a total of 46 years during which time he expanded his realm from regions that are present-day France and Germany into Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, parts of Spain, and into a portion of Italy.

A symbiotic relationship developed between the Emperor Charlemagne and Pope Leo III as they supported each others efforts. As one prospered, so did the other. It was Charlemagne who first instituted tithing to support bishops and other clergy. Authority for that was derived from the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. By 585, tithing was regularized as legal taxation. This is, of course, the source of institutional tithing encouraged and enforced by many Protestant churches today.[112] Elsewhere in the church of that day, funds were being raised through large stipends by affluent donors in exchange for masses said for themselves or their designates.[113]

That amalgam of Emperor and Pope was seen by many at that time as a restoration of the old Roman Empire, as Charlemagne and other kings placed on the throne were again given the title of "Caesar." However, the Roman Empire was now prefixed with the word "holy" — the "Holy Roman Empire" — to designate the power of the Papacy that supported it.

Upon the death of Charlemagne in 814, the large empire was divided into regions that would eventually become the nations of Germany, France, and Italy. With the installation of additional emperors to rule those regions, conflicts soon rose up between them and there was less cooperation between them and the Roman Papacy. Many bitter struggles took place between Popes and various provincial emperors over many centuries. Nonetheless, the joint control of Popes and emperors continued for a thousand years and during that time served to blend the German and Roman cultures into one greater homogeneous society. The Holy Roman Empire would only come to and end with its defeat by the French emperor Napoleon in 1806.

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[112] Christian tithing is discussed in Chapter 13.5 of Book II of this work

[113] *A History of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 356

The Medieval Papacy

Pope Nicolas I (A.D. 858–867)

Pope Nicolas I was the first Pope to establish himself as a king over a temporal church kingdom. This was done to establish the Pope's authority over physical territory and civil matters in addition to his supposed spiritual jurisdiction. Nicolas accomplished that by means of a collection of forged documents, decrees, and letters in a book that appeared around 857 known as the *Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals*.[114] Those documents exalted the authority and power of the office of the Pope and were most likely forged by lower-level German ecclesiastical members to enhance the Pope's supreme authority over their immediate superiors.[115]

Nobody in Europe and most likely even Nicolas himself realized that the documents were false when he energetically acted upon them. The *False Decretals* served to strengthen the political power of the Papacy by establishing canon law and central organization. Moreover, Nicolas I meddled and interfered with the affairs of the Eastern Church and eventually excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople. In return, the eastern Patriarch excommunicated Nicolas.

Papal Moral Corruption and Decline

During the years AD 867 to 1046, the years between Nicolas I and Gregory VII (Hildebrand)[116], the Papacy reached an all time moral low. For more than a century, the Papacy became notorious for bribery, gross immorality, murders and many other forms of corruption. The office of the Pope was commonly sold to the highest bidder. Hadrian II followed Nicholas I in 867, but he was soon

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[114] *Haley's Bible Handbook,* page 773.

[115] *The Story of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 274

[116] See Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) (ca. 1054–1085), page 187

succeeded by John VIII who was first poisoned and then bludgeoned to death in his own palace. Following the murder of John, the office of Pope became a political prize to be wielded against each other by rival parties in Rome. Intrigue was commonplace as some Popes were strangled to death and still others died of starvation in dungeons as one after another was deposed by their successor. Others were found guilty of a long list of crimes and were mutilated and put on public display. In the ensuing chaos, there were at times as many as three different Popes claiming the office of Peter simultaneously.

Benedict IX (1032–1048)

It was during that period that Benedict IX was made Pope at twelve years of age in 1032. The office had been purchased for him by his father, Alberich III, the count of Tusculum. He was probably the most morally wicked of all the Popes that had preceded or followed him having been accused of practicing homosexuality, bestiality, and other outrageously sinful practices.

Benedict was the only Pope to serve for three non-consecutive periods as he was first removed and then restored to the office twice during his reign. He was briefly forced from office in 1044 but was restored by the emperor Conrad II. In 1045, Benedict sold his office for a considerable sum in gold to a priest, John Gratian, his godfather, because he desired to marry. Gratian took the name Gregory VI and immediately began various reforms in the church. Unfortunately, Gregory's reign was short-lived. Soon regretting his rash actions, Benedict retook Rome by rescinding his abdication and regained the chair of the Pope until his death in 1048, although officially Gregory is still considered the legitimate Pope during that short period by the Roman Catholic Church.

Clement II (1046–1047)

Henry III of Germany eventually intervened by forming a council that deposed all existing Popes, and named Clement II Pope in 1046. Clement subsequently crowned Henry III Holy Roman Emperor. That same council then issued a series of decrees that abolished the practice of buying and selling positions in the church

along with dealing with various other corruptions. Benedict, however, refused to accept the appointment of Clement as valid. When Clement II died shortly after his appointment, Henry offered the Papacy to Bruno, the Bishop of Toul, who at first refused it unless he was democratically elected by the people of Rome. He along with two other monks, Hildebrand and Humbert, then proceeded to Rome for that purpose.

Leo IX (1048–1054)

Already having the approval of the emperor and Roman delegates, Bruno eventually accepted his warm welcome by the people of Rome as his mandate although no actual polling took place. Bruno was appointed Pope by an assembly at Worms in 1048, taking the name Leo IX. Pope Leo not only went to war against other countries, he actually participated in them. He was taken captive for the most part of a year from 1053–1054 as the result of a defeat suffered during the Battle of Civitate waged against the Normans. Leo did not long survive after his release and return to Rome expiring in April of 1054.

Age of Papal Power (A.D. 1054–1305)

The mutual excommunication that had taken place during the reign of Nicolas I had firmly solidified the division of established Christianity into eastern and western factions. Although the church had already been politically partitioned at the time of the division of the Roman Empire (A.D. 395), representatives from both the east and west still had attended various governing councils in common. However, this latest incident during the reign of Nicolas I further divided the church until by the year 1054 the established church was completely separated and divided into autonomous western and eastern institutions. After that great schism, the western Roman church rose to great power during the years 1054 to 1305 — a period that historians generally refer to as the "Age of Papal Power."

Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) (ca. 1054–1085)

The age of Papal Power began with Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) in 1054. Pope Hildebrand sought to purge the church

clergy of immorality, and eradicate simony (the purchase of church office with money). While internal efforts at reform were certainly commendable, the benefits of those reforms would soon become submerged under the larger issue of Papal political authority. As independent nations began emerging in Europe, conflicts erupted between the Papacy and the political rulers of those nations. The Papacy soon found itself at war with Germany over matters of Papal appointment and authority.

During that conflict, Henry IV, emperor of Germany, deposed Pope Hildebrand who in turn excommunicated Henry. Although a penitent Henry later was pardoned by Gregory, it was soon after rescinded. War ensued as Henry attacked Rome. Henry was forced to abandon Rome after an intervention by Normans that killed and enslaved the populace, and Gregory VII died while in exile in 1085.[117] Much bloodshed followed during the reigns of other Popes that followed Gregory VII as the appeal of new-felt nationalism began to spread throughout Europe.

Pope Innocent III (1198–1216)

Innocent III is generally considered to have been the most powerful of all the Popes. Under him, the European nations were made subordinate to the Roman Catholic Church. He further laid claim to being the "vicar of Christ." This claim gave him the total authority of Christ to govern in all temporal matters on earth. The error of transubstantiation (the transforming of bread and wine into Jesus' flesh and blood) began with Innocent III. He also issued a complete ban on the possession and reading of Holy Scriptures, and began the practice of Papal inquisitions and tortures to root out those persons who were branded as "heretics" by the church. In general, anyone who disagreed with the Pope in any matter was automatically considered a heretic.

Pope Boniface VII (ca. 1294–1303)

After the reign of Innocent III, there followed a succession of weak and ineffective Popes such that there was a general decline in the

[117] *The Story of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 288

power of the Papacy. Of special note was Boniface VII. Because of the weakness of the Papacy, he found himself in a power struggle with Philip the Fair of France. At the culmination of that struggle, Boniface again declared that all temporal authority was subject to the Church of Rome (meaning the Pope) and further stating that there was no salvation apart from the Roman church. Salvation, then, required not only baptism and adherence to church ordinances but subjection to the Roman Pontiff himself! This was probably intended to be a scare tactic to bring the French people in line with the Pope in order to overthrow Philip. If so, it did not work. As a consequence of that conflict, Boniface found himself imprisoned for a brief time by Philip of France. Soon after his release from prison, he died.

Pope Clement V (1305–1314)

Boniface was succeeded by Clement V who was a Frenchman. That appointment came about because of French domination over the office of the Pope. In 1309, Clement even moved the Papacy from Rome to Avignon, France. Some historians often refer to this as the "Babylonian Captivity" of the Roman church that lasted until 1377. In 1388, there were actually two Popes, one at Avignon and another who had been appointed in Rome! These rival Popes, often referred to as "antipopes," demonstrated the extent to which the Roman Catholic Church of that day had degenerated. This incident resulted in what is referred to as the "Great Schism" or division of the ***western*** church, which was not reconciled until the year 1417.

Notable Christians during the Papal Power Era

It would not be reasonable to end this study without mentioning a few of the leading Christian men of the era. Although the Roman church was in a perpetual state of self-denial of its serious faults and abandonment of the true faith, there were still many true witnesses to the wonder of the faith during that era that worked in the background of the church hierarchy. Many of those men remain nameless today since there was none to record their history. However, some made their way into the annals of history because of their connection to monastic life that features extensive records.

Bernard (1090–1153)

Bernard born in Fontaines, near Dijon, France of noble and pious parents was the abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux. Through him, the combination of love for Christ along with self-mortification to attain religious merit was blended and found its highest expression. Though we should love the Lord and deny the flesh that we may walk in the spirit as is befitting the adopted sons of God (Ro.8:13,14), such effort does not gain us any special merit above others before God lest his grace be compromised through human works. Most certainly, the mortification of the flesh must not extend to self-inflicted punishment for our sins inasmuch as Christ has already atoned for all of them in full. Bernard is widely recognized today for his many hymns such as *Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts,* and *Jesus, the Very Thought of You*, and most probably, the words of the hymn *O Sacred Head Now Wounded* can be traced to him as well.

Francis of Assisi (1182–1226)

Born of a successful businessman father, Francis was overly worldly and ambitious in his youth. However, when he was converted, he began to give his money to the poor and for the repair of churches. For that, his father disinherited him to stem the flow of wealth. In 1209, he responded to a call to go about preaching though he had no financial resources, wore the plainest of garments, and survived on whatever others might set before him to eat. Pushed aside by Papal authorities, he was not qualified to be included in any of the "Orders of Preachers" and so withdrew increasingly from the world, communing with nature, and reportedly bearing in his body what appeared to be a reproduction of Jesus' bleeding wounds on the cross. Before long, however, his Order of Friars had become as wealthy and worldly as were any of the official monastic orders such as the Dominicans. Necessary church reform could not come about through monasticism anymore than the corrupted Roman church could hope to reform itself.

Chapter 17.10 The Byzantine Empire

Up until this point in time, our historic study has followed the western church after the great schism that divided the church into eastern and western factions in 1054. This is appropriate because the great reform effort that we are soon to discuss in much detail in the next section of this book was to come about in opposition to the western church that had grown in great power and prestige as the eastern church was being suppressed by the continual threat of Islam. Before moving on however, it is important that somewhat be said about the church that lay within the Byzantine Empire to the east lest we ignore it altogether. Even so, the wide scope of this book will only allow a brief chronology and discussion of the eastern empire between the years A.D. 395–1460. When the Western Roman Empire fell, the eastern portion of the empire continued with its capital of Constantinople (Byzantium) that had been established when Constantine had moved the center of the empire away from Rome to the Roman city of Byzantium.

Justinian I (527–565)

During the reign of its emperor, Justinian the Great, the eastern empire expanded by means of various conquests into North Africa, Italy, and Spain even while Justinian held the eastern frontier of his empire against the Persians. During that same time, Justinian saw to the systematizing of what is referred to as the "Justinian Code," a system of law based on biblical principles. Many of the moral principles contained in the law were almost certainly influenced by Justinian's beautiful and influential wife, the Empress Theodora, who championed the sanctity of marriage and other laws affecting the well being of women.

The Struggle of the Eastern Empire

During the years 632–750, Muslim Arabs through *Jihad* overran the Middle East, expanding down into northern Africa and Egypt and upwards into Palestine and Syria. In 717, Arabs twice besieged the city of Constantinople. The final siege was broken in 718

by a unique invention of the time known as "Greek Fire" that was similar in effect to a contemporary flamethrower.

Leo III (717–741)

It was during that siege that Leo III became emperor of the eastern or Byzantine empire. A major doctrinal issue came to fore in the Eastern Church during his reign. It is often referred to as the Iconoclastic Controversy, because it centered upon the use of icons in worship. Many worshipers were using pictures of saints and Jesus in such a way that it was the center of their worship. The question of course was over whether the use of icons were in violation of the second Commandment prohibiting the creation and use of graven images or any likeness of God (Ex.20:4).

In 787, the second Nicene council vindicated the use of a symbol of the cross and two-dimensional icons or pictures as aids in worship on the basis of the incarnation of Jesus who alone was the "express image" of God's person (He.1:3) thus rendering the invisible God visible. The icons were seen to symbolize that fact — although it must be said here that such aids to the faith usually become objects of faith in and of themselves making them equivalent with idols.

Basil I (867–886)

During the reign of Basil I, there was an expansion of the eastern empire as it recovered many of the territories previously lost to the onslaught of the Islamic *jihad* through Arab and Turkish armies.

Basil II (976–1025)

Basil II came to power in 976, and was actually a Macedonian rather than a Greek. During his reign, the Byzantine Empire reached a peak of economic and commercial growth not equaled since the reign of Justinian in the sixth century. However, after the death of Basil II in 1025, the eastern empire went into a state of decline due in large part to political corruption. Nevertheless, during this time, Vladimir I (ca. 980—1015) grand duke of Kiev, Russia and the brother-in-law of Basil II became so interested in the eastern tradition of Christianity that he adopted Greek Orthodoxy as the official religion of Russia.

That ensured its continuation after the final loss to the Muslim Turks that overran the entire area of Asia Minor in 1071.

The East West Schism (1054)

The Eastern Church, though similar in doctrine to the western church in many ways, was always somewhat separated from the western church by culture and language. Although the church had already been politically partitioned at the time of the division of the Roman Empire (A.D. 395), representatives from both the east and west still had attended various governing councils in common. There had been many conflicts in joint councils such as the iconoclastic question that further increased the stress. Nicolas I[118] of the western church had greatly meddled and interfered with the affairs of the Eastern Church during his reign and had even excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople in the 860's. In return, the eastern Patriarch had excommunicated Nicolas. All of this finally came to a head in 1054 when the Eastern Church declared itself independent of the western church altogether.

The Crusades (1095–1272)

The Byzantium Empire was submerged under the hoards of Islamic militants in the east as Alexius Comnenus came to power in 1081. During the age of Papal power, military "crusades" (from the Latin "crux" i.e. "cross") were undertaken by the Roman Catholic Church of the west to regain that lost territory. The expressed purpose of the crusades was to win back the Holy Lands, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, protect the Byzantines from the threat of highly militant Seljuk Turks, and to release eastern Christian inhabitants from the religious oppression of Islam altogether.

However there is little doubt that the western church also saw this as an opportunity to regain control of the Eastern Church that had divided itself from the "mother church" in 1054. Moreover, the hyper-covenantalism of that time falsely saw the holy lands of Palestine as

[118] See Pope Nicolas I (A.D. 858–867), page 185

Christian territory because all that God had earlier promised to Israel had now become the property of the Church as God's new covenant people.

The Peasants' Crusade

Pope Urban II urged the faithful to free their eastern brethren from the clutches of Islam. As a result of feverish preaching and exhortation by the western church and its clergy, a wild mob of 20,000 poorly armed and disorganized peasants and farmers, led by Peter the Hermit, undertook an effort to retake the Holy lands from the Moslem Turks in 1095. Along the way, they savaged the land for food and killed thousands of Jews whom they also identified with Muslim infidels.[119] When they finally engaged the enemy, the highly organized Turks promptly decimated the ragtag invaders, leaving the few who escaped to join the first official crusade a year later.

Sanctioned Crusades

Following the peasant's crusade were seven official crusades directly sanctioned by the Roman church:

- **The first crusade** (1096–1099) was led by European nobles — primarily of French origin. It succeeded in capturing Jerusalem and the Muslim defenders were killed, but many of its civilian residents were also massacred in the process including Jews, many women, the aged, children, and even infants.
- **The second crusade** (1147–1149) was launched in response to Muslim advances and efforts to retake Jerusalem. It was only able to delay the eventual fall of Jerusalem again to the Turks in 1187.
- **The third crusade** (1189–1192) did not even reach Jerusalem.

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[119] *The Story of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 293

The third crusade ended the failed attempts to retake the Holy Lands in the twelfth century, but still other attempts were made in the thirteenth century:

- **The forth crusade** (1202–1204) was diverted from its goal of attacking Sultan Saladin, who had captured Jerusalem in 1187, at his headquarters in Egypt and instead captured Constantinople, devastating the city, and establishing a Latin Patriarchate there. Although Pope Innocent III[120] was at first highly displeased with that turn of events, he finally accepted it as a way in which God would reunite the church.[121] However, that event only further increased the existing hostility between the eastern and western churches. The Byzantines eventually retook Constantinople in 1261 ending the eastern Latin Empire.
- **The fifth crusade** was also organized as an attack on Muslim Egypt, but it amounted to very little.
- **A sixth crusade** forced the Sultan into an agreement wherein Emperor Fredrick II, who had amassed and led the army, was granted access to the cities of Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem. However, this was an unofficial crusade not sanctioned by Rome inasmuch as Fredrick had been earlier excommunicated by Pope Gregory IX.
- **The Seventh and Eighth crusades** were complete failures from the beginning resulting in their leader, Louis IX of France, being kidnapped by Muslims for ransom, while later in the second crusade he died of fever.

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[120] See Pope Innocent III (1198–1216), page 188

[121] *The Story of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 297

After this, all interest and resolve waned in securing the Holy Lands. Much blood had been spilled during the crusades including the blood of innocent young children who had been pressed into military service in 1212 by the Pope, believing that God would protect such innocence and give victory. In all, it is estimated that some 30,000 young children marched toward the Holy lands, but most did not even reach the area of battle — either turning back, becoming enslaved along the way, or dying of exhaustion, disease, and starvation.

It must be said that the offensive thrust of the crusades probably saved Europe from later advances by the Seljuk Turks, the earlier Turkish armies having been halted in 732 at Tours, France. Nevertheless, the crusades themselves were ill-conceived and complete failures as far as accomplishing their main objectives, while the reputation and authority of the Roman church was greatly diminished by their continuous failures and the bloodshed arising from them.

The Knights Templar

The legendary Knights Templar was a militant religious order formed around 1119 by a French nobleman, Hugues de Payens, who collected eight of his relatives to fight along side him. All were experienced knights that dedicated themselves to the protection of pilgrims as they visited the Holy Places in and around Jerusalem. This fully armed religious order was defended upon the grounds of "just war" that had been stated much earlier by the theologian Augustine.[122] In 1139, Pope Innocent II issued a papal bull that granted near autonomous authority to the order subject only to the office of the Pope. Free movement of the order was granted through any borders, and they were fully absolved from paying any taxes anywhere.

Their official name "Poor Knights of the Temple of King Solomon" was derived from the fact that King Baldwin II of Jerusalem had permitted them to set up a headquarters inside the Al Aqsa Mosque that was located on the Temple mount where Solomon's

[122] See The Just War Formula, page 169

temple once stood. Their name was later abbreviated to Knights of the Temple, Knights Templar, or merely Templars.

Not all of the Templars were warrior knights. The primary mission of most members was to support the knights who were actually engaged on the front lines of battle with both weaponry and funds. They collected considerable sums of money and land as donations to further their efforts through the strong implication that such donations would secure the giver a place in Heaven. In addition, they recruited the sons of various noblemen to add to their ranks. New members were required to swear a vow of poverty and to hand over their wealth to the order. In addition, many noblemen began to use the Templars as a virtual bank to hold their funds and properties in escrow while they were engaged over long periods in various battles in foreign lands. Although individual Templars were sworn to personal poverty, the order itself soon controlled immense amounts of wealth with which they built churches and castles as well as becoming heavily involved in widespread manufacturing and commerce in Europe.

The financial success of the Templars as well as the fact that they were a secretive autonomous military force that seemed to answer to no one soon led to widespread suspicion. Due to their great land holdings, they were rapidly becoming a state within a state in France. Mounting military failures in various battles further led to their decline. The failure of the second crusade wherein Jerusalem was regained by the Turks in 1187 as well as mounting Templar losses elsewhere eroded their sense of invincibility as well as their support. After the final failed attempts to regain the Holy Land in 1298 to 1300, the order also lost their primary sense of purpose, which was to protect pilgrimages.

The matter of a refused loan to Philip IV ("the fair") of France, who was already heavily in debt to the order to finance various wars, resulted in various intrigues involving the French Pope Clement V[123], Philip, and the Templars with charges and countercharges of moral degradation and heresy as well as threats of excommunication. Philip

[123] See Pope Clement V (1305–1314), page 189

summoned higher officials of the order to France under false pretenses, whereupon he captured them with his armies. The officials were made subject to the inquisition that extracted various confessions of heresy from them under extreme torture. Those admissions ranged from spitting and urinating on the cross to various homosexual acts committed in their secret rituals.[124]

Philip then sent his armies to raid Templar houses throughout France in search of gold reserves or any indication of where the Templar's great wealth may be stored away. That effort proved to be fruitless, such that Philip gained very little other than the fact that his great financial debt owed to the Templars was no longer collectable. The Templar order was officially dissolved in 1312 through and edict issued by the French Pope Clement V due to intense pressures brought to bear on him by King Philip IV.

Many of the large number of remaining Templars were merely absorbed into various other orders. Nevertheless, what finally became of the tens of thousands of other members, their numerous meetinghouses scattered about Europe, and various other financial holdings has been subject to much speculation inasmuch as any documents that they may have had describing their most secret rituals and operations were never found. Many Templars had most probably fled overland to Switzerland where it is thought that they set up secretive banking operations there ultimately leading to the establishment of the present-day Swiss bank.

In addition, a fleet of eighteen Templar ships that were used primarily for commerce vanished overnight at La Rochelle, France in 1307. It is thought by many that a large number of Templars, taking their wealth and secret documents along with them, sailed to northern Scotland. Scotland was at that time out of the reach of the French inquisition thus providing them with safe harbor. From there, their rituals and secret operations eventually spread throughout the British

[124] Because men will confess to anything under torture, those admissions are historically meaningless.

Isles.[125] That speculation has caused many to suggest that the Templars were instrumental in the establishment of Speculative Freemasonry, or at least that a merger or close connection was established with Speculative Freemasons. It is certainly known that the Templars had established substantial financial dealings with various Freemasons in Jerusalem earlier during the time of the Crusades.

Development of the Eastern Church

The Eastern Church had developed gradually after the schism with the Roman church in 1054. Over time, it laid claim to the term "Orthodox" (meaning "right believing") while the western church claimed the term "Catholic" (meaning "universal"). Thus, the Eastern Church became known as the Orthodox Church while the western church was referred to as the Catholic Church, though both actually claimed to be both orthodox and catholic.

Unlike the western church, the Eastern Church consisted of essentially self-governing (autocephalous) individual churches that shared the common Orthodox tradition. The ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople (later renamed Istanbul) was acknowledged as being only the "first among equal" Orthodox bishops, not a "pope." He maintained chairmanship and a general initiative over the church, but he had no official independent authority in either doctrinal or administrative matters.

The Eastern Church developed its own Greek liturgy (Byzantine Rite), symbolism, and pageantry apart from the western church, and developed its own superstitions as well. However, it shared many traditions in common with the Catholic Church such as

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[125] In more recent years, there has been the development of an hypothesis supported by highly refutable evidence that Templars may have traveled to north America via a known Viking route sailing by Iceland, Greenland, Newfoundland, through the Saint Laurence seaway, and then through the great lakes into what comprises the present upper Midwest area of the United States in 1362. This has led some to seek their hidden treasure on American soil, as well as speculating that the United States was founded by the Templars as their "New Jerusalem." The possibilities of those conjectures are far beyond the scope of this book to explore.

the veneration of Mary as the "mother of God"[126] (although it denies the "immaculate conception" of Mary) and the intercession of saints. Unlike the Roman Catholic celebration of the Mass where the wine is partaken of by clergy only, Orthodox Church communion distributes the wine as well as the bread to lay participants. A standing dispute between the Orthodox and Catholic churches is over what is known as the *filioque* clause of the Nicene Creed wherein the western church unilaterally added "and the son," regarding the sending of the Holy Spirit, to the original text.

The Greek New Testament was preserved through difficult times by the Orthodox Church, and it would later become the basis for Erasmus'[127] version of the New Testament in 1516 and the "received text" from which the *King James Version* of the Bible would be translated in 1611. The Eastern Church would eventually expand throughout Eastern Europe and the Middle East including Greece as well as the many Slavic nations.

In 1453, the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople, which brought the Byzantine Empire to an end. Though technically the Ottoman Empire was considered separate of the majority Sunni Caliphate within it, it was effectively ruled by a Caliph who had attained the title of Sultan. Although the Greek church was required to submit fully to the Ottoman Sultan, it continued to function in a limited manner under strict Ottoman control as a religious subculture within a Muslim Millet.[128] That close association with Islam negatively altered the Greek Church over time. The Ottoman caliphate was partitioned and brought to an end in 1922 following World War I.

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[126] See Mariolatry, page 161

[127] See Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1466–1536), page 224

[128] The Muslim Millet was a means by which the Caliphate could demand submission to the Sunni majority without destroying the usefulness of affluent peoples that were under their thumb. These Ottoman Millets consisted of Christians, Assyrians, Armenians, and Jews as well as various non-Sunni Islamic creeds. The head of each Millet reported directly to the Ottoman Sultan.

The Eastern Orthodox Church continues to this day — most notably in Russia where Islamic influence upon it was less.

Chapter 17.11 Global Expansion of Roman Catholic Churchianity

Missionary efforts were very much a part of the campaign to put everyone on earth under the temporal authority of the militant Roman church from its very inception at the time of Constantine. Rather than utilizing persuasive efforts that appealed to man's conscience to accept Christ as their savior, the approach of the Roman Catholic more often than not was to dictate submission to Roman-style Churchianity through the utilization of various coercive methods.

Rather than true Christianity being spread through a grass-roots movement by genuine believers who had accepted Christ based upon spiritual conversion, various monarchs took advantage of the power of religious conviction to subjugate peoples within their political domains to accept Churchianity en masse. In doing so, the rulers gained allegiance from their charges for various political causes as they established themselves as lords over the temporal churches thus formed. Therefore, all that was necessary to convert entire regions to Roman Churchianity was for Rome to convince various key political rulers of the temporal control attainable by diffusing a nominal obeisance to the outward trappings of Christian religion throughout their realm.[129]

As various regions were conquered militarily, Roman Churchianity was thrust upon the defeated populace through an abusive use of the traditional ritual of baptism that was erroneously seen as a mystical seal owned by the Roman church. The persistent erroneous doctrine of baptismal regeneration immediately declared them Christians. As the seal was applied, whether received voluntarily or through force, the individual was immediately seen to have become a member of the Roman church and subject to its full authority in all matters religious and temporal.

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[129] We saw this coercive method first established by the Emperor Theodosius as he declared church membership compulsory upon all subjects of the Roman Empire. See Theodosius (ca. 378–395) page 141.

While the conquests often brought about expanded political submission to various monarchs and ultimately to the Roman Pope, it did not often produce true converts to the faith since their hearts were not changed. It is indeed likely that very few of those who were baptized truly understood the redemptive power of the Gospel message or for that matter even understood their great need for personal salvation. They had merely exchanged one religious form for another. What was produced was nominal or pseudo-Christians who eventually injected their own local superstitions and pagan practices into Roman church tradition and ritual over time.

Europe

The territory dominated by the Roman church had been expanded into Europe by early missionary efforts of such men as Aidan (A.D. 634) into England, and Boniface (A.D. 700) into Germany. Bohemia and Poland accepted Christianity as a consequence of their close proximity with Germany inasmuch as German missionaries were primarily responsible for spreading Catholicism into those regions. Ansgar made his way into Denmark and Sweden in A.D. 865. During the century that bracketed the end of the first millennium and the beginning of the second millennium, Roman-style Churchianity had spread throughout Europe reaching as far north as the Scandinavian nations of Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland.

Monasteries provided much of the missionary presence in Europe during the middle ages as the Roman church sought to subject the heathen populace to church dogma. As various lands were conquered and subjugated, monks were sent to establish monasteries from which they could indoctrinate the native peoples. Enhancing that effort, monks also established libraries for general learning and accomplished research in an expressed desire to reduce the misery of the populace through improved agricultural methods etcetera. This latter effort was intended to advertise the love and goodness of God through pragmatic means to win over many of the more recalcitrant.

It is quite probable that many of those monks were true Christians and therefore did their best to inform their charges of the necessity of salvation attainable only in Christ. Unfortunately, the

established Roman Churchianity of that day, based upon works rather than faith, tended to foil their efforts through their own example. Although Roman Churchianity did little to truly convert large numbers to true faith in Christ, it did have a profound effect upon establishing civil order and domesticating many previously heathen populations into a more ingenious people.

North Africa and the Middle East

By the beginning of the second millennium, the Islamic religion had been forced upon many populations of North Africa and the Middle East through conquest. The Roman Catholic Crusades of 1095 to 1272 were ostensibly intended to recover those lands and release Christian populations from the religious oppression they suffered under Islamic rule.[130] Moreover, the Crusades provided an effective opportunity to convert those who had previously accepted Islam to Roman Churchianity. Franciscan and Dominican monks led that conversion effort during the Roman Crusades, and for their diligent efforts, many suffered death at the very hands of those they had sought to convert.

Asia

A people known as the Tartars were in some unknown manner reached with the Christian Faith and soon began to assimilate themselves among the Uighars that controlled trade routes between Europe and China. The Mongol conquests of the 13th century eventually pushed Roman Christianity into China through the exploits of Jenghiz (Genghis) Khan. Jenghiz Khan had married one of his sons to a Christian princess of the Kerait, a ruling family in a region of one of his many conquests. The shamanism of the Mongols quite easily made the transition to the mystic ritualism of Roman Churchianity during the time of the Mongol Empire. As the massive Mongol cavalry went forth to conquer still other areas, Dominicans and Franciscan missionaries went with them first into India whereupon

[130] The Crusades were discussed previously beginning on page 193

they continued to move northward into Russia and east as far as the China Sea. That eastward movement of Roman Churchianity would continue even in Reformation times as Jesuits such as Francis Xavier reached as far east as Japan in the mid 1600's.

A New World to Exploit

Christopher Columbus landed on Guanahani, an island in the Bahamas on the early morning of October 12, 1492. It was immediately renamed San Salvador, meaning "Holy Savior." Within the next few weeks, he also landed on Cuba, that he insisted was part of the Asian mainland, and in Espanola in what is now the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Neither Columbus nor King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain who sent him could have grasped the full significance of the landing because Columbus believed that he was somewhere in the outer region of Asia, not in a new and unexplored world. Nevertheless, Columbus saw his quest as a holy mission. In his own words, "It was the Lord who put it in my mind (I could feel his hand upon me) the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies…The working out of all things has been assigned to each person by our Lord, but it all happens according to his sovereign will, even though he advises men."[131] His given name, Christopher, means "Christ bearer," and his personal goal was to take the Light of Christ to the heathen occupying the land that lay at his journey's end.

Columbus was an able navigator and ship's captain, but as a governor of his own men and native populations on shore, he was a complete failure. All it took was for Satan to place a precious yellow metal, gold, in Columbus' path to entice him to deviate from his self-avowed noble task. Following his success and renown as a founder of a new land that had an abundance of riches, Columbus became even more prideful and arrogant in his actions, all but forgetting his personal goal of carrying the Gospel with him to a pagan population.

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[131] From Columbus' *Book of Prophecies,* translated from the Spanish by August J. Kling 1971 as printed in *The Light and the Glory*, by Peter Marshall and David Manuel Jr., Published by Fleming H. Revell, 1977.

During the return trip home in 1492 to receive the accolades of the King and Queen, his men, who were left behind in a small settlement he named La Navidad in present day Haiti, turned from trading trinkets for gold to merely taking it by force. Following that initial abuse of power, native populations were summarily abused, their lands were plundered, and their women were raped. Native populations that had previously been friendly resisted and turned violent.

Rather than bringing the true light of Christ's salvation to the new world all that Columbus had succeeded in bringing to it was a corrupted form of Catholic Churchianity that was forced upon native populations in order to put them under Spanish servitude. What Europe had received in exchange was the curse of gold fever and the dreaded disease of syphilis. On his deathbed in 1506, Columbus had to admit his mission failure before his Lord in whose presence he would very soon kneel.

Certainly much of the extended missionary effort by the Roman Catholic Church was fueled by the desire of the rulers of European nations under their influence to gain the riches of submissive subjects and to occupy and rape the lands such expeditions afforded. The conquest and exploitation of native populations soon became far more important than was the propagation of Christianity as a noble goal. Those cruel conquests in the new world left a bloodbath in its wake. Nevertheless, Roman Churchianity requiring religious submission to the church was seen as a means to gain control over native populations in the aftermath of such conquests. While this motivation was hardly faithful to the Great Commission, many indigenous people of many lands were introduced to Jesus Christ in name if not actually converted through genuine faith.

North America

Florida

In 1512, Juan Ponce de Leon was authorized to explore the islands of Bimini located somewhere north of Cuba where there was rumored to be a fountain that cured illnesses and perpetually maintained youth. Ponce De Leon's expedition landed in Florida, so

named because they took possession of the land in the name of the Spanish king on Easter — *Pascua Florida* meaning "flowery Easter."

When it was discovered that French Protestants were already in Florida, Spain responded with orders to take control of the region. The Spanish attacked in force causing many of the French who had fled inland to be slain by the indigenous population. Others were put to the sword by the attackers saving only women and children that were under 15 years of age. As an outcome of the Spanish conquest, the city of St. Augustine was founded in 1565, whereupon it soon became the center of Spanish operations in the new world.

In 1763, the British gained control of Florida through the *Treaty of Paris*. Nearly all of the Spanish population of St. Augustine vacated the city. British rule ended in 1783 as a consequence of still another *Treaty of Paris* proclamation in which the Spanish regained control. Spanish Catholic dominance in Florida would not completely come to an end until 1819 when the Spanish ceded all of Florida to the United States in the Treaty of Adams-Onís to settle certain civil claims and border disputes. By 1821, Florida had become a United States territory.

Mexico

When Hernando Cortez marched into the Aztec empire in 1521, he zealously destroyed pagan idols of the various tribes he visited in the hopes of implanting symbols of Catholicism in their place. (1521 was the same year in which Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms in defense of the reformed faith). The most prominent Aztec city, covering about five square miles, was known as Tenochtitlan. It was built upon a low island in the middle of a swampy basin upon which modern-day Mexico City is constructed. Tenochtitlan had an indigenous population known as the Mexica that numbered around 200,000 at the time of Cortez. The commercial needs of the city were served by a huge market place supplied with goods through many intersecting canals. The edges of the island city were adorned with colorful floating gardens, and magnificent palaces and temples stood within a special religious district of the city.

Although the splendor of the city impressed Cortez greatly, it did not prevent him from destroying it.

California

After the initial conquest of the Aztec empire, the Spanish began moving northward in search of a sea passage connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific and the legendary "Seven Golden Cities" of which some of the natives had spoken. The Baja peninsula was soon discovered, and from there, migration continued northward into what is present-day California implanting Catholicism there.

The Great Lakes Region

Beginning in 1611, Jesuit missionaries began to move out from Quebec Canada and eventually reached south and westward to the Great Lakes and into the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. The French and English were in a constant struggle for control in the area west of the Alleghenies. The French explorers, Marquette and Joliet, so impressed some of the Indian tribes with their bravery and resourcefulness that they were willing to join forces with the French against the English. After defeat of the French in the French and Indian War of 1754–63, French Catholic influence was essentially ended south of Canada.

Louisiana

Later, the *Louisiana Purchase* in 1803 encompassing some eight hundred thousand square miles essentially ended all French Catholic influence in the continental area that is now the United States with the exception of a few parishes around New Orleans. Settled originally by the French, that area had come into the possession of Spain by a secret treaty, then to the British, and finally to the French again — forced by the French emperor Napoleon I. President Thomas Jefferson of the United States saw the build up of French troops to the south as threatening to his young nation and sent James Monroe to Paris to negotiate a deal to purchase all or part of it. Inasmuch as the French population at Santa Domingo had been virtually decimated by Yellow Fever, and the threat of war with the British seemed inevitable,

Napoleon negotiated with the United States to sell the entire territory for fifteen million dollars.

Maryland

As the Reformation Movement reached England, devout Roman Catholics felt the pressure of semi-Protestant Anglicanism. When a Catholic nobleman, George Calvert, first baron of Baltimore, obtained a land grant from King Charles I of England, the colony of Maryland was established in the 1630's. The primary purpose of the colony was to provide a place in the New World for Roman Catholics to settle and worship without interference. However, the new government was established in such a way that it allowed for religious tolerance in the colony. Eventually, Roman Catholics became outnumbered by other separatists; nevertheless, English Roman Catholicism had found a strong foothold in the English Colonies.

South America

Columbia

Columbus had previously visited South America on his second voyage. The conquest of the coast of present-day Colombia was begun in 1508, but it failed. In 1525, Colombia was begun anew with the founding of Santa Marta under the benevolent and humane leadership of Rodrigo de Bastidas. However, when Rodrigo was forced out by other settlers, a wave of terror started up against the native population trying to force them to disclose the location of El Dorado, a legendary treasure city.

The Spanish soon moved westward founding Cartagena and south founding Santa Fe de Bogotá. The Spanish church was transplanted in Colombia with the establishment of various bishoprics and the introduction of the Spanish Inquisition to force compliance. The inquisition in the new world was used primarily against wayward Spaniards and some English that were beginning to appear in the region. Only in extreme cases was the inquisition used against the natives or black slaves imported as free labor from Africa.[132]

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[132] *The Story of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 391

Peru

The Incas controlled the western part of South America, an area that the Spaniards eventually called Peru. The Incas put up a determined and energetic defense against the Spanish invasion that was led by Francisco Pizarro. As during other Spanish exploits, some of the Spanish settlers raised a cry of protest over the way the native population was being decimated inasmuch as it was eliminating the indigenous slave workforce. This issue caused the Spanish to fight among themselves. It was eventually necessary for Spain to send reinforcements to quell the rebellion. The Inca territory was ultimately conquered through the audacious and brutal exploits of Pizarro.

The enormous wealth of Peru corrupted many of the friars who in other areas had made sacrificial efforts to minister among the native people. There were many rumors of licentiousness and greed. Although all of the native population was forced into the church, there was no protest at all when it was decided to establish separate churches for the Spanish and the natives. The areas that are now Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay were the last to be occupied by the invading Spanish.

Brazil

Soon after the discoveries of Columbus, the Pope had apportioned the entire non-Christian world between the nations of Spain and Portugal. Portugal had been apportioned the continent of Africa and the Orient. That line was drawn north to south down the Atlantic Ocean giving Spain the territories to the west of it. It was not at first realized that the eastern-most tip of South America projected over the line of demarcation. In 1500, a Portuguese squadron sailing for the Orient around the tip of Africa was forced westward by contrary winds and by chance spotted what is now Brazil jutting over the line. [133]

A later exploration of Brazil led to the conclusion that the primary source of wealth to be found in the area was brazilwood that

[133] *The Story of Christianity,* Volume 1, page 403, 409

could be used for making dyes. Later, when brazilwood became scarcer, attention was turned to sugar cane that could be easily grown in the region and brought high prices in Europe. Sugar, requiring intensive labor, resulted in the natives being enslaved for the work force. The Jesuits founded missions close to the native population in Brazil so that they could be enlisted in serving the plantations. Natives soon proved an insufficient work force as many had died or fled to the interior. As a result, African slaves were imported to make up the loss in the same way that the Spanish had imported them earlier.

Native Adaptations of Catholicism

Native South American populations soon came to believe that their gods had been defeated by the superior Christian god and so requested to be baptized in order to enlist the favor of the more powerful god on their own behalf. The general requirements for baptism and entry into the church were simply that they expressed acceptance of the fact that there was only one god and recognized that Jesus was their redeemer. In addition, they were required to memorize and recite the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. The rote recitations were meaningless to the natives and were often dispensed with after their initial submission.

The earlier violence carried out against them by the Spaniards and Portuguese was not forgotten by the natives just because they received baptism of course; nor were they truly converted. Over time, their own concept of the “Christian god” was recreated from various parodies of their own ancient gods, and many of their pagan rituals were assimilated into cultic rituals that combined earlier errors of Catholicism with their own. They made Jesus over into a deliverer-god that would come and rescue them from their present state of enslavement much as would many African slaves in North America at a later date.

In Brazil, for instance, the natives’ reaction to slavery was to develop a messianic cult that combined both Christian and pagan elements. When a smallpox outbreak killed thousands of them, they began to speak of a savior whom they called "Santo" that would come and free them from Portuguese enslavement. This new religion,

referred to as "Santidade,"[134] bridged the gap between natives that were enslaved under the Portuguese and those who were living free as fugitives in the jungle.

Failure of all this effort by both the Spanish and the Portuguese to genuinely Christianize the southern continent is very disappointing, but quite predictable, since conversion comes about only by the grace of God, not by the forceful efforts of men. That blending of an already corrupted form of Christianity with elements of new world paganism explains the spiritual condition and racial makeup of Central and South America to the present day. Even on the island of Hispaniola (Espanola), one of the places on which Christopher Columbus first set his foot in the new world, we find that half the people of the nation of Haiti continue to practice the witchcraft and ancient animism of Voodoo that is now well merged into the island traditions of Catholicism.

[134] *The Story of Christianity,* volume 1, page 410

Section 18 Reformed Church History

The Reformation Movement

Reformation Sweeps Europe

The Age of Revival

Early Protestant Missions Movement

Birth of a Christian Nation

Religious Impact of the Civil War

Radicalization of the Faith

Chapter 18.1 The Reformation Movement

As we shall discover, there were many instigations for the reform effort. First among those was Holy Scripture itself, especially the Pauline epistles, and the earlier teachings of Augustine. However, the reform effort had less theological foundations as well, such as the Renaissance Movement, humanism, spirituality, and a growing sense of nationalism. Lastly and even more significant was the dogmatic decadence of the Roman church that fueled the fires of revolt against its authoritarian dominance.

The so called "Babylonian Captivity"[135] at Avignon France, the problem of having two or more simultaneously serving Popes, as well as other evidences of church degeneration such as immorality of the clergy, church interference in state civil matters, the sale of indulgences (discussed below) and church offices, and high papal taxes made the need for reform obvious even from the weakest Christian perspective.

By the late twelfth century, the concept of the apostolic "rule of faith," first stated by Irenaeus and Tertullian[136], had become a highly formalized tradition that had become infiltrated with paganism and other errors contributed to it by corrupt church leaders over the centuries. As a result, a great disparity existed between the clear teaching of Scripture and many of the traditional teachings of the Roman church.

Furthermore, it could be seen that various church practices such as the Mass and the Eucharist had become corrupt distortions of earlier Christian gatherings and practices that could no longer be substantiated by Scripture. Unfortunately, those distortions went largely unrecognized by the laity inasmuch as the Scriptures were not readily available to them for personal study. The Roman church had

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[135] See Pope Clement V (1305–1314), page 189

[136] See Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–200?), page 114 and Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160–213?), page 119

forbidden the possession of Bibles by the laity in any form at the Council of Toulouse in 1229 — the only exception being the Psalms and short quotations that were contained in official Roman church literature.

There was a tremendous need to rethink church tradition in the light of the clear teaching of Scripture. In order to do so, however, it was necessary that translations of the Scriptures be made available in the common vernacular — a necessity highly resisted by the corrupt Roman church since it would undermine its established authority as the only legitimate interpreter of Scripture through supposed apostolic succession[137].

Arguments leading up to the Reformation

Reform would not come easily and it would not come rapidly. The major Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace alone through the sovereign choice of God alone was considered heresy by the institutionalized Roman church. The two sides of the argument are best evidenced by examining the views of two prominent men of that time.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)

Aquinas was known as the "dumb ox" because of his slowness of speech that served to disguise his brilliant mind. Aquinas attempted to synchronize the philosophical teachings of Aristotle with Roman doctrine. Human reason, he argued, was the final judge over all matters, since man was not a subservient religious creature, but a rational animal. Thomism, as this philosophy was called, denied man's total depravity and dependence upon God. Thomism was officially adopted by the Roman church because it stressed salvation through works, which paralleled its own doctrines of submissiveness and obedience to the Roman Church through the sacraments over the Pauline doctrine of salvation that is all of grace.

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[137] See Apostolic Succession, page 111

William of Ockham (1285–1349)

Ockham, a Franciscan Friar, English logician and considered to be the author of *Ockham's Razor*,[138] refuted Aquinas proving logically from Scripture that man was in a state of total depravity and unable to achieve the glory of God through human effort. Therefore, he argued that human reason could never bring a man to salvation and to God. The truths of Christianity must be accepted on faith alone. He attacked any doctrine that exceeded the text of Scripture and in doing so refuted the Pope's absolute authority over the church. Although his arguments were more an intellectual exercise than it was an insistence upon doctrinal reform, it can be seen that he was in essence stating the essential doctrines of the later reformation movement.

The arguments of Ockham and others against the basis of Thomism and its unsubstantiated dogma merely set the stage for the real battle that was yet to come.

Early Reformers

Even before the Protestant Reformation Movement actually began in earnest, many Bible-oriented groups and their leaders on the fringes of the Roman Catholic Church began pressing for serious reform.

The Waldenses (ca. 1176)

Among those groups were the Waldenses, originated by a wealthy French merchant, Peter Waldo, in southern France and in northern Italy. They rejected the exclusive authority of the clergy to interpret the Gospel, rejected the celebration of the Mass, denied that one could pray for the dead in purgatory, and taught the exclusive authority of the Holy Scriptures. They accordingly interpreted and preached the Scriptures for themselves as they rejected all extra-biblical doctrines. They emphatically rejected the authority of the Pope

[138] Ockham's Razor is a principle of logic that states that the simplest solution to a problem is the correct one. This is derived at by "shaving off" any extraneous assumptions that do not seriously affect the basic hypothesis or theory.

and denied that they were subject to his decrees or excommunication. They further rejected the role of the priesthood as a mediator that separated laity from direct access to the throne of God. Today, there are still churches of the Waldenses to be found in Italy, South America, and the United States.

John Wycliffe (1329–1384)

John Wycliffe, an Oxford scholar came from the north of England and became a leading philosopher of his day. He offended the church by backing the right of government to seize the property of corrupt clergymen. He later translated the Bible into English and spoke against Papal authority. He spoke for the peoples' right to read the Holy Scriptures, and among other things spoke against transubstantiation and the Mass. He sought to show that papal pretensions and everything else that was extra-biblical were actually dangerous to true Christianity. In doing this, he anticipated the reformation; however, the closest he ever came to restoring the Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith was his *Treatise on the Eucharist* in 1381.

His followers were called Lollards, which may mean "mutterer" or "mumbler." Again, we see a derogatory term being applied to a movement that permanently affixed itself. The Lollards in many ways prepared the way for the coming forth of Lutheranism in the next century.

John (Jan) Hus (ca. 1369–1415)

John Hus, founder of the United Brethren or Moravians, was a strong advocate of Czech nationalism. Hus emphasized personal piety and purity of life and his immediate followers were known as Hussites. Ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1400, he taught in the Charles University of Prague. All of his sermons given in the university's Bethlehem Chapel were delivered in Czech instead of Latin, as was the Roman tradition.

Like John Wycliffe, he stated that the true church consists only of the elect, excluding the unregenerated masses. He stressed the role of Scripture as having absolute authority in the church. He wrote

extensively, and in his chief work *On the Church,* he defined the church as the body of Christ with Christ as its ***only*** head. He criticized his people for worshipping images, believing in false miracles, and undertaking superstitious pilgrimages to Rome.

John Hus also spoke against the sale of indulgences, spoke against the worship of saints, spoke against worship in languages foreign to local church assemblies, and sought various other reforms in the church as well. For expounding his unrelenting views, he was excommunicated in 1411 and was burned at the stake as a heretic on July 6, 1415.

Girolamo Savonarola (ca. 1452–1498)

Savonarola, a Dominican Friar, spoke in the streets of Florence Italy against Papal vice. He was a moral reformer, and among his first acts was to make sodomy punishable by death. In what was known as the "Bonfire of Vanities" various items that were considered to be symbolic of moral laxity such as mirrors, cosmetics, various paintings, books, and even fine clothing were gathered door-to-door and burned in bonfires. Savonarola transformed Florence from a lax, corrupt, pleasure-loving place into a virtual monastery. In 1497 however, a revolt broke out beginning among the youth that reopened taverns and gambling establishments even as the general populace became disillusioned with Savonarola's moral dictatorship.

Savonarola had predicted the ascendance of King Charles VIII, and when the French invasion forces appeared in 1494 and began marching across the Italian peninsula, he began to be looked upon as having a supernatural gift of prophecy by the general populace. He interpreted Scripture contrary to the teaching of Rome, and denounced Pope Alexander VI as the head of a corrupt papal court, which eventually led to his martyrdom. He was excommunicated by Pope Alexander VI in 1497, charged with heresy and seditious teaching which carried the death sentence. In 1498, he and two of his companions were hanged and their bodies were burned.

The Anabaptist Movement

Closely associated with early efforts at reform was the practice of re-baptizing believers. The Anabaptists got their name from their practice of re-baptizing their members upon their confession of faith thus necessarily excluding the baptism of infants. (The prefix "ana" means "again"). The name, Anabaptist, was a term of reproach given them that the movement did not accept since it only very narrowly expressed their views though it is still commonly used to identify them.

It was believed that the baptism that had been received in the Roman church was administered under corrupt circumstances and was therefore void of meaning. The mode[139] of adult baptism (i.e. affusion or immersion) varied from group to group, but all required a confession of faith as a prerequisite. Under men such as John Hus, the practice of re-baptism also signified a complete break with the authority of the Roman church. Various groups began to practice re-baptism of adults, although some considered that such practice was unnecessary seeing baptism as being an effectual symbol of faith regardless of the circumstances under which it was administered.

The Renaissance Movement

A "revival" of secular learning was going on throughout Europe simultaneously with the religious reform effort. It had begun in Italy during the fourteenth century and then spread into northern Europe during the sixteenth century where it continued throughout the seventeen century. Historians call that period the Renaissance Period. Renaissance means "new life" and is applied to the new life that was given to many of the old Roman and Greek disciplines that had faded out in the middle ages upon the collapse of the Roman empire into the Roman Church. While there are many modes of the Renaissance Movement that can be described as scientific, literary, artistic,

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[139] Modes of ritual baptism are discussed extensively in Chapter 15.3 of Book II of this work.

architectural etcetera, we have simply divided the movement into profane and religious phases here for our purposes.

Humanism

Underlying all modes of the Renaissance Movement was the ancient philosophy of humanism. Humanism is the natural religion of fallen man. Although many modern-day humanists deny its religious nature considering it to be an anti-religion or referring to it merely as a "life stance," religion in its very basic sense can be defined as a common code of ethics that is used to establish a moral context in which to conduct the affairs of human life. Humanism is a philosophy of life that is centered upon the worship of the race of homo-sapiens as the ultimate entity about which and for which everything else exists. So much so that humanism looks upon society as the ultimate concern of a benevolent mankind to nurture it and control it through human reasoning.

It sees a human rational elite as having the ultimate responsibility and authority to perpetuate human dignity, well being, and longevity of life through fundamental societal changes.[140] In claiming that authority for man himself, humanism denies the possibility of any external authority over mankind by a supernatural agency such as an almighty God. In that sense, all humanists are atheists, though not all atheists are humanists inasmuch as many of them may not have any concern for their fellow men at all, but are fully egocentric.

Although the roots of humanism goes far back to Adam's fall, in which he sought to determine for himself what was good and what was evil rather than deferring that judgment to God, humanism in its modern form came about through the Renaissance Movement. During that time, many humanist organizations were founded that became the basis for many modern-day philanthropic and benevolent fraternities

[140] It should be noted that these tenets of thought are highly compatible with political governance through socialism. See Atheistic Humanism, page 510 and Socialism, page 517

and organizations. It was during the Reformation Movement that the legitimate benevolent aspects of Christianity to exhibit concern for our fellow man's spiritual need to turn to God for eternal salvation became mixed with humanist tenets that were swept up together in the greater Protestant Movement.

Today, we find many churches teaching and/or practicing humanism wherein the supposed worth of mankind is being extolled over the worship of God. The true Gospel is taking the back seat to a social gospel.[141] While the Gospel is concerned with the saving of a man's soul, the social gospel is only concerned with the comfort of his mortal life here on earth. This practice of humanism is particularly true of the many liberal churches of Protestantism such as the Unitarian/Universalist thought and Deism, although in more recent years it has begun to dominate the daily activities of mainline denominational churches as well as making its way into independent and conservative churches. Today, humanism is falsely being extolled as a fundamental Christian virtue, rather than the anti-Christian belief in the inherent worth of mankind apart from God, which is its sole basis of belief.

The acceptance of humanism into Christian thought and practice has largely come about due to the temporal church's rapid drift away from the diligent study of Scripture, as the absolute and sole authority for living our lives, toward Churchianity in which the temporal church and its congregation are being worshiped on a par with or far above Christ. The love for Christ and the love for those within the body of Christ have been replaced with a numbing tolerance of evil in those who are seen as fellow men and women in the universal brotherhood of mankind. Churches are teaching that we should unconditionally love fallen mankind no matter how debased they may be. The desire to be loved by a fallen world in return for that benevolence overrules the church's obedience to Christ. Although we are to pray for our enemies, and not return evil for evil deeds committed against us, it does not follow that we should participate in

[141] See The Social Gospel (ca. 1890–), page 360

their rebellion against God in order to win acceptance, but rather to reach out to them with the true life-changing Gospel regardless of the cost to ourselves in doing so.

Profane Phase

The early Italian phase of the highly humanistic Renaissance Movement in the 1300's was particularly corrupting morally. Perhaps it should be obvious that this reaction would occur closest to the Roman church center as the lid was blown off Christian ethics in reaction to Roman Churchianity, oppression, and corruption. The movement began with the rediscovery of ancient classical documents, disciplines, and ancient art, combined with various new scientific advancements.

Along with this reconsideration of the secular past came a new way of thinking, emphasizing knowledge for knowledge sake that most often negatively impacted religious faith. As many people became interested in acquiring truth apart from any established church dogma of that day, there were no Scripture texts readily available to guide them to that truth inasmuch as the Roman church had prohibited the publishing and private ownership of sacred text. As a result, the profane phase became completely humanistic in its tenets as it elevated man and his rational thought processes to the exclusion of any possibility of the existence of the supernatural. Christ was therefore rejected along with the authority of the corrupted dogma of the Roman church with which He had become falsely identified.

Religious Phase

Although the early Renaissance movement was humanistic in its tenets, the later phase as it spread into northern Europe aided the beginnings of religious reform by developing a thirst for ***religious Truth*** among the faithful. That resulted in a questioning of the church's dogmas and positions on various spiritual matters as it did in the earlier phase. For many, it must be admitted, the questioning of established traditional thinking could have driven them to doubt the Gospel itself and so become reprobate in their faith. However, it can be readily argued that these were already reprobate and were merely

existing as pretenders within a church framework of dogma and ceremony.

Unlike its corrupting effect in Italy, the thirst for knowledge drove many to read and interpret the Latin Scriptures, that were more available in Europe, ignoring the Papal edict against private study. That soon led to a demand for Bibles translated out of the Latin into the vernacular of the general populace in order to satisfy this newfound desire for Truth in various nations as that thirst spread.

Renaissance Aided by Technology

Aiding both the Profane and Religious phases of the Renaissance was an advanced technology in printing known as the "movable type" press that was invented by Johann Gutenberg (ca. 1397–1468) at Mainz Germany in 1440. Not only could books be set up and printed more rapidly, they could also be produced with far less expense than with older methods of printing. The first book to be printed on the press was the Bible, a printing of the *Latin Vulgate*,[142] in 1456. This edition was commonly called the Gutenberg Bible after its publisher. In addition to the Bible, many other secular as well as religious writings were published and printed on the press in the years to follow that accelerated both worldly and religious learning. From just a few thousand books existing before the invention of movable type, it has been estimated that 10 million printed books were in existence in Europe by the year 1500.

Many of the writings of Martin Luther[143], whom we shall discuss later, including his translation of the Bible in the German language, were printed on the new press and were widely distributed. The fact that many men could then have the Bible as well as many other religious writings in their own hands to read and study had a remarkable effect on the Reformation Movement. As a result of the direct contact of man's new-found thirst for knowledge with God's

[142] See Jerome (ca. 341–420), page 165

[143] See Martin Luther (ca. 1483–1546), page 225

Word in the Scriptures, the need for church reform was not only becoming obvious, it was soon seen as imperative. Through that means, God had set the stage for the explosion of the great Protestant Reformation Movement that was to follow.

Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1466–1536)

No one person energized the Religious phase of the Renaissance, as did Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, Holland. He is often referred to as a "Christian humanist,"[144] and is often considered the last of the forerunners to the Reformation Movement. He was ordained a priest in 1492, the same year that Columbus[145] discovered the Americas for Spain. He was a monk of the Augustinian order, but soon left the monastery because he saw himself unsuited for the regimented and solitary life it required of him. Erasmus subsequently published a series of works that ridiculed monasticism.

When he went to France to study theology in 1495, he found that he was more interested in the ancient classics than the repugnant theological teaching he heard there. He became familiar with French humanism through a circle of friends that he met in Paris, and still later, while in England, he was drawn even more toward the philosophy of what was referred to as "Christian humanism." He contrasted what he perceived as the old ignorance of dogmatic theology with the enlightenment of the new learning of the age.

Through his teaching Erasmus had a great influence on the thinking of many of the later reformers including Zwingli[146] in Switzerland and Luther[147] in Germany of whom he was a

[144] "Christian Humanism" is actually an oxymoron inasmuch as Christianity exalts the supremacy of God, while humanism exalts the supremacy of man through his sense of reason. The term is an attempt to combine two tenets of thought that are mutually exclusive and cannot be blended.

[145] See A New World to Exploit, page 205

[146] See Huldreich (Ulrich) Zwingli (1484–1531), page 234

[147] See Martin Luther (ca. 1483–1546), page 225

contemporary. As many of his fellow monks later said of him, "he laid the egg which Luther hatched." He further assisted the reformation when he published his *Praise of Folly* expressing his contempt for Roman decadence and further advancing his humanist perspective. He also published a Greek New Testament in 1516 contrary to Roman church prohibition. Although Erasmus was undoubtedly much more a humanist than he was a Christian, his eagerness to analyze and question Roman Catholic dogma as contrasted with Scripture bolstered the move toward church reform. So it was, that Erasmus, the great humanist, unwittingly sowed the seeds for the great Protestant Reformation Movement.

In a human sense, the Reformation Movement was fueled by three sets of circumstances. First was a thirst for personal knowledge of genuine Truth aside from all the old traditions that no longer seemed trustworthy. Secondly, it was reinforced by the availability of Scripture translated into their native tongue and a deep desire to read God's truth for oneself. Thirdly, a growing sense of nationalism, particularly by the emerging nations in northern Europe, facilitated a break with Rome politically and ultimately with Roman Catholicism.

Martin Luther (ca. 1483–1546)

On November 10 1483, Martin Luther was born to peasant parents, Hans and Margaretta, in Eisleben, Germany. His father, Hans, became a miner and then later became the owner of as many as six foundries. Martin was strictly indoctrinated in the Roman Catholic faith and was educated in church schools. In the university at Erfurt, he was taught in Ockhamist[148] philosophical reasoning that excluded Christian truths as being based upon faith alone. Martin received the M.A. degree from Erfurt in 1505 and then, at his father Hans' insistence began a study of law.

Martin Luther was haunted by persistent thoughts of man's ultimate destiny, seeing eternal damnation as the outcome of man's inability to live up to God's laws. When returning to his university

[148] See William of Ockham (1285–1349), page 216

from his home in the summer of 1505, a bolt of lightning, striking nearby, killed his companion and hurled Martin to the ground. Luther, frightened, and seeing this as God's threat of vengeance, cried out to Saint Anne, the patron saint of miners, for help. He promised to become a monk in exchange for her protection. As a direct result of that promise, he entered the strict Augustinian order soon after to the utter dismay of his father. In 1506, Luther took his final vows, and in 1507 was ordained a priest.

Martin Luther was transferred by the order to Wittenberg, Germany in 1508 where he became a teacher of physics, logic, and theology in the University of Wittenberg. He continued to advance in his teaching career and also preached in the church. Nonetheless, Luther was to find that none of his meticulous efforts could prevail against his inner feeling of God's damnation hanging over him. Roman Catholic doctrine required him to repeatedly confess all of his sins to the church, but Luther found it impossible to confess sins he either could not remember having committed, or sins that he had not even recognized as such when he committed them. While Luther accepted the complete sovereignty of God, he felt that God was impetuous in choosing some and rejecting others before they were born. Luther was in a persistent state of depression as he increasingly saw the fire of God coming to consume him for his sins. There was conviction of sin, but there was no means of deliverance from sin's hold on him.

The Just Shall Live by Faith

In 1512, Luther was appointed to the chair of Biblical Studies at the University of Wittenberg. It was while he was diligently studying Paul's epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians that he finally concluded that man's salvation depended totally upon the grace of God, made available to him through the atoning work of Christ: "the just shall live by faith" (Ro.1:17)! At first Luther struggled with the word "justification" which in the *Latin Vulgate* meant, to be "made just." Luther knew he could not live up to this expectation of perfection. However, when he went back to the Greek text he

understood the word to mean, "declared just." That was a marvelous revelation to Luther, and the answer to his dilemma.

In Christ, he saw God not as one who seeks to condemn men, but as God who seeks to redeem men and through that act of grace declare them just in his sight! He now realized that salvation from sin and judgment came as the result of believing and accepting what God had done through the sacrificial atonement afforded by Christ and in merely trusting that God would do what He had promised! The Pauline doctrine of an altogether gracious salvation was once again being restored, as he zealously desired to impart that knowledge to others through his teaching.

Luther had rediscovered the important Pauline distinction between law and grace, but in doing so, Luther had come to a position that was diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Such a distinction would undermine the authority of the Pope and loose the hold of legality that the Roman church had over men. The church taught that man had the ability to earn his right to salvation by keeping the Ten Commandments and obeying the dictates of the Roman church. They further taught that human works beyond simple obedience merited special favor before God. Luther saw that any such works, done in an attempt to win God's favor, were self-condemning since they were done with the expectation of a reward. Such human works were based on man's greed and sense of self-interest and so were condemning acts in themselves.

The Ninety-Five Theses

The now famous "ninety-five theses" that were posted on the door of the Castle church in Wittenberg on October 31 1517 was according to the custom of that day that invited debate by theologians on the topic at hand. That invitation to debate was unusual only as regarding the topical matter. This document was referred to as the ninety-five theses not because Luther had numerically listed ninety-five separate accusations against the Roman Catholic Church, but because it contained ninety-five paragraphs for discussion. The main topics concerned purgatory, confession, repentance, indulgences,

and the authority of the Roman church or the Pope to remit sins or affect the spiritual condition of those who had died.

Luther was outraged by the efforts of a Dominican monk, Johann Tetzel who extracted money from the populace by selling "indulgences" that were papers signed by the Catholic Pope (Leo X). Indulgences were essentially an absolution from all committed sin that was actually a certificate signed by the Pope and purchased by the making of a contribution to the church or the Pope. Some could also be earned by serving on crusades or by engaging in attacks against "heretics."

Later, the indulgences were even said to have the power to release the dead from torment in Purgatory and in effect purchase their way into Heaven. Church buildings and massive cathedrals were built by the raising of funds in that manner. Such indulgences were guaranteed to free dead sinners from Purgatory as well as confer forgiveness of sins for the living. We can see that indulgences, in effect, became a "license to sin" for those who bought them for themselves.

Luther further denied any possibility of the Pope having jurisdiction over Purgatory. The idea of Purgatory itself is a Roman Catholic fabrication that has no basis in Scripture. In effect, it is described as a place where, through tortures and severe anguish, the souls of men who have died pay for sins that they have committed upon earth and for which sins penance had not been paid in full on earth. Even the saved must pay for the sins that were ***not*** confessed to the Roman church by means of the confessional, but also for sins that ***were*** confessed in order to ***complete*** the payment for mortal sins. Purgatory, then, was seen not only as a place of punishment for sins committed, but also as a means of final purification from all sin. Those in Purgatory are unable to enter Heaven until every evil deed is paid for in full through their own suffering. The implication of this false doctrine is that Jesus did not pay our sin debt in full.

Luther denied that there was any relationship between the paying of money to the church and the remission of sins. He further denied any possibility of the Pope having jurisdiction over Purgatory even if such a place existed since the temporal church's authority must

end when one died. While Luther may have had many influential allies in those two matters alone, his further insistence that meritorious living (works) could not ever purchase salvation struck at the heart of Roman Catholic doctrine, and therefore attracted fewer followers.

Luther had openly sent a copy of the 95 theses to Pope Leo. Because they denied Papal infallibility, Leo held that it should be regarded as heresy. Martin Luther now found himself in direct and open opposition to Roman Catholic Church doctrine as well as a head-to-head confrontation with Pope Leo X.

Political Allies

Luther would have been highly vulnerable to immediate heresy proceedings except for the fact that there had been for several centuries a growing German national distrust for the Italian Papacy. As a result, "Fredrick the Wise" of Saxony, who was the prince over Luther's territory as well as a senior member of elders of the Holy Roman Empire, interceded for Luther asking that a full hearing be made of the charges. In order to insure that a fair hearing was made, Fredrick insisted that the hearing be held on German soil. Arrangements were made for a hearing before Cardinal Cajetan who was in Germany at that time. However, as an outcome of that hearing, Cajetan branded Luther a heretic. That meant that Luther would be burned at the stake if he did not recant his statements.

Yet, because Cajetan needed the vote of Fredrick of Saxony as chief of the seven electors who would appoint a successor to Emperor Maximilian of the Holy Roman Empire who had died, he did not press for Luther's execution. Instead, in order to win Fredrick's favor, he permitted Luther to debate John Eck at the university of Leipzig. Eck pointed out that Luther's views sounded very much like the views held by John Hus[149], the Bohemian "heretic," who had been burned at the stake a century earlier. Eck cleverly steered Luther into admitting that he held certain similar points of view with Hus. By that means, Luther was made to identify himself with a "known heretic" and as a consequence of doing so, he branded himself one as well.

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[149] See John (Jan) Hus (ca. 1369–1415), page 217

Again, political considerations intervened to save Luther from the stake. Many German nationals saw Luther as a patriot who was standing against a greedy Italian Papacy. Many powerful parties in Germany aligned themselves to support Luther. We should note that most if not all of his supporters had political rather than religious motives for lending their support. Even the humanists, under the leadership of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, looked upon Luther as a liberator from Roman religious tyranny.

The Papal Bull

The Pope had delayed in prosecuting Luther because of the national uprising over his views. Finally, the proclamation (called a "bull") was delivered to Martin Luther in Wittenberg on October 10, 1520. Martin Luther was officially given sixty days to recant of his "heresy" or suffer death at the stake.

However, Luther had not been idle during the time of the Pope's delay. He had published a series of tracts calling upon the German nobles to reform the church and to reduce the Papacy to material poverty and simplicity. Furthermore, he advocated that national churches handle all temporal affairs. In his tract, *The Babylonian Captivity,* Luther struck out against the sacramental character of the church and her claims to being a theocracy. Luther also attacked the Mass, which claimed to be a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ. He further attacked the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation wherein it was supposed that the bread mysteriously became the flesh and the wine became the blood of Christ.

Luther Becomes a Fugitive

Luther burned the Papal bull in public on December 10, the very day that it expired. The bull of excommunication was issued in January of 1521, but because it contained many other names along with that of Luther, in particular Ulrich von Hutten who had armed forces at his disposal, the bull was not circulated and it did not become effective. When Luther later appeared before the Imperial Council in Worms Germany, Aleander (the papal representative) was forced to accuse Luther of heresy before a primarily lay council with no papal

proclamation at all! Here Luther is said to have stated, "My conscience is captive to the word of God. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me." After some of Luther's supporters had departed, the remaining council placed Luther under the ban of the Empire, which, if it had not been for Frederick, would have resulted in Luther being summarily burned at the stake. Luther was stolen away from his guards in route to prison and hidden by Frederick in the Wartburg castle under the assumed name of Knight George.

It was while he was staying at Wartburg that Luther translated the New Testament from Latin into German. Luther's translation of the New Testament was so masterful that it not only spurred the Reformation to greater heights, but it practically served to standardize the German Language. While Luther was hidden away at Wartburg, the Reformation itself continued to take shape at Wittenberg University under the relatively capable leadership of his colleagues. Nevertheless, violence and civil unrest attended the movement as the artifacts of Romanism were smashed and burned. Thousands died in the conflict. That his words had resulted in such carnage haunted Luther. Luther was compelled to return to Wittenberg on March 6, 1542, though Prince Frederick warned him that he could not protect him there with the ban of the Empire over his head. Luther asking for no protection, but seeing only the force and direction of the Reformation, returned to Wittenberg both to moderate and to organize continuing reform.

The Augsburg Confession

Emperor Charles V invited German rulers and the princes of free cities to meet together in Augsburg in January of 1530 for them to give an account of their religious allegiance in an attempt to restore some degree of religious and political unity in the face of an impending Turkish invasion. Luther was not invited and did not make the trip because he was considered an outlaw, and many who attended the meeting feared that it was a trap. If Charles thought that the German princes would simply fold and submit to his demands to prohibit the teaching of Luther's doctrines and halt the printing of his newly translated German New Testament, he was very much

disappointed. The princes unanimously stood firm for the continuation of both. The document presented later on June 25, 1530 was an early reformed statement of faith known as the *Augsburg Confession*.

In brief, the confession reaffirmed the doctrine of the Trinity, and it affirmed the doctrine of original sin and the incarnation of Christ. It rejected millennialism as well as many of the teachings of the Anabaptist Movement. It opposed dietary restriction and rejected fasting as a means of gaining favor with God. Monasticism was rejected as a means of purification. It limited ecclesiastical power to teaching and the administration of the sacraments. Wine as well as the bread were to be offered to communicants in the Eucharist. Clergy was permitted to marry, opposing Roman Catholic celibacy.

Not surprisingly, much of the traditional Roman Catholic doctrines remained intact in its 28 articles. Although justification was considered to be attained by grace and not by works, sacramentalism as conducted in the Mass was retained as a source of that grace. Salvation was attained by grace through faith ***plus baptism***. Consistently attending Mass was considered appropriate for community worship and receiving the Eucharist, but it was not adjudged to be necessary as an act of works for attaining salvation. Sacraments were to be administered only by those "rightly called" to do so, thus not specifically limiting it to formal clergy. Confession was seen as necessary when seeking absolution of sin, but it should not induce an unreasonable state of guilt or anxiety for believers who may be concerned that not all their sins were confessed publicly.

A National Church Formed

Luther's efforts toward reform had actually founded a national church in Germany — the first of its kind. The Lutheran church ordained its own clergy apart from Rome. However, there was not complete accord within the Lutheran camp after his death. There were those who thought that the reform had not gone far enough in correcting papal and doctrinal error. It was not until agreement was reached through the "*Formula of Concord*" in 1577 that Lutheran theology was stated in definitive terms.

The *Book of Concord* published in 1580 provides the historic standard for the Lutheran Church that consists of ten documents that include, the *Apostles Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, the *Athanasian Creed*, the *Augsburg Confession*, a *Small and Large Catechism of Luther* as well as various other documents written by him. At this point, any additional efforts at reform in Lutheranism became stagnated and much Roman traditional error that should have been addressed had been left intact. By 1660, Lutheranism had spread to the Scandinavian countries, and the thoughts expressed in Lutheranism had found their way into the reform movements of other European nations as well.

Martin Luther, married Katharina von Bora who had previously been a Roman Catholic nun, and he had six children by her. By the grace of God, Luther lived another sixteen years beyond his earlier formulation of the *Augsburg Confession*. During that time, he set himself to the task of rebuilding the church from the wreckage in Germany. Luther wrote many papers and commentaries. His *Bondage of the Will,* which is a collection of letters written to Desiderius Erasmus[150] refuting Erasmus' doctrine of free will, is a classic well worth reading today. His translation of the whole Bible was published in 1534 and was a useful tool in forging the foundations of the Reformation. Yet, in modern Protestant circles, Luther is perhaps best known for his tunes and hymns such as *A Mighty Fortress is our God* that is based upon the forty-sixth Psalm. Luther died of a chronic illness in Eisleben on February 18, 1546, in the same town in which he was born.

[150] See Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1466–1536), page 224

Chapter 18.2 Reformation Sweeps Europe

While our study in the previous chapter has focused on the Reformation Movement in Germany that centered on the man Martin Luther, we should not be so near-sighted as to think that the Reformation was the work of one man or that it was totally contained within Lutheranism. We have already mentioned John Wycliffe and John Hus[151] whose efforts had preceded Luther's by nearly a century. In retrospect, we can see the hand of God working not only in Germany, but in other men and in other emerging nations as well to free men from the yoke of Roman Churchianity.

Reform in Switzerland

Huldreich (Ulrich) Zwingli (1484–1531)

Huldreich Zwingli, a contemporary of Luther, was born in 1484, and was educated in Berne, and Vienna. He was early on attracted to humanism through the influence of Erasmus, as was Luther. Only after his transfer to Einsiedeln did he become focused on evangelical beliefs and abuses of the Roman church. He was made peoples' priest in Zurich in 1518. Marriage being forbidden to priests, he nonetheless married Anna Meyer secretly and had four children by her.

For a while, Zwingli had been a chaplain to Swiss mercenary forces with the effect that he soon opposed the use of mercenaries in warfare altogether. He was greatly influenced over his lifetime by humanistic tenets as is clearly reflected in his theology. In fact, Zwingli rejected much of Lutheranism as well as Catholicism. He wrote a systematic theology and his *Commentary on True and False Religion* published in 1528. He successfully opposed papal indulgences, the Mass, the celibacy of priests, graven images, and other unscriptural errors of the Roman Imperial Church.

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[151] See John Wycliffe (1329–1384), page 217 and John (Jan) Hus (ca. 1369–1415), page 217

Zwingli strongly disagreed with Luther regarding the Eucharist believing that Christ was ***spiritually*** present in the Eucharist whereas Luther denied any direct presence. Because of his break with Luther over this and various other doctrines, he soon lost the support of Germany in his reform efforts. As a result, a Catholic Swiss army was successfully massed against Zurich, and Zwingli was killed in the ensuing battle in 1531. The success of the Catholics in that battle slowed further progress of reform efforts for a time in Switzerland.

Conrad Gebel (1498–1526)

An Anabaptist[152] group headed by Conrad Gebel also appeared about that time in Zurich Switzerland. Although Zwingli had rejected Anabaptism, the adherents of Gebel were a group that had broken off from the followers of Zwingli referred to as the "Swiss Brethren." They desired a more thorough reform effort and therefore a complete break from Catholicism in all respects. In doing so, they rejected infant baptism, and exclusively instituted "believer baptism." They clung to the Holy Scriptures as their sole authority for belief and practice and strongly advocated separation of church and state.

Re-baptism was only a small part of what their movement stood for. However, the requirement for re-baptism effectively declared infant baptism into the Roman Catholic Church void. On January 21, 1525, they made a full break with the Roman church and established the first free church of the reformation era while others of that time were being reformed from Catholicism into national churches.

John Calvin (1509–1564)

In our study of reform in Switzerland, we must not overlook the sometimes-controversial efforts of John Calvin who in 1537 became the organizer and leader of the reformed faith in Switzerland. Calvin's reformed views, as set forth in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is still a "must read" for all serious-minded Christians today.

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[152] See The Anabaptist Movement, page 219

In it, all the reformation truths are enumerated. In addition, Calvin wrote commentaries on all the New Testament books with the notable exception of the book of Revelation, and he wrote commentaries on nearly all the Old Testament books as well.

Birth and Education

Calvin was born in 1509 in Noyon, Picardy, France located about 60 miles northeast of Paris and a short distance from the English Channel. His mother, who was a devout Roman Catholic, died when he was 6 years of age. His father early on intended him to become a priest. Accordingly, Calvin began studying theology at the early age of 11 until his father decided that becoming a lawyer would be a more profitable profession for him to pursue. In the Roman Catholic era of that day, theology and civil law were very closely linked such that he was eventually ordained a lawyer. Calvin was a man who was very reticent about any discussion of his personal life, and like his father before him, he was also very strong-willed.

Conversion and Life Work

After Calvin graduated from the University of Paris, he became interested in and studied the various tenets of humanism that was so prevalent within the Renaissance Movement.[153] However, while in Paris, Calvin also came face-to-face with the teachings of Martin Luther such that he was miraculously converted to the reformed faith in 1533. While sequestered in Angoulême, France he began to assemble his systematic theology known more simply in that day as the *Institutes* which was published in 1536. This brief first edition would be revised four times as new editions were published over his lifetime.

Due to his complete rejection of Roman Catholicism, Calvin was soon forced to leave Roman Catholic France. On his way to Strasbourg near the border of Germany, that he probably intended to cross over in order to study and expand his writings in safety, Calvin stopped overnight at Geneva. There, an early Geneva reformer, a man

[153] See The Renaissance Movement, page 219

named William Farel, forcefully persuaded Calvin to help with the Swiss reformation effort in Geneva.

Geneva at that time had already become a safe haven for reformed believers. The town was ruled by a town council that was subsequently supported by a church consistory composed of Calvin, Farel, and various other reformers. The conservative town board compelled Calvin to formulate strong rules of personal morality, which were initially supported in principle by the town's reformed populace. As the town leaders began to enforce strict rules of morality upon its people however, Calvin became embroiled in various theological and civil controversies that were not of his own making or liking. He was blamed for every strict enforcement to the extent that he soon became detested by the very people that had at first so warmly welcomed him. Congregants would shout him down when he delivered his sermons, while other citizens would fire weapons outside the church building to disturb and disrupt services. Many more sought various other ways to ridicule his teaching and to embarrass and accost him personally.

After eighteen months of this turmoil, both Farel and Calvin were expelled from Geneva by the town board, which by that time had become infested through a town election with libertines and even some Roman Catholics. The expulsion came about because of an argument that arose with them over "fencing the Lord's Table."[154] The town board demanded that the church use a liturgy that they themselves had written and to serve communion to every person living within the town. This was based upon the assumption that all citizens of that Christian town were communicant Christians by virtue of the fact that they lived there. Although expelling Calvin and Farel did not completely end the growing reform that had taken root at Geneva, public morality in the town soon fell to a very low ebb. Civil disorder continued to worsen until in 1541 Calvin was begged by a newly elected town board to return to Geneva under the express promise of full cooperation in restoring order.

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[154] See Book II of this work, Chapter 15.6 The Lord's Supper Today, wherein we discuss restrictions regarding access to the Lord's Table.

Upon his reluctant return to Geneva, Calvin immediately set about organizing the church into separate offices of pastors, teachers, elders and deacons. An appointed council of pastors and elders were granted full authority to gain control over the civil disorder. In 1542, laws were written and approved by the council prohibiting drinking, gambling, dancing, and various immodest forms of dress.[155] Weekly church attendance by all town citizens became mandatory. It also became illegal to publicly criticize Calvin and other church officials thus protecting church officials from the ridicule and harassment that Calvin had experienced earlier. Books that in anyway promoted Catholicism were banned. Infractions of any of these laws ranged from fines to banishment from the town for repeatedly breaking them. Only very serious offences were to be punishable by public execution.

Regaining control was an up-hill battle as the populace still largely resented what they saw as Calvin's strong-handed tactics. Nevertheless, through fully-protected daily teaching and preaching, he was over time able to largely subdue most private objections. In all, Calvin taught in Geneva for a total of 25 years. He later founded the Geneva Academy in 1559, which brought students from all parts of Europe to study the reformed faith — thus spreading the influence of his teaching. One such student was John Knox about whom we shall have more to say later.[156]

Calvin's health failed him as he suffered severe migraines as well as gout and kidney stones, and there were times when he needed to be carried to the church pulpit in a chair from his home. John Calvin died of his maladies on May 27, 1564. Though his body initially lay in state for three days, so many came to view his remains that there was a growing concern that some would see this as elevating Calvin to a virtual state of "Protestant sainthood." As a consequence, his remains were buried in an unmarked grave somewhere in Geneva, as he

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[155] Strict moral laws later found their way into the Puritan movement. See The Puritan Movement, page 250 and , page 273

[156] See John Knox (ca. 1559), page 259

himself had desired and directed.[157] His burial place is still unknown to this day.

Teachings

It is highly recommended that Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* be read and minutely studied in order to fully understand Calvin's views regarding every theological subject, since it is impossible to do justice in this brief historical discussion to the voluminous topics about which he wrote.[158] A few significant issues will be briefly addressed here however.

Calvin strongly emphasized the sovereignty of God that characterized all of his teaching. He taught that a man's salvation is not a matter of chance or blind fate, but that it is predetermined and predestined by God who in Grace extends his mercy to specific men and women of his own choosing out of Adam's condemned offspring. That knowledge should bring about assurance, confidence, comfort and hope in the believer that we could never have if we were left to determine our own destiny.

Calvinism is most certainly not determinism or fatalism[159] as some of his critics would suggest, but it instead only serves to stress our complete dependence upon God for our life, or breath, and our redemption as well. Far better, that the security of our salvation rests in God than in ourselves that He alone may receive all the glory which is his due. As the Apostle Paul said of God, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; …for we are also his offspring" (Ac. 17:28).[160]

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[157] His request was also likely honored because of the Roman Church's practice of searching out the gravesites of supposed heretics whereupon they dug up their bodies, burned their bones, and dispersed the ashes.

[158] We have already discussed a large number of Calvin's views throughout this work, as the subject matter warranted.

[159] See Book I, Chapter 3.2 where determinism and fatalism are contrasted with the biblical doctrine of predestination.

[160] The Calvinistic/Pauline doctrine of the sovereignty of God and salvation that is all

Although highly reformed in his theology regarding salvation, Calvin still clung to the Roman Catholic concept of the absolute supremacy of the temporal church — albeit a thoroughly reformed one. After his earlier experience with the town board in Geneva, Calvin came to strongly reject any secular influence or control of the church by political government. Unlike Luther who rejected only those practices in the church that he saw expressly forbidden by Scripture, Calvin sought a more thorough reform of the church itself. It can be said that Calvin desired to bring the temporal church closer to its Scriptural ideal — the visible Church — though the large swelling numbers of the unsaved within the ranks of the temporal church makes that goal impossible to achieve in practice. [161]

Criticisms

Calvin, like Augustine[162] before him, saw the temporal church functioning as a "mother" in nourishing believers to a complete knowledge of the Truth (*Institutes*, Book 4, Chapter 1, Topic 4). While we must agree that one of the church's main duties is to instruct new believers in the doctrines of Christ that they may attain maturity, Calvin went beyond that when he further stated "…there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly unless she keep us under her care and guidance…" According to this statement, the new birth comes about only through the efforts of the temporal church and salvation remains secure only as long as the believer is under the direct authority of leaders of the temporal church.

That sort of thinking seriously diverges from the Apostle Paul's doctrine of individual salvation by grace alone through a God-

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of grace through faith alone is the basis upon which this entire work rests. In particular, see Book I, Section 3 of this work entitled, *The Sovereignty of God and the Salvation of Man*.

[161] See Book II of this work, Section 11, The Doctrine of the Church.

[162] See Augustine of Hippo (ca. 354–430), page 166

given faith, since church works and obedience to church doctrine are inevitably added to it. The vital role of the Holy Spirit in convicting men of their sins and leading them to salvation in Christ is largely negated on the false assumption that the temporal church can fulfill that role.

Over Calvin's lifetime at Geneva it is estimated that some 76 people had been banned from the town and 58 had been executed for flagrant violations of Geneva's strict moral laws. One man who was executed was Michael Servetus. Servetus was a determined and incessant personal critic of Calvin thus violating the town's strict laws against such harassment. Moreover, he opposed the doctrine of the Trinity along with other important theological doctrines.

Calvin is often strongly criticized for having made no attempt to intervene in his execution, which was carried out by burning at the stake in 1553. It is true that Calvin had established a strong influence in Geneva, but it is highly debatable whether he could have successfully intervened with its civil authorities in direct opposition to the town's own established laws in order to prevent the execution. It is also hard to estimate the adverse effect on continued reform both in Geneva and the world at large if he had successfully done so.

All criticism aside, John Calvin performed a key role in advancing and organizing the great truths of salvation that had been regained in the Reformation Movement. In his final illness before his death he wrote, "God has given me the power to write…I have written nothing in hatred…but always I have faithfully attempted what I believed to be for the glory of God."

Reform in France

France remained firmly in the Roman Catholic camp both religiously and politically as late as the sixteenth century. The sense of nationalism was not strong, and there was no grass-roots support for religious reform from the French populace. After the reformed faith was firmly established in Switzerland, French-speaking Calvinists imported the reformed faith over the border into France in 1555. The movement was highly charged politically, and the times were characterized by great unrest, civil wars, and severe persecutions. Even

so, the movement spread until by 1560 nearly one-third of the French populace had embraced the reformed faith. French Protestants, referred to as "Huguenots" after 1560, created a reformed church in 1559.

They immediately became the targets of extreme persecution from the Papacy, not in small part because their pure and earnest piety was in such sharp contrast with that of the corrupt Roman clergy of the day. Furthermore, France was the Papacy's main source of power and money with as much as half of the real property in France owned by Catholic clergy. Since the Huguenots were a very industrious people that could eventually threaten the source of funds, Pope Pius, in 1557, urged that they all be exterminated.

The King of France was urged on by a Jesuit priest, who was his spiritual advisor, to put them off guard by first pretending to befriend them and once having done so to massacre them all. The resulting King's edict culminated in what is called the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre that occurred on August 24 in 1572 as French soldiers attacked unarmed Protestants in Paris. At least ten-thousand, and perhaps as many as one-hundred thousand, were killed as a result of the slaughter in the first week alone as blood-thirsty mobs joined with the soldiers in committing the carnage.

Many of the more fortunate Huguenots were able to escape into the surrounding countries of Germany, Switzerland and some even across the channel to England. Those that crossed over to areas of England and Ireland eventually migrated to North America in the hopes of finally ending religious persecution. As for France, it fell into ruin as its industrial base collapsed resulting in famine, disease, and abject poverty that would eventually lead to the bloody French revolution.

The Huguenots were essentially pacifists making them easy prey for angry French Catholics, but finally those that remained in France after the massacre did take up arms in self-defense and resisted until in 1598 they were granted religious freedom by the *Edict of Nantes*. That edict was issued by the new Protestant King, Henry IV, who had ascended to the throne. Later however, when King Louis XIV came to the throne in 1685, he revoked that edict and religious

persecution became intense throughout France once again where it continued for centuries thereafter.

Reform in Holland

In Holland, which was firmly linked politically with Roman Catholic Spain, the reform movement was coupled with the further necessity to throw off the yoke of Spanish political control. Holland had a growing Anabaptist[163] population that threatened both the authority of the Roman church and the country's domination by Spain. In 1535, a declaration by Charles V of Spain declared that all Anabaptists were to receive "death by fire." All reading or even possession of Bibles, whether translations or the *Latin Vulgate*, were prohibited. Under Philip II, Charles' son, more than 100,000 people were massacred by means of a Spanish Inquisition with the aid of the zealot Jesuit order. Many incredible atrocities were committed as the Protestant population was systematically slaughtered.

Menno Simons (1496–1562)

Menno Simons was born in a little town in Holland, and served for 12 years as a Roman Catholic priest. Through careful study of the Bible, Menno became converted to the reformed faith and was re-baptized as a believer in 1536. An imperial edict was issued by Charles V making him a fugitive. In spite of that, Menno traveled about to various small towns preaching, and wrote extensively about his beliefs. He is often credited with having saved the Anabaptist movement through his efforts. His followers were called Mennonites after his death.

After Holland obtained its independence from Roman Catholic Spain, an edict of toleration was issued on January 26, 1577, though Mennonites were still often persecuted by individual Roman Catholics and even by devout Calvinists because of their differing views over Soteriology.[164] Political freedom for the Reformed churches was not

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[163] See The Anabaptist Movement, page 219

[164] Doctrines concerning the means of receiving salvation

granted until 1581. Various division of thought developed among the Mennonites over time resulting in the emergence of various sects in the sixteenth and seventeenth century including the Amish, led by Jacob Ammann in the late 1690s.

Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609)

It was also in Holland that we first see the doctrine of Arminianism[165] rise to seriously challenge the Pauline doctrine of God's sovereignty in election that was expounded so well by John Calvin. Martin Luther had also expressed that same teaching previously in his *Bondage of the Will*. Although the Mennonites and others generally ascribed to an anti-Calvinistic view, it was Jacobus Arminius (a.k.a. James Arminius, or Jacob Arminius) a theology professor in Leiden University who brought the conflict to a head. He completely rejected Calvinism stating that divine grace is resistible, and that the atonement is unlimited.

After Arminius' death in 1609, his followers formulated a statement consisting of five major points regarding Arminius' views that was then formally submitted as a remonstrance against existing Calvinistic doctrines being taught in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. In general, those Arminian views included partial depravity, election based on foreseen faith, universal atonement, resistible grace, and the possibility of a fall from grace once received. Those views were completely refuted by the widely attended Synod of Dordt, which met in the city of Dordrecht in 1618-19, and written down in what is generally known as the *Canon of Dordt*. It is from this

[165] The words "Arminian" or "Arminianism" should not be confused with the similar sounding words "Armenian" or "Armenianism" that are also spelled nearly alike but are in no way synonymous one with the other. The Armenian Apostolic Church, also known as the Gregorian Church, established in the nation of Armenia is the oldest remaining national church. It was not formed out of the later Reformation Movement but has roots extending back to around 300 A.D. The Armenian Catholic Church was later formed through a schism with the Gregorian Church and is under the full authority of the pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

document that the five points of Calvinism were constructed in defense of the reformed faith.[166]

We still find the teaching of Arminianism in many of our contemporary churches, and it is even more rife in many forms of the new or "neo-evangelicalism"[167] so prevalent today. While it is deeply entrenched in Evangelical Christianity, even many conservative and reformed churches have this Arminian leaning in individual members of their congregations if not in their written creeds or expositions from their pulpits.

