

FREE

A Twelve Tribes Freepaper

*The
Mystery
of the*
**BLACK
BOX**

*Like the
"black box"
of a crashed
airplane,
the Bible
tells the story
of the rise
and fall of the
first century
church.*

The **BLACK** **BOX** FREEPAPER



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THE BLACK BOX

First Love

Have you ever wondered why the church today is not the same as it was when it first began? The first few chapters of the Book of Acts are filled with the wonder and excitement of the vibrant life of love and sharing that resulted from the apostles' first preaching, and the miraculous ways the Holy Spirit worked through the apostles to establish the first communities of faith:

Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon

them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

(Acts 4:32-35)

What happened? Where did that life of genuine love and unity go?

Many Christians say that it was merely the short-lived, immature zeal of the first believers, or the peculiar circumstances of that time and place that caused them to live so closely together, and not the result of obedience to the teachings of the Messiah. As the Christian faith matured, so they say, believers ceased to live together in community.

But is it not more consistent with human nature that the followers of a great teacher would *drift* from his teachings, rather than growing more faithful to them over time? Surely the first disciples of Yahshua,* the Messiah, who had lived with Him and sat under His teaching, and who were witnesses of His resurrection,

and who had received His last instructions concerning the Kingdom of God¹ — surely they would have been diligent to put His teachings into practice just as soon as the Holy Spirit came upon them in power for that very purpose. After all, their Master had promised that this Holy Spirit they were to receive would bring to their remembrance all that He had said to them.² Indeed, the church that was born on the day of Pentecost was the first fruits of the Spirit, and surely the nature of that fruit would not change unless the tree itself grew sick.

Tragically, that is exactly what happened. In time the churches did drift away from the original foundation and pattern of life that the apostles had established.³ In fact, most of the New Testament is a documentary of this drifting process, of which the church in Ephesus is a case study.⁴ The Apostle Paul ended his warm but commanding letter to the church in Ephesus with this blessing:

Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. (Ephesians 6:24)

*The Hebrew name of the Son of God; see *What's in a Name*, page 82 ¹Acts 1:2-8 ²John 14:26 ³1 Corinthians 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:15 ⁴Acts 19:1-41; 20:17-38; all of Ephesians; 1 & 2 Timothy; and Revelation 2:1-7 are all about the church in Ephesus. A *case study* is a detailed study of the development of a particular person, group, or situation over a period of time; a particular instance of something illustrating a thesis or principle.





During the next few years Paul wrote two letters to his disciple Timothy, who was then overseeing the church in Ephesus, with many urgent warnings to them to beware of false teachers and the subtle deception of material comforts.⁵ But thirty years later the church in Ephesus received this chilling rebuke from Messiah Himself:

I have this against you: that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. (Revelation 2:4-5)

Their first love for their Master and for one another, which had expressed itself in a commonwealth⁶ in which their very lives were knit together,⁷ had been corrupted, abandoned after little more than a generation. All that remained was a doctrinally correct but almost lifeless husk. There was only a little glimmer of light left, fading fast, and soon Messiah Himself would come like a thief in the night⁸ and take away their extinguished lampstand, if they did not quickly repent and do the works they had done at first. Those *first works* had been the result of their *first love*, which resulted in the *first life* described so vividly in Acts 2 and 4, which was the *first light* of the church.⁹

The Black Box

Remember therefore from where you have fallen... (Revelation 2:5)

Like a plane that lost power and fell short of its prophetic destination, the first-century church gradually lost altitude as their love waned, making a crash landing not far into the second century. The letter of James, written early in the second century, gives the grim picture of a scattered church consumed with pride, devoid of compassion, riddled with jealousy and backbiting, and driven by lust for wealth, power, and pleasure. Then there is silence. The New Testament ends.¹⁰ The plane crashed.

To be sure, Christianity continued on, growing into the great world religion that it is today, but its nature was drastically different from the church that was established by the apostles. It was no longer on the rock of the revelation that Yahshua is the Messiah, the anointed one sent by the Father to command obedience to His Word.¹¹ Therefore, the gates of the unseen realm, the realm of darkness,

overtook the church. [See "Upon this Rock," on the next page.]