Aside from this pervasive biblical error regarding Soteriology, the Arminian movement of the period still constituted a necessary and important break with other erroneous traditions of Romanism.

Reform in England

The account of how Christianity first came to Great Britain is rather nebulous. Certainly, we know that Christianity first came to the European continent in the first century through the efforts of the Apostle Paul as he heeded the call of the man from Macedonia whom he saw and heard in a night vision (Ac.16:9).

From Paul's early efforts in Philippi, travelers individually and in bands likely carried the Gospel westward and northward over time. Early Roman interest in England was primarily tin, a metal that could be mined there in abundance and from which Britain ("land of tin") gets its name. Tin resisted oxidation and prevented corrosion thus making it a valuable metal in the manufacture of weapons so important to Rome. We also read in Acts that Lydia had a business venture selling various dyes and in particular an expensive purple dye (Ac.16:14). It may be then that various business ventures associated with her trade brought Christian teaching to Britain.

Tradition, never fully reliable, also suggests that Joseph of Arimathaea, a disciple in whose tomb Jesus was buried, traveled to

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[166] See Chapter 3.5 of Book I of this work in which the five points of Calvinism and Arminianism are compared side by side.

[167] Neo-evangelicalism is discussed in Chapter 19.2 of this book, page 405.

Britain on business and transplanted the faith there at the very early date of A.D. 63 — where he is said to have constructed the first above ground church at Glastonbury, England (cf. Mt.27:57–60). Tradition aside, the general hypothesis suggesting that Christianity existed quite early on in Great Britain would seem to be supported by the writings of Tertullian.[168] He wrote in part in his *Adversus Jedaeos* or *An Answer to the Jews*, "…all the limits of the Spains, and the diverse nations of the Gauls, and the haunts of the Britons [that were] inaccessible to the Romans, but [yet] subjugated to Christ…" From those rather vague bits of information mixed with tradition, we may easily conclude that the Gospel had indeed spread throughout Europe at a very early age and that commerce likely contributed to it.

In whatever manner it first arrived, Christianity in the Islands of Great Britain developed along separate lines from that of the Roman Church. The Roman Church denies this inasmuch as that would mean that the church had developed in part from other than Peter, thus wrecking its claim of universal authority for the Pope sitting on the throne of Peter. Nevertheless, an informal almost evangelistic form of Celtic Christianity most certainly developed in the first century that finally gave way to more formal Monastic living during a later period.

Due to England's geographic isolation, the Roman Catholic Church had not even sent any missionaries into England until Aidan arrived in A.D. 634. Even after that date, Romanism did not gain a very strong hold on the northern-most parts of the islands thus making fifteenth-century church reform more palatable in Scotland and Wales than in England. Even in England, however, there was an ever-increasing sense of nationalism that opposed Papal interference in national political affairs that would eventually aid the effort.

Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556)

A placid scholar, Thomas Cranmer was summoned to Canterbury to become the archbishop in 1532. Cranmer was a godly well-educated man and Lutheran in his theology also having a clear

[168] See Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160–213?), page 119

understanding of the ancient doctrines of the church. He preferred to advance the cause of the Reformation by means of gentle persuasion and did not approve of using any kind of force. His desire like most of the early reformers was to return the Catholic Church to its foundational faith that it had long since abandoned.

When the Church of Rome refused to be reformed, he took it upon himself to reform the Province of Canterbury. Cranmer was instrumental in translating the popular *Great Bible* into English in 1538, and he wrote *The Reformation of Church Laws* that was finally published in 1571 long after his death. His efforts and writings largely shaped the Protestant Church of England. Cranmer remained archbishop during the turbulent reign of Henry VIII (see below) and even kept Henry's respect to the end. He continued the reform effort during the reign of Edward VI who followed Henry as well, but Cranmer was later deposed by Mary I[169] (Mary Tudor) and burnt as a heretic at Oxford in 1556 for his reformed views.

Henry VIII (ca. 1491–1547)

Henry VIII ultimately declared the church that was within the boundaries of England to be separate and independent of the Roman Pope in 1534. That declaration adjudged the reigning sovereign of England to be the sole head of the English church. This break with Roman Churchianity actually was motivated by a quarrel Henry had with the Pope over his proposed divorce of Queen Catherine. Catherine of Aragon was born of Spanish royalty, the youngest surviving child of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.[170] Though subject to many miscarriages, Catherine gave birth to Prince Henry in 1511, who died just 52 days later. She also gave birth to a daughter Mary[171] in 1516 who lived, but in Henry's mind, she did not count as an heir.

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[169] See Mary I, page 249

[170] More regarding Ferdinand and Isabella can be found under the topics, A New World to Exploit, page 205 and The Inquisition, page 265

[171] See Mary I (1553–1558), page 249

Frustrated, Henry saw it as his royal duty to marry another in order to provide a male heir to the throne. First however he must divorce Catherine. His grounds for the divorce were that various texts in Leviticus indicated that if a man takes his brother's wife, they shall be childless. Though Catherine had in fact earlier married Henry's brother Arthur, he had died within six months of their marriage. Catherine maintained that the marriage was never consummated. Of course, Henry and Catherine were not actually childless. Catherine, upon discovering Henry's intentions to divorce her, appealed directly to the Pope, who refused to grant the divorce.

Henry's choice for his new bride was Ann Boleyn, who was already his mistress. When Ann became pregnant in 1533, he rejected the power of the Pope over the English church and directed Thomas Cranmer[172], the current archbishop of England, to grant his divorce. Nevertheless, Ann was not able to give Henry the male heir he so urgently wanted, and their marriage ended in an absurd tragedy. Ann was executed on May 19, 1536 resulting from trumped up charges of witchcraft, incest and adultery. Her daughter, Elizabeth, would one day become England's most noted queen.[173] Henry, though excommunicated by Rome over this dispute, remained a Roman Catholic in practice all his life never fully accepting the doctrines of the reformed faith.

At the same time that Henry had effectively destroyed the power of the Pope in England over a personal squabble, the greater religious movement was underway toward church reform in the nation. It was during the reign of Henry VIII that the *Great Bible*, that we mentioned earlier, was published in English. While still Catholic in doctrine long after the political break with Rome was made, the Church of England gradually became increasingly more Protestant in doctrine especially after the death of Henry VIII and still later during

[172] See Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), page 246

[173] See Anglicanism, page 249

the reign of Edward VI, the third monarch of the Tudor dynasty that had begun with Henry VII.

Mary I (1553–1558)

Mary Tutor, the eldest surviving daughter of Henry the VIII, was known as "bloody Mary" because of the many Protestants that were martyred during her reign. She attempted to reinstate Roman Catholicism when she ascended to the throne as Mary I in July of 1553 upon the death of Edward VI.[174] It was during her reign that Thomas Cranmer[175] was martyred along with as many as 300 other dissenters, as they were called. Even so, she ultimately failed in her efforts. Mary died at the age of 42 of influenza combined with uterine or ovarian cancer on 17 November 1558.

Anglicanism

Under the subsequent reign of Mary's half-sister Elizabeth I[176] (1558–1603), the "Middle Way" or Anglicanism was established. This was an attempt by Elizabeth to formulate a blended Protestant and Catholic doctrine for the Church of England that had actually begun under Henry VIII. If it were fully accepted, it could end the constant conflict between individual Protestants and Catholics throughout the realm. Although that compromise was most probably motivated by a desire to placate Roman Catholics into accepting moderate Protestant reform, Rome retaliated against Elizabeth by excommunicating her in 1570. The Papacy then enlisted the aid of Philip of Spain in massing a Spanish Armada against England. English church independence from Rome was made secure only when the Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588.

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[174] Edward VI was the son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour, the third wife of Henry VIII who succeeded Ann Boleyn after her execution.

[175] See Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), page 246

[176] Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn

The Elizabethan Era (1558–1603)

Contrasted with the tumultuous Tutor period preceding it and the turbulent Stuart period that would follow it, the period during the reign of Elizabeth I was one that could be characterized as being both restful and peaceful in England. That was due in large part to the general acceptance of religious tolerance that was brought about through the establishment of Anglicanism. While the reformed view became more palatable to many of its Catholic citizens, the protestant English parliament was not yet strong enough to push its agenda for meaningful doctrinal reform.[177] Furthermore, a national peace existed during this brief time between France and England, although Roman Catholic Spain remained an ever-present challenger of Protestantism in any form.

The general sense of well being, which was brought about by lessened political and religious conflict, contributed to a gentle more relaxed lifestyle that provided sufficient time to enjoy more leisurely pursuits. The Renaissance Movement, having come into full flower during that time in England, encouraged the writing of English poetry, the composing and performance of music, and the development of theatrical arts, all of which flourished along with humanist reasoning. This short era is often referred to as the "golden age" in English history.

The Puritan Movement

Although Anglicanism had brought about a more peaceful religious atmosphere in England, the Puritan movement came about as a result of the erroneous Roman tradition that had been retained within Anglicanism. Probably having its beginnings about the year 1560, the movement began as a disorganized discontentment with the presumptuous and arrogant teaching of the Church of England that differed very little from Romanism. It was an intense desire for a purity of reformed doctrine and practice that gave those involved in the movement their name — Puritans. Puritans not only desired a more

[177] See The English Parliamentary Revolution (ca 1642–1660), page 256

complete break with erroneous Roman doctrine and practice, they wanted to establish a Congregational or Presbyterian (i.e. representative) form of church government to replace the pontifical hierarchy of bishops that had been retained. What most Puritans did ***not*** want to do however was to break away from the Anglican church preferring instead to reform it over time from within.

Nevertheless, there were those who saw necessary reform as being impossible to achieve within the rigid hierarchy of bishops and therefore determined that it was imperative for them to form their own congregations outside the Anglican church. Consequently, while many Puritans doggedly remained within the Anglican church in hopes of eventually reforming it, many others began to assemble together secretly as small independent congregations. One such congregation about which we shall have more to say later was located at the little village of Scrooby.[178]

To the Church of England, Puritanism were seen as a very troublesome development that needed to be stamped out or at least suppressed at all costs. Reformed believers who assembled outside Anglicanism were known as "separatists," and were identified with other dissenters of the English church such as the Baptists. It was illegal for anyone other than an ordained Anglican priest to preach because it was considered dangerous. Dissenters were therefore expressly forbidden to assemble together as congregations outside of the English church, and they were also prohibited from possessing personal Bibles and from reading and interpreting Scripture — much in the same way that the Roman Catholic Church had dictated prior to Anglicanism.

It was at the *Hampton Court Conference* of 1604, which is best known for King James' approval for beginning the translation of the *Authorized Version* of the Bible (KJV), that non-separatist Puritan requests for further reform within the Anglican church was presented thinking perhaps that King James would be more tolerant of their proposals than had been Elizabeth. The Puritans were turned down

[178] See The Massachusetts Bay Colony, page 276

cold. King James, who himself had been brought up under very strict Presbyterian rule in Scotland, angrily opposed any suggestion of Presbyterian or Congregational government of the church. He feared, rightly so, that such a trend would endanger the monarchy and would eventually lead to democratic political rule. King James' resentful reaction against the Puritans eventually resulted in a migration of many Puritans first to Holland and then later to North America in 1629 through 1640. Others, remaining in England, engaged in various civil wars that would eventually leave Puritan thought dominant by 1649.[179]

Puritan thought

Puritans were those who followed the reformed teaching of Martin Luther and more particularly that of John Calvin of Geneva. It is very important to note that the Bible of the early Puritans was not the *King James Authorized Version*. They would have no part of it because of its obvious association with James Stuart (King James). The *Authorized Version* flew in the face of the Puritans who saw it only as a further effort to thwart reform and bury the Truth in a new translation. Their own Bible was the *Geneva Bible*, which was based upon the *Tyndale Bible* and the *Great Bible*.[180] The *Geneva Bible* contained numerous reformed notations that were totally omitted in the *Authorized Version* of that day.

Puritanism placed great emphasis upon ***simplicity*** of worship — worship with little or no pomp and ceremony. They objected to the observance of Christmas (Christ Mass) as an erroneous Roman fabrication. Puritans were known for their ascetic way of daily living, and for their strict observance of Sunday as a Christian Sabbath.[181] The problem of personal sin was taken very seriously; Puritans knew very well how easily even the most devout among them could be overtaken by its influence. They were therefore diligent about keeping

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[179] See The English Parliamentary Revolution (ca 1642–1660), page 256

[180] See Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), page 246

[181] See Chapter 13.3 The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Book II of this work

sin at bay from their congregation and greater civil community through the strict enforcement of moral regulations. Nevertheless, mercy was always gracefully extended to the truly repentant. Only under extreme circumstances was an excommunication issued. Behind Puritan thought was the desire to build a model church and to build a model society around that church. To do that, it would be necessary to apply Scriptural standards to society as well as to the church. In that way, all of the institutions of society would be brought under the headship of Christ.

The Quaker Movement (ca. 1652)

Quakerism, more formally known as the Religious Society of Friends, was founded in England by George Fox in the year 1652. It was born out of a religious awakening that expressed itself in groups more generally known as "seekers" that were dissatisfied with the Church of England. The Quakers, rejecting the pompous ceremonies and rituals of both Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism, believed in extreme simplicity of worship that expressed itself in simple meetings. They also practiced devout honesty, and believed in equality among all men. Their simplicity of belief produced no creed, but upon the death of Fox in 1691, they developed more formal doctrines and established certain strict ritualistic practices. By the year 1725, Quakerism had become standardized.

Their well known doctrine of the "inner light" which stated that God had placed an "inner light" into ***every man at birth*** was the basis for their belief in absolute equality among all men. This notion of a universal inner light, as we can see, essentially denies the depravity of mankind and the necessity of a spiritual rebirth to enter the Kingdom of God (cf. Jn.3:3). Another implication of Quaker belief is that all men can come to know Christ without any intervention or mediation by other men virtually eliminating the need for widespread evangelization. The "inner light" enables any man to experience a personal relationship with Christ through which it is possible to understand both the spiritual and the material. Therefore, there can be no separation of religious and civil political activities.

The doctrine of the "inner light" also means that no person can be judged by the insignificant externals of race or sex. All people have the same inherent worth; there is some good in every man. Consequently, Quakers oppose war and the death penalty for the commission of even the most heinous civil crimes. They also disdain fashions of dress and titles as being pretenses that have no significance spiritually. Today there are four basic movements of Friends in existence. Those are, the Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, Evangelical Friends International, and Conservative Friends.

The Shaker Movement (1747–)

The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, also known as the Shakers, was a religious cult that sprang out of the larger Quaker movement. It had its beginnings in the home of Mother Ann Lee in England in the year 1747 from where the group eventually migrated to America. Although the cult held to the doctrine of the inner light and also held other beliefs in common with the Quakers, their strong millennial bent as well as their highly charismatic activities practiced within their worship services, which included glossolalia and emotional enactments through dance movements, differentiated them from the Quakers. Although their music was simple and without instruments or harmony, they embraced the latest technologies and innovations such as plumbing in their communities, which served to make their daily lives easier.

As was briefly discussed in Book I Chapter 6.2 of this work, this cult believed in an absolute duality of God. Inasmuch as both men and women were created in God's image (cf. Ge. 1:27), they adjudged that Jesus Christ required a female counterpart to complete his nature and purpose. Mother Ann was consequently looked upon as the second advent of Christ that completed his earlier male advent. Even after the death of Ann Lee in New York in 1784, many reportedly had visions that they attributed to her continuing spirit among them. Believing that through her advent, they lived on the threshold of a heavenly age and further determining that sexual impurity had been strongly linked to original sin, they practiced separated communal living while enforcing strict celibacy.

Their numbers increased for a while through new conversions and by the adoption of young children until at one time they numbered around 20,000 dispersed over 19 separate settlements. Over time, however, their numbers diminished until only four remained in the Shaker community located near Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. Today, the physical structural remains of that community are operated as a Shaker museum. Various Shaker doctrines and practice continue to be observed in smaller groups located within various areas of the United States to this day.

The Baptist Movement in England (ca. 1644)

There has always been disagreement over the origin of Baptist churches. Some see them as having descended from independent churches that existed on the fringes of the institutionalized church throughout the Roman Catholic era, while others see them as a more particular movement that was founded within the larger Anabaptist movement. The first church that actually is known to have referred to themselves as Baptists was established in Amsterdam Holland in 1610. It was founded by a man named John Smyth in opposition to the institutionalized Church of England. Smyth who had been a priest in the Church of England resigned from the priesthood and due to severe persecution fled to Holland in 1608. Many in the church he founded there eventually joined the Mennonite movement, but a small remnant returned to England when persecution there had lessened. By 1644, there were by some counts an estimated forty Baptist congregations existing in England.

The Baptist groups in England had separated themselves from Anglican doctrine as well as a large part of the overall Puritan Movement. The Baptist movement tended to be more radical than was the Puritan movement inasmuch as it not only saw the necessity of separation from Roman Catholic doctrines, but from all state control as well. At this time in its history, we began to see the Baptist movement becoming more particular regarding the mode of baptism. We also see the two doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism further dividing the group into “General Baptists” who were affusionist and Arminian in

their belief, and "Particular Baptists" who were immersionists and Calvinistic in doctrine.

The word "general" in the name of the first group of Baptists referred to their rejection of the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement. Their belief was that Christ's atonement was general or universal in nature and was thus made available and effective for everyone, not limited in any way. The word "particular" in the name of the latter group of Baptists expressed the opposing viewpoint wherein the word "limited" was merely replaced with the word "particular." Christ's atonement was particular in that it was effective for the chosen Elect alone.[182]At or before 1638 there were congregations in London holding Calvinistic theology and practicing believer's baptism (Particular Baptists).

Baptists came to understand the church as a community of believers that were united through "believer baptism" and "personal confession of faith." Although Baptists believed in independent churches without hierarchal control, it did not mean that they would not cooperate with other independent Baptist churches as peers. Baptists generally sought to restore apostolic doctrine, the pattern for which could be discovered only in the New Testament. They later became involved in millenarian speculation as they studied the books of Daniel and Revelation — believing the Day of the Lord was near at hand. This strong millennial emphasis remains today.

The English Parliamentary Revolution (ca 1642–1660)

Conflicts between the monarchy and the increasingly Puritan English Parliament were frequent from the time of King James I and the *Hampton Court Conference* of 1604. Over time, opposition to the English monarchy increased and hardened within the Parliament into determined resolve. King Charles I had instituted various so-called reforms in the Church of England replacing Bible study with prayer books and promoting more papal-like authority for bishops. The

[182] The doctrine of limited atonement as well as the opposing view was discussed in Chapter 3.5 of Book I of this work.

victory of Oliver Cromwell and his "New Model" army led by trained generals and supported by the parliament won the day in the civil war that ensued. King Charles I who refused any compromise over what he saw as the "Divine Right" of kings to rule was removed from his throne and executed in 1649. Cromwell was appointed Lord Protector, or head of the new Puritan Republican State, in 1653.

The religious views of Cromwell and his companions differed from that of the earlier Presbyterianism of the Parliament as was indicated by the fact that various independents and Baptists were quite dominant in the army's leadership. Cromwell, himself a Puritan, believed in exercising a religion of conscience based upon the authority of Scripture and therefore opposed formal Presbyterianism which he saw as attempts to impose authoritarian rule over believers not unlike that of the Roman Catholic Church. The existing state church was allowed to continue under his tenure, but Cromwell allowed Baptists and independents as well as non-royalist Presbyterians to act as ministers in it. Furthermore, various independent churches were also allowed to continue outside of the state church as long as they did not take up arms or disturb the peace.

The majority of Baptists chose to continue independently outside the state church. We must recall that one of the basic tenets of the Baptist movement was complete separation of the church from the state. There were an estimated 300 Particular and General Baptist churches in England when the newfound republic collapsed in 1660, following the death of Cromwell, and the monarchy was restored. Charles II took the throne and persecuted both Baptists and Quakers heavily during his reign, the persecution continuing until about 1687.

The Westminster Assembly (ca 1646–1647)

At the pinnacle of the Puritan dominated Republican State, the Westminster Assembly met under authority of the English Parliament to formulate the *Westminster Confession of Faith,* which is a systematic formalized exposition of Calvinist doctrine. It was first completed in 1646 whereupon it was submitted to Parliament. However, the Parliament then required that Scripture proofs be added to all parts of it before it would give its approval. Although the clerics

had written the document based upon their considered opinion of the greater context of Scripture, no doubt supported by various references, it was then necessary for them to find and record specific proofs in Scripture for every individual point taken in their statements.

That without doubt accounts for the sometimes rather oblique references to particular words and short phrases that are highly dependant upon the *Authorized Version* of the Bible.[183] Moreover, the Pope was declared the final antichrist in the Confession, thus indicating the degree to which circumstances and opinions of that day had sometimes overruled the explicit teaching of Scripture.[184] Following earlier Augustinian-Calvinistic thinking, the *Westminster Confession* when speaking of the temporal church in Chapter XXV, paragraph 2 states, "…out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." We should note, however, that the word "mother" is not used and the word "ordinary" does at least concede the possibility of salvation of men apart from membership in the temporal church acting as our mother.

Having said all of that however, it remains the most considered and complete statement of the Christian faith to be found anywhere today and is the foundational document for various sound faiths though it is predominately utilized in Episcopal and Presbyterian churches. The document with Scriptural proofs was completed on April 29, 1647.

A catechism is written as a series of questions and answers designed to educate and define the faith for lay individuals. Following the "*Confession*" itself, the *Shorter Catechism* was completed in November of 1647 and the *Larger Catechism* was completed on April

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[183] It would be nearly impossible to replace the Scripture reference texts in the Confession with text from a more contemporary translation because of the dependence upon very specific words and phrases. At the very least, the entire confession would need to be rewritten and updated in contemporary English to do so.

[184] Later more contemporary printings of the *Confession* have had this reference to the Pope as the antichrist removed, though the Roman Pope is still denied as the head of the church in Chapter XXV, paragraph 6.

14, 1648. At first a concerted attempt had been made to create a single catechism, but it was soon determined that a comprehensive catechism was too difficult for beginners to understand. As a result, the project was split and a second catechism that was "more easie (sic) and short for beginners" was written to supplement the *Larger Catechism* that was more detailed and comprehensive. Unlike the *Westminster Confession of Faith* upon which they were based, the catechisms are more dogmatic in that they insist upon a specific word by word response.

The *Larger Catechism* is composed of 196 questions and answers concerning God the Creator, the doctrine of original sin, redemption in Christ, the Ten Commandments, the sacraments of baptism and communion, and finally a series of questions on the Lord's Prayer. The *Shorter Catechism* follows a similar format that consists of 107 questions and answers that are less comprehensive and therefore easier to memorize. The lack of specificity also makes them appear less dogmatic and therefore more easily adapted by various faiths. The *Shorter Catechism* in particular is commonly used to educate youth in the basic doctrines of the Christian faith.

Reform in Scotland

Patrick Hamilton (1508–1528), a student of Martin Luther, preached reform in Scotland and for his efforts, he was burned at the stake. This occurred under the reign of Mary I[185] of England or "Bloody Mary" as she was called. Two other men continued his work however. The first of those was George Wishart (1513–1546) who was also burned at the stake for his faith.

John Knox (ca. 1559)

The second of those men was John Knox, who was taken prisoner by the French during the war between England and France in 1547 and forced to serve as a galley slave for 18 months. When he

[185] See Mary I, page 249

finally gained his freedom, he went to Geneva and studied under John Calvin[186] instead of immediately returning to his homeland.

Upon his return to Scotland in 1559, Knox boldly brought the Reformation to Scotland. He attacked the error of the Roman Mass, the Papacy, and various forms of Catholic idolatry. John Knox, who had secured the aid of Scots nobility and the business community, finally established the Protestant Presbyterian Church in Scotland in 1567. Knox drew up a *Confession of Faith* in 1561 and reformed church liturgy with the *Book of Common Order* in 1564.

Mary Stuart (ca. 1561)

Mary Stuart, known as the "Queen of Scots," not to be confused with "bloody Mary,"[187] was born in Scotland, but was reared in France where she became a devout Roman Catholic. She was married at the age of eighteen into French nobility whereupon she became Queen of France. Upon the death of her still younger husband, the King, she lost any right to the French throne and returned to her native Scotland. She ascended to the throne of Scotland in 1561, made every attempt, and used every method available to her to ensure that Scotland remained Roman Catholic.

John Knox in his *History of the Reformation in Scotland* recorded a series of personal adversarial interviews between Mary and himself. Queen Mary Stuart struggled against the Protestant church for seven years, but she was finally forced to flee Scotland after losing two major military battles that greatly diminished her power. Seeking refuge in England during the reign of her cousin Elizabeth I, she was often accused of plotting against Elizabeth to usurp her throne. Mary was first imprisoned by Elizabeth for eighteen years, and she was ultimately executed because of the threat her continued presence, even while in prison, imposed upon the Queen's throne.

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[186] See John Calvin (1509–1564), page 235

[187] See Mary I (1553–1558), page 249

Separatist Movement in Scotland

In the 1600's and 1700's, certain painful difficulties developed within the Church of Scotland. The English king sought to impose an Episcopal form of government on the church that resulted in the formation of two splinter groups in opposition. One such group, which was often referred to as "the covenanters," formed the *Reformed Presbytery*. Those covenants, from which they got their name, were signed by many devout men who vowed in them to fight to the death rather than allow the Presbyterian form of government to be replaced by the Episcopal form that was controlled by the English king.

A second movement was organized against the practice of large landowners within the church using their great wealth to control or overrule various decisions made by many individual church congregations. Men such as Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine were generally categorized as "separatists," and they formed an *Associate Presbytery* that opposed such practices.

Other than a few areas in northern Scotland, consisting of small enclaves of Catholic nobility, Scotland was eventually firmly won for the reformed faith.

Attempts at Reform in Ireland

An edict from King Henry VIII[188] of England in 1537 declared that Ireland must completely reject Roman Catholicism. That came about in accord with his rejection of the Papacy in England the circumstances surrounding which we discussed earlier. However, no change was made in doctrine in the Irish church primarily because there were no Irish reformers to bring about the necessary change in doctrine. Ireland was a land filled with poor and barely educated people, with few if any books printed in the Irish dialects. Independent Bible reading would have been virtually unheard of.

When Queen Mary I[189] ascended the English throne in 1553, she reestablished Roman Catholicism in Ireland by removing any of

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[188] See Henry VIII, page 247

[189] See Mary I, page 249

the bishops who had shown any bent toward reform. Some of those bishops and other members of clergy had married and because of that, they were severely punished. It wasn't until 1560, after Queen Elizabeth I had ascended to the English throne succeeding her half sister, that Anglicanism[190] was established as the Irish religion by its own national parliament. In spite of that official standing, the people of Ireland remained predominantly Roman Catholic.

In Northern Ireland, Scots Presbyterians were settled in the country as a result of an edict issued by King James Stuart I of England. Thus, King James[191], who had sponsored the *Authorized Version* of the Bible, also initiated the great religious-political divide in Ireland that we find remaining there yet today. After many years, the great religious partition between Protestant Northern Ireland and Roman Catholic Southern Ireland exploded into violence and chaos. While the conflict continued, it was fueled more by group hatred and personal vengeance than of the great religious reform that was prevalent in the sixteenth century.

In 1998, a treaty was signed between Protestant Northern Ireland and Roman Catholic Southern Ireland. Seventy-one percent voted for the treaty giving Ireland the opportunity for peace after centuries of bloodshed although the peace will likely be a fragile one for many decades to come.

Church Music during the Reformation Era

Much Church music during and for a good time after the Reformation continued the Roman tradition of formal choirs as well as complex musical forms. Formal church music was written by some of the great composers of the day such as Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. Their music was shared between the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant churches. All of their compositions were written for and necessarily performed by highly accomplished musicians.

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[190] See Anglicanism, page 249

[191] See The Puritan Movement, page 250

Aside from the compositions of the great composers, Reformation era worship music often began with lyrics to which a popular folk melody had been added. Most of the lyrics were paraphrased from the Psalms and other Scripture texts. Sometimes that match was a good one, and over time, the popular melody of the street became identified with the lyrics such that the hymns became identifiable as Christian music to large numbers of believers. Up until the middle of the twentieth century, those hymns were the backbone of American Churchianity.[192] Many congregations in the recent past had joined in the singing of various popular hymns as worship offered up to God with or without instrumental accompaniment as their conscience and custom dictated.

The Counter Reformation Effort

The Roman Catholic Church did not merely sit back and let the Reformation movement have its way as we have already seen. Yet, its delay of nearly fifty years in combating the Reformation with a systematic concerted effort resulted in most of Europe, with the exception of Italy and Spain, going over into Protestantism. In France, the Roman church still had a somewhat tenuous hold. The reformed faith had also spread into Bohemia, and into Hungary. In 1546, the Roman church began its formal effort to recover lost adherents. The Roman church attacked the Reformation with a "counter-reformation" that employed four means to accomplish the defeat of Protestantism:

- Internal Reform
- Reaffirmation of Church Dogma
- The Index
- The Inquisition

Internal Reform

The Roman church began instituting internal reform measures to make Protestantism a less attractive alternative to reformers. Many priests and bishops at that time were political appointees, were

[192] See The Degradation of Church Music, page 412

uneducated, could not speak Latin, and were ignorant of even very basic doctrines of the Christian faith. Those that did have an education were most often educated in law, not theology, with the result that they essentially only became managers of church property. Through various notebooks and handbooks, the Roman church began a concerted effort to educate priests and bishops in theology and tradition to render them more conscientious in the performance of their duties.

Seminary training was established as a requirement for those offices. Greater emphasis was placed on the care of local parishes that required priests to live in the diocese they served in an effort to eliminate clerical absenteeism. Devotional meditation was emphasized allowing the laity to experience the faith through recitation of the Rosary and other means. All of that was done to put a softer face on the Roman church with the hope that doing so would make it seem less odious to Protestant reformers and especially those that would be their followers.

Reaffirmation of Church Dogma

The dogmatising of medieval theology and canonizing both the *Latin Vulgate* and the apocryphal books contained in it was formulated by the Council of Trent convening in three sessions between 1545 and 1563. The basic tenets of Protestantism were rejected and the Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone had the additional requirements of works and the strict adherence to church tradition firmly appended to it. The sacramental system that had supplanted the doctrine of salvation by grace alone in the second century church was dogmatically restated as the only means of receiving redemption from sins.

The grievous error of the supposed transubstantiation of the elements in the Mass was upheld. The practices of selling indulgences, the vitality of the cultic veneration of saints, the worship of relics, the underwriting of pilgrimages, and the worship of the Virgin Mary was also reaffirmed thus making the official Roman Church position uncompromising opposed to any biblically reformed doctrine. The line

had been drawn that rendered any hope of theological reform within the Roman Church nearly impossible.

The Index

The "Index" (*Index Librorum Prohibitorum)* was a list of banned books that were not to be read by the "faithful" under the threat of severe penalty. The first such list of banned books had appeared in the Netherlands in 1529 with the first Roman Index being written in 1557–1559. The censorship of the books on this list was founded upon them having immoral content or containing text that expounded or were based upon supposed theological heresies. The indexes needed to be periodically recompiled as new books were published. That need resulted in the setting up of the Sacred Congregation of the Index in 1571 to keep the list up to date. The last such list was published in 1948.

The first Roman index was published by the Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition whose primary aim was the exclusion of any books that espoused the reformed view in opposition to Roman church dogma and tradition. This list and the views expressed in them became the basis for rooting out supposed heretics. That made them subject to the inquisition that was specifically directed against Protestants and employed ruthless tactics to extract confessions and convictions.

The Inquisition

The Church has always recognized the need to combat heresy beginning with the Jews of Paul's day that wanted to put Christians back under the Law of Moses as well as those who came later such as Montanus and Arius who espoused erroneous doctrines that we discussed earlier in this book. Later, as the Roman church developed as a formal institution, it had itself embraced numerous heresies both doctrinal and moral as being orthodox.

The word "heresy" at the time of the Reformation Movement was defined as any opinions or doctrines that were at variance with the official position of the Roman church. Ultimately, any decisions about that position was the exclusive prerogative of the ruling Pope thus

ensuring and expanding existing error. All of the reformers were therefore considered heretics inasmuch as personal faith based upon Scripture alone carried no weight against the dogmatic erroneous doctrines and traditions of Romanism that were so firmly affixed and defended.

An inquisition was a severe interrogation that always violated the rights of human conscience and in its extreme application preyed upon the mental and physical weakness of individuals through physical torture. The supposed purpose of such interrogations and ensuing tortures was to get the "heretic" to confess in order to receive absolution for their sins — possible only through obedience to the dictates of the Pope and established church doctrine. There were four major movements dedicated to that end beginning in 1184 with the Medieval Inquisition and ending in 1834 with the Spanish Inquisition.

Therefore, inquisitions already had a long tradition before the Reformation Movement gained sway. Those were exemplified by the *Alhambra Decree* for the expulsion of Moslems and Jews from Spain under King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1492. Although a large number fled Spain, many others remained in Spain by claiming to have converted to Christianity. Under the first Inquisitor General, a Dominican friar, that remnant was systematically and severely persecuted.

Later, as the Inquisition became entrenched as an official function of the Roman church, various religious orders were enlisted to supervise and carry them out. The enlistment of the militant Jesuit order, which had sworn unquestioning obedience to the Pope, provided the means of carrying out Papal dictates in Spain. The inquisitor was usually a Franciscan or a Dominican monk or friar. Though swearing a vow of poverty, those friars were most often well educated through extensive reading and study that focused on Roman dogmatism. They did not have any inherent authority to carry out inquisitions depending instead upon delegated authority granted by a local bishop. However, any mandate that they received directly from Rome ensured the full cooperation of local clerics.

Punishments ranged from a public confession, the wearing of a cross, religious pilgrimages to Rome, a term of imprisonment, and in

the extreme case execution. Those who under pressure of threats readily recanted were often dismissed with mild reproofs. In other cases, inquisitions sought only to gain sufficient grounds for obtaining a capital conviction for their execution as in the case of Martin Luther.

Capital punishment was very rarely if ever carried out by officials of the Roman church. The church most often turned the convicted individual over to civil authorities that were directed to carry out the actual punishment in the most shameful way possible. This was in keeping with the hypocritical mandate that the church itself not be found guilty of shedding human blood. This is reminiscent of the Jewish clerics who demanded that the Roman authorities crucify Jesus for heresy.

The most severe means of execution were death by burning alive at the stake for those who remained unrepentant to the end or death by strangulation followed by burning of their body for those who repented at the last moment. Those who were convicted by the inquisition but had fled or hidden and could not be found were often burned in effigy. If the burial place of an escaped "heretic" was later discovered, the body was most often exhumed, burned and the ashes scattered.

The Thirty-Year War (1618–1648)

The struggle of Protestantism against Catholicism led to what is known as the Thirty Year War in Europe. Due to the *Peace of Augsburg* signed in 1555, German princes numbering over 200 could choose Lutheranism or Catholicism for their individual realms. In addition, various other smaller groups such as the Calvinists and Anabaptists were also free to practice their own religion. As religious, political and economic pressures mounted in Europe, the surrounding nations of Spain, France, Bohemia, Sweden and Denmark sought to gain control of border territories extending well into Germany.

The bloody war that ensued resulted in the deaths of many on both sides. Rome won the Bohemian and Danish phase, while the Catholic armies were defeated in Sweden. The final struggle between the House of Hapsburg (Germany) and France was won by the House of Hapsburg, which resulted in Lutheranism and Calvinism gaining

legal status. Under the *Treaty of Westphalia* in 1648, all lands that were Protestant before 1624 were allowed to remain so legally.

European Pietism

After the end of the Thirty-Year War, the various state-ruled churches that developed soon fell into a state of moral decline and ritual coldness. Combating that tendency was a Lutheran pastor by the name of Philipp Spener (1635–1705). His approach for revival was to begin a series of weekly Bible Studies, prayer sessions, and discussion periods to consider sermons that were taught the previous Sunday. As the popularity of those sessions grew, Bible studies began to spread throughout Germany. Those groups, known as *Assemblies of Piety* were regularly attended by a group of people referred to as pietists and the overall movement was referred to as pietism. This spiritual awakening spread beyond the borders of Germany into Scandinavian countries as well. Through the efforts of those groups, evangelism and missionary efforts greatly increased.

The Dunkards (ca. 1708)

While many of the Pietists stayed within the state-ruled churches, others started their own churches free of any state jurisdiction. One such group was an Anabaptist German group known as The Brethren. They were also referred to as "Dunkards" (German: "*to dip")* because of their unique method of ritual baptism. During that ceremony a believer was dipped three times, face forward, at the mention of each name in the Trinity. As we saw earlier, this method of baptism generally conforms to that which was established by Tertullian in the early church. The uniqueness was found in the fact that they were dunked face downward each time in a ***moving stream*** of water. It is not known why that method was used, but it could be speculated that it had something to do with the passage of Scripture found in John 5:2–4.

The Brethren were devout pacifists, took on the habit of plain dress, and advised against the use of alcohol and tobacco products. They early on denounced the slave trade. They prohibited engagement in politics and preferred to settle their disputes apart from civil courts.

The Eucharist was always celebrated in the evening, after the serving of a regular meal.

Severely persecuted by the state church in Germany, the Dunkards would eventually immigrate to Pennsylvania in America during the decade of 1719 to 1729. Because of that exodus, European pietism all but died out by the end of the eighteenth century giving way to rationalism and other more radical ideas.

The Extent of the Reformation

Before we leave this chapter in order to delve into the history of the church in North America in the next chapter, it would be well to briefly summarize the condition of the temporal church as a whole, that existed in Europe at the time of the American colonization. First, we observe that the effect of reform efforts within the Roman Catholic Church was minimal regarding both doctrine and practice. Furthermore, the Reformation Movement and the opposing Anti-reformation Movement had politically polarized Roman Catholics and Protestants to the extent that irreconcilable differences now existed between them. Unfortunately, those differences grew in large part out of a strong sense of nationalism, which prevailed in both the civil and religious sphere, rather than out of a sincere desire to purify and uphold sound Christian doctrine.

The necessary doctrinal reform would then continue outside the Roman Catholic Church, not within it, but it was also necessary that any further efforts for a thoroughgoing reform would continue outside the national churches as well. Although strong national Protestant churches had been established that had broken the power of papal Rome over regional congregations, considerable erroneous Roman tradition and practice still prevailed within the national churches.

Serious failings in the reform effort had led Protestantism to adopt a rigid form of legalism in its determined effort to oppose Roman traditionalism. All the while, the national churches had retained the authoritarianism and extreme formalism which it had inherited from Roman Churchianity relatively unchanged. Believers found themselves attending national churches that only attempted to

force them into the paradigm of their own peculiar brand of Churchianity. Protestant Churchianity was most often devoid of a genuine heart felt love and reverence of Christ in exchange for loyalty and devotion to a national temporal church in opposition to Catholicism. True biblical reform had become splintered, bigoted, and stalled.

National churches strongly resisted revival and further reform since they had already hardened into their own formalities, rituals, and dogmas that further reform threatened. The reformed church in Europe as a whole had become transformed through highly competitive nationalized Churchianity into a multi-faceted temporal church of a type similar to that of the first century church at Sardis (See The Formal and Dead Church, page 92). Because of stubborn residual Romanism, many genuine believers on the fringes of national churches in that day began to see the need for further reform. What was sorely needed was a grass roots spiritual revival among those believers that found themselves locked into national Churchianity that was in many ways no better than the Roman Churchianity that had preceded it. This effort was to be aided by the discovery of a vast unsettled continent to the west where it was hoped that true Christianity could be planted and made to flourish free of the growing oppression of the Churchianity of Europe.

Chapter 18.3 The Age of Revival

We ascertained in the previous two chapters that Protestantism was essentially a grass-roots reform movement that eventually manifested itself in the formation of state-controlled national churches as individual nations freed themselves of the Roman church politically. During the Reformation, religious doctrines became refined and honed against the Bible as translations abounded in various languages. Yet, we could see that the movement itself remained divided on many important doctrinal issues. In many areas of Europe true reform was being obstructed by the movement's own efforts. Each reformer, no doubt, thought that he had reached the pinnacle of reform lacking nothing that required further effort.

Therefore, as each new church was formed, it sought to thoroughly define both itself and the Christian faith through the establishment of its own dogmas thus ending all hope of any continued reform within its rigid framework. The early reformers, themselves, we must understand, were still held captive in a larger paradigm of thought that was deeply rooted in Roman church tradition. Such intrinsic mental bias is often very hard to reject and so acted as a brake against a needed thoroughgoing reform. Scripture was still being interpreted in the darkness of that bias despite the bright light that was coming from Scripture itself.

At the other extreme, were freethinking reformers who often introduced their own errors in both doctrine and practice in a determined attempt to distance themselves as far as possible from Romanism. A broad movement known as congregationalism had developed in England as early as 1537, where the adherents were first referred to as Dissenters. As that name would imply, Dissenters chose to separate themselves from the authoritarian rule of the Church of England to govern themselves as fully independent congregations. True Congregationalist churches are governed solely through the cooperative consent of their congregants rather than joining and obeying the dictates of a rigid denomination. In like manner, they do not adhere to any formal written creed relying instead upon the teaching of Scripture alone as their only guide to maintaining sound

doctrine. [193] Early Baptist churches had their roots within this broader movement as they strongly resisted any outside interference in their churches by national governments or by national churches. While Congregationalism allows for extensive reform to take place, its weakness is evident in the possibility of doctrinal error or of liberal progressivism. Only a genuinely regenerated congregation that diligently remains well studied in the Scriptures can prevent that from happening.

Luther, himself, was quite aware of the many conflicts and erroneous doctrines that would arise out of individual Bible study and interpretation. Yet, it was his view that the essential doctrines of the faith contained in Holy Scripture were so important to individual salvation that they must not be kept locked up for clergy alone to dispense or withhold. True spiritual freedom established upon personal conscience could come about only as individual churches through additional effort and conflict extricated themselves from state-run churches and all control of secular government.

The ensuing North American colonies, founded upon the principles of religious freedom and true piety toward God, were the direct outgrowth of the reform effort that had begun earlier in Europe. Although we shall concentrate our study on the American church in this work, it should be realized that God was still very much at work throughout the world. Nevertheless, the American churches would become the new spearhead of the reform effort that by that time had become blunted in Europe. The freedom needed for true religious reform was more accessible in the new land than anywhere else on earth because of the absence of any established secular laws and attitudes.

In addition, believers would enjoy the absence of undue influence from nationalized churches, which would stall further reform

[193] It should be noted that an informal standardization of doctrine and practice eventually develops, which is based upon a collectively accepted interpretation of Scripture. This standardization can vary from congregation to congregation and can become just as rigidly binding upon a member's personal beliefs and profession as does any formally written creed.

efforts. Many English and eventually Scots and Scots-Irish came to see in the New World a place where Christianity could be established and flourish so as to become a shining beacon in the world for the reformed doctrine of grace — "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Mt.5:14).

Tracing Colonial Beginnings

Having said all of this by way of summary and background, we must now move on to the task at hand, which is tracing Christianity from its early beginnings in the American colonies to more modern times. That is not an easy task since the history of Christianity in America is quite complex. Furthermore, as we approach modern times, we shall inevitably find ourselves immersed in very controversial topics as denominational dogmatism attempts to fog reality. For that reason, many writers of church history have made every effort to offend no one group or church (even cults) with the resultant effect of presenting sanitized details which somewhat inform but do not enlighten or guide us in any spiritual sense. We must not allow ourselves to become bogged down in formalism or extreme historical detail, nor can we deviate from our task out of a desire to please every church and denomination, which is quite impossible in any event. What we must make every effort to do is trace the major movements within American Christianity with a view to their impact upon individual biblical faith.

Rather than finding ourselves struggling to understand specific denominations in America, we shall actually find ourselves examining various religious "movements" that took place within and across various denominations and local churches. That is because there was no monolithic national church in America from which to break away or to reform. From the very beginning, America was fertile spiritual soil for further Christian reform in doctrine and practice.

The Lost Colony of Roanoke

During the Elizabethan Era, reformed Christianity in England had become blunted by Anglicanism which attempted to blend Protestantism into Catholicism. The European Renaissance had

invaded the church congregations such that there was no popular interest in launching formal missions into the new world by the Anglican Church. The French, however, had already established a successful Catholic settlement in Newfoundland in 1583, and the Spanish had established Catholic colonies which were known as New Spain, New Mexico, and Spanish Florida.

As Queen Elizabeth of England observed the riches of the new world flowing to Spain and to Portugal (from Brazil), she began to opine that England was missing out on its share of that wealth and began to urge that an expedition be sent forth to the Americas with the purported intent of reaching the savage population for Christ in the name of the Anglican Church. Although the French were already established in the north and the Spanish were well established on the southern coast of the northern continent, there still remained a vast unexplored coastline between those two settlements.

This interest led to many failed attempts to establish an American colony. The most notable of them was the so-called "lost colony of Roanoke." The English aristocrat Sir Walter Raleigh funded an expedition to the Virginia territory in the Americas. This expedition was led by John White in 1585 who was to be an administrator to the island colony.[194] White soon found the need to return to England personally for additional supplies only to find when he arrived that all commercial ships were being held in English ports for possible use against an invasion by a Spanish Armada. When White was finally able to return to Roanoke a long four years later, the settlement had disappeared without any trace of its residents or even an evident cause for the settlement's demise.

The Settlement at Jamestown

By the time King James I ascended to the throne in 1603, many other failed attempts had been made to establish an English colony in the new world. In 1606, wealthy investors in England had assembled a royal charter company known as the Virginia Company

[194] The area in which the colony was founded is now Dare County, North Carolina.

of London, which worked to renew interest in a profitable western venture. The goal of the company was to profit from the wealth purported to be readily available throughout the new world that reportedly included large amounts of gold. Nevertheless, funding for the project was heavily propagandized by the Company as a noble but venturesome effort to send the Gospel message abroad to reach thousands of ignorant Indians for Christ.

The London Company put together a group of 144 men as a first wave to send to the Virginia territory in order to establish a sound foothold in the North American continent. There was a conspicuous absence of any women and children on board that would be needed to establish an on-going permanent settlement, indicating that this was not at all their immediate goal. Furthermore, they took with them only one Anglican minister, Robert Hunt, to see to their own spiritual needs. The adventurers set sail with a charter from the Virginia Company on a very stormy crossing that cost them five months of their lives and three of their ships.

The expedition made landfall in 1607 on a jut of land that they named Cape Henry. Seeking a more secure location for the settlement, they discovered a Chesapeake Bay outlet, which they named the James River in honor of King James I of England. On April 26, 1607, they selected Jamestown Island for the place of their settlement. It was a cramped, swampy, isolated space that was infested with mosquitoes and provided them brackish river water that was unsuitable for drinking. The men who had volunteered for the expedition were unaccustomed to the kind of hard labor necessary to carve out a successful settlement under such severe circumstances and the settlement rapidly began to languish from lack of effort. In just a few months, over 50 percent of the men were dead from starvation and typhoid, while many others had sought asylum among the 14,000 Algonquin Indians whose territory they had invaded.

The Jamestown settlers later suffered many long periods of starvation that was alleviated only by the unmerited compassion of the Algonquians who sacrificially supplied them food from their own corn harvests. Rather than planting food crops many of the men went out on their own private expeditions to discover gold. Much of their own

work in the settlement was being forced onto the backs of nineteen black African slaves that Governor John Rolfe had obtained in exchange for some supplies with a pirate ship captain. Thus, we find that the terrible vice of slavery had already entered the Virginia Territory as early as 1619.[195] Two shipments of ore were sent back to England in returning supply ships to be assayed, but both shipments were found to be worthless. Even while all this depravation was going on in the settlement, English pulpits remained hypocritically aglow with the wondrous Christian mission that had been sent forth to the new world.

After the long-suffering Algonquin Chief Powhatan died and his son, Opchanacanough, took his place, an attempt was made by the Algonquians to completely eradicate the troublesome English colony once and for all. In what is referred to as the "Indian Massacre of 1622," more than 300 English settlers were killed.[196] After a massive fire in 1676 during which Jamestown was burned to the ground, there was little interest in rebuilding it.[197] The settlement of Jamestown had turned out to be a total failure as far as implanting the reformed faith in the new world.

The Massachusetts Bay Colony

The necessary personal industry and fierce individualized faith to endure the hardships of the new world was to be found in the English Puritans, whose desire for religious freedom would play such an important part in bringing the reformed faith to the new world. Many Puritans, having established separate congregations apart from

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[195] Also see The Slavery Clause in the *U.S. Constitution* on page 319

[196] Still another attack came later in 1644 during which Opchanacanough was captured and deliberately murdered by a rogue English guard who apparently shot him in the back.

[197] The remnant of the colony was moved to Middle Plantation and in 1699 it was renamed Williamsburg in honor of King William III who occupied the English throne by that time.

the ruling bishops of the Anglican Church in England, found themselves being hounded and thrown in jails during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the suppression only increased under King James and other successors.

The Church Relocation Campaign

Because of repressive measures that followed the *Hampton Court conference*[198], a congregation of separatist Puritans from Scrooby England immigrated first to Holland. Though their stay there was peaceful at first, it soon became apparent after twelve years that the impiety and ungodliness so prevalent among the general population at Leyden was infiltrating their ranks as many of their young people married Dutch nationals. A decision was made to move to the New World. John Carver was chosen from among their number to be their agent in securing a charter. The Puritans at first sought funding from the Virginia Company of London, but they were informed that the company was very near bankruptcy and would not supply them funds. A London Merchant unexpectedly offered to help them procure passage in exchange for their own investments in shares of the venture purchased from the sale of their real property in Holland and a period of indentureship for seven years.

In 1620, passage was finally secured aboard two ships, the *Speedwell*, and the *Mayflower*. Their numbers were such that only a small number of them could make the initial journey leaving others behind to immigrate at a later date. Three days after setting sail on August 5, 1620 the *Speedwell* encountered problems with its newly fitted masts. After another start and encountering similar problems with the *Speedwell* a week later they decided to combine all their company consisting of 44 Puritans, who referred to themselves as "saints," and 66 others including crew and venturers that the Puritans referred to as "strangers" aboard the larger *Mayflower.* The journey taking them 65 days was cold and damp, and food had to be eaten cold due to the risk of fire. They were often faced with contrary crosswinds

[198] See The Puritan Movement, page 250

and fierce storms. Their cramped quarters resulted in many quarrels, and one man died before they finally sighted land on November 10.

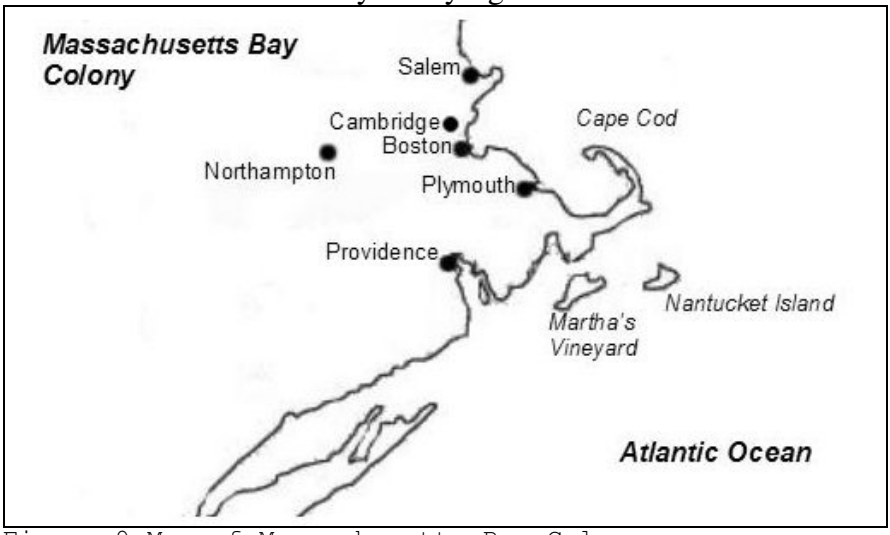

Figure 9 Map of Massachusetts Bay Colony

The Plymouth Colony

Due to contrary or much more likely providential winds, the *Mayflower* was forced to make landfall much farther north of Virginia near Cape Cod at a place earlier named Plymouth (See map Figure 9 above) by Captain John Smith in 1614. Due to much grumbling from the strangers aboard ship about settling so far north of Virginia where they had no valid charter and which could possibly endanger their commercial interests, an agreement was drawn up between the Puritan pilgrims and the strangers that had accompanied them. This agreement bound both saints and strangers together as citizens in common. In all of recorded history, this is the first instance where a group of free and equal men had pledged to form a civil government. This document became known as the *Mayflower Compact* the text of which is as follows:

> **"In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France,**

and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc. Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine our selves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the eleventh of November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign lord, King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini 1620."

John Carver signed the Covenant and on November 11, 1620 he was elected to serve a one-year term as governor for the Plymouth colony. After his death, which was apparently caused by sun stroke, in the spring of 1621, William Bradford was chosen to succeed him as governor. Due to the harsh winter that was already underway when the pilgrims arrived, it proved impossible to immediately begin building a settlement. Everyone had to spend the first winter huddled aboard ship. During that winter, as many as three or four died in a single day. By the time that the first warm day came unusually early on March 3 of 1621, nearly half of the pilgrims had died of infectious diseases that had spread among the crew.

When the pilgrims finally made contact with the native population, it was through a lone individual, who amazingly welcomed them in halting English! Through this man they were introduced to still another native whose name was Squanto, a Patuxet, who had been taken to England as a captive to be questioned about the riches of the New World. While in England Squanto had been taught

to speak English fluently and had even become a Christian. Upon his return from captivity to his homeland, he discovered that 95 percent of his Patuxet tribe had been wiped out by a plague. In God's providence, this plague had occurred about three years before the pilgrims dropped anchor thus providing them with suitable land for their settlement that was already prepared for planting. Squanto, himself, was also seen as a providential godsend, as he diligently instructed the pilgrims in the many skills that they needed to survive the very difficult first years ahead.

It was also through Squanto that they befriended the Wampanoags[199] during the first spring and summer months of 1621. It was the bountiful harvest of that first year that prompted a day of thanksgiving to God, which was declared to be held in October by Governor Bradford. A large number of the Wampanoags arrived early by invitation, and they had brought with them venison, and wild turkeys, as well as various other crops from their own abundant harvest. Thus well supplied with food, the celebration was extended for several days.

In November of 1621, the *Fortune* dropped anchor in their harbor. It was a supply ship headed for Virginia, but aboard were 35 more colonists from England. Among their number were relatives of those who had arrived on the *Mayflower.* Alas, the *Fortune* was carrying no provisions for them or for the new arrivals on this voyage forcing the colonists to go on reduced rations to survive the winter and spring months ahead. Over the years, more pilgrims continued to arrive from the little church at Leyden thus adding to the Plymouth colony.

The Boston and Salem Colonies

Further Stuart family hostility resulted in many more Puritans sailing from their home in England to the Massachusetts Bay area at

[199] The Wampanoags were a native American nation consisting of five tribes. Their population in the year1600 numbered about 12,000, and their territory covered present-day Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and the Elizabeth Islands.

Boston, and Salem (See map Figure 9, page 278). When Charles I ascended to the English throne, in 1625, persecution of Puritan dissenters remaining in England became more severe as he attempted to press the English church further back into the Roman Catholic mold. He refused to come to the aid of Protestants in the Thirty Year War[200] on the European mainland, and he even married a Roman Catholic princess, Henrietta Maria of France. His constant battles with the English Parliament over what he saw as his divine right as a king eventually led to civil war and to his execution as we discussed earlier.[201]

The early pilgrims had been Congregational Puritans who had landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. During King Charles' reign a much larger group of Presbyterian Puritans began migrating to America. These later immigrants did not consider that they were separating themselves from the English church as did the earlier pilgrims, but instead remained loyal to the English church that had fallen into the snare of Anglicanism. They hoped to influence the reform of the English church through American colonization that they believed would eventually work its way back to England through example.

Two thousand English Presbyterian Puritans arrived in New England in 1630 beginning with 700 settlers aboard the *Arbella* led by John Winthrop. Members of his group were of the more wealthy class compared to earlier pilgrims. Still more of their number, including Winthrop's wife, would arrive aboard the *Lyon* in subsequent voyages. John Winthrop wrote the words that defined their mission in the new world on shipboard just before landfall: "We must consider that we shall be as a city on a hill; the eyes of all people are upon us." The inspiration for this statement was almost certainly taken from the words of Jesus: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Mt.5:14). This model of a "city on a hill" would

[200] See The Thirty-Year War (1618–1648), page 267

[201] See The English Parliamentary Revolution (ca 1642–1660), page 256

also be emulated by other men such as Thomas Hooker[202] who set up a Bible commonwealth in Connecticut and by John Davenport who co-founded the colony of New Haven.

An estimated twenty thousand souls were present by 1640 to constitute the core population of the greater Massachusetts Bay Colony. What those who had searched for material riches in Jamestown failed to accomplish were now being achieved by those who sought instead the riches of religious freedom under the protection of God's providence. They had first sought out the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the hope that God would supply them with material goods according to their needs (cf. Mt.6:33).

Opposition to Puritanism

Not surprisingly, opposition to strict adherence of the covenantal tenets of Puritanism soon began to grow as more and more English settlers arrived in New England.

Roger Williams

Roger Williams was a separatist and, arguably, in many ways more of a doctrinal purist than were the Puritans themselves. A devout, learned, and congenial minister of the Gospel, he believed in the "liberty of personal conscience" to accept God's truth of salvation over the formal preparatory proclamations of an organized temporal church. Called upon to fill the pulpit for a brief time in the Puritan church at Boston, Williams declined to do so because he considered that the church had not yet officially broken all ties with the Church of England. Because the Puritans would not deny the verity of communion taken while in the Anglican Church, he made a break with the Boston colony.

Almost immediately thereafter, however, he accepted the pulpit of another church at Salem. From that pulpit, he strongly objected to any suggestion that the English King had any authority over the church or for that matter any authority to grant the colonists a

[202] See The Connecticut Commonwealth, page 284

charter in New England. He also stubbornly opposed allowing civil political authorities to enforce the Ten Commandments, which included such infractions as swearing, Sabbath breaking, etcetera. He stood for a complete separation of civil and religious authority much in the manner held by the earlier Anabaptist movement.

Although other Puritan churches were powerless to remove him, from the pulpit he was finally banished from the colony by civil authorities for his "unorthodoxy" and "troublemaking" in 1636. Williams went out from Salem to found his own colony at Providence, Rhode Island (See map Figure 9 on page 278), and while there he established the very first Baptist Church in New England in 1639.

Anne Hutchinson

Anne Hutchinson, a prestigious woman for her time, gathered a group of women out of the Puritan church to discuss various aspects of weekly sermons. Later, a few men began coming to the meetings as well. Puritans at that time taught that a lengthy legal preparation was necessary for the new birth to occur and that genuine regeneration was afterward proven by total adherence to God's Law. Anne taught that there did not need to be an application of the Law of God as a ***prerequisite*** to personal conversion. Moreover, she believed that sanctified good works were not exclusively indicative of a true believer, but rather that those who had the Holy Spirit indwelling them could supernaturally sense whether or not another person was a Christian. She believed that the "inner voice" of the Holy Spirit was much more important than was the exposition of God's Word in receiving salvation. Anne's teaching soon began to become even more radical inasmuch as she come to believe that direct revelation superceded the carefully considered interpretation of Scripture.

After a brief heresy trial, she was banished from the Bay Colony in 1637 whereupon she went to Rhode Island and became part of the colony of Providence established in the previous year by Roger Williams. After the death of her husband, she again moved her family to an isolated Dutch colony at a place called "Hell's Gate." There, she and her family died as early victims of an Indian uprising.

The Connecticut Commonwealth

Thomas Hooker a well-trained and competent minister came to New England when the newly appointed bishop of the Anglican Church decided that he was a dangerous dissenter and needed to be silenced. At first, Hooker was seen as a effective aid to the Puritan cause in Massachusetts, but he believed in a more democratic society where all magistrates would be chosen through a general election in which every man in the colony would have one vote. Because his view conflicted with the more aristocratic form of Puritanism, Hooker obtained the reluctant permission of the Bay Colony to move his church and community at Cambridge away from the Massachusetts Bay area to resettle on the Connecticut River.

Under the *Fundamental Orders of Connecticut* adopted in 1638 all landholders could vote for magistrates (servants could elect deputies to court), no religious requirements were established as a bar against voting, the authority of elected magistrates was limited, and the governor whose powers were likewise curtailed, could not seek immediate reelection. In a further document known as the *Sum of Church Discipline*, a believer was essentially granted the freedom to choose from among various church disciplines as long as in doing so it did not sever in any way the mutual bonds of civil society. Very soon other colonies in New England were being established on a similar basis, and as we should take note, those basic principles would find their way into the foundational documents of the United States at a much later date.

Although other religious forces were at work in the colonies, Puritanism remained a dominant religious force in the New England area for nearly two hundred years throughout the 1600's and 1700's. Some have pointed out that the Massachusetts and Connecticut experiments were actually the first efforts at establishing a reformed state-run church in America. If so, we must note that this was to have been accomplished by a thoroughly converted membership, not by the mere passing of regulations requiring uniform belief and practice. The resulting church-state union would be patterned after the Geneva

model and it would thoroughly reflect reformed Calvinistic thinking.[203]

Decline of Puritanism

A growing number of people remaining in the Massachusetts Colony could not testify to the regimented Puritan-style view of regeneration through specific doctrinal preparation. As a result, those citizens could not qualify for church membership and consequently, they could not vote in civil matters either. Many of those disenfranchised citizens began to make their way over to the Connecticut colony where they could have a say in their government.

It was therefore necessary for the Massachusetts Colony to respond to that growing faction in order to maintain peace and the political integrity of the Puritan Colony. The Massachusetts churches called a Synod in Cambridge (See map Figure 9, page 278) in 1647 out of which came the *Cambridge Platform* that established the scope of congregational civil order. It affirmed that civil authorities could punish various specific ecclesiastical offenses. In addition, it accepted the W*estminster Confession of Faith*[204] as its foundational creedal document. While solidifying the Puritan position, it did little to stem the exodus from the Bay Colony.

It was not until 1662, that another Synod was convened establishing what is referred to as the *Half-Way Covenant* whereby ***children*** of faithful church ***attendants*** could be baptized even though their parents could not claim personal regeneration under church rules. This last compromise may have made sense from a pragmatic point of view, but it began to seriously erode the strict covenantal bonds of Puritanism that had held the community together in the most difficult of times.

Men and women grubbing in the ground hoping for a small morsel to eat to stave off starvation will pray while they go about their

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[203] See Puritan thought, page 252 and read about the Geneva church model and Calvinism under the topic, John Calvin (1509–1564), page 235

[204] See The Westminster Assembly (ca 1646–1647), page 257

diligent search. Conversely, worldly riches always have a corroding influence on Christian faith. When a fair degree of prosperity finally came to the Puritan communities, they began to neglect prayer and church attendance. As they looked away from the hope of maintaining God's providence on their behalf through obedience to his divine law, they began to look increasingly to their own wits and their independent skills and abilities to survive the next crisis.

The small Puritan communities once located within a half-mile radius of their central church building were becoming thinly scattered as families moved further outside their communities to inhabit the rich farmlands that the New World had to offer. Moreover, as the New England colonies became increasingly prosperous, they attracted many more immigrants of various persuasions and religious convictions from Europe, which greatly diluted their faithful core populations. Occupied with mundane day-to-day activities, they soon began to develop an indifference to that Puritan faith they had once held to so fiercely.

The Indian Invasion

As settlement expansion took place, the once friendly relationship between settlers and the American natives also deteriorated first into suspicion and then into distrust. By the year 1675, many local tribes had thrown aside their tribal rivalries to organize under Metacom (or Metacomet; also referred to by settlers as King Philip) of the Wampanoag nation in order to focus their combined efforts against the settlers. Beginning with far flung homesteads and settlements, roving bands of Indians began their attack.

At first, the stunned settlers seemed powerless to defend themselves against sneak attacks until they finally enlisted loyal Indians, who had earlier converted to the Christian faith, as scouts. Those scouts soon taught them to fight the Indian way behind any available cover and to go on the offensive. As a consequence of the settlers greater numbers, weapons, and supplies, the Indian uprising finally ended on August 26, 1676 with the death of Metacom in an ambush.

Invasion by the Supernatural

Pressed by the threat of imminent death, the Pilgrims had returned to the fierce faith, which had served them so well in the beginning, to defeat the Indian uprising. Unfortunately, their peace of soul would not last long as Satan soon sent another wave of terror against them. This time it did not come about through the hostility of human agents from without, but through a supernatural evil that infiltrated their communities from within. As the seventeen century began to draw to an end, occultism and various forms of witchcraft were being practiced by an increasingly greater number of settlers.

This satanic practice began as various forms of ritual healing[205] in which individuals claimed to possess the supernatural power to heal various maladies from warts to even more serious diseases. Settlers increasingly began to look to them whenever they had any sort of physical infirmity. Dabbling into the supernatural realm inevitably brought forth religious corruption that denied the very roots of the Puritan faith, and it eventually led them to exercise practices that were even more satanic. Soon curses and spells were being pronounced as their confrontation with local pastors over witchcraft increased.

A Puritan minister by the name of Cotton Mather alone seemed able to withstand those encounters.[206] Mather had graduated from Harvard in 1678 whereupon he took the position of assistant pastor of Boston's original North Church. He later assumed full duties as its pastor in 1685.[207] Mather was a staunch social conservative and is often criticized over the negative description of women in his writings. Action to stem the growth of the widespread occult practices that were taking place, more often than not by women, was soon

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[205] Ritual healing was discussed in Book II of this work in Chapter 14.3

[206] Details regarding these encounters and the witch trials that followed are recorded in some detail by Cotton Mather in his book entitled *Wonders of the Invisible World*.

[207] Cotton Mather was one of the most noted religious leaders of his time setting the moral climate for the colonies through his authorship of more than 450 books and pamphlets. Many of his voluminous works are still studied and quoted today.

deemed imperative by Mather and other church leaders. Nevertheless, even their response to the evil about them would play directly into Satan's hands.

The Salem Witch Trials

For the five months extending from May to October of 1692, those accused of openly practicing witchcraft or wizardry were brought before civil magistrates at Salem (See map Figure 9, page 278) to be judged. Many of them were banished, but twenty were executed. Because of mass hysteria caused by the satanic onslaught, a veritable witch hunt ensued. It is quite probable that many innocent men and women were falsely accused and a few of their number were executed along with the guilty. That possibility greatly disturbed the clergy and especially Cotton Mather whose writings and actions earlier had seemed to encourage the trials. The trials were finally halted by the governor, William Phips, when it became apparent that the mad spirit of retribution that prevailed throughout the colonies was most certainly not in God's will. By then however, Satan had accomplished his diabolical purposes both through occult infiltration and then through the frenzied action taken in opposition to it.

Extended Puritan Influence

By the year 1700, Puritanism was taking its last gasp of the once intense faith that had earlier sent them to a new world. Nevertheless, it still must especially be said of the early Puritan pilgrims, which came ashore in the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1620, that they faced extreme weather conditions, starvation, and deprivation ultimately leading to their death having never realized all the material benefits that the hope engendered by their faith had promised them. If they had been at all mindful of the comforts of England from which they had come, they could have returned via the next supply ship, but because of the strong conviction of their faith they stayed. Having confessed that they were but strangers and pilgrims here on earth, they plainly declared that they sought to take up residence in a very special city. What those Puritans really sought after was not an earthly city after all, but a far better one — a heavenly one that was being prepared

for them by God (cf. He.11:13–16). Their settlement on the eastern shore of the North American continent was for them but a brief stop along their way to that glorious city.

Yet, the religious and civil principles of governance they left behind was to become the foundation for a great nation of bright hope for many generations of reformed Christians that would later walk in their spiritual footprints. The example of their earlier faith was to remain behind as a bright light emanating forth from a "shining city on a hill" to later generations. The effect of early Puritanism would be felt in the broader secular and political arenas through adherence to their view of popular education and high standards of public morality and personal conduct.

Even the *United States Constitution*[208] and the politics of the United States have been strongly influenced by Puritan principles of conduct first transplanted in Plymouth, and by the representative democratic rule in the early Connecticut community. Puritanism provided the moral and religious backgrounds of 75% of the people who declared their independence in 1776. In fact, as many as 85% of those noted signers most probably bore the "stamp of Geneva" if we consider the many Germans, Swiss, French, Dutch, and Scots as well as English settlers then present in the colonies.

The Age of Enlightenment and Reason in Europe

Even as Puritanism was waning in the United States, Europe was being overtaken by humanistic philosophies of the Renaissance Movement that had begun in the 14th century and continued on into the 17th century.[209] The so-called Age of Enlightenment is considered to have characterized the entire 18th century. The Age of Reason, as it was also called, began in about the year 1690 in England, and by 1715, it had begun in France as well. Those strong humanist philosophies resulted in a reaction against superstition, the cold formalism found in

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[208] See The Constitution of the United States (1787), page 318

[209] The Renaissance Movement was discussed in Chapter 18.1, page 219

corporate worship, and the dogmatic doctrines of the Roman church. By the 1700s, prominent philosophers of the age had come to reject Christianity altogether. Instead, they sought to apply human rationalization to all areas of living in the hopes of realizing a new social order — the "perfect society." It can be reasonably argued that Enlightenment principles greatly influenced the founding of the United States in 1787. It can also be observed that the humanistic philosophies of that time can also be found deeply imbedded in the progressive religious liberalism of most of today's churches as well.

Voltaire (1694–1778)

Voltaire, a staunch proponent of enlightenment philosophy, attacked Christianity in the name of reason. He placed his faith in the ability of human reasoning and in the supposed nobility of mankind. He saw rationalism or man's reason as the only criteria for truth. He also believed that random chance governed the world rather than the sovereign hand of God, and came up with many "facts" to disprove the Bible that later turned out to be pure fabrications.

Nicholas Ludwig van Zinzendorf (1700–1760)

The Moravian church that Jan Hus[210] had founded (so named because of its start in Bohemia and Moravia) flourished in Germany after a group of refugees found safe haven on the estate of Count Nicholas van Zinzendorf. There they were allowed to build the town of Herrenhut. Zinzendorf accepted the position of bishop for the Moravian group, which was then known simply as "The Unity." This term was descriptive since the Moravians were formed out of a mixed group from various political and religious backgrounds.

Zinzendorf was a gifted speaker and wrote considerable amounts of poetry much of which found its way into the worship music of the church such as, *Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness*. He remained a Lutheran all his life, but still tolerated the sincere beliefs of other Christians. As a condition of his continued hospitality,

[210] See John (Jan) Hus (ca. 1369–1415), page 217

Zinzendorf insisted that all that lived on his estate learn to live together peacefully as was set forth in a signed agreement known as *The Covenant for Christian Living*.

Zinzendorf was not in favor of the Moravians declaring themselves a church separate of the larger community of German Lutherans and Anglicans of the Church of England, which clearly demonstrated his ecumenical mindset. Moravian evangelical missions excelled in reaching many with the Gospel of Christ not only in Europe, but in America as well. In later years, Moravians would influence other reformers such as John Wesley[211] in 1736 through its Georgia mission in America.

The Great Awakening

While Puritan principles would still exert influence upon the newly formed American nation even into the early 1900's, Puritanism as a dominant religious movement had collapsed in the 1700's as we saw earlier. Nevertheless, the reformed faith was not dead, but merely hibernating in the American psyche waiting to be awakened once again. That condition set the stage for another great movement to gain sway in the young colonies that is commonly referred to as "revivalism." Revivalism was essentially an effort to awaken the Christian faith that had degenerated into a cold form of intellectual assent by many church members. Their lack of fervor also resulted in a growing lack of interest in Christianity by the unsaved. This dullness of spirit was about to change as the Holy Spirit began to move in what is referred to as the Great Awakening in America.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)

New England in the early eighteenth century was largely influenced by a modified form of Calvinism that had a strong leaning toward Arminianism. In that day, Presbyterians were divided into two camps. Those of the "old side" that insisted above all on strict adherence to the teachings of the Westminster standards, and those of

[211] See The Wesleyan Movement, page 293

the "new side" who placed their emphasis on the ***experience*** of redeeming grace. Jonathan Edwards was a firm believer in Calvinism and the doctrine of predestination. In an effort to move the populace of New England back toward a more rigorous Calvinism, he delivered a sermon toward that end in Boston (See map Figure 9, page 278) in the year 1731. The sermon was entitled *God Glorified in Man's Dependence* that was an open public attack on Arminianism.

Later in 1734, he delivered a series of sermons in his own church at Northampton (See map Figure 9, page 278) that had the same theme. Most noted of that series is his sermon entitled *Reality of Spiritual Light.* In this sermon, Edwards combined Calvinism with the reality of the working of the Holy Spirit in the elect that resulted in a religious experience that was given directly and fully by God. Although he was thoroughly a Calvinist intellectually, he was equally convinced of the need for a heart-felt personal experience of that God-given Salvation.

Edwards did not express any great emotion when he delivered his sermons and often read them from a prepared text. The predictable effect of that kind of preaching would have been considered average at best. However, the content of his sermons that underscored the need for a personal experience of conviction of sin and the corresponding divine forgiveness of God attracted and retained his hearers intellectually.

In time, the purely intellectual response to his sermons suddenly began to change dramatically. People not only heard and understood with their minds, they also began to become greatly affected emotionally by his sermons. This came about as he preached a series of sermons on justification by faith — the essential Pauline doctrine of grace. One such sermon entitled *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* caused many in his congregation to weep and moan in their seats. The fear of hell was a primary impetus for large numbers of his congregants to avoid its horrors by turning to Christ seeking mercy and forgiveness.

Not only did some begin to respond with emotional outbursts during his sermons, many also began to exhibit a remarkable change in their daily lives as well. There was much greater attention being given

to their personal devotional habits and they began to set a positive example for others. The "frozen chosen" were warming up and thawing out. The sudden and emotional response to his sermons actually surprised Edwards as much as it did others. During this time, three hundred new members were added to Edward's church. In fact, so powerful was this effect, it soon spread beyond the immediate area sweeping over into neighboring Connecticut. There seemed little doubt that the Holy Spirit was at work in their midst.

It was not long, however, before the remarkable results of Edward's teaching began to subside, and three years later the signs of the initial elation had almost disappeared entirely — though the memory of it remained and many entertained the hope of its rekindling. Edwards, himself, was still convinced that a work of the Spirit had begun that would eventually have widespread repercussions, and that the awakening was a genuine work of grace, expressing itself in both mental and emotional excitement.

The Wesleyan Movement

We shall now briefly turn our attention to England as we begin a brief study of Methodism that was founded by John Wesley with considerable support from his brother Charles Wesley.

John Wesley (1703–1791)

John Wesley was born of Saxon stock in England to Samuel and Susannah Wesley. Susannah was the mother and educator of her nineteen children of which John was the fifteenth. His father, Samuel Wesley was a graduate of Oxford and a minister in the Church of England. In 1696 Samuel was appointed rector of Epworth, where John Wesley was born.

A tragic incident occurring in John's childhood, when he was but six years of age, made a profound impression on him, which was to extend throughout his lifetime. He was scarcely rescued from the burning rectory of his father. He spoke of this close escape as a " brand being plucked from the burning," and for that reason he saw himself as a child of God's providence set aside for some special purpose.

John was admitted to the Charterhouse School in London in the year 1713 where he continued the studious religious lifestyle he had been accustomed to at home. In 1720 he was enrolled in Christ Church College, Oxford, where he received a masters degree in 1727. While he was attending college there, he was ordained a deacon in 1725, and he was subsequently elected a fellow of Lincoln College in 1726. He assisted his father as rector for two years, after which he returned to Oxford in order to fulfill his obligations as a fellow.

The Holy Club and the Bible Societies

In 1729, John Wesley along with his brother Charles began a small worship group at Oxford known by his critics as the "Holy Club." Its intended purpose was to provide a disciplined means toward achieving personal spiritual improvement. This group at the outset did not see itself as a separatist movement, although the Church of England would soon brand them as dissenters. As the group expanded, the many resulting groups became known as "Bible Societies" whose purpose was to provide a much-needed exposure to God's Word as well as provide an opportunity for corporate prayer by the laity. Great emphasis was placed upon personal holiness as well as the regular study of Scripture. This warm personal emphasis upon prayer and God's Word directing personal lives was in complete contrast to the remote formalism of national Anglicanism[212] of that day.

The Class Meeting

It was in 1742 that the "class meeting" was first introduced. The "divisions," as they were called (in Latin, *classis*), grew rather large and also purposed to encourage Christian stewardship, since dues were faithfully collected at each meeting. In 1743, a common set of rules was established, and the movement became a national organization. The Wesleyan movement, the members of which were nicknamed "Methodists" because of their meticulous and methodical approach to religion, was established to fill a void in the lax personal religious life in England. The Anglican Church had become by that

[212] See Anglicanism, page 249

time nearly stone-cold with respect to the spread of and personal response to the Gospel of Christ. The Methodist societies blew a breath of fresh air into a very stale church.

That breath of air was greatly enhanced by the many hymns that Charles Wesley wrote during his lifetime such as, *Love Divine, And Can it Be, Oh for a Thousand Tongues, Come Thou Long Expected Jesus, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Christ the Lord is Risen Today, Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending, Arise My Soul Arise, Jesus, Lover of My Soul, Soldiers of Christ Arise,* and still others that are revered and sung in church assemblies across many denominations throughout Christendom to this day.

The Georgia Mission

When Governor Oglethorpe sought a minister to send to Georgia in the Americas to conduct revivals in the English colony established there, John Wesley eagerly responded to the call. Although he had been diligent in his religious duties, Wesley never believed that it was ever enough; sin he felt was his constant companion from which he could never wrench himself free no matter how hard he worked to do so. Perhaps he thought that the efforts of this trip would finally be enough to free him from that guilt. Nevertheless, his stay in the colonies for about two years did not turn out the be the fruitful experience for which John had hoped. While there, he got into heated controversies with the colonists over the conduct of communion as well as various other church ordinances. In addition, he unwittingly became romantically involved with a married woman who in the end very wisely sent him away to return to England in 1738. His hopes of reaching and converting the American Indians had been a complete failure as well. As Wesley was to ask, "I went there to convert Indians, but who will convert John Wesley?"

Wesley's Conversion

After his return to England, John felt defeated and hopeless until he encountered a group of Moravians.[213] The redemption from

[213] Moravians were the followers of the early reformer Jan Hus. For more on the Moravians see page 217 and page 290

sin that had so long escaped him was finally obtained on May 24, 1737 while he was attending a Moravian meeting in Aldersgate Street, London. While listening to the reading of Martin Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, in which an explanation of the power of faith and the doctrine of justification through that faith was given, Wesley finally realized why all the works he had engaged in had availed him nothing. Wesley said of his conversion experience, "my heart felt strangely warmed. I knew I did trust Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and assurance was given to me that He had taken away my sins."

Suddenly, a new spiritual impetus was behind Wesley's preaching. However, finding the parish churches closed to him, he felt deeply dejected — until he came across a man named George Whitefield who persuaded Wesley to hold open-air or field preaching tours in England that had proved to be so successful for his own preaching tours. Although Wesley most often preached extemporaneously, he left behind a number of sermons, as well as notes and papers concerning various topics ranging from the fallen nature of men to defending the Methodist position. His many journals have been a source of intense study for many, especially those in the Methodist camp, over many years.

George Whitefield (1714–1770)

In the year 1739, the Great Awakening would reach its peak. Northampton would once again be a center of the Revival movement in America and Edwards would be a key figure, but the major influence fueling the revival in the region would be the evangelical preaching of George Whitefield. Whitefield was born in Gloucester, England in 1714. While attending Oxford, he had become a member of the "Holy Club" established by John and Charles Wesley. Whitefield struggled with his faith attempting to submit himself fully to God through self-imposed asceticism and good works, until one day the Holy Spirit arrested his efforts and gave him a new birth that revealed all his efforts at self-sanctification both impossible and unnecessary. Whitefield was ordained on June 20, 1736 at the age of 22, and revivals were spontaneously ignited in England when he

preached in Bath, Gloucester, and Bristol. The staid pulpits of the Anglican Church soon rejected his preaching. It was then that Whitefield became interested in the New England colonies.

In the providence of God, Whitefield visited New England at just the time that the revival that had begun earlier under Jonathan Edwards waned. With his charismatic preaching style, he led many to experience conversion as well as demonstrating outward expressions of repentance and joy. Although Edwards was a Congregationalist and Whitefield was an Anglican, Edwards warmly invited Whitefield to preach in his church. Unlike the dry content-oriented preaching of Edwards, Whitfield had tremendous oratorical skills that appealed to the human emotions. It is said that while Whitefield preached, Edwards wept. Suddenly, the awakening that had begun earlier in Edward's church had a new momentum. So large were the crowds that came to hear the English preacher, Whitefield had to resort to open-field preaching. His farewell sermon in America was to a congregation that was estimated at twenty thousand.

George Whitefield was a Calvinist, a firm believer in predestination and the sovereignty of God. Wesley, however, had come to place more emphasis on experience and the ability of man to exercise his "free will" by turning to God. In his mind, redemption came about solely as a result of a personal decision to accept what Christ had done. He saw preaching as a means of motivating a person to reach that conclusion. The conflict between the opposing doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism soon resulted in a religious breakup between those two devout men, as Wesley openly denounced Calvinism in 1740. Whitefield's thinking went on to establish the Calvinistic Methodists, which had a strong following in Wales, while Wesley set the groundwork for what was to become known as the Methodist Church.

The Wide Expanse of Revivalism

Upon George Whitefield's return to England, he was at first invited to speak before the nobility, but when he was rejected from their midst and then forbidden by the Anglican Church to preach his simple but forceful message of salvation, he began open-air preaching

to the masses. It had begun spontaneously when he had occasion to speak with a small group of coal miners who had never darkened the door of a church, and were therefore ripe to hear the wondrous Gospel. After that simple beginning, his audiences increasingly grew in size. In 1739 he was said to have preached to as many as twenty-three thousand in a single open-air meeting. That his voice could carry to that many without any means of amplification is nothing short of miraculous. The opportunities for the spread of the Gospel in Europe were immense, but Whitefield's heart was in America were he believed that God was at work creating a new Christian nation. It was then that he persuaded a born-again John Wesley to take up open-air field preaching to press the awakening in England, while he returned to the New England colonies.

Sailing up and down the coasts of the American colonies, Whitefield made numerous stops along the way where he was welcomed with huge crowds desiring to hear him speak. He was joined in his efforts by other evangelists such as a Presbyterian minister named William Tennent, and in particular his son Gilbert who had been given a special calling for the work. Theodore Frelinghuysen was bringing the renewal message to the Dutch Reformed church in New Jersey, while in Virginia Samuel Davies was carrying the water of life to the thirsty. Even David Brainerd, whose primary mission was taking the Gospel to the Indians, was instrumental in converting settlers who had occasionally come to his meetings to observe and mock his efforts.

Whitefield drove himself without mercy to reach as many as possible with the life-saving truth of the Gospel. It was inevitable that his health would eventually fail him, and it did so just as he was preparing to deliver another message. He retired from his great work on his death bed in 1770 in the home of Jonathan Parsons, the minister of Newburyport. During his entire lifetime, Whitefield is said to have preached a total of 18,000 sermons. In addition, he compiled hymns for a hymnbook that was published in 1753. A seven-volume collection of his many writings was published posthumously in 1772.

Revivalism Goes Out of Control

Unfortunately, there is nothing that God has begun that cannot be corrupted by man as Satan injects his own influence behind the scenes. It has been said, that if Satan cannot get one to neglect the work of God, he will get them to over-do it and so spoil it. The revival movement had soon grown out of control as biblical orthodoxy was persistently put aside as being far too dull and ineffective in reaching the lost. Emotionalism now ruled over sound doctrine, such that an unchecked form of revivalism had largely replaced the reformed faith. For the next sixty or seventy years in America revivalism had the effect of preventing any literal interpretation of Scripture as its text was carelessly allegorized to conform to prevailing religious experiences of the day. This was the sad state of Christianity in the colonies leading up to the war with England to gain American independence, which we shall discuss later in Chapter 18.5.

Chapter 18.4 Early Protestant Missions Movement

We shall digress briefly in this Chapter in order to address the History of the Early Protestant Christian missions movement to present a more cohesive overview of the efforts of the reformed church on earth to reach the world for Christ. This topic has already been touched on obliquely as we discussed the expansion of the temporal church both through militant Roman Catholic Churchianity and through persuasive conversion throughout the Protestant Reformation. However, this chapter shall take a much narrower approach inasmuch as the specific aim and purpose of the Protestant missions movement was and should be only to transmit the wondrous Gospel to those who have not previously heard it that they may be saved from the wrath of God to come should they remain in their sins.

Earlier Propagation of the Gospel

It is probable that the apostles traveled more extensively than is actually recorded in the Scriptures. It has been speculated that others like Joseph of Arimathaea (Mt.27:57–60), Nicodemus (Jn.3:1–9), and even Mary and Martha (Lu.10:38–42) became missionaries to other lands, though that can hardly be verified with any degree of certainty. John Mark apparently traveled to Alexandria in Egypt where a large Christian center eventually developed among the Jewish population. All of those efforts took place in the first century. Long before the Roman church prohibited the proliferation of Scripture among the laity, the texts of the original autographs of the apostles were being circulated through a large number of copies in Latin, Greek, and perhaps various other languages as well. By the second century, the Scriptures that included the four Gospels, the Acts, the epistles of Paul and the first epistles of Peter and John were almost certainly in widespread use.

Evangelistic services or revivals, along with the great exhortations before multitudes that are so common today and in the recent past, were non-existent in the early church. In this highly

evangelical age, many find the notion disturbing that the Church could grow so greatly without highly organized efforts of outreach. Some few debates were held by men such as Justin and Origen[214] before students attending their schools, but their efforts were quite limited as far as reaching the masses. The Gospel at that time was being spread by anonymous Christians who bore witness of their personal faith in the workplace, as they shopped in the marketplace, or as they entertained visitors, and as they traveled far and wide on extensive Roman roads.

Many also witnessed to the soundness of their faith through martyrdom. Their willingness to die rather than deny their faith demonstrated its genuineness for many. The word "martyr" simply means "witness," and does not necessarily include the negative context in which we use the word today[215]. Great missionary journeys such as those undertaken by Paul and his companions are not mentioned beyond the first century. The universality of the Gospel in saving the soul from sin regardless of race or background made Christianity its own best missionary as its life-transforming message was related from one individual to another.

Patrick, an Early Protestant Missionary

One of the earliest independent missionaries of whom we have record outside of Scripture is Patrick, a noted missionary to Ireland. Patrick, whom we refer to today as Saint Patrick (after Roman tradition), was born about A.D. 389 (exact date unknown) on the west coast of Britain at a time when the *Pax Romana* (Roman peace) was giving way before barbarian invaders. Patrick's given name at the time of his birth was Sucat, meaning "warlike." He would not take the name Patrick (meaning "noble") until a much later date.

Sucat's father was a magistrate and pastor (or deacon) of an independent British church and his grandfather was an elder (or

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[214] See Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–254), page 121

[215] See Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165), page 105

presbyter). At that early date, the Roman Catholic Church had not yet sent any missionaries into England though politically the Roman Empire claimed it as a province. It was being heavily exploited by the Roman military for its tin that was valued in the manufacture of weapons. It therefore cannot be said that Sucat (Patrick), his father, or his grandfather were Roman Catholics. Certainly, Patrick predates Aidan who arrived in A.D. 634. Tradition appears to suggest that Joseph of Arimathaea, a disciple in whose tomb Jesus was buried (cf. Mt.27:57–60), traveled to Britain and brought the Gospel there at a very early date. By whatever means, the Christian faith had first arrived by a means other than missionary efforts of the institutionalized Roman church.

Sucat was a typical "preacher's kid," rebellious and willful as his name implied. At the age of 16, he was kidnapped and made a slave of the fearful Druids[216] that occupied the island of Hibernia or Ierne as it was then known by the Greeks — now known as Ireland. In its early days, Ireland was ruled by various fierce tribal chieftains. The people were ignorant and oppressed and were hidden away from the world by a complex of low mountain ranges surrounding Ireland's lowland interior. Furthermore, there were no natural resources such as the tin found elsewhere in Britain such that the Roman Empire all but ignored Ireland.

Much like the proverbial prodigal son (cf. Lu.15:15), Patrick was put to work feeding swine for a Druid chieftain two hundred miles into the deep forests of Ireland. While in slavery, he was converted as he recalled some of the messages that he had heard from his father's preaching. In his recorded *Confession,* he tells how God opened his confused mind to the Truth. So overwhelming was his conversion that he made a great impact upon everyone he met who referred to him as the "holy youth." After 6 years in captivity, he made his escape by ship

[216] Druidism was a pre-Christian religion of the early inhabitants of the British Isles that expressed belief in the supernatural. Among other things, they held that when a person died, their soul was transferred into the body of a newborn child. They also believed in the mysterious power of various plants including the oak and mistletoe. Their rituals were customarily conducted in oak forests.

to his homeland in England, but could never forget the people or his experiences on the Emerald Isle.

At the age of 42, Sucat felt a calling to return to Ireland. It was at that time that he took on the name Patrick. It is reported that he took on the Druid chieftains in Ireland one by one, and converted and baptized well over one hundred thousand of Ireland's inhabitants, building over three hundred churches in the process. Through his efforts, Patrick emphasized the importance of missions in the Celtic church, which ultimately produced a large number of monks that later evangelized the inhabitants throughout Western Europe.

Pope Gregory the Great later sent a company of Roman Catholic monks to the kingdom of Kent in Britain at the end of the sixth century. Monasteries also began to appear in Ireland at that time. In the later days of Ireland, the abbot of a monastery replaced the local bishop as the Christian authority. Nevertheless, the churches in Ireland remained totally distinct from the Roman Catholic Church until A.D. 1167 when King Henry II sent Papal soldiers to Ireland to subdue and take authority over the independent evangelical churches that Patrick had earlier founded there.

The Gospel Mandate

When we think of the great Gospel mandate for the visible Church, we most often turn to the New Testament and the Gospel of Matthew in Chapter 28:19,20:

> **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**

While it is clearly evident by the context that Jesus was speaking only to the eleven[217] apostles (cf. Mt.28:16), it would be unreasonable to assume that the multitude of others who have also received the saving knowledge of the truth of the Gospel should not

[217] Judas Iscariot had taken his own life, and Matthias had not yet been appointed.

seek to go forth with the good news to others of the human race under the same mandate. As the Apostle Paul said, we having been saved by grace alone are debtors to all that have not yet heard the Gospel (Ro.1:14,15). As such, the debt must be paid by bringing the life-saving Truth to them whether by spoken word or the written word.

Nevertheless, Protestants were slow in reaching out to people of other lands in any systematic way. This was due in part to Roman Catholic persecution that continued for almost one hundred years in many lands after most of the Reformation struggle had seemingly subsided. In addition, many of the Protestant movements had not yet solidified into denominations of a size necessary to organize foreign missions.

The general view of most Protestants at that time was that the Great Commission of Matthew 28 had been given directly to the apostles and it was therefore not necessarily binding on the church at large. Perhaps, the reformed view of God's absolute sovereignty in choosing his elect had impaired their thinking about the necessary role that man must assume in taking the clear exposition of the Gospel message to all of mankind in order that they may have a sound basis for belief:

> **"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things"** (Ro.10:14,15)!

However, the strong Christian presence among local populations was proving to be a witness in itself as Christian believers discoursed with non-believers and witnessed of their faith through their actions. As churches were established, many were attracted to them, heard the Gospel message, and came to believe. It was only on the foreign missions field that nothing was yet being ventured.

Missionaries to Native North Americans

Christian colonists often found themselves transplanted in the midst of a missions field as a consequence of their own resettlement to other lands to avoid the persecution they had suffered in their homelands. In the young North American Colonies, there was a desire to reach the Native Americans with the Gospel message almost from the beginning. The interest was two-fold: Reaching the lost heathen with the Gospel would save their souls, but it would also effectively civilize them sufficiently to make colonization by white settlers easier and more peaceful. The push westward on the frontier, as the nation's population grew, expanded that effort and increased the interest in Native-American missions. The westward movement sometimes aided missions and at other times impeded them as the doctrine of "Manifest Destiny"[218] often trampled any genuine efforts made by western missionaries.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)

Jonathan Edwards is primarily recognized as being the great American Theologian. However, he was also instrumental in bringing forth the Great Awakening through preaching from his church pulpit as we discussed earlier in this book.[219] In Northampton, Edward's sermons soon called for an increasing demand for sterner religious discipline in the face of the wild and uncontrolled twist the Great Awakening had taken. Because of those efforts, his congregation soon turned against him and accused him of "high-handedness" and bigotry. That came to a head when Edwards flatly refused to admit unbelievers into the church membership and dogmatically denied them participation in communion services. Ironically, in 1750 a council representing ten congregations in the region dismissed Edwards, who had first sparked the Great Awakening, through his own pastorate.

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[218] "Manifest Destiny" was a political phrase that was used to express the belief that the colonies of the United States were destined to occupy all the territory from the east coast to the Pacific ocean. This also justified any means necessary to do so.

[219] See The Great Awakening, page 291

After his dismissal, Edwards became a noted missionary to the Housatonic Native Americans who lived along the Housatonic River in Massachusetts beginning in 1751. Having been dismissed from his pulpit in Northampton over doctrinal matters after many years of faithful service, he pastored a small church in the frontier hamlet of Stockbridge. As a close associate of David Brainerd (see below), he sought to protect the Native Americans in the area against prevailing cultural imperialism. Edwards died of Smallpox in 1758.

David Brainerd (1718–1747)

David Brainerd spent the latter part of his short life as an American missionary among Native Americans. He was born at Haddam, Connecticut in 1718 and was orphaned at age fourteen. He spent nearly three years as a student at Yale. Afterward, he prepared himself for the ministry, and he was finally licensed to preach in 1742. It was in 1743 that he made the decision to dedicate his life to missionary work among Native American tribes. He gained the support of the Scottish Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

His first effort as a missionary was at Kaunaumeek, which was an Indian settlement about 20 miles from Stockbridge, Massachusetts. The rest of his life was spent among the Delaware tribes in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Brainerd was never strong physically, suffering many days at a time from illness and depression. Nevertheless, he never wavered from his mission to see to the welfare of the American natives, physically as well as spiritually. He finally succumbed to illness on October 19, 1747. A lifelong friend of Jonathan Edwards, he died in Northampton, Massachusetts in the home of his friend and mentor.

Difficulties in Establishing Foreign Missions

The difficulty of mounting a successful missionary effort in a foreign culture cannot be overestimated. The cultures are often radically different and entangled with many generations of false religious beliefs. Even introducing simple Christian core teaching is viewed as radical and not easily accepted. Many of the matters discussed by the writers of the epistles of the Bible had to do with the

problem of adapting or correcting past traditions, customs, and behavior that were peculiar to new Christians of that time and place. Nowhere is this more evident than in Paul's two epistles to the Corinthians. The culture of Corinth was hardly conducive to the establishment of Christianity, yet it was established there in the midst of paganism and even began to mature over time.

Even where the Gospel is finally planted and it begins to grow, there is a strong possibility that Satan will come in and will attempt to snatch the young plants up by the roots. That is what Paul encountered with the Galatians as various Jewish sympathizers crept into their midst's to convince them to seek salvation through the Law of Moses.

> **"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain"** (Galatians 3:1–4).

That is why it is so important for missionaries to stay in one place long enough to train local men until they are sound in the faith to protect both them and their charges against the possibility of false doctrine undermining their faith. That meant that missionaries could not just briefly visit a foreign land, but must take up residence there.

In addition, a very strained relationship always existed between the colonialism of that day and Protestant missions. As various parts of the world were colonized, missionaries often followed the colonists to reach the indigenous populace for Christ. For that reason, some missionaries were criticized by natives as merely being the agents of colonial interests. However, many missionaries themselves criticized various aspects of colonialism that had so often exploited the native people. The colonists in turn often opposed missionary efforts fearing that it would spur a religious conflict that would interfere with their commercial exploits and endeavors.

Early Protestant Foreign Missionaries

Inevitably, there would come along those believers who had gained the spiritual insight to recognize the necessity of mounting missionary efforts abroad to foreign lands, regardless of personal difficulties and dangers involved in doing so. This must be done in order that the Scriptural mandate of Christ to reach the uttermost parts of the earth would be accomplished (Ac.1:8). They were willing to risk their health and their lives to achieve that noble purpose. We only have space here to tell of the efforts of a few of them. There were many others during and after their times.

William Carey (1761–1834)

Carey was a pioneer English Baptist missionary, and he is considered by many to be the "father of modern missions." Carey was born the son of a schoolmaster in Paulerspury, Northhamptonshire, England in 1761. At an early age, he was inspired by reading about James Cook's Polynesian journeys. When he became associated with Christian dissenters, he was converted and baptized as a believer in 1783. He supported himself through shoemaking and some teaching as he began to preach locally. Carey was ordained a Particular Baptist minister in 1787, and in 1789, he became pastor of the Baptist church at Harvey Lane, Leichester.

Denying the prevailing assumption by many Calvinist Protestants that the Great Commission applied only to the apostles, Carey published *An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. In accord with his own personal motto to "expect great things from God; attempt great things for God," the Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1792.

Carey and his family moved to Bengal, India where he worked three months of the year as a foreman in an indigo dye factory. The remainder of each year he studied oriental languages and worked with two fellow Baptists to set up missions stations. Carey was quite diverse in his capabilities. As a result of his study of botany, he set up an Agricultural Society in 1820. Through his linguistic abilities, Carey also supervised the translation of the Bible into Bengali. He also

translated several eastern books into English, and published grammars and dictionaries. He also founded the first Newspaper ever published in Bengali. Carey succeeded in his long efforts to eliminate the practice of infanticide and widow burning (Sati or Suttee) in 1829. Carey died in 1834 in India where his great work had taken him.

Two other groups, the China Overseas Missionaries as well as the Moravian Church soon began to launch missionary efforts in seacoast towns and villages in emulation of Carey.

Hudson Taylor (1832–1905)

What Carey was to India, Taylor was to China. However, rather than moving into seacoast towns, Taylor resolved to move inland. This became a missionary trend beginning in the 1850's. While this approach avoided some conflicts with colonialism that tended to concentrate along coastlines, it also isolated a missionary from the possibility of familiar aid when it was most needed.

Taylor was born in 1832 in England. In 1853, he went to China as a missionary for the Chinese Evangelization Society. Soon, he determined to cut off his support from them due to theological differences and their inability to provide adequate support. Illness forced him to return to England in 1860. There, he completed medical training and founded the interdenominational China Inland Mission. Taylor saw the need to keep Christians in England informed, but resisted centralized control believing that decisions should be made in the field. Hudson vowed to rely on prayer rather than making great appeals for support lest he take money away from other important mission work.

Hudson lived among the Chinese people, and adopted their manner of dress for himself and any fellow recruits that he made. The recruits were known as the Student Volunteer Movement. So widespread were the tropical diseases in China, that the death rate for the volunteers was nearly eighty percent. It is said, that student volunteers often packed their belongings in coffins when they left for China. Hudson Taylor died in 1905.

David Livingstone (1813–1873)

David Livingstone was born in Scotland in 1813 to poor but godly parents. He was self-taught, his knowledge supplemented by taking various night classes, as he worked in a cotton mill. Later, he studied medicine in Glasgow and London hospitals and some theology.

Livingstone served for fifteen years with the London Missionary Society in South Africa under the noted Robert Moffat. During the last five years of this time, he embarked on extensive travels including a walk across Africa from west to east. That travel he recorded in his *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* published in 1857. Seeing Livingstone as more of an explorer than a missionary, the society dismissed him with the result that he next led a British government expedition to explore the Zambezi River in 1858. In 1863, he was recalled, his mission largely a failure, and with it the additional sorrow of the death of his wife.

Livingstone's one great desire was to eliminate the Arab slave trade of Africa. He believed that the slave trade could be countered by African development in Agriculture that would produce products more attractive than would slaves. Thus, he saw the liberating power of the Gospel working hand-in-hand with political and societal reform through education. Before his death in 1873, Livingstone continued with exceptional zeal and energy in the East African interior. His body was carried back to the coast by African companions and his remains were interred in Westminster Abbey.

Adoniram Judson (1788–1850)

Adoniram Judson was born in Massachusetts in 1788, the son of a Congregationalist minister. He was quite precocious, learning to read at an early age, and he became interested in theology as a child. When he attended college at age seventeen, he was influenced toward deism by a fellow colleague. Later as Adoniram was staying in an inn, a man in the next room was dying. Adoniram was deeply disturbed by what he could hear through the walls. In the morning, he discovered that the man had died and that the person from whom he had heard

such horrible agonies of despair had been none other than his Deist college friend. The sudden, realization of his lost condition caused Adoniram to repent and dedicate his life fully to God's service.

Judson initially received support from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, but later when he became a Baptist, a Baptist missionary society was founded to support him. Three years after his conversion, Adoniram took his bride Ann Hasseltine Judson with him and set sail for India. Being denied stay in India by the East India Company, they arrived in Burma in 1812 where they worked together to establish a Christian presence there.

Adoniram easily learned the complicated Burmese language and began a translation of the New Testament into Burmese that was finally completed in 1834. While Adoniram discussed the Christian faith with men, Ann also learned to speak the Burmese language fluently as a consequence of her household associations. She aided Adoniram by translating the books of Daniel and Jonah into Burmese. She also established a Sabbath Society for women where she read the Bible to them, explained the Gospel, and taught them to pray. In connection with that effort she also wrote a catechism in the Burmese language as well as translating the gospel of Matthew into the Siamese language in 1819.

Adoniram Judson was arrested in May of 1824 and was imprisoned for nearly two years because of a state of war that existed between Burma and the British. He was tortured and treated terribly while imprisoned and was spared from death only through continual pleadings by his wife, who diligently fed and cared for him while in prison, and the fact that he was finally seen to be useful as a translator. Ann also suffered greatly during that time and died in 1826 at the early age of 37 shortly after her husband’s release from prison. Adoniram died in 1850 at the age of 62.

Proliferation of Early Missionary Societies

The founding of missionary societies was characteristic of the nineteenth century. Some drew their membership from a single denomination while others later crossed over denominational lines and confessions of faith. Few governments contributed any funds to

missionary efforts because of a potential conflict with their colonial efforts, as we discussed earlier on page 307. Furthermore, only a few churches contributed adequate funds to missionary societies because their efforts were focused closer to home in resolving internal conflicts, as well as continuing their struggle to maintain their membership while simultaneously winning over uncommitted believers from other churches and denominations.

Inasmuch as churches did not properly fund missionary societies at that time, many became known as "voluntary societies." The under-funding had resulted in a necessary appeal for support from the public at large. This soon resulted in a proliferation of missionary societies as a symbiotic relationship developed between them and the general public. The missionaries of those societies brought back stimulating news about far off lands such as Africa and Asia to their supporters through personal lectures that were often supported by lanternslide shows. Missionaries became looked upon as an interesting source of geographical information as well as a source of education regarding the lifestyles of foreign peoples and their overall cultures. For those purely non-evangelical reasons, a great outpouring of support for their educational properties soon resulted in the expansion of missionary societies and their efforts abroad.

Forerunners of that voluntary movement can be found in earlier centuries as well. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge or SPCK was founded in 1698 and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts or SPG was founded in 1701. Both of them were of Anglican origin with most of their work taking place among British expatriates. The push by Pietists, Moravians, and Methodists had resulted in the founding of even more early missionary societies.

More advanced missions began in the late eighteenth century and extended through the nineteenth century. In 1792, the Baptist Missionary Society was founded through the efforts of William Cary. In 1795, the London Missionary Society was founded through the cooperation of Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. The Church Missionary Society founded in 1799 drew its members from

the evangelical wing of the Anglican Church. The British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1804.

The missionary movement rapidly spread to other lands and soon there were Protestant missionary societies located in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. In France, there were Protestant and Catholic missionary societies. In the United States, Congregationalists founded the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. One of their missionaries, Adoniram Judson, of whom we spoke earlier, became a Baptist, and the Baptist missionary society that was founded to support him became the forerunner to the American Baptist Convention.

Christianity in the Islands of the Pacific

Even as English missionaries took the Gospel to Africa and Southeast Asia, Christianity was also spreading through the islands of the Pacific including the continent of Australia.

Australia

When a penal colony was founded at Sidney Cove in Australia in 1788 to rid England of the burden of caring for so many prisoners on its small island nation, large numbers of Irish Catholics, and Anglican Christians, along with a smaller number of Methodists were transported there as convicts. To operate the prison colony, other Englishmen and their families also settled there to act as guards and as a merchant support group for the expanding colony. By 1800, traditional churches such as Anglican (Church of England), Presbyterian, and various Congregationalist churches had found their way into Australia along with large numbers of immigrants.

Hawaiian Islands

The Hawaiian Islands, first known as the Sandwich Islands, were charted by Captain James Cook on one of his many journeys. Among a group of missionaries, that arrived soon after, was Hiram Bingham I who was sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He founded a Congregational church on the island of Oahu. The massive structure of its meetinghouse, the

Kawaiaha'o Church, was completed in 1842 and it still stands to this day. His son, Hiram Bingham II, also became a Congregationalist missionary to the Hawaiian people. In addition, he and his wife were instrumental in spreading the Gospel to many other Island communities in the Pacific.

Japan

Japan's first contact with Christianity was through the efforts of Francis Xavier and other Jesuit missionaries in the mid 1600's. It was not long until the government of Japan began to see Christians as a danger to its rule with the result that Christianity was driven underground. Crucifixion, which had been banned by Constantine in the fourth century and was virtually unheard of throughout the world for more than a millennia, was employed to execute a group of Christian martyrs at Nagasaki on February 5th 1597. Since that time, crucifixion has persisted in various parts of the world specifically as a means to persecute, terrorize, control, and murder Christians. Adolph Hitler used this method in a modified form to execute a number of his so-called undesirables including a large number of Jews who were branded as murderers of Jesus Christ. Much more recently, crucifixion has been employed in Sudan against a large number of Christian believers in a Muslim attempt to exterminate Christianity.

Japan remained closed to western influence until it was forced to sign a commercial treaty in 1854 by Commodore M. C. Perry of the United States Navy. The Japanese soon desired to obtain western technology through that treaty in order to build up its own military might. The culmination of that effort was evident in World War II. Nevertheless, the brief open door of western influence allowed various Protestant missionaries to enter the nation such that churches under native leadership were soon founded in all the major cities.

The Philippines

Roman Catholicism had come to the Philippines prior to the nineteenth century through wide-reaching Spanish conquests. The Philippines eventually declared its independence from Spain in 1896. Following the Spanish American War, Spain surrendered the island

nation to the United States in 1898. That did not end the internal conflict however as the Catholic Church was being used as an instrument in the hands of the ruling colonial government to retain its close ties with Spain. That conflict soon gave rise to an independent church declaring itself separate of the Spanish church, but in doctrine and practice, it was Roman Catholic much the same as before the declaration. Although various Protestants entered the nation during the time of American occupation, the nation remained adamantly Roman Catholic.

Chapter 18.5 Birth of a Christian Nation

Denominational lines were slowly dissolving as a consequence of the Great Awakening[220] and the American colonies were beginning to unite politically as well. In eighteenth century America, the revival was twice cut short by war. First, by the French and Indian War in 1754 to 1763, and then in 1775 to 1783 the war for independence from England became the predominant force in American life. At first the American colonies were divided on whether breaking away from England was wise or even morally right from a Christian perspective. However, the arrogant actions of King George III who ascended to the English throne in 1760 soon ended all objections to the move for independence.

The passage of various tariffs and taxes on the colonies levied solely for use in Great Britain was especially egregious. These included the Stamp Act requiring the purchase of a British stamp to be affixed to every legal document, and the Townsend Acts of 1767 that placed a tariff on numerous commodities including tea. This last act led to the Boston Tea Party of 1773 where the cry was "no taxation without representation." Ministers of the Christian faith (with the notable exception of Anglican churches) soon began to advocate independence from England from their pulpits on very precise biblical and moral grounds.

The War for Independence

The first shot of the war took place as British troops, contrary to orders, fired on and overrun a thin line of valiant Minutemen waiting for them on Lexington Green. The British forces then continued their determined march to Concord to end all colonial resistance once and for all. It was during this advance that Paul Revere began his now famous ride to warn that the "Redcoats" were coming. Larger numbers of Minutemen, mostly consisting of shopkeepers and farmers, answered the call and began to harass the British army along

[220] See The Great Awakening, page 291

the way of their march with such force that it caused the British to turn back to Charlestown in demoralized defeat. The colonials had finally found their nerve with the sound of the first shot at Lexington, and their stand at Concord had raised their confidence that the British could actually be defeated.

The *Declaration of Independence* was drawn up in 1776 and from that point there was no turning back. Along with addressing grievances requiring a separation of the colonies from England, it boldly read in part, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. [221] That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Here it was made clear that all human rights are bestowed upon men by God alone, and that it is not within the jurisdiction of human government to add or detract from them but rather to firmly uphold them with the consent of the governed.

A rather reluctant George Washington, a devout Christian, was chosen as General to form and lead a new Continental army to stand against the British forces.[222] Along with the war for independence, came a close association of the American colonies with

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[221] This phrase in the *Declaration of Independence* most likely came from the Virginia Declaration of Rights written by George Mason that reads in part, "…that all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety." Benjamin Franklin agreed with Thomas Jefferson that "the means of acquiring and possessing property" could not be guaranteed to all men by human government in any absolute sense and that the phrase should therefore be changed to the more "virtuous" phrase "pursuit of happiness" that also expressed the enlightenment idea of personal independence, social justice, and well-being.

[222] The difficulties Washington faced in fulfilling his duties including the terrible winter at Valley Forge and the ultimate victory of his mission is beyond the scope of this book on Christian history.

France. General Marquis de Lafayette a French aristocrat led his troops on American soil to help defeat the British armies. He valiantly served with great distinction under General George Washington in the Continental Army, and arguably the outcome of the war would have been far different without French aid.

War, even a just one, always has a detrimental effect upon Christian faith and practice. While the horrors of war often drive men in their foxholes to seek God in prayer for the comfort that He can offer, the urgencies of war always result in neglected church attendance and causes an overall moral decline within the populace. Moreover, the French branch of the Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth century had produced a sense of worldly enlightenment in France that had resulted in complete skepticism regarding religious faith and had resulted in infidelity to Christian moral principles. The close association of the colonies with French troops during the war resulted in much of that French skepticism and infidelity being transplanted into the colonies thus further corrupting their faith. In the aftermath of the victory of the war for independence, came forth an increase in American optimism in human ability that would often set aside the providence of God as unnecessary.

The Constitution of the United States (1787)

Under the *Articles of Confederation* that went into force on March 1, 1771, the Continental Congress was so weak that it could not effectively carry out its most necessary functions. Even funding for the Continental Army, while fighting for independence under General George Washington, was extremely erratic putting the colonies at great risk. For several years after the war had been won, there was still no effective central government uniting the colonies, such that each colony continued to rule itself independently often engaging in tariff wars that seriously impeded interstate commerce.

The "need for a more perfect union" was rapidly becoming evident as the fledgling nation continued to grow. Accordingly, the *Constitution of the United States* was completed and ratified in 1787 creating a centralized federal government to, in its own words, "establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common

defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." Because of the totalitarian rule they had been subjected to earlier in Europe, the writers of that document were determined to limit the power of government in order to allow liberty to prevail unimpeded, yet provide it with sufficient power to forestall anarchy.

Within the document, three major branches of government were established as well as defining the relationship of the federal government with its member states. It may be observed that the three branches of the government established in the document can be equated with a presbyterian form[223] of church government. The two legislative houses established in Article 1 can be equated with the rule of Deacons (the House) and Elders (the Senate), and the Chief Executive (the President) established in Article 2 with that of a Bishop. The Constitution itself can be equated with God's Law (which it purports to represent), and the judicial branch (established in Article 3) can be equated with the ruling of the Holy Spirit in guiding the church in the proper observance of those laws. The coincidence is far too striking to be ignored and it demonstrates the early Puritan thinking involved in the fabrication of the United States system of government.

Even so, the government was to be a political parallel, not a direct theocracy presided over by a church. That fact however does not mean that the founders did not expect God to preside over it indirectly through the workings of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of spiritually regenerated men as they held various offices and deliberated every cause.

The Slavery Clause

It is most unfortunate that Satan caused a thorn to be inserted in the document, which would ultimately have far-reaching consequences. The issue of slavery was hotly debated as far back as the framing of the *Declaration of Independence* and many of the constitutional delegates, especially those from the northern colonies,

[223] See topic Presbyterian Form in Chapter 11.3, Book II of this work

wanted to expressly prohibit the importation of slaves into the United States in the *U. S. Constitution*. Nevertheless, a block of southern colonies led by Virginia whose economy depended upon the continuation of slavery resolutely held out until a compromise was finally reached. We find this compromise in article 1, section 9, clause 1 which reads, "The migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight; but a tax, or duty, may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person."

Although many individual states prohibited the importation of slaves across their borders, and the U.S. Congress could levy a tax up to ten dollars per person to regulate the import trade, the U.S. Congress could not make an end to the slave trade into the young nation until the year 1808. By the time that twenty years had transpired, large numbers of slaves had already been imported to the United States where their population continued to increase through procreation. This compromise over the issue of slavery would lead to terrible consequences for the nation in just a few short decades, as we shall discuss in some detail in the next chapter of this book.

The Federalist Papers

Prior to the ratification of the *U.S. Constitution*, a series of articles written by many who opposed the creation of a federal government were being published. In reply, Alexander Hamilton along with the collaboration of James Madison and John Jay wrote articles in favor of the passage of the *U.S. Constitution* in three New York newspapers under the title of *The Federalist*. In a collection of the 85 articles known today as the *Federalist Papers* are to be found much of the philosophy, motivation, and reasoning that had gone into the writing of the *U.S. Constitution* with the result that they are commonly consulted by the U.S. Supreme court while making many of its constitutional deliberations.[224]

[224] Going into great detail regarding the *Federalist Papers* is unfortunately beyond the scope of this work.

The Bill of Rights

The U.S. Constitution specifically spelled out the limited powers granted to the federal government while reserving all other powers to the individual states and their citizens. Nevertheless, many in the new nation were concerned about the absence of any assurance of various civil rights, but Article V provided for amendments to be made to the constitution. That resulted in the *Bill of Rights* being written up shortly after in the form of ten amendments to the original constitution.

The First Amendment

Recognizing the abuse and persecution that had resulted from England's national church as well as the obvious apostasy and abuse of temporal power executed by the powerful Roman imperial church, the founding fathers of the United States sought to abolish all authority of civil government to meddle in purely spiritual matters. Accordingly, the opening words of the first amendment to the *U.S. Constitution* reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…" The word "congress" referred to the newly founded federal congress of the United States and the amendment specifically applied to the making of any law by that body that would establish a single nation-wide religion or in anyway prohibit the free exercise of religious faith by individuals or their congregations. The primary intent of this amendment was to ensure that the federal government, as a secular entity, could not interfere in any way with church affairs, while fully allowing the collective religious consensus of the people to positively direct government through its elected members in its many tasks.

However, individual sovereign member states of the union were not prohibited from establishing a state church through their own laws, inasmuch as this clause applied specifically and only to the federal congress of the United States. In the early days of the union, many states did in fact have state supported churches. Nine were in existence when the first amendment was signed without any apparent conflict of interest being in evidence. Although the first amendment

did not prohibit states from establishing churches, state churches did not remain in existence long after the signing as states began to realize the wisdom of the framers of the *U.S. Constitution* in encouraging the unfettered exercise of religious faith.

In addition, the First Amendment established freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the freedom to peacefully assemble together to discuss and debate political and/or religious issues, as well as the right to petition the federal government to have any of their grievances heard and remediated without restriction or forceful interference.

Through the signing of this declaration, Christianity would be allowed to flourish in a free land in a way that it had not flourished under either governmental persecution or governmental control and allow the Protestant Reformation Movement, that had stagnated under state control in Europe, to advance in the new world unabated. It was clearly intended through the formulation of the constitutional mandate engraved in the first amendment to give Christ a free hand to establish and build his Church in this new land as He alone saw fit. This was bolstered by additional amendments that sought to secure individual liberty.

The Second Amendment

The Second Amendment gave states and individuals in those states the right to bear firearms for their individual protection and for the protection of a free state against the violation of the rights of its citizens or any outside invasion of its territory.[225]

The Third and Forth Amendment

The Third Amendment was written to ensure individual rights to securely hold property free of confiscation by the federal military to quarter troops, and the Forth Amendment was written to protect individual privacy rights free of unreasonable search or seizure by the federal government.

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[225] Also see Gun Control Laws , page 471

Amendments Five through Eight

Amendments Five through Eight addressed due process of law in prosecuting violations of criminal or civil laws and the rights granted to those being accused to adequately provide for their legal defense, a speedy and a public trial by a jury of their peers, as well as the right to petition for reasonable bail while awaiting trial.

Amendments Nine and Ten

Alexander Hamilton, a strong proponent of the *U.S. Constitution*, was concerned that adding amendments as a bill singling out specific individual rights could result in an interpretation that any basic rights not specifically spelled out in them could be abridged by government. Amendment Nine was written to insure that individual rights were not in any way limited to those rights specifically spelled out in the Constitution, and Amendment Ten ensured that the states would retain all other authority not specifically assigned to the federal government in the Constitution or specifically denied to the states in that document. The authority specifically granted to the federal government and therefore prohibited to the states was:

- To provide for a unified national defense
- To establish foreign trade policies with other nations
- To declare war against other nations
- To enact national immigration policies
- To establish and run a national postal system
- To establish monetary policy including banking and the coining of money to be used exclusively throughout the states
- To regulate interstate commerce

The states and/or their citizens were to retain all other rights thus limiting the size and power of the federal government to exercise tyrannical control over the lives of individual citizens as had occurred in the European nations from which they had escaped.[226]

[226] Since the ratification of the *Bill of Rights* in 1795, seventeen additional amendments have been added to the Constitution, the last of which was ratified in

The Move to Secularize Christian Morality

The American colonies at first had depended upon the providence of God to guide them in all affairs of life, but now they had the burden of a national secular government to contend with. When seeking the first President to head the new nation, George Washington was again approached. Although he would much rather have spent his remaining years at his beloved Mount Vernon, he again found himself powerless to refuse the request of the Electoral College. He was inaugurated on April 30,1789, and for eight years a sober and humble George Washington again led the young nation forward through his personal leadership even as through his devout prayers he sought the wisdom of the Almighty.

The Christian nation was off to a good start, but Satan had planted a seed that was already growing in the pleasant garden of the young nation. It would soon send it in a direction away from true Christian morality established by God toward a relative morality based solely upon humanistic rationalism.

Thomas Jefferson

Washington appointed Thomas Jefferson as his Secretary of State, and he later became Vice President after losing by three electoral votes to John Adams who became President in 1797.[227] He narrowly defeated Adams in the next election becoming President in 1801. Thomas Jefferson was born to Anglican parents, and he became

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1992. While it is beyond the scope of this book to address the *U.S. Constitution* and all its amendments in great detail, some will be addressed later in proper historical context.

[227] In the early days of the nation, the electors of the Electoral College voted only for the office of President. Each elector was allowed to vote for two people for the top office. The person receiving the most votes would become President, while the individual who received the next largest number of votes became the Vice President. Today, electors are pledged to vote for a particular presidential and vice presidential candidate of the same party, whereas before they could split their vote between candidates of opposing parties.

an active member of the Anglican Church even serving on its vestry. He wrote the *Declaration of Independence*, but was abroad in France when the *U.S. Constitution* was written in 1787 thus providing no personal input to that document or to the *Bill of Rights* that soon followed it.

While in France, Jefferson's beloved wife died leaving him to care for a very young daughter. Soon thereafter, his mother and best friend also died. Being embroiled in the philosophies and religious skepticism just prior to the bloody French Revolution of 1789, Jefferson's faith was badly shaken. Many claim he had become a Deist at this point as well, denying the efficacy of prayer to a god who had created the universe, but no longer exercised any interest in it or control over it.

Although Jefferson continued to read and study the Bible daily, his theology became influenced by Unitarianism whereupon he increasingly began to look upon Jesus as a great moralist. He authored *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth,* which was strictly based upon selected words of Jesus cut from the four Gospels and rearranged as a single chronological text. The 46-page book only contained the moral aspects of Jesus teaching while omitting any references to his deity or to the supernatural. It contained only a very basic account of Jesus' life from Scripture texts beginning with his birth and ending with his burial. Kept closely secret by Jefferson and his immediate relatives because of the inevitable political uproar it would cause if it were made public, the leather-bound book was discovered in 1895 by a librarian of the Smithsonian and was published by the Congress in 1904.

This book on philosophical ethics became incorrectly known as *The Jefferson Bible,* and it has caused many to conclude that Jefferson was not a Christian evidenced by the fact that he "disavowed" vast portions of the Bible in his personal "translation." Nevertheless, it must be noted that while government documents had previously been dated by Washington and Adams with the phrase, "in the year of our Lord," Jefferson dated his with "in the year of our Lord ***Christ***." Furthermore, in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association,

Jefferson not only graciously accepted their prayers for him but reciprocated with his own for them.[228]

While serving as the third President of the United States (1801–1809), Jefferson directed that a church building be built for American Indians using government funds and similarly gained financial support for a Christian missionary to be sent to them. It would appear that Jefferson was not merely interested in converting the Indians to Christianity, but in assimilating their tribal nations into the western European culture of the eastern states through that means. He hoped to accomplish this through teaching them Christian moral standards as he had assembled them in his *Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*. When this effort failed to achieve the desired result with several native tribes, Jefferson promoted various treaties with them in which they were forced to exchange their lands in the eastern states for land in Arkansas and areas still further west of the Mississippi River.[229]

Although Jefferson remained an Anglican all his life, he also expressed interest in other Christian faiths including those of the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. In that sense, we could conclude that he had a somewhat ecumenical outlook on Christianity, and, perhaps, merely tolerated Christianity short of actually upholding its tenets. He reportedly stated on one occasion, "Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blind-folded fear." Most certainly Jefferson's radical bent toward humanistic enlightenment philosophies caused his religious views to deviate greatly from any biblical form of Christian orthodoxy. We must finally conclude that Jefferson was only an intellectual Christian who accepted Christian moral principles, but that he had not actually experienced the life-changing gift of the Holy Spirit that would have

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[228] See Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, page 455

[229] The *Indian Removal Act* became law in 1830 and was enforced under President Andrew Jackson.

transformed him into a true believer. The progressive approach to his faith connects him to the multitude of unsaved liberal-progressive church-goers today. It was under Jefferson that the nation began to depart from its firm Christian moorings and began to move toward a nation that rooted its moral ethics in the fickle collective will of its people.

The Second Awakening

The effects of the Great Awakening had all but echoed out when a Second Awakening began in New England following the founding of the nation as God again sent forth revivals in 1791–1792. By the year 1800, revivals were quite common in the eastern states. That new movement began to spread throughout various educational institutions.

Timothy Dwight (1752–1817)

In 1795, Timothy Dwight, who was the grandson of Jonathan Edwards, became the president of Yale University and through his personal influence broke down the spiritual infidelity of the student body. In 1802, revival swept the campus of Yale and soon spread to other college campuses. Campus revivals continued through 1815.

Dwight took a high view of the church leaning toward Churchianity as is evident in his hymn, *I Love Thy Kingdom Lord*. Consequently, he was quite pragmatic about revival, believing that a correct method, approach, or exposition of the Gospel would automatically bring forth a response in the unbelieving to the end that the masses would all turn to God. Here, beginning with Dwight, we see a common failing in emphasizing the power of mortal men and their rhetorical abilities to overcome opposition to the Gospel, rather than relying upon the power of God working through the Holy Spirit. Yet, there seems to be little doubt that the Holy Spirit made use of those efforts to save many even as Dwight's efforts also improved the overall consensus of Christian ethics and principles.

Frontier Evangelism

The opening of the American west with its "survival of the fittest" mentality caused a further breakdown of religious moral ethics on the western frontier of the United States. The extreme optimism of the growing nation as it pushed westward and the increasing feeling of assurance in one's personal abilities as many hardships were faced and conquered on the frontiers, resulted in an almost complete loss of doctrinal purity.

Evangelism now emphasized experience and emotion over doctrinal Truth that manifested itself even more in the mad frenzy of the westward movement. This "new" or "frontier-style" revivalism had much greater stamina than the older style revivalism of the east as Baptists joined with Methodists in the westward push. Lamentably, this frontier-style evangelism did not have the restraints of sound doctrine to temper it. Open-air extemporaneous preaching from a wagon bed was the form rather than carefully considered doctrinal orations from a pulpit inside a church building. As the westward movement continued, this new revivalism kept pace by moving westward with the nation.

Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875)

So great was the western religious fervor that its effects reverberated back eastward. Calvinism was now coming into disfavor with many evangelists back east like Charles Grandison Finney who referred to Calvinistic doctrine as "can-not-ism." Finney himself exhorted his own audiences to seize the moment and make an "immediate decision" for Christ. Finney also came up with what was called the "anxious seat" whereby indecision was sweated out of the reluctant sinner by hard close preaching.

Lyman Beecher (1775–1863)

Lyman Beecher, a student of Timothy Dwight, became the first president of Lane Theological Seminary in 1832. Though a Calvinist, he advocated "new measures" that were quite similar to the extreme evangelical views of Finney. While the major denominations still existed, and their doctrines were still firmly held by large

numbers, this new wave of revivalism would not leave them untouched. Protestantism in the United States had now become largely evangelistic rather than reformed.

While we may lament the sacrifice of Truth to evangelistic excitement (and rightly so), we can see that one great doctrine did come out of the movement and out of Methodism in particular. From Wesley and others the doctrine of the "new birth" was being articulated even if it was greatly exaggerated and distorted in frontier-style evangelism. Salvation, to be sure, is something that we ***can*** experience in this life; salvation is not something that we can merely take for granted and not act upon it; salvation is not something that we can receive and not have our lives changed by it!

Experiential Evangelicalism

In Central Kentucky in the summer of 1800, this new style of evangelism, which manifested itself in the "camp meeting," brought many people together. The idea of the camp meeting originated with the Presbyterian James McGready, and Methodist circuit-rider Peter Cartwright who joined forces. Entire families would travel great distances to visit with each other and hear their heated and fervent preaching. In 1801, it is estimated that as many as twenty-five thousand people came together in the Cane Ridge camp meeting in Kentucky that was staged by the combined efforts of Presbyterians and Methodists. Many Presbyterian ministers on the frontier, such as McGready, had fully denounced Calvinism in favor of Arminianism and many of his fellow Presbyterians had denounced any jurisdiction of their Presbyterian denomination over them in the frontier region.

Not only was sound doctrine commonly sacrificed to the heat of the moment, but also the persuasion of the Gospel itself was often dispensed with in favor of inducing a mere outward "experience of salvation." The unusually large crowds of people that were crushed together in an attempt to hear this fervent preaching were fertile ground for any form of mass hysteria. Excitement and high emotions, as well as an air of expectation, resulted in many strange phenomena; various "bodily displays" soon became seen as outward indications that the Holy Spirit was moving in the crowds. Swooning, stomping,

yelling, and even "dog barking" soon became recognized as evidence that the Holy Spirit had "fallen" upon them.

At that time, salvation was being seen as something for men to grasp by simply appropriating the name of Christ for themselves, not received as a free gift that God Himself had bestowed upon men to save them. Salvation was there for the seizing and the time was now, not in God's own good time as He willed. The doctrine of God's sovereignty in the act of salvation was all but forgotten as man attempted to tug at his own bootstraps and lay hold of salvation through his own efforts. Fundamental biblical doctrine was increasingly giving away to "experiential evangelicalism" that was charged with great emotion but was largely isolated from biblical Truth. Therefore, an extreme corruption of the Wesley emphasis on the necessity for "human response" had now become main-stream American Protestantism.

The Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement (1788–1866)

Out of the Second Awakening, an Irish-American editor, preacher, and college president named Alexander Campbell, along with his father (a Presbyterian minister), broke with the Presbyterian Church and began a program that was designed to accomplish further reform through the elimination of all creeds that they saw as being highly divisive. Outwardly, the movement, generally known as the Campbellite Movement, was to unite Christians by imposing no conditions on them except that which were found in the New Testament primitive church as could be deduced directly from Scripture.

The churches themselves often refer to the Campbellite Movement as the "Restoration Movement," believing that certain doctrines and rituals that had been abandoned in reformed and evangelistic Protestantism were through that movement being "restored" to the entire church. Campbell adopted baptism by immersion as the only valid mode of baptism. This aligned him with Baptists at the beginning, but soon other doctrinal differences resulted in a separate religious body being formed in 1830.

Barton W. Stone had been exposed to all of the major denominations in his youth, but after hearing James McGready speak at the Cane Ridge meeting, he decided to become a Presbyterian. However, he soon became quite skeptical of the doctrine of total depravity as well as many of the articles contained in the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Accused of embracing Arminianism, his relationship with the Presbyterian Church was soon severed.

The present day "Christian Church" subsequently had its beginnings in Kentucky through the efforts of Stone, while Alexander Campbell founded the “Disciples of Christ” almost at the same time in western Pennsylvania. Both men were of Presbyterian backgrounds, though Campbell had also allied himself with the Baptists for a time. The two groups joined efforts in 1832 and for that reason the movement is often referred to as the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement.

Both of those churches were quite Arminian, and sacramental in their belief and practice. That is, they denied that man is totally depraved, and that he therefore has it within himself to respond to the Gospel without any need of God’s direct intervention. In addition, great emphasis was placed upon ritual baptism as the sole means of receiving the salvation of God through obedience to this ordinance. The Lord’s Supper likewise was seen as a means of maintaining salvation through obedience to the ritual and therefore was celebrated every Sunday without fail.

Here, again, we find sacramentalism supplanting the Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone that the Reformation had so painfully restored. Communion was denied to all but those who had been baptized into their church on the assumption that previous baptisms were invalid. What had begun as an attempt to unite Christians soon developed into a form of exclusiveness with decided echoes of old Romanism through enforcement of the sacraments.

The Rise of Modernism /Liberalism

As the civil war era loomed upon the horizon, there were many problems within the Protestant movement in the United States. The first of those, of course, was the detrimental effects of free-style

experiential evangelicalism on sound doctrine. More ominous still, was the rise of Unitarianism and Universalism. Actually, that was the beginning of the rash of current religious liberalism in the American church scene.

Unitarianism denies the doctrine of the Trinity and by doing so of necessity also denies that Jesus is God incarnate. The Universalist denies that salvation is given only to an elect number, but instead believes that a God of love would not condemn anyone to an eternity of torment regardless of their sinfulness during their short stay on this earth (i.e. the doctrine of universal salvation). Unitarianism/ Universalism in combination also set forth such concepts as "transcendental thought" — one universal mind. This error became the basis for various cults such as Christian Science,[230] which will be discussed later in this book.

In those days, religious liberalism was more generally referred to as modernism since it was thought that Christian doctrines needed to be updated to conform them to current scientific theories and modern thought. With doctrinal purity being set adrift by the many forms of wild evangelism that we have discussed, liberal thinking easily gained a foot-hold in many denominations. It was seen by many, who were already adrift from sound doctrine, to interject sanity into an insane religious movement. With this strong wind behind it, Unitarianism and Universalism soon became prominent in eastern establishments.

Soon, to support ever-changing Modernist thought, literal interpretation of the Scriptures had to be denied on intellectual grounds. That denial allowed allegorical and various vaporous interpretations to the extent that the Bible could be easily bent to fit the mold of any organization of thought as required to suit mankind thus embracing humanism.[231]

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[230] See Christian Science, page 377

[231] See Humanism, page 220

Here we note the inherent danger of unrestrained evangelism since evangelism turned loose without the anchor of God's Word interpreted historically and literally, encourages rationalistic religious liberalism to fill the intellectual vacuum created by it.

Unfortunately, even Calvinism, if divorced from Scripture, can degenerate into a belief in God based on reason and nature that rejects all supernatural intervention and experience (i.e. Deism). In this case, excessive emphasis is being placed on head-knowledge to the neglect of a changed and contrite heart. This was in large part the root cause of the over-reaction against the doctrines of Calvinism during the evangelical revival periods. Here we see the necessity of always placing the wider emphasis of all of God's Word ahead of our "pet" doctrines. Truths must be held in check with all of Truth or they cease to be true at all.

Existentialism

The philosophy of existentialism sometimes referred to as "anti-philosophy" since it opposes any search for Truth or reality as being meaningless, appeared on the scene prior to the Civil War, but is still quite prevalent today. The existentialist believes that each man creates his own reality in his mind. This notion was first proposed by such men as Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) who considered any search for Truth as a leap into the darkness of the unknown in an effort to achieve some kind of universal and concrete reality that did not actually exist.

Fredrick Nietzsche (1844–1900) stated that since there is no universal reality "God is dead" and that it is within man's will to exercise the power of thought to create his own reality and the moral standards associated with it. Of course, that same power of the will would enable him to impose it on others in society as well. Since this supposed ephemeral "reality" has no past and no future, the adherents of this belief were in recent years referred to as the "now generation," in which each person lived only for the pleasure of the moment. The twin virtues of patience and responsibility within the "now generation" was totally lost, and ethics declined into a decadent immorality along with the denial of any future consequences for their actions.

Roman Catholic Immigration

In the three decades beginning with 1820, there was a great influx of Roman Catholic immigrants to the United States from Ireland and Germany. We must remember that the strong residual Catholic tendencies found in the Anglican Church had driven the Puritans to this land earlier. Furthermore, many of the French Huguenots had come to North America to escape severe Catholic persecution. Therefore, as the Catholic population increased in the United States, many Protestants began to look upon every Catholic as a potential agent of the Roman Pope. A pervasive fear was being expressed both secretly and openly that the spread of Catholicism to America was threatening American democracy at its very core. Many could actually envision the future possibility of a church-state union resulting in Roman Catholic political and religious dominance that would place them under the tyranny of the Italian Pope once again.

There was substance to that paranoia inasmuch as many eastern civil institutions had already fallen under the control of Roman Catholics. Catholics soon began demanding their share of tax revenues for their own parochial schools even as they were being elected to many political offices. Because of the religious tensions this generated, violence often erupted. That conflict might have accelerated even more had it not been for a still greater conflict that was beginning to occupy the nation's thoughts and conscience — slavery.

Chapter 18.6 Religious Impact of the Civil War

As a consequence of the Second Awakening, there was a rapidly growing awareness of the evil vice of slavery. Those that owned slaves often treated them as one would treat animals or worse. Slaves were kidnapped in Africa where they were sold to slavers who transported them by crowded ships to the United States. Once in the United States, they were sold in slave markets to work as animals at the bidding of a largely white European population. They quite often were whipped or beaten, their women were frequently raped, and many slaves were murdered at the whim of their owners. The children of slaves were pressed into forced labor at a very early age hence increasing the lucrative labor force over time. Families of men, women, and children were being separated and sold individually in southern slave markets.[232]

Only the Holy Spirit could eliminate such a terrible vice as human slavery through the collective conscience of Christian believers peacefully but diligently working together to bring it to an end. Nevertheless, the desire and efforts to abolish slavery in the United States came about as much or more by growing humanism that had greatly elevated the supposed noble worth of man and his abilities rather than exalting the glory of God as the common creator of all mankind.

All states in the union prior to the civil war had slave owners, although the large plantation owners of the south with their large cotton plantations and very little industry had the most to lose with abolition being signed into national law. Built almost totally upon free labor, abolition would bring the southern agricultural society to its knees and destroy its economy while the northern states could continue to support its large and growing industrial base with abundant

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[232] Not all slaves were so ill treated, but they were commonly considered property or chattel. Some were granted their freedom by benevolent masters, or were freed upon the death of their masters, to pursue their own lives as best they could in a white society that systematically considered them inferior beings.

and cheaply paid immigrant labor. There were, therefore, economic issues at stake as well as underlying issues involving state's rights under the *U.S. Constitution*.

The Birth of Black Liberation Theology

While they were being held as slaves, black men and women were forcibly introduced to Christianity in a faulty way that led to their forced conversions into a faith that they barely understood. No wonder then, that the black concept of Christianity would differ greatly from that of their white owners who were being seen as using Christianity as a means of mollifying them to the rigors of slavery. Consequently, the Gospel message was misinterpreted by slaves in the light of their physical oppression to promise a release from the bondage of the white man, not as redemption from the eternal consequences of personal sin, which is a common need of the entire human race.

This particular misinterpretation became known as black liberation theology. Jesus was increasingly being looked upon by the black slave populations of the south as a coming messiah who would someday deliver them out of the physical bondage of their white captors, much as Moses had delivered the Hebrews out of the bondage of slave labor from Egypt. Because so many of the slaves were illiterate, this messianic form of deliverance was learned and perpetuated through various musical forms, commonly referred to as Negro Spirituals. Those songs not only became a means of mental release from the grueling labor that they were put through each day, but they began to look forward to their fulfillment in an escape from their captors. The words of many of the Spirituals, though on the surface Christian, were secretly encoded and used to communicate the timing of actual escape attempts.

The Abolition Movement

As the atrocious evil of slavery was being realized for what it was in the northern states, many sought to aid escaping southern black slaves by transporting them to northern states through various escape routes known collectively as the "underground railroad." Slaves were secreted along various circuitous routes, hidden away in secret

compartments constructed in wagons and other conveyances, as well as being hidden away in houses near the northern border that were designed for that very purpose. While many slaves indeed succeeded in escaping to the north through the underground railroad, others were captured and returned to even more burdensome slave labor as punishment. Some were publicly killed as an example to other slaves. The already risky effort to free southern blacks from their captors was soon to take an even more violent turn.

John Brown

It may very well be that over time slavery could have been abolished in the United States through peaceful political action much in the same way as slave trade had in England in August of 1833 through the efforts of men such as William Wilberforce. Admittedly, that would most likely have been a long and arduous road considering the south's total dependence upon slave labor to sustain its economy. Although John Brown sought reform in much the same way as Wilberforce through his earlier political efforts, when those efforts did not bring forth rapid results Brown resorted to insurrection and violence.

Brown first concentrated his efforts in the border territory of Kansas in opposition to those who would bring the territory into the union as a slave state. When militant pro-slavers sacked the anti-slavery town of Lawrence, Kansas in May of 1856, Brown retaliated by intensifying his violent efforts. Low on support, funds and arms, Brown returned east to gain more resources for his fight.

Funded by affluent abolitionists in the east, Brown sought to institute an armed revolt by slaves beginning in Virginia. The arms were to come about by raiding the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. He was to have been met there by sympathetic recruits and they would then make a sweep liberating and arming slaves on the way through the south. Brown and his men successfully took the arsenal on October 16, 1859. There they were kept held up within the confines of the armory by armed local farmers and shopkeepers. The recruits he expected never came, but a group of U.S. Marines led by Lt. Colonel

Robert E. Lee eventually attacked the arsenal, ended the siege, and captured Brown.

John Brown was hung on December 2, 1859, but his death only further fueled the fires of impending war in both the north and the south even as the political union and the tenuous Christian unity that held it together began to disintegrate completely, which ultimately led to a declaration of secession by eleven states of the south in 1860.

National Religious Discord

Not surprisingly, the issue of slavery brought about great religious discord in the United States. Southern Christians pointed out that in the reading of Scripture, we find no direct command to abolish slavery outright through political action. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the early church had sought to eliminate slavery that was rampant throughout the Roman Empire. Indeed, the Roman Empire obtained its strength from enslavement of men and women and thrived on it. As we discovered when we discussed Roman Catholic missions in this book, slavery and Roman Catholic efforts to incorporate native populations into the church through conquest coexisted as one in the new world.[233]

Even so, kidnapping and the buying and selling of men and women as slaves is clearly forbidden in Deuteronomy 10:14 and 24:7 as well as in Titus 1:10. Both practices were clearly evident in the United States inasmuch as black slaves were being kidnapped in Africa, and then traded as chattel in southern slave markets. Such moral failings are a consequence of the hardness of the hearts of fallen man (cf. Mt.19:8). Paul, in his epistle to Philemon implored him to accept his run-away slave Onesimus as a brother in Christ forgiving him for his earlier escape. While Paul may have been able to keep Onesimus in his service as to the Lord, as is clearly stated in Deuteronomy 23:15,16, Paul encouraged Onesimus to return to his master that a greater end may be achieved. After all, how can a

[233] See Chapter 17.11 Global Expansion of Roman Catholic Churchianity, page 202

Christian, within whom all bonds to sin have been broken, in good conscience enslave a fellow brother in Christ?

Considering our sin nature and the devices that Satan has at his disposal, oppression is always present in the world in some form. There can be little doubt that Satan was behind the scenes using the issue of slavery and excess zeal on both sides of the conflict in an attempt to divide the young nation politically in much the same way that he had used earlier excess in the first and second awakenings to corrupt and divide believers doctrinally.

North and South Denominational Schisms

The religious and political tensions between individual believers that were fermented by the issue of slavery also began to formally separate Christians organizationally.

The Wesleyan Methodist Connection

The split in Methodism occurred as a group of ministers in the Methodist Episcopal Church formed a separate group of churches known as The Wesleyan Methodist Connection in Utica New York on the eve of the Civil War in 1843. All of his life John Wesley himself had been strongly opposed to slavery. While there were various issues at the root of the division, slavery was the main issue spurred by the anti-slavery views and writings of men such as LaRoy Sunderland and Luther Lee. By the year 1845, the north south split in Methodism over slavery was very much in evidence. The Wesleyan Methodist Connection would later merge with 25 or more smaller groups and denominations to form the Wesleyan Church.[234]

The Baptist Division

A Baptist split had already occurred when the Southern Baptists withdrew in 1845. Before the split, most Baptist churches belonged to the "Triennial Convention" formed in 1814 as a missionary organization. In 1907, the northern Baptists formed a new group known as the "Northern Baptist Convention." In 1950, the name

[234] See The Wesleyan Church, page 362

of this group was changed to "American Baptist Convention" and was changed again in 1972 to the "American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A." The "Southern Baptist Convention" has retained its name from the Civil War period until the present day.

The Presbyterian Split

The Presbyterian split did not occur until 1861 largely because the Presbyterian denomination already had internal conflict regarding old and new schools of reformed doctrinal thought that dominated their activities. Both denominational and evangelical Protestantism were thus weakened over the issue of slavery. Any concerns regarding the influx of Romanism into American Christianity were placed on the back burner for the interim.

The Third Awakening

Surprisingly, and wondrously, on the very brink of the Civil War, God again sent revival to the church in America. This Third Awakening is also referred to as the "Businessmen's Revival." It had begun when northern businessmen began meeting at the noon-hour for prayer. At that time there was a general population in the young nation of approximately thirty-two million people with about six million of that number being Protestant church members. During a single year between 1857 and 1858, it has been estimated that more than a half million people turned to Christ. The revival was spurred on by the same Para-church activities in the north even as the revival continued to spread to the southern states during the civil war conflict.

Aftermath of the War

Once the War Between the States finally ended with the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia under General Robert E. Lee to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox courthouse in 1865, the nation had to deal with the terrible aftermath. The south had been wrecked economically, physically, and emotionally. Its stately plantations and opulent way of life that had been built upon the evil vice of slavery had come to a devastating but inevitable end, as

was so well exemplified in the classic book and movie, *Gone with the Wind*.[235]

Racial animosity increased greatly in the south after the conclusion of the war. Now that black men and women could no longer be utilized as free labor, they represented a troublesome burden for impoverished plantation owners. The sore of slavery that had festered so long had finally been lanced, but due to the intense and deeply imbedded hatred that lancing had uncovered, it would never completely heal. A racial polarization had been created in the United States that was destined to remain to the present day. It would have far-reaching religious as well as political implications as we shall see in later chapters of this book.

The Freedmen

With their official release from slavery through the Emancipation Proclamation, African American slaves of the south found themselves free, but with no means to support themselves and their families. They found themselves abandoned by their previous masters who could no longer hold them legally, and they were also largely unaided by their northern liberators as well.

Though declared to be freed men (or Freedmen), they found themselves being constantly discriminated against by a white society that had been terribly scourged by the war. African Americans found it difficult or impossible to obtain a useful education, or to gain and hold beneficial employment. Many of them found themselves working at menial tasks for their previous slave owners, who were now their employers. For their labor, they received very low wages that often sustained them even more poorly than when they were slaves. Poverty continued and many were forced to steal in order to survive. Although Freedmen had technically gained the right to vote through the Emancipation Proclamation, they were commonly denied that right in

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[235] *Gone with the Wind* was a singular novel written by Margaret Mitchell, and released as a movie in 1939. The book won a Pulitzer Prize in 1937, and the epic movie went on to win many other awards.

practice by the majority white population through technical provisions of various so-called "Jim Crow" laws.[236]

Southern Reconstruction Efforts (1863–1877)

Following the end of the War Between the States, the federal Republican government pushed through three additional amendments to the *U.S. Constitution*. The Thirteenth Amendment ratified on December 6, 1865 abolished slavery in the United States and in any place subject to its jurisdiction. The Fourteenth Amendment ratified on July 9, 1868 effectively declared Freedmen full citizenship rights and denied the payment of any rebel claims submitted for damage of property. The Fifteenth Amendment ratified on Feb 3, 1870 granted all (male) citizens of the United States full voting rights regardless of their race or color of skin.

Reconstruction efforts of the south had begun with the Emancipation Proclamation that was signed on January 1, 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln. Reconstruction efforts began as soon as a southern state fell under the control of Union troops. Lincoln directed the setting up of moderately controlled governments in an attempt to quickly restore civil order with as little pain to the south as possible. Moderates contended that when all of the southern states finally

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[236] Jim Crow laws were first enacted in 1876 as a form of institutionalized caste system that extended from the suppression of simple human dignity of the black race to the denial of their basic rights as a citizen of the United States. It represented the black race as being an inferior servant-class race under a form of social Darwinism that was supported politically and even theologically by many southern white church ministers. Though primarily enforced in the south, the laws extended into northern states as well. As a few examples of these laws, a black man could not extend a handshake to a white man because it implied equality, blacks and whites had different bathrooms and used different water fountains. Blacks had to sit at the very back of buses, and their children attended different schools. Even after the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, many Southern states passed technical regulations effectively barring blacks from voting through poll taxes, requiring literacy tests, and a so-called grandfather clause in which a man could not vote if his grandfather did not vote. The Supreme Court effectively ruled all Jim Crow laws unconstitutional in 1965. Also see Great Society Programs of the 1960's, page 416

accepted the Thirteenth Amendment to the *U.S. Constitution*, it could be seen as ending the dreadful conflict in all respects.

After Lincoln's assassination on April 14, 1865, however, the powerful Republican controlled congress demanded more rigorous terms for the repatriation of the southern states. Radical Republicans demanded that any vestiges of slavery be rooted out and demolished along with the complete destruction of the old confederate governments. Legislation was immediately enacted that dismissed the civilian governments, which had previously been allowed by the President, placing former Confederate states under strict Union military rule. The army subsequently oversaw new elections in which freed slaves were allowed to vote but men who had held leading positions of government under previous confederate rule could not vote or run for office. The newly formed southern state governments, which generally consisted of coalitions of freedmen, northern carpetbaggers (northern opportunists), and southern "scalawags," enacted various reconstruction programs that offered massive aid to build railroads, construct public schools, and of course increase state taxes to fund it all. All of this reconstruction effort was very ill-conceived causing corruption to run rampant.

Southern White Supremacist Movement

The large number of confederate soldiers who had returned to their homeland after the war found nothing but devastation. Wandering about at will, many southern veterans engaged in various acts of lawlessness, which included violence, as many of them banded together into small groups vowing to return the south to its once glorified status.

One such group, known as the Ku Klux Klan (commonly known simply as the Klan or KKK) was founded in 1865 by Tennessee confederate veterans. The name was most probably derived from the Greek word for circle, which is *kyklos* thus rendering their name as "circle clan." The sole purpose of their circle was to restore white supremacy to the south. They strongly resisted the reconstruction efforts of the north and especially the northern carpetbaggers who were raping the desolate southern political and

economic establishments. They strongly opposed the Republican party, which in their view had compelled their necessary withdrawal from the Union, had begun the devastating war which followed, and now foisted the corruption of reconstruction upon them.

The Klan intimidated, assaulted, and murdered both white Republicans and black Freedmen, who saw Republicans as their liberators and most commonly voted for Republican candidates. The Klan assaulted and burned houses and killed blacks leaving their bodies on the road as examples to others. Klan members donned white robes, and masks to hide their identity, which also added to the terror of their night raids as they intimated to superstitious blacks that they were the ghosts of dead confederates bound on revenge.

They diligently worked to deny African Americans education, voting rights, and any sort of economic advancement. Through their intimidation efforts and acts of terrorism, the Ku Klux Klan succeeded in voting Democrats into power in the southern states. In that sense, the Klan became a militant arm of the U.S. Democratic Party in the south.[237] After a national economic recession in 1873, Democrats regained control of many northern states causing railroad expansion to end, and reducing the reconstruction efforts which effectively came to an end in 1877 with the collapse of the last three Republican governments in the southern states.

Post Civil War Christian Denominational Disunity

Just as the war had been devastating to the nation and its economy, churches were also severely damaged by the conflict. The Evangelical movement had been seriously disrupted. The first churches to rejoin, north and south, were the Roman Catholics and Episcopalians. However, supported by northern churches, the Republican congress had passed reconstruction policies to reintegrate the south into the Union that practically assured that there would be no rapid healing of the breaches made in Northern and Southern Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians.

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[237] Also see Resurgence of the White Supremacy Movement, page 380

A southern Presbyterian theologian R.L. Dabney is quoted as having said "I do not forgive — forgive those people who have invaded our country, burned our cities, destroyed our homes, slain our young men, and spread desolation and ruin over our land? No I do not forgive them!" Henry Ward Beecher in the north said, "I charge the whole guilt of this war upon the ambitious, educated, political leaders of the South. A day will come when God will reveal judgment and arraign those mighty miscreants. Then those guiltiest and most remorseless traders shall be whirled aloft and plunged downward forever and ever in an endless retribution."[238]

The bitter feelings between the churches in the north and south were further exacerbated by the desire of the north to do something to aid the newly freed slaves through the establishment of interdenominational agencies and denominational boards, while at the same time denouncing white southerners. Southerners looked upon efforts to aid the Freedmen in the same light as they did carpetbaggers.

Emergence of African American Churches

The African Methodist Episcopal denomination had been organized in 1816 and the A.M.E. Zion Church had been organized in 1821 in the north long before the great conflict, but nothing of that kind was to be found in the south. The churches that blacks had previously attended were white churches, and they had none of their own. Enslaved blacks had been allowed to attend white churches in segregated areas of the church building before the war, but not allowed to start their own churches. At war's end, African American Baptists began to organize themselves apart from the Southern Convention, and Presbyterian African Americans established their own Presbyteries and Synods. The war had done nothing to reunite the races socially or spiritually; on the contrary, the spiritual chasm would grow even wider.

As southern whites slowly regained control of the south after Reconstruction days, there was an increased proliferation of African

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[238] *They Sought a City,* Fredrick W. Evans Jr., page 35

American churches. Ostensibly religious institutions, African-American churches became the center of social and political life and was seen as a forum in which African Americans could freely express themselves. Lacking a political power base, they soon saw the value of using their churches to gain a degree of respectability and influence through concerted numbers. African American Baptists organized themselves in the National Baptist Convention. African American Methodists organized the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, which later changed its name to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church or more simply, the C.M.E. Church.

Long-term Consequences of the Conflict

Just as waves of revival had swept the nation before the war, now the devastating aftermath of the War Between the States would result in both moral and spiritual decline. During and after the conflict the federal government had grown in size and power as it attempted to force its will upon the southern states. Even Abraham Lincoln had recognized that the issue of slavery was not within the constitutional jurisdiction of federal government, but that it properly fell under states rights. Nevertheless, when Lincoln ran for Senate office for the state of Illinois he gave an acceptance speech in Springfield in June of 1858 in which he declared that,

> **" 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved — I do not expect the house to fall — but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new — North as well as South."**

Therefore, slavery was the issue that fostered the rapid intrusion of the federal government into the rights that were properly reserved to the states and its citizens under the *U.S. Constitution.* This

first and arguably necessary intrusion would ultimately lead to even more intrusions that would result in a vast expansion of the federal bureaucracy in future decades. In doing so, it would eventually erode the foundation upon which the U.S. Republic was built and move it toward a form of democratic socialism in the twenty-first century.[239]

The evil vice of human slavery that was found festering in a nation whose earliest founding document (the *Declaration of Independence*) had emphatically declared that all men were created equal under God with unalienable rights that included life and liberty had dealt Christianity in the United States a severe blow.[240] It was a shock to the spiritual health of the nation from which it would never fully recover. Rather than healing a racial divide the war had only exacerbated it. White racial hatred would abound and the perpetuation of black liberation theology would later lead to even more racial conflicts in the future.

Moreover, large numbers of good Christian men had been lost on both sides of the terrible struggle, and it had left many more physically maimed and wounded mentally and spiritually. Many godly men who remained, and the events and movements they motivated, soon put forth efforts to thwart the rapid spiritual decline. Even so, it will soon become apparent as we continue our study that there was now to be a determined and often rapid move toward radicalization of both Christian thought and practice as the nation continued its drift away from the religion of true Christianity toward humanism and neo-paganism. This drift away from its devout Christian base would have serious adverse effects upon many aspects of U.S. society including

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[239] See Chapter 19.4 , page 476

[240] But, see The Slavery Clause in the U.S. Constitution on page 319

Capitalism, labor relations, and financial markets. We shall begin to discuss this drift in the next chapter of this book.

Chapter 18.7 Radicalization of the Faith

After each wave of evangelical zeal within both the first and second awakening, there had been a time when the desire for sound orthodoxy returned. After the Civil War, there was also an increased need for a systematic theology to inform those who had accepted Christ in troubled times but were largely ignorant of the great doctrines of the faith.

Charles Hodge published a 3-volume theology in the 1870's. W.G.T. Shedd published his *Dogmatic Theology* in the next decade. A.H. Strong published a *Systematic Theology* in the 1880's. All of those works were essentially Calvinistic theology and had post-millennialist leanings. Each shared in the optimistic hope that the church would eventually triumph over the earth by converting all to Christ before his return.

While evangelicalism was still popular in the 1880's, it was just not possible to develop a systematic theology that would encompass its tenets from Scripture in the same way that it was with Calvinistic theology. As Fredrick W. Evans Jr. wrote, "Arminianism was easier to preach than to systematize."[241] Indeed, because of the wide variation in thought that was often devoid of supporting Scripture it was like trying to wrap your hands around smoke. For that reason, many Evangelicals today still reject any thoughts of systematizing Christianity lest it limit their evangelical zeal.

The Renewed Challenge of Religious Liberalism

During the period between the Civil War and World War One, the reformed Protestant hold on America was seriously challenged by religious lliberalism and liberal thought in general. The effects of accumulated gross doctrinal errors upon denominational church congregations had been devastating. Conversely, the nearly complete neglect of doctrine altogether that had been carried along on the wave of experiential evangelicalism for fifty or more years had left the

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[241] *They Sought a City,* Fredrick W. Evans Jr., page 36

American churches anxious for new spiritual experiences, but largely adrift from God's Word as a foundation upon which they could be authenticated.

As a result, Unitarianism/Universalism easily entered into many of the major established denominations. Furthermore, Unitarianism had become quite radical by that time as is exemplified by the teaching of men like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Emerson was a noted American essayist and poet who had no less than seven ancestors that had been ministers. His father, William Emerson, was minister of the First Church (Unitarian) in Boston. Ralph Emerson graduated from Harvard Divinity School in 1829. It is not surprising then that he would also hold similar Unitarian views with his father. He became minister of the Second church (Unitarian) of Boston, but resigned in 1832 over a conflict concerning public prayer and because he did not feel he should continue to minister the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Although Emerson married Ellen Louisa Tucker, who died of tuberculosis and much later a second wife Lydia Jackson who bore him four children, there is considerable grounds to believe that Emerson had bisexual or homosexual leanings as is evidenced by his close association with Martin Gay[242] while attending Harvard College. This association led Emerson to write sexually emotional poetry about him. An apparent later infatuation with Walt Whitman as well as various other men supports that unfortunate view.

In his divinity school address, Emerson flatly stated that Jesus was a great man but was not God. Moreover, Emerson was also a leader of the philosophical movement known as transcendentalism that emphasized intuitive thought processes over empirical evidence. He published *The Dial* a transcendentalist magazine founded earlier by

[242] Martin Gay's last name is most likely the source of the word "gay" that is commonly associated with homosexualism today.

Margaret Fuller for about two years. His various essays and poetry reflect the views of English Romanticism, replacing earlier rationalism, as well as neo-Platonism. Both were commingled with an underlying Hindu philosophy that further enforced his views of transcendental thought.

Theodore Parker (1810–1860)

Parker was an American preacher and social reformer. Like Emerson, he also was a graduate of the Harvard Divinity School. So radical was his views that even many Unitarians wished to expel him from the pulpit and few ministers would associate with him. Parker, like Emerson, also was a transcendentalist and completely opposed the existence of the supernatural. He routinely criticized the Bible and his view of the person of Christ was humanistic.

Not only did Unitarianism deny the doctrine of the Trinity (a view that must also deny the deity of Christ), it also denied the supernatural altogether. It romanticized the Scriptures until they had no basis in reality and they were thus seen as devoid of any real authority. Most liberals were from the Unitarian camp, but many moderate Evangelicals were merely swept along into liberalism in reaction against extreme evangelical practices.

Tenets of Religious Liberalism

In general, religious liberals believe that all religion concerning any supernatural supreme being exists only in the subconscious thoughts of men and therefore has no basis in reality. The material universe is all that there is.

Open Deism

In 1799, the German, Schleiermacher, defined religion as "a feeling of absolute dependence." That is, Christianity was viewed as merely being a religion among many others that leads toward a conscious understanding of an intuitive “concept of God.” In still other words, God is only in the mind of man; therefore, absolutes regarding God as a conscious salient being are nonexistent. This form of “open deism” allows man to fashion God into any image he chooses. In the

words of the American, Horace Bushnell (1802–1876), man merely "intuits the divine." Therefore, “God” is seen to manifest Himself only in nature and within the thoughts of mankind.

Scientific Compliance

As physical science developed, religious liberalism, as did modernism before it, insisted that religion must be made to conform to “scientific fact.” It begins from a presupposition that God does not exist, and that all religious notions must be reconciled to science and the natural world — denying even the possibility of the supernatural. We must immediately take issue that the body of scientific knowledge, itself, is not fact or Truth, but that it is an hypothesis built upon a series of theories that are in turn based upon various human observations of physical phenomenon. As new observations are made, theories need to be constantly revised in order to make them conform to perceived results. Although many scientific hypotheses are workable for a time in the practical sense, we can never be sure that we have a final absolute understanding of how it all works. Therefore, we cannot ever equate Truth with theory, nor should we seek to conform religion to science.

Developmentalism

Embracing Charles Darwin’s ill-conceived theory in his book *On the Origin of the Species* in 1859 was one step in that direction, as was the acceptance of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* in 1832 regarding a “natural” geological evolution of the earth itself through uniformitarianism[243] as being scientific. These theoretical processes

[243] Uniformitarianism opposes any catastrophic geological events since the Ice Epoch that Lyell originally set as having ended at 1,000,000 BC, but later was forced to revise to 35,000 BC. Uniformitarianism states that all earth processes have been unfailingly uniform since that time. The great universal flood that the Bible speaks of must therefore be rejected as being mere legend since any possibility of supernatural intervention with the earth’s geosphere or atmosphere is denied. Nevertheless, it is believed that man himself can alter that supposed uniformity by means of unintentional pollution (See Environmentalism, page 511).

known generally as "developmentalism," soon were envisioned as being applicable to everything as it crossed over from the physical to the spiritual. That is, man had spontaneously evolved from animals, and in like manner, religion itself had evolved from animism (the belief that all things possess souls or consciousness) to the current belief in one universal god (monotheism/Universalism). The text of the Bible was merely viewed as one development in that long evolutionary process.

Because man is considered to be an animal, it is quite natural for him to have base instincts that are in conflict with any rigid moral ethic. In that sense, sin is but a myth to be eradicated lest it interfere with the upward climb of mankind toward perfection. The only thing that matters in a moral sense is how a persons attitudes and actions are seen to affect others about them in society. Society itself must therefore be the only judge of what is ethical and moral.

Equating Scripture Text with Legend

Soon, the Bible's text was under serious attack because if interpreted literally and authoritatively it deviated widely from basic liberal suppositions. From Germany to England and then to America came what was referred to as the discipline of "higher criticism" of the Bible. Lower criticism is a valid critique of Bible text for the purpose of assuring accuracy of translation and correct interpretation. It does not deny the source of Scripture, but by such means seeks to validate and insure its authenticity. Higher criticism, however, denies the very source of Scripture at the outset and seeks to relegate its text to various myths and legends that have no actual authority over how we should live our lives.

Old Testament Texts

The Old Testament was not to be considered the Word of God in verity as Christianity insists, but it was a mere historical account of Hebrew History interspersed with various legends and poetry. It was alleged that the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) was not written by Moses. Rather, it was a collection of various texts obtained from multiple manuscripts written in assorted periods by

various authors all edited together to appear to represent a cohesive origin of the earth and mankind. The then accepted dates of many of the prophetic books were questioned primarily on the basis of chronological order. Since supernatural knowledge was judged impossible, the prophets could not have predicted future events. Thus, the books must have been written after the events had already occurred, and they were merely assembled later in an order such that they appeared to predict future events.

New Testament Texts

As far as the New Testament accounts were concerned, there was most probably a man named Jesus, who was believed to be the Christ in the past, but he was not actually God. Being but a mortal man, Jesus likely died as a martyr for his revolutionary beliefs. Nevertheless, his death could not have atoned in any way for man's shortcomings. Man's supposed shortcomings are but normal evolutionary development that has been impacted negatively by environmental issues. Jesus could not have been born of a virgin, nor could He have been physically raised from the dead because both are in conflict with medical science. Most of the letters of Paul were singled out for attack because of the fact that Paul clearly demonstrated the Christology of the Hebrew Old Testament as well as firmly attesting to the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave.

Liberation Theology

Though denying the foundational truths of Christianity, the religious liberal nevertheless sees religion as a useful tool to lead men to accept various societal goals. Therefore, any doctrines connected with Christianity could be considered true in a ***symbolic*** way to satisfy the religious ***needs*** of man, but not accepted as factual. That leads us to consider the process by which various liberal goals may be attained through the application of religion — a process which is commonly referred to as liberation theology.

Theology in the sense that it is used in connection with liberation is a study of religion with respect to how it can be used to

benefit mankind in a physical secular way. The direction of liberation theology is derived from various oppressions that men commonly suffer whether real or imagined. Many have found themselves under political oppression, abject poverty, debilitating disease, imprisonment (just or unjust), or in servitude to another whether directly as a servant or slave or merely as a devalued employee. Not surprisingly, then, there is a long history of liberation theology wherein religion is not being looked to for a release from the unholy terror of sin with its eternal consequences, but merely from any tangible consequences of it here on earth.

We find for instance, that liberal-minded Jews in Jesus' day were interpreting Old Testament texts in such a way that their deliverer was to be one who would free them from the political yoke of Rome. Many nationalists during the Reformation Movement often interpreted Scripture in such a way as to liberate themselves from Roman political domination and oppression. In South America, the native populations redesigned Roman Churchianity, which had been forced upon them, to free themselves from their European captors through a coming deliverer fashioned out of their painful need in the likeness of Christ.[244] Similarly, we also described black liberation theology that had its origin in the slavery of the southern United States.[245] A narrower version of liberation theology is to be found today in various churches as the prosperity doctrine[246] or the doctrine of perpetual health[247], which overrides the true Gospel message.

Liberation theology then can be defined as any attempt to interpret Scripture based solely upon a foundation of humanistic

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[244] See Native Adaptations of Catholicism, page 211

[245] See The Birth of Black Liberation Theology, page 336

[246] The prosperity doctrine is a misinterpretation of the Scriptures that states all believers in Christ will automatically obtain financial security through faith or by obedience to certain prescribed rules of conduct.

[247] See Book II, Chapter14.3 Ritual Healing

thought, which is in turn motivated by human need, want, or greed totally apart from considering the sovereign will of a supreme being or God. Furthermore, such faulty scriptural interpretation does not remain fixed since it must be altered over time to fit any particular crisis or oppression at hand. Therefore, current human experience alone determines how its proponents go about interpreting all religious thought in general, and humanism demands that man himself must be the one to deliver physical redemption through his own socio-political efforts.

Capitalism and the U.S. Industrial Revolution

In the colonial days of the young nation, economic production was mostly derived from farmers and small shopkeepers. Although there had always been conflicts between employers and individual employees, the early Christian moral climate had mostly held widespread exploitation of labor in check. Nevertheless, the once firm Christian ethic deteriorated as the Christian faith became increasingly radicalized over time, and conflicts increased even as the young nation prospered economically. Following the disastrous war between the states, the moral climate within the nation degraded notably. A growing industrial revolution in the northern states attracted a large "working class" that led to the exploitation of inexpensive labor by the owners of large factories. This cheap labor came into the eastern industrial states from a steady stream of new emigrants from Europe as well as an influx of black Freedmen from the southern states.

Accommodating industrialization, an assembly line technique, also known as "mass production," was developed that increasingly made use of unskilled or at most semi-skilled labor rather than employing skillful craftsmen that could successfully demand and receive higher wages. This cheap unskilled labor force not only included men and women, but large numbers of children as well. Under pressure of both the secular and religious communities, child labor laws were enacted to prevent the industrial exploitation of children who had become virtually enslaved within the sweatshops of northern clothing factories. To some extent, this effort was motivated

by the same humanistic concerns and with the same zeal that had resulted in the abolition of black slavery earlier.

For Capitalism to function properly, a symbiotic relationship needs to exist between employers and their employees based upon common production goals, mutual respect, and cooperation. As industries and factories continued to grow in size, owners as well as top management became increasingly isolated from their common laborers. They began to view labor as a faceless expensive commodity that seriously limited company profits unless payroll expenditures could be cut back. Large corporations needed to regularly declare sizable dividends to keep their fickle investors satisfied, thus adding to the pressure to keep labor costs low.

Even as corporate greed increased, the Christian work ethic (cf. Ex. 20:9; Ep. 4:28; Col. 3:23 etc.) also became seriously eroded such that animosity grew exponentially between workers and management. That growing animus resulted in still broader social problems, which eventually gave rise to the extreme theories of Karl Marx and others that demanded "social equality" for the poor masses through some form of socialism. Marxism was the basis for the founding of national communism in Russia, while in the United States, the desire to see the lot of the working class improved in the face of increasing exploitation resulted in the establishment of labor unions.

Labor Unions

Labor unions are generally credited with improving working conditions for large sectors of the working class through "collective bargaining;" this can hardly be disputed. However, the formation of labor unions is actually an unsound economic concept that is not compatible with free capitalism. Labor unions are based upon a socialistic concept that requires equal pay and benefits for each individual worker of the union regardless of their personal ability and expended effort to work productively.

Since labor unions control and monopolize large pools of workers, they tend to drive the cost of labor up beyond levels that are competitive with the rest of the work force both within a nation and worldwide. The higher cost of labor thus elevates prices for finished

goods and services making them much less affordable for the domestic consumer, and it severely curtails exports to other nations as well. Moreover, high labor costs severely limits the number of workers that a company can reasonably afford to hire. It therefore degrades the quality of life for both union and non-union workers through higher prices and decreased employment opportunities.

When the demands of unions for higher wages and benefits exceed that which company managements are willing or able to supply, unions frequently refuse to continue working through what is commonly referred to as "strikes." At that point, factory output becomes zero, and both management and union workers suffer financial loss until the deadlock in negotiations can be overcome.

Revivalism Gives Way to Evangelicalism

The ghost of revivalism continued for a while after the Civil War, but the Industrial Revolution meant that large numbers had left the countryside to dwell within cities. Under Finney[248] of the previous century, the focus was upon the revival of churches and their members. Now under men such as Dwight L. Moody (see below), there would be more stress placed on the ***initial*** calling of men and women to Christ rather than the revival of the faith of existing churchgoers. Unfortunately, the negative effect of that shift upon Christian orthodoxy cannot be overemphasized as the desire to embrace the lost would soon exceed the desire to reverence Truth — thus the term "evangelicalism" as the unregenerated masses were dragged into the churches in the hopes of converting them.

Dwight Lyman Moody (1837–1899)

Moody was brought up in a typical Unitarian Church but was not well educated. He was later converted in a Trinitarian Congregational church in Boston at age 18. A salesman by trade, he moved to Chicago where he became a successful shoe salesman. Moody was a zealous witness of the Gospel and sought to fill church

[248] Charles Grandison Finney: see topic, Frontier Evangelism, page 328.

pews with the “down and out” as well as organizing what he called "Sunday Schools." Because of what was seen as his excessive zeal, he was often called "Crazy Moody" by his detractors. His evangelistic outreach actually began in England and later caught root in America. Unlike Finney[249], Moody stressed the love of God, not God's vengeance as a motivation for the acceptance of Christ. Moody had chosen no personal successor when he died in 1899. However, his younger colleague, R.A. Torrey, formulated Moody's evangelistic bent into his own campaigns.

Billy Ashley Sunday (1863–1935)

Billy Sunday was employed in the baseball profession as a player from 1883 to 1891. He became interested in the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA)[250] in 1891 and set aside his baseball career to begin working for that organization in Chicago. There he became interested in evangelism, and was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1903. His main compulsion was to clean up Chicago from the moral decadence that he saw there thus paving the way for the Gospel to take root. He was a strong proponent of the Prohibition Movement, leading a revival in New York for that cause in 1917. In all he conducted some 300 evangelical revivals in the United States, preaching to a total number of people estimated at 100 million.

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[249] See Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875), page 328

[250] The YMCA (was founded in London England in 1844 by George Williams, who had grown up on a farm and worked in a city dry goods shop. As many young men from rural areas moved to the cities to work in factories, they encountered decadent associations and unsafe living conditions. The YMCA provided Christian-based opportunities for wholesome fellowship and recreation as well as providing safe affordable housing. The YMCA found its way to the United States in 1851 where it carried on that tradition. Over time, however the YMCA began to focus more on social and spiritual diversity and a mission of physical fitness that would eventually carry it a field from its primary Christian roots. Some women began to be admitted to the YMCA as early as the 1860’s and by 1946 as many as 12 percent of the YMCA’s membership was female. Today the YMCA is most commonly referred to as the “Y.”

The Social Gospel (ca. 1890–)

The religious community also addressed the problems of economic injustice and social inequality. The liberation theology espoused by liberal churches strongly supported that effort. Post-millennialism, the belief that the church would overcome the ills of the world such that it would establish a virtual Heaven on Earth was still prevalent among many believers. After the church had accomplished the task of converting the heathen, Jesus, would be free to return to earth as its head to usher in the eternal ages. Such optimism was especially exuberant in America.

It is interesting to note that religious liberalism and its doctrine of liberation theology had so infiltrated the denominations by this time that many had come to view the Kingdom of Heaven as a utopian social and political order that could be ushered in through the inherent "goodness" of humankind. Many professing Christians saw the economic and social problems of the masses as an obstacle to establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The Gospel of salvation from sin was being altered to become a "gospel" of salvation from human want; it was rapidly becoming a "social gospel." By applying certain Christian principles to economic and social problems, it was thought that the Kingdom age could be achieved through human effort. This notion, of course, is based upon false theology because it denies the innate sinfulness of mankind.

The Prosperity Doctrine

The social gospel is the preaching of prosperity for the poor. The Gospel of Christ's death for the spiritual redemption of the human race from sin is replaced with a physical redemption from poverty and human want through human activism. While there is nothing inherently wrong with seeking to improve the lot of the poor and the desire to free people from political oppression, this so-called "gospel" and the so-called "theology" underlying it goes far beyond that to make this effort a religion in and of itself. The social gospel teaches the poor that "life" owes them wealth with or without effort.

"Liberation theology,"[251] the philosophy behind the social gospel, seeks to liberate men ***not*** from sin and its consequences but from government and even from all forms of religious oppression, whether real or imagined. Liberation theology purports to liberate man from all authority — especially the authority of God — allowing him to live (i.e. sin) as he desires with impunity, as he makes up his own rules of personal conduct. This is nothing less than moral anarchy.

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878– 1969)

One of the most effective proponents of the Social gospel was a religious liberal American pastor and teacher named Harry Emerson Fosdick. Inasmuch as the Bible is the greatest challenger of the false social gospel because it clearly denies the innate goodness of man, he severely attacked the veracity of the Bible itself as well as all Christian doctrines that rest upon it. He took on the Christian fundamentalist movement (to be discussed fully later in this chapter, page 368) with his sermon entitled, *Shall the Fundamentalist Win?*, and he attacked Christian Trinitarian doctrine with his sermon, *The Peril of Worshiping Jesus*.

The Holiness Movement

Soon after the U.S. Civil War, another national movement came into prominence that was primarily of Methodist origin. This is known as the National Holiness Movement. It was thought by many in Methodism that the message of personal holiness had been lost in evangelical pragmatism and the influx of liberal thought — a fact that could hardly be denied. It was also believed that Methodism was catering more toward the middle class and was therefore neglecting the poor and uneducated especially in urban areas. In England, those concerns gave rise to the Salvation Army that was established by a Methodist preacher, William Booth, who concentrated both on the spiritual and physical well being of the urban poor. Given similar

[251] See Liberation Theology, page 354

needs in the United States, the Salvation Army soon also migrated to the shores and cities of America.

The Wesleyan Church

The Wesleyan Church was actually formed out of the anti-slavery schism as the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in Utica New York in 1843 thus anticipating the Holiness Movement proper by over two decades.[252] The Wesleyan church was and still is firmly Arminian in doctrine as was John Wesley,[253] with an added emphasis upon sanctification or personal holiness that would ultimately ally it with the later Holiness Movement in the United States. From the very beginning, the church advocated and promoted women's rights, both civil and religious, such that in 1856 it was the very first denomination to officially ordinate a woman, Antoinette Brown-Blackwell, to any Christian ministry in the United States. It also actively associated itself with the later Women's Suffrage Movement all of which is in close keeping with the prominent role of women within the greater Holiness Movement. This church would merge much later in 1968 with the Pilgrim Holiness Church at Anderson University, located in Anderson, Indiana. The church at its very inception entertained and maintained a strong interest in revivalism and missionary efforts, and in keeping with that tradition it currently sustains a missionary presence in about 100 different nations around the world.[254]

Still more churches were being formed out of the Holiness Movement that placed a special emphasis upon personal sanctification and holiness that the Methodist Church, by that time, was arguably

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[252] See The Wesleyan Methodist Connection, page 339

[253] See The Wesleyan Movement, page 293

[254] The Wesleyan Church now consists of nearly a half million members worldwide, which are located in some 5000 churches. Its international headquarters is presently located in Fishers, Indiana.

neglecting. The Church of God was formed in 1886, followed by the Church of the Nazarene in 1895, and the Holiness Church in 1896.

The Second Blessing

Those splinter churches in general believed in a state of Christian perfection brought about by an "instantaneous experience" that was separate from initial justification, forgiveness of sins, and conversion. This experience is most often referred to in Holiness circles as the "second blessing." Therefore, a believer who in the past had neglected personal holiness still had the opportunity to achieve it instantaneously through this second experience. As we can see, this premise actually amounted to a "third birth," and it denies that redemption automatically begins a process of practical sanctification that all Christians undergo as they slowly approach spiritual maturity.

The right-wing of this movement, such as the Church of the Nazarene, adheres to the tenet that sanctification comes about through the Holy Spirit as a "second work of grace," by means of a "baptism with the holy spirit" subsequent to initial redemption that results in a state of "entire sanctification." That state of perfection however cannot take place without the full cooperation of the believer that must nevertheless come about through a second "crisis experience." This "second blessing" is recognized as having taken place by evident acts of spiritual discipline and a fervent love for God and one's fellow man. This position generally characterizes the more moderate-wing as well, such as, the Christian and Missionary Alliance[255] founded in 1897, and later, the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America, and the Free Methodist Church.

The left wing of that movement, however, soon sought to go beyond the mere simple acknowledgement of this state having been reached through evidential fruits of the Holy Spirit demonstrated in the believer, to a more extreme position that we shall now discuss.

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[255] See Christian and Missionary Alliance (ca. 1897), page 386

Pentecostalism

One difficulty with accepting the concept of a "second blessing," was found in determining any ***exact moment*** when an individual believer has attained that purely spiritual experience signifying this enhanced state of holiness. Not being satisfied with merely recognizing this state of holiness by observing a positive change in a person's life style over time, some found it necessary to look for a more tangible instantaneous ***sign*** to indicate that this state of holy perfection had actually been achieved. Out of this desire for an instantaneous sign, another movement called Pentecostalism grew out of the holiness movement.

Pentecostalism espouses a belief that an experience similar to that which the apostles underwent on the day of Pentecost must be experienced by individual Christians today to signify that their moment of sanctification has in fact come. This was thought to have manifested itself in glossolalia, or "speaking in tongues."[256] That unusual phenomenon resembled the activities that had broken out on the frontier at the beginning of the Second Awakening and at the Cane Ridge Camp Meeting a century before.[257]

The Latter Rain Movement

In 1898, the Pentecostal Holiness Church was formed. That church and other churches patterned after it formed the far left-wing of the Holiness Movement. It is often referred to as the "Latter Rain Movement" because of their strange misinterpretation of James 5:7: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." Some Pentecostals make an application of this verse to state that the sign gifts will be "rained" down upon believers in the "latter days."

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[256] Glossolalia was discussed at length in Book II, Chapter 14.1

[257] See topic Experiential Evangelicalism, page 329

However, as we plainly see in the larger context of this passage, it describes how a farmer who has planted seed watches it wither in times of drought, yet waits in hope for the late rain which would bring his crop to fruition. James was only saying that we should remain patient in hope, even in the face of persecution, for that day when Christ will return.

Global Spread of Pentecostalism

The Azusa Street Revival, as it was called, took place in Los Angeles, California beginning in 1906. It was led by William Seymour, an expelled African-American preacher, who taught that "speaking in tongues," was the evidence of having received “Holy Spirit baptism.” Eventually through impassioned and frenzied preaching, his small group experienced the desired glossolalia. As his group increased in numbers, a dilapidated building on Azusa Street in downtown Los Angeles was procured as its meeting place. People from all around the world came to the frequent and euphoric services that would continue for about three years. The Azusa revival welcomed multi-racial, and poor people, as well as encouraging the participation and leadership of women in the worship, which probably contributed to its phenomenal success. While Pentecostalism had earlier roots, as we have seen, the Azusa Street Revival launched it as a worldwide movement.

Anti-Intellectualism

Pentecostalism had its beginnings in the poorer and thus less educated masses particularly in the southern states. Many were illiterate. As a result, Pentecostalism relies more on emotional response than upon learned comprehensive Bible study and exposition. Many today still oppose any intellectual or systematic approach to studying the Scriptures believing that the Holy Spirit informs them with personal revelations apart from that obtained through diligent individual Bible study. Furthermore, many of their preachers do not even prepare any sermons in advance depending instead upon the

movement of the Holy Spirit to provide their words as they speak.[258] Therefore, Scripture is used primarily for devotional purposes with certain specific passages recited repeatedly in order to prop up their own unique religious viewpoint.

Diversity in Doctrine

There is much diversity in doctrine regarding glossolalia within the Pentecostal movement making it difficult or impossible to collect them together into one single category.

- Holiness churches that were formed after the turn of the century including the Assemblies of God in 1914, Pilgrim Holiness in 1922, and the Foursquare Church in 1927 expressed the belief that the new birth or regeneration itself comes about only in the second blessing with the evidence of "tongue speaking."
- Some Pentecostal groups hold that sanctification is experienced following the "new birth" and subsequent "baptism in the Holy Spirit" all of which occurs together as a single experience evidenced by "speaking in tongues."
- Other groups state that sanctification is essentially personal dedication that begins in the new birth or conversion experience, and that it is culminated later by "baptism in the Holy Spirit" evidenced by "speaking in tongues."
- Still other groups believe that the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is actually a ***third*** act of grace that follows the act of personal sanctification gained by the efforts of the individual.

Although most of those groups are considered fundamentalist with regard to their view of the authority of Scripture, about twenty-five percent of Pentecostals are Unitarian or "Jesus only." This

[258] This idea is most probably extrapolated out of context from Luke 12:11,12

doctrine essentially grew out of the old error of modalism[259]. The United Pentecostal Church is the largest group among this faction that rejects Trinitarianism.

Liberal Opposition to Established Doctrines

Even as the evangelicalism of Methodism eroded into experiential evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, other doctrinal conflicts were encountered within all of the major denominations. Established doctrines and creeds were being attacked from within the denominations by men such as David Swing, a Chicago Presbyterian minister, as well as from without as religious liberalism made a concerted advance across the denominational landscape in America. The advance would continue well into the nineteenth century and it would later become widely constituted in the twentieth century.

Liberalization of Schools and Seminaries

A broader religious liberal party began to develop within Northern Presbyterianism as the turn of the century (1900) approached. Many "new school" seminaries sprung up that were being supported by the liberal party. These seminaries included but were not limited to Lane Theological Seminary, in Cincinnati, Auburn Theological Seminary, in Upstate New York, and Union Theological Seminary, in New York City.