When a plane has crashed, there is normally a great urgency to recover the flight recorder from the wreckage. Commonly called the *black box*, the flight recorder is an almost indestructible device that records cockpit conversations and critical flight data. Investigators are eager to study the data contained in the black box, hoping it will shed light on the cause of the crash and show how to avoid similar disasters in the future.

The Bible, especially the New Testament, is the "black box" for the "flight" of the first-century church. It has proven to be indestructible, miraculously preserved through the perilous centuries. To the discerning eye, it documents the decline of the church and reveals the reasons for its demise. In the first century, the apostle Paul wrote these words to the church in reference to the fall of old Israel:

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. (Romans 11:21-22)

Fallen, Fallen

Early in Paul's ministry he fully expected Yahshua to return in his lifetime,¹² ushering in the end of the age and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, but later it became clear to him that he would not live to see that day.¹³ As the years went by the warnings in his letters to the churches grew more urgent, for he saw them departing from the foundation

⁵ 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 4:1-3,6,7; 6:3-10,20,21; 2 Timothy 2:14-18,23-26; 3:1-5; 4:3-4 ⁶ Ephesians 2:12 ⁷ Ephesians 4:15-16 ⁸ Just as for the church in Sardis, in Revelation 3:1-3 ⁹ John 1:4 ¹⁰ Although it does not appear last in the printed order of the New Testament, the letter of James is last chronologically, following the Book of Revelation. (Oddly, some scholars date it much earlier, about ten years after the church began, but it is unthinkable that the church would be in that condition so soon.) ¹¹ Matthew 16:15-18 ¹² 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 ¹³ 2 Timothy 4:6-8

he had laid,¹⁴ being led astray by charismatic, self-proclaimed apostles¹⁵ who peddled a more appealing gospel¹⁶ that made room for their fleshly appetites.¹⁷ Finally, all that remained was a form of godliness that lacked the power of love, for they were no longer drawing life from the root Paul had spoken of.¹⁸

So the axe was laid at the root of that fallen tree, just as it had been in the days of John the Baptist, cutting off the fruitless branches of old Israel.¹⁹ Twice fallen, just as the chilling judgment is pronounced in the book of Revelation:

***Fallen, fallen** is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her,*

and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living. (Revelation 18:2-3)

Just as Paul had forewarned,²⁰ and just as had happened to old Israel,²¹ the betrothed virgin had become a harlot, and the last 1900 years of history tell the lurid and bloody tale of her immoralities.

The Restoration of All Things

However, history also tells of courageous souls over the centuries who longed for a restoration of the church as it was in the beginning. None of their brave attempts actually succeeded in restoring all things as the prophets foretold²² must happen in order for Messiah to return. Yet, as William Bradford expressed in his bittersweet memoirs of Plymouth

Plantation, they were stepping stones for those who would come after them.²³

For there must be a people who will restore all things, fulfilling the words of the prophets, thus bringing an end to this wicked age and the return of Yahshua, the Messiah, to establish His reign of peace on the earth. There must be a people who will learn from the lessons of old Israel, and from the lessons of the first-century church, and overcome where they failed. The hope of that restoration was vividly expressed by a wise man who lived long ago:

For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:10 ¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 11:3-5,13-15 ¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 2:17 ¹⁷ 2 Timothy 3:1-7
¹⁸ Romans 11:17 (see also John 15:5) ¹⁹ Matthew 3:10; 21:43 ²⁰ 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 ²¹ Isaiah 1:21 ²² Mark 9:12; Isaiah 49:6; Ecc'cus 48:10 ²³ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, Chapter 4, Paragraph 5 (1647).*

“Upon this Rock”

*Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

Many have quoted this verse to prove the impossibility of the gates of Hades (the realm of the dead) prevailing against the church. They assume that regardless of the spiritual and moral condition of the church, God has never withdrawn His Holy Spirit from her, for a body without a spirit is dead, and that would mean the gates of death had prevailed against the church. But this is not what Yahshua was promising to Peter that day.