Under the Influence of Professor of Philosophy Borden Parker Browne, large numbers of liberal preachers began to infiltrate Northern Methodism from Boston University. Browne espoused the twin philosophical concepts of “transcendental empiricism,” which states that all knowledge comes from personal experience, and “personalism,” which emphasizes the significance of the individual person in determining reality stating that there can be no reality without a person to experience it. Other Methodist schools and

[259] The error of Modalism was discussed in Book I, Chapter 6.2 and the Jesus Only movement was discussed in Book II, Chapter 14.1

denominational agencies were also overwhelmed by this influx of religious liberal philosophy.

John D. Rockefeller, philanthropist and arguably the richest person who ever lived, ensured increasing religious liberal influence in the Baptist camp when he heavily endowed the University of Chicago and its Divinity School with some eighty million dollars thus changing it from a small Baptist college to a prominent institution. In Colgate's Baptist seminary, William Newton Clarke taught his own brand of religious liberalism to highly impressionable students from evangelical homes. One of his students was Harry Emerson Fosdick the noted liberal U.S. Preacher and author from western New York who we mentioned earlier in this chapter.[260]

By the turn of the century (1900), all major denominations as well as most other church groups were inundated by liberal religious thought and practice. This resulted in a watered down restatement of Calvinistic theology by the Presbyterians that leaned toward Arminianism, while others such as Methodists and Baptists found themselves catering to a growing liberal minority in their own midst. The result of that influx was denominational schisms and continual internal conflict within individual churches. Liberalism had fully infiltrated both traditional reformed thinking as well as evangelicalism, and the religious liberal, himself, had completely given in to the then prevailing secular spirit of the twentieth century.

Fundamentalism

Realizing that the fundamentals of the Christian faith were being thrown to the wind, many Evangelicals attempted to establish a foothold before it was too late. As the winds of religious liberalism blew through Christendom, they clung tenaciously to the rock of God's Word. Even as their stand was being made on the periphery of the main-line churches and denominations, religious liberalism gained further control of universities and seminaries. The Fundamentalists, as they were soon called because of their insistence on maintaining the

[260] See Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878– 1969), page 361

fundamentals of the faith, fought back by establishing their own independent Bible schools and Bible institutes.

Tenets of Fundamentalism

The three basic tenets of Christian fundamentalism are the literal interpretation of Scripture, absolute biblical authority, and Scriptural instruction. Fundamentalists stressed the authority of Scriptures, claiming that they were divinely inspired even to the very words. The original autographs of Scripture were without error, and translations have been divinely preserved to prevent error. The Scriptures not only contain the words of God, they ***are*** the Word of God. As a result, sermons from church pulpits must always be a teaching of Bible text and the exposition of God's Word, not merely verbose oratory or exhortation with a moral or social implication. Fundamentalists insisted upon a fully literal interpretation of all Scripture opposing any allegorizing or spiritualizing of Scriptures in any way.

Fundamentalist Adoption of Dispensationalism

At that time, many churches and denominations had already "spiritualized" all of God's promises that were made in the Old Testament to Israel to apply to the church. This approach to Scripture placed an emphasis upon the ***material*** promises that had been made to Israel, and had reassigned them to the temporal church to help promote its optimistic concept of post-millennialism. In opposition, the highly literal interpretation of the Fundamentalists allowed them to develop pre-millennial[261] eschatology that further led them to adopt an interpretive system known as "dispensationalism" over covenantalism.[262]

It should be noted that dispensationalism was not invented by the American fundamentalists. Dispensational eschatology began out

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[261] See Chapter 20.2 Preliminary Millennial Doctrines, page 551

[262] Covenantalism and Dispensationalism as methods of Bible interpretation was discussed more fully in Chapter 11.2 of Book II.

of a Bible study by men who called themselves the "Plymouth Brethren" in England about 1820. Most prominent of those men was John Nelson Darby, an ordained Anglican clergyman who broke with the established church in the late 1820's.

Darby saw the church as being in a state of decline through which it would become increasingly apostate in the faith over time.[263] This view was expressed in his document *The Ruin of the Church.* In his view, believers would be "snatched out" (cf. 1Th.4:17) before Christ returned to judge the apostate church in the Great Tribulation,[264] which would then culminate in Christ's return to establish His Millennial Kingdom and reign from Jerusalem. Considering the destructive inroads being made by religious liberalism in their day, American Christian fundamentalists quite readily embraced this teaching of a growing apostasy within the church at large.

Fundamentalist view of Millennialism

The Fundamentalist believed in a future Kingdom on earth that would be established by Christ upon his Second Advent.[265] At that time there would be a gathering of Jews to occupy that Kingdom as a fully restored Israeli state would come into being. Much later in 1948, Israel was again reestablished as a political nation leading to speculation that the time for Jesus' return was very close at hand. However, Israel has been compassed about by Satan's agencies ever since its restoration. More than sixty years later, Islamic nations and Palestinian terrorists still surround Israel. Her land is infiltrated by Gentiles of every variety, and it is hardly the theocracy that existed in her beginning many centuries ago (cf. Lu.21:24). As their nation increasingly becomes populated with non-Jews, there is even a growing concern that Israel could someday lose her Jewish roots entirely. Nevertheless, the reestablishment of Israel as a nation fueled

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[263] See The Final Apostasy, page 533

[264] See The Doctrine of Tribulationism, page 562

[265] See The Second Advent, page 580

sensationalism within dispensational pre-millennialism as many began to think that the Second Advent was very close at hand (cf. Mt.24:32,33).

Mischaracterizations of Fundamentalism

The fundamentalists had reacted to the left-wing Liberal threat by moving a full 180 degrees to the right. That had a tendency to isolate the fundamentalists from other believers, and reduce their effectiveness in other religious movements at large. The wind-swept Fundamentalists were clinging to the Bible with such tightfisted hands that genuine exhortation often was forgotten as they staunchly argued for Scriptural Truth. They soon developed a reputation as not caring for the physical or even the spiritual needs of the masses as they unfalteringly opposed the onrush of religious humanism. The liberal elements of the main-line churches quite naturally exploited this portrayal such that this unfortunate mischaracterization continues yet today.

Although true fundamentalists care greatly for the plight of the lost, their insistence upon sound biblical doctrine separates them from the liberal evangelicals who only seem to be more compassionate because they consider man's immediate "needs," ignoring the eternal consequences of God's proclamations of judgment against sin.

Many today attempt to commingle Christian fundamentalism, which is the belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and the need to emphasize correct biblical doctrines based solely on Scripture, with extreme evangelistic positions that are nothing more than shallow "believeism," which places the emphasis upon belief itself without any solid basis or standards for that belief. Most Protestant churches today are all lumped together into the broader classification of "evangelicals" without regard to this important distinction of evangelism based on Scriptural Truth as opposed to evangelicalism based solely on human emotion and experience.

Even the word, "fundamentalist," has fallen on hard times as it is often incorrectly used by both secular and liberal religious opposition to describe various radical groups and cults rather than those who merely hold to the fundamentals of the Christian faith as

found in Scripture. Sadly, holding to Scriptural Truth is also being characterized as radical and extremist by far too many today. Christian fundamentalists have even been lumped together with Islamic terrorists in the secular media through the use of the term "Islamic fundamentalists."[266] Christian fundamentalists are likewise depicted as being radical, militant, and ignorant.[267] This false characterization has had a tendency to isolate true Fundamentalists from other believers reducing their effectiveness in religious movements at large.

The Millerite Movement

In the mid nineteenth century, there was growing emphasis upon the second advent of Christ and the rapture of the church because of a paradigm shift toward pre-millennialism in Europe that crossed the ocean into the United States through the American Christian fundamentalist movement. It was perhaps inevitable that the study of the Bible by various individuals and groups would eventually lead to various forms of error and sensationalism in connection with it.

William Miller, a converted Baptist, and amateur Bible scholar soon extended pre-millennialism beyond its reasonable conclusions by attempting to construct a rigid timeline that would predict the exact date of Jesus' return to earth. That timeline was based upon the Old Testament date estimation system developed by Bishop Ussher[268]. It was finalized by combining that estimation with the Old Testament

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[266] Even as this is being written, the term "Islamic Fundamentalists" is being heard less often due to some sense of political correctness in that it offends Muslims.

[267] Admittedly, this portrayal may be correctly applied to some few groups falsely claiming to be true Christian fundamentalists that are camped on the fringe of the movement, but it is untrue of genuine Christian fundamentalists. The fundamentals of Islam and the fundamentals of Christianity are polar opposites. (See *Answering Islam*, by Norman L. Geisler & Abdul Saleeb).

[268] James Ussher was a 17th century Anglican Bishop in what is now Northern Ireland. His chronology was based upon a literal interpretation and compilation of biblical genealogies found in the Old Testament, which caused him to place the date of creation at 4004 BC.

prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel and the New Testament book of Revelation.

Any attempt at any precise prediction in advance, of course, disregards the words of Jesus when he said that, "…of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels, of heaven, but my Father only" (Mt.24:36;cf. Mk.13:32; Ac.1:7). Apparently, Miller thought inasmuch as the time was rapidly approaching, a precise date would now be revealed whereas it was kept hidden before. Apparently Miller's focus was on the verse in Malachi 3:1, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts." Following Miller's lead, thousands of people sold their homes, farms, and businesses in anxious anticipation of the rapture of the Church. When Jesus did not appear in the predicted year of 1844, many ascribed the error to a mathematical miscalculation or to various conspiracy theories regarding the religious traditions and doctrines of the existing churches that had prevented it.

In the confusion of the time, the leaders of the movement disbanded in the face of the "Great Disappointment" as it was called. However, the movement continued by reckoning that the Temple sanctuary to which Jesus was to have returned in 1844 was not on earth, but in Heaven. Only after He had completed his work there would He return to earth. This concept was to carry over into Seventh Day Adventism. In addition, general Millerite thinking would directly affect the establishment of the Jehovah's Witness cult and to a much lesser degree Mormonism and Christian Science.

Seventh Day Adventism

Although the Millerite movement originally spanned various denominations and groups having Baptist, Methodist, Campbellite, and even Presbyterian adherents it would find a more permanent placement in Seventh Day Adventism founded by Ellen Gould White. White was a visionary that, unlike Miller, was a Trinitarian but advocated the authority of present-day prophecy in addition to Scripture. She saw her followers as the remnant of an apostate church

that was being restored through direct revelation. Her voluminous writings covered every aspect of Christianity from theology to health. She was greatly involved with health issues embracing vegetarianism to promote that end. Her writings are still considered authoritative in Seventh Day Adventism, though that is apparently slowly changing.

In recent years, most Seventh Day Adventists churches have moved more toward the mainstream of Christianity, but they still celebrate the Hebrew Sabbath on the last day of the week, and consider many of the Old Testament mandates given specifically to Israel as a nation fully binding upon the Church. In addition, they hold to the "Heavenly Sanctuary" concept of the later Millerite movement that is most definitely out of the mainstream. Their legalistic traditions, which allies them with a strong tendency toward works salvation, includes following the strict dietary laws given to Israel, although today they claim that it is only a means of promoting good health habits.[269]

Dietary restrictions are highly indicative of many religious cults thus lumping the Seventh Day Adventist Church in with them. True Christianity is based completely upon the doctrine of God's sovereign grace, not works of any kind as has been reiterated many times over in this writing (Ep.2:8,9). As the Apostle Paul said, it is impossible to mix any works with grace else grace is no longer grace but becomes useless works (Ro.11:6),

The Growth of Religious Cults

Today, Seventh Day Adventism is arguably a sect of Christianity, not a cult. A cult, as described before, places the emphasis upon a singular doctrine or principle that is well outside the mainstream of historic Christianity and quite often exalts a man (or a woman) as a modern-day prophet.

Three major cults, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science pressed in to fill the spiritual vacuum left by liberal religious thought in America. The following paragraphs only represent

[269] Also see Holistic Healing, page 422

a brief summary of each of those organizations and they are presented here only to show how they fit into the historic times and the influence they asserted on Christianity generally. For those who would like more information on those and other cults, Walter Martin's definitive work *The Kingdom of the Cults* published by Bethany House is highly recommended.

Mormonism

Joseph Smith Jr., was born in Vermont in 1805 into a poor family. However, he was not inclined to labor in the fields, preferring instead to search for hidden treasures and claiming that he had visions or theophanies telling him where they were to be found. One of his alleged "visions" in 1823 was that of the angel Moroni through which he claimed that he was given two inscribed gold tablets and two seers' stones that he used as spectacles to read the inscriptions. Hidden behind a curtain, Smith dictated what he said was the translation of the two tablets to others beginning with his wife Emma and the majority to Oliver Cowdery who wrote it down. The result of that dictation was to become *The Book of Mormon* that was published in the 1830's. Joseph Smith became the mayor of his community in Nauvoo, Illinois and in 1844 even declared his candidacy for President of the United States.

Additional alleged visions led Smith further and further away from orthodox Christianity. One of the more egregious doctrines is that men may become gods through super-human effort thus embracing Satan's lie to Eve (Ge.3:5). This god-like state was to be achieved through participating in various secret temple rituals. Smith immediately raised the ire of more mainstream Christians as he embraced the dual radical doctrines of plural and celestial marriage.[270] Joseph Smith believed that through an ultimate Adamic "man-god"

[270] Christian marriage ends upon the death of either of the two spouses thus freeing the living spouse to remarry. The erroneous doctrine of "celestial marriage," however, insists that marriage on earth never ends but continues in Heaven through eternity. Jesus clearly stated that there is no continuance of the marital state when the resurrected saints enter into Heaven (Mt.22:30).

engaging in external sexual union with as many women (Eves) as possible, the earth would over time become fully populated with Mormon "gods."

Smith was accused of corrupting and seducing women by a Nauvoo Illinois newspaper whereupon he had the press destroyed. He, his brother Hyrum, and various close associates were subsequently charged with violation of freedom of the press and were incarcerated in the jail at Carthage. Fearing his release after initial charges were dropped, a large mob stormed the jail and both Smith and Hyrum were killed. Smith was replaced by Brigham Young who led the Mormons out of Illinois to the present day state of Utah.

A war later broke out for a time between the United States and the Mormons over the vile issue of polygamy. Though Mormons finally agreed to end the practice prior to Utah becoming a state, the statement endorsing polygamy still exists unaltered in their *Doctrines and Covenants*. Moreover, polygamy is still practiced by various sub-cults of Mormonism within private isolated compounds in the western United States even as this history is being written.

Jehovah's Witnesses

The Bible Student Movement was founded by Charles Taze Russell in the 1870's. Various doctrines, church creeds, and traditions were being re-examined in those analytical studies. While that may seem a commendable undertaking on the surface, extreme error came about as the result of the strange way some were reading Scripture by looking for hidden clues embedded within the text that predicted future events and the end of the world. This predictive element probably came about through their association with Millerite Adventist ministers George Storrs and George Stetson. Russell, who is recognized as the founder of the Jehovah's Witness movement, soon concluded that Satan was then currently using the United States government, the business community, and even the established church itself to attain his own ends.

In 1881, Russell founded the Zion Watch Tower Tract Society that served to intensify and disseminate his views. Russell rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, and the divinity of Jesus. In association with

Nelson H. Barbour, he predicted that the second coming would occur in 1878. Russell sold out his vast clothing enterprise and worked toward a revival in preparation for the rapture. When this did not occur as was predicted, he broke with Barbour. Later predictions stated that the end of the world would come about in 1914. However, instead of the end of the world, 1914 only brought about World War I.

Upon his death in 1916, Russell was replaced by Joseph F. Rutherford as president of the Watch Tower and Bible Tract Society. Rutherford eventually gave the Jehovah's Witnesses its present name in 1931 and changed the name of the society from Watch Tower to Watchtower.

Christian Science

The Church of Christ, Scientist was founded in 1879 in Boston by Mary Baker Eddy who had suffered chronic illness all of her life. Eddy was a staunch Congregationalist that fully rejected any notion of predestination. After a serious injury she suffered in 1866, she unexpectedly recovered when she turned to reading the Bible. The next three years were spent in formulating her theories regarding the spiritual basis of illness. Not unlike the Jehovah's Witnesses, Eddy perpetuated her views through a series of publications including the *Christian Science Monitor* that she founded in 1908 at the age of 87.

Like Gnosticism, Manicheism, and Spiritualism before it, Christian Science states that the material world is imaginary or is at least insignificant. The alleged purpose of life is to live in harmony with the "Universal Spirit." Illness therefore is only seen as an aberration of the mind, not reality, which can only be cured by a closer relationship with that Universal Spirit.[271] Furthermore, it is alleged that Scripture can be accurately interpreted only by means of a hidden spiritual clue that is unknown to most Christians. Eddy taught that all continuing illness was the result of spiritual errors in the utilization of "spiritual science." She claimed to have rediscovered the clue that Jesus Himself had discovered that enabled Him to healed the sick.

[271] Also see Holistic Healing, page 422

Ironically, Mary Baker Eddy spent the last two years of her life in severe pain and anguish that was relieved only by massive doses of Morphine. She died in 1910 at the age of 89.

The Sixteenth Amendment

In the United States, a temporary federal income tax was first instituted in 1861 to help pay for the civil war efforts (rescinded in 1872), and another enacted in 1894 to make up for the loss of federal revenue incurred from reducing various federal tariffs. Funding of the great social welfare programs of the twentieth century was made possible by the passage of the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1913, which gave congress virtually unlimited power to collect taxes on corporate and personal incomes. This was a progressive income tax pushed through congress as the Revenue Act at the insistence of the highly progressive Democratic President, Woodrow Wilson.

A progressive income tax is designed to heavily tax those with greater incomes while levying much less upon the less affluent. Moreover, a poverty threshold is established below which no taxes are levied. Progressive taxation redistributes wealth from the rich to the poor — a highly socialist concept that also expanded size of the government. This unwise action precipitated a serious economic decline that led to a deep depression in 1920. However, when Warren Harding gained the presidency in 1921, he downsized the government dramatically and cut taxes, which soon brought the depression to an end. Under his conservative policies and those of President Calvin Coolidge who followed him, the nation moved into a period of economic and technological expansion.

The Age of Optimistic Overindulgence

Even as dispensational pre-millennialism advanced, post-millennialism was dealt a severe blow as war broke out in Europe and eventually encompassed a large part of the globe. That did not bode well for mankind establishing the kingdom age on earth. However, as the First World War ended, optimism was high that this war was truly the war whose end had signaled the end to all wars on earth. With the

end of wars, man could then achieve his highest goals in a humanistic utopia. Consequently, the continual movement of the major denominations toward religious liberalism accelerated after the war.

Although religious liberalism had actually been on the offensive since 1870, it reached a pinnacle in 1907 as the Federal Council of Churches was formed. The three major denominations in the United States, the Methodists, most Presbyterians, and even many Baptists, were now largely lost to religious liberal thought. Many conservative Baptists, however, were forced to make a break with the major Baptist congregations and organizations. By the end of the 1930's, all major denominations except the Southern Baptist Convention and the Lutheran Missouri Synod were firmly in control of religious liberals.[272]

Believers Set Adrift

The extreme optimism of the 1920's along with prevailing liberal religious thought in the United States brought in an era generally known as the "Roaring Twenties" in which traditional standards were dismissed as being passé in favor of various forms of modernism. Consequently, personal morals were severely lowered. Jazz and various forms of wild dancing propelled the youth of that day deep into its depths even as Prohibition made "speakeasies," wherein illegal alcoholic beverages were sold, popular haunts. Meanwhile, many believers found themselves set adrift in an era in which everything was considered possible through economic growth and the modern advances of technology. The automobile had become king, and the innovation of movies and radio further enhanced that mood. Excess optimism in mankind's own abilities drove many farther away from any serious consideration of God in their lives, even as most protestant churches continued to expand their modernistic religious philosophy.

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[272] Fredrick W. Evans Jr., *They Sought a City*

Roman Catholicism's Move to Fill the Vacuum

So liberal had the major Protestant denominations become in the early twentieth century that the traditionalism of Roman Catholicism began to move into the spiritual vacuum that religious liberalism had created. Catholicism made great numerical advances between the two world wars. The effect of Catholic political influence also could not be ignored. Many conservative Protestants began to see that they had more in common with Roman Catholics than with many of the main-line Protestant denominations. As the Knights of Columbus began to recruit members, and as radio was employed to reach disillusioned Protestants through the efforts of such men as American Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, Catholicism began to grow.

Roman Catholics were not the only ones to take advantage of the "watered down" doctrines of the liberal churches of course. Judaism also made great inroads in the United States during that time. The cults soon began to show gains in membership as well. No longer would there be an over-riding Protestant reformed biblical ethic guiding the nation. The nation had become a nation with highly diverse religious thought. This religious pluralism became a fact that would need to be dealt with in its national politics, its judicial system, and in its national laws for years to come.

Resurgence of the White Supremacy Movement

In reaction to the inroads made by Roman Catholics in the industrial era as well as the migration of African Americans from the south to work in northern factories, a second KKK was formed in 1915. Unlike the earlier Ku Klux Klan in the south following the U.S. Civil War,[273] this Klan was a more formal fraternal organization that had an organized hierarchical structure, and it was recognized and run much as a political party. The Klan commonly conducted street parades that included organized musical bands to aid in their recruitment. This new Klan not only preached racism, but anti-Semitism, and anti-Catholicism as well. Local groups took part in

[273] See Southern White Supremacist Movement, page 343

cross burnings, lynchings, the burning and destruction of homes, as well as engaging in many other violent activities — especially in the southern states. At its peak, the Klan claimed about fifteen percent of the eligible voting population though by 1930 its membership had already dropped sharply due to strong national opposition to its violent nature. Its popularity dropped even more dramatically during the Great Depression era, which we shall now discuss.

The Great Depression Era

The great optimism of the nineteen twenties would soon decline into the great pessimism of the thirties. The Great Depression was a worldwide economic crisis of major proportions that began in 1929 and continued to plague the entire world throughout the 1930's. Although causes of the Great Depression in the United States were deeply embedded in the excesses of the Roaring Twenties, its beginning is commonly recognized as coinciding with the U.S. stock market crash on "Black Tuesday" in October of 1929 during the first year of the presidency of Herbert Hoover. Hoover tried to deal with the financial problem through implementing various government programs as well as encouraging volunteerism within the private sector. High tariffs were placed on foreign imports in an attempt to protect struggling U.S. industries. None of those efforts was effective and resulted in the loss of Hoover's bid for reelection in 1932.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, sworn into office in 1933, advocated and succeeded in creating various public works programs such that the U.S. government artificially created jobs to build roads, bridges, dams, and various other kinds of public infrastructure. Funds for the highly socialist programs were gathered through heavy taxation of those persons and businesses that had survived the depression. In so doing, it is most probable that the depression era was actually drawn-out inasmuch as private sector job creation was being curtailed.

The Social Security program was also established in 1935 as a "safety net" to prevent the elderly from falling into poverty when they were no longer able to engage in physical work. This was supported by a special payroll tax. The Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA) was also created in 1938 to aid citizens with obtaining

affordable housing, a governmental agency that would later play a major role in the financial and economic crisis of 2008.[274]

As we conclude this chapter, it is important to take note that we have increasingly drifted away from a study of Church history in any formal sense with the founding of large numbers of independent churches replacing national churches. Instead of discussing Christian church institutions, we have instead begun to discuss various intertwining religious, social, and political movements. These movements large and small had an overall effect upon all denominations. When taken together they have seriously radicalized the Christian faith into many strange religious factions that often cross over denominational lines. Because of that ensuing chaos, there is no longer a common consensus as to what comprises the Christian faith thus bringing in an age of religious pluralism, which we shall discuss in Chapter 19.2 in the next section.

[274] See topic, The Financial Collapse of 2008, page 485

Section 19 Christian and Geopolitical Conflicts

Twentieth Century Missions

Age of Religious Pluralism

The Concerted Attack on the Faith

The Dimmed and Faltering Lamp

The World Unification Movement

Chapter 19.1 Twentieth Century Missions

Unlike Christian missions of the eighteenth century, twentieth century missions were greatly affected by the radicalization of the Christian faith that took place in the nineteenth century and continued throughout the twentieth century. That radicalization has seriously inhibited any united effort in the clear propagation of the true Gospel both at home and abroad even as it has simultaneously threatened the preservation of consistent Christian doctrine and practice within temporal churches that support missionary efforts. When that radicalization is transported to foreign missions fields, the results are catastrophic.

Moreover, it is impossible to totally divorce missions movements from mankind's inherent thirst for adventure and conquest, as we observed in Chapter 17.11 Global Expansion of Roman Catholic Churchianity, page 202. That thirst was also present in Protestantism as twentieth century Churchianity dawned. Satan is always active behind the scenes to impede or corrupt the propagation of the Gospel such that conflict and struggle remains inevitable. That much is already evident in the broader church history previously recorded in this book.

Due to the failure of the institutionalized temporal church to fully live up to its ideal counterpart, we find that the Gospel was often carried forth by those whose motives were not spiritually pure and by methods that are quite contrary to the peaceful Christian ethic. Many were more interested in imposing their own brand of Churchianity upon native populations, rather than giving them the life saving Gospel.

That having been said, we must not fail to recognize that other men and women have dedicated and risked their mortal lives that others may live through hearing and receiving the life-saving Gospel of Truth. Many faithful ambassadors of Christ are still doing so. As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Ro.10:15)! They willingly gave over the comforts of home and family to travel abroad into a wilderness of ignorance, disease, and poverty to reach the lost

with the Good News. Many gave their very lives as evidence of their godly zeal to be true to the heavenly commission placed upon them.

While history does record the lives of many of the more prominent of those, a few of whom we have already mentioned or will later discuss in this work, multitudes of unsung heroes of the faith will never be properly recognized this side of Heaven. They have patiently gone forth day-by-day in the market place, in the work place, and in various byways of life, and through their humble witnessing they have aided the Holy Spirit in bringing forth eternal life in the spiritually dead. Only when they finally stand before the Lord, will they receive the ultimate recognition and reward for their efforts in hearing Jesus say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord" (Mt.25:21).

The Complexity of Cultural Adaptation

The complexity involved in cultural adaptation without destroying the Gospel message in the process is the paradoxical problem faced by many modern missionaries when taking the Gospel to a foreign land. We also have the same difficulty to a lesser degree with the various ethnic and social sub-cultures within the United States today. While there is usually no need to completely overturn a culture, it is still imperative to root out those old customs and practices in the lives of new believers that directly oppose sound Christian doctrine lest they become reprobate in the faith. Maintaining that delicate balance is no easy task in many cultures.

Failure of men to successfully adapt the message of the Gospel and the Christian faith to other cultures resulted in Christianity being seen as an American or western religion by many around the world. This has resulted in an initial rejection — not of the Truth of Christ or the Gospel — but only of any attempt to introduce western social customs into other cultures. That tends to build a wall around the Gospel. Only when Christianity is appropriately adapted to their own customs and situations can that people be opened up to the Truth of the Gospel. It is necessary that the missionary adapt himself socially to those he intends to reach, not they to him (cf. 1Co.9:19–22).

By the twentieth century, most missionary organizations were interdenominational. However, there were still some denominational organizations, as well as larger numbers of small groups, that continued to work both at home and abroad. It is of course impossible to list all of them in this brief chapter. The two that have been chosen for study, it is judged, are characteristic of the two basic approaches commonly utilized in adapting the Gospel to reach the lost within contradicting cultures.

One approach is to appeal directly to human emotion through exhortation backed up by acts of charity, while the second is to appeal foremost to the mind through the written Word of the Scriptures. Sincerity and zeal must rest upon the foundation of God's Word by which we are sanctified — his Word is Truth (cf. Jn.17:17). Without the Truth, we would have nothing to say to the lost. Likewise, Truth without genuine zeal and love for the lost is lacking the good works that must characterize all believers that are true to the faith (cf. Ja.2:17). While it may be argued that both methods are valid initial approaches, both are required working together to achieve Christian maturity. We must remember the words of Jesus when he said that God seeks those who worship Him both in spirit and in truth (Jn.4:23).

Christian and Missionary Alliance (ca. 1897)

The Christian and Missionary Alliance also referred to as the C&MA was founded by Albert Benjamin Simpson in 1897. Though it had its beginnings in the late nineteenth century, its major efforts were to be realized in the twentieth century. Simpson was born on Prince Edward Island in Canada in 1843. He was educated at Knox College in Toronto and graduated in 1865. Simpson was ordained in the Presbyterian Church and was pastor at Knox Church for eight years, followed by a pastorate at Louisville, Kentucky in 1874. He moved to the Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church in New York City in 1880 where he published a missionary journal, which by 1911 became the *Alliance Weekly*. Simpson resigned after one year to devote full time to preaching to the non-churched. He established a mission in New York known as the Gospel Tabernacle where the objective was to

present the Gospel as well as provide social aid to the poor and middle class, unmarried mothers, and orphans.

The Christian Alliance was formed in 1885 in Maine. The Evangelical Missionary Alliance was formed soon after, and it was supported by twenty-five or more denominations sustaining two hundred missionaries in one hundred missionary stations in various parts of the world. In 1897, the two groups merged and they became known as the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

The C&MA is often identified with the Pentecostal movement. That was based on their common doctrine of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," and their four-fold emphasis on salvation, sanctification, healing, and pre-millennialism. However, the C&MA, unlike the Pentecostals, did not hold with glossolalia as being a unique sign that a person was indwelt with the Holy Spirit. However, Simpson did support the "orderly expression of supernatural gifts," which did not directly exclude glossolalia.

Moreover, Simpson advocated physical healing by spiritual means and even encouraged healing missions, which was similar to the Pentecostal position. Simpson also saw a considerable role for women in the C&MA, particularly in its evangelical phase. When Aimee Semple McPherson introduced the "Foursquare Gospel" that she claimed was revealed to her through direct revelation, the emblem so closely resembled the C&MA emblem that it further added to the confusion. Many members made a complete break with the C&MA in favor of Pentecostalism while others stayed in the C&MA where they still practiced glossolalia as they were allowed.

The C&MA was often criticized over its ecumenical attitude toward the Gospel by denominational churches. The organization was accused of actually promoting religious pluralism. The doctrine of spiritual healing was not supported by most major denominations at that time. Furthermore, because of the extraordinary efforts of the C&MA to aid the poor and underprivileged, they were also accused of engaging in secularism, humanism and even Social Darwinism.

Various local gatherings of the C&MA began to function as churches by 1930, but still did not consider themselves denominational churches. After the death of Simpson, the C&MA further distanced

itself from Pentecostalism, having become more focused on the deeper meaning of the Christian life. In 1965, a formal doctrinal statement was adopted, thus defining their doctrine in the same manner as a denomination. By 1980, the C&MA effectively divided into Canadian and United States denominations each having their own general assembly.

Wycliffe Bible Translators (ca. 1942)

While the C&MA sought to convert unbelievers through overt evangelistic efforts, others believed that the sound knowledge of God's Word was also necessary for that conversion to come about. By the twentieth century, it became apparent that there were numerous ethnographic groups of people around the world that were not being reached with the Gospel because they were isolated either by language or by class from the major geographic groups that past missionaries had been reaching. William Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran resolved to do something about this around 1935. McGavran concentrated on finding ways to cross over both class and cultural barriers. That remains a problem in many countries such as India, where there are nearly 4600 separate people groups that are separated by language, caste, or a combination of both.

Townsend, while a missionary to the Cakchiquel people of Guatemala, had seen the need for many new Bible translations after Cakchiquel-speaking men said that they could not understand why God could not speak to them from the Bible in their own tongue. After that, Townsend was determined to provide a translation for every man, woman and child on the globe in their own native dialect. It would not be enough to try to instill natives with a working knowledge of a foreign language such as French or English, the Bible must be translated into their own "heart language" — the language in which they commonly formed thought patterns.

This effort was complicated by the fact that many native tribes did not have any written language. In that case, an entire syllabary (see below) needed to be fabricated from their spoken language that could then facilitate the construction of syntax from scratch. Only then, could a Bible translation be undertaken. Following that, a literacy

program had to be provided to enable natives to read the text of the new translation in their own language. It is quite apparent that this endeavor is no small undertaking since the process needs to be repeated for every tribe that is isolated by language.

Development of Native-American Syllabaries

Almost as soon as Europeans reached the shores of the North American continent, many became interested in developing written languages for native tribes to make it possible to better communicate with them and provide a basis for their education which would serve to bridge the gap between European culture and their own.

A syllabary first needed to be developed for each individual spoken language. A syllabary is a table in which a written symbol (letter or mark) or a group of symbols are used to represent a particular spoken sound or syllable. A Cherokee syllabary was developed for his own people by a Cherokee leader by the name of Sequoya in the early nineteenth century. A Methodist missionary, James Evans, developed a syllabary for use by the Cree, which was also utilized by the Ojibwa people, in the late 1830s. Simple Syllabaries were developed for many other tribes as well.

Camp Wycliffe

"Camp Wycliffe" was subsequently founded in 1934 as a linguistics training school. The name, of course comes from John Wycliffe, who first translated the Bible into English. By 1942, "Camp Wycliffe" had grown into two parallel organizations, Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics. To date, over 700 translations of the New Testament and 25 complete Bibles have been completed and hundreds more are in development. Over 100 million people have been impacted by those translations alone. The process of translation has been speeded up considerably in recent years by the availability of laptop computers and the software to aid in the translations. As translators go forth into the field, they now take laptop computers and solar rechargeable batteries with them so that the initial work can be done anywhere even in the most remote locations of the world.

Support for Protestant Missions

For several centuries prior to the nineteenth Century, support for most Protestant missions had come from the various national governments that also supported their state churches. By the nineteenth century, western governments had little official relationship with missionary efforts. This separation was enhanced in the United States by the fact that a national church was expressly prohibited in the U.S. Constitution. Most European governments and the United States as well, developed a neutral and sometimes even hostile position toward missionaries and their efforts because governments often saw missionaries as obstacles to their political interests.[275]

Missionaries were also seen as a liability inasmuch as they would often go into dangerous areas and situations that required governments to rescue them from life threatening circumstances bringing about serious political implications. Consequently, many missionaries went forward with the clear understanding that they could not expect any support of any kind from their governments. If they got into trouble, they knew they were on their own placing total reliance on God for their deliverance.[276]

It is quite common today for missionary agencies to receive funding from various evangelical independent and denominational churches as well as from individuals. The purpose for sending men and women into the field may often be as much or more humanitarian than evangelical depending upon the vision of their support groups. The tradition of reports about foreign lands and cultures to local churches and support groups continues as missionaries visit on regular sabbaticals from the field in order to secure their continued support.

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[275] See Difficulties in Establishing Foreign Missions, page 306

[276] Today, many larger missionary agencies have the funding to provide for their own emergency removal of missionaries from the field in the event of medical emergencies or violence caused by political or civil unrest.

The Role of Women in Protestant Missions

From the beginning, women had played an important role in organizing missionary societies, collecting funds, and supplying the needs of overseas workers. At first, all missionaries on the field were men in keeping with the traditions of the church regarding church offices. However, men often took their wives and children with them to the missions field. Some women even continued the work when their husbands died leaving them on the field. The contribution that those women made to the missions effort did not go unnoticed. Soon missionary societies that were already being largely run by women began to send single women into the field.

Abroad, women performed the duties of teachers, nurses, cared for the aged, etcetera. (Roman Catholics sent nuns who served much the same roles as they did in their homelands). However, women on the missions field also began preaching and organizing churches — an activity that was forbidden to them at home. Strangely, that was allowed by their home churches without much complaint in part due to prevailing racism. It was thought acceptable for women to exercise authority over black native men, for example, in a way that would have been denied if the populace had been white. This privilege was granted them on the same basis as if they were women teaching male children.

Soon, other Protestant women, pointing to the success of various women missionaries, began demanding the opportunity to do the same. It can even be said, with some degree of credibility, that the modern feminist equal-rights movement has its roots in missionary societies. It is even more evident that the present push to ordain women in church offices is in great part due to the growing prominence of women in missionary work.

Interdenominational Cooperation

While Denominational rivalry was acceptable and often seen as productive in Christian homelands to ensure the purity of doctrine, that same rivalry was viewed as counterproductive on the mission field. The lack of a common witness and the competition for converts

confused the natives and often turned them off to the Gospel message altogether. As a result, a spirit of cooperation grew among missionaries of various denominational backgrounds. Soon missionaries and their converts took active steps to knock down the theological barriers that separated various denominations.

Most missionary societies today make no serious effort to stamp their own brand of Christianity on the missions field. Instead, they focus on clearly presenting the simple message of the Gospel and/or translating the Bible into native languages. In response to this mission-field ecumenism, missionary societies back home soon began to recruit their missionaries from various denominations rather than from one particular source.

It can be seen that the modern Ecumenical Movement actually had planted itself on the foreign missions field as doctrinal particulars were often freely compromised in the interest of presenting a united front to native populations. Furthermore, compromise meant that missionaries could find desperately needed human fellowship with missionaries of other faiths. However, many missionaries sent to the field, when faced with making compromises to their faith, are unable to bend that far and often return home as “casualties.” That is as often as much the cause of failure as is "culture shock," since those missionaries are often seen as uncooperative and are effectively isolated and even opposed by other Christian missionaries. Because of mission-field ecumenism, most often the evangelical that is weaker doctrinally or is more inclined to compromise Truth is the most successful in remaining on the missions field. This is a most unfortunate situation.

Therefore, we observe that the opportunities afforded the perpetuation of the Gospel through organized missionary societies are counterbalanced by the negative results that often comes from the compromise necessary to sustain that effort. Unfortunately, if missionary boards decided to hold the line on doctrinal purity, the number of people they could send to the field would be drastically reduced. In spite of all the negative aspects of the missionary struggle, it is still necessary to support sound missionary efforts around the

world while making every effort to avoid the progressive ecumenism that prevails there.

The Age of Electronic Media

Prior to the twentieth century, print media was being used to supplement the efforts of individual missionaries as they went into the foreign field. Furthermore, the production of tracts and other small booklets were being printed to aid those attempting to reach individuals for Christ on the avenues and byways. The outreach was limited to the number of individuals willing or able to take the time to reach out with the Gospel in shoe leather. "The harvest truly [was] great, but the labourers [were] few" (Lu.10:2). That situation was about to change dramatically.

At the turn of the twentieth century, radio broadcasting was in its infancy. By 1910, point-to-point radio-telegraphy was in use for ship to shore communication. With the invention of the vacuum tube, voice modulation was soon being used experimentally. The Radio Corporation of America was formed to resolve various patent conflicts that were present following World War I in order to standardize the technology and make general broadcasting possible. Formal broadcasting to the public did not begin until November 1920 on an experimental non-profit basis.

By 1926, commercial radio was established by the development of radio networks that together could provide a higher volume of programming. Relatively unscathed by the economic depression of 1929, radio revenues increased greatly, but programming still lagged behind. The Communications Act of 1934 established the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that was to oversee all non-governmental use of the radio spectrum.

Christian Radio Broadcasting

By the 1940's, various church services were being broadcast over local stations. Only when secular programming caught up with demand was religious broadcasting being set aside in favor of more lucrative programming that also had broader listener appeal. At that point the FCC established certain rules providing for the setting aside

of airtime for public service use of radio without fee. Through this means, many churches were able to continue broadcasting church services and sermons on Sunday mornings free of charge. In order to determine what was genuinely religious broadcasting, the gratis privilege was granted only to those churches that were members of the Federal Council of Churches.

Fundamentalism and the Media

The popularity of neo-evangelicalism[277] in the 1940's, which gave rise to Protestant Churchianity in the 1950's, pressed sorely against those attempting to restore sound biblical doctrine and authority in the churches. The Fundamentalists[278], finally realizing that they could not hold sway within their denominations any longer, began working outside them. Fundamentalists not only continued to build Bible Institutes, but also began to use radio and other media to reach Christians who had been set adrift by the religious liberalism that had invaded their churches.

Fundamentalists, however, found themselves paying dearly for time on commercial radio stations, while liberal churches, recognized under the banner of the Federal Council of Churches, got free time under the public-service provisions of FCC regulations. In response, some Bible institutes, such as Moody in Chicago, started their own radio stations in the early 1940's as an alternative to existing media to reach the masses of humanity. As this is being written, Moody has a network of 30 radio stations across the nation although a drift from the basic tenets of Christian fundamentalism toward the evangelical left has been in evidence over recent years.

National Religious Broadcasters

Not only were Christian fundamentalists having difficulty on the broadcast media, various other evangelical groups were also having difficulty even obtaining paid time on commercial stations. In

[277] See Neo-evangelicalism, page 405

[278] See Fundamentalism, page 368

1944, the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) was formed to combat that discrimination. Today, it also operates a DirecTV satellite service called the NRB Network that consists of programming produced by NRB members. Various neo-evangelicals, more in line with the ecumenism of Billy Graham and others, view this organization as being bent upon domination of all religious broadcast access as well as having a bent toward control of secular matters through the promotion of Christian statesmen to government offices. This criticism probably also arises out of attempts to regain a Christian consensus in the United States through various forms of political activism. The Reclamation Movement and the potential consequences of Christian political activism will be discussed in Chapter 19.3 The Concerted Attack on the Faith, page 462 and 465 of this book.

Effects of International Radio Outreach

In 1952, Paul Freed established what was to become Trans-world Radio (TWR). It began by broadcasting evangelical programming into Spain from Morocco. After TWR was evicted from Morocco, a high-powered radio transmitter, which had been abandoned by the Nazis as World War II ended, was procured by them to continue broadcasting. TWR presently broadcasts from fourteen countries to people in 160 nations in over 200 languages and dialects. Much of their programming is produced by their own staff with other regular contributors such as Thru the Bible Radio, in Pasadena, California. Through radio, it became possible to reach untold billions throughout the world with the Gospel thus greatly extending the reach of Christianity. Furthermore, this could be done without the necessity of sending missionaries abroad into harm's way.

For many decades, radio broadcasts carrying the Gospel message as well as sound Bible teaching had been beamed into the Soviet Union in the languages of listeners. When the Berlin wall finally came down in 1989, many were amazed to find that Christianity was actually alive and well beneath the thick dark cloud of atheism in the Soviet block. Moreover, unlike most of the churchgoers in the United States, large numbers of the Russian Christians were genuine believers — perhaps because of the cleansing effects of

persecution that had impeded the establishment of Protestant Churchianity and the efforts of such as TWR that had beamed the Word of God to those who had no Bibles to read. Bibles, which were in high demand, but short supply, soon began to cross the borders into the various satellite nations that were once within the Soviet sphere of authority. Bibles soon were being printed within the old Soviet block itself.

Following on the heels of radio, most of the genuinely effective evangelical work from the west was accomplished by various Para-church organizations inasmuch as major church denominations were locked into their lifeless Churchianity such that they lacked both the will and free resources. Unfortunately, that rich missions field was soon being exploited by various cults as well as by various non-Christian religions and fringe sects of various persuasions.

Christian Television Broadcasting

Following World War II (1945–1952) there was a great growth in the number of radio stations licensed in the United States. In addition, the erection of 108 TV stations during that period fostered the purchase of many television receivers in the American home. This combination began to force a shift in emphasis away from radio to television. The religious broadcaster also sought to take advantage of this newest media marvel to reach the un-churched, not only to perpetuate the Gospel, but also to increase the institutional status of their churches and to increase membership. Adding to the choice of ordinary air broadcasts is the more recent availability of many local cable networks as well as satellite communication that also provides international exposure.

Radio vs. Television

The expense of producing and airing a television program is monumental in comparison to that of a radio program of the same length. The need for greater funds is further multiplied when international exposure is desired. As a result, television ministries, in particular, must solicit great sums of money from their viewers to stay on the air. While visual aids can be useful for teaching Scripture

through maps, timelines, and charts, the television picture is ordinarily used only as meaningless visual gloss on most programs and it does not aid the spoken message in any valid way.

If the purpose of using electronic media is to get the Gospel message and attending Bible doctrines out to as many as possible throughout the world, radio is by far more cost-effective since radio broadcasts blanket the globe and even the poorest native often has access to a battery-powered transistor radio.[279] Television is only an unnecessary enhancement that consumes large sums of money and prevents a ministry from reaching nearly as many people as it could through radio.

The Internet

Many radio ministries have more recently discovered the power of the Internet. This turns out to be a relatively inexpensive way to reach large numbers of people around the world. While it is quite true that many people in foreign lands do not have computer access, the many that do find that the Internet is quite helpful inasmuch as a message can be listened to any time of the day or night while radio broadcasts can be heard only when scheduled. Furthermore, some of the ministries have made their messages available through a file downloading process so that the message can be played back later for one or many. The Internet can be a very useful tool for foreign ministers that do not have ready access to other teaching aids. Entire Bible courses are currently being offered to Internet users around the world free of charge through organizations such as the Bible Broadcasting Network (BBN).

Corruption of Electronic Missions

It should be made clear at the outset of this next topic that one cannot issue a blanket condemnation of ***all*** radio or television ministries any more than we could all paid church ministers. Thank

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[279] Satellite television signals are becoming more available throughout the world, but the cost of receiving apparatus is very much higher and beyond the reach of many.

God for the way He has used radio, in particular, to reach those behind the iron and bamboo curtains and in other areas of the world where the Gospel would otherwise be unheard. In that respect, the electronic media plays an important role in the Gospel mandate set forth in the Great Commission in the past and today.

However, the desire for more entertainment in contemporary church services has led to the popularity of certain radio and television programs that have diluted the Gospel or have completely forsaken the Gospel message to play upon human desire and emotion. This has resulted in many radio and television ministries becoming large entertainment empires. Religion is a booming business enterprise today. One has but to listen to the radio (in particular religious radio stations) or more significantly watch religious television programming to realize that peddling religion can generate huge sums of money. This is because many believers have come to think of the preaching of the Gospel only as a form of entertainment from which no genuine response is expected. Perhaps that is because the gospel that we so often hear from the church pulpit today is not actually the Gospel message at all. The message and the remainder of the service are especially designed to be entertaining in order to hold the attention of wayward pew-sitters.

Contemporary Christian music adds to the revenue to be gained from religion. We have somehow come to consider musical performances and meaningless psychobabble on a par with or more important than the simple direct exposition of God's Word. While music does have its place when we offer it up to the glory of God in worship, it ceases to become worship when it is performed exclusively for the delight and applause of a human audience. We have then traded the worship of God for human gratification and pleasure.[280]

Battle for Audience Share

The battle for viewers or listeners and their continued support often leads to desperate requests based upon false premises with great

[280] See The Degradation of Church Music, page 412

attendant emotional appeals in order to pay the bills. In the United States, the airwaves are so filled with charlatans that they often resort to trickery to steal each others' viewers or listeners and, of course, their monetary donations as well. The public that is, in general, completely ignorant of the Word of God often become ensnared in the web of those religious spiders. Interestingly, much of the donations to those broadcasts actually come from the unsaved, which in itself should tell us something about the character of those broadcasts.

It is indeed reasonable to suggest that many religious broadcasts exist for the sole purpose of raising money for the continued support of the broadcast that in turn exists only to raise more money in an endless cycle. Even Christian programs that may have begun with good intentions of preaching the Gospel and strengthening the faith of the saints often becomes corrupted because of the extreme financial burdens of broadcast time and production costs. That should be obvious to the listener when a third or more of the broadcast time is spent in an emotional appeal for money.

Humanistic Appeals

Money is often requested for certain humanitarian efforts throughout the world in addition to the maintenance of the broadcast. These are actually worldly humanistic appeals that are being presented in Christian wrappers, while the Gospel message and the teaching of sound Bible doctrine take a back seat because they are not considered to be effective in raising money from the populace at large. Pictures of starving children and mass poverty abroad have much more emotional appeal to believers and unbelievers alike.

We must be very wary of the preacher who uses the poverty of others whether here or abroad as a foundation upon which to build a so-called Christian ministry. While it is most certainly not wrong to feed the poor, it is wrong to use such tactics to obtain support from listeners under the guise of doing God's work. God's primary missionary purpose for the Church today is as it always has been to spread abroad the Good News of eternal redemption in Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, an approach that places a ***primary*** emphasis upon satisfying physical needs and hunger causes the donor to believe that

God will reward him with a special blessing because of his giving to the broadcast and therefore overlook his many sins. This is an error similar to that of the selling of indulgences[281] by the Roman church in Martin Luther's day.

Corruption of Media Leaders

The popularity, money, and power that media ministries acquire often leads to the corruption of the entire ministry, including its leaders, if, in fact, it did not have a corrupt beginning. Quite often, the charismatic leaders of those religious enterprises become like gods in the eyes of those who fervently watch the growth of their "ministry" and send in their own tithes and offerings to help fuel their ascent to prominence. So wrapped up in those TV super-stars are their followers that when the objects of their worship are revealed to have feet of clay, they feel lost and betrayed and their faith is severely undermined. They are perhaps the more fortunate ones, since still others merely deny their leader's failings and continue to support them— refusing to accept the truth.

Prosperity/Health Preaching

We especially must beware of the "prosperity preachers." Those are the preachers that teach, and perhaps through self-delusion even believe, that accepting Christianity should make everyone materially rich through the exercise of faith.[282] It is all too apparent that the manner in which they think God will make them rich is by fleecing the flock they "serve." A similar preacher we should be on guard against is one who preaches that his particular brand of Christianity will bring about perpetual physical health or guarantee worldly happiness.[283]

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[281] The Ninety-Five Theses, page 227

[282] See The Prosperity Doctrine, page 360

[283] See Book II, Chapter 14.3, Ritual Healing

Both of those approaches are a form of liberation theology [284] that feeds on man's greed and his fallen state in general, but perhaps the worst preachers of all are those who prey on the sick. To promise miraculous healing of all physical infirmities for everyone who "believes" is based on presumption, not promise, and it merely leads to a false sense of hope in the unsaved, not to genuine faith and hope of the believer in eternal life. Genuine Christian faith is not an emotional leap in the dark, nor is it a Band-Aid for our physical ills. We know whom we have believed and we are persuaded that He is able to keep everything that we have committed to Him against the day of our death and the judgment to follow (cf. 2Ti.1:12).

It is the immature, unwary Christian or the rank unbeliever that usually falls into the traps laid by the false prophets of the airways. A good steward must be purposeful in his giving. Before sending money to any radio or television ministry, it would be wise not only to fully investigate where the money goes, but to determine from God's Word whether the character of the ministry is truly in line with our Lord's mission for the Church in this age. Be aware that it is not enough to simply accept that the supposed popularity of such broadcasts proves a God-directed purpose since multitudes flock to all kinds of error today with their ears itching to hear more. After all, if the motive behind such ministries is to make money, the broadcast will be made quite attractive and it will always seem to fill a humanitarian need. Most often, the broadcasts that truly serve God's purposes will not be extremely popular with the masses.

As Jesus pointed out in the parable of the mustard seed, the temporal church has grown from its simple roots into a massive tree in which all kinds of birds roost today. Many of those birds are vultures. As the children of God, we must be on the lookout for the false teacher

[284] In Liberation Theology, Scripture is interpreted in such a way as to meet a person or group of persons' needs, real or perceived, rather than God's unadulterated message to mankind for the salvation of their souls. See Liberation Theology, page 354

as well as those who would devour the fruit from the tree even before it is ripened (Mt.13:31,32).

Chapter 19.2 Age of Religious Pluralism

Beginning with a study of the age of religious pluralism in this chapter and continuing through still later chapters in this section, sociopolitical matters will move more prominently to the forefront of our discussions. Even as they do so, it will become increasingly more difficult to separate social, political and religious thought as they begin to merge into one homogenous humanist philosophy that frames a worldview that is diametrically opposed to a Scriptural Christian worldview.

As World War II came upon the world, the citizens of the United States were stunned into recognizing the realities of world conditions. The religious optimism that had existed following World War I exploded like an over-filled balloon. The liberal view of a world of plenty and peace brought about by the efforts of "good men" working in harmony world wide suddenly fell apart. Americans at first largely saw the European war as a regional war from which they were protected by a vast ocean. Although willing to provide England with armaments, there was no stomach for actively engaging in a war against Adolph Hitler and his Nazi advances. That isolationist policy was about to change abruptly.

Particularly devastating, was the Sunday morning attack on Pearl Harbor even while many attended their local church services. It was now obvious that the war to end all wars had not done so, and the efforts to unite nations politically through the League of Nations had utterly failed. The awful reality of human nature in all its decadence and moral corruption was plainly visible for all to see. The axis nations were demonized through propaganda efforts in the media that depicted every individual in those nations as decadent and evil.

Neo-orthodoxy

Many religious liberals were forced to take the biblical message regarding the horror of sin and the need for God's grace seriously both during the war and after it ended — at least as far as the enemy was concerned. Even so, they were not so overwhelmed that they would consider the Bible as fully authoritative in every way. This

half-measure led to a new type of orthodoxy known as neo-orthodoxy." Neo-orthodoxy is sometimes referred to as "crisis theology" because it is a forced pragmatic response based upon a crisis of the time. This acknowledgment of theological truths was and still is only a superficial one. While terms of orthodox Christianity are often used by the neo-orthodox, they are devoid of any genuine Scriptural meaning.

Neo-liberalism

After the sting of World War II had subsided, neo-orthodoxy slowly began to give way to neo-liberalism as the "pendulum" of liberal religious thought began to swing back toward the left once again. This "new" religious liberalism was born in the aftermath of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan. Again, the liberal would bring into being a new age through humanism,[285] but the first efforts must be directed against obstacles such as the ultimate destruction that was demonstrated in the atomic bomb, as well as the religious pluralism that not only dominated the United States, but the world at large. Religion was now seen as a force causing divisiveness that would prevent the ushering in of a utopian age, unless it could be harnessed into a single religious movement. The ultimate goal of Neo-liberalism will be discussed in Chapter 19.5 The World Unification Movement, page 504.

Ecumenism

That is the essential motive behind the church ecumenical movement. It is an attempt to reconcile by any means the religions of the world into a common worldwide religion to usher in a time of lasting peace. To that end, the World Council of Churches was formed in 1948. All of the major denominations in the United States joined in the effort. Two years later in 1950, the Federal Council of Churches in the United States changed its name to the National Council of Churches.

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[285] See Humanism, page 220

Since the Roman Catholic Church still contends that Protestants must return to the "mother church," it was quite natural, then, that the Roman Catholic Church would add its voice to the ecumenical movement. In 1952, the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible was published. That version is a carefully written liberalized translation as can be evidenced by the diversity of nominally "Christian" organizations that subscribed to it. It is truly an ecumenical Bible as seen by the fact that many Protestant denominations as well as the Roman Catholic Church endorsed it.

Neo-evangelicalism

The combination of Neo-orthodoxy and Neo-liberalism brought with it a new form of evangelicalism or Neo-evangelicalism. Along with the progress made outside the religious liberal community by the Christian fundamentalist movement, evangelicalism had been closely identified with Christian fundamentalism in the first half of the twentieth century. However, genuine Fundamentalists were increasingly being seen as intellectually ignorant by the liberal churches, and they were viewed as socially corrupt and lacking in genuine compassion for the lost by many others. What the neo-evangelical sorely needed was a means of bridging the gap between the two extremes to further advance the ecumenical movement through increased church membership.

The Graham Phenomena

No one exemplifies the tenets of neo-evangelicalism as well as did William (Billy) Graham who arrived on this scene in 1949. He was born in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1918 and had been educated in the traditions of fundamentalist Bob Jones University, the Florida Bible Institute, and Wheaton College in Illinois. He was ordained as a Southern Baptist in 1939, and in 1943, he accepted the pastorate of the First Baptist Church of Western Springs, Illinois. He was commonly viewed as a fundamentalist because of his early background at Bob Jones, but without the dogmatic hardness normally associated with it because of his having attended strongly neo-evangelical Wheaton College.

Graham was a dynamic, articulate, and charismatic preacher. Starting with a crusade in Los Angeles in 1949, he began a series of tours throughout the United States and Europe. He became even better known than would otherwise have been the case through television that was finally reaching maturity as a communication medium. He always concentrated on one basic message that was an invitation to make a personal decision to live for Christ. His messages included subtopics on the bondage of sin, the love of Christ, the power of the cross, and the redemptive peace to be received through the acceptance of Christ as one's personal savior. A formal acceptance of Christ was always encouraged at the end of each rally by asking people to make a commitment signified by coming forward for prayer.

Although Graham was often considered a fundamentalist[286], his style was far more ecumenical in nature. He had never publicly dabbled very deeply into theology and his messages were devoid of it. Without a doubt, that contributed to his success as he received support for his rallies from a large cross-section of denominations and churches.

Graham was never viewed as a threat to individual theological distinctions or indeed to religious liberalism at large. That attitude was at times a source of criticism; his failure to take decided stands on matters of great theological concern troubled many. Over the years, he had also periodically associated himself with various offbeat and even non-Christian religions around the world in his desire to reach out to every soul for Christ. Regardless of any criticism that he may have received, Graham's success was continually bolstered by his unquestioned personal moral integrity.

Neo-evangelical Churchianity (1940–1970)

The combination of the second global war and the new orthodoxy that now again timidly called sin, sin, began to draw many into the churches of all denominations both during and after World

[286] See Tenets of Fundamentalism, page 369

War II. The many popular rallies held by Billy Graham no doubt contributed to that phenomenal growth as well.

Starved of the "good life" for so many years by the heavy rationing imposed during the war, the hunger for material possessions became widespread. The emerging medium of television helped drive this materialistic desire as well as depicting a stereotype of suburban family living. This overwhelming craving for material wealth carried over into the churches as a desire to build bigger and better church buildings. A large number of new church buildings were built during that era as nominal Christians dominated religious life in America.

That time in American religious history (1940's to 1960's) has been correctly characterized by Fredrick W. Evans Jr. as a time of "religious boom and moral bust."[287] Certainly, their bodies were in the churches, but their hearts were far from God. Even as church membership swelled, the unsaved masses within them embarked upon a mission to reach the un-churched. "Visitation evangelism," as it was called, was aimed more at increasing numbers participating in the social life of the churches than reaching the lost with the soul-saving Gospel message.

Rebellion of U.S. Youth (ca. 1945–1962)

After World War II had ended in 1945, the world's attention had been drawn toward the rapid buildup of nuclear weapons within the United States and the Soviet Union, which was viewed as a serious threat to world peace that could very well bring about the annihilation of large portions of the world's population. The same buildup however essentially ensured that neither nation would intentionally launch a preemptive attack against the other, because to do so would bring forth what was referred to as "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD). Nevertheless the growing stockpiles of nuclear weapons were alarming. The real concern therefore was over the possibility of an accidental launch of missiles or a launch brought about by various rogue activists on either side who might surreptitiously gain access to

[287] *They Sought a City,* Fredrick W. Evans Jr., page 59

some of the launch sites. During this time, fear was being induced into the minds of elementary school children through pointless "duck and cover" drills in which they would duck under their desks and cover their head and eyes with their hands. This fear would remain within them when they grew into young adults.

In the minds of many evangelical Christians in the United States, America represented the forces of God opposing demonically inspired communism — completely ignoring the rapid decline of true Christian beliefs, morals, and ethical standards within their own nation. For the most part, U.S. citizenry had begun looking toward their own wits for survival rather than turning to God and seeking his protection through divine providence.[288] Due to an irrational fear of sudden death coupled with the rapid spiritual and ethical decline in the United States, a drift was slowly being made toward the acceptance of socialism over what was viewed as the destructive alternative.

This fearful thinking brought into being a broad anti-war movement that strictly opposed war on principle even to the point of accepting surrender in exchange for survival. This was especially true of the nation's youth who were of military draft age. They saw themselves as being used as pawns in the effort to stem the growth of communism through military action in various foreign lands, while all the while nuclear annihilation hung over their heads if the activity was carried to the brink.[289] The alleged "high ideals" that had opposed war on abject principle rapidly gave way to drug abuse, moral decadence, illicit sex, and a form of communal living that isolated the nation's youth from society.[290] Thus came about a period of time when it seemed that the United States had lost its will to challenge atheistic communism as pessimism and apathy prevailed.

Humanism was the overriding philosophy of government as Christianity had seemingly lost its power to motivate the very nation it

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[288] See The Death of God Movement (ca. 1960), page 413

[289] See The Korean and Vietnam Conflicts (1950–1973), page 410

[290] See The Hippie Culture (ca. 1960), page 411

had founded. Not unlike atheistic communism, United States leadership had begun to see government as the solution to mankind's ills, completely neglecting God as the one from whom all good things come and to whom we should look for salvation, security, and peace.

Progressive Education

As humanism gained sway, progressive education methods became more prevalent in the public school systems of the United States after World War II though its roots extend back much earlier to a man named John Dewey (1859–1952). Dewey, an atheist and an ardent believer in "democratic socialism," proposed the concept of "no moral absolutes." Within that perspective, there is no absolute Truth, nor are there any established standards for human action and interaction. Therefore, when educating children, they should be allowed to follow their own natural instincts in the learning process, unguided by any ethic or scholarship of the past.

By extending Darwin's theory of human evolutionary Developmentalism to public education, Dewey believed that subsequent generations could be freed from various inhibitive moral notions of earlier periods that prevented them from excelling academically. This educational method abandoned all traditional education in favor of purely experiential learning. The damaging results of that method of education can be seen throughout the United States today. Not only are many of our youth devoid of any moral underpinnings, they are also largely uneducated as well.

The doctrine of "no absolute Truth" eventually found its way into the liberal churches of the day in the form of an underlying atheism that threatens the temporal church at its very core as the belief in a sovereign God who has established absolute standards for mankind to live by is being denied.

The Beatnik Culture (1945–1960)

Lacking sound Christian underpinnings through ethical education, the population began to drift increasingly to the left. Some rebelled against the affluence that was brought about by the improved economic conditions that followed the war. At the same time, they saw

the social and moral conformity being promoted about them through Churchianity as an evil to be rejected. In the mid 1940's, men such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg wrote profusely about what they saw as the "beaten" state of the individual under the weight of crass materialism and artificially fabricated social conformity.

The term "beat" probably has various connotations, one of which comes from the word "***beat***en." Another comes from the word "***beat***itude," and still another from the ***beat*** of Jazz music and the meter of poetry. The Beat Culture's idea of "beatitude" or blessed state was to be accomplished through the exploration of the erotic that encouraged casual sex, the artistic through music and poetry, and the exploration of the spiritual self through the use of mind enhancing drugs. They also adapted the mystic system of Zen Buddhism from the occult. Though not strictly Buddhists, they adopted some of the literary forms such as the Japanese haiku in their poetry. The term "beatnik" describing those who embraced those ideas was coined in the late 1950's.

Due to the cold war that existed with the Soviet Union and its satellite countries, it became popular in the United States to become suspicious of and even persecute various social dissidents and others that did not conform to the accepted American culture of that day. That suspicion quite naturally came to encompass the Beatniks as well. As a result, the Beatniks reacted still further against the establishment as they professed themselves the "lost generation of love" as Allen Ginsberg referred to it.

The Korean and Vietnam Conflicts (1950–1973)

Korea had been annexed as a Japanese colony in 1910. At the conclusion of World War II, the Soviet Union and the United States agreed to divide Korea along the 38th parallel in 1945, leaving the north occupied by Soviet forces and the south by United States forces to maintain the peace. That was in agreement with a United Nations mandate. When civil war broke out in Korea between the north and the south, the United States found itself in what was technically a police action to regain the peace, but which in fact became a war in which winning was not a viable option. This war along with the even more

unpopular Vietnam War to stem communism that began in 1959 greatly contributed to the rebellion of American youth against all governmental authority.

The Hippie Culture (ca. 1960)

The Churchianity of the 1950's would finally cause a greater break in the 1960's among young people who had seen their parents giving lip service for nearly a decade to a God they barely knew and only casually acknowledged. The actions of adults, especially professing Christians, most often denied the very moral convictions that they supposedly professed. The rampant liberalism in American churches that only paid lip-service to Christianity and denied the very Truth upon which the Church was founded, was unable to satisfy the need of young people to find something genuine to sustain them in the trying times.

Finding such hypocrisy distasteful, many young people sought some form of "truth" apart from the accepted moral norm that no one seemed to practice anyway. Many of them sought to reach an understanding of themselves through achieving a mental "high" through the abuse of drugs with the result that large numbers of our youth were easily seduced by satanic spirits.

The Beatnik Culture of the previous decade was made to order in its offering up of alternative values and literary modes as well as its rejection of the establishment in favor of a culture of anarchical love. This newer generation, however, embraced rock music over jazz and the film medium over written literature. Young people began experimenting with ancient occult religions and more and more dangerous mind enhancing drugs in an effort to experience spiritual truth in the midst of what they saw as a sea of Christian hypocrisy and governmental oppression. Communal living and "free love" became part of the chaotic rebellion that became increasingly expressed in various demonstrations against the Vietnam War. Their placards in those demonstrations commonly read, "Make love not war," and "rather red than dead."

Still greater numbers of youth not directly involved in the hippie movement were indirectly mesmerized by the fall-out from the

movement in the form of hypnotic rock music, which seduced and adversely affected their minds. That effect continues today.

The Degradation of Church Music

Music by it's simplest definition is "the art of combining and regulating sounds of varying pitch to produce compositions expressing various ideas and emotions."[291] The ideas and emotions expressed through those sounds are often nebulous, however, conveying various meanings to different listeners depending upon their state of mind at the time. Music can be presented either through the human voice or through the use of various instruments. It is only in connection with the human voice that words or lyrics can be added to better define the ideas or emotions that the music is intended to convey to the listener. Nevertheless, the musical tones themselves continue to convey an underlying idea and/or emotion of its own that can either reinforce or conflict with the lyrics. Therefore, it is apparent that music conveys its own subliminal message apart from whether any lyrics are added to it.

As the moral climate of a nation declines, its popular music becomes increasingly decadent. During the Roaring Twenties (page 379) and still later in the Beatnik era, jazz began to work its way into the popular music of the day, and quite naturally, that form was soon adopted as a basis for new Christian music as well. More degrading still was the popular Rock music of the decadent Hippie drug culture that also found its way into church music. It could be argued that all music invokes a mind-altering state since music can be soothing, uplifting, or even inspiring. However, rock music has at its very core the jungle rhythm of pagan moral decadence and the undertones of violence that is an irritant to the human soul. Popular music not only reflects a society's moral condition, the consistent repetition of immoral music as a form of entertainment also serves to accelerate the decline.

Increasingly, contemporary congregations began to look upon the music of church worship as a form of entertainment often sung by

[291] Randomhouse College Dictionary

a soloist or a "praise team" much as if attending a secular rock concert. In contemporary church music, the lyrics and sounds no longer remain in good balance to act together in presenting a unified message consistent with Scripture and sound biblical Theology, thus having a corrupting influence upon the temporal church. The resultant contemporary Christian worship music today is a combination of theologically poor repetitive lyrics often drowned out by heavy drums added on to the instrumental musical sounds of an increasingly decadent society. As world conditions decline even further in the future, music that is still more decadent will find its way into the temporal church until the church finally succumbs to the final apostasy of the last days.[292]

The Death of God Movement (ca. 1960)

It was also in the early 60s that the "Death of God" movement was afoot in the United States. The many technological advances as well as a large number of government social programs in the United States, including Welfare programs, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, resulted in citizens seeing the scientific community and the U.S. government in particular as their "savior" from all the ills of this life.

Perhaps there are not too many that do not yet remember the bumper stickers on automobiles stating, "God is Dead" followed by the other bumper stickers arguing the point with: "My God is alive, sorry about yours." The over-all climate in the United States could very much have been stated in this way: "God, if he ever existed at all, is now dead, and can neither help nor judge. Who needs him anyway? We are getting along quite well on our own without him!"

The Civil Rights Movement (ca. 1957–)

African-American churches began to promote the civil rights movement in the midst of this social turmoil as the liberal-progressive element began to speak through them. Over the years, African-

[292] See The Final Apostasy, page 533

American churches had developed their own form of Churchianity that had emerged from their earlier days in slavery. It soon prevailed as the only constant in their lives. The black liberation theology that was so prevalent under slavery,[293] had continued on in a modified form as slavery converted itself into a persecution complex that in many ways was even more debilitating. Of course, we have seen that persecution complex had quite genuine persecution at its roots.

Black liberation theology is a special adaptation of liberation theology[294] that is specifically focused upon the oppression of African American citizens by white citizens. Therefore, racism is at its very roots. Whereas racism is commonly seen as a derogatory attitude of white citizens toward African Americans, those who support black liberation theology openly express a reversed racial bias that they see as fully justified in return. That racial bias is based upon the many years of slavery that their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents had experienced on southern plantations and in the ghettos of northern cities as well.

Although the Gospel was being preached from many of the black church pulpits, the undercurrents of slavery and black liberation theology continued to degrade that teaching as years passed. The true Gospel was being modified as necessary to fit the needs of church organizers who were embroiled in a form of black humanism. Whereas humanism touts man as the quintessential being, black humanism touted the black man as the truly superior being that had been suppressed by an inferior white race for so many years. This racism inspired a revolutionary fervor that has so often resulted in political conflict and open violence.

Most of the educated African American ministers had come from liberal seminaries because so many of the conservative seminaries would not admit African Americans. That is most unfortunate because many of the African American churches were left

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[293] See The Birth of Black Liberation Theology, page 336

[294] See Liberation Theology, page 354

almost totally without sound biblical teaching. Political activism quickly filled the vacuum. Lacking a missionary purpose to get out the Gospel of Christ, they went about promoting the social gospel of black liberation in its place.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was founded in 1957 after a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, earlier in 1955 and 1956. The boycott was in response to seating arrangements in public buses that mandated that African Americans sit only in the very back of the bus. Men like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was closely associated with the SCLC, saw Christianity as a force that could be utilized to transform the racial inequalities of society. King combined the message of Jesus to "love your enemies" with the non-violent methods of Gandhi of India. It was actually this combination of religious principles, not pure Christianity, which gave impetus to the Civil Rights movement.

Therefore, underlying the Civil Rights Movement was the pervasive doctrine of black liberation theology. Although its origin was in the south during and after the Civil War, the Reverend James Cone of Manhattan's Union Theological Seminary is commonly considered to be the founder of the modern Black Liberation Movement in the 1960's. Through the activism of the times, Cone established a focus for his doctrine from Dr. King as well as from the far more radical Malcolm X, who was a devout Muslim and who had referred to the white man as Satan. The Scriptures and the Gospel were being interpreted to mean that God was primarily concerned with the liberation of the poor and weak. Since American blacks were consistently identified with the poor and the weak, they began to see themselves in a more favored light to the point of self love.

This, of course, is not to say that ensuring the rights of African American citizens was not a just cause, but only to lament the fact that the all-important matter of liberation from sin and its terrible consequences had been displaced by it. We are only pointing out that this great social effort essentially displaced sound Christian doctrine in many of our African American churches such that the Gospel of Christ suffered loss among the African American population.

Great Society Programs of the 1960's

Under President Lyndon B. Johnson, many socialist laws were established that were collectively referred to as efforts to bring about a "Great Society" in the United States. That envisioned integrated society was to be presided over by a massive centralized federal government that would guide its course. Due to an income tax cut lowering the top marginal rate by twenty percent, which had been advocated earlier by President John F. Kennedy before his assassination and finally enacted in 1964 by Johnson, the economy boomed and government revenues increased dramatically. The resulting surplus was diminished later only by the conduct of the Vietnam War that had begun in 1963 and expanded to a major conflict by 1968.

Civil Rights Acts

It was amidst the time of war protests, that the Civil Rights Movement reached a peak that manifested itself in urban street riots in various larger cities including New York City and Los Angeles. In 1965, the Supreme Court of the United States had declared all Jim Crow laws[295] unconstitutional and abolishing their enforcement. This paved the way for new federal laws to ensure that Jim Crow was dead and to reverse the adverse effects that such laws had on the black population in the past.

Due to enhanced public awareness and in order to quell the growing insurrection, various civil rights acts were instituted between 1964 and 1968. These acts prohibited discrimination because of race in all job markets and public facilities including learning institutions. Voter registration of African Americans was ensured through the abolition of state poll taxes and literacy tests, and that abolition was enforced by federal examiners stationed at polling districts in areas where it was deemed necessary. Racial discrimination in housing was also prohibited by law in an attempt to fully integrate the populace into one uniform society. That massive effort by the U.S. administration

[295] See footnote 236, on page 342

was seen by many states as the government trampling upon States rights as ensured by the U.S. Constitution. That led to many standoffs between federal and state agencies that were ultimately won by the U.S. government — often by threatening the use of military force.

Hate Crime Legislation

In the past, individual states enforced laws against various crimes that are committed against individual citizens from theft up to and including murder. Although intent was properly considered through an array of physical evidence in adjudicating a just penalty for a criminal act, there had been no direct attempt to directly prosecute persons for their intimate private thoughts that had brought forth such crimes.

In an attempt to reduce physical attacks upon African American citizens by bigoted members of the greater white population based exclusively upon race, the federal government legislated various hate-crime laws as an extension of earlier civil rights acts. Under those laws, if murder or a lesser crime of violence was found to be the result of racial hatred on the part of the perpetrator, it would also be considered a violation of the victim's civil rights, and it must therefore fall under federal jurisdiction to increase the prescribed penalty.

The law would later be extended to include criminal acts that were brought about through hatred of a person's moral character, such as deviate sexual behavior, and it could be broadened to include their religious convictions as well. Though technically the law could be construed to prohibit acts stemming from racial or moral hatred committed by a member of a minority group against a person of the larger majority population, that intent is not generally considered to be within the scope of the law; it was specifically targeted to protect minorities from any unjust oppression by the majority.

War on Poverty Programs

The Civil Rights Acts further encouraged the administration to intrude into other public arenas. Many African Americans and other minority groups lived in abject poverty due to a lack of education and job opportunity. Added to those were many other citizens that were

poor for a variety of reasons not having to do with race. As a part of his Great Society movement, President Johnson began an "unconditional war on poverty." The primary thrust was to help the poor better their condition through improved education, job training programs, and the development of their communities through various community action programs. Food stamps were provided for the indigent who could not help themselves.

All of that effort required considerable federal funds and still fell far short of eliminating all poverty, which is an impossible task in any event. As Jesus Himself said, "the poor always ye have with you" (Jn. 12:8; cf. Mt.26:11; Mk 14:7). Only during the future Millennial Age with Jesus ruling on the throne of this world will mankind know a time that is truly without want.

Medicare and Medicaid

As medical technology advanced, the cost of medical care increased exponentially throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. At the same time, the populace increasingly began to see quality healthcare as a basic human right that must be guaranteed by government for every man, woman, and child. In response, the congress during the Johnson administration created the Medicare program in 1965 for the elderly, as well as the federally mandated state-run Medicaid program intended for the disabled and the extreme poor of all ages who had developed debilitating or terminal diseases. That also included children and pregnant women that were not covered under other medical insurance.

Federal Funding of Education

It was likewise during the Johnson era that large amounts of money began to be provided to fund public elementary and secondary education. This infusion was primarily aimed at helping poor children obtain materials and to get an early start in public education through a program known as Head Start. However, its effects were not limited to the poor as local school systems increasingly began to seek additional federal handouts for various programs involving social engineering. It was through this means that the centralized federal government began

to gain control of public schools that had previously been under the jurisdiction of local and state governments.

Federal Environmental and Cultural Programs

In addition, it was under the banner of the Great Society that the federal government enacted various miscellaneous acts designed to protect the air, water, and wildlife against various threats, imagined or real, by U.S. industry. The federal government also intruded into society's cultural affairs nationwide by the institution of various cultural centers, public broadcasting, and federal funding of the arts and humanities.

Therefore we find that it was during this era that the federal government pushed its way increasingly deeper into every aspect of public life setting the framework for still future efforts that would push the nation increasingly away from free capitalism and progressively closer to democratic socialism[296] all of which would ultimately have an increasingly negative effect upon true evangelical Christianity.

The New Age Movement (ca. 1970)

The aftermath of the Beatnik and more particularly the Hippie Movement is still to be found in various New Age cults, the corruption of popular music, and the disastrous drug culture. Growing out of the pagan and spiritual experimentations of the Hippie Movement came about a broader movement that has been generally referred to as the "New Age Movement." New Age is a very broad term encompassing a wide variety of eclectic approaches to the supernatural that includes but is not limited to "channeling" (communication with the spirit world) through quartz crystals. Environmentalism takes on a religious fervor in this movement because of the intense worship of "mother earth" as a goddess.[297] There is also intense speculation regarding the presence of extraterrestrial life existing on earth as spiritual entities

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[296] See The Ultra-progressive Movement, page 479

[297] Also see Environmentalism, page 511

through an interest in various U.F.O.[298] sightings. Because of wide variations in thought, and lacking any written standard, the New Age Movement is actually a highly disorganized network that depends upon various individual spiritual teachers, physical healers, seekers, and shaman for leadership.

Neo-Shamanism

While the word "shaman" specifically refers to a miracle worker of certain Siberian tribes, the name has generally been applied to the entire range of "mind over matter" practitioners. These include wizards, witches, witch-doctors, sorcerers, voodoo practitioners, Indian medicine men, gurus, mediums and the like. Each shaman claims contact with a "familiar spirit" that guides them and councils them in the dark recesses of their minds. Trance-like states of mind are brought on through various forms of deep meditation or are induced by various mind-altering drugs to enhance communication with the familiar spirit.

Therefore, the New Age Movement, as an outgrowth of the nineteen-sixties Hippie Movement with its emphasis on "free love" and the use of mind-altering drugs such as LSD to reach some form of "altered consciousness," is actually a resurgence of ancient shamanism. Rather than New-Age thinking constituting a new religion, it is actually only a new spin on a mixture of ancient and occult religions — the most prevalent of which are Hinduism and Buddhism.

Neo-Hinduism

Hinduism is the belief in a "universal mind" that will receive all individual minds after the "illusion" of time and space has been overcome. This illusion is the basis of modern-day existentialism. In practice, various means are used to overcome reality in order to achieve that existence where space and time do not exist. Failure to do so means that the human soul must atone for their bad actions (Karma)

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[298] Unidentified Flying Objects

through a series of reincarnations, human, animal, plants, or even non-living objects.[299] Such attempts to escape reality leaves one open to the spirit world. Of course, many do not understand that they are embracing ancient Hinduism when they engage in various mind-altering exercises such as Transcendental Meditation and physical worship through Yoga.

Those who had rejected Christianity as superstitious nonsense readily embraced Hinduism in this altered form because it does not require the existence of a personal God. Without God as a personal being, there are no moral absolutes, and there can be no ultimate judgment for any of man's actions. Emphasis is placed upon man and his ability to control the world around him by altering the "illusion" and ultimately his own personal destiny by mental or "spiritual" means totally apart from a personal God. In fact, if man can control all things by merely thinking them into or out of existence, he is exercising a power that makes ***him*** a god in his own right.

Neo-Buddhism

Buddhism has some similarities to Hinduism, but places a greater emphasis on compassion for others and upon self-denial. That makes it highly acceptable to the humanist mind-set as they seek to exercise unbridled toleration of anything and everything. Man can do no wrong and everything is beautiful in its own right. Buddhism, as well as Hinduism, is rooted in the belief of reincarnation of the soul into another body after death resulting in the living of many lives one after the other. This is in part the driving force behind animal rights activism inasmuch as the bodies may be that of various animals and even insects.

Since existence is only temporary and is only seen as being experienced in suffering, the ultimate goal of the religious man is to escape this series of reincarnations by achieving complete "nirvana," — an escape into a bliss of nothingness. As we can see, there is no

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[299] For more information on Hinduism and Buddhism see *Kingdom of the Cults,* Walter Martin.

hope in Hinduism or Buddhism for conscious eternal life after death in Heaven or to live in the presence of a loving God. Complete annihilation after death is actually what is expected and being sought after. That is exactly what many atheists choose to believe and hope for today to avoid eternal judgment for sinful acts that they commit here on earth.

Therefore, we find many of the contemporary mind cults are themselves merely a "reincarnation" or a contemporary mixture of various eastern occult religions that are not only anti-Christian, but also dangerously satanic in that they provide an open invitation for spirit-control of the mind and lives of those who are gullible enough to fall into their trap.

Holistic Healing

Closely associated with the new age movement is the parallel movement of holistic healing. Although spiritual medical procedures date back to ancient shamanism, it has been revitalized through the new age movement, which is based upon ancient Hinduism and Buddhism as well as various other pagan practices. Rather than treating illnesses of the body alone, holistic healing purports to combine mental, and spiritual healing along with it. Various devices are used to bring about the perceived necessary balance between the body, soul, and spirit to attain a state of whole wellness. Those devices include such things as crystals, tuning forks, and amulets, combined with various mental and spiritual rituals and exercises. Exercises include touch therapies, massage therapies, aroma therapies, color therapies, biblio-therapies (through reading holistic literature), magnet therapies, meditation, acupuncture and many more. Channeling through spirit guides, angels, and other supposed spiritual entities are also very much a part of holistic healing.

Holistic healing is also dependent upon an adherence to various diets and in particular the use of various dietary supplements for which outrageous unsubstantiated claims are often made. Holistic medicine has been credited with the treatment or prevention of Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Arthritis, and a very large number of other diseases even including sexual inadequacies. In this mind-over-matter

treatment of the human body, soul, and spirit as a combined entity, we clearly observe the incorporation of various cultic elements of Christian Science[300] as well as many of the dietary restrictions practiced by Seventh Day Adventists[301] being added to the neo-Hinduism and neo-Buddhism of the New Age Movement.

Today, the teaching of holistic healing has spread throughout the spiritual and psychological spectrum to invade various sects of Christianity. Particularly susceptible to the notion of holistic healing are members and churches involved in the modern Charismatic Movement[302] that already believe in miraculous physical healing brought about through ritual acts of faith healers. Highly susceptible to believing that they can merely think themselves well through a presumptuous faith, the placebo effect of various dietary supplements and amulets are quite strong adding to the general religious delusion that has entrapped them. Holistic healing has also spread throughout Roman Catholicism due to many general pagan superstitions commonly associated with it. More troublesome still, it has even spread into more reformed protestant churches as they have slowly drifted away from the true doctrines of the Christian faith. Pushing this movement along are the manufacturers of these supplements and devices, whose efforts are supported by the authors of many printed books and articles. Billions of dollars are being squandered upon worthless holistic healing every year as even more people of all walks of life and religious persuasions are being seduced by its offers of perpetual wellness.

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[300] See Christian Science, page 377

[301] See Seventh Day Adventism, page 373

[302] See Chapter 14.1 Charismata and Glossolalia and Chapter 14.3, Ritual Healing in Book II of this work. As background also see The Holiness Movement, page 361 and Pentecostalism, page 364 of this book.

New-Age Gurus

Throughout the twentieth century, the United States as well as other parts of the world have been infiltrated by many false teachers or gurus of the eastern religions of Hinduism and Buddhism. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1Co.3:16). By this, he meant that those who have been born again in the spirit have the Holy Spirit living within them. Eastern gurus however claim that the god who lives within them is in fact their own self.

Through this delusion, the unsaved dare to look into the innermost chamber where their fallen spirit remains unregenerated and proclaim it to be deity such that they become their own god. We must recognize this as a restatement of Satan's lie to Eve in the garden when he told her, "ye shall be as gods…" (Ge.3:5). This trend toward self-deification is quite strong in fallen man and is an instrumental tenet of the New Age Movement.

As various gurus go about imparting their own brand of Neo-paganism upon others, they quite often set themselves up as a form of superior deity. So much so that they are being worshiped as God. While each person is supposed to be their own god, those that teach the techniques revealing that fact become a superior god. Each of these gurus are actually an antichrist exemplifying the ultimate satanic antichrist to come, and in doing so they help pave the way for his appearing on the future scene with universal acceptance by the mass population of the world.

The Religion of Speculative Freemasonry

Easily blending in with the neo-shamanism of the New Age Movement was Speculative Freemasonry (also known as Accepted Masonry). Freemasonry had become a religious organization very near its inception in the Middle Ages[303] inasmuch as it had various occult elements and traditions imbedded within it that had been inherited from Roman Churchianity. It soon after became transformed into a

[303] See Early Development of Freemasonry, page 146

monolithic religion in its own right as it appears today. It is speculated that the Rosicrucian Movement, which claimed various supernatural powers, which were to be obtained from secret occult symbolism of the rose and the cross, had already infiltrated Freemasonry.

There can be little doubt that Satan was busily working behind the scenes to insure that the transformation took place. However, in the human sense, the transformation that took place was very much a consequence of the Renaissance Movement[304] and the Reformation Movement acting in concert in Europe. The age of the construction of great cathedrals was slowly coming to an end by this time in history. In the 1600s, a shift was being made within Freemasonry away from it being an operative workers' guild toward a monolithic religious organization that was admitting to membership those that were not involved in any way with masonry work. Therefore, there were two classes of freemasons at that time which can be referred to as "Operative Freemasons," and Accepted Freemasons."

The atheistic humanism of the Renaissance Movement had injected both strong religious skepticism and freethinking into the organization that soon necessitated a break of the Freemasons away from maintaining any close ties to the Roman Church. Perhaps their ties with the Knights Templars, [305] which had suffered betrayal by the Roman Catholic Church through Pope Clement V[306], also contributed to that move. The forceful spiritual renewal behind the Protestant Reformation Movement[307] provided a convenient cover for that surreptitious move as the Roman church focused its attention on rooting out various supposed heretics who were in fact serious reformers of the faith.

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[304] See The Renaissance Movement, page 219

[305] See The Knights Templar, page 196

[306] See Pope Clement V (1305–1314), page 189

[307] See Chapters 18.1 and 18.2

Modern or Speculative Freemasonry likely had its official beginning with the founding of the first Grand Lodge on St. John's Day in England in 1717, created from the combining of four other older lodges. The term "Speculative Freemasonry" comes about from the fact that there were no longer any strong ties in Freemasonry to the realities of a strict workers union; it would now take on the esoteric nature of speculative religious worship based upon the ancient ritual practices that remained behind. Many of the tools that had been used in masonry work such as the square and the compass were retained as speculative symbols to help facilitate the move internally. From those two tools, the official Masonic emblem, found on various documents and on rings and other jewelry worn by many of their members, was adopted. The square supposedly represents moral rectitude and the compass is seen to represent circumscribed virtue in Speculative Freemasonry. A large letter "G" which purports to stand for geometry is commonly seen placed in the center. The letter "G" was apparently added around 1812 in the United States, and it is not a part of the original symbol that could date back far into antiquity as a builder's mark.

Speculative Freemasonry was greatly influenced by the Age of Enlightenment,[308] which began in the mid seventeenth century, followed by the Age of Reason that would come about in the late seventeenth century. Both of those movements emphasized human reason and rational thought over simple faith resulting in the allegorizing of the occult symbols and rituals of Freemasonry into various philosophical principles of thought and conduct. [309] It is also quite likely that many of the secret rituals of the Knights Templars had been incorporated within the movement by that time as well.

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[308] See The Age of Enlightenment and Reason in Europe, page 289

[309] We should note that various symbols used in Freemasonry often have very nebulous origins and can therefore be interpreted differently in various lodges and by individual Masons. That is all part of the nature of Speculative Freemasonry.

Inasmuch as the United States was formed as a nation in the midst of the strong enlightenment philosophies of the 18th century, many have come to associate the principles of freedom and equality expressed in many of its founding documents with Freemasonry. It has also been suggested that various historical architectural monuments in the city of Washington DC were engineered by Freemasonry with an underlying subversive intent. Most certainly, Enlightenment principles had been transferred from France to the United States due to the close association with France during and after the Revolutionary War through such men as General Marquis de Lafayette who was also a Freemason.

Though Reformed Christianity had a major influence upon the founding of the nation, it cannot be denied that many of the influential men of the age had close ties with Freemasonry. Benjamin Franklin was a Freemason who also had strong ties with Voltaire.[310] Paul Revere, and John Hancock, were noted Freemasons. The first president of the United States, George Washington, was a Freemason as were many later presidents such as John Adams, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry Truman to name but a few. Even one of the strongest proponents of a free capitalist system, Adam Smith, was a Freemason.

Not surprisingly therefore, many believed that Speculative Freemasonry was a benign Protestant Christian organization that only opposed the Churchianity of Roman Catholicism. Nevertheless, the strong humanist intent of the organization was actually first to extract itself from Roman Catholicism and then to eradicate any vestiges of Bible-based Christianity within its membership. As early evidence of that fact, we find that Jews were admitted to various lodges in the 1720's inasmuch as Freemasonry was no longer offensive to Jewish religious teaching opposing Christianity. Replacing Freemasonry's earlier Christian roots would be a mixture of old Catholic dogma, open deism,[311] occultism, numerology, humanism, and socialism along with

[310] See Voltaire (1694–1778), page 290

[311] See The Delusion of Open Deism, page 443

a splattering of ancient druidism[312] that outwardly manifests itself today in evolutionism and environmentalism.

The humanism that had infiltrated the organization elevates man himself to the position of being a noble god through rationalism. Accordingly, we find that Freemasonry substitutes various names for God[313] that are at the very least nebulous and at the worse, blasphemous (cf. Ex.20:7). The works and nobility of mankind is viewed as being paramount, and his noble works are seen as a means of salvation that will be universal to all men (cf. Ep.2:8,9; Tit.3:5; cf. 1Co.6:9–10; 2Pe. 2:9; Re.20:15; 21:8). The blood oaths required for membership into Freemasonry is in direct violation of Holy Scripture against taking such extreme oaths (cf. Mt.5:34–37). Because of their acceptance of occult deism, much of their required reading and study material is of occult origin, even as the Bible is relegated to a mere ornamental decoration or furnishing having the same standing as many of their occult symbols (cf. De.27:15; Is.5:24). The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is displaced by an allegory that is a consistently repeated ritual depicting the death, burial, and resurrection of a legendary stone mason by the name of Hiram Abiff who had supposedly engineered the building of Solomon's temple.

Humanism has allowed Freemasonry to take on the character of what is seen outwardly today as a benevolent gentlemen's club[314] or service organization that consistently funds and supports various worthwhile charitable activities that benefits mankind. That same pseudo-Christian façade of humanism however also provides the

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[312] See footnote 216, page 302

[313] Set, (also variously spelled, Seth, Sutukh, or Seteh) is apparently the primary god underlying Freemasonry. Set was a mythological god of the ancient Egyptians who was closely associated with desert storms, ominous darkness, and chaotic disaster. In that sense, he can be equated with Satan, the prince of darkness.

[314] Co-Freemasonry or Mixed Freemasonry organizations exist that admit both men and women, but they are not recognized by most Masonic lodges who consider them atypical clandestine groups. Also see Order of the Eastern Star below.

organization with a cloak under which to hide its deeply occult inner core. The hidden secrets of Speculative Freemasonry are carefully guarded from the public, and membership is strictly by invitation only. The secrets are revealed very slowly through a series of ritual initiations encompassing 33 levels or degrees of membership.

Many unwitting Protestant men who hold membership at the lower degrees of Freemasonry can find nothing that appears to be anti-Christian about it, though its strong anti-Roman Catholic views should be quite evident to them. Since they are devout Protestants themselves, they may not see the greater deep-rooted purpose underlying that effort. Only when a member reaches the higher degrees of office does its obvious satanic motivation become clear. By then, however, many will have been brainwashed over so many years that they are willing to rationalize away even the most serious infractions of true Christian faith in order to retain their membership.