What Yahshua confirmed in Peter was that he was hearing from the Father – receiving revelation – not merely repeating what other men might have said. Peter had heard in his heart that Yahshua was the Messiah, and that revelation caused him to pledge his utter devotion and obedience to Him. Now that was something Yahshua could work with – people who could hear from His Father and obey what they heard. Upon such revelation He could build an eternal dwelling place for His Father’s Spirit, for that, after all, is what the church is supposed to be.

The Master said things like this to His disciples many times, such as in this familiar passage:

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. (Matthew 7:24-27)

Hearing and obeying is the foundation of the house that will endure all that comes against it, and wise is the man who builds on that rock. But foolish is the man who builds his house on those who hear but do *not* obey. That house will not withstand the test. The floods of deception and the shifting winds of doctrine will prevail against that house.

So was Yahshua the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, a wise man or a foolish man? Was He contradicting Himself by saying that the house He was building would endure

in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth sprigs like a young plant.
(Job 14:7-9)

We believe that sprig is sprouting now, producing the same life that sprang forth on the day of Pentecost almost 2,000 years ago. Or to switch back to the other metaphor, we have discovered the blueprints of the original plane, and we are building according to that pattern using the right materials, under the direction of the original Designer. We are paying careful attention to the transcript of the "black box" of the original flight that crashed long ago so that we can stay on course and reach our prophetic destination.

And we are searching earnestly for all those who want to come aboard and fly with us. 🌱



regardless of whether it was built on the foundation of hearing and obeying His words?

Many years later, in the waning days of the first-century church, the writer of Hebrews said these words to the church:

But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house – whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. (Hebrews 3:6)

The Greek word translated as "confidence" literally means freedom in speaking; unreservedness in speech. It is an outspokenness that comes from the confidence that one is hearing and obeying Messiah's words. Such outspokenness characterized the gatherings of the early church, when they were devoted to the apostles' teachings, but as the first century drew to a close and the churches were drifting from the simplicity of their first devotion, their gatherings degenerated to rote ritual and a professional clergy. That is the record of history. So were they still "His house" in spite of Hebrews 3:6?

Here is another promise the Master made to His disciples:

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him... If anyone loves me, he will keep My word, and My

Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (John 14:21,23)

Those who truly love Him obey Him, and He reveals Himself to them, which causes them to love and obey Him all the more. It is with such as these that He makes His home. He went on to say, "Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words." What can be said about them? Are they also His dwelling place? 🌱

If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed.
(1 Corinthians 16:22)





The Crash

The worst airline crash in history happened when a 747 failed to get off the ground. Instead, it hit another jumbo jet and exploded in a cataclysm of ruin. The full tanks of jet fuel were the final, lethal touch for most of those who survived the impact. The runway became a nightmare landscape of death and fire. The Canary Islands are still remembered for this tremendous crash of the planes that never made it off the runway.¹

There was an even more consequential crash long ago. Like this one, it spread death, fire, and ruin wherever it touched. Unlike this one it was the crash of a once mighty movement of individuals, not of gigantic airplanes. The ruin of the jumbo jets was very public, irretrievable, and final. They couldn't be repaired and put back into service. They were so much scrap when the fires were out, and so many painful memories of lives suddenly, senselessly ended.

The crash of the original movement begun by Yahshua, the Messiah, and His apostles was no less cataclysmic, and for

those who witnessed it, the tragedy was no less final. The engines of self-denying, sacrificial love had flamed out. That "airplane" would not fly again in their lifetime. Someday, somehow, it would have to be restored to the spiritual greatness it had attained before the crash.

It would have been much better then if the survivors had gone home and left the scene of the wreckage behind. But they didn't, and something different and strange happened to the twisted and charred pieces of the movement. It was as if the various pieces of the wreckage, disconnected from one another as they were, mysteriously took on a life of their own. But it was a life alien to the life of the movement that had once begun to soar.

Gone were the days when each person's voice mattered. No more could God speak through the least, but only the greatest. Or perhaps these eloquent, learned men had another motive than that of the first passengers. The new "faith" delivered to the new "saints" was doctrine and ritual.²

If anyone could have seen their true condition – seen into the spiritual realm – they would have seen the flaming wreckage strewn over the historical landscape. They would have discerned that persuasive speakers were preaching a new and deadly message. Lots of the old words were kept, but it didn't produce a radical life of caring and sharing. It was a mysticism that separated the material from the "spiritual" realm — what mattered was not the external expression, but only the "inner man." Faith was divorced from the works of love it had once produced.