Order of the Eastern Star

Freemasonry also has various auxiliaries the most prominent of which is the Order of the Eastern Star (also known as Eastern Star or simply Star) that was founded in 1868. This order is open to all female relatives of Freemasons, and it operates under the full guidance and authority of Freemasonry. A Master Mason must be present at all their meetings, although all other offices are held by women. Although the name "Eastern Star" that identifies the order is most commonly thought to have had its origin in Matthew Chapter 2, verse 2,[315] the "star" that they worship is most probably Sirius, the dog star, that has a special meaning in occultism symbolic of the brightness of Lucifer (cf. Is.14:2). Closely related to the Eastern Star is the female youth organization commonly known as Job's Daughters that is fully sponsored by Freemasonry. Its primary purpose is to recruit increasingly more members into the delusion of Freemasonry.

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[315] We clearly see in this verse that the "wise men" were in the east when they observed the star (Mt.2:1), and that the star would most likely have appeared in their western sky. Therefore, the name Eastern Star could not refer to the star of Bethlehem.

Through all the scintillating, nebulous occult symbolism connected with Speculative Freemasonry both men and women have been seduced away from the true Christian faith while opening the door to continuing satanic influence in their lives — many of them without any conscious realization of that fact.

Members of occult Speculative Freemasonry, both men and women, had already taken up many important positions in secular society as well as having infiltrated a large number of Protestant churches long before the beginning of the twentieth century. Roman Catholics, of course, had always been prohibited from joining the Masons under the threat of excommunication. However, some Protestant churches, such as the Christian Church of the Stone Campbell Movement[316] along with numerous other Protestant churches, readily admitted Freemasons into their membership precisely because of their steadfast anti-Catholic stance. Many other Protestant churches recognizing that Freemasonry was not just a benevolent service organization with a religious bent, but an occult religion in and of itself that is most decidedly anti-Christian in every respect prohibited membership.[317] Nevertheless, because of the secretive nature of Freemasonry and its membership, many Masons still found their way into prominent positions within those churches as well.

The Neo-Pagan Movement

Neo-paganism is a broad term used to specify a variety of modern satanic occult religious movements. It had its beginning in the Renaissance Movement[318] even as Christian faith waned under the profane phase of the movement. As a revival of ancient religions took place through the study of classic Greek polytheism, neo-paganism

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[316] See The Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement (1788–1866), page 330

[317] Those churches to date cover a wide range of Protestantism from the charismatic Assemblies of God to the reformed Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

[318] See The Renaissance Movement, page 219

was easily substituted for the ancient paganism already inherent in Roman Churchianity. As any semblance of Christian principles was tossed aside by the unregenerated masses, the new form of paganism became increasingly more radical.

Neo-paganism as it is practiced today is a blending of polytheism, animism, and pantheism taken from various forms of ancient European folklore that have been blended in with the wider variety of new-age thinking. The most prevalent form of neo-paganism being practiced today is known as Wicca. Wicca is a polytheistic form of witchcraft that is centered around a mother goddess or in some instances a panoply of goddesses. In other instances, Wicca has revolved around the practice of homosexuality both male and female. As we can see, those forms of Wicca blend in well with the present homosexual movement in the United States.

In Wicca, Satan is not viewed as an evil being. Evil is seen only as an undesired state of imbalance that comes about when people make mistakes for which they are subsequently punished in their current lifetime or in later reincarnations.[319] Therefore, sin is replaced with a form of karma, and salvation is seen as being irrelevant in favor of attaining a state of spiritual balance with each other and with nature. This desired balance can supposedly be achieved and maintained through group ceremonies, which include dancing, singing, meditation, the induction of a hypnotic trance-like state (with or without the aid of drugs), as well as conjuring up various cooperative spirits. Human psychics, seers, gurus or shaman are commonly enlisted as well to oversee various ceremonies and rituals to further aid them in achieving a supposed spiritual balance.

Wiccans generally support the belief that when a person dies their soul is joined with their dead ancestors who then look over the families of their living offspring. This notion results in a form of ancestor worship in which prayers are offered up to a deceased mother, a father, or some other relative to intervene in the affairs of the living. Moreover, various forms of secret ritualistic “magic” are

[319] See Hypnotism and Reincarnation, page 434

commonly incorporated in the practice of Wicca much as we discovered being exercised through various ritual enactments in Speculative Freemasonry (see above).

The female principle is especially prevalent in what is referred to as Dianic Wicca, which promotes a concept of "mother earth" requiring worship as a goddess. Dianic Wicca has been strongly supported by the modern feminist movement in the United States since the 1970s. This notion of a mother earth goddess quite easily blends in with the religious fervor now present within atavistic evolutionism and environmentalism. Evolutionism and environmentalism are also well supported by another form of neo-paganism known as neo-druidism. Neo-druidism is a revival of ancient European druidism in which the earth, rocks, and trees as well as its many birds and animals are worshiped as next to deity because of the false doctrine of reincarnation of men and women in various animate and inanimate forms after death. As we can see, this is also a form of ancestor worship.

Therefore, joining in with a growing number of Speculative Freemasons were even more people who had embraced occultism through the New Age Movement. As they too began to take up influential positions in the United States, even the most secular aspects of society began to become infected with occult thinking — if not with its more specific tenets or practice. Certain alterations were made to the ancient religions to make them appear more up-to-date and even scientific so that they could better fit in with the growing nonreligious contemporary life-style. Through this approach, religion and science could eventually be merged into one philosophical discipline.

Nevertheless, the core tenets of occultism had not changed sufficiently to make them completely unrecognizable to the firm atheist as retrograded occult religion. In fact, the obvious relationship with the occult was often not even denied by many of its proponents, but was merely explained away by saying that contemporary adaptations of this thinking are based on modern knowledge that the ancients could not have fully understood. What had seemed like religion to them in their day had been proven to be rational scientific

methodology. As the Apostle Paul said about such as these, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Ro.1:22).

The outward rituals associated with ancient occult religions were soon being equated with benign physical exercise, and the mental exercises associated with them were equated with beneficial psychology. Those two approaches to make over occult tenets into mainstream thought are generally referred to by the twin terms, "pseudo-science," a "science' that is not scientific, and "psycho-babble," a nonsensical approach to attain a sense of reality. Mixed in with pseudo-science and pseudo-psychology is evolutionism with its worship of the Earth as a goddess that being impregnated by the "god of time" brought forth human life. Through neo-paganism, occult humanistic methods rapidly infiltrated the scientific community, education, the workplace, government, and even Christian institutions as proponents gained prominent positions in those institutions.

Metaphysical Evolutionism

Since physical science had failed to bring the world closer to peace and through nuclear weapons had even brought men closer to the brink of self-destruction, it fell from favor by many as a solution to mankind's many problems. Even the ability of medical science to extend physical life had severe limitations and extremely high economic costs that threatened to bankrupt society. Medical advancements also raised new ethical questions because the human body itself can be kept alive by mechanical means even when all mental activity has (seemingly) ceased. Consequently, the interest in physical science was often replaced or supplemented by an interest in metaphysics. Metaphysics is a speculative philosophy that attempts to explain the true nature of reality and being.

Those interests led many including various scientists to explore a connection between the physical and the spiritual albeit outside the bounds of Christianity lest it smack openly of religion. The atheistic scientist[320] either sees the human mind as a means to control the

[320] It would be well to point out that not all physical scientists are atheists. Far from it. The founders of all the major scientific disciplines of the past were, in fact, devout

physical world through some latent "natural" ability that has been lost or forgotten, or he sees it as one that needs yet to be developed in man through an evolutionary process. Therefore, it was thought possible that this process could be stimulated and hurried along through various scientific techniques. As a result, there was a renewed interest in the ancient arts of shamanism under the guise of so-called "mind science." In particular, E.S.P. (extra-sensory perception), telepathy, telekinesis, and other forms of mental control over the physical world and even mental control over time itself were being actively explored.

Hypnotism and Reincarnation

Psychiatry is the main thrust behind the exploration of the "subconscious" mind. By means of hypnotism and various other relaxation techniques, the psychiatrist seeks to find a cause for undesired conscious behavior and attitudes from some subconscious area of the mind. We should take note that the psychiatrist studies the "mind," not the physical organ of the brain. It must therefore be characterized as an art, not science. "Mind" encompasses much more than physical anatomy. It crosses over into the spiritual realm of man's being which is, of course, his soul. Therefore, all study of the mind is actually moral and religious and cannot be equated in any way with physical science.

By attempting to apply physical scientific methods to the study of the spiritual realm, many errors came about. Those errors have even given credibility to reincarnation by suggesting that people have lived previous lives in another age. This, of course, is the basis of Hinduism and Buddhism that we discussed earlier. This so-called information about "past lives" has often been extracted from the subject while under hypnotism, which leaves the mind highly subject to external suggestion.

Furthermore, the trance-like state caused by hypnotism breaks down the barrier between the physical world and the spiritual world allowing spirit-beings to plant mental images in the subject's mind.

Christians.

That can often lead to demon-control of the subject. Spirit beings are not subject to physical death. Therefore, demonic spirits have first-hand access to historical information and are able to convince the subject (as well as the examiner) that such planted images of a previous life are factual through the allusion of scientific methodology. As the Christian author, C.S. Lewis had his fictional demon named Screwtape express in his letter to his nephew protégé Wormwood regarding the subversion of mankind:

> **"I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time how to emotionalize and mythologize their science to such an extent that what is, in effect, belief in us, (though not under that name) will creep in while the human mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy. The "Life Force", the worship of sex, and some aspects of Psychoanalysis, may here prove useful."** [321]

While the demonic spirit's projections regarding future events are not infallible, they are usually far better guesses than that of the subject utilizing normal rational mental ability. That is the means by which future events are often predicted with some degree of credibility by so-called "psychics." Of course, historical events concerning real people who have lived in the past are easily conjured up and applied to the minds of the unsuspecting subject as their own.

Extraterrestrial Evolutionism

Due to the highly speculative nature of Metaphysical Evolutionism, it is not surprising that some would attempt to carry it over into science fiction. As a consequence, it was suggested that there could likely be many undiscovered worlds within the vast universe containing beings that had already evolved both physically and mentally to such a high order that they would appear as gods to us should we ever meet up with them. While the Bible never suggests that there are other worlds that God has populated with other physical beings, it never outright denies that possibility. If this would prove to

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[321] *The Screwtape Letters,* letter VII, C.S. Lewis, July, 1941

be true, however, it is apparent that they would be but created beings, not gods, inasmuch as God will not share his sovereignty with anyone or anything (Ex.20:3–5). This false notion of extraterrestrial god-like beings led to the creation of various cults and isms such as Scientology in which it is assumed that man is descended from advanced extraterrestrial beings.

Scientology is a religion founded by L. Ron Hubbard, a science fiction writer, in 1955. It began as a self-help system in which a person may come to understand his or her existence across many supposed lifetimes and in doing so positively affect their performance in the present world. In achieving this goal, they also attain a state of total freedom. Men are actually believed to be reincarnations of Thetans who created the universe. Many reincarnations from Thetans took place through evolution thus precipitating the present race of god-like human beings.[322].

Whether the reason for this new-found interest in the supernatural world was derived from unrestrained scientific curiosity, religious fervor, or some misguided search for a nebulous "reality," the door was opened up to the spiritual realm, which is the present abode of demons and various evil spirits that are of satanic origin. That crossing over into the metaphysical was a major element in the "new age" movement that has grown into the larger movement of neo-paganism. It is all of satanic orchestration, although the performers, themselves, may believe that they are freely exploring new ground.

The Undermining of Public Education

Public schools, already infiltrated with the atheistic tenets of progressive education, were very careful to avoid the promotion of any aspects of Christianity. Nevertheless they readily accepted Yoga and Transcendental Meditation as mere physical exercise and various forms of psychobabble as mere aids to enhance mental development.

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[322] For more information on Scientology, see *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Chapter 13, by Walter Martin.

Unfortunately, educators in particular are quite susceptible to such shams because of their pell-mell desire for the so-called "academic freedom" to seek out new ideas and methods. In practice, however, the educator repeatedly recycles previously failed teaching methods, adds various exotic elements, gloriously renames them, and then claims that they are a new development that will advance the art of education.

Educators always seek to be on the front lines of any new teaching method or scientific development that comes their way — the more exotic the better. The educator is actually trapped in a paradigm from which he cannot escape. If he were limited by absolutes of any kind, his so-called "academic freedom" to delve into fantasy would be severely limited, and his own "creative inventions" would be limited by solid walls of Truth. The resulting personal prejudice against absolute boundaries resulted in many educators leaning toward or openly embracing various practices of ancient occult religion as new scientific methods of teaching.

Rationally sound teachers were often forbidden to teach what they personally understood as truth because it looked like "religion" (meaning Christianity, of course), and they were subject to dismissal if they insisted on doing so. So much for real academic freedom! Having said that, many teachers and educators still attempted to teach within an absolute framework of personal morality and truth, but they became more rare with most today being found only in Christian schools, rather than public schools. Unable to express their own faith in their teaching efforts, most Christian teachers were forced to leave the profession altogether.

Textbook authors have an atheistic bent that invades classrooms with humanistic doctrine. In real or imagined fear of the courts, school boards would not adopt textbooks that even remotely seem to have a bent toward absolute moral responsibility or a creation origin for the physical world. This further encouraged the textbook publishers to continue their atheistic bias in order to sell their books thus creating a symbiotic spiral downward toward incredibility.

No greater example is to be found than the insistence that evolution was "scientific fact."[323] Evolution touts man as the quintessential being that in turn makes shamanism seem more plausible. Most credible scientists today are quite aware that the theory of evolution is full of holes since there is no fossil evidence to fill them. The theory of evolution is scientifically obsolete, but if man did not spontaneously evolve, he must have been created. Creation demands the acceptance of an intelligent creator. An atheist can never accept that fact regardless of the overwhelming evidence for it.

That bias was not just present in Science textbooks. History books were systematically stripped of all mention of the Christian origin and development of the United States and the way in which the religious and moral convictions of men had positively affected the very roots of western civilization — a civilization that the western world is still enjoying, although it is currently on the way down to oblivion.

A democratic republic requires an educated, moral, and informed populace in order to function. As the public schools divorced themselves from anything Christian and largely accepted if not embraced amorality, the moral underpinnings of U.S. society seriously degenerated as children grew into adults. The result was a technically knowledgeable yet semi-educated society that sees its liberty existing in a moral vacuum. This is ultimately the road to anarchy.

Intrusion into the Workplace

Neo-paganism rapidly invaded the work place in the form of various so-called "self improvement" seminars. Those who were engaged in or influenced by various pagan disciplines from the ancient occult to Scientology[324] often conducted those seminars. The seminars actually stressed the ability of the mind to create a desired reality. By merely visualizing an outcome and then believing with intensity in its

[323] See Scientific Compliance, page 352

[324] See Extraterrestrial Evolutionism, page 435

reality, it would spontaneously come about. This created a virtual cult of men and women who were attempting to think projects and personal goals into existence through exercising a Positive Mental Attitude, which is seductive neo-paganism under the guise of being a neutral scientific method. Careful planning and hard work were often neglected to the extent that productivity often suffered. Why exert physical effort when one can use one's mind to bring it all about?

Fortunately, there were yet many in the workplace that were not taken in by this "easy think-ism" who still managed to get the work done through overt effort. Unfortunately, that only seemed to add credence to this form of shamanism by allowing superiors to believe that they had thought a project into successful completion by their mental power alone. What they actually created was leaderless confusion at the task level that required some workers to tax their abilities in an attempt to make the impossible possible. However, it soon became obvious to those at the task level that they only needed to create an illusion of their own that only makes things seem to happen. Their superiors' egos would make it "reality."

The obvious fallacy within this "think and bring into being method," of course, is that each individual is trying to think different and often opposing goals into existence. It takes no genius to figure out that someone has to fail in such a mental tug-of-war. Add business competitors and thousands of persons, each with their own personal goals, and the situation becomes impossible. Fortunately, many of its proponents only paid it lip service. That is just as well since it is pure shamanism not unlike attempting to turn lead into gold through mysticism.

Infiltration of Churchianity

If the invasion of education and industry was not bad enough, it was inevitable that Churchianity, itself, also would be infiltrated with Positive Mental Attitude teaching. [325] *The Power of Positive*

[325] Only a brief summary of the infiltration is provided here due to the broad scope of this work necessitating brevity. For a more comprehensive discussion, *The Seduction of Christianity* by Dave Hunt and T.A.McMahon, Harvest House Publishers, 1985, is

Thinking, a self-help book written by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale[326] and first published in 1952 is only one example of this invasion of thought into Churchianity. Peale's use of hypnotic autosuggestion in his methods pushes them into the metaphysical realm. Robert H. Schuller's[327] *Possibility Thinking* had espoused a similar doctrine inasmuch as it based human achievement upon visualization and belief in the power of the human mind to bring about success through an imaginative process. Sin is seen as anything that robs man of his self-esteem because it inhibits such visualization. So powerful is the mind of man that God is no longer a necessary part of the equation or is considered a mere placebo to aid man in the promotion of the result. Such man-centered elevation is nothing but a reiteration of fallen man's religion of humanism, which is reinforced by recycled shamanism that echoes the lie of Satan (Ge. 3:5).

While optimism in the power of God is commendable, it does not follow that He has transferred his sovereign power to us in order that we may be successful in all that we do by merely thinking positively about our own fallen abilities. Practicing such techniques

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recommended.

[326] Dr. Peale was raised a Methodist, but he later changed his affiliation to the Reformed Church in America in 1932. He was a graduate of the Boston University School of Theology. Peale teamed up with Smiley Blanton, a psychoanalyst, in running the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry, a religious-psychiatric clinic next door to his church in Manhattan. Peale wrote prolifically. His most popular book, *The Power of Positive Thinking,* sold over 5 million copies, and it was reportedly published in more than a dozen different languages. Peale also began a radio broadcast, *The Art of Living* in 1935 (a title of one of his books as well) that continued for 54 years. Peale was a Scottish Rite Freemason.

[327] Robert H. Schuller was the founder of the Hour of Power television ministry. The completion of the ornate Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California from which it was aired took place in 1980. The congregation at one time consisted of around 10,000 members. It is estimated that the Hour of Power had more than 20 million viewers in 180 countries around the world. Schuller's many Positive Mental Attitude books sold in the millions to unbelievers and to deluded believers alike.

attempts to bind God to our own desires even as it blinds us to our fallen nature and the true realities of evil in this world.

We read in Scripture that God merely spoke, and all things came into being at his command. The Holy Scriptures are God's written word and there is therefore power contained within Bible texts. However, we must see that power is not actually vested in the individual words and phrases of Scripture, but in God who spoke them. Their sacred meaning for us is a consequence of our personal relationship with God who spoke them. Words are considered by the occult religions to have power no matter who speaks them inasmuch as power is seen to be vested in the words themselves, not in the one speaking them. A consistently repeated phrase or word that is thought to have sacred meaning and power is commonly known as a mantra.

While true Christians pray to God using their own words, they look to Him for an answer to their prayer and the receiving of his benefits according to his will. The occultist however falsely sensing his own god nature speaks his own decrees or positive affirmations fully expecting his demands to be carried out by the power of his own words. We see this notion of sacred mantras having infiltrated Churchianity quite early on through various Christian clichés and precisely prescribed words to be repeated through ritual prayer[328] and during various ritual acts including baptism and the Lord's Supper. The supposed power of Positive Thinking and Possibility Thinking are but more modern propagations of this occult falsehood. Those two thought processes manifest themselves in various ways in Churchianity including the prosperity doctrine wherein one can but think and speak themselves to wealth, and in ritual faith healing[329] wherein one can become healed from all physical disease through a positive thought process called "faith" that is actually presumption and by speaking aloud various ritual mantras.

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[328] Ritual Prayer is discussed in Book II, Chapter 14.4 of this work

[329] Faith Healing is discussed in Book II Chapter 14.3 of this work.

Because of the growing ignorance of sound Scriptural truth by many Christians, ancient occult methods were more and more being viewed as a means of spiritual worship of the true God as neo-pagan thinkers entered the church in increasingly greater numbers. This deception exemplifies itself in various contemporary forms such as modern emulations of the "wild fire" of the earlier Charismatic Movement to the "warm fuzziness" of the religious liberal to the "cold ice" of the religious formalist. The desire of the religious charismatic to constantly experience spiritual gratification often leads him head-long into the spiritual realm of demons and the occult. The religious liberal denies the possibility of miracles or the existence of the supernatural altogether. Because he sees the spirit world as mere superstition, he readily accepts various forms of shamanism as benign scientific developments.

Ritual formalism and liberalism can quite easily co-exist as the religious liberal keeps religious rituals around to hold onto an external visual aspect of Christianity. The religious formalist is merely playing with the outward rituals of a religion insisting that mental exercise is all that there is to true faith. Unlike the charismatic that willingly desires to enter the spiritual realm, both the religious liberal and the religious formalist simply deny that the crossing can ever take place. Therefore, they easily cross over without even realizing it. All are equally seduced and are unaware of their plight.

Injection into Evangelicalism

Even evangelical and numerous conservative churches adopted many of the worldly and occult methods of her liberal and/or charismatic sister churches. As other churches increased in numbers, more conservative churches found their membership dwindling and desperately sought some means to "reach the lost" in new ways. This desire for the awakening" of the dull masses was so intense that any human method seemed okay to use as long as it brought forth results. Sound theological thinking was totally set aside as being non-productive. An unreasonable sense of urgency gripped them, causing them to move from their firm stand on Scripture and patient trust in God.

Thus, they too were left vulnerable for whatever form of occult deception that seemed to accomplish their pragmatic ends. Many introduced meaningless formalism into their worship to dress it up and make it aesthetically appealing to their congregations. Community outreach programs degenerated into various psychological self-help seminars that were completely devoid of the Gospel lest they offend anyone and prevent him or her from applying for church membership in the future. They would deal with making "Christians" out of them after they joined, so they believed.

As more and more unbelievers came into the church, Sunday School classes degenerated into pure psychobabble as the teaching of Scripture and sound doctrine was neglected in favor of presenting various psychological improvement programs for them. In doing so, the church leaders were blatantly ignoring the words of the Apostle Paul in Colossians 2:8 when he said, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Only the outward and visible symptoms of sin were being treated by the evangelical without addressing the underlying cause that only true spiritual conversion in Christ could cure. Those programs often came through the door as self-help or self-improvement seminars on ready to use videotape that released the pastors and elders from the hard work of preparing Bible-based classes that were becoming increasingly unpopular and unattended anyway.

The Delusion of Open Deism

As a means to unity, all religions were being characterized by various atheist intellectuals and religious liberals[330] as being basically the same. Each recognized and worshiped the same universal god — though that god may be viewed by different religious groups in vastly different ways. Accordingly, personal life styles and the worship of that god could legitimately vary from view to view. Therefore, all people on earth should embrace the religious views of all others as being equally valid with their own.

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[330] Also see Open Deism, page 351 as a basic tenet of religious liberalism.

By viewing God as a nebulous deity that can be easily conformed to human thoughts and aspirations, God can no longer be seen as an absolute being but only an abstract concept. In some religions, God is not seen as a personal being, but a mere force or idea. Therefore, it is not true that all the religions of the earth worship the same god. A single being could not possibly take on such contradictory characteristics and still be the same being in any real sense. To the Christian, God is fully defined by the Scriptures such that no other description of Him could possibly be valid. All other gods are false.

While it is true that all paths must ultimately lead a man to God, it does not follow that all religious paths that a man may follow in this life will allow him to approach God in a favorable way. Jesus said that He alone is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one can come to the Father but by Him (Jn.14:6). Jesus is the only true way that can lead to eternal life; all other ways are false paths that lead to eternal death. All men and women will most certainly come to stand before God in the end regardless of their religious convictions, but only those that are in Christ will be able to approach him as their Father in whom there is love and forgiveness. All others must approach Him as a strict uncompromising judge. Before his judgment seat, they must suffer the full penalty for their sinful rejection of Him. Of all the religions on earth, only true Christianity contains the all-important element of redemption that mankind so desperately needs.

Unfortunately this nebulous view of God or "open deism" found its way into many of the more liberal churches completely unchallenged under the guise of exercising reasonable tolerance of another person's religious views. While we may respect a person's particular views about many things, that respect does not mean that we can accept all of their religious views as valid. Too much is at stake in doing so — Truth. Nevertheless, in that way, the corrupt Churchianity of the temporal church was moved increasingly farther away from what was once an outward form of Christianity to an outward form of religion in general. That transformation was aided by the corruption of

the Bible through various poor translations and paraphrases[331] as well as many aspects of the new-age and neo-pagan movements that we have already discussed in this chapter.

The Warren Phenomena

As William (Billy) Graham became aged and was no longer physically able to conduct the revivals that he once presided over, the reigns of his greater ministry were turned over to his son, Franklin Graham. However, it would appear that the younger generation preferred to make a complete break with what they saw as an outmoded neo-evangelical movement in order to accommodate the tenets of even more progressive psychological thinking found in neo-liberalism and even various forms of neo-paganism.

Conservative Southern Baptists had struggled long and hard against the progressive religious liberalism that soon overcame and dominated the Southern Baptist Convention. Liberal-minded Baptist seminaries had begun turning out pastors more inclined to a progressive liberal worldview in the late twentieth century. That was particularly true of seminaries in California and the southwestern United States. One such product of those seminaries was Rick Warren who founded the non-denominational Saddleback Church in 1980. Through his progressive teaching methods, the church rapidly increased in numbers to become a mega-church located in Lake Forest, California with a weekly attendance of over 22,000 by the turn of the century.

Warren galvanized his teaching methods into various books such as *The Purpose Driven Life*, and *The Purpose Driven Church*. Because they promoted ecumenism through a lack of specific theological doctrine, his books were particularly popular with other progressive-minded churches within various denominations. Many churches utilized the first mentioned book in a church supported 40-day program (*40 Days of Purpose*) in an attempt to pump up church members to take their place in the more progressive Churchianity of

[331] See Corruption of the Bible, page 446

the day. In doing so, they hoped to enliven church activity among older members and reverse their declining membership with an influx of young people.

So successful were sales of the books to individuals and churches that Warren reportedly was soon able to decline any salary for his pastoral duties and even to invest 90 percent of his book royalties back into the ministry — thus further enhancing the state of his personal ecumenical status. Due to the widespread popularity of his books, Rick Warren soon became one of the most influential religious leaders in the world as the twentieth century ended and the twenty-first century dawned. As his national and international influence grew, he was increasingly being seen by many as the successor to Billy Graham in establishing the will and conscience of the United States. This fact became quite evident in August of 2008 as he hosted a televised civil forum at the Saddleback Church in which the two presumptive nominees for the office of the U.S. presidency were queried before a worldwide viewing audience regarding their personal ethical views.

Corruption of the Bible

As neo-paganism infiltrated Christendom and in particular neo-evangelicalism, several unfortunate developments simultaneously occurred in Bible translation. It is probably expecting too much to have a perfect translation of the Bible since something is always lost in the process of translation from the original languages regardless of the care taken by fallible men. However, a new move in biblical scholarship came about to deliberately abuse Scripture text in order to promote various neo-evangelical and neo-pagan agendas.

It is most unfortunate that the International Bible Society and the same publishing house that gave us the *New International Version* undertook a revised version of the NIV. The NIV had already abandoned a strict "word-to-word" translation method to include a moderate "thought-to-thought" translation method that many conservative scholars considered troubling. This newer version, called *Today's New International Version* (TNIV) was published in 2002 and is not merely an updated translation of the NIV, as its name would imply. In fact, the language of the NIV could hardly have been

considered dated to the point that it was beyond today's readers to grasp, nor is there any recent manuscript discoveries that would obsolete the text from which it was translated.

Many texts in the Bible refer to man or men in a generic sense that includes women through any reasonable interpretation from the context. The masculine pronouns are in keeping with a precise translation from the original languages. However, feminists in more liberal churches had strongly objected to being referred to with masculine generic pronouns and wanted the text of the Bible changed to comply with their agenda. In this new version, every effort was made to use neutral-gender words to replace clearly masculine words that are found in the Hebrew and Greek texts thus abandoning sound translation methods in doing so. One can only assume that the target market for this clearly feminist translation is the many liberal-progressive churches today that would, no doubt, eagerly embrace such a version in the name of open-mindedness and to corroborate the ordination of women to church offices. The female principle injected into worship is very much a part of the neo-pagan movement emulating the rank paganism of the pre-Christian era.

In an attempt to avoid confusion between the NIV and the TNIV, many of the more conservative evangelical churches began to discontinue using the NIV in the pulpit and replaced NIV pew Bibles.[332] Various Bible versions began to be used in its place. Some fell back on the *New King James Bible* in the hopes of keeping the word-to-word translation accuracy of the old KJV but with updated language usage. Others have chosen various newer translations such as the 2001 *English Standard Version* (ESV) published by Crossway Books.

The ESV is an evangelical revision of the older ecumenical RSV (*Revised Standard Version*) in which the text is claimed to be a literal "word-for-word" translation. Ironically, the ESV, while

[332] A newly revised version of the NIV is expected to be released in 2011 entirely replacing the older NIV. This new version is expected to have much of the neutral gender language of the TNIV incorporated in it, thus rendering all versions of the NIV unreliable. At that point, many other fundamentally sound evangelical churches will most likely abandon the NIV in favor of reliable versions.

correcting most all of the non-Christian interpretations of the RSV Old Testament text, contains much of the same gender-neutral language that sparked the primary criticism of the TNIV. It must be said, however, that the instances of neutral-gender transpositions are present only where the male gender in the original manuscripts were obviously intended to include the entire genesis of mankind. Nevertheless, it still represents a departure from an accurate "word-***to***-word" translation, wherein the words in both languages have the same essential meaning, in exchange for a "word-***for***-word" translation wherein the meaning of words chosen in the translation can be quite different.

It would appear that gender-neutral language is becoming a major trend in Bible translation. We may well wonder what may come about next. It therefore behooves us to be even more cautious of the way we select our Bible translations and Bible helps in the years ahead. We must also make every effort to see that new believers are not misled into selecting seriously corrupted translations or unsound and misleading commentaries thinking they are selecting reliable time-tested versions that remain faithful to the original languages.

If this trend continues, word-to-word translations may someday be abandoned altogether. Even modern word-for-word translations are becoming more rare. That is already evident in the proliferation of various paraphrased texts of the Bible. Paraphrases exemplify the thought-to-thought method of translation carried to its extreme. A paraphrase is actually a subjective interpretation of the Scripture text, and therefore it is not a true translation at all. We mentioned a few of the earlier paraphrases such as the *Living Bible* and the *Good News Bible* in Book I Chapter 1.1 of this work. However, the newer paraphrases are an even greater cause for concern since the interpretations in so many of the more popular versions are becoming highly radical. When compared with a sound translation, many paraphrased verses prove to be written out of whole cloth without any relationship with true Scriptural content it purports to emulate.

Unfortunately, many of the churched have been led to believe that paraphrases are really the Bible and are treating them as such. If they don't like what their current version has to say regarding any

particular verse or text, they can merely switch to another paraphrase that supports their own opinion of what they believe the Bible should say. In addition, they can easily put their own spin or interpretation on the weakened text of those paraphrases, which further extends the error.

While Christians may not always agree on the interpretation of various Scripture texts, there should at least be an agreement on standardization of the text itself. Anyone may interpret the Bible as he chooses to the extent that his conscience will allow, but passing off those loose interpretations as canonical text is very destructive. There is no limit to how extreme paraphrases may become over time since Christians seem so intent on not only accepting them as canonical text, but also buying various psychological self-help books that are supported by texts from those corrupt paraphrases.

A perfect example is Rick Warren's book on Christian living, *The Purpose Driven Life*, (mentioned earlier) that had been received with great popularity by a broad consensus of neo-evangelical and liberal churches. It is merely a philosophical fabrication supported by a wide mix of good and poor translations along with many corrupt paraphrases. All the while, there is reference being made to all of the supportive texts as being "God's Word." By merely utilizing multiple translations and paraphrases, it becomes obvious that one can make the Bible say just about anything they wish for it to say.

The Promise Keepers (ca. 1990)

The movement called the "Promise Keepers" was founded in 1990 and has been very popular among a diverse number of Christian men since its beginning. Its alleged purpose was to instill a sense of leadership and accountability in men at a time when few accepted any responsibility in their lives. The name "Promise Keepers" comes from seven promises that men must agree to. On the surface, the promises seem reasonable and fully in accord with Scripture. However, the ecumenical and humanistic aspects of the movement render those promises very unreliable.

These seven promises are all relationships beginning with man's relationship with his God, followed by his relationship with his

mentors, himself (personal integrity), his family, his church, his brothers, and ending with his relationship with his world at large. Women, in particular, have often been critical of the movement because they see it as a method of teaching their husbands to return to their homes to exercise tyrannical control over their wives and their families. Since the teaching within this group is void of reliable Bible underpinnings, it is easy to see how many men could actually interpret its purposes that way.

Rather than teaching Bible-based doctrine and theology, it promotes humanistic psychological ethics and methods, and it is found to be only more of the psychobabble so prevalent in Churchianity at large. It is also greatly infiltrated with charismatic teaching that is commingled with the psychobabble to increase its emotional impact. The use and promotion of corrupted Bible translations and paraphrases are actually encouraged by the use of those corrupted texts in their own presentation. Where sound Scripture text ***is*** used it is often twisted, misinterpreted, and misapplied to support the psychological thought at hand.

While the importance of evangelism is stressed, it does not accurately define what the Gospel message really is, leaving that to personal interpretation so as not to offend anyone's personal religious beliefs or the teaching of any of the diverse number of churches that support the organization. Perhaps the "good news" is only to promote the Promise Keepers as a viable movement. The negative effect on the biblical and historic theology of local churches to which those methods are ultimately brought back can be profoundly devastating to sound doctrine.

Chapter 19.3 The Concerted Attack on the Faith

This chapter will primarily focus on the multifaceted attack on the faith that is presently taking place within the United States inasmuch as that nation can be seen to be the last great battleground of the reformed faith against all comers who would seek to undermine it. If the true faith fails to maintain a sound foothold in the United States, the future of Christianity throughout the rest of the world becomes bleak indeed.

As those who were involved in the neo-pagan Movement came of age and began to form a large voting block, they began to elect men and women who held similar views to the United States House and Senate. Older established representatives who were already indoctrinated in humanistic social liberalism easily transformed themselves into a condescending mold to assure their reelection. Torn from the fixed reference of God's Word and purposes, the government ran amuck and merely gave citizens whatever they wanted, rather than considering what was reasonably and morally right. That provided an opportunity for liberal-progressive groups to push their neo-pagan agendas through congress, although there were just enough conservative members to make it slow going and uncertain. There was a much faster way to accomplish their goal.

Assault on Christianity through the US Judicial System

A concerted political attack is presently being mounted against Christian liberty through the judicial system in the United States. It is spearheaded by the American Civil Liberties Union aided by various other newer organizations such as the People for the American Way. Through the legal campaigns of such groups, the courts legalized abortion on demand, and tax monies were demanded to obtain abortions for the poor that could not afford this so-called "basic right of women." The education system was legally stripped of its most useful means of molding moral character as all Bibles and public prayer was removed by Supreme Court edicts so that growing neo-pagan and atheist religious attitudes would not be offended or impeded.

The American Civil Liberties Union

The American Civil Liberties Union or ACLU was founded in 1920 out of an earlier antiwar movement opposing involvement in World War I. The ACLU is a consortium of lawyers and has an early history of pacifism and defending those accused of communistic ties. It supports the cause of abortion rights advocates, the legalization of mind-altering drugs, and special rights for homosexuals. Freedom of amoral and immoral expression was defended by insisting that any effort to prohibit it was a violation of the first amendment of the *U.S. Constitution* that in their view ensured ***uninhibited*** freedom of speech. In addition the ACLU advocates a total isolation of church from the state that includes prohibition of the public display of Christian expression, public moneys going toward religious schools in any form, and public prayer or moments of silence anywhere in the educational arena. Therefore, uninhibited freedom of speech in their view does not apply to Christians.

People for the American Way

In the 1960's and 1970's television had been seriously infected by neo-paganism through liberal-minded producers and artists that opposed any moral limits on its "freedom of expression" that continually pushed the limits of public decency. The People for the American Way (PFAW) is a highly liberal organization that was established by Television producer Norman Lear in 1980 to combat any moral limits being set on television programming. It was expressly established to oppose the growingly active religious community exemplified by the Moral Majority Movement in the United States whose public voice was Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell during the 1980's. Although the Moral Majority officially dissolved in 1989, it was replaced by the Christian Coalition headed up by Pat Robertson. Since then, various other conservative action groups have also sprung up.

The First Amendment

The first amendment to the *Constitution of the United States* reads as follows:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment

of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

In the full context of the first amendment, it is apparent that such freedom of speech applies specifically to religious and political speech whether spoken or printed to ensure that the people retain control of their own government through the right of open petition without undue interference or regulation.[333]

Examining the Establishment and free Exercise Clauses

The relevant phrases of the first amendment of the *U.S. Constitution* upon which the ACLU and others falsely base their concept of total exclusion of religious expression from government or in the public marketplace reads,

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…"

Beyond the preamble that the amendment applies specifically to the United States congress, this amendment contains two operative clauses generally referred to as the "establishment clause," and the "free exercise" clause. It is quite apparent that the word "congress" refers to the ***federal congress*** of the United States and that the amendment applies only to the making of a ***law*** by that body that would ***establish*** a ***nation-wide*** religion or in anyway ***prohibit*** the ***free exercise*** of personal religious faith by the populace.

It is further obvious to any reasonable person who has any knowledge of history that the drafters of the first amendment to the *U.S. Constitution* intended that the word "religion" be applied specifically and only to Christianity in its many sectarian persuasions that sprang out of the Reformation Movement. Thus, the original intent of the first clause was to keep the federal government from establishing a national temporal church. The free exercise clause was written by the framers to ensure that the federal government, as a

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[333] Also see The First Amendment, page 321

political entity, could not interfere in any way with church affairs, while fully allowing the collective religious consensus of the people to positively direct government in its many tasks through their duly elected representatives.

Furthermore, Christianity is not something that can be expressed in a mere ritual or contained within the walls of a building, but is something that permeates one's being in all affairs of life. Therefore, the intent also prohibited federal political control in any manner over believers exercising their faith through everyday secular expression and activity — thus immediately came forth the clause assuring freedom of speech. Therefore, the establishment clause does not prohibit an otherwise legal and constitutional executive order, such as declaring a voluntary national day of prayer, nor does it prohibit individual members of congress from openly favoring and expressing their own religious faith as they see fit.

Source of the Metaphoric "Wall of Separation"

A so-called "wall of separation" phrase implying the prohibition of public religious expression in the market place or within government, is not found in the first amendment as can be clearly seen. The metaphoric "wall of separation" was extracted by ACLU lawyers out of context from a personal letter of assurance written on January 1, 1802 by President Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut. Thomas Jefferson's personal life has posed a dilemma to many, and atheists have had a virtual field day generating confusion surrounding his religious-political views.[334] Jefferson was abroad in France when the *U.S. Constitution* was written in 1787 thus providing no personal input to that document or to the *Bill of Rights* that soon followed it. Therefore, his personal opinion regarding the interpretation of either must necessarily be removed from any direct knowledge of the original intent of the signers.

[334] See Thomas Jefferson, page 324

Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association

The Danbury Baptist Association, a religious minority in the state of Connecticut, had become alarmed that their immutable religious rights upheld by the *Constitution* were instead being viewed as mere privileges granted by the federal government. If so, those privileges could be withdrawn if the federal government should ever decide to gain universal control over worship and practice through the official endorsement of a national denomination. The pertinent part of Jefferson's reply to them reads as follows:

> **"Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with solemn reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between church and state."**

It would be completely out of context to think that Jefferson was attempting to assuage the Baptist's fears by telling them that they had no right to exercise or express their faith outside of their church walls as the contemporary interpretation by U.S. courts dictates. The metaphoric "wall" to which Jefferson referred was a ***protective*** wall that sheltered the church from government interference in the religious affairs of the nation through legislation. That was fully in keeping with the Baptists' own view of separation regarding the church and secular government.

It should also be noted that Jefferson ended his letter with the following statement: "I reciprocate your kind prayers for the protection and blessing of the common Father and Creator of man, and tender you for yourselves and your religious association, assurances of my high respect and esteem." If Jefferson had really meant to say what contemporary court interpretations maintain that he meant in this

letter, he would have been found guilty of breaching his own "wall of separation" by acknowledging and reciprocating their prayers.

Like all metaphors, this one can be too easily taken out of context and abused. Therefore, it would be better to abandon it altogether and refer directly to the text of the first amendment that is very clear indeed. The framers fully expected government offices to be filled with godly men such as themselves that were elected by a God-fearing populace. They surely knew that a democracy ruled by an ungodly rabble would rapidly degenerate into wild anarchy. The fragile new republic required a godly self-controlled populace to support it since a government of the people would rapidly corrupt itself if they turned their backs on their God who had made the "great experiment" of self-rule possible.

Judicial Inclusion of Anti-Christian Religions

In a nation where unfettered freedom of religious conscience is protected by law, religious pluralism flourishes. Early on, Judaism was tolerated within the larger American religious community of faiths as being foundational to Christianity. Only recently however has the word "religion" in the First Amendment to the *U.S. Constitution* been interpreted by the federal courts to include a vast number of non-Christian religions — that is, religions that do not recognize Jesus Christ as the center of personal faith. Those religions also include Islam that is militantly anti-Jewish and anti-Christian, a vast array of occult and new age religions as well as humanistic atheism that supports the liberal progressive political movement. It no doubt would have been inconceivable to the framers of the Constitution that false religions could have so influenced the nation that they would have ever been considered on a par with Christianity. They would have surely believed that the free offer of salvation that Christianity presents to free men would have overcome any false notions of God or of worshiping any other gods in his place.

Nevertheless, it is not so much that anti-Christian religions are being fondly embraced as authentic religion, but that the Christian faith is so vehemently hated by the neo-pagan. The newly established "political correctness" and relativism in the United States requires that

Christians refrain from making any negative comments about other religious faiths such as Islam or even positive comments about Christianity to the exclusion or detriment of other religious beliefs.[335]

Many see the constitutional provision in the first amendment as not only requiring ***protection*** under the law for every conceivable brand of religion —no matter how extreme — but also a demand for universal tolerance leading to its full ***acceptance*** as a religion equally valid with Christianity. While all religious activity, with the noted exception of any open public expression of Christianity, is protected under the current interpretation of the Constitution, it does not follow that all religions must therefore be equally valid. Jesus himself issued a challenge to all other religions when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn.14:6). As Christians, we must either fully accept Jesus' words as absolute or deny our faith in Him altogether; there can be no middle ground.

While many individuals and churches held to the clear Scriptural mandate necessitating the uniqueness and superiority of Christianity over any other religious philosophy, the liberal majority caved in to the liberal-progressive socialist tidal wave to accept open deism[336] in which all gods and religions are considered equally valid.

Muslim Immigration to the United States

Even as the judicial assault was underway and the moral and spiritual state of the temporal churches in America in the main had seriously degenerated, Christians were faced with the renewed challenge of Islam as the twentieth century came to a close. An attempt at world dominance was well underway through the infiltration of western societies with large numbers of Muslims through legal and illegal immigration coupled with active recruitment of disgruntled citizens within those societies. Islamic immigration and recruitment had already resulted in a larger number of Muslim citizens

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[335] See Hate Speech Laws, page 466

[336] See Open Deism, page 351 and The Delusion of Open Deism, page 443

than Methodists in the United States by the last decade of the twentieth century.[337] According to a more recent survey made in 2009 that figure could now be close to 2.5 million or about 0.8% of the U.S. population.[338]

This growth was particularly realized within the African American population that due to the relentless preaching of black liberation theology[339] from a large number of their pulpits, so often felt that they had been cast off and disenfranchised from Christianity altogether. Many were easily led by activists to believe that Islam was the original faith of their forefathers in Africa before Christianity had been forced upon them in this nation while they were being held in slavery. Islam is the second most rapidly growing religion in the world today with approximately 1.57 billion[340] of the world's population at large being Muslim in submission and practice if not in religious conviction. This figure is just behind Christianity including both Roman Catholic and all Protestant faiths with a combined estimated total of 2.1 to 2.2 billion.

While that subtle Islamic migration was going on, the churches of the United States largely ignored the sea change in the American religious landscape. The religious liberal merely saw Islam as another way to worship God. In fact, Islamic scholars often quote extreme Christian liberals whose statements often appear to echo and bolster their own monadic (anti-Trinitarian) view of God. Conservative believers on the other hand largely viewed Islam as a religion isolated to Arabs and nations of the Middle East, as they continued to concentrate all their efforts against the apostate religious left. The average conservative Christian's knowledge of the true tenets of the

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[337] Statistic from *Answering Islam* by Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, 2001.

[338] Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2009

[339] See The Birth of Black Liberation Theology, page 336 and Liberation Theology, page 354

[340] See footnote 338

Islamic religion was practically nil in the year 2000. Since they saw Islam as false on the surface, they had made no effort to understand its tenets thus failing to see the serious challenge it presented to the spread of Christianity.

Liberal Progressive Muslims

We cannot automatically assume that every professing Muslim that we encounter within the United States is bent upon the violent overthrow of the United States government or that they seek to kill every Christian or Jew they may encounter. The infiltration is much more subtle than that inasmuch as their growing presence in a predominately Christian nation has a subversive effect in and of itself. Many of them were born of Muslim families within an Islamic culture such that they see themselves as Muslims by tradition and heritage, but they have liberalized their thinking and have progressed beyond their more radical fundamental roots. In fact, many Islamic immigrants to the United States had actually escaped from oppressive Islamic governments that had strictly enforced Sharia law[341] in order to seek a more peaceful way of life in a free society. Some were admitted as immigrants precisely because they could prove that their lives were mortally endangered should they have been forced to return to the nation of their origin.

Although these more progressive Muslims have essentially sought to separate themselves from the more violent tenets of Islam, the Imams who lead prayers and teach Islamic doctrines in a large number of U.S. mosques must almost certainly teach the fundamentals of Islam, which include Sharia law as well as Jihad[342] or holy war to obtain its objectives. This strong exhortation may very well inflame some Muslims to commit acts of violence and terror on U.S. soil. Still other Muslims may only seek to convert the world to Islam and Sharia law through less forceful means. While the large remaining number do

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[341] See Universal Sharia Law, page 515

[342] See The Rise of Mohammedanism (A.D. 632), page 180 and The Militant Challenge of Islam, page 472

not openly accept Islam's violent nature, they dare not speak out against it lest they forfeit the underlying tenets of their own more progressive religious conviction. In practice, they continue to use prayer beads and shawls, perform the prescribed prayers, and engage in other outward acts of ritual as their tradition requires, but in all other ways, they greatly desire and enjoy the fruits of western liberty.

Islamic Progressive Efforts at Subversion

Islamic progressives seek to obtain peaceful coexistence and full acceptance of the American populace just as is afforded all other U.S. citizens. Unfortunately, that means in doing so they also demand full acceptance of Islam as a religious faith on a par with or even superior to Christianity. In cooperation with a growing number of educational and political socialist radicals who strongly oppose Christianity, Islamic fundamentalism is finding its way into public school systems as instructional courses where they can easily subvert the nation's impressionable youth. Simultaneously, elements of Sharia law are intruding their way into government institutions where they must ultimately impact our nation's laws in a very negative way.

On Friday, September 25, 2009 as many as 50,000 Muslims were expected to conduct a day of Islamic unity (Arabic: *Jummah*) consisting of a day-long prayer gathering on the West Front of the U.S. Capital building in Washington D.C. Perhaps due in some part to inclement weather, only about 8000 Muslim men and women actually attended. Smaller groups of Christians, carefully watched by plain-clothes police, protested the sanctioned event from a distance, but they made no effort to directly interfere with it.

Though outwardly peaceful enough and even voicing solidarity with American political values, this traditional Islamic prayer gathering was something that could not even have been imagined by the founding fathers of this nation, and it fully demonstrated the encroachment that Muslim infiltration into the United States' political structure has already achieved. More recently still, U.S. Muslims have advocated building a mosque to be prominently located quite near the site of the World Trade Center bombing. Protesters to its construction have recognized this proposed

structure as a blatant declaration of an Islamic victory over the United States. All of those surreptitious efforts seriously undermine the historic Christian foundation of the nation upon which it was built.

A Difficult Backyard Missions Field

Of course, the large number of Muslim citizenry could actually represent a vast missions field for American Christians right in their own backyard, although the Churchianity of highly liberal and ritualistic temporal churches can offer them nothing of substance that they do not already believe they have. The opportunity for those of the Visible Church is great, but that task will not be an easy one. The power of the Islamic faith is found in the complete separation of the Muslim's religious convictions from any form of rational thought that would oppose it. Although Muslims may be very coherent and even brilliant in subjects such as science and engineering, they seal off the door of their minds as they meekly submit to the dictates of Islam without question. Unlike true Christianity, any attempt to apply rational thought processes to the religion of Islam to fully understand it is fought with failure.

Only if God opens their hearts and minds can Muslims truly find the salvation from sin that they so desperately need yet do not seek. While man's efforts may fail, God is still at work as He often resorts to reaching them through their dreams. When He does, we must be there for them as well with the good news of the assurance of salvation and guaranteed entrance into Heaven that can be their own in Christ alone.

Conservative Efforts to Resist the Assault (1960–)

The liberal-progressive main-line Protestant churches held most of the religious power in the United States in the 1960s, with Roman Catholics and Jews also having their say in U.S. politics. The Jews, themselves a primary source of social liberal thinking, had also grown in importance as a consequence of the creation of the state of Israel in the Middle East in 1948. Christian cults such as the Jehovah's

Witnesses and the Mormons[343] increased in numbers as a spiritually starved religious populace desperately began to look for something tangible in which to place their trust.

The Presbyterian Church of America

Many congregations of the reformed faith had withdrawn from the liberal progressive Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) as it officially embraced more and more of the social humanist viewpoint. These separatist churches formed the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) whose first General Assembly met at the Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham Alabama on December 4, 1973. The Reformed Presbyterian Church was merged into the PCA in 1982 through the assistance of contemporary reformed theologian, Francis Schaeffer of Switzerland.

Schaeffer's prophetic concern that the PCA in time would become liberal, as had other denominations, if they failed to take a firm stand on Scripture has largely taken place as this is being written. Many liberal members had merely transferred their membership from the old PCUSA into the newly founded PCA in order to remain within their local assemblies. Many other members of often-questionable persuasions came in from other evangelical churches. Over time, even the word "Presbyterian" has become an embarrassment to many of the more liberal PCA churches as they have swung increasingly toward an Arminian[344] view of Soteriology. Some of the PCA church names no longer have the word "Presbyterian" in them. Many of the more conservative PCA churches are realizing that a split of the PCA into two separate bodies is inevitable in the near future.

The Reclamation Movement

Opposing the neo-pagan secularization of what was once a nation that reverenced, feared, and trusted God, were men such as Dr. D. James Kennedy, who was the senior pastor of the nearly ten-

[343] See Jehovah's Witnesses, page 376 and Mormonism, page 375

[344] See Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609), page 244 and Book I, Chapter 3.5

thousand-member PCA-based Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. He tendered his retirement from the pulpit on August 26 2007 forced by a cardiac arrest in late 2006 from which he was unable to resume his duties in the church. He passed away on September 5, 2007. He was very well educated and the author or co-author of more than 65 books — a large number of which were written to aid in the goal of restoring the United States to the status of a Christian nation.

Whether the United States ever was a "Christian nation" depends upon how you define the term. The term, "Christian nation" is not synonymous with "theocracy," as many opponents of the current Christian political movement fear. Moreover, it cannot be said that every single person in the colonies was a heartfelt Christian when the revolution against England was fought or when the Constitution was signed. Nor can it be said that the nation was established to be run by or as a monolithic church. The framers who had earlier fled national churches in Europe expressly prohibited that possibility in the first amendment to the *Constitution of the United States* as we have seen.[345]

Having said that, however, there is no historical doubt that most all of the early settlements and colonies were founded by church congregations that had found their way to the shores of America to avoid religious persecution in Europe. All human law is based upon a higher divine law of God who alone establishes the standard for all human conduct (often referred to as Natural Law). For that reason, most of the early colonies did not separate their laws into categories of religious and secular. It is also apparent that almost all of the signers of the Constitution were devout Christians. There was an overriding Christian consensus in the young nation that God should and would direct the affairs of the national government to fulfill his mandate to make the new nation "a shining city on a hill" that would witness to his grace. It was to be "one nation under God." That noble idea is

[345] See The First Amendment, page 452

reflected in all of the nation's early documents and even in the configuration of its system of government.[346]

So unique is the Republic that those godly men formed, that it is highly doubtful that it can long continue to exist without a unifying Christian consensus of thought since it was uniquely designed by Christians for a predominantly Christian citizenry. Failing to have the internal guidance of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of its people, a political nation based on individual self-rule must eventually tend toward anarchy and chaos since it is in accord with the fallen nature of mankind for each to seek his own benefit over that of others. As increasingly oppressive laws are passed in an attempt to stem the flow of individual corruption and violence, totalitarianism with a resultant total loss of individual liberty must ultimately follow. Only if genuine Christian men and women reclaim their heritage in this great nation can that be avoided.

Resurgence of Christian Education

Roman Catholics in the United States always had their own parochial schools since they lived in a predominantly Protestant society. However, because of the secular takeover and control of the public school systems, many Protestant churches also began their own schools to teach children necessary general subjects in a Christian environment. Most Christian parents justifiably rebelled at the godless leadership of most of the secular-minded public schools. The outlawing of prayer, Bible reading, and morality based on Christian ethics, as well as the exclusive teaching of godless evolution and humanism as mandated by the courts, left many conscientious parents no choice but to seek alternative schooling for their children.

Obviously, the secular school systems did not take kindly to losing young minds to those they often saw only as "religious fundamentalist fanatics." Compulsory-education laws were often used in an attempt to force children back into the humanist teaching of the public schools. Christian schools could keep their students only if they

[346] See The Constitution of the United States (1787), page 318

met all of the requirements of the state of residence for a private school. For small churches, in particular, those requirements were difficult or impossible to achieve and maintain.

It was also increasingly difficult to find state-qualified ***Christian*** teachers, since that is obviously not what the colleges and universities were attempting to turn out. As a result, parents, elders, and pastors were thrown into jail for trying to operate a church school that did not meet the state's exacting requirements. Church buildings were even locked up by state order in retaliation (i.e. contempt of court) for operating such schools in them contrary to law and/or judicial order.

Fortunately, most states allowed home schooling of children by their parents though states could still regulate them. Since such schooling is not directly under a Christian banner or a church, parental rights were upheld on secular grounds independent of any religious issue. Of course, many who home-schooled their children did do so out of religious concern and conviction. All the while, they were being taxed to support a public school system that was in direct opposition to their efforts and beliefs. Home schooling places a tremendous burden upon the time, skills, and resources of parents such that some parents were just not able to provide an adequate home-school education for their children.

Various support groups sprung up in an attempt to aid those who home schooled with curriculum and team teaching, but all too often those groups were church-based that could again make them a target of the secular school systems. More recently, home schooling parents gained support from special legal organizations such as the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) established to inform them of their rights and afford them legal protection against undue interference from public school systems and secular government.

Christian Political Activism

A few churches have sufficient wealth that they can consider remolding the nation or the world into a form of Christian ethic through political activism. As they do so, the unsaved naturally react

in kind resulting in a moral war that continues to be elevated seemingly without end. Christian activism is a clear example of trying to externally impose Christian values on a people that have no taste for it rather than expending efforts to reach them with the Truth of salvation that can change them from within. Such political warfare consumes much of the funds that would ordinarily be used in reaching the masses with the Gospel of Christ thus weakening that most important effort. In the end, such militancy can also adversely affect the church as it dirties its hands with worldly methods and neglects prayer, which should be its first recourse.

The social mandate of the Church extends out of the Gospel mandate. That is, as we reach more and more people with the Gospel, society benefits and slowly changes from within. Perhaps political activism is motivated by the temporal church's impatience with the slow progress of the Gospel in affecting change when in fact the church has only grown weak in its efforts to fulfill the Gospel mandate. Prayer has become perfunctory as if it had no power to affect genuine change. Though often undertaken with the best of intentions, political activism is ultimately doomed to failure because it does not fundamentally change society — it only attempts to impose Christian ethical restrictions on it from without.

Hate Speech Laws

For some time it has been the habit of political progressives to refer to unpleasant situations and conditions using a different word or phrase to spin it to seem much more pleasant than it actually is to avoid speaking of it in such a way as to offend anyone. This spin is commonly referred to as "political correctness" (or simply PC). For instance, when referring to a physically handicapped person they would instead be referred to as being "physically challenged, and the insane or mentally retarded would instead be referred to as "mentally challenged."

Although many accepted this spin as a polite way of speaking, this kind of subterfuge can also be used to deliberately hide immoral or debased activities leading to serious social failings under a barrage of pleasant-sounding language. Pro-abortion advocates for example are

commonly referred to as advocating "freedom of choice," when what they actually advocate is the death of the unborn in massive numbers. Not surprisingly, some political progressives would also seek to make the use of politically correct language mandatory through enforceable laws to provide an impenetrable cover for their neo-pagan agenda.

Many atheists and neo-pagans who viewed Christianity as a dogmatic and arrogant faith, which was highly offensive to the beliefs and activities of everyone outside their immediate circle, sought to widen hate-crime laws[347] to prohibit any ***Christian speech*** that could remotely be viewed as being offensive to anyone outside the Christian faith. That effort was a determined move to prevent any moral or religious outcry being made through Christian political activism concerning the depraved activities of an increasingly neo-pagan citizenry — specifically members of the highly vocal homosexual community — in an effort to eventually normalize depravity into an accepted standard.

The very fact that the First Amendment of the *U.S. Constitution*[348] sought to protect free speech certifies that necessary speech could at times be objectionable to someone or it obviously would not need to be protected at all. Furthermore, the placement of this clause within the First Amendment makes it quite clear that the protected speech being referred to is political and/or religious in nature — the very kind of speech that hate-speech laws would seek to prohibit.

With the enactment of federal hate-speech laws, even a statement that was made in opposition to the moral views or criminal actions of others, no matter how debased their activities may be, could be interpreted as a federal criminal offense. Repeatedly speaking out against the depraved convictions of any group of individuals could be construed as criminal activity on a par with racketeering, rather than it being a matter of protected intellectual debate.

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[347] See Hate Crime Legislation, page 417

[348] See The First Amendment, page 452

Accordingly, a mainstream Christian minister that publicly differentiated Christianity from his pulpit as being unique and superior to any other religion would not only be considered personally intolerant, but he could also be found guilty of committing hate speech. The reading aloud of chapter 1 of Romans would almost certainly be prohibited by law as well, since it expressly condemns the practice of homosexuality by characterizing those who practice such acts as having a "reprobate mind" (Ro. 1:28).

However, the converse wherein a person who revels in his or her moral depravity or a person who is an advocate of any other religious conviction speaks out harshly against the ethical beliefs of mainstream Christianity would be allowable. It would be considered a valid exercise of protected free speech rights no matter how hatefully it was expressed simply because of that person's minority status. In this way, all moral opposition could be silenced while the neo-pagan movement could be freely advanced without interference in the United States under the full protection of federal law.

Continued Moral Decline of the 1990's

The conservative trend that had begun with the election of Ronald Reagan at the beginning of the previous decade had run its course in the 1990's after the fall of the Berlin wall and after the cold war threat had subsided. Seeing the new decade as a permissive opportunity, a more liberal-minded populace elected William Clinton to the office of president of the United States. The last decade of the twentieth century was characterized by various socialist trends and the immorality that such trends tend to foster. So much so, that when the president himself was found guilty of unspeakable sexual immorality and then attempted to cover it up with a lie in court, he remained in office to finish his term. As the saying was at the time, "personal character does not matter" in the election of individuals to public office. Rather than treating the root cause of the moral degeneration, it was more popular to treat its symptoms with tolerance. If sin could not be defeated, it should merely be declared the norm.

Devaluation of Marriage

Because of the moral decline, there was an increase in abortion on demand, and homosexuality was considered a personal choice of lifestyle. Even the legitimizing of so-called same-sex marriages had begun. Since the fall of Adam, man has been born with an appetite to sin and that sin is expressed in many ways in the human race. Only in that sense can we say that one is born a homosexual. We could as easily say that one is born a liar, a thief, or a murderer. The homosexual community demanded special legal privileges so that they could continue to practice their particular sin with impunity. Divorce and co-habitation without the benefit of marriage was so common that many did not even consider marriage a reasonable alternative.

Increased Drug Abuse

Drug abuse by this time had increased to alarming proportions. With the devaluation of marriage, homosexuality became widespread which further encouraged the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. The most dreaded of those diseases was AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), which is a terminal disease with no known cure. Even those who were not infected needed to pay the price by caring for those who were. While efforts were underway to find a cure, the most that could be hoped for was an extension of life at a very high material cost for the drugs needed to do so. Since most of those individuals could not afford such treatment, it was a further drain on the national economy as government welfare paid the bill.

Pragmatic Acceptance of Gambling

Gambling, once recognized for the evil that it is and the additional corruption that it generates, spread throughout the land even including the Bible belt as state governments saw gambling as a means to create more revenue for the funding of growing social programs. States developed state lotteries, opened horse tracks, allowed pari-mutuel betting, and even allowed state regulated casino gambling. Every sin that man commits results in a degradation of that person and the society in which he or she lives. Gambling is certainly no exception.

Anarchy Tending toward Violence

As the Christian ethic was rapidly being replaced with neo-pagan values, moral decline and drug abuse was on the increase to the extent that anarchy began replacing the concept of liberty existing within a framework of law. As violence inevitably sprang out of that anarchy, more and stricter laws were enacted by state and federal legislatures in an effort to combat the increasing violence, thus giving more power to government agencies over the liberties of the people in the wake of that legislation.

The Second Amendment

Fear of the establishment of a future tyrannical national government or a government-established church of the type they had experienced in Europe was of such concern to the founders of the United States that the Second Amendment to the *U. S. Constitution* was added to the *Bill of Rights*. The Text of the Second Amendment reads as follows:

> **"A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."**

The Second Amendment allowed the general public to keep and bear arms in order to secure their state and nation by force if that should ever become absolutely necessary. As a government of the people, it was more than their right to do so; it was their sacred duty to ensure the future existence of a nation of free men. As Thomas Jefferson is quoted as having said, "When governments fear the people, there is liberty. When the people fear the government, there is tyranny." It is, of course, quite proper and necessary for human government to legislate just laws and establish organized police forces to control the criminal element and maintain civil tranquility for the safety of all its citizens. Nevertheless, should the scope of police powers become excessive, tyranny is the inevitable result.

Nationalization of State Militias

Unchecked in its growth, the federal government later nationalized various existing state militias or state guard units into the National Guard through the Militia Act of 1903 to serve as a reserve military force for the national military. Through the National Defense Act of 1933, all state guard units could then be federalized. Although not expressly stated, those acts served to stem the possibility of any future state withdrawing from the union, or of a possible armed uprising of individual states against the national government in order to retain their constitutional rights. During the civil rights movement, many units of the National Guard were federalized and used against their own state governments to enforce the dictates of various national Civil Rights Acts.[349] In a practical sense, therefore, the only real concern government officials need face today from its citizens is the fear of not being reelected to office.

Gun Control Laws

As violent street crime increased along with a growing fear of radical secret militias, there was a renewed cry for increased gun control to stem the tide of violence. An increasingly frightened citizenry had by that time become all too willing to give up many of their basic freedoms in exchange for what they falsely perceived as the physical safety of a totally disarmed society. Inasmuch as the root cause of violence is to be found deep within the unregenerated hearts of men, which Christ alone can cure, the government attempted to control the symptoms, leading to the enactment of various gun-control laws. Those regulations also restricted the rights of individual law-abiding citizens to keep and bear arms for legal hunting and/or their personal protection.

While the Supreme Court of the United States has upheld the Second Amendment against any serious infringement upon the right of individual citizens to bear arms so far, a future shift in the makeup of the court through presidential appointment of progressive activist

[349] See Civil Rights Acts, page 416

judges could eventually change the court's ruling toward total disarmament of all private individuals in order to protect the federal government from its own citizens. That would of course turn the Second Amendment on its head much in the same way that the First Amendment is already being interpreted to protect government against the moral guidance of Christian virtues.

The Militant Challenge of Islam

As financial pressures began to have a serious effect upon the economies of the western world, a radical Muslim group founded by Osama bin Laden and known as Al-Qaeda sprung out of the earlier war with Russia in Afghanistan. Its primary goals were and are the establishment of Sharia law[350] throughout the world, the political unification of all nations under a restored Caliphate, and the elimination of Israel as a political state. In New York, on February 26, 1993, a group of conspirators headed up by Sheik Omar Abdel-Rachman attempted to topple tower one of the World Trade Center into tower two with a 1500 pound urea-nitrate bomb planted in a rented Ryder van. The van was driven into the parking garage beneath building one by Ramzi Yousef, who had engineered the bomb, and an Al-Qaeda companion. Six people died, and one thousand more were injured in the explosion. All of the conspirators were caught and sentenced to long prison terms, and most citizens falsely assumed that the issue had been isolated to one single radical group of Muslims. Throughout the decade however, Al-Qaeda continued to fund and execute still more attacks against United States interests abroad in the world.

It was not until the World Trade Center was successfully attacked and destroyed on September 11, 2001 by radical terrorist members of Al-Qaeda that Americans became seriously concerned about the threat of Islam at all. Most citizens still are unaware of what

[350] Shariah is Islamic law based upon and interpreted from the Qur'an and the hadith, which is a book of the sayings of Muhammad, strictly applied to both private and public lives of individuals. See Universal Sharia Law, page 515

is at stake because they see religion as a private matter that need not directly affect social and political life. The political liberal merely seeks to attain peaceful coexistence with Islamic states in the hope that that approach will eventually thwart any further attacks by its extreme elements. If coexistence is not possible, it becomes necessary to root out the more extreme elements by force while leaving fundamental Islam intact. Unfortunately, the now unveiled traditional hatred for Christians and Jews goes to the very heart of the religion of Islam as we briefly stated earlier when we discussed the founding of the movement (The Rise of Mohammedanism (A.D. 632), page 180).

The Judeo-Christian ethic long adopted by much of the western world is diametrically opposed to Islam in essence and principle as can be clearly seen by comparing the beliefs of the two religions side by side. [351] As long as militant Islamic ideology exists along side Judeo-Christian belief and ethic, there can be no lasting peace in the world. As has been demonstrated in this study, Islamic Jihad involves much more than a battle of ideas since it must ultimately erupt in violence. As Jesus himself said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Mat 10:34).

Western Response to Radical Islamic Terrorism

In response to the murderous attack made by Islamic terrorists on the World Trade Center in September of 2001, the United States military soon invaded Afghanistan with the support of most of the western world. This was done in an attempt to eliminate Osama bin Laden and the Taliban who were harboring and supporting Al-Qaeda militants in Afghanistan. To this date, Osama bin Laden has not been found alive nor is there any proof of his death. Moreover, strong remnants of Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants continue to attack U.S. and coalition personnel remaining in Afghanistan from isolated border

[351] It is not within the scope of this writing to do a comparative analysis of the Islamic religion with Christianity. For an excellent and scholarly comparison of the beliefs of both, it is recommended that one read *Answering Islam* by Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, Baker Books.

areas of neighboring Pakistan where they have found safe haven among local Islamic tribesmen.

On March 20, 2003, the United Sates invaded the Islamic nation of Iraq. The express reason given for the invasion was to eliminate various weapons of mass destruction that U.S. intelligence as well as various other intelligence agencies around the world indicated was being stockpiled by its regime, and to eliminate the possibility of Saddam Hussein's support being given to Islamic terrorist groups that might zealously use those weapons against non-Islamic nations. Hussein repeatedly and consistently refused to disclose the location of any weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, he would not allow the western world to verify their elimination or absence through United Nation's inspection teams. Finally, the patience of the United States Bush administration came to an end.

Although the invasion by military units of the United States and Britain that were assisted by smaller units contributed by Australia, Poland, and Denmark, succeeded in toppling Saddam Hussein's regime, the invasion was not supported by most of the world, and no weapons of mass destruction were ever found. It would appear that Saddam Hussein was merely bluffing the United Nations, and in doing so guarding against any appearance of weakness before his hostile Iranian neighbor.

The invasion, mounted as it was by non-Islamic nations, was not welcomed as a liberation effort by Iraq's populace, as many in the west apparently believed that it would. Competing internal Islamic religious factions within the country that had been held in check by the tyrannical Hussein regime rose up against what was viewed as an invasion of infidels. They also turned to fight against each other and against the newly established government that was purported to be based upon democratic principles. That insurrection was aided by various Islamic terrorists that crossed over the Iraqi border, primarily from Iran and Syria, to wage war on western military personnel.

The insurgency succeeded in maiming and taking the life of many U.S. and coalition personnel over time as well as requiring a tremendous expenditure of money that went into a continuing conflict and occupation now lasting over seven years. Although violence

recently has subsided sufficiently that a U.S. military withdrawal is currently beginning, there is no assurance that the insurgency is not lying in wait for that to take place after which they may effectively renew their efforts.

Chapter 19.4 The Dimmed and Faltering Lamp

As the twentieth century came to an end, the United States had moved very far away from its humble beginnings, which began when the Pilgrims aboard the *Mayflower* first set foot on American soil at Plymouth. The great hope of establishing a "shining city on a hill" founded by God and occupied by godly men and women that was expressed by John Winthrop[352] was made difficult from the beginning as Satan worked behind the scenes to corrupt the effort. Even as the Holy Spirit later began a great work to redeem increasing numbers of lost colonials during the Great Awakening[353], Satan was there to accelerate it out of control.

During the war for independence, moral and religious infidelity had invaded the young colonies through their close association with France and its Renaissance corruptions. Once the war for independence was won, the Second Awakening[354] soon began, but it was also perverted as it struggled its way through various institutions of higher learning. During that period and the time that followed it, we saw a rapid radicalization of the reformed Christian faith take place as additional reform efforts were being carried forward on waves of wild emotion rather than it being based upon a solid biblical foundation.

Even in the founding document of the United States, Satan had succeeded in placing an article in its text permitting the importation of slave labor[355] for two decades, which would later lead to the devastating War Between the States. That war severely divided and corrupted the nation spiritually, ultimately leading to religious pluralism in its aftermath. Even as Christian churches and institutions came under pressure from various radical religious notions, a legal

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[352] See page 281

[353] See The Great Awakening, page 291

[354] See The Second Awakening, page 327

[355] See The Slavery Clause. page 319

attack on the first amendment, contained in the *Bill of Rights*, took place through atheistic progressive organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union. Their efforts in successfully eradicating any vestiges of Christianity in public education and governmental institutions was made all the easier by the faltering faith of American churches that had drifted far away from sound biblical doctrines in favor of warm fuzzy religious humanism. Temporal churches continued to corrupt themselves as they increasingly embraced basic tenets of neo-paganism in order to justify their existence in a growing neo-pagan society.

While this book is not primarily about politics but a study of the history of Christianity, the political institutions of the nation had been seriously altered when a sound Christian faith no longer motivated a majority of its leaders. Even as the spiritual light of the once "shining city" born in God's grace was fading, the bright torch of individual liberty that Christianity had fueled was faltering as well. As Christianity became increasingly radicalized in the highly pluralistic nation, and the concerted attack to eradicate any vestiges of the true Christian faith gained increased momentum, the United States inevitably declined politically. The Christian foundation crumbled beneath many of its once noble institutions, as U.S. politics was transformed from a Christian into a neo-pagan paradigm. Neo-pagan politics had become the motivating force in the nation replacing God's grace and providence.

Although we must necessarily discuss revolutionary political movements within the United States in this chapter, we must keep in mind that great spiritual failings underlie and motivate them. This is where our study of the Christian faith has inevitably led us in order that we may be better able to understand what has brought about future apocalyptic events when we discuss them in Section 20 of this book. The following dissertation is intended to be a candid analysis of current financial and political events derived from a carefully considered Christian perspective to help achieve that understanding.

Socialist Tendencies in the United States

For more than two centuries, reformed evangelical Christianity had peacefully coexisted with the free enterprise system of the United States. Economic freedom actually bolstered religious freedoms and in turn, religious freedom bolstered the sense of liberty found within free enterprise and a free society in general. It is apparent however, that evangelical Christianity cannot coexist with an ultimate socialist state since true Christianity and humanistic socialism represents a complete antithesis of world-views, principles, and goals. For that reason, Christian leaders and lay people in all walks of life have always strongly opposed any suggestion of activities leaning toward socialism in any form.

Nevertheless, the socialist movement in the United States dates back to 1874 with a group of socialists known as the Workingman's Party, which later changed its name to the Socialist Labor Party. The Socialist Labor Party then merged with the Social Democratic Party in 1912 to form the Socialist Party of America. At one time, that organization boasted 100,000 members, but that number had fallen dramatically by 1950. Early advocates of socialism were Susan B. Anthony who headed up the women's suffrage movement, as well as George Bernard Shaw, and even the noted physicist Albert Einstein. The American Civil Liberties Union was formed in 1920 out of a larger socialist movement opposing World War I.[356]

Although the United States is still considered a uniquely capitalist nation wherein all industry is owned and operated by individual citizens, the largest single employer in the United States is the federal government. Moreover, there have been many instances in the past when the government succeeded in co-opting various aspects of private enterprise under the banner of public necessity during various crisis periods. Additional issues that were used to do so included altruistic concerns over racism, workers rights, widespread poverty, inadequate healthcare, and the much more nebulous term

[356] See The American Civil Liberties Union, page 452

"general public welfare" as we have already discussed at various places in this book. [357]

The Ultra-progressive Movement (ca. 2000)

Growing progressive activism opposing any elements of conservative thought remaining within various religious, social, and economic institutions in the United States eventually led to a concerted political effort to harness that activism and integrate it into a broader political socialist movement. The populous base for this ultra-progressive movement was formed earlier by liberal-progressive professors within various prestigious universities who had corrupted the worldview of their students such that Christian principles had been erased from their minds and replaced instead with humanist elitism. Moreover, the largely uneducated masses, brought about as a consequence of the abject moral failure of primary public education, readily embraced socialism as a way to exploit the government to obtain more free benefits without effort even while the humanist elite put forth socialist ideals as a way to gain firm political control over the masses.

Democratic Socialism

By the year 2000, an ultra-liberal humanist element advocating a modified form of democratic socialism began to dominate the political scene in the United States. Rather than an overt effort to gain control, the element began to infiltrate both the Democratic and Republican parties. Though the Republican party was not unaffected, the Democratic party, which was already under the control of a large number of liberal progressives, was easily infiltrated and taken over by the socialists to achieve their own ends. While democratic socialism advocates governmental ownership of all means of economic production, the modified form espoused by those of the ultra-progressive movement initially only sought greater governmental control of private enterprise through much higher taxes on the wealthy

[357] See: The Social Gospel (ca. 1890–), page 360, The Great Depression Era, page 381, Great Society Programs of the 1960's, page 416

in order to extend a vast governmental social program as well as imposing extensive regulation on current business enterprises.

Such regulations would range from esoteric environmental impact matters to how businesses are allowed to choose and retain their employees. Under this extreme agenda it could eventually become impossible to refuse anyone employment on any basis or to fire them for any reason once they were employed.[358] That would stymie personal initiative and effectively disable the Christian work ethic (cf. Ex. 20:9; Ep. 4:28; Col. 3:23 etc.) that has served this nation so well. Inasmuch as production would fall dramatically causing businesses to fail over time, the government could eventually justify nationalization of businesses and additionally create its own enterprises in order to fill the public need for various products, services, and jobs thus bringing in democratic socialism in its classic sense.

Neo-pagan Special Interest

Riding on the wave of this ultra-progressive trend, various special interest groups holding extremely immoral positions began taking their agendas directly to the electorate in such a way as to make political conservatism seem to be radical and bigoted rather than embracing mainstream American thought. Through that means, abortion proponents further elevated their "pro-choice" propaganda efforts to seem a moral norm. The homosexual lobby also gained social prominence as it continued its efforts to legalize so-called "gay marriages"[359] based on equal rights of individuals to enjoy the economic privileges of marriage regardless of their sexual orientation.

Globalism

As progressive liberalism that tended increasingly toward socialism began to become a major movement in the United States,

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[358] The disastrous economic results of democratic socialism can already be seen in many European nations such as Sweden and France.

[359] See footnote 242, page 350.

many in that nation began to view themselves as "citizens of the world" even as the earlier doctrine of the sovereign right of nations began to recede throughout the world. In its place, a stronger worldwide socialist government was increasingly being advocated through a more robust United Nations. National borders were increasingly being viewed as unnecessarily restrictive of a basic right of individuals to live and move about wherever they pleased.

As illegal immigrants continued to pour over the border from Mexico into the United States, the progressive Democratic party catered to them in an attempt to increase its voter base among Hispanics even as the Republican party caved in to the demands of business for cheap labor. Only the overriding concern that enemy agents could gain entry into the United States to carry out disastrous acts on the order of the earlier destruction of the World Trade Center prevented an open border policy.

Funding for Massive Socialist Programs

Because of the progressive nature of federal income tax brackets, coupled with a large number of allowable deductions, approximately half of the United States citizenry today pay no federal income taxes whatsoever. As the nineteenth century French thinker and historian Alexis de Tocqueville noted, "A democratic government is the only one in which those who vote for a tax can escape the obligation to pay it." That fact has created a sharp divide that has worked its way well into the politics of the nation such that those who pay no taxes repeatedly vote for ultra-progressives who advocate increasing the benefits received from government in order to secure their own reelection. Those of this number who vote for ultra-progressives are benefiting from the redistribution of wealth even as they become increasingly dependent upon government handouts. Some not only do not pay taxes, they regularly receive unearned income through various social credits paid directly to them annually. Again quoting de Tocqueville, "The American Republic will endure until the day Congress discovers that it can bribe the public with the public's money." That day has now come, and the Republic is most assuredly at great risk.

All of this redistribution of wealth has a negative impact upon the overall growth of national wealth since earnings by productive individuals rapidly reach a point of diminishing returns through taxation. More conservative politicians who advocate lowering taxes in order to spur economic growth through increased employment and production find themselves fighting a losing battle as the demographic of their more affluent supporters shrinks in size below fifty percent of the voting public.

It is apparent that socialism was encouraged through the program that the federal government uses to raise revenues. Although many conservatives have advocated a flat rate tax or some form of national sales tax on consumption replacing income tax to better equalize the tax burden, there is little hope that any such program would ever be passed by even a moderately progressive U.S. congress. Higher bracket rates have occasionally been readjusted downward by more conservative congresses in order to spur economic growth, but the Sixteenth Amendment[360] has never been repealed thus providing a virtually inexhaustible amount of capital for the continued expansion of the federal government and its growing social programs.

Mounting Economic Pressures

Extensive socialist programs introduced within an otherwise capitalist nation inevitably bring forth burdensome economic pressures. Once those programs were introduced, it became practically impossible to dissolve them. Therefore, problems arising from them resulted in still more socialist programs being offered up as a solution, thus compounding the problem.

Health Insurance Crisis

During the last half of the twentieth century, the working middle class most often received medical benefits through health insurance purchased by their employers even as the cost of medical care skyrocketed due to great scientific advances in technology. These

[360] See The Sixteenth Amendment, page 378

social benefits were largely the result of labor union negotiations. Small business owners were of course required to provide for their own health insurance, and in order to retain their valued employees many also provided medical insurance for them as well. As the high cost of health insurance became exceedingly burdensome to employers, many employees found their benefits being cut or eliminated by management requiring them to purchase their own insurance on the open market or do without. Many found that they had no choice but to do without insurance for basic and even essential medical care.

The worsening medical crisis, spurred on by increasing costs of rapidly advancing medical technology, opened the door for the government to further expand socialist activities through a form of universal healthcare, paid for by the government through general taxation, for every man, woman, and child. Such programs have already been implemented in other nations, but as of the date this is being written, no such program has been implemented in the United States — though it is currently being proposed.[361] Such programs place an extreme burden on the taxpayer and have a widespread detrimental effect on the overall quality of healthcare in general.

The Forced Energy Crisis

By the turn of the twenty-first century, the United States had found itself largely dependent upon oil for its primary source of energy. Environmentalism[362] had prevented it from developing large amounts of nuclear power, drilling for domestic oil that the nation has in abundance, or continuing to use its vast natural gas and coal resources. As energy needs rose dramatically, it found itself transferring its national wealth in alarming amounts to Islamic nations as well as various other unfriendly nations that controlled vast oil resources and sought to do the nation harm. With the monetary wealth

[361] See Sociopolitical Climate (2009–2010), page 492

[362] Also see Environmentalism, page 511

gained from the sale of oil, Islamic nations then bought into various economic sectors of opposing nations ranging from their company stocks to real estate in order to gain internal control. The tightly controlled availability of oil was easily used as an effective weapon aimed directly at the United States and free world economy.

Moreover, the world oil crisis had pried open a door through which the government could expand its socialist activities in the exploration of various exotic means of energy production through government-funded programs. There were even some hints that some in the congress would be first willing to heavily tax and then even to nationalize large oil companies — the owners of which were increasingly being characterized as greedy oil barons. That would of course have only further reduced oil exploration and production driving up the cost of motor fuel even further.

The Anti-war Crusade of the Social Elite

While many citizens had protested U.S. involvement in the earlier Korean and Viet Nam conflicts, such protests were largely based upon philosophical ideals that opposed all warfare as a moral principle. The extreme unpopularity of the Iraq conflict again put fuel to the fire of anti-war activism in the United States as well as providing an opportunity for ultra-progressives to obtain positions of political power in the United States government. The opposition mounted by ultra-progressives to the war on terrorism was largely based upon its economic cost, although the cost in human lives was put in the forefront to enlist the American public in support of that opposition. Though many progressive members of the U.S. Congress had voted to permit the invasion of Iraq prior to the time of the invasion, many then claimed to have been lied to by the Bush administration regarding the validity of various intelligence reports.

Because the war on terrorism in Iraq was stealing economic resources at an alarming rate that the ultra-progressive wanted to fund its massive social programs, the Iraq war was held up by ultra-progressives as an example of the failure of conservatism to understand the intrinsic worth of every man on earth regardless of his radical bent. Terrorists were often characterized as freedom fighters,

and were represented as being victims rather than aggressors. In such a way, the humanist liberal element gave comfort and encouragement to the enemy even as the death of every American soldier was used against the current U.S. conservative administration to serve ultra-progressive political ends.

The ultra-progressive put forth the old argument of appeasement as the means to avoid all wars, and they therefore put forth any attempt to stem the advance of radical Islam through military means as not only unwise but a violation of basic human rights afforded all individuals regardless of their radical leanings. As the American military death toll rose in Iraq, the then current president, George W. Bush, was easily set up as a scapegoat who could be blamed for the war and its economic consequences and in doing so pave the way for more ultra-progressive congressmen and congresswomen to be elected. That hope was realized as the new ultra-progressive political element gained control of both the U.S. House and Senate in 2006 and began the attempt to institute its radical agenda in 2007 while entertaining still further hopes of gaining executive branch control in the 2008 presidential election.

The Financial Collapse of 2008

Even as the Republican administration succeeded in keeping taxes relatively low in the first eight years of the new millennium in order to spur economic growth, the continual pressure to spend more money on various governmental social programs increased. Moreover, massive sums of capital were continually going into the Iraq war effort as well as into shoring up homeland security to stave off additional terrorist attacks. The continuing addiction to and purchase of foreign oil at an alarming rate took billions out of the economy every month. Even nature added to the nation's financial woes as massive hurricanes displaced large numbers of people from their homes and damaged and destroyed property along the Gulf Coast. The only bright spot in the U.S. economy seemed to be the booming housing market that fueled optimism and bolstered consumer confidence. However, that optimism and confidence was about to fall abruptly.

The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977

In 2008, a financial crisis of unprecedented magnitude was precipitated on the American people. It had its roots in the mortgage market as loans were being made to people who had no reasonable ability to repay them. This was being sanctioned as a consequence of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), passed during the first year of the James (Jimmy) Carter presidential administration in 1977, and later amendments that were ostensibly designed to ensure that everyone in the United States could own their own home regardless of their financial means to do so. This was obviously a highly socialist concept that would over time bring about unintended and very serious consequences.

Local lending institutions were soon being forced to make sub-prime loans through the political pressures of such activist groups as the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) through picketing and "sit-ins" of various bank lobbies. ACORN insisted that the CRA required Banks to do this, and banks caved in under the pressure. Because those FHA mortgages were not profitable to hold on their own books, banks soon sold them to one of two quasi-governmental agencies.

The first of those was the Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA — a.k.a. Fannie Mae), created in 1938 to provide liquidity and funds for the mortgage market during the Great Depression era. The second was the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (FHLMC—a.k.a. Freddie Mac), created later in 1970 to buy, bundle, and resell mortgage packages to individual investors as mortgage backed securities on the open market. As these quasi-governmental agencies absorbed the bad debt, more money was freed up for banks and other primary lending institutions to make still additional mortgages.

Since there was an easy way to dump bad loans with governmental approval through the CRA, greed soon abounded in those who received commissions on the writing of mortgages. Over time, lending practices in the primary mortgage market became increasingly "innovative" through the issuance of various sub-standard

loans. Many mortgages required no down payment by the borrower, had extremely low but temporary and adjustable interest rates on the principal, or even constituted "interest only loans" that required the borrower to pay only the interest due for a specified period after which payment on the principal was required in subsequent months. Such wild lending schemes created mortgages that were increasingly less profitable over time, even as greater numbers of unqualified people bought into the housing market.

The Artificially Induced Construction Boom

Innovative credit schemes also seduced many otherwise qualified homebuyers into purchasing expensive homes that were beyond both their needs and financial means. Because of accelerating home prices driven upward by contrived demand, many were able to buy homes, live in them, and then resell them a very short time later at considerable profit. With the proceeds from that sale, they bought homes that were even more expensive and continued the process that was generally known as "flipping." The growing shortage of existing houses initiated a lucrative construction boom that was soon experienced nationwide in concert with the inflated demand.

It was, of course, inevitable that the rapidly expanding bubble of home prices must eventually burst and collapse as it finally did in late 2006. As mortgage interest rates began to increase, many who held adjustable-rate mortgages found their monthly payments increasing. Insurance rates and property taxes also increased greatly as did the cost of energy ranging from gasoline to fuel vehicles to the energy used to heat and cool homes. Expected increases in household income were not forthcoming in a sufficient amount to cover the exponential rise in expenses. Mortgage defaults increased even as home values reversed their rapid upward trend and began a freefall.

The value of houses that were previously used as collateral no longer covered mortgage balances. To make matters worse, many homeowners had used the equity in their homes to obtain an equity line of credit that they used as credit cards. Homeowners could not even realize enough money from the shrinking equity in their house to pay off their mortgage balance if they were forced to sell their homes

at current market value. Consequently, a great number of houses remained on the market at a price that no buyer was willing to pay. Many purchasers seeing their home equity vanish just walked away from mortgages whose principal balance far exceeded the current value of their homes. As banks and other lending institutions foreclosed, they were burdened with a mountain of non-collectable debt in exchange for deflated properties that they could not sell.

The Financial Market Freeze

In September of 2008, the mortgage crisis finally came to a head as the growing toxic debt finally overflowed the mortgage cesspools of both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac necessitating a massive government bailout with taxpayer funds. Federally imposed bookkeeping rules had required those institutions to value mortgages at current market value of the collateral property, not mark them at the principal balance that was still owed by the purchaser. That rule progressively inflated the value of home mortgage instruments as long as market values were increasing, but seriously deflated them when market prices began falling. When the housing market finally froze up, mortgage instruments became virtually worthless on paper even though payments were still being regularly met by most borrowers.

Due to further re-bundling and slicing of toxic mortgage instruments by various investment companies, no one could be sure what any of mortgage-backed securities were worth. Many banks and investment companies that held those debts and derivatives of those debts went into bankruptcy. Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) and 401K retirement funds that had invested in those instruments dropped dramatically in value. Pension funds that had also considered those investments backed by the U.S. government and therefore safe were bordering on insolvency.

Federal Intervention

Larger institutions including insurance companies were necessarily shored up by government monies to prevent a systemic collapse of the entire financial system. Finally, the huge American International Group (AIG) became leveraged to the U.S. government

in the order of eighty percent of its value to prevent its failure that would have had worldwide financial consequences. It was judged that it was just too big to let it fail. As underlying company stocks began a meteoric fall in value, even routine borrowing from banks that was routinely needed to fuel American enterprise was halted as the credit market all but froze up.

President George W. Bush was presented with a disastrous situation that was impossible to evaluate. Though he considered himself to be a conservative, he quickly caved in to a progressive solution to head off the expected disaster, which was predicted as being inevitable should the government do nothing. The government quickly worked out an initial plan to purchase, with 700 billion dollars of taxpayers' money, all the bad mortgage debt that was clogging the financial market in order that the U.S. banking system could continue to lend and function. However, due to the uncertainty of its worth that plan proved to be technically impossible. In an attempt to induce banks to begin lending more quickly, the government instead infused a large amount of that money directly into larger banks and lending institutions in exchange for preferred stock, which immediately constituted a quasi-government ownership — another decisive move away from free market capitalism and toward socialism.

The Economic Recession

In the aftermath of the collapse, the public began to tighten its purse strings because of job uncertainty in the prospect of a grim economic future. That reduced spending forced many retail companies to cut back on their workforce, as the actual layoff of retail workers began. Still more were laid off as the industries that supplied consumer goods severely reduced production in the face of falling demand. Many retailers and industries were forced into bankruptcy. Many state governments soon found themselves in need of financial assistance due to decreasing revenues obtained from state sales and income taxes, and an increasing number of major industrial enterprises such as the big three U.S. automotive manufacturers also had their hands out for federal funds.

In Retrospect

When the government interceded to make the financial failure of certain financial enterprises impossible, it only further encouraged the corrupt practice that had caused the collapse. For that reason the U.S. stock market did not immediately respond in the positive way that was intended by that action. It must be noted here that capitalism can excel only as long as free enterprise is not handicapped with impossible goals of social engineering set by progressive government policies. Unwise investment practices should never be encouraged by government as it had been through the Community Reinvestment Act. The desire for reasonable personal gain through investment in a properly regulated but otherwise free market is always tempered by the risk of failure when that reasonable desire instead becomes abject greed. Failure as well as success must not be inhibited in any way for a free market to function properly.

Political Fallout from the Economic Collapse

The emergency intrusion of funds into financial institutions and private enterprise turned out to be the wedge that the ultra-progressive movement had been waiting for in order to push through their highly radical socialist agenda as a cure for the supposed failure of capitalism. The political fallout of the economic collapse upon the 2008 presidential election was immediate as many of the more gullible members of the electorate ironically viewed the collapse as an inherent failure of the entire capitalist system when in fact it had been prior social engineering that had set up the conditions for the collapse. The strong political conservatism that had characterized the Ronald Reagan era of the 1980's had long before lost most of its resonance even within the Republican Party.