It was a much more popular message, although its implications soon became clear: everyone *had* to accept their lot in life, not expecting anyone to sacrifice his riches to lift his brother out of poverty. Their physical circumstances didn't really matter. If many people's needs went unmet while others had an abundance, why, that was evidently "the will of God." Didn't it say somewhere that "the poor were rich in faith"?

¹ A KLM airlines 747 crashed into a Pan American 747 on the runway in Santa Cruz de Tenerife on March 27, 1977, killing 583 people.

² Earle E. Cairns writes in *Christianity Through the Centuries*, p. 83, that as early as the middle of the second century [around AD 150], worship consisted of several readings from epistles and the prophets, a homily [sermon] by the "president," responsorial prayer by the people, the Lord's supper, and collection of the offering, which was followed by dismissal of the people to their homes. The people were silenced, conquered, as it is to this very day. (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan)

³ [Speaking of the church after the first century...]"The Church can no longer consider herself the receptacle of pure souls only. The danger of that notion has become all too clear. She grows into a Church that accepts being a mixture." (G. Guitton, *Great Heresies and Church Councils*, Harper and Row, Publishers, p. 71, 72)

⁴ "Between the years AD 100 and AD 500, the Christian Church changed almost beyond recognition... [At first] the organization of the church was still fluid... there were no creeds to be recited, no set forms of worship... [By AD 500] the worship of the church was entirely liturgical with fixed, set forms of prayer..." (Tony Lane, *The Lion Book of Christian Thought*, Lion Publishing Company, Batavia, Illinois, 1984, p. 8)

⁵ Some say such things are still happening today, while others say it was just in the bad old days. They were pretty bad, too. Charlemagne, for instance, killed one quarter of the Saxon population of northern Europe. All the rest were persuaded they should believe as he did. Others took note of this message's effectiveness: "baptism or death" was short and "to the point." No fine points of doctrine to confuse people. Anybody could understand it, even if they spoke another language! Whole nations and continents became Christian as this message spread from Europe to Central and South America.

⁶ "The Dark Age church merely developed Augustine's teaching [of the just war]. Leo IV said that anyone dying in battle for the defense of the Church would receive a heavenly reward; John VIII thought that such a person would even rank as a martyr." (Paul Johnson, *History of Christianity*, Atheneum, New York, 1976, p. 242)

The startling contrast between the way of the believers and the way of the world around them faded. The church opened her doors to rich and poor, moral and immoral, but unlike the first days, they remained rich and poor, moral and immoral.³ The only startling contrast left was the contrast to the way the church had begun.⁴ Being different from the world brought suspicion upon you, which was becoming a more and more dangerous thing to do.

The one they had first called "Master" had said amazing words about laying down the sword and not fighting the kingdoms of this world with the weapons of this world. By the fourth century,

love was defined as taking up the sword. In no time they filled the ranks of the military and the halls of government. They spread fire and death wherever "love" called them to go. They even spread their "faith" in this way.⁵ Dying in such causes became a way to eternal happiness.⁶ So powerful was their new persuasion that those who still read what the Master actually said and wanted to be true to Him were persecuted for "disobeying" Him. Those who *didn't* live by the sword would now die by the sword. ♣



The Olive Tree: a Parable



Once there was a farmer who planted an olive tree in his garden. He carefully watched over the tender green shoot, watering it and pulling the weeds that threatened to choke the life out of it. As it grew into a proud tree, he anticipated the day when it would begin to bear its precious fruit in abundance.

Outside the garden grew a wild olive tree. It did not receive the care that the gardener lavished on the cultivated olive tree. Its branches were scrawny, its leaves small, but in its wild and haphazard way it produced a steady but sparse crop of small, bitter olives.

As the cultivated olive tree matured, its branches grew strong and luxurious

with leaves, but no olives appeared. Year after year passed, and still the gardener waited in vain for a harvest. He rebuked the olive tree, saying it deserved to be cut down and burned. But with compassion he dug around the tree and worked fertilizer into the ground, watered it, and waited again. Still it failed to produce the oil-laden fruit that the gardener desired.

Brokenhearted, the gardener took his ax and began to cut away the barren branches. Then he carefully grafted in branches from the wild olive tree, and again fertilized and watered his tree. To his delight, this hybrid olive tree soon began to bear rich, succulent fruit, both from its cultivated and its wild branches. But alas, its fruitfulness was short-lived. In a few years its once bountiful crop dwindled away to nothing. Gradually the farmer cut away the worthless branches, and eventually the entire tree.

Many years passed. The stump withered and its roots dried up in the ground. But the farmer never ceased longing for his tree and the abundant fruit that he intended for it to produce. Others came into the garden and took the cut-off, withered branches and stuck them into the ground. They decorated them and hung ornaments on them and boasted

about them. People began to give credit to the gardener for the beautiful arrangements of dead branches that surrounded the place where his olive tree should have been. In time everyone forgot about the olive tree.

Everyone, that is, except the gardener — he never forgot. In his own time he returned to the garden. Ever so slowly he began to sprinkle a little precious water around the base of the stump, just enough to soak into the parched ground and not be wasted. Faithfully he continued to saturate the ground with life-giving water. And ever so slowly the life that lay dormant in that old, dry root began to respond. When no one was looking, a tiny green sprout peeked timidly from the side of the stump. No one was looking, that is, except the gardener. He saw that tender shoot and great joy welled up in his heart. How lovingly he watches over that little stem! What do you think will become of that new olive tree? Will it fail or flourish? ♣

For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all nations. (Isaiah 61:11)

NIGHTFALL

*We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day;
NIGHT IS COMING, WHEN NO MAN CAN WORK.
While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:4-5)*

The Son of God spoke these words to His disciples, prophesying of a time that was still in the future. After the light of the world was no longer in the world, a time called "night" would come when no one would be able to do the work of God. What was He talking about? What was the light of the world?

According to the Master's own words, He was the light of the world. But He also said in Matthew 5:14 that His disciples were the light of the world. So, according to His prophecy, "night" would come when neither He nor His disciples were in the world. At that time, no one would be able to do the work of God. But when would this happen? Has there ever been a time when Yahshua was not on the earth and also had no disciples on the earth? Will there be in the future?

When Yahshua finished His mission on earth and ascended to His Father, the work of God was left in the hands of His disciples. They were His Body on earth, the dwelling place of His Spirit, carrying out the deeds prepared for them.¹ Their primary task was to serve each other and build each other up until they all became like their Teacher in every way.² They were a witness of the coming Kingdom. Their life together showed what it will be like when Messiah returns and the whole earth obeys His commands.³

Once every nation has seen this demonstration, the end will come. At that time, according to Revelation 19:7-8, the Church, the Bride of Messiah, will

be ready for Him. She will be clothed in righteous deeds, the works that He prepared for her.

So, if the Church did the works of God in the beginning, and will be doing them at the end, what did the Master mean by "night, when no man can work"? Could there have been a time in between that the light went out? Surely this prophecy must have a fulfillment. The Son of God Himself spoke it. Did the works of God ever stop being done? Could this be what Revelation 2:4-5 was talking about?

I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

What was going on at the end of the first century when this was written? If the churches had "abandoned love," and God is love, did this mean that they had abandoned God? If they weren't doing the works of love they did at first, does that mean they weren't doing the works of God? If God "removes your lampstand," does that mean you are no longer the light of the world, as far as He is concerned? Is it possible that the people this was written to disregarded it?⁴ Did they not have ears to hear this warning that the Spirit spoke to the churches?

What if the light of all the churches actually went out at some point in history, between the bright beginning recorded in Acts and the glorious end prophesied in Revelation? Could such a thing be possible? In John 8:31, Yahshua said, "You are truly My disciples if you keep obeying My teachings." Did He mean that if the churches stopped obeying His teachings, then they wouldn't be His true disciples anymore? It was His true disciples who were the light of the world. If there were no more true disciples, would the light of the world cease? What does it take to be His disciple?