The highly liberal-progressive Democratic candidate for president, Barack Obama ran on a platform of "fundamentally transforming America." Few of the electorate apparently realized that this was not mere political rhetoric, but that he actually stood for a radical change in they nation's system of government that would replace capitalism with a form of socialism. Obama rapidly gained a

dominating lead in the polls over Republican candidate John McCain. Ironically, the atypically far less conservative Republican candidate was being tagged as advocating the same administrative methods as the current Republican president that had allowed the financial disaster to occur on his watch.

Regardless of which presidential candidate would ultimately win the 2008 election, the nation would never be the same again after such extreme governmental intrusion into financial markets — although the ultra-progressivism that had infiltrated the Democratic Party would more rapidly accelerate the move toward socialism. Clouding the real issues of the election was the fact that Barack Obama was the first-ever African-American candidate for the office of president and the first ever woman Republican vice-presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, was a little known governor from Alaska whose casual style did not fit in with Washington D.C. elitism nor did it fit the typical feminist prototype.

Barack Obama claimed to be a Christian, but inasmuch as his father was a devout Muslim, he was also seen to retain favorable attitudes toward Islam if not actually engaging in its practice. He was also closely identified with black liberation theology[363] inasmuch as he had attended a church for many years that was pastored by a friend and confidant the Rev. Jeremiah Wright who was an outspoken radical proponent of that doctrine. Political and religious conservatives consistently pointed out not only those troubling connections, but also the fact that he had been associated in his past community-organizing days with various political radicals who had supported communist and anarchical causes. One of those men, Bill Ayers, was an unapologetic member of the Weather Underground a radical left-wing group that had engaged in bombing attacks of federal government buildings and various banks in the early 1970s. Obama also had close ties with ACORN[364] whose voter registration drive was unambiguously aimed

[363] See The Birth of Black Liberation Theology, page 336 and The Civil Rights Movement (ca. 1957–), page 413

[364] See page 486 where we earlier defined ACORN

at supporting his election both legally and through various registration irregularities.

Regardless, or perhaps in some cases precisely because of his highly questionable associations, Obama was generally hailed by the African-American community as a near messianic figure that offered them hope of economic deliverance through expansive government assistance programs. The social elite of the political far left as well as the liberal-controlled media heaped their praises upon him to serve their own idealistic ends. The outcome became inevitable. Barack Obama handily won the election in November of 2008 as progressives and many conservatives alike hailed his election as an end to the dark days of a nation that had long been divided by race.

Sociopolitical Climate (2009–2010)

It was not immediately clear whether president-elect Barack Obama would succumb to the pragmatic weight of responsibility that comes with the office of president to responsibly moderate his progressive views when he took office in 2009, or whether he would instead move in concert with the ultra-progressive congress to drag the nation still further away from its capitalist roots toward democratic socialism. Statements and decisions that President Obama has made and actions of congress that he has supported since he took office now clearly demonstrate his radical socialist leanings. Without going into great detail, which is in any event beyond the scope and purpose of this book, those congressional actions to which he is allied include to date:

- 787 Billion dollars allocated by congress for a supposed economic recovery program through massive government spending[365]
- Governmental control of the financial industry through a massive infusion of public funds into the banking

[365] It should be noted that this money has so far been primarily spent for sustaining or creating additional government jobs, thus supporting the move toward socialism.

system[366]

- Rationing of energy through a program called "Cap and Trade" supposedly designed to reduce smokestack emissions, but which would tax and ration energy leading to dramatically increased energy costs[367]
- Government takeover and control of two major automotive manufacturing industries that were on the verge of bankruptcy in order to save union jobs[368]
- Government promotion of more labor unions through a program called "Card Check" thus driving up labor costs and reducing employment[369]
- Proposed government control of healthcare with strong tendencies toward adopting a monolithic taxpayer-supported single-payer system[370]

Due to proposed spending on increasingly more sociopolitical programs that are not adequately supported by taxes, the dollar must eventually become seriously deflated resulting in a massive inflation of consumer prices across the board — even as the United States becomes increasingly in debt to foreign nations such as communist China. Devaluation of the dollar means that the debt could be repaid with far weaker dollars, but that would also serve to wreck the credit rating of the United States.

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[366] Some of the financial institutions are in the process of returning those funds to the government in an attempt to function as a free enterprise once again. It is presently unclear what the government plans to do with any returned funds.

[367] See The Forced Energy Crisis, page 483 and Environmentalism, page 511

[368] Like various financial institutions, General Motors is struggling to pay back federal funds in order to gain administrative control over their own corporation once again.

[369] See Labor Unions. Page 357

[370] See Health Insurance Crisis, page 482

It soon became obvious to many independent voters as well as a few fiscally conservative Democrats that if all this unwise sociopolitical action was not halted and reversed in the near future, it would ultimately wreck capitalism in the United States as well as bankrupt the nation completely. In addition, it would lead to massive growth of government taking control over individual lives as a monolithic socialist bureaucracy automatically comes into being to oversee wide-spread social programs. Already a disturbing trend was seen as being underway through the executive appointment of a large number of special advisors or "czars" by President Obama to run various aspects of newfound areas of government control. Each of those un-elected officials constituted a serious breach in the system of government established by the *U.S. Constitution* because of their independent dictatorial power.

Supporting the bureaucracy and the programs that they oversee would eventually require massive tax increases on the middle class as well as the rich. The rich who are already paying a much greater share of government costs do not have the capacity to pay the enormous amounts of additional revenue that would be needed. Many European governments have instituted what is referred to as a Value Added Tax (VAT). This tax is paid to the government by manufacturers and companies at various stages of production beginning with raw materials and ending with retail sales. Those taxes are then surreptitiously passed on to consumers through much higher prices for products and services. Rather than replacing the income tax program with a VAT, it is most probable that a VAT would be added on top of the income tax burden in a desperate attempt to raise the massive revenue that will be required. The tax burden on U.S. society would then become debilitating seriously inhibiting commerce and actually ***decreasing*** government revenue.

Opposition Movements

Those who opposed proposed government healthcare changes were rapidly growing numerically, and they were becoming very vocal in various "town meetings" by mid 2009 because the changes being proposed to healthcare by congressional progressives involved vastly

increased taxes and individual policy costs as well as it allowing the government to gain control over life and death issues. There were some indications that the current progressive government would attempt to use their new-found power in an attempt to suppress dissent. Suppression would take place first through ridicule and derision and then, perhaps, should that not be found effective, even through dictatorial power under the pretext of maintaining civil order.

Congressional members of the minority Republican party stood together in firm opposition to extreme socialist trends, but they were powerless to stop the passage of highly progressive legislation because of their minority status in both congressional houses. Moreover, all of the major radio and TV news networks, which were themselves run and operated by progressives, played down any opposition to progressive plans as being radical and unfounded.

Nevertheless, there were a few conservative commentators that managed to present a clear view of what was at stake through independent radio programs and radio networks as well as through the Fox News Channel (FNC) on national cable television. Leading the charge on FNC to expose the progressive agenda were men such as Glenn Beck whose views were corroborated by well researched evidence and various guest appearances. So relentless was the expose that was aired over the Fox News Channel that the network began to stir the ire of many progressives in government.

As the general populace of the nation slowly began to wake up from their lethargy and began to voice independent resistance to the relentless advance of socialism, grass-roots opposition began to become more organized. Leading this grass-roots opposition was a broad conservative movement known generally as the Tea Party Movement that held locally organized rallies nationwide.[371] By the

[371] The name is derived from a revolutionary war incident in which bales of tea were dumped into the Boston harbor in protest of a high tax placed on tea by the British government. The underlying protest was in opposition to the unilateral taxation of the colonies without colonial consent or representation.

beginning of 2010, many Democratic candidates to office found themselves being replaced by conservative Republican candidates. In an important off-year election in January of 2010, the Senate seat vacated upon the death of Edward Kennedy in the historically liberal state of Massachusetts was won by Scott Brown who was a highly charismatic quasi-conservative candidate. He won election primarily on his vow to be the 41st vote against the progressive healthcare bill in the Senate in hopes of blocking its passage.

The Leap Toward Socialism

As this text was being written, it at first appeared that the healthcare agenda would turn out to be the "Achilles' heal" of the current trend toward socialism, which could at least slow down its progress for a time. However, opposition to its passage failed when progressive Democrats in the House of Representatives passed an earlier Senate bill virtually unchanged on Sunday, March 21, 2010 with a final vote of 219–212. After a brief reconciliation, it was sent to the President's desk for his signature. The bill is expected to cover 32 million more people under Medicaid to be paid for by 400 billion dollars in new taxes, plus a 500-billion-dollar cut in Medicare payments to hospitals, nursing homes, and other providers of medical care for senior citizens. Every Republican voted against the bill along with 34 Democrats, which included fiscal conservatives as well as a small block of Pro-life Democrats.

Certain provisions written into the bill could readily be interpreted in such away as to open the floodgates to government-sponsored abortions on demand. A promise by President Obama to issue an executive order blocking the law's provision from allowing government-sponsored abortions secured the passing votes, but the executive order could be successfully challenged in the courts in favor of legislative law. Moreover, it could be withdrawn at any time by the current or future Presidents. It is highly probable that the passage of this healthcare legislation will be followed up over time by further amendments to the bill leading toward a single-payer government healthcare system. As well, it could only be the first step in the passage of additional socialistic legislation to gain governmental control over

all other areas of American life from food, housing, and energy to enterprise, employment, and eventually laws affecting religious activity.

Remaining Islamic Perils and Risks

Even as economic conditions continues to worsen worldwide, zealous Islamic terrorists persisted by conducting raids of destruction against U.S. interests throughout the world, and no end to their activity is in sight because of the widespread support gained from fundamental Islamic ideology that advocates Jihad (holy war) to gain world domination. Although there is no way that isolated terrorist incidents, no matter how devastating, could defeat more superior western weaponry in a direct military conflict, the continued threats and acts of terrorism constitutes an economic war that is quite effective indeed. The effect upon the U.S. economy from war expenditures as well as the additional expense of shoring up homeland security against the prospects of future terrorist attacks conducted on U.S. soil has been to date highly effectual for the Islamic cause.

Adding to the western world's woe is the fact that various Islamic nations already have or are in the process of developing nuclear weapons capable of mass destruction. So far, the Islamic attack against western civilization has been made through conventional devices that are not all that far advanced technologically. That is likely to change dramatically in the near future as they gain mastery over both biological and nuclear technologies. For that technology to be developed, the movement must gain national status, not merely existing as isolated cells of terrorists hiding out in undeveloped areas of the world.

Afghanistan

Ever since the earlier invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 by the United States and her allies, in which the Taliban was removed from power, the Taliban, in which elements of Al-Qaeda are imbedded, continue to survive in its border areas and particularly along the border with Pakistan. U.S. and allied troops had been limited during the major conflict in Iraq making an all-out offensive

impossible. However, military and political successes in Iraq eventually allowed for a buildup of troops in Afghanistan in an effort to finally eliminate both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda from the region. On December 1, 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama escalated that engagement by sending 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has a long history of political corruption that continues into the present day thus making the government of its current President Hamid Karzai weak, ineffective, and unreliable. Although U.S. troops have recently been successful in destroying Taliban strongholds, as this is being written, the long-term political outcome remains seriously in doubt once U.S. and coalition forces begin a scheduled withdraw in mid 2011. It is possible that the Taliban is falling back until after the withdrawal takes place. Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai offered an olive branch to the Taliban in January of 2010 in the hopes of establishing a peace initiative with its top leaders. Such an effort, should it be successful, could very well push the nation back under radical Islamic control once again.

Pakistan

Pakistan is an Islamic nation that has already developed advanced nuclear weaponry. As we have already mentioned, elements of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda fled over the border from Afghanistan when U.S. and allied forces went into Afghanistan in an attempt to root out the source of international terrorism. Near the border areas of Pakistan, Islamic terrorists found safe haven within its tribal regions where they now are plotting to subvert that nation in order to gain control and use of its nuclear weapons. Because their own sovereignty is at stake, Pakistan has recently accelerated their own military efforts against the Taliban in their tribal regions with some degree of success.

Pakistan, though an Islamic nation, is presently considered an important ally in the western world's efforts to eradicate Islamic terrorism within neighboring Afghanistan. However, it is apparent that any Islamic nation must necessarily be an unreliable ally in that struggle because of the underlying religious dedication of its own people to a broader Islamic movement to place the entire world under Sharia law. Although many Muslims probably prefer to have the

submission of the world come about peacefully, Islam has never hesitated to use violent efforts through Jihad to achieve its ends in the past, nor is there any reason to believe that such deeply embedded religious zeal will abate in the future.

Iran

More troubling still is the oil-rich Islamic nation of Iran. Though apparently not quite yet a nuclear nation, it is currently bent upon the development of nuclear weapons as well as long-range missiles to deliver them in order to reach out and destroy the nation of Israel. Due to the radical nature of this fundamental Shiite ideology, it is highly probable that they would fulfill their threat at their first opportunity in order to bring in the final Caliphate under the rule of the twelfth Imam or the Mahdi.[372] Iran's current Prime Minister Ahmadinejad has often been compared to the Mahdi, but he only claims to have been directed by Allah to prepare the way for the coming of the Mahdi. This preparation would be initiated by a time of extremely violent global chaos ending in the ultimate subjugation of the worlds population to Islam.

The first logical move in bringing forth that time of chaotic horror would be for Ahmadinejad to ignite the global chaos through an Iranian effort to destroy Israel. He has repeatedly threatened to wipe Israel off the map once Iran's military strength is sufficiently built up to do so. Inasmuch as Israel cannot merely stand by and allow itself to be decimated, it very well may be that Israel will soon realize the need to launch a preemptive attack for the sake of their own survival.

Whether initiated by Iran or by Israel that conflict could well result in an exchange of both conventional and nuclear missiles that would turn the entire Middle Eastern oil fields into a blaze of destruction. As western nations are drawn into the conflict, still other Islamic nations and semi-organized jihadist groups are likely to join in the fray. From there, it is most likely that the violence will spread beyond that region throughout the rest of the world. It must be clearly

[372] See Islam, page 508

understood that this is exactly what aspiring Islam hopes to accomplish so that Mahdi can come to power. Ahmadinejad has repeatedly spoken in highly apocalyptic terms before the United Nations assembly, referring to the United States as the "great Satan" and Israel as the "little Satan," but the world generally disregards all his words as meaningless rhetorical gibberish.

Today's western nations are deeply embroiled with Islam in what is essentially the preliminary stages of World War III, but it would appear that most of the world does not yet seem to realize that fact. Only should it eventually turn into a global nuclear conflict, would it become apparent to everyone. Unlike previous wars, there would be no sovereign nation or nations to conquer and then restore to establish a lasting peace. The radical Islamic ideology is too widespread for any form of meaningful reconciliation to take place. Islam cannot stand down until the entire world is under the complete domination of universal Sharia law.[373] The very essence of world civilization is at stake from the threat of Islamic world domination and no end of that war is in sight.

Lacking any spiritual insight or indeed any knowledge of end-time events, which are discussed in Section 20 of this book, free nations of the world presently fail to understand the subversive religious nature of the war with Islam that is at hand. Instead, they only see the militant spearhead of the assault as being motivated by extreme political aspirations brought on by poverty and a lack of respect for the "peaceful" religion of Islam, even as they continue to resist the insidious effort through narrowly targeted political and military force. In that way, they are presently losing valuable ground through their lack of understanding regarding the apocalyptic religious zeal inherently underlying ***all*** of Islam, which continues to motivate the widespread effort to force the world into submission regardless of any political or military efforts to resist it.

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[373] See Universal Sharia Law, page 515

Summary of the Current Political Crisis

Inasmuch as recent political trends in the United States stem from an essentially neo-pagan worldview, it is difficult to tell with any certainty whether the adverse consequences being precipitated by the present United States congress and administration are intentional or unintentional. If they are intentional, it is most probably a determined effort to destroy capitalism and replace the present U.S. Republic with a socialist regime upon its collapse. If they are unintentional, it may be that cooler heads may yet realize that present actions must be halted before it is to late to do so.

Regardless of intent, the ultimate consequences of those trends are not yet inevitable. It may be that a newly awakened citizenry could even yet regain control of runaway government spending on socialist programs by halting or reversing those trends through the ballot box in November of 2010. Recent October polls indicate an almost certain Republican majority in the house, with a much less certain majority in the Senate. Regardless of the outcome, Republicans are unlikely to attain a veto-proof majority, thus making it difficult to overturn any existing socialistic legislation in the short term.

Should current revolutionary trends continue unabated, or should they periodically reoccur over time, thus incrementally implementing additional government social programs, they must inevitably lead to an irreversible bankruptcy of the free capitalist system in the United States. The collapse of capitalism would be followed by widespread poverty in its immediate aftermath. Christian religious freedoms currently being enjoyed by the nation's citizenry would be at risk as government bureaucrats take dictatorial control over every aspect of individual life to control panic and chaos. Reversing some of the socialist trends may not even be possible after they become firmly established because large segments of the population will become increasingly dependent upon the insidious benefits of various entitlement programs.

Because the *U.S. Constitution* cannot be arbitrarily set aside without bringing about the total collapse of government along with its obvious demise, its words are currently being reinterpreted out of

context to achieve liberal-progressive goals through judicial activism. Thus, the sound principles of government established by the founding fathers in the Constitution are no longer being upheld as inviolate but are being replaced by opposing principles representing an entirely different worldview.

It would require a spiritually awakened and motivated electorate to put into office men and women who have a firm understanding of what is at stake to reverse it. Nevertheless, fewer and fewer candidates for public office have any personal regard for the Almighty God who established the nation through his divine providence that they may lead as true statesmen, but instead they seek personal aggrandizement as political hacks through continuous reelection to office by any means available to them. The politics of the United States is no longer influenced by a strong independent Christian consensus as our founding fathers had envisioned thus undermining the Constitution of the United States as a foundational document deemed unsuitable for the guidance of the nation into a post-Christian future.

Decline of U.S. International Moral Influence

The spark of true Christian liberty, which the U.S. Republic once received as a nation under God, has already been surrendered in large part to the dark anti-Christian principles of creeping humanistic socialism. If that trend continues unabated, the ultimate failure of the U.S. Republic as a government that is led by a moral self-ruling people is most surely at hand. Under the weight of the current progressive political movement, the light of the "shining city on a hill" envisioned by our founding fathers as a beacon of the Christian faith to the entire world has all but flickered out. That light which had once made the United States of America unique in the history of the world soon will have faded out completely — even as she has turned her back on the Almighty God who graciously blessed her every endeavor after having first given her birth and breath.

As the United States eventually loses her economic dominance to foreign nations, who will have drained her of her material wealth, the United States will cease to be a dominant world power and will no

longer be able to influence world events. Lacking the means and the moral will to prevail against her sworn enemies, she must then submissively give in to various nuclear threats and terrorist demands in exchange for a nebulous hope of attaining world peace. The United States will then have become just another nation within a larger socialist world as she conforms to the humanist worldview against which she had once stood out as a bright beacon of hope.

Her decline into insignificance would pave the way for the formation of a unified world government. Moreover, it almost certainly explains why the United States of America is never mentioned or even alluded to in Bible prophecies concerning the last days prior to the return of Christ. A badly weakened United States would very likely pave the way for the formation of a worldwide socialist government (to be discussed in the next chapter) as U.S. Christian influence in the world ends. That one-world government in turn would ultimately trigger the beginning of prophetic end-time events climaxing in the rise to power of the political antichrist as a world dictator who will ultimately bring about the destruction of world civilization.

Chapter 19.5 The World Unification Movement

As we begin to move into the subject matter of this chapter, we discover that we are beginning to make a rapid transition from the consideration of existing religious and sociopolitical conditions toward an estimate of near future events as well. Those estimated events must ultimately bridge the gap between happenings of the present and the recorded prophetic events of the very last days that will bring to an end this current age of God's grace. The prophetic events concerning the last days, recorded in the Revelation document[374] handed down to us by the Apostle John, are not subject to any revision because God Himself has revealed them as inviolable and therefore in full accordance with his will. They must eventually come to pass without fail exactly as they are written regardless of any efforts of mankind to circumvent or thwart them.[375]

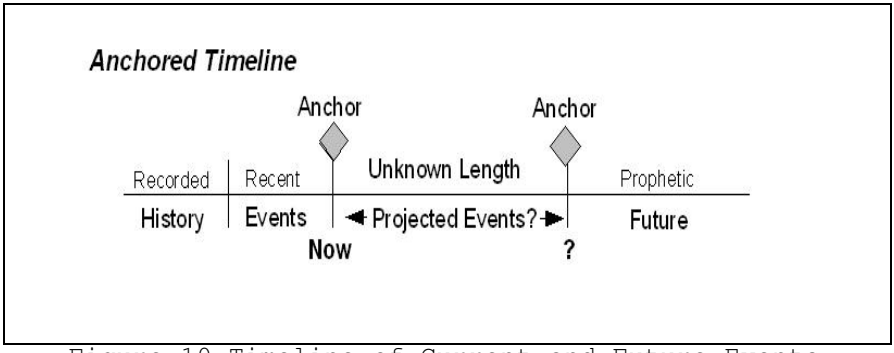

Figure 10 Timeline of Current and Future Events

Lacking any hard evidence about events that must bridge that gap between the present and the future, we can but hypothesize concerning various events that are most likely to take place along a timeline (see Figure 10 above) based upon a projection of current sociopolitical pressures. The timeline itself is rigidly anchored at one

[374] See The Revelation Document, page 66

[375] The Doctrines of the Last days are fully discussed in the next section of this book.

end in the present and at the other end in prophetic Scripture. Thus, the two anchors establish a broad but unalterable path for the timeline to follow, though its length in years, months, and days cannot be accurately determined.

Although the occurrence of near future events described in this chapter seem most probable based upon a careful analysis of current sociopolitical pressures, they should not be considered prophetic nor are they inevitable. If the hypothesis that is put forth in the analysis presented here has any credibility, the length of the timeline could be as short as one or two decades. Nevertheless, it is well within the providence of God to delay or even to reverse through various means even the most determined trends. It is during times of extremely severe religious, economic, and political pressures that mankind's thoughts most often seek out the comfort and encouragement of sound religious faith. God could easily use those pressures to send forth a grassroots revival of the true faith that would stall or even reverse for a time the relentless progression of sociopolitical events that would rapidly lead us to the end of the current age.

Nevertheless, we do know with great certainty that at some time in the future, whether near or far, the Holy Spirit will no longer contend with a corrupt mankind to constrain his evil propensity thus paving the way for a world that is unified against God and his true Christ. That will take place through the establishment of a world government that is headed up by a highly influential and charismatic leader described in Scripture as the antichrist[376] and the "man of sin." Only when recorded prophetic events finally come to pass with unquestioned certainty and the man of sin is ultimately revealed to the world can there be any valid conclusion made about the impending times in which we live (2Th.2:3).

Past Attempts at World Unification

Although God has ordained Jesus Christ as the ultimate monarch to rule over all the earth when the time for his coming is

[376] See The First Seal : The Antichrist Comes Forth, page 602

fulfilled, attempts to unify the world under one single government through debased human effort is certainly not a new goal or concept. It began with Nod (Ge.4:16) that was founded by Cain, and continued with Nimrod (Ge.10:8–12; 1Ch.1:10; Mi.5:6) who founded Nineveh (Ge.10:11,12) that led to the construction of the tower (Ge.11:1–9) to invade heaven that was erected on the plain of Shinar. Then, we must also recount the efforts of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Cyrus of Persia, numerous pharaohs of ancient Egypt, Alexander the Great of Greece, the expansive Roman Political Empire, the Holy Roman Empire that followed it, and even the English Empire. More recently still, we have observed the violent attempt of Hitler's Germany to overcome the earth through Aryan fascism, and finally the Soviet Union's efforts to dominate the earth through world communism. Although all attempts at world domination and unification have ended in failure in the past, the satanic mental impetus behind world unification continues.

Unification Efforts by European Progressives

For numerous decades, various liberal-minded humanist progressives in the United States and throughout the world had believed it was a noble imperative for mankind to usher in a unified world government to end all prospects of future wars through peaceful dialog and to bring into being a worldwide utopia of peace and prosperity. The current organization portrayed as heading that effort is the United Nations that was organized in 1945 at the end of World War II wherein a socialist structure is already evident.[377] Its ambitious motto is taken out of context from Isaiah 2:4 which arrogantly reads in part, "…they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (cf. Mi. 4.3).[378]

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[377] The United Nations was designed to replace its ill-fated predecessor the League of Nations. The League of Nations, based upon the Treaty of Versailles in 1919–1920, was powerless to prevent the events that led up to World War II.

[378] The Scriptural context of this verse clearly states that it is the Lord Himself who will bring this utopia about, not some geopolitical organization established by a

Even as World War II ended, many European progressives began to look for ways to unite all European nations into a stronger economic block in an attempt to further international cooperation and to avoid the possibility of future wars. Although small steps were being made through clusters of nations such as the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, the cold war between the Soviet Union and the United States limited more expansive efforts. As the cold war threat rapidly receded in 1990 however, Europeans began to seek more ways to minimize the significance of their borders in an effort to unite with surrounding nations to form a stronger commercial block that could compete economically with larger industrial nations such as the United States. Thus, in 1993 the European Union (EU) was formed consisting of twenty-seven member states. As this is being written, fifteen of the member states have also adopted the Euro as their common currency thus further dissolving national sovereignty.

Employing Religion as a Unifying Force

It is apparent that the world is presently divided by both political and religious thought. In order to fully unify the people of the world, a world religious movement must be designed to parallel and complement a world political movement in such a way that an ultimate world government could unify and maintain unchallenged authority over both religious belief and politics. Admittedly, the effort to fabricate a universal religion out of whole cloth that would satisfy the religious desires of everyone on earth would not be an easy task requiring both persuasion and covert force. In some instances, overt force could ultimately prove to be necessary.

Christianity

A World Ecumenical Movement has already been long underway to unify all Protestant sects of Christianity under a single banner. The Postmillennialist[379] position states that the temporal

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morally corrupt mankind.

[379] See Post-millennialism, page 557

church will eventually overcome the world providing a finished kingdom for Christ to claim when He returns, thus supporting this view. In doing so, Christianity would again be a unifying force to be reckoned with in the world much as it was during the Middle Ages. At that time, the Roman church reined both religiously and politically over a massive amount of the known world. The supposed framework for this new unification is already present in the Roman Catholic Church that is more than willing to accept all other denominations and sects back into the "mother church" from which they had fled during the Reformation Movement.

However, as a World Unification Movement took hold and began to advance, it quickly became apparent to its proponents that it would take more than a mere reunification of Christianity to join the nations of the world into one government, though that could be considered as an important first step. There were just too many other well-established religions in direct opposition to Christianity that had much more momentum even as the religious faith that had bolstered Christianity for centuries seemed to be waning.

Islam

The Muslim sees Islam[380] as the only valid religion for all of humanity. The name "Islam" does not mean "peace" as some seem to think, but "submit." Only if one submits to the teachings of Muhammad, can one expect to have peace. Since Islam is seen by its adherents as the only valid religion in the world, it is necessary for ***everyone on earth*** to submit to it — by force if necessary.

Outside of militant Catholicism,[381] Christians generally attempt to evangelize the world through preaching and persuasion and understand that not all will respond, but for the Muslim, that is not enough. In fact, it may not even be possible to articulate the Islamic faith in such a way as to win converts by any form of logical

[380] See The Rise of Mohammedanism (A.D. 632), page180

[381] See Chapter 17.11 Global Expansion of Roman Catholic Churchianity, page 202

persuasion — though some respond to its radical nature. It is not really even necessary for one to believe in the Islamic religion to be a Muslim, only submit to it.

The Shiite Muslim, in particular, believes in the coming to power of a hidden twelfth Imam. This Imam's name is Abu al-Qasim Muhammad or Muhammad al Mahdi. Mahdi means savior or messiah. Mahdi is believed to be the son of the eleventh Imam born in A.D. 869 and a direct descendent of Muhammad. He is believed to have gone into hiding at 5 years of age and did not die, but will emerge supernaturally to judge the world in its last days. He will rule over Arabs and the entire world for seven years during which time he will eliminate all tyranny and oppression bringing in a period of peace and harmony.[382] When he leads in prayer at Mecca, it is expected that Jesus[383] will be at his side and will follow him. Other Muslim schools of thought such as the Sunnis and even various Shiite sects believe someone other than Abu al-Qasim will be the Mahdi.

The expected Imam's return will be signaled by a series of extreme chaotic events that will take place during a span of three years. Many Muslims of a more radical nature believe that they must initiate that state of chaos themselves through overt and covert means in order to bring in the twelfth Imam and the final Caliphate under his rule.

Therefore, for the Muslim, this struggle toward world unification must go on indefinitely using any means available to them in order to accomplish its end goal. Jihad is the name that the Muslim applies to this "struggle" against all those outside of Islam.[384] This

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[382] It should be noted how closely the emergence of the Mahdi compares with the rise to power of the antichrist in the book of Revelation. Also see The Unholy Trinity, page 603

[383] The Muslim sees Jesus only as a prophet that preceded Muhammad and was killed before he completed his mission that was successfully taken up by Muhammad in the seventh century.

[384] The Qur'an makes it very clear that jihad is not an internal struggle within the hearts and minds of Muslims as they fight personal temptation. This false notion is

"holy war" may at times take on the character of a less violent takeover if the subjects of that conquest readily submit through fear generated by mere threats, while at other times it requires war exercising every form of physical violence to accomplish its goal. Such a religious war has no holds barred. For that reason terrorism is seen as a perfectly valid means of waging this war until the whole world finally submits to all the externals of Islam.

Further fueling the call for violence, the Muslim believes that there is only one sure way to enter "heaven" and that is by giving his own life in furthering the Islamic cause by killing the enemy of Allah. The more radical elements have extended that belief from organized warfare to include individual acts such as suicide bombing in spite of the fact that Islam does not condone suicide within its basic tenets. It is most probable that it's radical and violent nature will ultimately lead to its downfall, as the nations of the world unite against its overt attempts to put all peoples under subjugation to strict Sharia Law that offends mankind's fallen nature.[385]

Atheistic Humanism

The strong natural tendency of fallen man to totally exclude the existence of any supreme being as God altogether would make a worshipful form of atheistic humanism the most likely to succeed as a world-wide religion. The natural religious philosophy of fallen man is humanism wherein self is exalted. Humanism is at its very core atheistic since it exalts the worth and ability of mankind to do all things through his own supposed noble thoughts and efforts apart from the oversight and control of an omnipotent God — whose existence is emphatically denied.[386] This humanist philosophy is no more in evidence than when we consider fallen man's desire to rule the entire

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an intentional subterfuge to mollify Islam's opponents.

[385] See Universal Sharia Law, page 515

[386] Also see Humanism, page 220

earth through his own power and on his own terms.[387] Aiding the effort to perpetuate worldwide humanism are the twin religious philosophies of Evolutionism and Environmentalism bolstered by animal activism.

Evolutionism

In full support of atheistic humanism is Charles Darwin's faulty theory of natural selection.[388] It is being bolstered by a modern revision of the ancient Druid religion of earth worship generally termed Evolutionism. The Druid religion incorporated various aspects of animism inasmuch as they worshiped rocks, lakes, trees, and various other plants and animals. In the absence of God, the earth is seen by fallen man as a deified "mother" that brought forth mankind to an exalted god-like state through a process of evolutionary natural selection. Her less developed "offspring" in the form of various animal species must therefore be protected from the ravages of mankind at all costs lest this wondrous process be disrupted. It is seen as the religious duty of mankind to protect "mother earth" from any possible harm through active political means regardless of the detrimental effect such a defense may have on more developed human life.

Environmentalism

Environmentalism as a modern world movement has already found its way into humanistic thinking through the "global climate change" theory. This theory not only puts forth the hypothesis that an incessant global warming is taking place, it further insists that it is occurring as a result of manmade pollution added to the atmosphere, which is caused by various "greenhouse gases" generated by the largest industrialized nations.[389] Many credible scientists have pointed

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[387] This desire is of satanic origin as Satan presses mankind to bring into being a kingdom for himself that displaces the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ.

[388] See Developmentalism, page 352

[389] Global warming is primarily based on Charles Lyell's theory of uniformitarianism in which all physical processes are assumed to remain uniform over time. Therefore,

out some very serious flaws in the global warming assumption, but the proponents of this philosophy continue to put their theories forth with even more ardent zeal through the more general hypothesis of "climate change." Any kind of violent weather ranging from snowstorms to hurricanes is now being pointed to as sufficient proof of that theory. Advocates of various forms of the climate change theory have gone so far as to predict various massive future disasters such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, and massive food shortages as a consequence of global weather anomalies.

Vegetarianism and Animal Activism

An unusual association has bound the religious philosophies of evolutionism, and environmentalism together through the philosophy of vegetarianism. The religious connection between the supposed natural rights of animals to the philosophy of evolutionism has already been established in New-age religions through their underlying ties to neo-Hinduism, as we have already discussed.[390] Vegetarianism has also been closely associated with animal activism for some time through various groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), who have long been advocating special rights for animals both wild and domestic. In their view, human beings have no inherent right to take the life of lower animals species for food and clothing (cf. Ge.9:2,3). Nor they argue do human beings have the right to displace their habitat for their own use, encage them for exhibition, or use them as experimental animals in medical research. As noble dominant animals, human beings are considered fully obligated to protect all other natural animal life, so they insist.

It is argued that raising animals for food must be curtailed as an environmental issue as well. Adding impetus to the connection

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any detectable change in temperature must be the consequence of mankind's ability to alter that uniformity, not brought about by any natural non-uniformity such as a change within the earth's core or the sun's intensity. See Developmentalism, page 352

[390] See Neo-Hinduism, page 420

between vegetarianism and environmentalism, are many in the scientific community who have recently pointed out that the methane gas and carbon dioxide produced by the enormous number of domestic animals presently being raised for meat throughout the world is capable of producing more climate change than all of the man-made gasses omitted by industry and automotive exhausts combined. By reducing or totally eliminating the number of domestic animals being raised exclusively for food, it is supposed that much of the predicted negative climate change could be avoided. Although this claim is highly exaggerated, we find that vegetarianism along with animal activism has become an integral part of the current environmental issue.

Obviously, the climate change theory itself is being highly exaggerated as well, but whether there is any sound evidence for that theory is completely beside the point in this discussion inasmuch as the theory has become the ideal means to codify a worldwide unification movement with religious fervor — its underlying political goal. Inasmuch as such global issues as undesired environmental change cannot be contained within individual national boundaries, it is deemed necessary by proponents of the theory to unite the world against this supposed threat in such a way that sovereign nations must submit themselves to authoritarian international law for the ultimate survival of the human race.

Proponents of Evolutionism and Environmentalism, whose underlying goal is actually worldwide governmental control of individual freedoms in order to protect the earth from the supposed polluting "rabble" of the human race, have gained considerable credibility in recent years. The media as well as public education, both largely controlled by progressive social liberals, injected this liberal thinking into the general populace thus subverting large numbers to the greater cause of political globalization.

Competing Forms of World Government

Therefore, we cannot consider political forms of world government apart from the religious philosophies that underlie them. Though the means of control are political, the underlying motivation is

actually religious in nature. In earlier times, attempts at achieving world dominance were made through the efforts of individuals who rose to power in order to gain control of a monarchial state. Those monarchs forced their own religious inclinations upon the subservient population under their jurisdiction. Increasingly however, national leaders began to rise to power based upon their ability to identify themselves with the religious philosophy already held by their subjects. At present there are three major competing ideologies regarding the proper form of a world government. We shall briefly examine them in the following topics.

Representative Democracy

Although Democracy is generally seen as an ancient Roman concept, Representative Democracy is essentially an outgrowth of American Christianity that expressed the God-given right of individuals to enjoy life and liberty and to engage in the personal pursuit of happiness — in the practical sense to pursue and retain personal wealth through private ownership of property.[391] With that liberty comes personal responsibility in securing those benefits through personal initiative. Free capitalism, which that intrinsic right endorses, acknowledges the greed and fallen nature of man as an inevitable reality, whereas other forms of economic systems do not. Excessive greed is effectively controlled with the prospect of certain failure. The desire for growing wealth through private investment ultimately increases prosperity for everyone involved as it produces both products and jobs. Life, liberty and personal happiness are seen as an outgrowth of the providence of God to bless those that honor and praise Him.

Therefore, a Representative Democracy demands a citizenry that is highly moral in spirit, educated of mind, and well informed of events through a free press for its existence. Over the years, the United States has attempted to transplant Representative Democracy in various nations throughout the world in order to develop a worldwide

[391] See The Declaration of Independence on page 317

federation of independent nations that could work together to foster world cooperation and peace.

However, Representative Democracies have failed to take root or have failed to function properly in many nations because they initially lacked or no longer have an adequate population that is ruled internally by God through the Holy Spirit. For that reason, Representative Democracy must be viewed as a very weak form of world government as the world drifts increasingly farther away from Christianity in the future. Violence will only continue to increase in them as voluntary obedience to just government laws and regulations degenerates into a state of near anarchy.[392] In the face of such obstacles, any government of, by, and for the people must ultimately make a transition into a much less desirable but more stable government that is ruled exclusively by an elite governing body through the use of force to prevent chaotic collapse.

Universal Sharia Law

Sharia law — was developed by Mohammad and his followers over many centuries.[393] All Muslim states are Islamic theocracies, not civil nations. Unlike western civil law Sharia cannot in any way be separated from its religious underpinnings inasmuch as the Islamic religion is fully defined and enforced by it. It is based solely upon the Qur'an and upon complex Islamic tradition that has developed over nearly 1400 years.

While Sharia law covers such things as banking, economics, and business enterprises, it also covers social issues, family conduct, sexual matters, and even personal hygiene. In Arabic, the word "Sharia" means "way" or "path" and that path extends well into both public and private life. For instance, strict dress codes are enforced for

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[392] The characteristics of this lawless state of mind will be discussed in detail in Chapter 20.1 of this book, as the depraved nature of fallen mankind is unleashed in the world at the beginning of the last days just prior to the coming of the antichrist.

[393] See The Rise of Mohammedanism (A.D. 632), page 180

both men and women. For women, only their face and hands can be exposed in public.

While Sharia law routinely tolerates slavery, punishment for any violations of prohibited activities are very harsh. Here are only a few examples of crimes that Sharia prohibits and the brutal punishment meted out for any serious infraction: Male and female thieves when convicted must have their hand cut off. Unmarried couples that engage in fornication are subjected to severe public whippings. Likewise, gambling or drinking of alcohol are punishable by public flogging. All homosexuals when they are discovered are summarily executed. Married women who commit adultery are stoned to death, and her male codefendant can be hanged. Criticizing Mohammad, the Qur'an, or even Sharia law itself makes that person subject to execution. Apostates of Islam (those who convert to any other religion), after being given a period of time to repent, are executed. As we can see, Sharia law is very strict though some Muslim societies interpret various aspects of it somewhat differently.

Such harsh laws would not be easily tolerated by western societies and other socialist nations such as China and Russia. Thus, it would seem to this author that Sharia law will never be established as a worldwide government — unless it could be brought about by overwhelming force. It is highly likely that Iran[394] or another Islamic nation will attempt to bring about the establishment of the twelfth imam, the Mahdi, as a world ruler through a worldwide revolution in order to do just that. Nevertheless, the Islamic world is divided on the rationale of any effort to bring about the Caliphate through intentional chaotic violence that would wreak destruction upon their own nations.[395]

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[394] See Iran, page 499

[395] It is quite probable that latent militant Islam will initiate the great war that breaks out soon after the antichrist takes power. See The Second Seal: Global War Breaks Out, page 611

Socialism

In an increasingly decadent world, Representative Democracies must ultimately degenerate into a firmer form of central government to survive politically as their Christian base is severely eroded and atheism, paganism, and anarchy expands in its place. Socialism is by definition, "a system of social organization that advocates the ownership and control of industry, capital, land etc. by the community as a whole" (*The Randomhouse College Dictionary*). In the political sense, the "community as a whole" becomes an established government, which is firmly controlled by a social elite whether elected or appointed. When this decadence finally comes about in total, socialism then rapidly degenerates into communism as all material property becomes owned by the state to be used and/or distributed as it sees fit (see Communism below).

Socialist Workers Movement

As the poor increasingly demand a greater share of the overall wealth of a nation as a personal right of existence, not as a result of personal productivity, a revolutionary transition begins to take place within an initially sound democracy through a state of near anarchy into socialism. This transition is characterized by class warfare that socialists promote between the rich and the poor, which in turn is the populace fuel needed for their political movement. Socialists strongly promote the establishment of labor unions that organize workers into large pools of labor controlled by their labor organizers. Labor unions provide socialists with the "soldiers" to do battle against large capitalist industries for which they supply labor. Overpricing of labor must eventually bring down capitalist industries that are supplied with labor by the unions rendering them bankrupt. Over time, those labor unions are quite easily taken over and nationalized to become the core of a larger socialist workers movement.

Economic Dependency

Unlike capitalism, socialism has no power to generate wealth, but only the power to consume and redistribute it. Therefore, the engine that powers socialism as it initially evolves from capitalism is

the collecting of increasingly higher taxes from the citizenry and private business as is required to fund a massive federal government. Inasmuch as capitalism is seen as having created an unequal distribution of material wealth between the rich and the poor, a redistribution of that wealth must be brought about through a class struggle to restore a balance. Any surpluses are held in trust by the state for use in promoting the general welfare as it sees fit.

Over time, however, serious inefficiencies inherent in socialism result in an impoverished society. While the poorer classes of democratic societies hungrily advocate socialism believing it would immediately offer them a better way of life through numerous government provisions, any benefits would actually be received in exchange for the liberty to accumulate personal wealth through individual efforts that would ultimately enable the poor to enjoy a better way of life through earned affluence.

Individual independence of thought and action supported by capitalism is considered both counterproductive and subversive to the strict political control required to hold together a socialist "utopia." As socialism begins to invade every conceivable sphere of human life, individual citizens become increasingly dependent upon government handouts for everything from food to housing. Individual initiative declines dramatically as men and women begin to look to government for the source of their continual well being as a basic human right of their existence instead of engaging in productive labor and seeking out God's providence as in a free society. Lacking any incentive to obtain personal gain, national productivity severely declines, and the share of the "economic pie" that is obtained from redistribution of wealth decreases dramatically when the remains of the wealthy class are finally picked clean.[396] All citizens then eventually become immersed in a common state of dependent poverty.

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[396] Socialist states have commonly invaded more prosperous neighboring countries to absorb their wealth in an attempt to keep the inefficient socialist machine of government running.

Religious Dependency

Socialism is the natural outgrowth of the religious philosophy of atheistic humanism, which is the natural religion of fallen man. Therefore, the form of government most suited to the religion of atheistic humanism is socialism since the goals of both are parallel. Although the existence of deity is suppressed in humanism, the desire to worship something or someone greater than oneself remains deeply embedded in the heart of mankind and must therefore be somehow gratified. Socialist governments commonly provide an alternative religion (statism) that is based upon atheism to satisfy that desire. Inasmuch as humanism exalts the worth of man, the object of that worship is a collective of mankind imbedded within the socialist state.

As socialism begins to supplant God in the minds of its citizens, it is inevitable that all existing temporal churches must first be strictly regulated and then ultimately nationalized in order to "protect" society from any "radical teachings" that could seek to undermine the socialist order. In the place of the true worship of God, presentation of the Gospel, and recognizing the authority of Scripture, such churches would only be allowed to preside over meaningless ritual religious acts while giving out the official humanistic socialist line from their pulpits. Adherents of this false religion would eventually come to see socialistic statism as the means to attain temporal redemption and to view the human leaders of their state as messiah figures — from whom all temporal blessings flow.

Communism

In a socialist state, individual freedoms soon must be severely curtailed to conform the populace to its stringent philosophical tenets. A totalitarian state must subsequently come into being as social elites battle each other to gain and retain absolute power. All genuine opposition is held in check by a powerful nationalized police force. That is exactly what has taken place in various nations who adopted the extreme socialism of Marxism and communism. Communism is a strict form of socialism in which all means of production are owned by the "people" collectively such that all private ownership in any form is

forcibly prohibited. That collectivism brings forth a theoretical classless society consisting of co-equal workers that support a ruling elite, which maintains full authority and control over them.

Social Darwinism

Much as bees in a hive, the workers of the collective are viewed as existing only to support the hive and its idealistic leadership (i.e. queen bee). All individual merit must be sacrificed to the needs of the greater collective. Those who refuse to work to that end or are seen as being incapable of producing anything above that which they consume become a drag on the collective. The lazy, the infirm, the elderly, or those who politically oppose the collective in any way must be eliminated so that the collective can thrive. This radical notion is based upon the survival of the fittest teaching that was set forth as a core element of Darwinian evolutionism. It has already led to mass genocide in the past by radical socialists such as Hitler in Germany, Stalin in Russia, and Mao Tsetung in China.

Because Democratic Republics can thrive only on free capitalism, which is seen as being economically divisive to the humanist sense of "fairness" resulting in social disunity, and Sharia Law demands the dictatorial worship of Allah as an absolute form of supreme being which is violently opposed by the atheist, the economic structure of a future homogeneous world order most likely must be envisioned as being based upon socialist principles. One can only imagine what the disastrous effects of unified global socialism would bring about as it degenerated into communism. Nevertheless, that is most probably the form of world government that the antichrist will one day head up as the world enters the end times.

Monarchical Dictatorship

A world government ruled exclusively by one man or monarch would be difficult to set up in today's world considering the large physical territory involved and the vast religious and political diversity of the world's population. However, global socialism would rapidly degenerate into communism, and from there dictatorial power could be readily obtained by one individual. In fact, Scripture informs us that

such a worldwide monarchical government will one day be established by the antichrist[397] — most likely upon the ruins of a highly degenerate socialist world system. His rule will be absolute, but it will not be long lived as the world rapidly falls into chaos. Following his failure, the one Monarch whose right it is to rule forever will ultimately establish a thousand year reign upon the earth in which righteousness and peace will finally prevail.[398]

The Yawning Chasm

As we conclude the brief analysis of current events and movements in this section, we find that the temporal church on earth has been seduced and infiltrated by the sorcery of new-age thinking and neo-paganism. Instead of the temporal church influencing secular society positively for Christ, the converse has taken place as a corrupt society mostly occupies the churches within their crumbling walls. Church leaders have joyously welcomed the unregenerate worldly element inside. Temporal churches in this current age find themselves overwhelmed by a worldly socialist ideology that seems much more powerful than their own faltering faith. The Christian worldview has largely been subverted by humanistic globalism.

The true Christian faith of an earlier era that was based on the exacting authority of Holy Scripture has been largely displaced by a numbing sense of religious tolerance rooted in the false brotherly love put forth in humanism. For the most part, temporal churches have already rejected the Truth and have swallowed Satan's lie that all roads of religion lead to the pacification of an increasingly nebulous god such that all will be saved from any possibility of divine judgment for their actions on earth — let alone eternal judgment in a Hell after death. Man is again being viewed as the master of his own fate, such that the future of the world is in his own hands and ability, not in the divine providence of God.

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[397] See The Political Antichrist, page 603

[398] See Chapter 20.7 The Last Age of Man on Earth, page 644

Even as the world teeters on the brink of the deep and inescapable chasm of political and religious globalism, it finds itself challenged by determined terrorists whose wild religious fervor is beyond the understanding of the world's national leaders. The mysterious iniquity of the last days is already at work. As spiritual darkness increasingly gathers around the world's great population, fallen man's depravity becomes increasingly evident in his decadent reactions to world events — both in the political and religious spheres. Stifling atheistic socialism is increasingly smothering the economic, political, and religious freedoms that can only be enjoyed in a free society that consists of self-governing individuals who are inwardly guided by the Holy Spirit.

As we now prepare to move from the events of today directly into the eschatology of the next section of this book, it is apparent that the world is quite ripe for a charismatic, powerful, and aggressive world ruler who could unite it both politically and religiously lest it ultimately destroy itself through religious terrorism and political anarchy. However, the messiah that the decadent and deluded world desperately seeks is not Christ, who alone is ordained by his Father with the authority and wisdom to rule, but the ultimate antichrist whose iniquitous workings are actually that of Satan. Even so, we cannot know precisely when that dreadful event will happen, but only that it appears to be near at hand.

> **"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"** (2Th 2:7–12)**.**

Section 20 Doctrine of the Last Days

The Gathering Darkness

Preliminary Millennial Doctrines

Outline of the End-Times

Preliminary Survey of Revelation

End-Time Events Unsealed

The Day of God's Wrath

The Last Age of Man on Earth

The New Jerusalem and the Eternal Ages

Chapter 20.1 The Gathering Darkness

As was made evident in the brief analysis of current events in Chapter 19.4 of the previous section, the United States is rapidly turning into the path previously taken by Europe and the rest of the world, which ultimately leads downward into a grim and dark post-Christian era. For most of its existence, the United States has been a bright beacon of the reformed Christian faith in the world. Once that light of American faith and the freedom that has supported it is extinguished, however, the entire world will face an obscurity of Truth that will make the dark ages look like the brightness of midday. Truth will continue to exist only within a rapidly diminishing remnant that makes up the Visible Church, which must meet secretly within a wide scattering of house churches throughout the world. That decline will signal the beginning of the end times the study of which is commonly referred to as Eschatology.

Eschatology

Eschatology, or "doctrines of the last days," is a subject that is of intense interest in many of our temporal churches today. Many of the men in those churches are referred to as "prophecy mongers" inasmuch as they often embellish prophecy beyond what Scripture clearly states in order to draw the curious with itching ears into their membership. Conversely, many other churches ignore Eschatology altogether. In doing so, they leave out large portions of prophetic Scripture that they view as too nebulous and emotionally depressing to even consider. That is particularly true of Chapters 6 through 18 of the book of Revelation. They do not seem to realize that they are taking away from the prophecy just as surely as prophecy mongers are adding to it. Both are clearly forbidden in Revelation Chapter 22, verses 18 and 19.

Purpose in Understanding Future Events

It is apparent that the Church should be looking forward to hearing the clarion call from Christ to join Him in the air. The time of the rapture will be wonderful as those believers that are alive as well as

those that have died in Christ will be resurrected to be with Him. However, the Great Tribulation period that will precede that great event will be a terrible ordeal of intense suffering, pain and difficulty. Therefore, those things regarding the last days are primarily written that the Church would not be ignorant of future events that are to come to pass upon the earth and be prepared for them when the time comes (cf. Jn.15:15).

In a second sense, however, those things are also written for those who have not yet accepted Christ in this age of grace and therefore could find themselves in the midst of the Great Tribulation in a lost state and without hope. It is both a warning and an invitation for them to accept Christ while there is still time to do so. Now is the day to accept Christ as savior lest the day comes upon you unaware and you must face the full wrath of God (2Co.6:2).

In a third sense, we also often fail to realize that the New Testament was not written for the new covenant Church alone, but as a witness to Israel as well. After all, Jews largely wrote the New Testament. Paul, though the Apostle to the Gentiles, was also a Jew. Much of that which is written in the Revelation is most likely also directed toward the remnant of Israel, not just the Church. There is every reason to believe that the Bible will still exist during the Great Tribulation period and beyond (Mt.24:35). History testifies to its durability through many other attempts to destroy it. When the Visible Church is finally transported from the earth into the heavens, the sealed remnant of Israel will pick it up and they will be enabled to understand what they are going through in the Day of the Lord.

Although we must not dwell upon future things to the exclusion of the Gospel and other important theological doctrines, we should be aware of as much as Scripture has to tell us about things to come — even if we cannot fully understand it all. In Revelation Chapter 1 verse 3, we read: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." That surely means that we are to read and study all that has been written about the future in Scripture and not ignore any of it as being irrelevant because those things are certain to come to pass at their appointed time. Considering the

worsening of social, religious, and political world affairs that we are now experiencing throughout the world, we could very well be living on the threshold of those colossal events.

Human Depravity to be Unleashed

Man is morally depraved from birth as we have repeatedly asserted in this work. Yet, most parents Christian and non-Christian alike have taught their children to behave responsibly within the family unit to maintain peace and order in the home. When children become adults, they carry the standards of their earlier upbringing with them, whether they be good or bad. The restraint of human government under girded by the influence of responsible men and women working together through both religious and political institutions to establish ethical boundaries have mostly held outward moral degeneration of society at bay in the past. Admittedly, that restraint has never been perfect as the ever-present criminal element clearly demonstrates. As the foundational family unit finally crumbles away, however, unfettered political and moral anarchy must inevitably follow its demise throughout all of society.

Within Christian societies, the Holy Spirit working within and through redeemed men and women has kept depravity at bay in the world. This restraint will cease in the future, as the Holy Spirit no longer contends with a depraved mankind that fiercely rejects the wondrous redemption offered in Jesus Christ. No longer will He seek to convict men of sin with the consequence that man's depraved nature will be unleashed to run wild. That is necessary in order that prophetic Scripture can be fulfilled.

In this first chapter of this section, we begin a study of world conditions as a gathering darkness obscures all spiritual Truth just prior to the earth's downward spiral into the frightful future that is described in the book of Revelation. The Apostle Paul told of this very time in his second and last epistle to Timothy just prior to Paul's death by Roman executioners.[399]

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[399] The Apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy was written about AD 67 from Rome just prior to Paul's beheading. For that reason, it is considered to be his "death

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. " (2Ti.3:1)

The "last days" as it is used here refers to the period just prior to the end of the age of God's grace and ultimately the end of the church age on earth. That perilous time will begin as uncontrolled human depravity is unleashed through personal and societal relationships that extends well into government and religion. Paul described the unbeliever living in the end times in 2 Timothy 3:2–9.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;" (2Ti.3:2–4)

This is a indeed a frightful picture of degenerate mankind, but it is one that we cannot ignore because the time may soon come upon the earth when those words will be fulfilled. Truly, those will be very dangerous times in which to live (2Ti.3:1).

Egocentric Lovers of Self

In the last days of the present age, "men shall be lovers of their own selves,…"(2Ti.3:2). This is the basic tenet of the religion of humanism and is foundational to the depraved nature of mankind. In that sense, self love has always been present in man's egocentric nature. Here however we find that men will no longer consider the well being of society, nor will there be any true concern for other people at all. All thought will be centered fully upon themselves.

More than that, however, men will actually worship themselves! A first step in that direction is heterosexual sex out of wedlock. Homosexuality is actually another step in the direction of this self-love. Both are a form of self-gratification without accepting the responsibility for their effect upon others. They are a corruption of the God-given love relationship between a man and a woman that

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bed" statement and is therefore highly significant as well as being prophetic in nature.

cements the human race into a responsible social sphere forged of the building blocks of the family unit. When the family unit goes, society must inevitably degenerate into total chaos.

Strangely, there are already many going about today teaching that we should look into the mirror each morning and say to our image, "I love you"! All of this self-love is supposed to be a matter of building up self-esteem for personal effectiveness in both the social and business spheres. The ultimate effect, however, will be very self-serving.

Filled with Covetousness

Nothing is too much for the one whom we love — what if that person is our self? That brings about the sin of covetousness with a vengeance, as we desire only the best for ourselves. Lovers of self must have plenty of money with which to indulge their desires. Nothing must stand in their way, and nothing is too high a price to pay.[400]

Boasters

Men will boast of great things that they have done and will yet do to win the admiration of others (2Ti.3:2). This will also manifest itself in their manner of dress, the food they eat, the automobiles that they drive, and the homes in which they live.

Elevated with Pride

In that day men will be full of pride as the license of the individual to do as he pleases has been raised up and put on a pedestal. Many personal motivation tapes and lectures are really an effort to improve the performance of men in the work place by building up pride in themselves. Though man's pride in his self-worth will be falsely placed, he will continue to elevate self in his own mind.

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[400]Covetousness is what is behind the growing personal debt of individuals who abuse credit and credit cards. These also borrow from family and friends with no intention of ever repaying them. They see it as their due because "they are worth it."

Blasphemers

Men will rail against God — blaspheme his name — and deny his very existence. Even if they recognized in their hearts that God existed, they would still rebel against Him since they alone would rule their own lives.

Disobedient to Parents

Those born in that day will be disobedient to their parents, and parents who have the same bent will be reluctant to enforce discipline upon their children. Thus children will fail to be taught the disciplines necessary for them to become responsible adults.

Disobedient to Authority

Such men will be disobedient to all authority in that day (2Ti.3:2). To give in to obedience to a sovereign God would curtail license, which they hold so highly. After all, they see themselves as the ultimate being that everything else revolves around and for which everything else exists. From the railing against authority and the rebellion against the curtailing of personal freedoms will come a rebellion against government as well. Many will seek to manipulate government to suit their own desires as government takes its hands off of many of the real issues that it should address and meddles instead into the personal lives of its citizens.

Unthankful

Men and women in the last days will be unthankful (2Ti.3:2). They will certainly not thank God, for they do not even acknowledge Him. Nor will they thank their friends or families for any act of kindness. What they receive from others will be seen as only that which was owed to them by society. They have extracted all things from others by their own will and efforts, and their cleverness has served them well. To give thanks is to acknowledge an authority other than self — a sign of weakness — it is to humble oneself in the presence of a kindness that was undeserved. The men of the world in that day will not have it in them to offer thanks — to God, or anyone else.

Unholy

People in that day will be profane without any personal integrity. In Scriptural terms, they will be unholy. If a man of integrity could be found in that day, he would be despised by other men of the world (2Ti.3:3). Honor will be a thing banished to the relics of a long-past age.

Without Natural Affection

Men and women will have no affection toward others, not even toward members of their own family. All natural affection will be gone from them as they seek to satisfy their own desires. Yes, even love of those closest and those that should be held dearest will be freely sacrificed to self-love. We already see this loss of affection in the abortion of children in the womb as well as the abandonment of children by their own mothers and fathers.

Trucebreakers

Trucebreakers are those that on the surface make peace, but underneath they still harbor animosity. They will be irreconcilable and impossible to get along with no matter what efforts are made by others to do so. They will not hesitate to make agreements that they never intend to keep, and they will break them with out a qualm when it serves their purpose.

False Accusers

Men in that day will lie profusely. False accusers include those who engage in gossip in order to harm the reputation of others and those who take others to court even over quite trivial matters in order to satisfy their own sense of pride or for material gain. They will think nothing of giving false testimony against others in order to ruin their reputations or even to betray them to death.

Incontinent

Men will be totally lacking in self-control, because all inhibitions will be removed. Democracies must crumble into socialist states because their citizens no longer have the necessary self-

discipline to rule themselves. Only the government that rules with an iron fist can retain control as the rest of the world turns to anarchy. In the last days, the world will find itself in turmoil and many will come to seek peace apart from it but will not be able to find it. Only an absolute global dictator could force the world into submission to the extent that a tenuous peace will be achieved.

Fierce

They will be fierce men; violent in their actions; destructive in their ways (2Ti.3:3). Their anger will rule them as they continue to go forth to consume the spoils of others in their own lusts. Men will have no time for weakness. Meek people cannot serve his own pride and are to be hated; they get in his way; they must be kicked aside. Striving, achievement, ruthlessness, and raw power are the important attributes to attain.

Despisers of those that are Good

Goodness is not an attribute that will be cultivated. True goodness will be equated only with weakness, and it dismisses such a man or woman as worthless in the eyes of the world. The good are worth nothing to them, but to be trampled under their feet in the upward climb to self aggrandizement.

Traders

In that day, citizens will think nothing of their country or their homeland. All national interests will have been sacrificed to self. Therefore, there will be many traders to country in that day (2Ti.3:4). The secrets of one nation will be easily traded to another. Moreover, those evil men will also betray their best friends and other members of their households just as easily.

Heady

Men will be conceited. They will be heady — that is, they will be very rash in their decisions. They will be impetuous in their actions. That is, they will not think things through before they decide and act.

High-minded

Men will be very high-minded. That is, they will be arrogant about their own rash decisions and will be completely unwilling to consider the opinions or advice of others (2Ti.3:4).

Lovers of Pleasure

Men in that day will seek after pleasure like never before. Holding themselves in high esteem, they will love the pleasures that bring them self-gratification (2Ti.3:4). Nothing will be off limits in that day. The simple pleasures of the presence of loved ones and close friends will be denied them because of their audacity. The pleasures they seek will be the exotic and the immoral as pleasure is sought at all costs and it is placed above all that should rightly be held dear. Not only will men love pleasure, they also value their own desires above all else, they will actually worship personal desire more than God!

Religiously Corrupt

> **"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."** (2Ti.3:5–7)

Astonishingly, through all of this, men will still hold to a form of religion (2Ti.3:5). It is of course they themselves whom they truly worship. Yet, worship always has its ceremonies and rituals. Even in that day, men will be deeply religious and will have their organizations, their initiations, their secret rites, and their pledges.

Men will be lustful, engaging in terrifying and immoral acts to satisfy their own lusts in the name of a self-serving religion. Men will seek to seduce "silly women," (both mentally and physically) through their false religious whims, and women will not have the wisdom in that age to resist their advances.

"…Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived (2Ti.3:13). Lust-filled women will likewise mislead men as they rise to high positions of religious

authority. Both men and women will seek after spiritual wisdom, but the result of their search for wisdom will instead lead them to follow the doctrines of demons. Through their religious activities, they may believe that they have performed miraculous feats (cf. Mt.7:23).

> **"Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was"** (2Ti.3:8,9).

Though they seek diligently after knowledge of all things in that day, they shall not find the Truth (2Ti.3:7). They have already fully denied Him who is the source and substance of Truth.

The Final Apostasy

The Greek word *apostasia* literally means to desert, defect, revolt, or irrevocably abandon ones principles, cause, or faith. The English words "apostate" and "apostasy" are transliterations of the Greek word. Nevertheless, those words are not found in English translations of the Bible. Rather, *apostasia* is translated as "to forsake" in Acts, Chapter 21,verse 21 in the *King James Version* and "to turn away" in the *New International Version*. In Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians in Chapter 2, verse 3 it is translated as a "falling away" in the *King James Version* and "rebellion" in the *New International Version*.

To What the Apostasy Applies

We must first determine to what the apostasy, rebellion, or falling away applies. In early usage, the word *apostasia* was used to indicate a rebellion against government or military authority. However, the strong implication of the word apostasy as it is represented in Scripture is that it constitutes a rebellion or turning away in a religious context. In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul said that in the latter times there would be a departure from the faith (1Ti.4:1). We also find this context at various other places in the New Testament such as Paul's second epistle to Timothy in Chapter 3, verses 1–5 and in various other verses in the Old Testament of the

Greek Septuagint (Jos. 22:22; Je. 2:19; etc.). There can be little reason to believe other than that the great apostasy being referred to will be a departure from the Christian faith through an open rebellion against God, his Christ, and the Gospel.

To Whom the Apostasy Applies

The world was already rebelling against God and against Christians in Paul's day as was evidenced by the Thessalonians themselves who were being severely persecuted. So much so that Paul needed to assure them that they were not already in the Great Tribulation that will occur just prior to Christ's return to the earth inasmuch as the man of sin, the antichrist, had not yet been revealed (2Th.2:3). It is evident that when Paul speaks of a rebellious falling away in the last days, he cannot be speaking of a rebellion by the world at large, inasmuch as the world has always been in rebellion against God and his Christ (Ps.2:1–3). The decadent world never at any time held the Christian faith from which to fall away (Jn.1:10).

Nor can Paul be referring to an apostate Israel since Israel had already rebelled against the true faith prior to the writing of the New Testament texts when the nation rejected and demanded the crucifixion of its own Messiah (Ac.2:40). While a small remnant accepted Jesus as their long awaited Messiah, the large majority did not. The believing Jews became the core of the new covenant church, while the majority fell away and went into a state of total rebellion against God along with the world at large through their adoption of rabbinical Phariseeism.

Therefore, this text must refer to a falling away from or rebellion against the true Christian faith by the very ones who had previously professed it. The final and irreversible animosity against the Christian ethic that began within the hearts of all degenerate men and women in the last days must eventually overwhelm the temporal churches — including every major Protestant denomination — as they fall so far away from the Truth that they are no longer a voice in the world for the Gospel. Instead, they will only be captive religious forums for promoting a humanistic pseudo-gospel that is no gospel at

all. This church is indicative in type of the first century church at Laodicea (See The Rich Liberal Church, page 93).

Here we must clearly state that when we speak of the apostasy of the worldly temporal churches in this work, we do not mean to infer that elect believers can ever depart from the faith since that would deny the security that Christ has promised every one of his own (Jn.10:28,29). We speak only of the institutional organizations that will have become so overwhelmed with false doctrine resulting from worldly influence that they will depart from the faith. Individual believers, as they become increasingly scarce numerically, will need to abandon those physical parodies of the invisible Church[401] as the outspoken pseudo-Christian takes their places in its highest offices and in the pews.

Timing of the Apostasy

Admittedly, a gradual progression toward a total state of apostasy is already nearly two thousand years old as the history of the temporal church emphatically attests. Nevertheless, this falling away can presently be seen to be on an accelerated track through the influx of neo-paganism[402] and other forms of religious liberalism into churches throughout the world.

There are many texts in Scripture that indicate that the terminal state of apostasy must come about prior to the return of Christ to the earth to establish his reign. Jesus Himself said that although the abuse of the elect would be avenged by God, "…nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth" (Lu.18:8)? The rhetorical question at the end of Jesus' statement can lead to only one possible conclusion. Over many centuries, the elect have been persecuted and killed because of the unrelenting stand that they have taken for the Gospel and for Christ. Yet, God has put a hedge about many of them such that they have yet survived and through their

[401] See The Final Stance of the Visible Church, page 544

[402] See The Neo-Pagan Movement, page 430

witnessing, others have come to know Christ. However, when Jesus physically returns to judge the earth, all of the elect will have suffered death or they will have been instantaneously transformed and called up to meet Him in the air within the faithful Church that will be transported from the earth (1Th.4:16,17). This final departure will then render the earth devoid of the true faith.

Form the Final Apostasy Will Take

We must now determine what form the ultimate and final apostasy will take in order that we may recognize it as it approaches. As we do this, we shall discover that large numbers of the present-day temporal churches already exhibit much of the attributes of the final apostate church. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4). The apostate church will ultimately be a church without Christ and without any true believers within its ranks. The apostasy of the temporal church will then facilitate the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel, which we shall discuss in Chapter 20.3 Outline of the End-Times, page 573, and the coming of a world dictator that Scripture identifies as the political antichrist.[403]

Whereas in the past, Truth could be restored, even the Protestant churches at that time will become so reprobated that restoration will no longer be possible. God will then abandon them as a storehouse of Truth much as He displaced the corrupted Roman church with Protestant churches earlier in the time of the Reformation Movement. The present humanist ecumenical movement eventually will be instrumental in establishing one universal religion that through compromise will deny the apostolic Christian faith as Protestant churches are reunited with a fully corrupt Romanism. The final rebellion against God in which the temporal church will take part must ultimately bring to an end the present church age on earth.

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[403] See The Political Antichrist, page 603

We have been given a graphic outline of the form that the apostasy will take in the Apostle Paul's first epistle to Timothy in Chapter 4. While it would appear that Paul realized that a falling away would begin in Timothy's lifetime, it is also evident that the march toward total apostasy has progressed through the centuries with occasional setbacks as reforms and revivals have broken out among God's people. When this age of grace finally comes to its end however, the Holy Spirit will no longer strive with fallen men and will no longer restrain evil upon the earth or in the temporal church (cf. Ge.6:3).

The Temporal Church Will Turn to Fables

Paul wrote, "…the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2Ti.4:3,4). The apostate church will turn to fiction for their source of authority. We can expect that to mean the spoken words of false teachers as well as their voluminous religious writings. There will be a massive media blitz in that day, but even now, the distinction between Truth and fiction is already being blurred. Christian bookstores are presently filled with books that are so full of theological and biblical error that many correctly qualify as being nothing but fiction. As a matter of fact, Christian fiction books are already best sellers as sound doctrinal dissertations collect dust from lack of interest.

Men would much rather look to the opinions and suggestions of other men than depend upon the Truth as revealed in God's Word, the Bible. Because the false teacher will speak to the godless nature of men through their incessant psychobabble in a religious fashion, the apostate church will heap up their books and listen to their words instead of studying the Word of God. The popular writings of many false teachers today already throw doubt on the inerrancy of the Bible for those who are not well grounded in their faith. In that day, evil men will make great pretense of still calling themselves "Christian," though they will be far from holding to the true faith.

The pseudo-believer would rather hear men that are smooth talkers, that will make them feel good, and will tickle not only their ears, but their egos as well. "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 1:16). The speech of those false teachers will be as smooth as butter and sound quite reasonable. In keeping with the popular topics of the day, they will be careful not to offend anyone by speaking of such offensive things as judgment or Hell. Nor will they speak of sin, or blood redemption, but of how "good men" can effect changes in the world to usher in a new utopian age — totally apart from God — through the temporal church's own organizational skills and methods.

Congregations, made up entirely of the unsaved, will have previously voted out the men of God and will have hired men more to their liking even before the final apostasy of the church takes place, while believers starve for the Word on the fringes of Christendom. No longer will the critical test be whether the church leader is himself a redeemed servant of Christ, or whether he is filled with the Holy Spirit, or whether he seeks out God's will, or whether he studies and keeps God's Word, but whether he is a good orator and motivator that is well liked by their godless congregations.

The Temporal Church's Unremitting Appetite for Evil

Congregations in that day will desire to hear about evil things from the pulpit rather than the good news of the Gospel. That cosmopolitan church will find no fault in hearing about those things that God has called evil. Rather, the church itself will adopt evil means in order to embrace a corrupted world system and align the churches with an age that knows no inhibitions.

For example, a metropolitan church recently put on a skit, which was a parody of the birth of Jesus Christ, as a part of a larger Christmas program to which the public was invited. In that skit, the Scripture was severely distorted and annotated into an irreverent dialog in order to poke fun and elicit laughter by the audience for what should have been a serious depiction of the events surrounding the incarnation. The argument put forth for doing this, of course, was that

the church had to reach the unsaved on their own level. It should be noted however that one cannot pull anyone from a deep pit by jumping down into the pit with them, nor can the world be reached for Christ by embracing the decadent world system lest we become contaminated by their ways (cf. Jude 1:17–23).

The prime objective of the church will turn from reaching the lost sinner with the Gospel to getting unbelievers and believers alike involved in their evil ways, their various political intrigues, and away from the love of God to topics of human sexuality. God's unbending requirements for men, as clearly stated in the Decalogue, will be deserted for a less harsh concept of popular morality that has no absolute restraints or bounds of Christian ethic.

In addition, the biblical meanings of words will be abandoned by many church ministers as they lean increasingly toward humanism. We must already be on guard for the abuse of words such as "liberty," by which they mean license, and "tolerance," by which they mean acceptance of sin, that are already being used as a snare to trap the unwary. We must even beware of the use of the word "grace" where it no longer means the grace of God, but only the supposed benevolence of men and women toward each other.

Temporal Church Ministers Will Seek the Way of Balaam

Preachers and other prolific writers of error will all seek after the way of Balaam, the Old Testament prophet for hire. Jude spoke of the apostate minister when he wrote,

> **"…these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core"** (Jude verse 10–11).

Preachers will speak evil of spiritual and heavenly things, and will speak glowingly from the pulpits of base and amoral things — even immoral things as they seduce men to commit adultery with the world. Like Cain of old, they will seek after a doctrine of works and abhor even the thought of a true salvation received of God's grace

alone. They shall seek the reward of men, heaping money upon themselves and upon their massive works — money that has been seduced from the spiritually ignorant and the unwary. They will fill themselves with pride and usurp the positions of God's true prophets, as they rebel against the authority of God and his true ministers. Like Core (Korah), they will seal their own fate.

> **"These are spots in your feasts of charity [love feasts], when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever"** (Jude 1:12,13).

Many unstable men and women in those days will become quite popular because they will be very charismatic speakers. Nevertheless, they will not produce any fruit, nor will they speak the Word of Truth, but will engage instead in "speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1Ti.4:2). These evil religious church leaders will think nothing of boldly telling lies even as to their own position with the Lord (whom they do not truly know). Rather, they will use great swelling words, which they so easily speak, to motivate the unsaved masses to follow them into the darkness of oblivion.

The Temporal Church Given Over to Seducing Spirits

In the time of the great apostasy, the institutional church will give itself over fully to various seducing spirits (1Ti.4:1). Of course, we can already see this happening to the public at large through new-age and various other neo-pagan religious beliefs. Elements of those errors are continually infiltrating temporal churches through glossolalia and other false doctrines of the present-day Charismatic Movement. The congregations of those churches in the last days will not be happy with the Truth and verity of Jesus' atonement through which comes God's redemption. Instead, they will seek after many experiences of a "spiritual nature" to pleasure and reassure their flesh. This desire for enhanced emotionalism will most likely be assisted by

increasingly decadent forms of "spiritual" music and dance being incorporated into "worship services" that no longer honor God but merely stimulate worldly congregations through elevated religious excitement.[404]

Multitudes of the unsaved will find that as they open themselves up to a spirit world, they can experience various mental and physical phenomenon that give them an emotional lift and make them feel more in control of their lives. Many may even believe that they have given themselves over to the power of the Holy Spirit, but instead they will have given themselves over to the seduction of evil spirits that will gladly accommodate men's desires in order to achieve their purposes.

No wonder Paul said that in the great apostasy the temporal church would adhere to the doctrines of devils (1Ti.4:1)! While under the control of evil spirits, the teaching of the demons will enter into the minds of the gullible. So real and desirable will those teachings become to the minds of the controlled, that they will preach them as if they were truth. So influential and natural is the word of demons to the unsaved man, that he would much rather accept that evil doctrine than genuine Truth. The doctrines of the demons will be designed to please men, because their express purpose is to destroy men in their sins by keeping them away from the Truth and the one true God.

The Temporal Church Will Forbid Marriage

A cult known as the Shakers[405] forbad marriage, such that new couples dissolved existing marriage bonds when they became members in order to live separately as brother and sister. This dictate was based upon the notion that they were preparing themselves to live in an imminent heavenly kingdom in which there would be no marriage relationships (See Mt.22:30). The Roman Catholic Church still dictates celibacy for its priests and other clergy, though not for its

[404] See The Degradation of Church Music, page 412

[405] See The Shaker Movement, page 254

laity. However, in the time of the great apostasy, the temporal church will follow the world's lead and declare that marriage is no longer allowed for anyone (1Ti.4:3). Base sexual immorality will seem so normal and so prevalent that the temporal church will most likely fear that insistence upon the sanctity of meaningful marriage bonds will serve no purpose but to limit their numbers.

Even as this book is being written, the world at large has denied the sanctity of marriage as a God-given institution. So-called "gay marriages" or "civil unions" are already taking place, and they are being declared legally binding in many nations throughout the world. This has so diluted the true institution of marriage that marriage has all but lost any meaning. Perhaps the temporal church will merely recognize short-term "unions" for economic and reproductive purposes even as it forbids the institution of consecrated marriage.

Many of our more liberal churches already tolerate deviate sexual practices within the lifestyle of members of their congregations, and many have opened their doors to the ordination of homosexual church officers as well. Eventually, that sexual permissiveness could result in the sanctioning of even more immoral activities by the temporal churches, and it could even result in the introduction of various immoral religious rituals.

The Temporal Church Will Impose Ritual Diets

It may at first seem very strange that Paul should mention restrictive diets as a religious ritual in connection with the coming apostasy (1Ti.4:3). Yet, dietary restrictions and edicts have a long history within religion at large. We certainly know that many Jews of Paul's day advocated abstaining from meats that at first may have been offered to idols before being sold in the marketplace. Following the Jerusalem Council,[406] however, the eating of meat by Christians was left up to the conscience of individual believers since idols were determined to be nothing at all such that they could taint the meat offered to them in any way.

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[406] See The Jerusalem Council, page 50

Most cults have gone off onto strange tangents about what may or may not be eaten by their followers, and they have turned those restrictions into rituals along with various mental and physical exercises. However, ritualistic diets have also been identified with institutionalized Churchianity in the past as well as today. What had begun as a matter of personal conscience eventually congealed into legalism as the scruples of a few were soon forced upon all. To state more recent examples, the Roman Catholic Church, until recently, forbad the eating of meat on Fridays. Seventh Day Adventists[407] still encourage vegetarianism if not in fact dictating it.

The saying "you are what you eat" has been extended from the physical into the spiritual realm. Even some of our present-day evangelical churches have begun to dabble in various dietary restrictions or food supplements under the guise of promoting "spiritual wellness." We should understand that no food is good or evil in itself, "for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1Ti.4:5). Nonetheless, the abstinence from, or the partaking of, certain foods will be considered signs of spirituality among many church congregations, who have no real spiritual sense at all, in the time of the final apostasy.

Having said all of this, however, we must remember that vegetarianism was being strongly advocated through the twin religious philosophies of evolutionism and environmentalism[408] long before the turn of the twenty first century. Therefore, vegetarianism ultimately could be politically enforced upon the world's populations, and its religious aspects will be fully embraced by the apostate church that only follows the world's lead in forbidding the eating of meat.

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[407] See Seventh Day Adventism, page 373

[408] See Vegetarianism and Animal Activism, page 512

The Mother of Harlots

If we are amazed that the temporal church could ever become so utterly depraved, if we cringe from even looking at her — this corrupted apostate church — so did the Apostle John.

> **"… I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw a woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great [astonishment]"** (Re.17:3–6).

We must understand that this apostate church will certainly not be the body of Christ! It will be a counterfeit temporal church that only had her roots in Christianity that have long sense been cut off. She will prostitute herself before the world and deny her betrothed, her Lord. This church of the last days will be full of corruptness, and evil will flow out in her works; the apostasy will be absolute. Because of her worldliness, the apostate church will have grown into a worldwide organization that will elicit the worship of the entire world. All nations will bow down to her.

The Final Stance of the Visible Church

Through the centuries, the visible Church on earth has found itself encased within the larger temporal church that is organized and operated by fallible men. A combination of increasing external persecution and control as well as the pressures arising from increasing internal religious and political corruption will eventually drive the temporal church to the breaking point after which it will completely depart from the true faith without any hope of its restoration as we have already discussed in this chapter. As that point draws near, the

elect of the visible Church must flee out of established temporal churches to begin meeting in individual homes as small groups in order to retain and freely practice the true faith until Christ calls them forth to be transported into the heavenly realm.

> **"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."** (2Co. 6:14–18).

The House Church

The House Church (also referred to as the Home Church) is not a new development; it has been a bastion on the periphery of temporal Christendom ever since the first century. All of the early first century churches were house churches inasmuch as they had no set-aside places of worship. As we have seen, small groups would travel from house to house meeting with the apostles, praying, and engaging in the Lord's Table memorial (Ac.2:42,46). Inasmuch as they were increasingly ostracized by unbelieving Jews, they began to order themselves into a larger federation in order that they could provide for the physical necessities of the poor among their number that were no longer being cared for through the resources of national Israel. Although that was a pragmatic necessity that was forced upon them by circumstances, it is at this very point that the visible Church began to neglect its primary objective to worship God and instead it began to "serve tables" (Ac.6:2). From this simple beginning, the temporal church was formed that would eventually enclose the visible Church

within a hard shell that would inhibit its growth and even threaten its very existence.

House Churches during the Roman Era

We have already discussed, monasticism and other separatist movements that sprang up in connection with Constantine the Great in an earlier chapter as the Roman Emperor became the de facto head of the church (Reactions of the Church to Constantine, page 140). While there is little historical information about them because of their concealed nature, other smaller individual groups of believers that were bent upon holding their own course at all costs almost certainly continued to exist invisibly on the fringes of institutionalized Churchianity throughout the Roman era. Though heavily persecuted by the institutionalized Roman church whenever and wherever they were found, those wilderness churches carried the body of Truth onward in time throughout the Roman period leading up and into the Protestant Reformation Movement[409] that would begin much later in the sixteenth century.

While some present-day independent Baptist churches often claim an historic succession from John the Baptist onward through those independent churches, such a line of church succession cannot be proven anymore than the Roman church's claim to an apostolic succession of bishops from Peter. Furthermore, we must note that John the Baptist was the last of the old covenant prophets, not an apostle of the new covenant church, and John's baptism was a baptism of repentance to prepare the Jews for the coming of their Messiah, not a witness of Christian conversion. Still other independent temporal churches also view themselves in much the same way as being the sole keepers of the true faith without exhibiting any credentials to support it. When house churches become institutions, they cease to be house churches.

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[409] See Chapters 18.1 and 18.2 beginning on page 214

Perseverance of House Churches

In various parts of the world where Christianity has been heavily persecuted by atheistic national governments, the house church has proved to be the mainstay of Christian persistence and growth. Although there are many areas of the world in which we could site this case, primary examples can be found in Communist nations such as Russia and China. In each case, those house churches were formed in reaction against a national church that was controlled by the central government. In Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church was taken over by the communist government and used in an attempt to encase all religious activity within its walls to control it, stifle it, and prevent it from spreading to newer generations of believers. In China, the Three Self Patriotic Movement was utilized by its communist government in the same way. Although gathering in house churches was forbidden, believers still met as often as they could, many were persecuted, and their leaders arrested. In spite of all that, house churches prevailed and continue to prevail. As still other governments of the world nationalize the operation of the temporal church to meet their own socialist ends, house churches will become even more widespread.

The Contemporary House Church Movement

Even today, the size of the house church movement is difficult to evaluate because house churches are so small and nearly invisible by their very nature. Most house churches likely begin as isolated home Bible study groups. Dissatisfied with the Bible teaching (or complete lack thereof) that they are receiving from local churches, many choose to gather in small groups to study the Bible for themselves. Soon those studies begin to take on more of the characteristics of a church as their participants begin to pray together and establish their own basic doctrines. Their unrecorded memberships are expanded by personal invitation thus reducing the possibility of dangerous secular influx.

While the formation of house churches can guard against the doctrinal error that is so deeply entrenched within almost all denominations and larger organized churches, it is also apparent that

many of those house churches could themselves contribute to that error. Rather than seeking true Biblical reform, many of the members of those churches could only be those who have not only rebelled against the temporal church, but against historic Christianity itself. If so, they could become no more than small cults. Furthermore, if the growth is sufficient, some Bible study groups begin to search for a larger building to house their members in mass rather than further expand through the creation of other independent house churches. At that point, a temporal church is founded such that they become the very thing from which their members had previously escaped.

Because many of the temporal churches recognize that they cannot reach out to indoctrinate every individual member to keep them firmly in their fellowship, cellular groups are formed within the church. These are formed in part to keep small house church groups from forming outside and apart from the temporal church's jurisdiction and control. These cellular groups often meet in private homes much as do genuine house churches except that they are led by carefully chosen elders or others of high standing in the mother church. They are therefore fully creatures of the temporal church that spawned them, not house churches.

The Current Exodus of the Visible Church

House churches will eventually become essential when the temporal church goes its way into the state of final apostasy, although the exodus is already underway. The reason for this initial exodus is based upon serious failings of the temporal church that have arisen from the various negative trends and movements that have already been discussed in this chapter and elsewhere throughout this book. Outwardly, the trends exemplify themselves in the following ways:

- Stifling Churchianity and the increasing authoritarianism being practiced by many church leaders to enforce it
- The increasing trend toward progressive liberalism by contemporary churches on the one hand and the lifeless ritual formalism of older established churches on the other

- So-called community outreach programs that have instead become the means by which the unsaved have infiltrated the church in increasingly greater numbers
- Worship services that have degenerated into mere musical entertainment for the attendants who are revered more than God
- The embracing of various radical paraphrases and faulty translations of the Bible to replace sound and tested translations to further the error of open deism
- Increasing reliance on psychological methods and studies that displace the study of God's Word with humanist methodology and socialist tendencies
- Voluminous socialist church programs supported by a legal tithing system that has become insufficient to support them thus requiring increasingly greater contributions of money from an already heavily tax-burdened congregation

Churches Already on the Brink of the Abyss

Therefore, we surely realize that the things that we have discussed in this chapter cannot be safely assigned to some dim and distant future inasmuch as early indications of the final apostasy are already present within today's increasingly worldly-minded temporal churches. In spite of the efforts of the early reformers, the temporal church as a whole today is on the brink of becoming totally apostate in that it has already deviated in great part from the sound doctrines that are the core substance of Christianity. For instance, it has become quite common to hear ordained clergy deny the virgin birth of Christ and his physical resurrection from the dead. False teachers, worldliness, and compromise, work together to push the churches away from the true faith and toward the cliff edge where it will eventually fall away into the abyss of unbelief.

The lifeblood of most of our temporal churches today is not the blood of Christ, but hard cold cash. Due to the large investment in buildings and grounds, large church staffs, and voluminous programs a church soon finds that it must compromise its beliefs in order to bring

in enough money to keep up their worldly commitments. When money becomes even tighter, and as the elect increasingly vacate those churches, Jesus may again find himself being sold out for thirty pieces of silver. That compromise will cause an even greater exodus of the elect whose place will be filled with the reprobate pseudo-Christian.

This apostate condition within institutionalized temporal churches as a whole will actually continue to worsen as we approach the time when the antichrist will win her over. The diminishing remnant of the believing elect, must soon seek fellowship in individual gatherings outside her massive and imposing walls. It must therefore be reiterated that when we talk about the church going into apostasy, we are not talking about the elect who may still exist within the fringes of those organizations for the present. Those who are truly the elect of God cannot fall away.

This will be the condition of the world at large in the last days prior to the Lord's return to judge the earth, as the counterfeit church paves the way for the acceptance of a counterfeit "christ," the antichrist. The earth will be a horrible place as man's evil nature runs rampant. It will be a time much like it was in the days of Noah before the flood came and destroyed all life on the earth in that past age (Mt.24:37–39). Men, preoccupied with evil deeds, will not be aware of the terrible judgment that hangs over their heads — ready to fall upon them when the cup of their iniquity is full. They will continue life as usual even when destruction is at the very door.

Chapter 20.2 Preliminary Millennial Doctrines

In this chapter, we shall confine our study to the general doctrines of the rapture of the Church and the Millennial Age while in the next, we shall present a broad outline of the events of the last days. In the chapters following, we shall go into much more detail as we study individual chapters of the book of Revelation in chronological order. While no attempt is being made to be intentionally tedious in these introductory chapters, some preliminary technical aspects must be presented for clarity in our later study of the momentous events of the last days.

Millennialism

In addition to the doctrine of the church, covenantalists and dispensationalists (all of which we discussed in Book II, Section 11 of this work) differ greatly regarding a millennial age on earth with Jesus Christ personally ruling on the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem. However, the doctrine of millennialism in various forms can be traced back to the early beginnings of the church many centuries before the formulation of dispensationalism[410] in the 1800's. For that reason, one can quite easily believe in a coming millennial kingdom age and still hold to a reformed covenantalist position regarding soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) in all respects; the two positions are not mutually exclusive as many would suppose.

Four basic interpretative approaches are held by Christian scholars regarding the one thousand year span mentioned in Revelation Chapter 20. They are "preterist view," " historical view," "spiritualist view," and "futurist view."

Preterist View

The preterist[411] believes that the events of judgment recorded in the Revelation have been fulfilled during the old Roman or

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[410] See Tenets of Fundamentalism, page 369

[411] The prefix "preter" is derived from the Latin *preterit* meaning beyond, more than, prior to, past, or previous.

Apostolic era — prior to and ending in A.D. 70. Although some insist that this view extends back much farther, it appears to have become formulated sometime in the sixteenth century. Preterists see the second advent of Christ as having already occurred in A.D. 70 at the time of the destruction of the Temple thus negating any possibility of Jesus' future return.

This view is based upon several verses of Scripture. The great tribulation period concerning which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24:21, is seen as the severe persecution of the saints under Nero whom they envision as being the antichrist. The second verse is found in Matthew 24:36 when Jesus said that no one knew the "***day*** and ***hour***" of his return. It is said that He did not mention the ***year*** inasmuch as his return would be within the immediate years of their own generation. This is supported by misinterpreting Matthew 16:28 and Matthew 24:34 to mean that he was referring to the generation of his immediate disciples. A more convincing verse which they commonly use to support this view is found in Matthew 10:23 in which Jesus said to his disciples as He sent them out, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, ***Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come"*** (emphasis added). In addition, Revelation 1:3 is referred to as supporting this view inasmuch as it reads, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for ***the time is at hand***" (emphasis added).[412]

There are many serious problems with this interpretation. First, we see that Jesus' return in AD 70 must indeed have been a "spiritual return" (as they themselves claim) inasmuch as He does not presently reign in the flesh upon the earth. This notion is in direct conflict with Acts 1:11 however where it is said that Jesus will return in "like

[412] This early fulfillment of the events in Revelation would require that the Apostle John wrote the Revelation just prior to 70 A.D., while most scholars date the writing of Revelation somewhere around 85 to 90 A.D. based upon the writings of Iranaeus (See Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–200?), page 114). Somewhat tenuous evidence though that may be, there is no historic evidence at all to suggest that John could have written the document earlier.

manner" as he ascended. Jesus ascended in the flesh, whereas in the preterist view He descended only in spirit. The Olivet discourse, commonly considered prophetic regarding yet future events recorded in Revelation, must therefore be all about the destruction of Jerusalem and nothing more.[413]

As to Nero being the antichrist, his reign and persecution was limited to the Roman Empire at that time not the entire earth. He issued no mark restricting the trade of goods. As to his personal character, he was a weak, insane, and ineffectual man who took his own life in AD 68 ***prior*** to the destruction of Jerusalem. He therefore was not at all characteristic of the antichrist that is referred to in the book of Revelation. As bad as the siege and destruction of Jerusalem was, it has not been the worse period of tribulation in the history of the earth, as Jesus emphatically stated that the future tribulation period would be (Mt.24:21). The massive suffering in World War II that ended in the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan was exceedingly more devastating than the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

Regarding verse 10:23 recorded in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus was merely telling them that He would be rejoining them before they had gone over all the cities of Israel in the immediate context of this verse. Obviously, all of the cities of Israel had been visited by the disciples long before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, and in fact, the Gospel had spread out into Samaria and it was even carried toward the ends of the earth as the Apostle Paul reached far-flung Gentile populations throughout the Roman Empire (Ac.1:7,8).

As to the day and hour, Jesus was merely telling them that the precise time was unknown. As we shall see in the following chapters, there will be many strong indications that that day is approaching, although the precise time regarding the day and hour will not be known even when it is immediately pending. As to the generation He spoke of, in Matthew 16:28, He was referring to the revelation that Peter, James and John saw when He was transfigured on the mountain top, and they saw Him as the Eternal King (Mt.17:1,2). In Matthew

[413] See The Olivet discourse, page 574

24:34, Jesus was not referring to the life span of his immediate disciples, but of those who would begin to see the predictive signs of which He had just spoken being fulfilled in rapid succession.