We know that He said, "None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."⁵ We also know that the twelve apostles left everything to follow Him⁶ and that they taught others to do the same.⁷ The first church in Jerusalem lived this way in obedience to His commands:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For all who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.
(Acts 4:32-35)

This sharing did not come from mere external obedience, out of a sense of obligation. Obviously, they had a deep concern about each other's pressing needs. It was greater than their consideration for their own future security. This was the result of God's love being poured out in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.⁸ These deeds of care were the "works of God" that had been prepared for the "light of the world" to do in the sight of the watching world.⁹

So if the light of the world ceased, as the Master predicted, how would we know? Would there be no more true disciples on the earth? How could we tell? Would it be that they didn't obey His commands? Would they no longer give up their own possessions? Would they stop sharing everything they had and start becoming rich? Would they start to have poor and needy people in the churches? How disobedient would they have to get before God no longer considered them the light of the world?

If the churches stopped being the light of the world, what would they be like?¹⁰ If they no longer had God's love in them, would they start loving the things of the world?¹¹ Would they get involved in the world's politics?¹² Would they fight in the world's wars?¹³ Would they persecute people who disagreed with them? Would they claim to have God's light in them, when really it was darkness?¹⁴

If all the lampstands of the first century churches went out, as Revelation 2:4-5 warned,¹⁵ it would explain a lot of things in history. It would explain Christianity becoming the state religion under Constantine. It would explain the atrocities of the Crusades, the horrible tortures of the Inquisition, the flagrant corruption of the Popes, the religious wars of the Reformation, and the splintering of Christianity¹⁶ into over 36,000 current denominations. It would explain why the Christian Church, supposed to be the dwelling place of God in the Spirit,¹⁷ has for nearly 2000 years been filled with what Galatians 5:19-21 calls the obvious deeds of the flesh.

Is it possible that humanity has been dwelling for centuries in the "night" that the Son of God prophesied? And if so, would the loving God who sent His Son to die for us be so gracious as to give the world another chance? Would He consent to light new lampstands,¹⁸ after such a long time? Could the same life that the first disciples had be restored to the earth again?¹⁹ And if the light of the world were once again on the earth, what would it look like? Would they do the works that the disciples did at first, like Revelation 3:4-5 talks about? Would they obey the Master's teachings to love each other,²⁰ like the first Church in Acts 4:32-35? Would they leave everything to follow Him?

And if the light were once again on the earth, how would people respond to it?

How would you respond? 🙏

While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light... I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. (John 12:36,46-48)

¹Ephesians 2:10 ²Ephesians 4:11-16; Luke 6:40 ³Matthew 24:14; Daniel 7:27 (RSV, NRSV, ESV, NJB) ⁴It seems that the church in Ephesus had not taken to heart Paul's encouragement in Ephesians 6:24 many years earlier. ⁵Luke 14:33 ⁶Matthew 19:27; Mark 10:28 ⁷Matthew 28:19-20 ⁸Romans 5:5 ⁹Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 2:12 ¹⁰Philippians 2:14-15 ¹¹1 John 2:15; 1 Corinthians 16:22 ¹²Timothy 2:3-4 ¹³John 18:36; Matthew 26:52; Luke 22:50-51 ¹⁴Matthew 6:22-24; Luke 11:35 (Make sure that the light you think you have is not really darkness.) ¹⁵See also Romans 11:21-22 ¹⁶Possibly the most divided of all religions, in utter disregard of 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 ¹⁷Ephesians 2:22 ¹⁸Establish new churches full of disciples who obeyed their Master's commands ¹⁹John 1:4; 8:12; 1 John 5:12-13 ²⁰John 13:34-35; 15:12-15



WEDDING BELLS



The sound of wedding bells echoed through the air in the city of seven hills, proclaiming to all the union of a seemingly idyllic couple.

The groom was a man of stature, risen to the rank of general, fresh from the battlefield in triumph.

The bride was a lovely lady, her upbringing having been handled with the finest of care from a tender age. She had been chosen for a special purpose and even betrothed, yet not to this man. She had been betrothed to another husband.

The groom's name: Constantine.

The bride's name: the Church.