Partial-Preterism

Because preterism essentially destroys the "blessed hope" of Jesus' future return to the earth for his own (Tit.2:13), some only partially accept the preterist position.[414] In this view, Jesus' supposed return in AD 70 is only to be considered a spiritual precursor to his second advent. Partial-preterists, unlike full preterists, believe in a second advent (or perhaps a third advent?) and the resurrection of all believers at the end of time. They, like full preterists, are Amillennialists (see Amillennialism, page 556) that do not believe in the coming of a literal Millennial age on earth or else believe that we are presently living in a spiritual kingdom age of undetermined length (See Post-millennialism, page 557). They do not believe that Jesus will call down to earth to transport his Church out of harm's way (the rapture) prior to executing divine judgment on the earth's sinful population that will remain behind. Nor do they believe in the coming of a literal antichrist in the last days who will be destroyed at the coming of the faithful and true Jesus Christ.

Historical View

Those holding to what is referred to as the historical view of Revelation state that most all of the events in Revelation have already been fulfilled in all of past history. Unlike the preterist, however, they mostly see those events as being fulfilled before Jesus was born. Many different interpretations attempt to fit the prophecies found in the book of Revelation to various specific historical events that took place in the Maccabean era. Traditional Jews were being persecuted at that time by a Hellenist faction and the supposed antichrist was Antiochus Epiphanes.[415] It becomes necessary to stretch both historical facts and

[414] The prominent P.C.A. theologian R.C. Sproul apparently falls into this category along with various other present-day theologians and preachers.

[415] Antiochus Epiphanes was the ruler of the Seleucid Empire that occupied Palestine

Scripture to make all the puzzle pieces fit convincingly. That accounts for the rather large number of historical interpretations based on this view.

Spiritualist View

The spiritualist unlike the preterist and the historist believes that the events recorded in Revelation have no literal context at all, but merely point out the importance of various Christian principles and attitudes. The severe judgments related in the Revelation only serve as warnings to point out the serious consequences of Christians deviating from the faith. This is generally the view of the hyper-covenantalist as well as various religious scholars of liberal denominations who render the entire book of the Revelation as poetic allegory rather than predictive prophecy.

Futurist View

If we reject Preterism as being in conflict with both Scripture and history, and the historical view as likewise unconvincing because of the nebulous pre-Christian background it imposes upon the text, that leaves us with either allegorizing the events described in the book of Revelation into some sort of vague application for daily Christian living, as does the spiritualist — or accepting the futurist view which is after all the more rational view to accept. It is hard for one to believe that John's highly detailed vision was merely intended to be a recapitulation of the past especially in the light of Revelation 1:19. Furthermore, allegorizing the many prophecies in the book of revelation out of their prophetic context could be used to justify almost any sort of philosophical bent no matter how extreme it may be.

The futurist believes that most all of the major events of Revelation are yet to be fulfilled in the future, with the exception of

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between the years 175 to 164 BC. The Maccabees, a traditionalist sect of Judaism, organized a successful revolt against liberal Hellenist Jews. Antiochus who had prohibited worship in the Temple had in fact defiled it by offering up a swine on the altar. The Temple was purified and restored after the successful revolt. Also see Renewal and Purification, page 586

the vision of the glorified Christ[416] and the primary intent of the messages to the seven churches found in the first three chapters.[417] That is the almost universal position taken by dispensationalists, although some covenantalists may also hold to a less specific futurist view that does not include a millennial age. The futurist view will be the only position put forth in this work as we move on into our discussion of the doctrine of the last days.

Amillennialism

Amillennialists envision Jesus Christ returning to earth one day in judgment thus ending all future activity on earth as the eternal ages immediately begin. They therefore argue that there is to be no actual thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. In doing so, however, they must somehow account for the "thousand years" that are clearly mentioned in Revelation Chapter 20.

Both the preterist and Historical interpretations necessarily discount the "thousand years" stated in Revelation as being a figurative term only designating a long length of time. They often refer to the verse in the Old Testament wherein it is stated that the LORD owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps.50:10). Obviously, there are more than a thousand hills on the earth with cattle on them. The question then becomes, who owns the cattle on the other hills. Therefore, one thousand in this text is most certainly figurative. Nevertheless, the verse of this Psalm of praise fits into the context of hyperbole utilized within poetry — all very legitimate. That context however is absent in the prophetic book of Revelation if John is indeed speaking of real events, as we shall insist is so in this eschatological analysis.

Amillennialists also argue that the "thousand years" is only mentioned in a "few obscure verses" in Revelation Chapter 20 as if that makes it less important. However, we find that it is mentioned six

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[416] See Vision of the Glorified Christ, page 67

[417] See Prophetic Aspect of the Seven Messages, page 89

times in just six verses in that chapter so that we cannot possibly miss its significance (Re.20:2–7). The Greek word *chilioi* is very specific and means "one thousand." The Greek word *etos* means "year." How can God's Word be any more specific than that? If we merely take the words of Chapter 20 at face value, we find that the reason the Millennium is not mentioned other than here is that the thousand-year reign only fits in ***chronologically*** following the end of the final outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth in the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

Post-millennialism

The Postmillennial position is founded upon the belief that the preaching of the Gospel by men of the church will eventually convert mankind and thus usher in a "Christian" age at the end of which Christ will return to lay claim to his completed kingdom. However, many post-millennialists have now come to the realization that the entire world will not be converted by the temporal church inasmuch as the total and obstinate depravity of man has been so obviously revealed in two world wars and more recently in semi-organized terrorism. They therefore have most often been forced to digress to the extent that they accept the amillennial mindset. Even so, with the influence of humanism being so widespread today, some still cling to the post-millennial viewpoint in practice if not in doctrine — especially when world affairs seem to be on the mend for a short time.

The post-millennialists also must consider the "thousand years," mentioned in Revelation as the length of an age in which Jesus rules on earth, to be figurative. That is quite necessary inasmuch as nearly two thousand years have already transpired since Jesus' ascension, and He has not yet returned to take over the reigns of the church. Therefore, the "kingdom age" in which Jesus rules spiritually would already be much longer than a thousand years.

Pre-millennialism

Those who believe that Christ Himself will return in the future to personally establish his thousand-year Kingdom of Heaven on earth are known as pre-millennialists. The calling up of the true remnant

Church to be with Christ in the air is expected to occur prior to the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. That general position is also the viewpoint taken in this treatise.

Purpose of the Kingdom Age

"After the Church age, why would this thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth be necessary?" That is the question that the Amillennialists repeatedly ask, and it needs to be answered. One could merely suppose, as do they, that the Church is God's last witness to a sinful world, and that it is immediately to be followed by the final judgment. Aside from the fact that Scripture does not support that point of view, there are five reasoned arguments for the existence of a temporal Millennial Age.

Clear Demonstration of Man's Fallen Nature

The first purpose for the Millennium is to demonstrate that man's rebellion against God comes from the depths of man's own heart. Today, many of our secular political leaders believe that if we could merely eliminate poverty, want, and human suffering, the "noble nature" of man would emerge, thus ending all strife and war. The Millennium will bring in such an age with the Lord, Himself, in control of a world that will "blossom like a rose." During that time, all human wants and needs will be fully met. That will truly be the utopian age that so many seek to create today.

That utopian age will be characterized by ideal living conditions brought about by Jesus and by the incarceration of Satan so that he can no longer influence mankind. Even with Satan bound in the bottomless pit, man will still exhibit his rebellious nature against the Laws of the Kingdom though it will at that time be suppressed by the threat of immediate retribution. The Millennium will fully demonstrate that man, himself, has a fallen nature and is capable of sin even without being continually enticed and deceived by Satan. That tainted nature will be clearly demonstrated even under ideal environmental conditions.

To Set the Stage for Satan's Demise

Secondly, Satan has drawn men into sin by means of his lies and deception. We have seen that from the very beginning, as Eve was deceived by Satan in the garden. We find that the Millennial Age sets the stage for the demise of Satan when he is finally released at the end of the Kingdom age. We read in Revelation 20, verses 8 and 9 that even then Satan is able to deceive a large number of the Gentile nations to go against Jerusalem, and in so doing, go against the very throne of Christ Himself. Because of that final rebellion, Satan will be cast into the "lake of fire and brimstone" along with the antichrist and the false prophet who had already preceded him (Re.20:10).

Preparation of Mankind for the Eternal Ages

We also find a third purpose for the Millennium as well. The Kingdom age will be a time of purification and preparation for the timeless Eternity that will follow the thousand years. When the eternal ages begin, Satan will have done his worse and lost. Those who engaged in the final rebellion will have been purged from the earth as "fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Re.20:9). Those that remain will be the loyal subjects of the King.

Fulfillment of Promises to Israel as a Nation

Lastly, a careful study of the Old Testament reveals that there are specific elements of prophecy peculiar to Israel as a nation that have not yet been fulfilled. Further study will also reveal that God made many of his promises to Israel without any established condition so that even Israel's vehement rejection of Christ cannot alter it. Paul, the Apostle, as much as said that Israel was only blinded by the close proximity of the light of God's Son so that the Gentiles (non-Jews), seeing the light from a distance, could be brought in (cf. Ro.11:8,25). It is inconceivable that God would not honor his own Word and would fail to carry out his specific promises.

The covenant with Israel regarding the Kingdom Age can be found repeated throughout the Old Testament text as a promised future age and again in the New Testament as Jesus Christ actually offered

the Kingdom at that time to the Jews. [418] The fact is that the Jews of that day not only would not receive the kingdom, they ***could not*** receive the kingdom. While the offer was perfectly valid on God's part, it never had any possibility of being accepted by the Jewish nation because of their moral inability resulting from mankind's inherited depravity.

That Christ May Reign on Earth

One such promise is that Jesus Christ (the Messiah) would one day reign on the throne of David. We clearly see that the Jews rejected Jesus as their King nearly two-thousand years ago. Although He was of the line of David and ordained by God as King of Israel, He never ruled over Israel, as did David. Israel rejected Him when He came to them, and the nation at large still rejects Him today. In the Millennium, we find that Jesus Christ will literally reign on the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem, thus fulfilling God's promises to Israel.

Israel's Purpose in the Kingdom Age

It is apparent that our understanding of the Bible as to Israel's existence as a nation in the Kingdom Age is quite significant. It is quite true that the many ceremonial laws of the Old Testament that pointed ahead to the Messiah are no longer valid for them today. The Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, and has never been rebuilt as of this day. It is further true that the nation of Israel served its primary purpose in bringing forth the Messiah. It is also true that Israel, as a nation, rejected their savior and king.

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[418]There are numerous examples of this covenant with Israel regarding a future kingdom on earth. One such example is to be found in Jeremiah the 23rd chapter, verses 5 through 8. It is significant to note that no king of Israel in the past was ever called "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" as is found in verse 6. This is a title that can only refer to Jesus Christ who will reign in Israel during the future Kingdom age. The New Testament example referred to here is to be found in Matthew Chapters 5 through 7 where Jesus defines kingdom-age principles and law in what is commonly referred to as "The Sermon on the Mount."

The new order of things in this age of grace[419] is found in the spiritual construct of the Church that is made up of Holy-Spirit filled believers, not in the Temple at Jerusalem made of lifeless stones. God's people in this age worship Him "in Spirit and in Truth," not in mere ceremonial shadows of things to come (1Pe.2:5;Jn.4:23). From those facts alone, some conclude that God is done with the nation of Israel. Yet, Israel as an ethnic people still exist today as a testament to the promises that God had made to them even in the face of the extreme persecutions and exterminations that they have suffered. The fact that Israel exists as a political nation today cannot be explained away even though it is far from being a theocracy in which God rules through the Messiah (Christ).

The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church

The word "rapture" is quite commonly used today to denote the event described by the Apostle Paul in First Thessalonians 4:17:

> **"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"** (1Th.4:16–17)

Unfortunately, the primary contemporary meaning of the word rapture is that of being in an uncontrolled state of ecstatic joy or ecstasy. "Rapture" also has secondary English meanings that attach erotic or sensual connotations to it as well. Obviously, those definitions do not describe in any way the miraculous transformation and transport of the Church off the earth. In this verse, the Greek word *harpazo* is found for the word "caught" or "caught up," and it literally means to ***suddenly*** catch away, pluck, pull, or take by force.

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[419] Throughout this work, the term "age of grace" was used to describe the present age. It is not that God's grace was not evident in other times, but that the most prominent characteristic of this present age is an overwhelming abundance of God's grace poured out on Jew and Gentile alike.

The English word, "rapture" that is in common use for the "catching up" of the living Church is actually derived from the Latin word, *rapere* meaning "rapid." That word is very descriptive inasmuch as the transformation of the redeemed of the Church will be very rapid indeed. As the Apostle Paul said, "we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1Co.15:52) from the earthly into the heavenly state. In the same way, the bodies of the dead in Christ shall first rise up from their graves, be reunited with their spirit into a changed state, and then they will be transported along with the living off of the earth and into the air to be with Christ.

It should be very carefully noted that this verse does ***not*** say that Christ will physically return to the earth at the time of the rapture. Jesus will not need to come down to the earth to gather his Church; rather, the saints will go up to meet Him in the air. We find therefore that Jesus does not return to earth to establish his Kingdom at the time that the dead in Christ rise and those who are yet living are translated, but only that a great shout will come down from Heaven above that initiates the exodus (cf. 1Th.4:16,17).

Therefore, those critics who would argue that the rapture constitutes the second advent of Christ, thus requiring a totally unscriptural third advent for Christ to return to establish his Kingdom at a later time, is totally without merit. This fact will become even more obvious as we proceed with our discussion concerning the second advent of Christ in the following chapters of this section.

The Doctrine of Tribulationism

Pre-millennialists generally agree on the rapture of the church as an actual event, and the ultimate return of Jesus Christ to establish a thousand-year Kingdom age on earth. They also agree on a time of great tribulation (related in Chapters 6–18 of Revelation) preceding the kingdom age, which in their view is a full seven years in length. This seven-year period is based upon the prophecy of Daniel concerning future events that is found in Daniel Chapter 9. His entire prophecy will be chronologically outlined in detail in the next chapter, but at this

point in our discussion, we must consider it a given concept.[420] However, millennialists are divided on whether the true Church will be raptured before, in the middle, or after the period of great tribulation. In connection with the mid-tribulation viewpoint, some refer to themselves as "pre-wrath" mid-tribulationists.

Although the majority of millennialists today tend to agree on a pre-tribulation rapture, none of the chronologies are fully convincing from Scripture, as is evidenced by the fact that there are three basic positions held by reasonably sound scholars. Consequently, we shall soon put forward a modified position that we shall refer to as post-tribulation — pre-wrath, which afterward shall be considered the only valid position in this book. That position will be fully expanded in the chapters ahead, but first let us briefly consider each of the other positions in turn.

Post-tribulation Rapture

Post-tribulationists believe that elect Christians will be gathered together by Christ into the Kingdom of God here on earth at the end of the seven-year period of tribulation. They primarily make that assumption based upon the text of Matthew 24:29–31, Mark 13:24-27, and Luke 21:25-27. That of course means that the believing Church must suffer the full wrath of God here on earth throughout the trumpet judgments as well as the horrible bowls of God's wrath that will finally be poured out upon the inhabitants of the entire earth. The return of Christ and the rapture are seen as occurring simultaneously as the saints are transported into the air by angels to join Christ as He returns to establish his Kingdom on earth. All of the raptured saints will enter into the Kingdom on earth, rather than going to live in the New Jerusalem in heaven at that time.

Pre-tribulation Rapture

The primary reason so many adopt the pre-tribulation position is that it is indeed inconceivable that Jesus would ever allow the true

[420] See The Seventieth Week of Daniel, page 573

Church, which is his body and beloved bride, to suffer God's wrath. In fact, that is precisely why Christ died for our sins. Furthermore, it would be inconsistent with Paul's statement to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 in which he said that they had been delivered from God's wrath to come as a consequence of their having accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior and that they should: "…wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (cf. Re.6:17).

Mid-tribulation Rapture

Mid-tribulationists believe that the rapture of the Church will occur about halfway through a tribulation period before the most devastating judgments come about. The seven year tribulation period is generally divided into two 3 ½ year periods. The first 3 ½ years is referred to as the "beginning of sorrows" (cf. Mt.24:8) that the Church must go through while the last half is considered to be the period of very intense tribulation that will fall upon the unregenerated inhabitants of earth.

Pre-wrath Rapture

The pre-wrath concept is a specific modification of the mid-tribulation viewpoint. Pre-wrath tribulationists much like mid-tribulationists believe that the rapture of the believing Church will take place within the seven year tribulation period, either 3 ½ years into it or still later, but most definitely before the seven bowls of the wrath of God are poured out. Many see the rapture coming just before the beginning of the trumpet judgments, which is quite similar to the position taken in the following interpretation.

Post-tribulation — Pre-wrath Rapture

We shall now put forth an alternative to the four aforementioned interpretations as a consequence of ***more narrowly defining the "tribulation period as a brief but intense time of man's insane inhumanity forcefully perpetrated against their fellow men***. The great tribulation ***does not*** encompass the entire seventieth week of Daniel. Therefore, to believe that the Church does not go through the

time of the great tribulation is merely to misunderstand what characterizes the tribulation and what has brought it about. The great tribulation is ***not*** a time of God's judgment being carried out on sinful mankind in any way, but it is fully motivated by Satan working through mortal men.

The Great Tribulation should be more correctly defined as a short period of extreme chaos and anarchy occurring at the end of the antichrist's failed reign.[421] That brief but intense tribulation period immediately precedes the rapture of the Church, which will in turn be followed by God's fierce judgments on the earth in the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord. As in the pre-wrath rapture position, the Church must be transported off the earth prior to God's fierce judgments, which include the seven trumpet judgments and the seven bowls of his wrath. Only after God's vengeance against rebellious unredeemable sinners still residing upon earth has been fully carried out will Jesus personally return to earth to establish his Kingdom upon the ashes.

Relative Timing of the Rapture

While there is no question among believers that Christ will one day remove his Church from the earth to be with Him, the precise location of that event relative to other events described in the book of Revelation has always been controversial.[422] Having carefully made a

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[421] Note that the alternative tribulation view presented in this work should not and cannot be referred to as another mid-tribulation position, because the rapture does not occur until the ***end*** of a properly redefined tribulation period. Nor is it identical with the pre-wrath position since that position still interprets the entire seven years as the tribulation period. Therefore, it must be uniquely referred to as post-tribulation — pre-wrath.

[422] No serious attempt is made to defend the pre-wrath timing of the Rapture that is presented in this work, since it is believed that Scripture must bear that out well enough on its own. However, for those dispensationalists who are especially interested in reading a more thorough-going discussion of the technical aspects of pre-wrath Rapture as it relates to dispensationalism, Marvin J. Rosenthal's book entitled *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church,* Published by Thomas Nelson and copyrighted in 1990 is highly recommended.

decision to accept a post-tribulation—pre-wrath position, it now becomes imperative for us to determine the precise point within John's vision as he related it in the book of Revelation that the rapture takes place in order to fully reconcile the pre-wrath position with Scripture.

Obviously, if the true faith will no longer exist on earth when Christ returns to establish his Kingdom, there could be no true Church present at that time (Lu.18:8).[423] The remnant must have already been caught up to meet Him in the air above the earth before that time comes. Therefore the rapture must come before his physical return. Some see this as occurring before all the future events in the book of Revelation take place, some during, and some after according to their tribulation interpretation. That is because there is no ***absolute*** reference to the rapture of the Church as an event in the book of Revelation. In fact, after Chapter 3, in which Jesus addressed the seven churches[424] at the end of the apostolic age, there is no mention of the Church by name at all. Nevertheless, two passages have been seen as depicting the rapture metaphorically or through allegory. Neither is without some difficulty in interpretation, as we shall discover in the following discussion.

The Twenty-four Elders

The first of those passages on which the "classical dispensational pre-tribulation" viewpoint is founded is in Chapter 4 of Revelation.[425] It can be assumed that the Church is raptured when John is beckoned to come up into Heaven where he is to be shown

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[423] That does not mean that a counterfeit temporal church that no longer holds to the faith will not remain in its place.

[424] See Seven Messages to Seven Churches, page 67

[425] Here the use of the term "classical pre-tribulation" refers to the majority opinion of dispensationalists that believe the rapture occurs prior to the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel (discussed in the next chapter) and that the entire week constitutes the Great Tribulation Period. For more information regarding the classical interpretation, it is recommended that one read the comments on Revelation by J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Radio,* Volume 5, page 876.

future events (Re.4:1). Although we are not told that the raptured Church ascends along with John, it is further assumed that the twenty-four elders that are seen in verse 10 represents the entire Church in total or perhaps just her leaders.

The fact is, we are never told who those elders are although in the next chapter they sang a ***new song*** of the slain Lamb, "thou hast redeemed ***us*** to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Re.5:9-emphasis added). This last verse, in particular, suggests the church that is universal of kindred, tongue, people, and nation whereas the nation of Israel was specific to a particular kindred, people, and nation.

However, we cannot totally exclude those Elders from being the redeemed of Israel. First, we see that those elders are not saying that they were ***members*** of various kindred, tongues, people, and nations, but that they were saved "out of" those groups. Jews have been scattered among the nations for most of their existence. It would not be unreasonable for them to see their redemption as being both through the blood of the slain Lamb, to which their old covenant rituals pointed, as well as their redemption out of the many nations to which they had been dispersed over so many centuries.

Secondly, we see that this song of redemption is described as a "new song," which could mean that the Old Testament saints now recognize themselves as part of a larger body (including the saints of the old covenant who are now also integrated into the new) that have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. In fact, no redemption by God is possible except through the blood of the slain Lamb (Messiah) of which the old covenant sacrifices all looked forward as a type.

Third, the word "elder" is not exclusively used for church leaders. Its primary meaning is that of age and the rank or position of that age. In Hebrews 11:2, the Greek word, *presbuteros*, or "elder" is applied to the forefathers of Israel. Therefore, we could easily assume that those are the Old Testament saints that were raised from the dead at the time of the resurrection of Jesus as we read in Matthew: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Mt. 27:52,53).

Fourth, the fact that there are twenty-four of them, or twelve times two, is also somewhat indicative of the twelve tribes of Israel.[426] Perhaps those are actually men such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaiah, Daniel and various others of the saints of old that predate the Christian era. In verse 10 of Revelation 5, they see that they have been made "kings and ***priests***." Levitical Priests served in twenty-four courses in the Temple, each course serving for one week at a time (1Chr.24:1–19). Perhaps they now serve in the heavenly Temple. Again, we are simply not told directly who those elders are, which makes the assumption that they are the raptured Church in Heaven quite uncertain since they could as easily be old covenant saints.

The Great Multitude

The second passage of Revelation is found in Chapter 7 following the sealing of the remnant of Israel. The Apostle John saw this event from his vantage point in Heaven as a great multitude of people appeared there before him and stood before the throne (Re.7:9–17). Here we again see the elders that were mentioned earlier as a separate group along with the four living creatures (Re.7:11). The number of this new multitude was so great that it was impossible for any man to count them. If, as this author believes, this is the raptured Church (both the transformed living and the resurrected and transformed dead), John saw them not as they left the earth, but as they arrived in Heaven. They are dressed in white robes that are indicative of righteousness and carry palm branches that are indicative of victory.

We, in fact, are all but told that the multitude are Christian believers in verse 13 and 14. In verse 14 we read, "…and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The problem that most have with this passage depicting the rapture is the fact that the angel seems to be telling John that the multitude all died as martyrs in verse 14. However, we see that it is said only that they

[426] We must admit that there were also twelve apostles, but if these represent the twelve apostles, it would seem strange that John was outside viewing this group of which he himself would certainly have been a member.

came out of great tribulation, not that they were all martyred during it. If this multitude is the raptured Church in total, they all — whether physically living or dead at that time — ***would*** indeed have all come out of the Great Tribulation at its very conclusion as Christ called out for his redeemed to join Him in the air above the earth.

The classical pre-tribulation viewpoint views the rapture of the Church as a day when a large portion of the population will suddenly disappear as believers are taken up to meet Christ in the air leaving a lamenting few out of a greater majority behind. Nevertheless, what that choice of timing for the rapture cannot allow its proponents to consider is that due to the anarchy and persecution that takes place during the Great Tribulation there may be few genuine believers remaining on the earth in that day.

Large numbers will have already died during the reign of the antichrist from war, famine, and disease, and many others will have been martyred during the Great Tribulation that culminates in his final attempt at controlling the chaotic collapse of his rule. Those believers that remain will have hidden themselves away out of view of those that seek to do them harm. No one would know when they were removed. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that all believers will be transformed and transported together at the very same instant. Therefore, the sensational sentiment that is expressed in an earlier bumper-sticker that read: "In the event of rapture, this car will be driver-less" could most likely misses the mark completely.

Although those who are living in that day will be translated and caught up to meet Christ in the air along with the believing dead whose bodies rest in many cemeteries, there is little reason to believe that the world at large will even miss the living or see the resurrected dead leave the earth. Anarchy and lawlessness in that day will be, with out doubt, very widespread, and people will disappear every day because of persecution and violence. Nor will the multitudes that are resurrected from their graves linger for any time on earth, but they will be transported immediately into the presence of Christ in the Heavens in their transformed bodies.

Therefore, none of the unbelievers that remain in that day would likely connect even a large number of missing persons with the

rapture of the Church. As unbelievers they will deny that possibility out of hand. They will, instead be concerned only for their own personal safety when they see the great cosmic upheaval and as they hide from the then visible face of Christ,[427] whom they have rejected, and attempt to flee the terrible wrath of the Lamb to come.

[427] See The Sign of His Coming, page 581

Chapter 20.3 Outline of the End-Times

It is impossible to understand the events of the book of Revelation without first superimposing two parallel timelines that are set forth earlier in Scripture.[428] The first of those timelines is found in the prophecy of Daniel Chapter 9, and the second is found in the Olivet Discourse of our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 24. Let us briefly consider the prophecy of Daniel first. A timeline of the entire seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy is found in Figure 11 below and it should be referred to while reading this initial discussion.

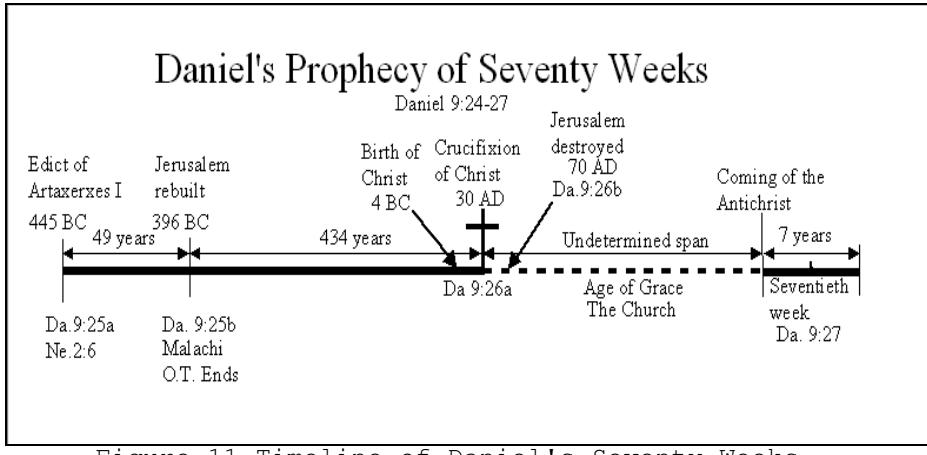

Figure 11 Timeline of Daniel's Seventy Weeks

> **"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy"** (Da. 9:24).

This prophecy initially speaks of the 70 years of the captivity of Judah in Babylon (one week = one year). However, the extended

[428] It must be understood that the timelines of the Olivet discourse and the seventieth week of Daniel have no absolute date anchors. That is, there is no way to determine that these timelines will begin on a date certain on today's calendar.

text is also predictive of a still greater event in the future.[429] Each of the 70 weeks actually represents 70 ***weeks of years*** or 490 years total (i.e. 70x7). That period of 490 years began with the edict of king Cyrus of Persia in 445 B.C. that allowed the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

> **"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times"** (Da. 9:25).

The first 49 years (7 X 7=49) was required to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem by the returning exiles. The end of the next 434 years (62 X 7=434) closely coincides with the date of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as the Messiah was "cut off" (cf. Isaiah 53:8):

> **"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined"** (Da. 9:26).

As the Messiah (Christ) was cut off from the earth through crucifixion we notice a break in the chronology of the timeline of Figure 11 above indicated by a dashed line. The dashed line indicates a period of undetermined length, which represents the age of grace in which we presently live. That period is now nearly two thousand years in length. For a short interval of one generation (about 30 years), Jews continued to worship in the Temple offering up animal sacrifices that no longer had any purpose or meaning since Jesus Christ had been

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[429] The prophets often did this. As they predicted an event nearby, the Holy Spirit used that event to symbolize another event that would take place farther into the future. The fulfillment of the earlier event served to authenticate the latter. Therefore, prophecy is often seen to have multiple references — referring to more than one event, the first of which is but a foreshadow of a later culmination.

offered up once and for all sins thus fulfilling the purpose of the ceremonial law of animal sacrifice.

The Temple in Jerusalem was subsequently destroyed at the end of that generation by "the prince that shall come" in A.D. 70. The first reference of this prophecy is most certainly applicable to Titus[430] who destroyed the city and the sanctuary in the first century (first reference). As a result, Temple sacrifice was discontinued, and the city of Jerusalem was made desolate. Nevertheless, "the prince that shall come" also refers to the antichrist who will spoil a rebuilt Temple[431] at a future date putting and end to the religious offerings once again (culmination of the prophecy). This second reference becomes quite evident as the prophecy begins to shift forward into the far future in the second half of this and the following verse.

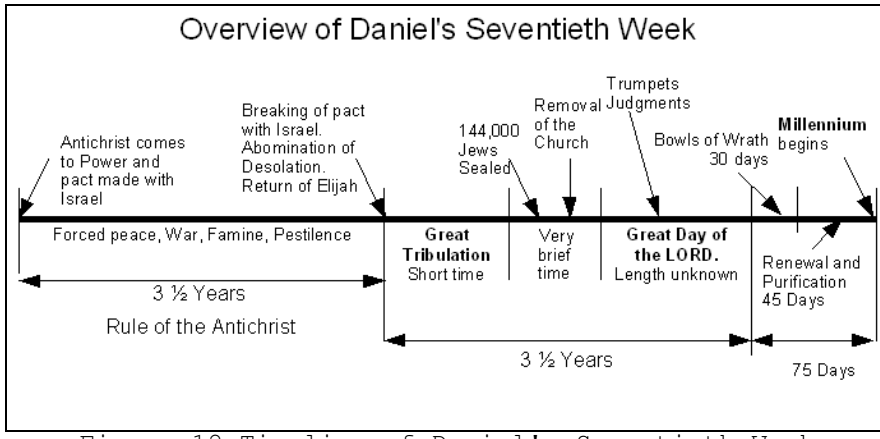

Figure 12 Timeline of Daniel's Seventieth Week

The Seventieth Week of Daniel

As can be seen, only 69 of the 70 weeks or a total of 483 years have been accounted for at this point in the prophecy. The final week

[430] See Footnote 15, page 64

[431] See Rebuilding of the Temple, page 608

is mentioned in verse 27 in connection with the "prince that shall come" (i.e. Titus, a commander representing a type of the antichrist).

> **"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate"** (Da.9:27).

The antichrist will make a covenant of peace with Israel for one week, or seven years (Figure 12 above). During that time, Israel will mistakenly return to the sacrificial system. However, in the middle of that week (3 ½ years) the world dictator will violate that covenant by desecrating the Temple that will have been rebuilt in Jerusalem.[432] That defilement is most often referred to as the "abomination of desolation" as our Lord Himself referred to it in Matthew 24:15.

The Olivet discourse

In order to properly understand the events of this last seven-year period of Daniel's prophecy, we must turn to the New Testament and the words of Jesus as found in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. The Olivet Discourse is actually the intermediary text that bridges the gap between the Old Testament prophecy of Daniel and the New Testament prophecy of the Apostle John in the Revelation. The parallel between the Olivet Discourse and the events of Revelation are quite striking and nearly impossible to miss.

Jesus Foretells the Destruction of Herod's Temple

Chapter 24 of Matthew begins with Jesus telling his disciples that the Temple will soon be destroyed leaving not one stone on another as they were on their way to the mount of Olives.

> **"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of**

[432] See Rebuilding of the Temple, page 608

the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mt.24:1,2).

This Scripture was literally fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Roman soldiers (contrary to orders) set fire to the Temple. Then, the gold from its appointments and furnishings began to melt and flow down and in-between the great stones. The gold-hungry soldiers literally dismantled the Temple to scrape out the gold. Not one stone was left standing upon another.

The Disciples Question Jesus

Later, as Jesus sat with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, four of his disciples Peter, James, John, and Andrew (See Mk.13:3) asked Him privately about statements that He had earlier made in public that was not clear to them.

"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the [age]" (Mt. 24:3)?

Here we find that the disciples actually asked Jesus three questions:

(1) When were the Scribes and Pharisees going to be judged? Jesus had already told the Scribes and Pharisees that judgment would come upon them in their own generation (Mt.23:36). Moreover, He had said to them, "Behold, your house [Temple] is left unto you desolate" (Mt.23:38). In connection with the desolation of the house of the Scribes and the Pharisees, the disciples wanted to know more about when the physical destruction of Herod's Temple would take place. Some had spoken of the Temple, how it was adorned with massive stones and appointments and wondered how its destruction was at all possible.

Matthew does not record Jesus' answer to this question, but Luke does. "…When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (Lu. 21:20). Jesus instructed them to flee the city when that time came about.

> **"Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days![433] for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled** (Lu.21:21–24).

(2) Jesus had said to the Scribes and Pharisees, "For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mt.23:39). The disciples at that time expected Jesus to establish the Kingdom, but when He had wept over Jerusalem and emotionally stated that He needed to leave Jerusalem that had rejected Him, the disciples were understandably confused. They did not dare ask Him where He was going at that time (cf. Jn.13:36), but instead they only wanted to know what notice (sign) would precede his return to them.

(3) Finally, the disciples wanted to know what particular signs would precede the end of the current age, and when that cataclysmic event would come about. Since the necessity of Jesus' death and resurrection was not yet comprehended by them, they would not have been able to connect the end of the age as coinciding with Jesus' return from Heaven to the earth in the future that lay well beyond their mortal lifetimes.

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[433] The Jewish General and historian Flavius Josephus, had acted as an intermediary between the Roman armies and the city of Jerusalem during the siege. When writing about the siege of Jerusalem, he told how the bodies of babies were being eaten for food due to the terrible starvation within the walls of the city before it finally fell. Outside the city many children were also left helpless upon the death of their parents, and many of them were slaughtered.

Events Preceding the End of the Age

Jesus began to answer their second question by first warning them not to be deceived by the coming of a false Christ in his place.

> "**And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many"** (Mt.24:4,5).

The Apostle John in his first epistle said that even in his time there were many antichrists at work (1Jn.2:19). These men at first had associated themselves with John and the Gospel but had then abandoned both Christ and the Truth. In those men, we see a type of the ultimate antichrist that we can still see about us today in various religious leaders that deceive the world through false teaching. Many have falsely claimed to be the Messiah over the many centuries since Jesus' first advent, but eventually an ultimate antichrist will appear.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Then, Jesus began to answer the disciples second and third questions together when He spoke of wars and threats of wars that would take place in the time of his absence in verse 6 and 7.

> "**And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows"** (Mt.24:6–8).

These verses relate to the Red horseman of war that comes forth in Revelation 6:4. In addition, in verse 7, Jesus speaks of famines and pestilences which refer to the black horseman of famine and the pale horseman of disease and death seen in Revelation 6:5–8. Jesus says that those events are but the "beginning of sorrows," and they do not yet signal his return. It is easily demonstrated that those events encompass the first half of Daniel's seventieth week or the first 3 ½ years as will become more apparent as we proceed in this study.

Persecution of Christians and Jews under the Antichrist

Throughout the 3-½ year reign of the antichrist, afflictions and persecutions will be very common. These will primarily be carried out against Christians because of a pact that the antichrist made with the Jews in Jerusalem to continue the practice of their ceremonial law. We have already discussed this anarchical depravity of mankind that will be unleashed upon the earth as wicked men rise up against each other just prior to the coming of the antichrist (See Chapter 20.1 of this section, page 524). This global anarchy is in fact what has finally accelerated the antichrist to power in the world's desperate attempt to gain control of the pandemonium. We also saw how moral depravity would ultimately infiltrate the temporal church resulting in its total collapse into apostasy as it then joins with the antichrist to persecute true believers, which it will have branded as heretics. Jesus spoke of this to his disciples in the Olivet Discourse when He said,

> **"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another"** (Mt.24:9,10).[434]

During that time, the false prophet[435] and his minions will go forth to deceive many with a false humanist gospel (cf. Mt.24:11). This false gospel will only spread increased hatred and distrust. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Mt. 24:12,13).

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mt.24:14). In spite of the antichrist's effort to quash the Gospel of the

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[434] It should be noted that the word "synagogue" that we find in Mark 13:9 and Luke 21:12 only means "an assemblage of persons" that could be found either in a Jewish meeting house or a meeting place for a Christian church. Therefore, the use of the word "synagogue" in those two parallel verses does not specifically prove that only Jews are being persecuted, as some would suppose.

[435] See The False Prophet, page 605

Kingdom with a false gospel, the news of the imminence of Christ's Kingdom Age will find its way into every nation on earth. After that, the end will come as the antichrist finally goes too far in his efforts to maintain strict dictatorial rule over the earth.

The Abomination of Desolation

As we saw in Daniel's prophecy, the antichrist will break his covenant with Israel at the mid-point of the seventieth week and will desecrate the Temple in Jerusalem.[436] The "abomination of desolation" is related again in Matthew 24:15 by our Lord.

> "**When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)"** (Mt.24:15).

The Apostle Paul also told us that the man of sin must be revealed before the Day of the Lord will come in 2 Thessalonians 2:2,3. At that time, the antichrist will be fully exposed as the man of sin that he is, not the deliverer that many had supposed him to be. Satan will set himself up as God in Jerusalem and demand the worship of all the men of earth. The idol of the antichrist — which can move and talk and has various astounding powers — will be set up in the Holy Place of the Temple to be worshiped thus defiling the Temple with the abomination of desolation.

> **"Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:"** (Mt. 24:16–20)

There will be a mass exodus of both Jews and Christians out of Judea when the abomination of desolation is set up in the Temple. Many will run away into the nearby mountains while others will flee into various Gentile nations of the earth in the hopes of finding safety

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[436] See Rebuilding of the Temple, page 608

much as many Christians had done before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.[437] God will prepare many of the dispersed Jews a place of safety for the next 3 ½ years (Re.12:6). Nevertheless, a large number of the more orthodox Jews will choose to remain in Jerusalem and Judaea during the terrible time of tribulation that is then approaching.

The Period of Great Tribulation

Jesus specifically refers to a length of time following the setting up of the abomination of desolation in Matthew 24:21, as the "Tribulation Period," ***not*** the entire seven year period.

> **"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"** (Mt.24:21,22).

It should also be noted that the Great Tribulation that begins near the middle of Daniel's seventieth week does not continue until the end of the seven-year period either. As we have just read, the Great Tribulation will be cut short for the sake of the elect. What we are not told and do not know is exactly how short it will be. Therefore, it will still be impossible to determine the exact hour or day that Jesus will return even as the prophecy of Daniel is being fulfilled during the time of the Great Tribulation (cf. Mt.24:36).

The Second Advent

At this point in his Olivet Discourse, Jesus began to speak to the disciples of his ultimate return. The suddenness of his return will be as fast and unexpected as a lightning stroke without warning or preamble.

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[437] It is quite easy to confuse this passage in Matthew 24 with the passage in Luke's gospel concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Though similar in several ways concerning the exodus itself, the passage in Luke 21:20 refers to the armies of Rome gathering about Jerusalem to institute a siege, whereas the passage in Matthew refers to the setting up of the abomination of desolation within the Holy of Holies by the antichrist. Therefore, these are two separate warnings that Jesus issued.

> **"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken…"** (Mt.24:27–29).

There is also a reference to the universal visibility of his return by the entire earth at one time just as lightning that strikes in the east is also visible in the west. The corruptions of those times demand the judgment of God. Corruption always brings forth judgment just as a carcass brings forth vultures to cleanse the land (Mt.24:28).

The Cataclysmic Upheaval in the Heavens

Jesus said in verse 29 that immediately after the period of Great Tribulation is cut short, a great cosmic upheaval will take place. This refers to the same event related in Revelation 6:12–14[438] and further echoes the prophecy of Joel in Joel 2:31 of which Peter spoke in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Ac.2:19,20). At that time, Peter also spoke of this cosmic upheaval occurring before the coming of the "Day of the Lord." That is the proper name for the remainder of the 3 ½ year period that follows the Great Tribulation. Although this upheaval will be quite visible from earth, it will take a short while before the tremendous effects reach earth in the form of seven trumpet judgments that are soon coming.[439]

The Sign of His Coming

At this point in his discourse, Jesus directly answers the disciples second question regarding the sign that will immediately precede his return. Immediately after the great heavenly upheaval, the

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[438] We shall discuss the sixth seal that is mentioned in verse 12 of Revelation Chapter 6 in the next chapter of this book, page 618.

[439] See The Blowing of the Trumpets, page 624

entire populace of the earth will actually see the Lord Jesus coming down out of Heaven in the same clouds of glory in which He ascended (Ac.1:11). We read of this in the Olivet Discourse as Jesus said,

> **"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"** (Mt. 24:30; cf. Da.7:13).

The nations of the earth will mourn when they see the sign of his coming, not rejoice. His return will signal the great judgment of God that must soon begin upon the earth in the Great Day of the Lord. However, before Christ returns to the earth to execute judgment, two very important events must first take place. Both will come about in rapid order such that the time between the sign of Jesus' coming and his actual return to execute judgment could be quite short — perhaps even less than one day.[440]

Sealing of the 144 Thousand

The first of those events will be the gathering together of selected Jews by angels for the purpose of sealing 144,000 of them that must survive on earth during the terrible outpouring of God's wrath that is to follow. Jesus spoke of this to his disciples in his Olivet Discourse when He said, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Mt.24:31). We shall discuss the sealing of the 144 thousand in greater detail in the next chapter on page 618.

Anticipative Watchfulness

At this point in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus turns his attention toward instructing his disciples through parables about their duties on

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[440] This brief interval of time will be discussed in the next chapter as occurring between the breaking open of the sixth and seventh seal of a scroll in Heaven by Jesus. See: The Sixth Seal: Jesus Cuts Short the Great Tribulation, page 618 and The Seventh Seal: Heralds the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord, page 623

earth as they await his return for them. This instruction continues through Matthew Chapter 25 whereupon the Olivet Discourse ends. Regarding when He will return, He has only said to them, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Mt.24:36; 25:13). They are to spend their time working for the Kingdom while in a state of anticipative watchfulness.

As we can see, Jesus did not answer the disciples third question in definitive terms as to precisely when the end of the age will come.[441] Instead, Jesus used a fig tree as an example of the way in which it would be possible for believers to tell when the end of the age is rapidly approaching even if they cannot predict the precise day or hour.

> **"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." (Mt.24:32,33).**

Just as we can know with certainty that summer is soon coming when we see leaves starting to appear on the trees, we can likewise know that the end times are soon coming by the appearance of various prophetic events clearly predicted in Holy Scripture concerning those times.[442]

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[441] The disciples may not have understood that Jesus' return to earth would not occur in their lifetimes. Jesus' return to earth would actually signal and coincide with the end of the age untold centuries after their mortal deaths.

[442] Many dispensationalists relate the fig tree in this verse to the fig tree that Jesus cursed, which is found in Mark 11:13–20. In that passage, the fig tree symbolized the fruitless religious establishment of Israel that had turned the Temple of God into a den of thieves. Though it is important to keep and eye on Israel regarding the approach of the end-time, especially with respect to the rebuilding of the Temple, we must be on watch for other prophetic events leading up to the end of the age as well.

The Rapture of the Church

The second event to take place before the return of Christ to earth is the transport of the remnant Church into the air out of harms way. While elect Jews will be sealed to endure the judgment to follow, the believing Church will be completely removed out of harms way before the Lord returns in judgment and the Great and terrible Day of the Lord begins. The transport of the believing Church is most often referred to as the rapture. As was discussed previously, the word "rapture" comes from the Latin word *rapere* that means "rapid."[443] As the Apostle Paul has told us, the transformation of the mortal body, whether living or dead, to an immortal state will occur in a "moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (1Co.15:52). That change of state must occur immediately prior to the rapid transport to Heaven.[444]

The Church is certainly headed for a glorious lifting up and out of the world to be with Christ as the Apostle Paul further stated: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the ***clouds***, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1Th.4:16–17 — emphasis added). The word "clouds" was also used by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse in answer to his disciples' question regarding the ***sign*** of his coming (Mt.24:30). As we see, the rapture is to occur immediately after the great cosmic upheaval and the sealing of the 144 thousand Jews.

The Day of the Lord

The "Day of Wrath" (Re.6:17) encompasses the time of the sounding of seven trumpets[445] and seven bowls of wrath[446] that come

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[443] See The Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church, page 561

[444] Also see Rapture of the Church, page 621

[445] See The Blowing of the Trumpets, page 624

out of the seventh trumpet that are then poured out on the nations. The trumpets collectively represent the period called the "Day of the Lord" which brings to a close the seventieth week of Daniel. Since we don't know how long the Great Tribulation is to be, we also cannot know how long the Day of the Lord is either. We can only conclude that the two combined are less than 3 ½ years. Babylon, the seat of idolatry will be destroyed, as Christ Himself will appear in Heaven with his angels to weed out the grapes of iniquity from among his people (Re.14:8–20; Is.63.3,4). The winepress of the wrath of God will destroy evil, and their blood will flow as much as four feet deep for a distance of about 185 miles. This is the distance from Dan to Beersheba. The phrase "Dan to Beersheba" means the entire length of Palestine north to south (cf. Jud.20:1;1Sa. 3:20).[447] This is highly figurative language, to be sure, but its implications are quite real demonstrating the dreadful nature of sin.

The Bowls of Wrath

Little has been made of the two periods of time that Daniel mentioned concerning the 75 days that follow the seventieth week. These are mentioned in Daniel 12:11,12. In verse 11, we see the first period of 30 days. That period immediately follows The Day of the Lord. After the trumpet judgments of the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord, there is still the matter of the pouring out of the bowls of wrath upon the nations that come forth from the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet.

As the nations receive the final wrath of God, the remnant of Israel who were sealed and have come through the Day of the Lord will mourn over their previous rejection of the Messiah with great bitterness of heart. This is expressed in Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

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[446] See The Bowls of Wrath, page 638

[447] Dan, originally Leshem, was the northernmost city of Palestine, which had been captured and renamed by the Danites (Judges 18). Dan was the fifth son of Jacob. Beersheba, present day Bir Es Seba, marked the southern border of Israel.

the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." We read on in Zechariah, Chapter 13, "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Ze13:6).

Renewal and Purification

The next forty-five days of Daniel 12:12 are not as easily discerned since Scripture does not cover them in any detail. It is probable that this will be a time of preparation for the Jews as they end their time of mourning and prepare themselves to enter the Millennial Age. It could simultaneously be the time that Christ renews the earth physically in preparation for the Millennium since the trumpet judgments alone will have caused widespread damage. Many also see this as the time needed for the purification of the Temple since the period is similar to that of an earlier purification that took place in the time of the Maccabean age after the overthrow of Antiochus Epiphanes who has been seen as a type of the antichrist.[448]

After the revolt and overthrow of Antiochus, the Temple was cleansed and rededicated. The Temple was entered and all pagan statuary and artifacts were destroyed. In the place of the altar in which a swine had been sacrificed, a new altar was erected and dedicated to God. After this time of purification, the Jews celebrated the "Feast of Dedication" which lasted for eight days. Remembrance of that time was celebrated annually as the "Festival of Lights" or Hanukkah as it is commonly known today. All told, this time of purification covered a

[448] Antiochus Epiphanes did in fact desecrate the Temple by sacrificing a swine on the altar and erecting a statue of Zeus-Jupiter to be worshiped. This statue is one that Antiochus actually saw as an image representing himself. The Temple desecration lasted for approximately 3 years. Instead of this image facilitating common worship to overwhelm the resistance against him as Antiochus anticipated, it resulted in a massive revolt.

span of 45 days.[449] Antiochus as a type of the antichrist and the events surrounding it are, in fact, so overwhelming that those who take a historic view[450] of Revelation and Daniel Chapter 9, see that event as its complete fulfillment. However, we know that this must be merely a type since Jesus mentioned the abomination of desolation in his Olivet Discourse long after that event had taken place as something that would yet occur in the future (Mt.24:15;Mk.13:4).[451]

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[449] The Historian, Josephus, wrote of these events in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI, Chapter VII.

[450] See Historical View, page 554

[451] One criticism of this view of the forty-five day period is the fact that we must resort to events that took place outside the canon of Scripture. Scripture itself does not tell of the period of time that occurred in the four hundred years between the Old and New Testament. However, we must realize that these were historic events that were certainly well known to both Jesus and the people of Israel at the time that Jesus related future events to his disciples in the Olivet Discourse and when John recorded the book of Revelation.

Chapter 20.4 Preliminary Survey of Revelation

Having established a general timeline of the events of the last days, it now behooves us to begin a preliminary survey of the book of Revelation in preparation for a more in-depth study in the following chapters of this book. The English word "revelation" is derived from the Greek word *apokalypsis.* Our English word "apocalypse" is transliterated from the Greek word and is commonly interpreted very narrowly as a time of destruction that comes about at the end of days. However, the true meaning of *apokalypsis* (apocalypse) is "discovery" or "unveiling." Revelation clearly unveils all the events of the last days in considerable detail that can at times become very involved. It is therefore highly recommended that the reader follow along with this study in his or her own Bible so as to fix every detail in his or her own mind.

There are seventeen prophetic books in the Old Testament, but the book of Revelation is the only prophetic book to be found in the New Testament. That in itself should make it unique enough to warrant our attention. Unfortunately, because it is the last book of the Bible, many foolishly choose to plunge into the book of Revelation in an attempt to discover how everything will turn out at the end of time without first going through all the hard work of studying that which goes before it. Those that choose to take this approach will become quickly confused and greatly disappointed. We must first understand the Scripture of the Old Testament and the New Testament that precedes the book of Revelation as well as equipping ourselves with a basic understanding of the history that has transpired since it was written down before delving into the prophecy of this book.

Nevertheless, it is extremely important for us to understand that the book of Revelation is ***not*** a sealed prophecy (Re.22:10) as was the prophecy of Daniel (Da.12:4,9). Nothing has been hidden away out of view or encrypted for the understanding of a spiritual elite. It is rather an open revelation that unveils prophetic knowledge through a series of visions to all that will take the time to read and diligently study it.

Furthermore, the book of Revelation is not a difficult book to follow because of its very orderly construction. Admittedly there are many things contained in the prophecy that we would rather not accept at face value because of their terrifying implications, but that is no reason why we cannot comprehend what is being told to us if we seek the Holy Spirit to aid us in our understanding.

Because the book of Revelation is so condemning of the human race and speaks of fierce judgment in response, the humanists and religious liberals cannot bear to look upon it, and so choose to ignore its message altogether. There is however a unique blessing and promise given to those who read and keep the words of the prophecy: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Re.1:3). Moreover, there is a strong warning for those who would tamper with its contents: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Re.22:18,19). While adding to its text by attempting to inject present-day events into the prophecy is most certainly prohibited, so is the taking away from the prophecy by ignoring various parts of it that one does not like, and by refusing to read, study, and preach about its more judgmental passages to avoid receiving its harsh message.

Concerning Metaphors and Allegories

Although the language used in the Revelation is largely figurative, we must understand that all of those figures represent real persons and events that we most probably could not properly understand if they were expressed literally. The metaphors and allegories utilized in the many visions are meant to be a means to aid our understanding, not intended to obscure it. Many of the symbols are used to represent other things within an allegorical context that we

may grasp the true meaning of things that otherwise would be far beyond our comprehension.

It is important however that we carefully follow John's allegories as he gave them, not fabricate our own. Many today choose to lift various scenes out of their prophetic context in an attempt to apply them to events taking place today where they do not fit. Although this may draw many to attend various prophetic conferences in an attempt to better understand end-time events, the addition of modern innovations to the prophecy prevents it from becoming a serious study.

We should also notice that when John did write about "signs" (or metaphors) per say, he was careful to say so specifically or very suggestively in order to aid us in our interpretation.[452] Many of the things, places, or beings, which we could imagine to be only symbolic, could in fact be literal, and the events that surround them must then be fulfilled exactly as it is presented, just as past prophecy was so often fulfilled. It is important therefore that we accept a literal reading of the text while still maintaining a careful sense of its prophetic nature that we do not deviate from its intended meaning.

The Chronology of Revelation

Many may at first think that the Book of Revelation is but a jumble of unrelated visions randomly dispersed throughout the book. However, Revelation is actually written in a reasonable chronological order that is not at all difficult to follow from beginning to end. A preliminary chronology of the events that make up the contents of the

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[452] John used the phrase "as it were"12 times, the phrase "like unto" 14 times, as well as using the words "like" or "as" alone at various other places to indicate that he was using metaphors to describe what he saw when he was not giving a literal description. For example: "And the shapes of the locusts were ***like unto*** horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were ***as it were*** crowns ***like*** gold, and their faces were ***as*** the faces of men" (Re.9:7; emphasis added).

book can be seen in one key verse. "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Re. 1:19). The things, which John had seen at that point in his narrative, were all about the glorified Christ. The "things which are" (then and now) are the things pertaining to the Church age, now nearly 2000 years long, which are exemplified in the seven messages to the seven churches.[453] The "things which shall be hereafter" pertain to future events. In as much as those events refer to the end times, they are also in our future. Those future events are also set forth in a reasonable chronological order as well.

Twenty-one major apocalyptic events that will occur on earth are presented in the book of Revelation as three cascading series of seven beginning with seven seals in Chapter 6, the last of which announces seven trumpet judgments in Chapters 8 and 9, the last of which announces seven bowls (or vials) of God's wrath in Chapter 16. This interconnected cascade is set forth in Figure 13 below.

The seven seals encompass the period beginning with the rise to power of the antichrist and continuing until the sounding of the first trumpet which begins the great and terrible Day of the Lord. The last three of these seven trumpets are shown bracketed by three woes that were the pronouncement of an angel signifying their extreme severity.[454] The Day of the Lord concludes with seven bowls of wrath being poured out upon an unrepentant earth.

Chapter Outline of the Revelation

In the following paragraphs we present an outline of the book of Revelation chapter by chapter in preparation for a more in-depth study that will be found within all the following chapters of this book. At various points in this outline, the reader will find it beneficial to refer to both the prophecy of Daniel's seventieth week (see Figure 12,

[453] See Seven Messages to Seven Churches, page 67

[454] See The Three Woes, page 628

page 573) as well as the cascade of apocalyptic events presented in Figure 13 below.

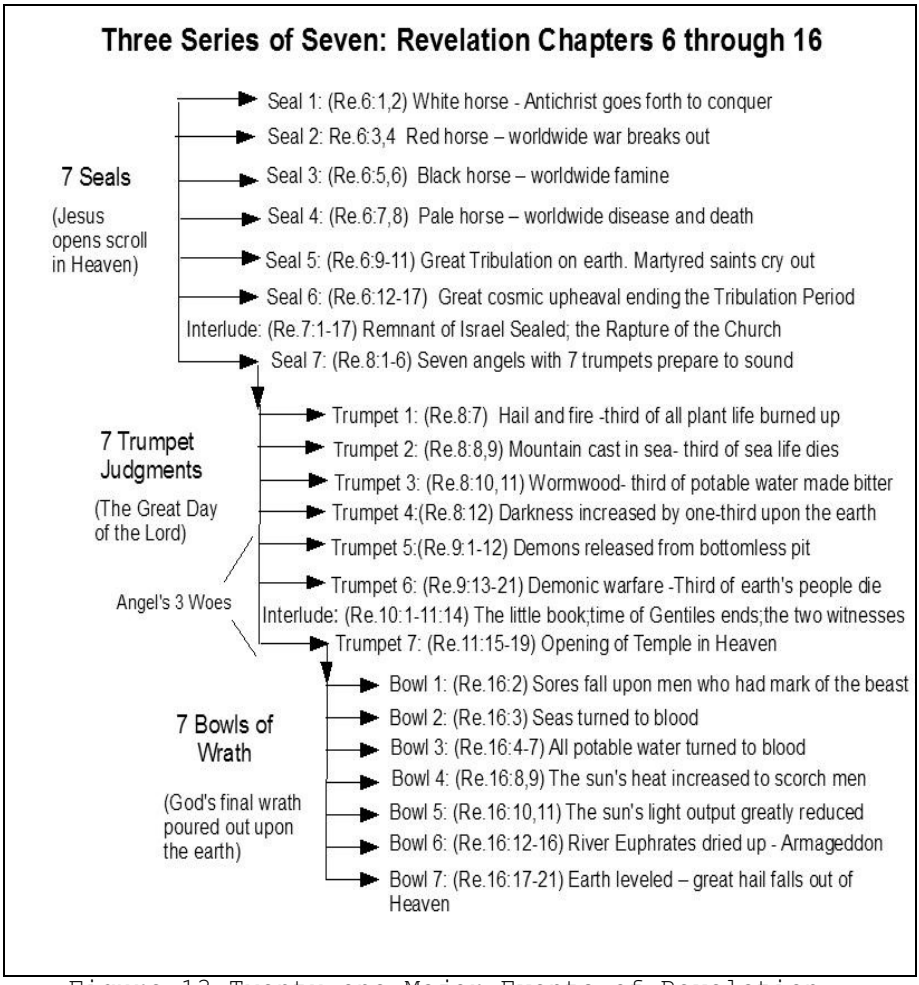

Figure 13 Twenty-one Major Events of Revelation

Chapter 1: The Things John Had Seen

Revelation begins with a portrait of the resurrected and glorified Christ in Chapter 1.[455] No "gentle Jesus" or "man of sorrows" here. We no longer know Jesus as a man (i.e. after the flesh), but as Almighty God (2Co.5:16). "King of Kings and Lord of Lords"! The book of Revelation is not primarily the unveiling of the antichrist, of various beasts and of future judgments. We must realize that the book of the Revelation is actually the revealing of the person and glory of Jesus Christ and the work He is doing and will yet perform upon the earth. It tells of his majesty and power not only to save, but also to judge and to rule!

Chapters 2 and 3: The Things Which Are

As we discussed at length in Chapter 17.4 The Church at the End of the Apostolic Age, page 64, the earthly churches are addressed in Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. As we saw in our study, those were specifically seven temporal churches of Asia Minor that were under the Apostle John's oversight from his home church in Ephesus. Nevertheless, we discovered that they represented a cross-section of all temporal churches existing in every future age, as well as providing us with a prophetic outlook into seven dominant churches in seven future ages. That outlook was substantiated as we proceeded through the history of the church in the earlier chapters of this book.

Chapter 4: The Apostle John's Spiritual Transport to Heaven

In Chapter 4, we read of the Apostle John's transport to Heaven in the spirit and his observations of the worship of God there:

> **"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was**

[455] See Vision of the Glorified Christ, page 67

set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." (Re.4:1–3).

John saw the glory of God who sat on a throne in Heaven surrounded by a sea of glass like crystal. He also saw seven lamps that were the "seven spirits of God" about the throne (Re.4:5), the 24 elders which we mentioned previously on page 566, and four living creatures that perpetually worshiped before the throne saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Re.4:8). The twenty four elders cast their crowns before the throne saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Re.4:11).

The living creatures that John described were very strange indeed each having six wings. One creature was like a Lion, the next like a calf, the third had a face like a man, and the last was like a flying eagle (Re.4:6–8). These living creatures are commonly seen as being symbolic of the four Gospels. In Matthew, Jesus is presented as a King (lion), in Mark He is presented as the servant of God (calf), in Luke he is depicted as the perfect man, and in John he is identified as majestic deity (eagle). They also echo four pillars that were located in the harbor of Ephesus in John's day having an emblem of the cross upon them. Each of the four monuments was named after one of the four Gospel writers.

It is very important for us to take note here that John ascended to heaven in the ***spirit*** while his ***body*** remained on earth on the island of Patmos such that it does not picture the physical Rapture of the Church as many dispensationalists would suppose.[456] While in Heaven in the spirit, John observed various events taking place there as well as viewing future apocalyptic events that will one day unfold upon the earth from his privileged vantage point in Heaven.

[456] See Relative Timing of the Rapture et al, page 565

Chapter 5: The Book with Seven Seals

In Revelation Chapter 5 verses 1 to 4, we find that John saw a book sealed with seven seals, which was held in the right hand of God (Re.5:1), has been claimed by a "Lamb as it has been slain" (Re. 5:6–7). This book and the seven seals that Jesus will one day break open are the subject of the next chapter of this book and will be discussed in much greater detail there.[457]

Chapter 6: Jesus Opens the First Six Seals of the Book in Heaven

As these seals are each opened in turn, the antichrist will first come to power followed by world war, famine, and plague. This will then be followed by a short but severe time of great tribulation on the earth that ends with a great cosmic upheaval. (Refer to Figure 13 on page 592).

Chapter 7: The First Interlude

A very important interlude takes place between the 6th and 7th seal which is recorded in Chapter 7 (again see Figure 13). It is during this interval that 144,000 men of the twelve tribes of Israel will be sealed[458] to endure the terrible times ahead (Re.7:4–8), and the Church will be transported off the earth and into the air to meet with Christ (Re.7:9–17).[459]

Chapters 8 and 9: The Seventh Seal Opened and the First Six Trumpets are Sounded in Turn

As we observed earlier, the last of the seven seals brings forth the next series of events announced by the blowing of seven trumpets. The trumpet judgments will be discussed within a later chapter entitled

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[457] See The Book with Seven Seals, page 601

[458] See The Sealing of the 144,000, page 618

[459] See Rapture of the Church, page 621

Chapter 20.6 The Day of God's Wrath under the subtitle: The Blowing of the Trumpets, page 624).

Chapter 10:1 through Chapter 11:14:The Second Interlude

A second interlude is found between the 6th and 7th trumpet which is recorded in Chapter 10 through Chapter 11 verse 14 (refer to Figure 13, page 592). In that interval, a mighty angel approaches the Apostle John holding a little book, which John subsequently reads and digests in Re.10:8–11.[460] These portrayals themselves are listed chronologically within the limited context of the little book, as is the greater text of the Revelation surrounding it. Afterward, John is told to measure the Temple, but to exclude the outer court of the Gentiles (Re.11:1,2). Then, the angel tells John about the period of the prophesying of two witnesses (Re.11:3–12)[461] and lastly a great earthquake precedes the last of the trumpet judgments (Re.11:13,14).

Chapter 11 (verses 15–19): The Last Trumpet Sounds

With the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet the Temple of God is opened up in Heaven from which seven angels will emerge with seven bowls of God's wrath (cf. Re.15:7).

Chapter 12 and 13:The Little Book

After the last trumpet sounds in Chapter 11, we find an exception to the strict chronology maintained throughout the Revelation document to this point. A portrayal of various prophetic scenes written down by the Apostle John in Chapters 12 and 13 appear as a parenthesis within the greater text. The detailed descriptions of persons and events most likely came from the contents of the little book that John ate and digested in Revelation 10, verses 8–11.

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[460] See outline topic, Chapter 12 and 13:The Little Book, page 596 below in this chapter and Contents of the Little Book, page 632.

[461] See The Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Two Witnesses, page 635

Chapter 14: The Redeemed of Israel and the Reaping of Evil Fruits by Angels

In Chapter 14 we see the redeemed of Israel are finally reunited with Christ whom they had at first denied, the fall of Babylon the Great is foretold, and the everlasting Gospel is preached by a flying angel. The reaping of the growth of evil fruits on the earth by angels to be crushed in the great winepress of God's wrath is revealed as a precursor to the return of Christ in the battle of Armageddon.[462]

Chapter 15 and 16: The Seven Bowls of Wrath

In these two chapters John observed seven angels emerging from the Temple of God and the final outpouring of God's wrath upon a sinful unrepentant earth which will bring an end to mankind's rebellion (See Figure 13, page 592). The bowls of wrath will be discussed later in more detail under the topic heading, The Bowls of Wrath, on page 638.

Chapter 17: Religious Babylon and Her Destruction

John sees the image of the apostate church in Chapter 17 presented before him as "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" who will have given her kingdom over to the false prophet as the political antichrist comes to power. She will have become drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Christ whom she diligently persecuted during that time. Her devastation is inevitable as her religious kingdom becomes so thirsty for power that she will begin to move beyond the religious sphere to seriously interfere with secular and commercial matters.[463] "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Re.17:19). At this point in time, God will completely destroy all that remains of her along with all the

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[462] See The Battle of Armageddon, page 640

[463] See Devastation of the Apostate Church, page 609

false religious systems from Baal worship to the ceaseless paganism and adulteration of true Christianity that she represents.

Chapter 18: The Fall of Commercial Babylon

In Chapter 18, we read of the final destruction of the commercial world system that the antichrist had established during his rise to power. Its gluttony for wealth had pushed it to the pinnacle of commercial success, but is corruption had made it ripe for judgment. Its demise is greatly lamented by those who carried the mark of the beast and who had also grown rich along with its rise to prominence. The destruction of both religious and commercial Babylon had been preordained by the will of God just as was the destruction of the Babylon of old.[464]

Chapter 19: The Marriage of the Lamb and the Second Advent of Jesus Christ

In Chapter 19 of the Revelation, we find that all Heaven rejoices over the fall of Babylon even as the earth dwellers lament her demise (Re.19:1–4).

Jesus Christ will then marry his bride (the Church), which had been earlier transported from the earth to be with Him. This marriage will take place in Heaven:

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and

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[464] The ancient city of Babylon (Greek for "Babel") was the seat of great religious and commercial power during the time of Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC) as he briefly ruled the world of his day. It was famous for its beautiful hanging gardens, palaces and temples. Its walls and fortifications were so massive as to be considered impenetrable by any enemy. Nevertheless, the city was overthrown by Cyrus, king of Persia in 539 BC, and it lies in ruin today within the middle-eastern nation of Iraq. Babylon is also the site of the ruins of the tower of Babel that had been constructed to oppose and challenge the authority of God (cf. Ge.11:1–9). Consequently, Babylon is used symbolically in the New Testament as representing that which stands in opposition to God. Here in the Revelation, it is being used as a metaphor for the satanic religious and commercial world systems that will exist in the end times under the antichrist because of their similitude to the corrupt religious and commercial systems of the Babylonian nation of old.

as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Re.19:6–9).

After the marriage, Jesus, leading the vast armies of Heaven, will return to judge the earth in fierce array to do battle. The antichrist and the false prophet then will be cast in the lake of fire (Re.19:11–21). See The Battle of Armageddon, on page 640. This is the culmination of the long awaited second advent of Christ to earth from the throne of God — for which all the earlier judgments had paved the way (cf. Ps.110:1).

Chapter 20: The Millennial Age on Earth

In Chapter 20 of the Revelation, Satan is bound and Jesus Christ establishes his millennial Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth, which we shall discuss fully in Chapter 20.7 The Last Age of Man on Earth, page 644. The thousand-year reign will end with Satan being released and thrown into the lake of fire after his final act of rebellion. Following that, a final judgment will take place before the great white throne of all that have not followed Christ — whose names are not found in the Book of Life (Re.20:12–15; see The Judgment of the Lost, page 656).

Chapters 21 and 22: The Eternal Ages

After the final judgment, time as we presently experience it, will end and an age without end (eternity) will begin (See Chapter 20.8 The New Jerusalem and the Eternal Ages, page 659).

Chapter 20.5 End-Time Events Unsealed

In Chapter 18.7 Radicalization of the Faith, page 349 we discussed how the Christian faith had become severely radicalized in the United States following the Civil War causing temporal churches to increasingly deviate from the reformed faith that had restored the Pauline doctrine of salvation by God's grace alone. While some protestant churches more or less moved backward to embrace erroneous Catholic doctrine and dogma, the majority of them slowly moved away from a Christ-centered faith and dependence upon God's providence toward humanistic liberalism as activist Churchianity replaced Christianity.

Then we discussed the attack upon the Christian faith within the United States by growing secular forces in their attempt to erase any vestige of God and his Christ from social and political life in Chapter 19.3 The Concerted Attack on the Faith, on page 451. The effectiveness of that attack led to increased religious pluralism and conflict as well as an overall moral and political decline in the United States. We discussed this decline in Chapter 19.4 , page 476. That decline, should it continue unabated, soon must also adversely affect the Christian faith globally as well as causing worldwide political instability and upheaval. The result of that chaotic upheaval would create anarchical conditions leading to radically inspired terrorism and quite possibly even open warfare between nations employing weapons of mass destruction.

We discussed the secular humanist's solution to that instability and threat of mass annihilation, in Chapter 19.5 The World Unification Movement, page 504. As we saw, world unification is a movement that has been underway for many millennia extending far back into the times of Cain and Nimrod as a consequence of Adam's fall. However, it is one that has now gained serious momentum in this highly technological age of rapid travel and worldwide communication. This movement has grown into prominence within the United States as personal religious and political liberty has continued to decline.

Finally, as we discussed in Chapter 20.1 The Gathering Darkness, on page 524 of this section, a morally reprobate world

system of religion and government, will ultimately become ripe to accept a world-wide dictatorship to control the lawlessness, terror, and anarchy that will spring forth from the religious and political corruption. The man that will come forth to take control of that global dictatorship will appear to have the wisdom, riches, and power to implement that huge monolithic government. Although many pseudo-Christians embroiled in the Churchianity of that day may think so, that man will not be the true Christ, but the ultimate antichrist. He does not receive his exceptional power and clever abilities from God, but from Satan. Thus will begin the great delusion of the last days.

The Book with Seven Seals

With the previous chapters of this section as an overview where we have already reasonably covered Chapters 1–4 of the Revelation in some detail, we must now look closely at the book of Revelation beginning with Chapter 5 and its many verses leading up to the establishment of a worldwide institutional government and religion.

In Revelation Chapter 5 verse 1 to 4, we found in our previous survey that John saw a book sealed with seven seals. This book was held in the right hand of God (Re.5:1), until it was claimed by a "Lamb as it has been slain" (Re. 5:6–7). No-one else had ever been able to take the book, open the book, read it, or even to look upon it.[465] This sealed book is pivotal to all the apocalyptic events and judgments which will be loosed upon the earth in the last days as Jesus breaks open each seal in turn.

The book with seven seals (Re.5:1–4) contains the forecast of future events and with it God's express authority to rule and judge the earth. It is the calendar of events to come, all of which have been preordained. Some scholars have also referred to this book as the "title deed" of the earth. However, much more than real estate is implied; every living thing including mankind himself is encompassed. Since

[465] This book should not be confused with the little book that was given to the Apostle John to read (Re.10:8–10). See Chapter 12 and 13:The Little Book, page 596

the fall of Adam, no man has had the authority or wisdom necessary to rule the earth, although many such as Alexander the Great have made the attempt.[466] Jesus Christ alone ***does*** have that authority and wisdom. Therefore, He will finally take control, put into motion the great global events that must quickly occur upon the earth, and in doing so pave the way for his return to the earth in glory to reign over it.

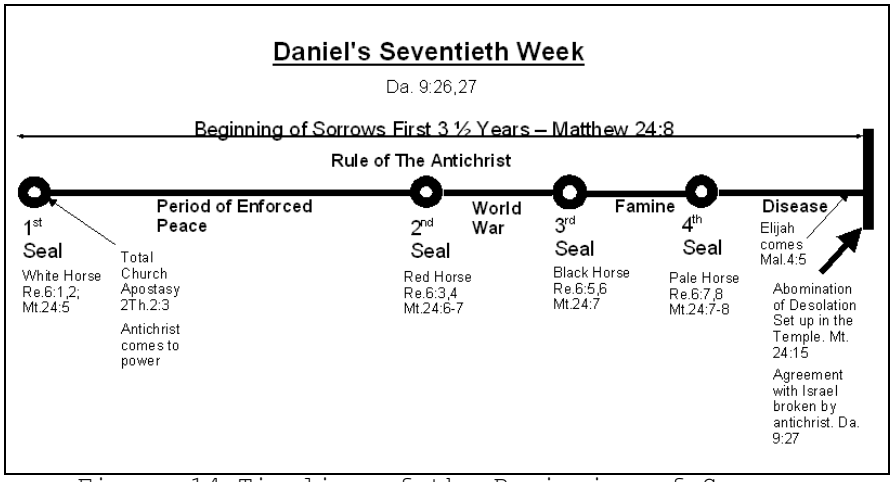

Figure 14 Timeline of the Beginning of Sorrows

The First Seal : The Antichrist Comes Forth

In Revelation 6:1,2 we find that Jesus will one day open the first seal from the book of authority (Refer to Figure 14 above). This begins the sequence of events contained in Daniel's seventieth week (Figure 12, page 573) that we discussed in overview in a previous chapter. A white horse goes forth upon which a man sits. This man is Satan's puppet — the political antichrist. The white horse is both a symbol of authority and of peace. Here, in fact, Satan's man will imitate the second coming of Christ to establish his kingdom rule as we can see by comparing Revelation 19:11. Notice the fact that Christ Himself, also riding a white horse in 19:11, is called "Faithful and

[466] See Past Attempts at World Unification, page 505

True" thus making an important distinction between Christ and this earlier imposter.

As we have already determined, Satan at some time in the future will no longer be restrained but will be given a free reign upon the earth through the antichrist. In the human sense, that will come about because of the moral degeneration of societies, religious institutions, and governments culminating in political and moral anarchy. However, it is actually preordained in Heaven to come about as Jesus Christ breaks the first seal of the scroll mentioned in Revelation 6:1. The antichrist is the rider on the white horse that has the power to go forth and conquer (Re.6:2).

The Unholy Trinity

When Satan emerges, it would appear that he will begin to move on two fronts to establish order: a political front, and a religious front. As we discussed in Chapter 19.5 The World Unification Movement, on page 504, both religion and political effort must be used in concert to unite the world under one global government. Satan is an invisible created spirit being and thus must work through men as he gains control of them. Satan's one goal since the beginning of his rebellion has been to rule in God's place and to steal a position of honor and worship from mankind for himself. In order to accomplish that goal Satan will present himself to the world as God, put forth a political ruler as his substitute for Christ, and put forth a religious leader as his surrogate displacing the Holy Spirit. The political ruler will have the name, "antichrist" and the religious leader will have the name "false prophet," but they are essentially one in purpose. It must be remembered that Satan motivates and controls both of them and that it is Satan that receives worship through their unholy activities.

The Political Antichrist

One meaning of the prefix "anti" is that of opposition, while the second meaning is that of substitution or counterfeit. The political ruler will deny and therefore be opposed to God and to his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he will simultaneously attempt to emulate. Individual citizens of nations in that day will resent national authority as laws will

have become increasingly oppressive in an attempt to control the chaos caused by worldwide violence and terrorism. Nationalism will have come to be seen as a threat to world peace since it polarizes large populations against those of other nations. The world population at large will become so fearful of nuclear, chemical, biological and perhaps other even more exotic weapons in the hands of rogue groups, that they will soon be ready to accept any restrictions upon their personal freedom, both political and religious, in order to feel free of the threat.

At that very time, the political antichrist will appear on the world scene as a messiah figure. It is important to understand that this is but a mortal man who will have claimed to have achieved godhood through mystical means much as the many gurus[467] of modern cultism are viewed today, but on a much larger scale. Both the religious and the secular communities will be drawn to him because of his highly advanced solutions to world problems and his ability to establish a global formula for peace. A worldwide government will then be established with the political antichrist at its head. Some believe this world government to be the United Nations although it could turn out to be its more robust successor that is willing and able to enforce its edicts with its own military.

We are given more information about the characteristics of the political antichrist in Revelation Chapter 13 (from the "little book"; Re.10:8–11; see page 590). We read in verse 1 that a beast rose up out of the sea. The Greek word is *therion* that means a "wild beast," which is some form of living creature. Symbolically a beast represents a world power and a world sovereign as its head. The sea represents all of humanity and, in particular, the Gentile world. Therefore, we can interpret that this first beast is the political antichrist who is a world dictator.

It would be bad enough if this were but one person alone, but we also see as we continue in verse 1 that he actually leads a consortium of seven that is unified as one being under Satan. "And the

[467] See New-Age Gurus, page 424

beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition" (Re.17:11). Collectively this antichrist also carries with him the heads of ten nations (ten crowns) who pledge their military support to him (ten horns; Re.13:1). These ten nations will be godless nations having a blasphemous attitude toward God.

One of the heads of the antichrist (one of the consortium leaders) will be mortally wounded, and he will be declared dead (Re.13:3). When it is proven that he has been amazingly healed of the fatal injury and is alive and well, the people will worship Satan (who is the antichrist's source of unity and power) by exalting the beast (the antichrist) as being invincible (Re.13:4). This will be most probably publicized abroad as a miraculous resurrection from the dead.

The political antichrist will blaspheme God and will speak against the worship of God, the Temple of the Jews, and against the true Church, which will still remain on the earth, as well as the Church that is in Heaven (Re.13:6). The antichrist will be given power to eliminate any true worship of God, and to completely overcome any resistance to his rule throughout the world (Re.13:7). For the first three and one-half years of the seven-year period (Re.13:5), the antichrist will receive the accolades of the entire world except for those who are written in the Lamb's book of life (Re.13:8). During his reign, all physical resistance against the antichrist will be futile (Re.13:10). Those few who still honor God must patiently endure rather than rise up in rebellion.

The False Prophet

Satan, not being satisfied with merely receiving glory through the world dictator who opposes God, must attempt to do something to both satisfy the desire of religious man and to receive worship for himself on a par with that which God the Father has obtained through Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Satan will establish a religious ruler (a false prophet) to drum up religious fervor in the populace for the political ruler much as the Holy Spirit indwells and reveals the wonders of Christ to the elect.

In so doing, a global religious system will be established in parallel to the world government. The apostate temporal church, which

remains upon the earth, will quickly align itself with the movement seeing it as a furthering of its own goals of peace and universal brotherhood. The ecumenical movement will have come to full fruition as all religious differences are sacrificed in compliance. Even the Zionist nation of Israel will align itself with the movement because of the express promise of the political ruler that it may finally know autonomous peace in all their land against its war-like neighbors.

The religious ruler (the second wild beast) will rise up out of the land (Re.13:11). Unlike the first creature that was a consortium, he appears to act as a single person. For reasons that will be explained as we proceed, this religious ruler may actually come out of the nation of Israel or at least appear to do so. We see that this religious ruler has very little military might or political authority of his own ("two horns like a lamb"), but his words carry great influence upon the populace ("spake as a dragon").

The false prophet in fact exercises the same power as the first beast, because he exhorts the entire world to worship the political antichrist. He even points out the power of the antichrist to raise men from the dead (Re.13:12). The religious antichrist (the false prophet) will perform many miracles and will even demonstrate his Elijah-like power to call fire down from heaven. By that means, he will seduce mankind to worship the political antichrist saying "that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword and did live" (Re.13:14).

"And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Re.13:15). This image is almost certainly the "abomination of desolation" that we spoke of in the last chapter, page 579. It is frightening to think of that which our modern technology could produce even today. In Old Testament times, images were hewn of wood, overlaid with gold, were carried about and propped up, but could not hear, speak or execute any action (Je.10:3–5). This image of the antichrist will appear to be alive, and will both speak and have the ability to root out those that do not worship the antichrist in order to have them killed.

Furthermore, this "image" will cause every living man, woman, and child to receive a number that they must either carry in their right hand or commit to memory (in their forehead) (Re.13:16).[468] Without that unique identification, a person cannot carry on any business anywhere in the world. They cannot work or buy food. More than that, it identifies all who have the mark of the beast as a part of the kingdom of the antichrist. To accept the mark will be paramount to denying Jesus Christ as well as the rejection of his Kingdom. It seems reasonably evident that this image will be a sort of global super-computer that will be used as a tool in the hands of the antichrist to control all commerce.

Revelation 13:18 has been responsible for many "witch-hunts" to root out the antichrist in the past. In the temporal world we may find "666" appearing at random all around us every day. However, verse 18 does provide some insight as to the background and character of the religious ruler. There are only two places (other than here in Revelation) that the number "666" appears in Scripture. These are 1Ki.10:14 and 2Chr.9:13. In both instances, it describes the tribute received by Solomon in a year's time. Accordingly, the man of which "666" is the number will be Solomon-like. This verse begins with, "Here is wisdom…" which is another attribute of Solomon.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the false prophet will come from, or perhaps need only appear to come from, the ranks of national Israel. He will be a man who has the wisdom of Solomon and will also be a man of great wealth as was Solomon. This religious ruler will have great influence with the political antichrist and for that reason will appear to be a suitable intercessor for Israel.

National Israel will be completely ripe for the coming of a false Messiah by then as the hostile world gangs up on them and they

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[468]It is difficult to determine how future technology may be able to implant this number in the hand or forehead. Already we have microchips that could be permanently implanted to accomplish this numbering. It could also be accomplished by reading fingerprints or the retina of the eye. The important thing for us to see is that the antichrist will have assigned a unique identification to every person who gives allegiance to him.

huddle fearfully in their land.[469] That leads to the covenant of peace that Israel will sign with him that will be broken 3 ½ years into the seven-year period. So powerful will the messiah-delusion be that not only Israel but also the world at large will be fooled. The entire world will bow down to Satan by proxy instead of God the Father and to the false Messiah instead of Jesus Christ (with the exception of an elect remnant).

Rebuilding of the Temple

At the date this book is being written, there is no Temple in Jerusalem. The Islamic Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque stands on the very spot that the Temple must be rebuilt and no other location can be used. We are not told whether the Temple will be rebuilt in accordance with the covenant that Israel makes with the antichrist at the beginning of the seventieth week or whether it will have been rebuilt before he comes on the scene. Regardless, the advance of Mohammedanism's effort to enforce Sharia law as the foundation of world government must have been severely broken to ever allow that to take place. Considering the length of time that would be required to properly rebuild the Temple, it seems most probable that the world government that eventually makes way for the rise of the antichrist will have already overcome Islam's relentless effort at world domination militarily. However, it is not impossible to assume that the antichrist himself will exercise his power to disarm Mohammedanism, and that the Temple will be built in accordance with his treaty with Israel in very rapid order.

The Temple will most surely exist before the coming of Elijah and Moses (the two witnesses)[470] since we read in Revelation that John was instructed to measure the Temple just prior to his mention of

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[469] At present, the primary allies of Israel are England and the United States. Of the two, only the United States has the power to provide any real protection. In that future day, either the United States will have degenerated in political power, vanished as a nation, or will have lost the will to aid Israel in her plight.

[470] See The Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Two Witnesses, page 635

the two witnesses (Re.11:1;cf. Ez.40–42). The fact that the outer court (Court of the Gentiles) was not to be measured is easily explained by the fact that godless Gentiles would continue to occupy the larger portion of Jerusalem for 3 ½ years (Re.11:2).

Once the Temple is rebuilt, animal sacrifice will once again be practiced by Israel as they erroneously attempt to reinstate the ceremonial law that was completely fulfilled in Christ — the final sacrifice for sin (cf. He.10:10). The continuance of the Temple and animal sacrifice is agreed to in the covenant that Israel will have made with the antichrist whom Israel will erroneously see as a Messiah figure (Jn.5:43).

Devastation of the Apostate Church

In Revelation 17:7, we find that the apostate church has been carried along on the back of the beast's rise to power. Instead of this apostate church remaining faithful to Christ, she will have committed adultery with the antichrist. The wording of Revelation 17:8–9 strongly suggests the restoration of imperial Rome as is exemplified by the Roman Catholic Church. Verse 8 describes a world power "which was, and is not, and yet is" that also well describes the Roman Empire which collapsed yet lives on in the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, in verse 9 the angel states that this power sits on seven hills for which Rome was and is noted (Re.17:18).

It is very likely that by this time the ecumenical movement will have successfully consolidated the many Protestant denominations back into the "mother church." [471] This pseudo-church will rule over "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Churchianity will have reached its apogee as the apostate church is worshiped worldwide. The leaders of this ecumenical church will eagerly lend

[471] As this is being written, the Roman Catholic Church cannot yet be equated with the harlot church described here in Revelation. However, the imperial nature of the Roman religious framework, which will remain intact in that day, will be highly suitable for the construction of the final global religion. It will likely appear to the non-elect as if the majesty of the Roman church was restored through the ecumenical movement.

their power to the antichrist helping him to wage war on the remnant of true Christianity that does not conform to their own humanistic ecumenism (Re.17:6).

Nevertheless, the pseudo-majesty of the apostate church (Re.17:5) will be short-lived. The antichrist had merely used the adulterated temporal church to aid him in his own rise to power. The antichrist and the commercial powers that he commands "shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give the kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Re.17:16,17).

Satanic jealousy will eventually become so strong that Satan will completely takeover the temporal church, strip it of all its power and its glorious vestures, remove its vast riches, take over its physical structures, and incinerate all of its holy documents — leaving no trace of its Christian roots. God will allow this to take place in fulfillment of his own will, for we must realize that this church will no longer be the Church in any viable form, but it will instead be a horrible parody of her (Re.17:17). It is fitting that the counterfeit church will have been plundered by her own lovers with which she played the harlot — Satan and the secular world he controlled.

After this devastation has taken place, the apostate church will have no vestiges of Christianity remaining, and it will be converted into a satanic church of the antichrist's own making. At a later time, God will completely destroy what remains of this totally decadent religious institution much as the pagan religious systems of old Babylon were destroyed (See Revelation Chapter 17).

It must be pointed out here that the devastation of the apostate temporal church will not involve in any way the true Church that will yet remain on the earth at that time. The true Church will be made up only of those genuine believers who had not become drunk with the wine of the temporal church, nor participated in her blasphemies, and had further refused to embrace the antichrist — most likely a small remnant indeed (Re.17:2,3). By this time, the true Church will have long since resorted to conducting secret meetings hidden away in individual homes having gone invisibly underground to avoid the

severity of the extreme persecution of that day coming from the apostate church as well as the very powerful global government.[472]

The Second Seal: Global War Breaks Out

We have determined that the antichrist will only reign for 42 months or 3 ½ years, which is midway through the seventieth week prophesied by Daniel (Re.13:5; seven years based on Da. 9:25–27; see Figure 12, page 573). During that time, it would appear that the antichrist will have full control over the entire earth. Nevertheless, evil and corruption will grow like a festering sore until an eruption of violence becomes inevitable. That time was revealed to John when Jesus Christ in Heaven opened the second seal (Re.6:3,4). This time, a red horse (red signifying war) will go forth upon the earth, and "power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Re.6:4).

We are not told in Scripture what specific human events have led up to the start of this war. Perhaps the devastation of the apostate church was a factor. We are merely told that one individual or group (the horseman) has been given a formidable weapon (a "great sword"). While there is no way to be absolutely certain, it seems quite possible that that "sword" will be wielded by a renewed Islamic attempt at world domination made possible by their surreptitious development of a highly formidable weapon. Not only will all individual and national freedom have been lost to world government, it will now have been lost without enjoying the benefits of the forced peace for which it was sacrificed.

Apparently, mankind will never learn that war is not caused by the instruments of war, but by the war-like nature found in the hearts of men. War must be the ultimate result of unilateral or even universal disarmament — which will have been the case under a one-world government. It only takes one side to make war and there will be no

[472] See The Final Stance of the Visible Church, page 544

powerful national champion to thwart it in that day. That this is a global war is indicated in the words: "take peace from the earth".

Whatever that "great sword" is, whether nuclear, chemical, or something far worse, is not stated. Nevertheless, we can be sure that it will be just as devastating as any fears we may have today of any third global war as people are given the power to "kill one another." It is likely that this war will occur somewhat near the end of the 3 ½ year reign of the antichrist, but we can place no specific location on the time-line of Daniel's seventieth week to verify that fact. The two horsemen that are yet to follow would likely occur in rapid sequence as the consequences of warfare are felt.

The Third Seal: Worldwide Famine

The global war could, of course, be over in a very short time assuming that very sophisticated weapons are used. The immediate consequence would be a world-wide famine for survivors due to the mass destruction of food crops. That famine is seen to come about when the third seal is opened in heaven by our Lord (Re.6:5,6). The black horse of famine will then go forth. Although it is likely that a large percentage of the earth's population will be destroyed by the instruments of war, there will still be a large population remaining that will starve because the processes of food production and delivery will have been destroyed. A black market will also spring up (as is always the case) so that items of luxury can still be obtained by the rich and powerful while the poorer classes go hungry (Re.6:6).

The Forth Seal: Plagues and Death

War brings forth more than famine. We read in Revelation 6:7 and 8 that as the Lord opened a fourth seal a pale horse was seen. The pale horse represents plagues and death. We cannot be sure if those plagues, in whole or part, were brought about by the release of biological weapons during the war itself since disease often follows in the aftermath of famine succeeding any war. We only know that disease will run rampant and unchecked on the heels of the red horse of war and the famine that followed. This horseman's name is "Death" and the grave follows after him.

Even the wild beasts of the earth, driven by hunger, will add to the death toll (Re.6:8). Whether those wild beasts are literal wild animals whose populations may have grown enormously through institutional animal activism supported by the false religious philosophies of evolutionism and environmentalism,[473] or whether they metaphorically represent evil gangs of men motivated by hunger and greed to kill for food and medicine cannot be precisely determined.

It is not clear whether a fourth of the earth's population will die ***after*** the war, or if the toll is the total consequence of the war and its aftermath. It is most probable that seventy-five percent of the earth's population will survive the total impact of the global war including the aftermath of famine and disease. Considering the likely population on the earth at that time, the death toll would still be enormous. If the loss of one-quarter of the world's population were not enough, the mechanisms for sustaining the remaining population has been largely lost as well. The time ahead is extremely bleak.

The Midpoint of Daniel's Seventieth Week

Those terrible events bring us to the mid-point of the seventieth week of Daniel (Figure 12, page 573). In a desperate attempt to maintain control, the antichrist will break his agreement with Israel and establish himself as God in Jerusalem. At that time the image of the beast will be moved inside the Temple in Jerusalem — the abomination of desolation will be standing where it should not be — in the Holy of Holies (Mk.13:14;Mt.24:15). The Jews who originally looked to the antichrist for salvation from their many enemies will then recognize him as the "man of sin" that he is. At this point in time, both conditions that Paul mentioned for the Second Advent of Jesus Christ have been fully met (2Th.2:3,4). The institutionalized temporal church has not only abandoned the faith, but it ceases to exist, and the man of sin has been revealed to the world.

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[473] See Vegetarianism and Animal Activism, page 512

The Return of Elijah

Just prior to the end of the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel and coinciding with a time just before the "abomination of desolation" is revealed, we see the return of Elijah as was prophesied in the book of Malachi.

> "**Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse"** (Mal.4:4–6).

In these consecutive verses we find Moses (Mal.4:4) and Elijah mentioned. Together they represent both the Law and the Prophets. Two witnesses are spoken of in Revelation 11:3–12. In verse 6, we find that one has the ability to shut up heaven so it does not rain; the other has the power to turn water to blood along with bringing forth other plagues. Those are the types of miracles of judgment that characterize the ministry of Elijah and Moses. Accordingly, many believe the two witnesses to be Moses and Elijah.

Those two men will witness throughout the last 3 ½ years of the seventieth week of Daniel (Re.11:3). They are seen to be martyred, resurrected, and taken bodily into Heaven just prior to the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet[474], which means that they must appear on earth just before the abomination of desolation is set up in the Temple (Re.11:12–15). Their prophetic witness will be specifically to the nation of Israel though their message will be heard and hated by the antichrist and the Gentile nations.

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[474] See The Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Two Witnesses, page 635

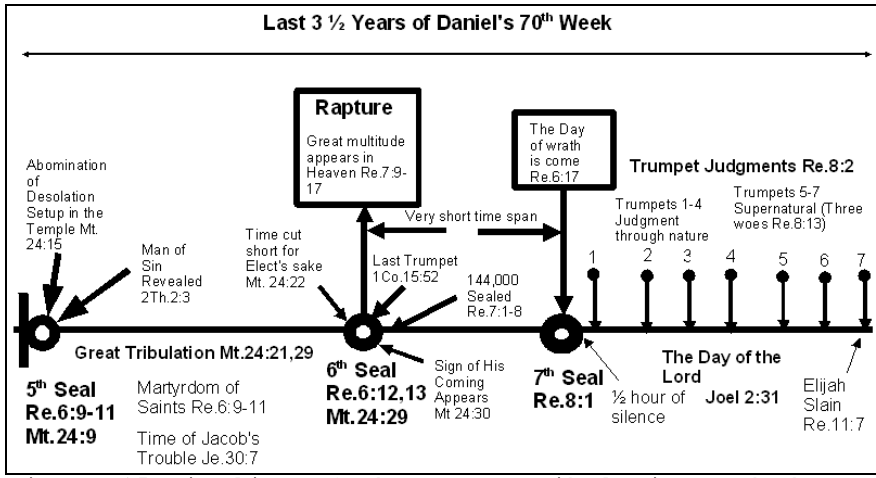

Figure 15 Timeline of the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord

The Fifth Seal: Begins the Great Tribulation

The time between the fifth and sixth seal was labeled the Great Tribulation by Jesus Himself (Mt.24:21). (Refer to Figure 15 above). When our Lord opened the fifth seal, John saw those that had already been martyred during the earlier ordeal prior to the opening of the fifth seal. They had been martyred because of their witness and because they held to God's Word, and they cried out for the Lord to avenge them (Re.6:10). "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Re.6:11).

Thus begins the time of the martyrdom of the saints, as many others of their brothers will join them because of the tribulation that lies ahead. It is at this point in time that Russia will lead the charge as she and various Islamic allies mount the failed attack upon Israel with formidable force. Both Christians and Jews will be hunted down and martyred because of the fierce anger of the antichrist and prevailing lawlessness.

During the Great Tribulation Period, Israel especially will be under great pressure and persecution, although the tribulation will also

extend outward to the remnant of Christian believers around the world as well:

> **"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"** (Mt. 24:9–13).

This time of great tribulation is also noted in Scripture as the "time of Jacob's trouble" (cf. Je.30:7). Of all the persecution that the Hebrew people have suffered, including the severe persecution under the Russian Czar and the later German Holocaust, this time will be far worse for them (Mt.24:21–22). Satan will attack Israel in all his fury since it was by her that Christ came upon the earth (Re.12:1,2; Ro.9:4,5; cf. Ge.37:9,10). Semitic Jews have been tormented to this day because of their rejection of the Messiah and by Satan's anger against them as the ones who brought Him forth into the world. Unlike the Christian who knows Jesus, to have Satan vent his anger on Jews because of Christ and for them not to have the joy of knowing Christ is unbearable. The words of a familiar hymn immediately come to mind.

> **"O come O come, Emanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that morns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear… O come thou Rod of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny… Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."** (Latin hymn from the twelfth century).

Israel became a political nation once again in 1948 in fulfillment of the prediction by Ezekiel in Chapters 35 and 36 of his prophecy. The dry bones of Israel that lay in the dust of the earth sprang again to life when Jews came forth out of Gentile nations of the world in which its bones were buried to repopulate their land (Eze.37:1–11). A state of war has existed between Israel and her displaced Arab neighbors ever since.

In 1967, Israel was attacked by the Arab nations of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria along with troops contributed by various other

nations including Saudi Arabia. The smaller Israeli air force decimated the much larger Egyptian air force on the ground in a surprise preemptive attack. By the execution of brilliant Israeli military tactics on the ground, the war was over in 6 days. Miraculous to be sure, but Israel still remains surrounded by her sworn enemies and the conflict has continued.

In the time of the great tribulation, an even greater army will be massed against Israel. Ezekiel speaks of this in Chapters 38 and 39 of his prophecy. *Gog* means "head" and is undoubtedly a reference to the antichrist, the world dictator (Eze.38:1). *Magog* ("head") describes a leading nation made up of the sons of Japheth (who was one of the three sons of Noah) that inhabited the lands north of Ur after the time of the confusion of languages on the plain of Shinar (Ge.11:7). This word is identical with the Hebrew word *Rosh* that also means "head." For that reason, it is commonly believed that Russia (*Rosh*) will be the nation from the north that will lead a massive invasion against Israel supported by a large number of Islamic nations including Iran (Persia), Ethiopia, Libya, and Turkey (Togarmah), and even aided by Germany (Gomer) (cf. Eze.38:5,6).

Russia's strange fellowship and cooperation with various war-like Islamic nations such as Iran only reinforces that view today. It has been suggested by J. Vernon McGee that "the hook" (Eze.38:4) that will pull Russia in that direction in the latter days (Eze.36:16) is three-fold. First, is the persistent desire of Russia to obtain a warm-water port, second to dominate the remaining oil deposits in the Middle East, and third is to mine the massive mineral deposits to be found in the Dead Sea.[475] That would give Russia the upper hand in dictating worldwide events as the world's natural resources dwindle.

The hand of God will be evident when he turns back Russia and her eager allies (Eze.39:2) by inflicting them with six grievous plagues. "And I will [judge] against him [Gog] with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the

[475] *Thru the Bible Radio,* Volume 3, page 515

many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone" (Eze.38:22).

The Sixth Seal: Jesus Cuts Short the Great Tribulation

So severe will be the distress, persecution, and slaughter in the remaining time of the great human upheaval that none could survive if the Great Tribulation were to last any longer than a short while. For the sake of God's elect, Christ will bring it to a swift conclusion as we see Jesus beginning to open the sixth seal of the scroll in Heaven (Mt.24:21,22; Re.6:12). Up to this point in time, though preordained by God, the terrible events of those days have been carried out by Satan and by the evil nature of men themselves. War has taken a terrific toll through direct destruction and indirectly through famine, and disease.

Now however, men will have little doubt regarding the change in the source of judgment as our Lord opens the sixth seal (Re. 6:12–17). Upon the opening of the sixth seal, a violent earthquake will shake the entire earth, the sun will go dark, and the moon will turn blood red (vs. 12; cf. Jl.2:30–31). A great display of meteorites will be followed by a blackening of the sky, as the heavens will roll up as a scroll when the reading is finished (vs. 13,14;Mt.24:29). The earthquake will be so severe as to move mountains and islands out of their previous locations (vs. 14).

The Sealing of the 144,000

A break in God's judgment occurs at this point in time to ensure that there will be survivors from the nation of Israel to move on into the Millennium after God's wrath is vented. We read Jesus' words regarding the gathering together of the elect Jews He has chosen to be sealed in the Olivet Discourse,

> **"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"** (Mt.24:31).

Here we find that the elect of Israel must be gathered together and sealed for their physical protection. So terrible is that which is

coming forth through the seven trumpet judgments to follow that they would not be able to survive with any certainty without the seal of God upon them. The Apostle John recorded this event in Chapter 7 of Revelation.

> **"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads"** (Re.7:1–3).

A seal signifies both ownership and protection. Therefore, to ensure that ***all*** of the remnant of Israel will survive intact, twelve thousand that are descended from each of the twelve tribes of Israel will be sealed in advance (Re.7:4;14:1). The angel of greater authority is most probably the archangel Michael, who guards and protects Israel. In the verses that follow, we find that twelve-thousand souls from each of the twelve tribes of Israel are sealed.

> **"And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zebulun were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand." (Re.7:4–8).**

It should be noted that the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted. Those two tribes had led the nation into idolatry at the time of

the division of the kingdom (1Ki.11:26) such that any remnant of those tribes that remain in that day will not be sealed (Dan: see 1Ki.12:28–30; Ephraim: see Ho.4:17). Any descendents of those tribes must survive the great wrath to come without that benefit, as shall also the great number of Gentile unbelievers. Therefore, in this list we find that the tribe of Joseph takes the place of Ephraim and that the priestly tribe of Levi, who inherited no land, takes the place of Dan. [476]

All of those Jews have generally been assumed to be unmarried and celibate men as we read in Revelation 14:4. That would certainly be appropriate for the horrors of the times that they are about to endure (Je.16:1 ff; Mt.24:19). There is a serious problem with this interpretation however. If those men are to repopulate the kingdom during the Millennium as is commonly understood, they would not be able to do so if they are all men and no women go through this time with them.[477]

These are specifically men who have refused to worship the antichrist and do not have his seal upon them and are therefore spiritually celibate or "metaphorically chase." [478] When it is said that they are "not defiled with women" it does not exclude them from

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[476] Some have attempted to assert that the elect that are sealed here in the Revelation are Christian saints. The context, however, denies that possibility. The listing of each tribe of Israel individually makes it quite clear that the sealed remnant are exclusively of Israel. Any attempt to allegorize these tribes into twelve divisions of the church would be a very extreme interpretation indeed. Furthermore, there will be no need to gather the elect of the Church together, inasmuch as they soon will be immediately transported from the earth in the rapture prior to the unleashing of God's wrath. This reality shall be made clear in the next topic of this chapter.

[477] That these women who repopulate the kingdom for a thousand years could be resurrected saints in glorified bodies makes no sense since there is no male or female in the resurrected form as we have discovered earlier in this work (Mt.22:30). We also know that death will not yet have been conquered until the end of the millennium so that reproduction would still be necessary (1Co.15:26;Re.20:14).

[478] See *Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, W. E. Vine, published by Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981.

marriage that has been sanctified by God (He.13:4). Marriage is an honorable estate in which there is no defilement. When God saved Noah from the judgment of the flood, he did not save him alone, but his wife and sons as well (Ge.6:18). As God sealed Noah in the ark, his family was with him. It is therefore the strong opinion of this author that there will be 144,000 men sealed, and their families also will be carried safely in the "ark" of God's protection during the flood of his judgments that are about to follow.

Rapture of the Church

Immediately after the sealing of the one-hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel, John saw a great number of people appear in Heaven:

> **"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb"** (Re.7:9,10).

John was asked by one of the elders who they were, but John did not know and said, "Sir thou knowest." The elder replied in turn,

> **"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sunlight on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes"** (Re.7:14–17).

As is made evident by "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" in verse 9, this multitude is the Church largely made up of Gentiles. These are those — both the living and the dead — who were caught up at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation

immediately following the opening of the sixth seal and are now safely in the heavenly realms such that God's wrath can never fall upon them as the earth is judged (cf. 1Th.4:16,17). As God had removed Enoch of old who walked with God, Christ will have removed his Church that walked with Him. This Raptured Church is indicative in type of the first century church at Philadelphia that remained loyal to Christ to the end (See The Loyal Church, page 92).

Great Fear Comes upon the Earth

Every man left remaining upon earth will look after his own self, since total anarchy will have replaced the previous dictatorship of the antichrist. Satan will completely lose control under the onslaught of God's direct judgments. Every man who has the means will hide himself in caves or in the rocks of the mountains (Re.6:15). It may be that Joel's prophecy finally penetrated their minds (Jl.2:30–31;cf. Mt.24:29). It is apparent that caves and mountain projections would actually represent more danger than safety against earthquakes.

However, the men of earth will know full well from where this judgment comes. When "the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together," (Re.6:14), it is certain that Jesus Christ will have been clearly visible and recognized by the unsaved multitudes as Jesus Himself had predicted. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mt.24:30). "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Re.1:7). And the unsaved "said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the ***face*** of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the ***wrath of the lamb***" (Re.6:16 - emphasis added). These men will be so fearful of the visible presence of Jesus Christ that they will prefer to be buried in the rocks of the earth.

The Seventh Seal: Heralds the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord

The opening of the seventh and last seal will be followed by an ominous "silence in heaven for about the space of half an hour" (Re.8:1). That silence will be recognized as an omen of terror by the earth-dwellers as it heralds in the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord. After the silence, the prayers of the martyred saints will be mixed with the wrath of God, and cast to earth by an angel (Re.8:3–5). This will result in the accusations of the saints of all time being "broadcast" to earth as "voices" which are as loud as thunder, and which shall cause the earth to quake from the sound (Re.8:5).

Then as a consequence of the opening of the seventh seal, seven angels with seven trumpets will prepare to sound (Re.8:6). The blowing of the first trumpet by the angel will set forth a series of direct judgments upon the earth from God Himself. The day of his almighty wrath is finally come (Re.6:17).

Chapter 20.6 The Day of God's Wrath

This chapter actually covers two distinctly discernable periods of time. The first of those is the Day of the Lord (Jl.1:15) that encompasses the trumpet judgments and extends to the end of Daniel's seventieth week. The second, is the thirty-day period of Daniel 12:11 extending past the seventieth week in which God's final wrath is poured out in seven bowls putting a rapid end to all rebellion — cleansing the earth of all sin.

As we have previously observed, the opening of the first four seals of the book that Jesus Christ held in his hands will allow Satan's antichrist to come to power resulting in the turning of man's evil nature against himself in global warfare. That destruction is not a result of God venting his wrath on mankind, but is of satanic origin aided by the intrinsic evil found deep within the hearts of men.

When the fifth seal was opened the martyred saints cried out for the Lord to judge the earth as the Great Tribulation began. With the opening of the sixth seal, the elect of Israel were sealed against the coming judgments and the Church was transported off the earth into the air out of harms way. A great cataclysmic upheaval will take place in the heavens: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:" (Mt.24:29), and the unsaved inhabitants of the earth will be given a clear view of the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of Heaven at that time (Mt.24:30). When the seventh, and last, seal was opened, the prayers of the saints were mixed with the wrath of God and hurled at the earth. It is then that the voices of the saints will be heard upon the earth with great thundering.

The Blowing of the Trumpets

With the opening of this last seal, the Lord will initiate his own direct judgments upon the earth and its inhabitants. This is symbolized in Scripture by the blowing of seven trumpets by seven angels (See Figure 13, page 592). The time of the seven trumpets is commonly referred to in Scripture as the "Day of the Lord" (Jl. 1:15; Am. 5:18;

Zec.14:1; 1Th.5:2).[479] The seven trumpet judgments are divided up by Scripture into four initial judgments, which are brought about through catastrophic upheavals of nature, and three final judgments, which are brought about through supernatural means (See The Three Woes discussed below).

The interpretation presented here surrounding the initial four trumpet judgments is based upon the probability of the earth being approached in those days by a relatively large celestial mass, perhaps a comet. While it cannot be dogmatically stated that the approach of a celestial mass will be the natural causation underlying the catastrophes coming forth from the sounding of the first four trumpets, it may very well be true based upon the Scripture text and our present-day knowledge of the universe.[480] Regardless of any underlying physical causes however, we must clearly understand that all of the trumpet judgments will be initiated at their appointed time by Jesus Christ Himself when he opens the last seal of the book in Heaven, and that they are not merely brought about as the consequence of a "chance" encounter with a celestial body.

To the men and women remaining on the earth at that time, there will be no doubt about where the trumpet judgments are coming from or who is bringing them about. They are actually a final warning to mankind to repent of their evil and turn to God. As we look at each of those warnings in turn, we can see that Christ mercifully restrains His hand against total destruction each time giving room for repentance. Nevertheless, the multitude of the great population of the earth will refuse to repent. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and

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[479] See The Day of the Lord, page 584

[480] Most physicists would concede the probability of a collision or near collision of the earth by a celestial body sometime in the future inasmuch as there is strong evidence that such cataclysmic events occurred in the past on both the earth and its moon. Such an event most likely brought forth the Ice Epoch on earth in which the great mammoths were destroyed as well as the great Noachian flood in which the earth's human population was annihilated saving only Noah and his immediate family.

the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Ps.2:2,3). Pitiful sinful men will actually think that they can somehow stand against God and win in the face of overwhelming power!

The First Trumpet

When the first trumpet is sounded, one-third of all the vegetation of the earth will be destroyed: "The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up" (Re.8:7). Here we see God's wrath mingled with the blood of the saints who were martyred. It will come in the form of fire from out of space as debris from the great celestial cataclysm begins to reach the earth. We read in the Old Testament that Elijah was allowed to call down fire from heaven in judgment (cf. 2Ki.1:10–14). However, this fire is not intended to directly kill men. Instead, it will burn up every form of vegetation from grass to great trees much as when God sent a great hail mingled with fire upon the land of Egypt (cf. Ex. 9:22–25). This almost certainly will also include all types of food crops as well. Even so, we are told that only one-third of the vegetation will be burned up by the burning missiles so that mankind will not starve to death.

The Second Trumpet

With the blowing of the second trumpet, one-third of all sea-life will die. "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed" (Re.8:8,9). From the phrase, "as it were" we realize that the "mountain" need not be a literal mountain. Even so, it must be like a mountain in size. It may be that this signifies the eruption of a huge volcano somewhere on earth that is then thrown into the sea by a massive explosion. This could be triggered by the gravitational pull upon the crust of the earth resulting from the approach of a large mass

from out in space before it actually reaches the earth. Whatever this huge burning mass is, it will destroy one-third of the smallest of fish up to and not excluding one-third of the ships of men, which are the only means of transport for scarce food grains to various parts of the earth. We are not told where on the earth that great event will take place, but again, two-thirds of the earth's seas will remain unaffected.

The Third Trumpet

With the blowing of the third trumpet, one-third of all the fresh water will be made poisonous. "And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter" (Re.8:10,11). Here the approaching celestial mass is described as a star that will finally reach the earth. A star (or comet) has little or no solid core but is made up of gas. Perhaps the burning gases of this visitor from space entering into the upper atmosphere will pollute the rainfall and thereby poison one-third of the rivers and streams from which men get their drinking water. The word "wormwood" means "bitter." The poisoned waters will have a bitter taste making the water undrinkable. Again, we see that this is not a total judgment since two-thirds of the fresh water supply of the earth will not be affected.

The Fourth Trumpet

When the fourth trumpet sounds, one-third of the day and one-third of the night will be without light. That is, the day will be short of sunlight, and the night will be short of both moon and stars. "And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise" (Re.8:12). We should not think from this that the sun and moon would have a "bite" taken out of them. Rather, the last part of this verse clarifies the first part. That is, the sun will not shine until it is well elevated into the heavens and will be dark

before it again reaches the earth's horizon. It is quite possible that this will be brought about by large amounts of atmospheric debris resulting from the close approach of the "star" that caused the lower atmosphere to become more opaque so that the sun's rays cannot penetrate it near the horizon. In a similar manner, the moon will not be seen for one-third of the night. The stars would not be seen at all near the horizon. The net result will be an increase in darkness upon the earth.

We are not given a specific timeline for the first four trumpet judgments. They could rapidly follow each other or there could be a short interval of days or even months between them as the bright celestial mass approaches and finally completes its pass nearby the earth. Man's environment will have been wrecked by this catastrophic event, but a far worse disaster is soon to come about.

The Three Woes

"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound" (Re.8:13)! The first four trumpets brought judgments upon the earth through the elements of creation as a massive star-like body passed nearby the earth. While those were natural judgments that God had directed, the judgments that are to follow will be supernatural judgments. While the first judgments were in the physical realm, those that are to follow are in the spiritual realm. The power of the underworld will be unleashed against mankind! The demons that have been forbidden to indwell men will be given freedom to do as they wish with the sinful rebellious men and women that remain on earth. This will be a terrifying and horrible time in which to live. None of the previous judgments, though extremely severe, can compare to the next three judgments for instilling pure terror. Those three events are often referred to as the "three woes" after the angel's message.

The Fifth Trumpet (First Woe)

The fifth trumpet will soon sound, and the first of the angel's three "woes" will come upon the earth. This is related in highly

figurative language in Revelation 9:1–11. "And I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit" (Re.9:1). Unlike the physical "star" described in the third trumpet judgment, the pronoun "him" is used here to personify this "star." In Luke 10:18, the Lord Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Jesus said this in response to his disciples joy in having power over demons (Lu.10:17). There can be little doubt that Satan himself will be the one permitted to open the bottomless pit (Re.9:2). When Satan opens the pit, smoke will first come out followed by the imprisoned demons themselves. Although demons are spiritual creatures having no physical substance, they are described in this text as locusts. They literally swarm like locusts from the pit. We know that John is using the word "locusts" in a figurative sense here inasmuch as these "locusts" also do not attack vegetation as do real locusts, but instead they will attack mankind spiritually (Re.9:4).

We discover from the description of the demons in Revelation 9:7–10, that they are very warlike in appearance, heavily armed, and well protected. They have faces like the faces of men, long hair like women, sharp teeth like lions, and tails like that of a scorpion (Re. 9:7–10). They are also highly organized like an army going forth, for it is said that they have a king with the name of Abaddon (or Apollyon), which means "destruction." They will not be allowed to destroy men physically, but they will be allowed to control and wreck men mentally and spiritually.

The demons will inject their spiritual venom into their prey like the sting of a scorpion. Men and women will be suddenly and painfully attacked by the plague of demons, and then they must suffer the terrible venomous aftermath. Those so injected with this spiritual venom "shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." This is an indication of the horror and mental pain that those demon beings will inflict upon their victims. Men and women will suffer terrible mental agony without even the hope that death could ultimately relieve their pain since this torment is perpetual. They will not even be able to take their own lives through attempting suicide! That does not mean that the insanity brought on by those demons will not cause men to inflict terrible physical pain upon themselves and others (cf. Mk.5:2–5), but

they will be kept alive through it all since they are being prepared as pawns for a demonic war that is to follow when the sixth trumpet sounds.

We should take note that the demons are not allowed to attack any Jew who has been protected by the seal of God to continue on earth through the terrible Day of the Lord so that the remnant of Israel will not be affected (Re.9:4; cf. Lu.10:20). Here, as we should also note, we are given a specific time for the interval between the fifth and sixth trumpet of five months (Re.9:5). "One woe is past; and, behold, there come two more woes more hereafter" (Re.9:12).

The Sixth Trumpet (Second Woe)

When the sixth trumpet sounds, four angels of destruction will be loosed from the river Euphrates. The fact that those four angels were previously bound indicates their evil nature and intent. The river Euphrates is where Eden and Ur were located and is at the very cradle of human civilization. The river serves to separate the eastern and western worlds. The express purpose of the four angels is to "slay the third part of men" (Re.9:15). Here we discover a war that is being waged by demon-possessed men against each other. We find in the description of the horsemen a great similarity to the demons just described — though not identical. That is because these are truly men, but they are men that are being ruled by the demons who possess them.

While the demons themselves were not allowed to kill men directly, the demon-possessed men will wage a war of physical destruction. The size of the demon-possessed army is an incredible 200 million men (Re.9:16)! (This also says a lot about the large population that will still remain on the earth in that day). The destruction will continue for "an hour, a day, and a month, and a year", as the army will "slay the third part of men" (Re.9:15). Here we see that we again are given a specific span of time between the sixth and seventh trumpet of thirteen months, one day, and one hour.

Although this terrifying destruction will last for more than a year, and a third of the earth's population will die as a result, the large majority of the people remaining on earth will still not repent from

their paganism! That is an incredible statement regarding the fallen nature of mankind. One would think that after having endured so many of God's judgments and living through that terrifying time, men would be more than ready to turn to God for deliverance. Yet, we see that this is not so!

> **"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts"** (Re.9:20,21).

The Prophetic Interlude

At this point in the Revelation, there is a pause in God's judgment, which takes place between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets. As between the sixth and seventh seal, preparation for a very important transition is about to take place.

The Mighty Angel and the Seven Thunders

> **"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices."** (Re.10:1–3)

As we just saw, mankind will utterly refuse to repent. The seven thunders echo God's disapproval as a mighty angel sets foot on the earth and the sea to lay claim to the earth and Christ's authority over it, and he shouts out his disapproval of mankind's refusal to submit to Christ's rule over it. This angel is actually an angel that exemplifies Christ in his appearance (cf. Re. 5:2; 8:3) in that he displays many of the glorified Christ's attributes (Re.1:15,16; 4:3).

> **"And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I**

> **was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not."**(Re.10:4)

Although the Book of Revelation is not a sealed book, we find that John was told not to write down the sayings of the seven thunders that he had heard. John did not write them down, and they therefore do not appear anywhere in the text. For that reason, it is impossible and inappropriate to make any attempt to comment on them further here.

> **"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."** (Re.10:5–7)

The mighty angel swears by God the Creator that there shall be no more time allocated to man for repentance and redemption. The phrase "there should be time no longer," is best interpreted to say that there shall be no further delay in pouring out God's final wrath upon the sin-filled earth. This will rapidly come to pass when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet preparing the way for God's wrath to be poured out full strength upon the earth out of seven bowls (See below).

Contents of the Little Book

We saw that when the Mighty Angel approached the Apostle John he held a little book opened in his hands. John is directed to take the book, read it and digest it (Re.10:8). While the knowledge from the book was at first sweet to John's mind, its implications were very bitter for him to contemplate (Re.10:9) because of the open malevolence of Satan that is evident in it all. The interesting but disturbing portrayals that John read in the book and then sourly digested are as follows:[481]

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[481] John does not immediately write down the things which he read in the little book

1. The woman — representing Israel (Re.12:1,2)
2. The Red dragon — representing Satan (Re.12:3,4)
3. The woman's child — representing Jesus (Re.12:5,6)
4. War waged in Heaven between the archangel Michael (the protector of Israel: Da.12:1)) and the Dragon (Re.12:7–12)
5. The Dragon (Satan) persecutes the woman (Israel) (Re.12:13–16)
6. Satan continues to persecute the believing remnant of Israel (Re.12:17)
7. First wild beast comes out of the sea—the political antichrist (Re.13:1–10) [482]
8. Second wild beast comes out of the earth—the false prophet (Re.13:11–18)[483]

We should note that not all of these portrayals can be considered future-prophetic in nature. Most certainly, 1 through 5 as listed above must be considered to be historic,[484] number 6 is both historic and future-prophetic, while only the last two can be considered unambiguously prophetic of future events. For that reason, the reader will find the last two of these rather detailed portrayals (7 and 8 in the list above), which reveals the characteristics and actions of the political antichrist and his false prophet, already included within this study

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until Chapters 12 and 13 of the book of Revelation. We have moved up the text of its contents here just following the time the angel gave him the little book to read in order to aid the reader in following the last of the trumpet judgments into the seven bowls of wrath without any unnecessary interruption.

[482] See The Political Antichrist, page 603

[483] See The False Prophet, page 605

[484] Some scholars consider the war in Heaven (#4 above) as being yet future. Most probably, it will remain ongoing until Satan is bound and is finally thrown into the lake of fire.

where they fit into the greater chronological context of the Revelation.[485]

Time Set for the End of Gentile Occupation of Jerusalem

> **" And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."** (Re.11:1,2)

The outer court of the Temple complex was provided for the worship of godly-minded Gentiles. There will be no more worship taking place in the outer court at the time of the angel's pronouncement, and thus the outer court should not be measured. However, unholy Gentile populations of the world will continue to trod down the streets of Jerusalem for another 3 ½ years. This is in accordance with the words of the Lord Jesus when He said that following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (in the year 70 AD), "…Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lu 21:24). Even after Israel captured Jerusalem in the six-day war of 1967, Gentiles continued to occupy its streets even to the day this book is being written.

The final 3-½ year period for the Gentiles to occupy Jerusalem, spoken of by the angel, begins with the breaking of the pact made with Israel by the antichrist. This in turn results in the insane lawlessness of the great tribulation period. Gentiles will at that time overrun Jerusalem until the end of the trumpet judgments, which also coincides with the end of Daniel's seventieth week (See Figure 12 Timeline of Daniel's Seventieth Week, page 573).

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[485] See The Unholy Trinity, page 603

The Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Two Witnesses

God will not leave the earth without a witness during the time of the trumpet judgments (Re.11:3–12). We are told that for three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel, God has provided two witnesses (prophets).[486] Since they prophesy for the last 3 ½ years, it is clear that they must appear at or before the time of the fifth seal at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. It is also apparent from the first two verses of Revelation Chapter 11 that those men will begin witnessing from Jerusalem when it is still "trodden down by the Gentiles." Gentiles will cease to occupy the holy city for the remainder of the seventieth week of Daniel.[487]

God will protect his witnesses and give them the power to create drought, turn water to blood, and send forth plagues to reinforce their message like Elijah and Moses of old. There can be no question about the prophets' authenticity as they both warn of and bring forth judgment. Needless to say, their message of repentance will not be popular with fallen men who will hate them and refuse to listen. We are told that the host of demons that comes up out of the bottomless pit will eventually kill them through the actions of demon-possessed men. It is most probable that this will occur just before the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet of the Day of the Lord.

In Revelation 11:9–11 we are told of the grotesque action of the inhabitants of the earth upon hearing of the death of the two witnesses. The bodies of the witnesses will be laid in the street of Jerusalem for three and one-half days without burial both in order to intimidate the Jewish inhabitants and to shake their fists at God who

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[486] There is little doubt about the first of these witnesses being Elijah as predicted in Mal.4:5. (See The Return of Elijah, page 614). However, there has been great speculation regarding the identity of the second of these two witnesses. Some believe that he is John the Baptist, Jeremiah, or some other Old Testament prophet. The weight of Scripture evidence is for Moses as was mentioned earlier.

[487] See Figure 12 on page 573

had sent them (Re.11:8,9). The whole world will watch the dead bodies, probably through television or some similar media. There appears to be a fear of resurrection or perhaps they merely attempt to mock God and dare Him to raise them. Rather than bury the witnesses, the men of earth will gloat over their dead bodies for more than "three days and three nights" to assure themselves and the rest of the world that they are truly dead.[488] They obviously fear to put them into a tomb or to bury them out of their sight!

After three days and nights, the people of earth will rejoice over their deaths because they will feel that they have cut off the source of the wrath that they have been suffering. Of course, they have only killed the messengers because they did not like the message. In a mocking parody of what seems very much like the present-day highly secularized Christmas celebration, they will send each other gifts and make merry (Re.11:10). That will be for them Christmas and New Year's Day all wrapped up in one. Just as many today ignorantly make the annual celebration of the birth of Christ a drunken orgy and dishonor Him, the partying will be much more blatant at that time. This will be an "in-your-face" celebration intended to dishonor God since they will have killed the means of delivering God's message to them.

"And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them" (Re.11:11). We are told that the two witnesses will be called up bodily into heaven before the eyes of their enemies (Re.11:12).

> **"And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted,**

[488]From the accounts of the resurrection of Christ, they will mistakenly understand that their resurrection must occur within three days of their death. Hebrew tradition states that the spirit of the dead only hover around the body for three days after death and that following that, there is no hope for resurrection. Their watch is similar to the guard that the Pharisees set over the tomb where Jesus was buried except that now the whole world will be watching.

and gave glory to the God of heaven." (Re.11:13)

There will be a great earthquake that will slay seven thousand men in Jerusalem as a consequence of a tenth part of the city being destroyed (Re.11:13). A great fear will come over the remnant of Jerusalem and they will give glory to God. Almost certainly, the remnant referred to here is the sealed remnant of Israel who did not participate in this farce.

The Final Trumpet (Third Woe)

Then, the seventh angel will sound, and the third and last woe will come very quickly (Re.11:14,15). This seventh trumpet marks the beginning of the closing judgments of the Day of Wrath during which interval God will no longer be pleading with men to repent. The seven bowls of his wrath will soon be poured out upon the earth putting an end to earth's sinful rebellion against God. As the last trumpet sounds, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Re.11:15). In Heaven, John saw the twenty-four elders fall on their faces and worship God:

> **"Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth"** (Re.11:17,18).

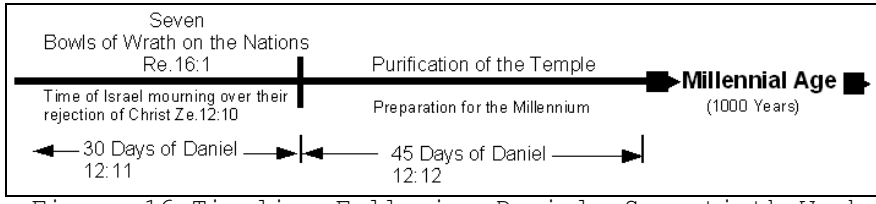

Figure 16 Timeline Following Daniels Seventieth Week

The Bowls of Wrath

We read in Revelation 11:19 that the Temple of God was opened in Heaven. We are given further information about this event in Revelation 15 beginning with verse 5. This is, no doubt, the heavenly Temple after which the Tabernacle on earth was patterned. It is out of this Temple that the seven angels walk, which will administer the wrath of God[489] that is symbolically contained in seven vials or bowls, upon the earth (See Figure 13, page 592). Those last judgments will come in very rapid succession (Also see Figure 16 above). It is believed through this interpretation that they will be poured out within a thirty-day period just following the Day of the Lord which brings to a close the seventieth week of Daniel. That would correspond to the thirty days that Daniel told of in Daniel 12:11.[490] Whereas before (during the trumpet judgments) only one-third of the earth was affected, these judgments are in ***total***.

The First Bowl

The first bowl brings boils upon ***all*** "the men that had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image" (Re.16:2). That would, of course exclude the 144,000 sealed Jews[491] that again will be passed over by the avenging angel. Even in that day, there could still be a large Gentile population that had earlier refused to receive the mark of the beast or worship his image for various reasons. Many may have repented after the Church was removed. What their life must have been like during the time of persecution by the antichrist and/or during the trumpet judgments can only be imagined.

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[489] Also see The Bowls of Wrath, page 585

[490] The abomination of desolation was set up and the discontinuance of the daily sacrifice was ended 3 ½ years into the agreement Israel had made with the antichrist when he revoked it at the midpoint of the seventieth week. 3 ½ years then make up the remainder of Daniel's seventieth week (See Figure 12, page 573). The thirty days are evident by subtracting 1260 days (3 ½ years) from 1290 days.

[491] See The Sealing of the 144,000, page 618

The Second and Third Bowl

The second angel will pour out the second bowl of wrath and ***every*** living thing in the sea will die (Re.16:3). The third bowl of wrath will result in ***all*** of the fresh water being poisoned (Re.16:4). The water will become like blood. As the men of earth had before shed the blood of saints and prophets so now they have only blood to drink (Re.16:5–7)!

The Forth Bowl

The fourth angel poured out his bowl of wrath on the sun (Re.16:8). Here we find that the sun's heat will be increased tremendously "And men were scorched with great heat" (Re.16:9). Suffering men of earth responded by cursing God who had sent the plagues and refused to repent or glorify God (Re.16:9).

The Fifth Bowl

Afterward, the fifth angel poured out his bowl of wrath and the sun's light ceased, bringing forth darkness. Evidently, the sun's rays will increase in the lower spectrum (increasing the heat), and will diminish in the visible spectrum (decreasing light). This most probably will take place as a change in the sun itself, although it is possible that changes in the earth's atmosphere could produce an effect that would increase the heating effect of the sun's rays while reducing the apparent light output.

Again, we find that men will refuse to repent and turn to God (Re.16:11). Even in that day, whosoever would call upon the name of the Lord seeking mercy would be saved. Evidently, there are none that will repent. God is surely right in his fierce judgments!

The Sixth Bowl

When the sixth bowl of wrath is poured out, there will be a breaking down of all east-west barriers, as the river Euphrates will be dried up. That has always been the demarcation between one hemisphere and the other.

The Battle of Armageddon

Now because of the "spirits of demons," (16:14) the whole earth will be drawn together as one to fight against the authority of God in one final battle. "And he [Satan] gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue "Armageddon"[492] (Re.16:16). The stage is thus set for the final combat.

The Return of Christ

At this point in time, Jesus Christ will return to the earth. This is the event commonly referred to as the Second Advent.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and

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[492] Armageddon (*Har-Megeddon*) literally means "the mount of Megiddo," which is a plateau rising up within the Jezreel valley near the northern border of Israel and Lebanon. The high fortress city-state of Megiddo is a present-day archeological dig (and an Israeli national park) consisting of 26 layers of the ruins of various ancient cities. Megiddo has been uninhabited since the Babylonian captivity of Judah in 586 BC. It was strategically located on an ancient trade route known by the Romans as the V*ia Maris* ("way of the sea"; cf. Is.9:1;Mt.4:15) at the head of a pass through the Carmel Ridge, which overlooks the Valley of Jezreel from the west. At Megiddo, the trade route to the north divided with an inland branch moving away from the sea route through Galilee and Dan and into the Asian continent. King David, as had many others before his time, fortified Megiddo to guard the important trade route. The valley of Megiddo has been at the center of many battles in the past since vast armies needed to pass through Israel by this route to reach Egypt to the south and to reach Assyria and Mesopotamia to the north. Those battles include an ancient one between Egypt under Thutmose III and a large Canaanite population living there during the fifteenth century B.C. in which Egypt was victorious. Another battle took place between Egypt and Judea in 609 B.C. during which King Josiah was killed by Necho II (2Ki.23:29,30;2Ch.35:20–35). A much more recent battle took place in 1918 A.D. between Allied British forces and Islamic forces during World War I, which finally brought the Ottoman Empire to an end in 1922 (See page 200). In 2005, archeologists discovered an early Christian church, buried under the ruins of an Israeli military prison located just a few hundred yards to the south of the tell, possibly dating back as far as the times of the emperor Diocletian (See page 128). The church contains a large mosaic (See Christian Art, page 143) with an inscription dedicating the church to "the God Jesus Christ" as well as various other Christian symbols and drawings that include the sign of the fish (See page 117).

he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of God" (Re.19:11–13; cf. Jn.1:1).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself will lead the charge in the final battle at Har-Megeddon.

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Re.19:14–16; cf. Re.1:16, Ps.2:9, Is.63:3).

As the armies of the antichrist prepare to do battle against the hosts of heaven, an angel of God bids all the vultures of the air to come to a great feast at Armageddon.

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great" (Re.19:17,18).

The words of the angel indicates that no one will survive this battle regardless of their rank in life as the wrath of God is finally satisfied upon the flesh of evil man such that they become carrion for the vultures to pick clean.

The First Occupants of Hell

We read that following that battle the antichrist (the first beast), the false prophet (the second beast),[493] and all those that have worshiped the image will be "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Re.19:20). The first occupants of Hell, described here as the lake of fire, will be the antichrist and the false prophet. All of the remaining army will have been slain by the Lord Himself and the vultures will have eaten their flesh (Re.19:21; cf. Mt.24:28).

The Seventh and Final Bowl of God's Wrath

The seventh and final bowl of wrath will be poured out into the earth's atmosphere, and an end will be made of Satan's earthly kingdom. "And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done" (Re.16:17). A mighty earthquake will shake the entire earth (Re.16:18). All of the cities of the nations will fall into rubble. Babylon will be made to drink of God's wrath full strength. All of the islands (continents) of earth will disappear, and the mountains will be leveled (Re.16:20). Great boulders of about one-hundred pounds each will fall out of heaven. Even during this final judgment, the great majority of the men that remain will still not repent, but only further "blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great" (Re.16:21).

In the aftermath of the seven bowls of wrath, earth will be fully demolished, and the evil works of men shall be fully judged as the Lord Jesus Himself lays claim to the earth as his own domain. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1Co.15:25). The earth will be in ruin and the remnant of the terrible wrath of God will be the 144,000 that were sealed to survive the Day of the Lord along with a comparatively large company of Gentiles that also will have miraculously survived the destruction. Those two groups will

[493] See The Political Antichrist, page 603 and The False Prophet, page 605

constitute the population that will go into the kingdom age as Jesus Christ begins to rule the earth upon the throne of David.

Chapter 20.7 The Last Age of Man on Earth

At long last, all sinful opposition will have been put down and the wondrous Kingdom Age will emerge as Jesus Christ, victorious in battle, takes his rightful place on the throne of the Earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the timeless words of Isaac Watts,

" Joy to the world, the Lord has come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing."
(*Joy to the World*, paraphrased from Psalm 98)

The Incarceration of Satan

Up until this time, Satan has run free upon the earth seeking out men who he may consume through his evil influence. With Jesus present upon the throne of the earth for the next one thousand years, there will be no place for Satan on earth or in heaven. We read earlier that the antichrist and the false prophet along with those who worshiped the image of the antichrist, were cast into Hell (Re.19:20), but Satan had somehow escaped that judgment. Nevertheless, that old serpent who tempted Eve in the garden must be incarcerated for a thousand-year period of time so that he no longer has the ability to tempt men upon the earth during the Millennium.

> **"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled…"** (Re.20:1–3).

Why God would loose Satan after the Millennium is connected with the greater question of why God would have permitted evil to enter the garden through the person of Satan to begin with. However, as we view how God dealt with evil in his creation, we can better understand the mind of God through his attributes of love, grace, mercy, and redemption. Only against the backdrop of evil can God's

overwhelming goodness be seen in all its resplendence, even as we simultaneously see his ability and determination to judge evil. Satan's demise is already assured through the death and resurrection of Christ, and Satan's ultimate judgment is soon to come (See Satan's Final Judgment, page 653).

Israel in the Millennium

We discovered in Chapter 20.5 End-Time Events Unsealed, page 618 that 144,000 Hebrew Jews along with their immediate families will be saved alive on earth through the terrifying Day of the Lord as a result of a seal placed on them by God. We also saw the great trouble that had surrounded those Jews that dwelled in Jerusalem earlier during the Great Tribulation Period. Gentiles compassed them about and even persecuted them within their own city. The marked Hebrew survivors will form the core of the inhabitants of the Millennial Kingdom on earth in a fully restored Israel that will be added to by a large number of surviving Gentiles scattered throughout the nations of the earth.

We can get a preview of Israel in the Kingdom age by studying the writings of the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel. We read in Isaiah Chapter 11 verses 10–16 for instance, "…in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people…" (Is.11:11). The first recovery took place at the conclusion of the Babylonian captivity. A descendent of Jesse (i.e. Jesus) shall be an "ensign of the people," who will "assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Is.11:10,12).

The Lord Jesus will seek out his Hebrew flock like a shepherd in that day (Eze.34:11,12). "…I will bring them out from the people [Gentiles], and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country."(Eze.11:13). They will be returned from various hidden places within the Gentile nations. "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the LORD God" (Eze.34:15). Sheep lay down only when they feel safe

and are at peace. "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away…"(Eze.34:16).

In the Kingdom age, Israel will at last dwell in complete safety within their land. "…I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods" (Eze.34:25). "And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid" (Eze.34:28).

Israelites will be forgiven for all of their past sins with the arrival of the Kingdom age, on the same basis of grace that Gentiles had been redeemed, as they embrace their true Messiah (Eze.36:24–25). Moreover, a great spiritual change will be made in them — a new birth from above. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Eze.36:26,27). This is what the prophet Joel meant when he said, "…I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh…"(Jl.2:28). In that day, all will receive of the Holy Spirit, which was first received on the day of Pentecost by the apostles.

The theocratic nation of Israel will be completely restored and made whole. Ezekiel saw this picture of the resurrection of national Israel in his vision of the valley of dry bones (cf. Eze. Chapter 37).[494] Even as the bones came together and the breath of life was given to them, so shall Israel be restored in the Kingdom age. "And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all" (Eze.37:22). At the time Ezekiel made that prophecy, Israel was divided into the northern Kingdom, consisting of ten tribes, and the

[494] When Israel as a democratic nation was assembled in 1948, that event was only a precursor to this final restoration of Israel as a theocratic nation that would be ruled by their Messiah in the Kingdom Age.

southern Kingdom consisting of Judah and Benjamin. In the Millennium, Israel will once again be an undivided nation. "And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them" (Eze.37:24). Notice the reference to David, as the shepherd. Yet, David had long since died when Ezekiel said this. Therefore, the reference is actually to the great shepherd, the greater eternal descendent of David, the Lord Jesus Christ who was yet to come!

"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Is.35:10). "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim (Jl.3:18). "…Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion" (Jl.3:20,21).

Gentile Nations in the Millennium

Many Gentiles will have stubbornly refused to worship the antichrist, yet through terrible and painful trials they somehow will have avoided martyrdom for their refusal. Throughout the outpouring of the entire wrath of God, they were overshadowed by God's providence. That they survived at all is a wondrous measure of God's grace and mercy since we are never told that they were ever sealed to survive, as were the remnant of Israel. Those Gentiles, no doubt, will include a large number of women and children as well as men that will make up the populations of the nations as the Millennium begins. During the millennial reign of Christ, men and women must still marry and bare children in order to repopulate the earth since death will not yet have been destroyed (1Co.15:26; Re.20:14).

Judgment of the Nations

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the

holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats…" (Mt.25:31,32)

All of mankind is collectively referred to as sheep elsewhere in Scripture (Is.53:6). The specific reference to goats here indicates the rulers and governments of various nations that had denied God and his Christ. Goats though related to sheep have beards and straight horns. The face of the goat has often been used symbolically in satanic worship. The "goats" that had misled and abused God's people will be cast into everlasting punishment (Mt.25:41), but those sheep who were under their thumb and yet had demonstrated compassion by sheltering, feeding, and clothing God's people within their midst will receive eternal life (Mt.25:46; Mk. 9:40,41).

We observe that the many Christians that were martyred before and during the Great Tribulation, as a result of refusing to receive the mark of the beast or to worship his idol, will be restored to life at the beginning of the millennial age (Re.20:4). These martyred saints will sit on thrones to reign over the nations of those Gentiles who have miraculously survived the terrible period of judgment on earth during the Day of God's Wrath.

Israel as a Witness to the World

From the beginning, Israel was intended to be a witness to the Gentile nations surrounding her but largely failed in that mission due to repeated periods of disobedience. During the Millennium, that witness will be fully realized as the Lord Jesus Himself will reign as their King in Jerusalem. Kingdom Law as Jesus articulated it in the Sermon on the Mount discourse will be in full effect (see Chapter 9.1 of Book II). The Beatitudes with which Jesus began that great discourse will become reality as many men and women will have those very attributes imbedded in their hearts (Mt.5:3–10).[495]

[495] It should be understood that the fallen nature of all men will not have been completely overcome as we shall see later in this chapter when we discuss the release

> **"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem"** (Is.2:2–3).

Rather than rebelling against the Lord's rule as before the Millennium, the Gentile nations about will instead look to the wisdom of the Lord, seek out his teachings, and desire to walk in his paths.

True Justice

The earth that has known no genuine justice due to the sinful nature of man will finally receive true and perfect justice, as the Lord himself will settle all disputes among the nations to the extent that war will be a relic of the past. All instruments of war will finally be destroyed and man's industry will be turned into peaceful production. The art and science of warfare will no longer be studied at all, and man's thoughts will dwell on peaceful pursuits.

> **"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD"** (Is.2:4–5).

Over a thousand year period of walking in the light of the Lord's teaching and justice and living under ideal environmental conditions, the population of the world will again increase to a great number.

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of Satan for a short while at the end of the Millennium. In those who yet remain in their mortal bodies, the fallen nature has only been suppressed.

The Worship of God in the Millennium

No one in the Kingdom age will doubt the existence or authority of God. "…for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Is.11:9). There will be no atheist or agnostic in that day because God will be plainly visible living among them in the person of Jesus Christ who will be reigning upon the throne of David in Jerusalem.

God alone will be worshiped in the Millennium as the source of great comfort and salvation. "And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me" (Is.12:1). God will be worshiped for the redemption that He brings through his person to his own people: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore, with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Is.12:2,3).

God will also be worshiped as the great Creator. There will be no more evolutionary theories or doubts about man's origin in that day, because the Creator, Himself will be ruling on the earth in the person of Jesus Christ! "And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee" (Is.12:4–6).

The Temple

The Temple that will have been build upon the earth in Jerusalem before and/or during the reign of the antichrist[496] apparently will have survived the time of great tribulation and the wrath of God that followed it. It will be rededicated as a memorial in the Millennium. The Shekinah glory, which had departed before the Babylonian captivity, will have at long last returned to Israel in the

[496] See Rebuilding of the Temple, page 608

person of Jesus the Christ. "…behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory" (Eze.43:2). We find that Jesus will again enter the Temple through the eastern gate just as He did during the "triumphal entry" before his crucifixion. The eastern gate is presently sealed up as it has been since the sixteenth century when Ottoman Turks sealed it in an attempt to prevent the Jewish Messiah from entering through it in fulfillment of biblical prophecy. In doing so however the Arab Muslims had only unwittingly fulfilled the prophesy of Ezekiel: "Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut" (Eze. 44:2). Jesus would have used this gate as he came to and from the Mount of Olives to teach in the Temple on the Sabbath day (cf. Lu.21:37).

We read in Ezekiel Chapter 40, verses 39 and 41 mention of sacrifices again being offered up in the Temple. Yet, Christ died once for all by presenting his own body as the perfect sacrifice (He.10:10). The crucifixion of Jesus Christ ended any need for future animal sacrifices. Moreover, continuing to observe the old sacrificial system was henceforth offensive to God because it denied the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice to remit sins. After a brief transition period of one generation, this practice forcibly ended with the complete destruction of the Temple on earth in A.D. 70.

Many scholars believe that animal sacrifices will be offered as an "act of remembrance" in the Millennium looking back to the atonement of Christ in contrast to an act looking forward to the atonement of Christ as they were in Old Testament times. However, that would directly conflict with the strong rebuke of the writer of the book of Hebrews since in it he is clearly admonishing fellow Hebrew believers for continuing such ritualistic practices in his day (He.10:14,18). They were, symbolically, crucifying "to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" every time they offered up an animal (He.6:6). The implication of their continuing animal sacrifices was that Jesus' one sacrifice of Himself was not enough to cover their sins.

Therefore, it is almost certainly the animal sacrifices erroneously being offered up for a brief period under the pact made between Israel and the antichrist of which Ezekiel spoke. They must certainly cease in the Millennium, since they would greatly dishonor Christ not act as a memorial to Him who will be living in their midst. The sacrifice that will be restored to the Temple in that age will be the person and body of Christ Himself of which earlier sacrifices were but a shadowy type.

Physical Renewal

Vast worldwide destruction will have come about from the great war during the time of the antichrist, and again when the wrath of God was being poured out upon the earth. After that wreckage is cleared, Jesus will restore and enhance the beauty of His creation in many ways during the Millennium. It can be assumed that all of this will be accomplished in the 45 days spoken of by Daniel the prophet in Daniel Chapter 12, verse 12 (see Figure 16, page 637).

Renewal of Man's Health

During the Millennium, man will be completely renewed physically. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing…" (Is.35:5,6). In that day, there shall be no illness or disabilities that the Lord Himself will not heal. Jesus healed many during his ministry upon the earth to demonstrate his divinity. During the Millennium, there will be no doubt of Jesus' deity! That will be an age in which man will enjoy perfect health for all of his life span. Only physical death, itself, will not have yet been done away (Re.20:14).

Renewal of the Land

More than that, the earth itself will be renewed as well as all the living plant life upon it. "…In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become as a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons [jackals] where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and

rushes…"(Is.35:6,7). "…the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing…" (Is.35:1,2). We see that the desert lands of the Middle East will be changed into a very lush land not unlike the Eden of old. Man will become a vegetarian to eat of the abundance of fruits, grains, and nuts as he did in the garden before the fall. He will once again live in complete peace with the entire animal kingdom.

Renewal of the Animal Kingdom

Just as man will again become a vegetarian, the creatures of the earth will be restored to their original condition that they held before the fall of man brought judgment upon the earth. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; and their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Is.11:6,7). The carnivorous animals will be converted back to their original state to eat of the lush vegetation in that day. All of the need to kill in order to eat and survive will be gone. All of the members of the animal kingdom will be at peace with each other and with mankind as well!

Satan's Final Judgment

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth…"(Re.20:7,8). Satan will be turned loose upon a largely Gentile populace that have received the benefits of a thousand years of perfect conditions upon the earth — a people that have been ruled by the perfect government, the perfect man, and have received of his benevolence and of his grace. We read in Revelation 20, verses 8 and 9 that even then Satan is able to deceive a large number of the Gentile nations to go against Jerusalem ("the beloved city"), and in so doing, go against the very throne of Christ Himself. Because of this final rebellion, Satan will be cast into the "lake of fire and brimstone" along with the antichrist and the false prophet who had already preceded him (Re.20:10).

Paradise, the Place of Anguish, and Hell

When the bodies of men and women in Old Covenant times died, their souls went into a place called *Sheol* in Hebrew (or *Hades* in the Greek). It is most unfortunate that both of these words were commonly translated as "Hell" in various Scripture texts quite early on. Hell, as Jesus described it, is a place of intense eternal torment, described in Scripture both as a place of outer darkness and a lake of fire. Hell is not the silence of the grave, nor is it the place where the souls of the reprobate dead immediately go after death. This synonymous translation of *Sheol* with Hell has led to a great amount of confusion such as is evidenced by the phrase, "He descended into Hell" that is found in various creeds such as the *Apostles Creed*. [497] In Ephesians 4:9 we read, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" While Christ descended to the earth in his incarnation, in his death and burial He descended into the lower parts of the earth or into *Sheol*.

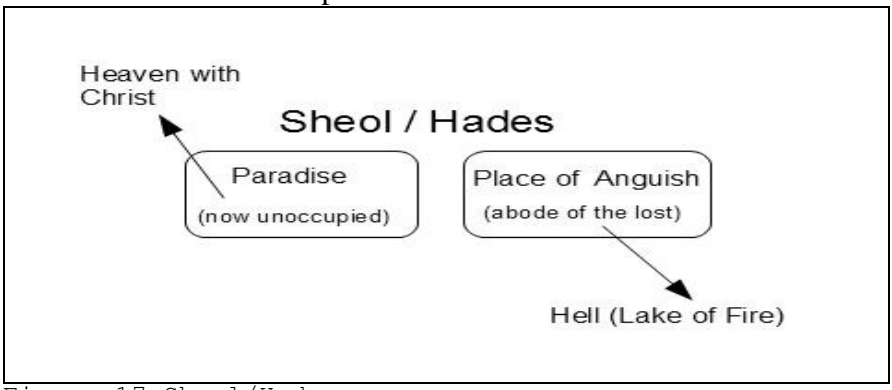

Figure 17 Sheol/Hades

Sheol was never intended to be a place to incarcerate the reprobate for eternity nor was it intended to be a purgatory[498] for saints to gain entry into heaven through works. *Sheol* was but a ***temporary*** place to hold the souls of the dead prior to them receiving final

[497] See The Apostles' Creed (ca. 150–724), page 108

[498] Purgatory, see page 228

judgment in the last days. *Sheol* was strictly segregated into two areas (see Figure 17, above); the first of which was a very pleasant place or paradise[499] that was reserved for the souls of Old Covenant saints, while the second area was a terrible place of anguish reserved for the souls of the reprobate, as they contemplated their future torment in Hell. We should take note that when Jesus hung on the cross, he told the believing thief that he would be with Him in paradise (Lu.23:43). The soul of the thief went to paradise where Christ was going that very day to release those souls of saints that were being held captive and to transport them heavenward in the train of his own ascension.

Today, the souls of those who die in Christ go directly into his presence in Heaven (cf. 2Co.5:8), while the souls of those who have not responded to his offer of redemption continue to go into the place of anguish in *Sheol*. There they must abide until a future day when they must stand before the great white throne to receive their final sentence based upon their works (See The Judgment of the Lost below).

The Resurrection of the Dead

The Scriptures also describe two distinct periods of resurrection as shown in Figure 18, below.

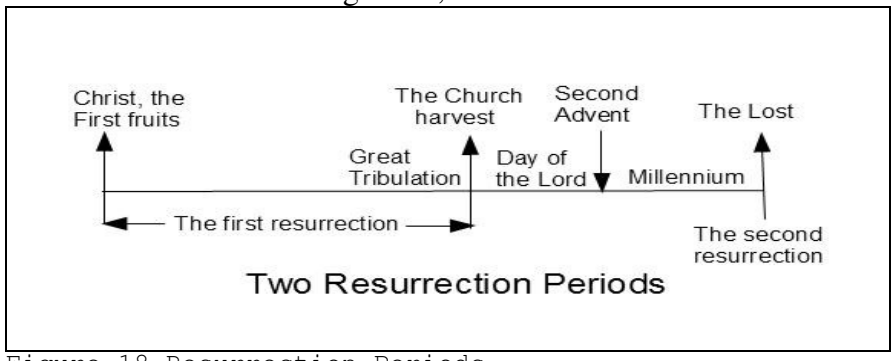

Figure 18 Resurrection Periods

The first resurrection encompasses an interval of time that is bound by two very significant events. This interval began with the

[499] This place was also referred to as Abraham's bosom by Jesus (Lu.16:22).

resurrection of Jesus Christ as he also brought many of the notable Old Testament Saints out of paradise to bodily ascend along with Him at that time (Mt.27:52,53). For the nearly two millennia following that time, paradise has remained unoccupied inasmuch as the souls of those who now die in Christ are escorted directly into his presence. There they immediately stand before his judgment seat to receive just rewards for those things that they have done for Him on earth while they were yet in mortal flesh (2Co. 5:8–10).

The concluding event of the first resurrection will occur as the souls of the great multitude who are presently with Christ return to earth to occupy their resurrected bodies as they rise up from the grave (1Th. 4:14,16). The bodies of those saints who are yet alive in the flesh at that time will likewise be translated into immortal flesh (1Th.4:17). Both groups of saints will then be caught up together to meet with Christ in the air as the true and complete Church. This first resurrection will also include all of those saints who will have died as martyrs during the tribulation period. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Re. 20:6).

The Judgment of the Lost

Following the Millennium, the second resurrection will take place. After Satan has been cast into the lake of fire (Hell), and the Kingdom is purged of all evil, there will be but one bit of unfinished business before the eternal ages of mankind can begin. The lost of all the ages must stand before Christ to receive the sentence of their final judgment. In Revelation 20 verses 11–15 we see the great white throne with Jesus Christ sitting upon it. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: (Jn.5:22).

Here we see the general resurrection of the lost: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God…"(Re.20:12). "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and [the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them…" (Re.20:13). We can ascertain from this text that the mortal bodies of the unsaved who have died will be restored to them so that they can stand before the great white throne.

Unlike those in Christ whose bodies will be translated into immortal flesh suitable for the permanency of eternity, no mention whatsoever is made regarding the bodies of the lost being translated in any way. What a terrible thing to have to stand before God in corrupt mortal flesh and know that every sin that you have ever committed is visible to his eyes.

"And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Re.20:12). The unsaved — whose names will not be found written in the book of life — will be judged from the books of their deeds.[500] All who have ever said that they could stand before God by virtue of their own works will be given that opportunity, but as we see it will only be to determine their punishment since all of fallen men's works are as filthy rags (cf. Is.64:6). We find, then, that as the saved are to be rewarded for their deeds performed for Christ in this mortal life, the unsaved will be judged for every evil deed they have committed without fail; the greater the sin, the greater the punishment. The more they benefited from their evil deeds, the more they must suffer. Nevertheless, even the best of the works of the unsaved will not prevent them from going into the place of eternal torment. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Re.20:15).

The Second Death in Hell

We also read in verse 14 of Revelation 20 that even "…death and [*Hades*] were cast into the lake of fire." Here we see that death and the grave, which had a hold over mortal bodies, will be cast into the lake of fire along with the resurrected lost. What we then see in the reference to the "lake of fire" is referred to as the "second death" (Re.20:6,14). The lake of fire is a place of eternal torment: "…and

[500] The redeemed will have been judged previously at the Judgment Seat of Christ where they will have been rewarded for the things that they have done in his Name in this mortal life — their names also having been found written down in the Lamb's Book of Life.

shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Re.20:10). We cannot foresee exactly what that "lake of fire" is like; no believer in Christ will ever experience it. No doubt, "fire" is but a metaphor of what the real torment will be like, and the word "lake" indicates the immensity — the depths — of the torment.

The lake of fire is what we should think of as "Hell." Jesus described Hell as a place of fire (Mt.18:9). Again in Mark 9:45, Jesus described Hell or Gehenna as a place where there is a "fire that never shall be quenched." And a place where "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mk.9:46). The word "worm" here probably refers to the maggot that attacks the flesh of the dead. That the "fire" is not actually a literal fire is seen in the further description of Hell as a place of "outer darkness" as we read in Mt.8:12, Mt 22:13, and again in Mt.25:30. This "fire" evidently does not give out any light. We read in those same verses in Matthew that "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" indicating intense conscious torment and suffering.

This is not a pretty picture — this picture of Hell that we find envisioned here. Hell will be a horrible place where the inhabitants will "burn" forever with the wrath of God, and will know no peace, no rest. It will be a place where their sins will continually "eat" at their flesh. A place where the light of God's grace will never shine. A place of torment where the lost will be fully separated from the love of God. Worse yet, each will know that the torment is just and would greatly desire to undo even one evil deed to reduce their punishment and know that they cannot. Worst of all, that lost condition cannot be reversed; there is no room for repentance; the lost will be abandoned in the outer darkness forever and ever… for all Eternity!

Nevertheless, for those who will never need to stand before the great white throne and whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life, a new day will begin that shall know no end. The Eternal Ages will commence in which those that are alive in Christ Jesus shall live forever with Him in his wondrous and boundless glory!

Chapter 20.8 The New Jerusalem and the Eternal Ages

At this point in the future, we find that Satan will have been cast into Hell. The lost also will have been judged before the great white throne and cast into Hell. All judgment of the earth will have been fully executed, and all opposition to God and his Christ will have been completely overthrown. All sin and temptation will be gone. Finally, death itself will be slain and cast away into Hell because it no longer serves any purpose. This wondrous condition will usher in a new era where all the things of the past will have no further relevance or purpose. God will make everything new (Re.21:5).

The End of Time

In a much earlier chapter of this work,[501] we defined time as a precise creation of God — created for the benefit of his creation and for mankind's express use in a mortal sphere of existence. "When Adam sinned, Adam died, and yet he lived. That is, Adam lived for a span of "time." In the many generations since Adam, each man has had his own day in the sun before his body returned to the elements from which it was made (Ge.3:19). For each man, God has established a span of time in which that man's eternal destiny can be resolved through reprobation or redemption… Time is the setting in which the redemption of mankind took place by God's grace alone." When the express purpose for time has been fulfilled, it will come to an end as all mankind, then existing in an immortal state, moves out of the finite sphere of time and space into the limitless expanses of eternity and infinity.[502]

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[501] See Chapter 3.1 God's Sovereignty over Time, *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity*, *Book I Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith*.

[502] Here we must note that unlike time, eternity has no beginning or end, nor does it have a past or future, but it is a never-ending all-encompassing present.

The Old Creation to be Dissolved

Thereafter, there will be no place for the old earth or the old heavens in a new eternal age. When time ends, the old earth and its heavens will melt, or dissolve when an intense heat overwhelms them. "…the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up" (2Pe.3:10). "…wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2Pe.3:12). We must realize that Peter is not talking about the Great Tribulation or even of God's wrathful trumpet judgments, or the bowls of wrath here, but he is talking about the end of time when the eternal era of mankind will begin. There will be no mortals living on the old earth when it is dissolved that they any may be destroyed along with it. The redeemed will be living with Christ in the eternal city that He prepared for his Elect, and the lost will be in the fiery lake of Hell where they must suffer the consequences of their sins forever.

Genesis of the New Creation

In Genesis 1:1 we read, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." God pronounced that creation good, but it was soon spoiled by Satan's rebellion and mankind's sin. Now that both have been dealt with, God intends to replace the genesis of old with the genesis of a new creation that is entirely free of sin and filled with righteousness. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away…" (Re.21:1). During the Millennium, the old earth was renovated and made to bloom like a rose following God's catastrophic Judgments. Even during the Millennium, however, the earth's basic structure remained much as it had before with continents and seas. The heavens though suffering a celestial upheaval at the time of Christ's return also remained much as they were before with the sun, moon and stars. As time ends and the eternal era of mankind begins, however, we find that the old earth and the old heavens must "pass away" to make way for a beautiful but radically new creation vastly different than the old one.

A New Heaven and a New Earth to be formed

The Apostle Peter described this new genesis with the following words, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwell righteousness" (2Pe.3:13). The old heavens and the old earth have had one long sad history of man's unrighteousness and of God's necessary judgment for their failure to comply with his will. Such remembrances shall have no place in the new eternal era. "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind" (Is.65:17). Only God's Word will span the gap between the old and new creation. As Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt.24:35).

Physical Laws to be Altered

We must try to understand as we continue this chapter that everything will be radically different in the eternal era. When time ends, many or all of the natural laws that govern this present earth and the universe in which it was placed will need to be altered or eliminated since nothing will any longer be governed by the restrictions of time. Light is closely related to time as are the physical laws related to travel and spatial distances. The vast changes that could come about as time ends are admittedly beyond mortal comprehension. Even the law of gravity will most likely be altered or eliminated when the old universe collapses and it is dissolved in a ball of flame. At that instant, God would need to institute new laws more suitable for governing the physical nature of his new creation replacing the old natural laws that once governed the old universe.

The New Earth to Have No Sea

It is quite interesting that we are told that the new earth will be created without any sea (Re.21:1). The old earth was about seventy-five percent covered with oceans, seas, lakes and rivers. In the ancient world, seas were often a source of turmoil and catastrophe. Huge storms, as well as invaders, often rolled on to land from the Mediterranean Sea. Even the small Sea of Galilee could at times be dangerous when strong winds whipped up the waves. Seas and rivers

have acted as barriers and, conversely, as highways. They have been a source of food, and they have also acted as a huge septic system.

There will be no huge storms bringing calamity (natural or manmade), no need of barriers to divide nations on the new earth, and there will be no need of a septic system either. The inhabitants of the new earth will live in glorified bodies that will not be subject to the old natural laws that had once governed their carnal bodies and will not even need water to drink. There will not be any need for the production of human food. In the Millennium, we saw that man had again become a vegetarian as was Adam and Eve in the first Eden, but in eternity there will be no continuing need for man to consume food of any kind to live.

Shape and Size of the New Earth

It is well to note, that we are not given the shape or dimensions of the new earth, which could be very large indeed to hold a huge population. Transportation problems will not exist since a lack of gravity, absence of time, and new spatial laws would make instantaneous transit possible anywhere on the new earth or well into the new heavens as well. The shape of the earth could very well be in the shape of a cube as is the New Jerusalem, which we shall now consider.

The New Jerusalem

With the formation of a new earth will come a new capital city replacing the Holy Jerusalem of the old creation that God had once established as his capital city on the old earth. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Re.21:2). Up to this time, the Church's abode has been in Heaven where she has been largely absent from the earth for 1000 years (during the Millennium).[503] Now she is visible in fine array coming down from

[503] The Church will have returned with Christ to judge the earth. However, the ***home*** of the Church will not be on earth during that time, but in the heavenly eternal city.

God out of Heaven. There can be no question that the Church is being referred to here because in Re.21:9, the angel makes it clear by referring to this new holy Jerusalem as being the Lamb's wife. We should understand that the Church is actually the inhabitant of the city while the visible aspects of the city is her outward adornment or "dress." That will be a fantastic sight, seeing "the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, having the Glory of God" (Re.21:10,11). Notice also the use of the word "wife" here; the marriage will have already taken place earlier — soon after the Church was transported into Heaven (Re.19:7–9).[504]

Shape and Dimensions of the City

While we are not given the size of the New Earth, we are given precise dimensions for the New Jerusalem. Since both the heavens and the earth will have been re-created out of no material that we could recognize, it is understandable that we, in this present temporal age, cannot fully comprehend the position, shape, or dimensions of the New Jerusalem. For instance, we are told that the city is foursquare with the length, breadth, and height each about 1500 miles (Re.21:16). That would appear to make the city in shape like a cube, which is very hard for us to comprehend. Some however have sought to envision this cube as dimensions taken inside a sphere (a little larger than the diameter of the moon or 2600 miles), hanging in space.[505]

The Centrality of the City

We are not ever told that the New Jerusalem will rest upon the new earth. Nor, are we specifically told that it will remain hanging in space. Nevertheless, we are told that "the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it" (Re.21:24). There is an implication here that the light of the city will illuminate the new earth at all times;

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[504] See chapter outline of Revelation, Chapter 19: The Marriage of the Lamb and the Second Advent, page 598

[505] J. Vernon McGee, See *Thru the Bible Radio*, volume 5, page 1071

therefore, it may be assumed that the new earth will revolve about it in space.

Physical Substance of the City

Even more difficult for us to comprehend is the physical substance of the New Jerusalem. It appears to be of a material substance in as much as it can be measured (Re.21:15). However, the exact substance escapes us since the city looks as if it is made of crystal and other transparent materials. Even the "golden streets" are not actually gold as we know that metal since it is "as it were transparent glass" (Re.21:21). Hanging over this whole description of the New Jerusalem is the feeling that we are again trying to look at supernatural things through carnal eyes. Indeed, we are. Nevertheless, we must remember that in that day, when we shall live in that celestial city, we shall be as different as it is. We shall be like Christ; this will be our home. We shall have no problem adjusting to it then.

The Exterior Walls and Gates

The city as John described it had "…a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (Re.21:12). The wall is obviously not there for protection from enemies, but for adornment. The wall itself was of clear crystal or diamond as we saw earlier, but it was tinted by the golden interior (Re.21:18). We are told that the street of the city is to be made of transparent gold (Re.21:21). The gates permit the entry of the children of Israel who will not live within the city but rather outside upon the new earth. The gates will be huge (1.5 to 6 miles across) as we discover by referring to the book of Ezekiel (Eze.48:30–35). We read that the gates are placed in four groups of three on the east, north, south, and west of the city. That arrangement is similar to that in which the Israelites camped about the Tabernacle in the days of their wilderness wanderings.

The Foundations of the City

Even the foundations of the city are described. "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Re.21:14). While the walls are made up of the lives of believers, the foundation itself is in twelve parts each part representing an apostle. Each of the foundations has a unique color (Re.21:19,20) just as each of the apostles provided a unique foundational contribution to the construction of the Church.

We may well wonder here about the Apostle Paul who was not one of the original twelve, nor was he numbered with the apostles, nor was he present on the day of Pentecost when the Church was born. Matthias, it will be recalled was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot (Ac.1:23–26). It must be realized that Matthias was clearly chosen to represent one of the twelve tribes of Israel to be a witness on the day of Pentecost. The Lord Himself much later chose Saul of Tarsus as an apostle to the ***Gentiles*** as one "born out of due time" (i.e. Paul; Ac.9:15,16;1Co.15:8). Therefore, we could reasonably assume that the foundations actually represent: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew (i.e. Nathanael), Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes, Jude, and Matthias (Ac.1:13). Of course, that would not diminish in any way the huge contribution that the Apostle Paul made as he built upon that Jewish foundation for the redemption of the Gentiles, and for which he received the crown of life.[506]

The City's Supernatural Attributes

From the description given of the Holy City in Chapter 21 of Revelation, we must understand that it is quite natural that we would have difficulty fully visualizing the city since it is an eternal city that is not built of ordinary stones, but of "living stones" that are its building blocks (1Pe.2:5). Paul spoke of the New Jerusalem when he said,

[506] Many very sound scholars including J. Vernon McGee disagree that Matthias is a part of that foundation inasmuch as there is no biblical reference to him having made any substantial contribution to the foundation of the Church.

"…we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Co.5:1).

Jesus said to individuals in the churches, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Re.2:17). Jesus also said, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my god, and he shall go no more out: and I shall write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name" (Re.3:12).

God to Supernaturally Supply All the City's Needs

The Shekinah glory was once present in the earthly Jerusalem, but departed because of the sins of the city's inhabitants. It was restored only during the time when Christ reigned for one thousand years. Now the visible glory of God will reside in the New Jerusalem forever! This glory is in appearance like a huge crystal or diamond as the light hits it except that the light actually comes from within.

We read that John saw no Temple within the city (Re.21:22). The old Temple was a representation of Christ and will no longer be appropriate in as much as the real Temple (i.e. Jesus Christ Himself) will be in eternal residence there. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Re.21:23). Night shall never fall upon that city as God Himself continually illuminates it with his glory (Re.21:25). There will be no sun or moon needed to light the interior or surfaces of the city.

The River of Life

As we turn to Revelation Chapter 22, we find that there is "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Re.22:1). We find that all may partake freely of the "water of life" whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life and who therefore live there. The "tree of life" will also be

there on either side of the river, and beside the street of the Eternal City (Re.2:2). The "tree of life" was first seen in Genesis as it was growing in Eden: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Ge.3:22,23). Therefore, we know that the fruit of that tree provides eternal life. Even the leaves of the tree will be used for continual healing of the nations that remain upon the new earth (Re.22:2).

No More Curse

In the Eternal City, "…there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (Re.22:3,4). No more curse! Adam's fallen race will be no more, but the Lord Jesus' resurrected race (His new creation in his blood) will live forever! We shall joyfully worship God, see his face, and enjoy his presence for all eternity! "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Re.22:5)!

No More Tears or Sorrows

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Re.21:4). This is what Heaven will be like! We may not be able to comprehend it all, but we can understand no death, no sorrow, no crying, and no pain. Those are the things that now plague us every day of our lives here on this earth. In Heaven, it will have all passed away with the former things.

Life in Eternity

While much is said regarding Hell in the Scriptures, very little is said of Heaven that exists in Eternity[507] except in the book of Revelation. Remember however that Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And wither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (Jn.14:1–4).

That leaves us with many questions about Heaven and about the redeemed in relationship to it. We can clearly see that the Elect Church will reside in the New Jerusalem along with Jesus Himself. The "mansion" or "abiding place" that Jesus is preparing for his own must be in the New Jerusalem.

Even so, there will be a large population upon the new earth as well in the Eternal Ages. Those men and women will have come through the Millennium and will constitute a Jewish population plus a great number of Gentiles. They are not part of the Church, having come to faith in God after the Church was removed from the earth, but we discovered that the New Jerusalem will have gates through which they may enter the New Jerusalem to worship God and then return again to their land. Likewise, it would be inconceivable that the members of the Church would not also be able to come and go from the New Jerusalem, which is their residence. The Church will reign with Christ over all creation from the New Jerusalem.

Renewing Earthly Acquaintances in Heaven

It is often wondered if we will meet and know the ones we have known and loved down here when we get to Heaven. We know that although we shall be changed physically, we will not lose our individual personalities inasmuch as our souls will remain our own.

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[507] Heaven and Hell were both discussed in the context of essential doctrines earlier in Book I of this work within Chapter 8.3 *Doctrine of Death and Resurrection.*.

Furthermore, all believers will be in substance like Christ "for we shall see Him as He is" (1Jn.3:2). Just as Jesus was recognizable to the apostles in his physical body after his resurrection, so would we also be recognizable to each other in our resurrection bodies. Even after our glorification, in which our resurrected bodies would be further enhanced, our basic personalities will remain the same. Therefore, we will most certainly recognize prior friends, and relatives in Heaven.

Neither will we have any more differences in thought or theology with those we may have known as mortals on earth. Then, "we shall know as we are fully known" (1Co.13:12). Hence, there will no longer remain any jealousy between us, nor will there be intellectual conflicts of any kind. Truly, it will be easier to live with the "saints above" than with the saints we live with here on earth, because we will all have been fully translated into a new eternal state of being.

Spousal Relationships in Heaven

We must realize that we shall experience a different relationship with our spouses in Heaven than we once had here on earth. Just as we shall have been changed (translated) into the new creation, so shall they also have been changed. We in fact realize that there will be no need for spousal relationships in Heaven because there will no longer be any need for the procreation of the race of mankind in eternity. Jesus said that in Heaven man would be as the angels,[508] which are neither male nor female (Mt.22:30).

In Heaven, all of our personal relationships with each other will directly hinge upon our relationship with Jesus Christ as the Son of God. We shall all be in the same position of being the sons of God whether we were men or women in our mortal lives. That is why Paul said that there is no male or female in Christ (Ga.3:27,28). In the same verse, Paul also said that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is

[508] As mentioned before, Jesus was not saying that men and women would be converted from physical into spirit beings in Heaven. That would deny the resurrection of the dead.

neither bond nor free…for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Ga.3:28). It is the Christian's unity in Christ that truly makes us one with each other.

Consequently, the most wonderful thing of all about Heaven will be our intimate relationship with God. At last, we shall see God on the throne in all his majesty. We shall see Jesus face-to-face as He really is and will share with Him the inheritance of all his vast creation. "…And so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1Th.4:17). There can be no more severance of man from his Creator. God and man will finally subsist eternally in perfect harmony within Christ as we go about to serve Him.

Eternal Occupation in Heaven

That brings us to another important question. Will we be idle in Heaven? Will we just loaf around as bodiless spirits on clouds and learn to play harps? This is the strange picture that many have of man's life in Heaven. However, man was created as a physical being so that he could accomplish meaningful work in a physical environment. God already had the angels, who are created spirit beings, when Adam was created. Man was created by God to perform a specific purpose in a physical universe. The fall of man has prevented God's physical creation from fulfilling his ultimate purpose within the confines of time because of prevailing sin both in ourselves and in the world about us.

In this life, we must sleep in order to renew our strength for another day. In Heaven, we will have immortal physical bodies that will not ever grow old or get tired. There will be no relentless process of time working on us to take its toll. For that reason we see that there will be no need of night there in which man can sleep; it will no longer be needed. We can only imagine living in a body that is always in peak condition and is always ready to do our bidding. We accomplish so few things in this life because our bodies are simply not up to it. We have considerable physical and mental limitations as well. We grow tired, and various illnesses and pain limit our capacity to work. In our new immortal body, all such limitations will have been removed.

In Eternity, redeemed man will finally be able to fulfill that high standard and calling of God. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ep.2:10). In Heaven we will be able to produce wondrous and creative works that will both glorify God and fulfill our own need for satisfying accomplishment. There will be no fear of failure in us as we go about our tasks since we will know no physical or intellectual restraints to hinder our work in the Heavenly Realm. Worshiping God, and serving Him will not be some dull ritual or boring ceremony; it will be very productive, very exciting, and perpetually satisfying to our souls. There indeed we shall "fully glorify God and enjoy Him forever!"[509]

[509] Quotation taken from *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, Response to Question 1: "What is the chief and highest end [purpose] of man?"

Author's Postscript

At last, this work over which I have labored for nearly three decades is completed. I suppose there is little more that could be said although it has been difficult to determine where to leave the historic dialog concerning the rapid changes in current events that must eventually hurl us toward the end times. It indeed has been a difficult and arduous struggle, and not always one to my own liking inasmuch as strictly holding to a comprehensively reformed view of the Christian faith based solely upon Scripture has so often separated me from close fellowship with others of the visible Church whose views remain largely traditional.

It must be understood that I am speaking directly here in this final annotation only to you who make up the body of the elect — those who have truly accepted Christ, who also have been accepted in Him, and who make up the living organism of the visible Church — whether we are in full agreement in all doctrinal matters or not. It was my intent from the beginning to be as candid as possible, but in presenting my own views, I may often have come across as being far too dogmatic. "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Ga.4:16). If I have unnecessarily offended any of you by being too forceful in this work, please forgive me. I have written nothing in anger, but only out of a sincere desire to inform and aid you.

No doubt, many among you will believe that I have gone too far in extending biblical reform, while I have at times been greatly concerned that I may have failed to root out deeply imbedded erroneous traditions and dogmas to the extent that I should have. Traditional errors are so insidious that they repeatedly creep into our thoughts. Indeed, it is highly probable that this endeavor must be repeatedly taken up in the future by still other believers within the visible Church as they continue to apply biblical standards to the drifting orthodoxy of the day in which they live.

I sincerely believe that the reformers of old and I would find little disagreement regarding the essential doctrines discussed in Book I of this work — though there would undoubtedly be a few small areas

on the fringes eliciting intense discussion. The many extreme and unscriptural dogmas, ceremonies, and rituals, as well as the distortion of valid traditions that were discussed in the second book of this work are the primary source of much of the strife that has separated true Christian believers from each other for so many centuries.

I trust that we have satisfactorily disclosed the source and background of many of the more egregious errors and abuses of tradition within the historic dialog found in the first half of this last book. When we can all finally bring ourselves to abandon blind acceptance of tradition based upon its supposed infallibility founded upon its antiquity and instead conform all rituals and practices to Scripture alone, we shall find that we will have torn down many of the barriers that we have allowed to be built up between us over time. Those barriers were mostly erected by rigid religionists out of a fleshly desire to spice up profoundly unadorned Christianity into a garish religion based upon vain works arising out of conformance to explicit man-made conventions and ritual mysticism. As we seek to tear aside all faulty traditions, rituals, ceremonies and other religious dogmas that have so long divided us, we shall soon discover that those crutches to our faith were more often veils over the eyes of our minds that had blinded us to an anticipated apprehension of Truth. Rather than being an aid to our faith, they were actually a fleshly impediment to us as we sought to move upward toward a highly desirable state of spiritual maturity.

In the last half of this book, I was faced with the terrifying necessity of directly and candidly discussing the highly controversial doctrines of the last days lest the overall view of God's work would appear to end midstream, and I should fail to consider the prophetic teaching of Scripture as a whole. Although I am intellectually comfortable with the approach taken and the conclusions reached throughout this work regarding various specifics of eschatology, it is perhaps the most difficult subject of all about which to be very confident in minute detail. Therefore, rather than take up dogmatic viewpoints and automatically oppose all other views in that complex controversy, as many among us have, we need to candidly and openly discuss the doctrines of the last days throughout the entire cross-

section of the visible Church so that varying opinion can no longer divide us into warring camps.

In the last days, Scripture warns us of a great religious delusion of the antichrist that will overcome the temporal church such that the intense Churchianity that the delusion fosters would be capable of deceiving the very elect — if that were at all possible (cf. Mt.24:24). I remain confident that that is not possible. When candidly analyzing the Churchianity of today, one must wonder if we are not already deep within the dark grasp of that ultimate delusion. Unfortunately, even we, the body of the elect, have not yet reached that state of spiritual maturity wherein the visible Church is firmly unified within the one true faith even after nearly two thousand years of its existence. The loud persistent voice of Churchianity has all but overwhelmed the simplicity of the profound message of the wondrous Gospel.

Dogmatic traditionalists still residing within the elect remnant find it very difficult to extend the Christian reformation effort to its necessary conclusion since to do so would require them to break out of their comfortable religious paradigm that has been successfully reinforced through the predominant Churchianity of the temporal church. Nonetheless, that is exactly what they and we must do together in order to unite the shrinking Christian remnant of the elect for the formidable trials that lay ahead of us prior to the end of the age of grace even as we expectantly await the trumpet call of Jesus Christ to join Him in the air. As the terrible ordeals that precede that call come upon us, we cannot afford to remain alienated from each other.

Churchianity has long been championed by the unbeliever as a way to attain salvation through mortal church works — a hopeless impossibility as we have seen. Fallen man is all too satisfied to polish the ornaments of religious ritual that have been handed down to him through tradition rather than look directly into the face of God because of their justifiable fear of Him. However, God has invited those whom He has chosen for Himself to directly seek his face (cf. Ps.27:8), to search Him out through the eyes of faith, to approach Him as our loving Father through Jesus Christ, to truly worship Him in Spirit and in Truth with unabashed simplicity of mind that lacks any human contrivance or invention (cf. Jn.4:23).

No mountain, no temple, no ritual, no ceremony need any longer separate God from his elect or us from Him (cf. Jn.4:21; Re.21:22,23). The veil of corrupt mortal flesh that once separated man and God has been rent asunder forever in the death of Christ (Mt.27:51). "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh…let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (He.10:19,20,22).

Unity of the Christian faith does not rest in the "when", "how", or "what" of religious ritual. It rests only in "whom" — Christ Jesus in whom we have all believed and to whom we all belong. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Ro.14:7,8).

Inasmuch as it is no longer possible for the elect, both individually and collectively as the visible Church, to be separated from God, it must follow that the elect must not allow themselves to be separated in any way from each other but become one in thought and purpose as we together seek to attain to the mind of Christ. Jesus prayed for that very thing in his high priestly prayer on the night before his crucifixion, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (Jn.17:22).

The Apostle John said, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1Jn.4:10,11). Our love for others in the Body of Christ is not an option that we can disregard based upon our personal dislike for various activities of individual believers that stem from their lack of mature spiritual knowledge. Love is in fact an undeniable consequence of our common salvation in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn.13:34,35).

When we think of Jesus' great love for his apostles and his other disciples who so often demonstrated their own ignorance of theology, doctrine, and practice in his very presence, we find a basis for our own unconditional love for other believers living among us that have not yet attained an unquestioned level of spiritual maturity.

As elect Christians, we must not seek so much to win doctrinal arguments that only elevate our own pride and destroys Christian fellowship, as we should seek to edify and build up the faith of the weaker vessels among us. Admittedly, this requires much prayer and patience. Doctrinal differences among the elect are mainly built upon ignorance and misinterpreted personal experience, not upon intent to perpetuate error. To remedy that prospect, God in days past had first given us his Word through the prophets and finally He gave us his beloved Son who chose his apostles through whom we have received the Holy Scriptures of the new covenant upon which the firm knowledge of our faith rests.

Therefore, our love for other believers in the visible Church should not and cannot be built upon a feeling that we do or do not have for them personally, but upon the trust and love we have in and for Christ whom we all share in common. Christ truly loves them all since we realize that He gave his life for them as surely as He gave his life for us. If He loved them so much that He died for them, shouldn't we also love them as fellow sinners who were redeemed along side us within his own body on the cross?

Admittedly, nothing can be more trying at times than to associate with fellow believers who are within various stages of sanctification on the long march to spiritual maturity. Love is often heavy work because we are still in the flesh, and we still carry our old nature along with us in all our associations. We so easily offend others in word and deed, and are easily offended ourselves (cf. Ja.3:2). Nevertheless, true Christian love is founded in a firm resolve to unconditionally love other believers based upon our common fellowship with Christ and nothing else. We must allow the love of Christ to transcend all of our petty annoyances and differences of which there are often many.

We must realize that spiritual maturity comes about through a gradual, lengthy, and difficult process; it is not created in us fully developed at the time of our spiritual birth. If we only depend upon emotional feelings toward other believers, we may find that it is impossible for us to drum up any love for them at all. That is because we only seek a fleshly kind of counterfeit love that will satisfy our own egos, when we should instead determine to love other Christians for Jesus' sake alone regardless of the cost to ourselves.

The Apostle Paul said, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth" (Ro.14:4). God alone has the right and the authority to judge his own servants, certainly not any of us. Furthermore, God is able to make even the weakest servant among us to serve Him in the way that He sees fit (cf. Ro.14:4). How, then, dare we judge other elect believers over trivial matters of performance? We, the elect, shall all individually be called upon to give an account to God of our ***own*** deeds that we carried out upon the earth, not the deeds of others (cf. Ro.14:10). We should instead concentrate on putting away pride and error from our own minds lest we become completely blind to the Truth. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Mt.7:3).

Rather than disputing with our brother, we should instead be very careful not to put our own personal opinions and actions in our brother's way with the intended purpose to trip him up (cf. Ro.14:15; 1Co.8:9), for what account will we give to Christ for having done so? "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ" (1Co.8:12). We should diligently seek only to help our brother, and in particular our weaker brother, to serve the master in the very special way that God has uniquely equipped him (cf. Ro.15:2).

If a true believer does a particular thing in sincere and reasonable service to God, can it be evil in itself? Not if such action is truly in God's will for ***him or her***. Yet, if we, by diligently abiding by our own conscience and thoughts, offend a weaker brother in Christ can that ever be right? "For even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me"

(Ro.15:3). "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Ro.15:1). We should always seek the edification — the progression into Truth — of our weaker brother (cf. Ro.15:2). We should not seek to tear him down just because he is yet ignorant of the whole sphere of Truth, but make every effort to carefully and lovingly build him up in the basic essentials of the faith. If we truly love them, we will not merely tolerate them in their ignorance, but seek to assist them and to build them up in the Truth even as others have patiently worked to build us up in the past. Do we truly love the Lord? Then, we are to both love and ***feed*** his sheep (Jn.21:15–17)! Having done so, we must let God do the rest as the Holy Spirit works within them to renew their minds.

Let every man serve God through the dictates of a good conscience, realizing that all judgment is ultimately of God. Let us carefully make up our own minds regarding those things that are not clear to everyone among us, but let no man despise another Christian for variations in thought concerning matters about which the Scriptures are not clear or are silent. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Ro.15:4). Since we share in that one same hope with all believers, should we not, then, praise God with one voice, and with patience and temperance accept those differences in ministration that God has willed of his servants until we all come to perfect knowledge (cf. Ro.15:5,6; 1Co.13:12)?

Nevertheless, while one man is often called upon to minister in a different way than another, he must not while performing that service intentionally deviate from the one true Faith that has drawn so many of us from various backgrounds, tongues, and customs to the one true God in the Body of Christ. There can be only one Truth. Paul spoke of having tolerance of those who have not yet come to a full understanding of that Truth, but not of those who knowingly and deliberately compromise the Truth with falsehoods. Those he strongly condemned. The essentials of Christianity center on Christ: who He is and what He has accomplished in the redemption of mankind. Of those things, we can and must be emphatic, for God's Word is

inflexible concerning those essential doctrines. Without the core doctrines, as was discussed in Book I of this work, our faith falls apart; but regarding rituals, ceremonies, various observances, ministries, and other minor details let us not quarrel among ourselves.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Re.19:7–9). Are you truly in the visible Church — have you betrothed yourself to Him? Both "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Re.22:17).

And now, my fellow beloved in Christ, I must bring this tome to and end and bid you all farewell. Remember to cling tightly to the wondrous Truth made so evident in God's Word — being careful not to add to it nor take anything away — that we may all one day attain true unity in the Faith. May the unshakable substance of your hope rest in the evidence of your ever-persistent faith even as the Holy Spirit comforts you and assures you of the life to come. May the Lord Jesus carry you on the wings of his abundant grace until that great day when we shall all meet together in sinless resurrected bodies to behold Him in all his glory and worship Him together in concert with one unified voice as the redeemed children of the living God. To that end, Amen.

Arthur J. Smith, 2008–2010

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