This monumental event took place in the year 312 AD. It was the marriage of church and state. At their embrace, both parties were changed forever. The mighty civil government of the Roman world became a religious empire, with Christianity at its side as the state religion. It was an eerie fulfillment of the words spoken by the prophet Daniel almost 1000 years before:

As you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.
(Daniel 2:43, RSV)

The iron of Rome was married to the clay of religion, but it was a marriage of convenience, and such marriages are by nature unstable. Yet Constantine's marriage vows were promising, as recorded in the famous Edict of Milan:

...no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion... any one of these who wishes to observe Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation... we have given to those Christians free and unrestricted oppor-

tunity of religious worship.

The groom's benevolence on his wedding day even extended beyond his blushing bride to all of his subjects, that there would be liberty in all his domains:

Let the followers of error enjoy the same peace and security with those who believe ... Whatever truth a man has received and been persuaded of, let him not smite his neighbor with it ... For it is one thing to voluntarily undertake to wrestle for immortality; it is another to constrain others to it by fear.¹

This liberty, however, was short-lived. After Constantine's death, his sons used against all who would not embrace the Christian religion the same instruments of oppression that Nero had employed against Christianity. Their reaction against other religions elevated and established Christianity as the state religion of the empire, and set in motion an unholy alliance between the church and the state. The adulterous relationship begun at this point has continued on down through history and marches prophetically toward the consummation of the age.² Once Rome declared Christi-

anity to be its state religion, the Roman church was instantly clothed with civil power and began to persecute all those who disagreed in matters of conscience and belief.

In doing so she shamelessly fulfilled the fears Paul the apostle had expressed about her when her waywardness had first begun to show:

I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.
(2 Corinthians 11:2-3)

She was indeed led astray in many ways, not the least of which was her departure from the way Yahshua had taught His disciples to treat those who did not receive Him (or them). Once when some Samaritans didn't receive Him on His way to Jerusalem, His disciples James and John said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He rebuked them, saying, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

It was not that people who rejected Him or His teachings didn't deserve judgment, but He knew that the day for judgment had not yet come:

If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.
(John 12:47-48)

Until then, the responsibility of the

THE CHURCH COUNCILS OF THE EMPEROR



The high drama of the first council of Nicaea has sadly been much neglected by playwrights. Not only is this event called “one of the most important in the history of Christianity” by *Encyclopedia Britannica*,¹ but its powerful images cry out for the Shakespeares of the world to imprint them on the human imagination. Here is the regal emperor, casually retaining his leadership of the Roman state pagan religion, even its title *pontifex maximus*, as he coolly calls one major gathering of Christian bishops after another.² He first exercised his power to gather the bishops to do his bidding because of a controversy in the

Church, as though the emperor should have anything to do with it.

Here they come, walking through lines of imperial Roman soldiers who only

twenty years before had presided over the latest round of the death and torture of Christian martyrs. They’d done it with the same cruel efficiency with which
(Continued on next page...)

¹“The 5th century historian Socrates declared that the Nicene fathers could not depart from the truth because they were enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) declared that the decisions of the Council of Nicaea were unalterable.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 6, p. 633 (1971).

²“The rise of the Donatist schism of North Africa was the occasion for introducing the secular element of imperial authority into the conciliar system. *The Emperor Constantine, not yet baptized, and, therefore, without any rights in the Christian society of the church, convoked a council in Rome in 313, to settle the rival claims of Caecilian and Majorinus, the Donatist, to the see of Carthage. Though the decision of the council was made under the presidency of Pope Melchiades, the right of the emperor to convoke the synod passed unchallenged. It was Constantine who convoked the larger council of Arles in 314, to which Bishops from distant Britain were summoned.*” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. VI, pp. 587-588, 1957)

Wedding Bells *(continued...)*

Church was to be the light of the world, showing by her purity and devotion to Him, expressed in self-sacrificing love and kindness, that she was worthy to be His bride. That light of love would draw the sincere to be saved, and repel the wicked, sealing them for their eventual judgment.

But now more than 200 years had passed since the days of her pure and simple devotion, the common life of love and unity described in the book of Acts in which all were full participants in service and worship. Now rich Christians oppressed their poor brothers, and a professional clergy in fancy robes lorded it over the common people. As one historian put it, “Between the years AD 100 and AD 500, the Christian Church changed almost beyond recognition.”³

So it was little surprise that she committed adultery with this king of the

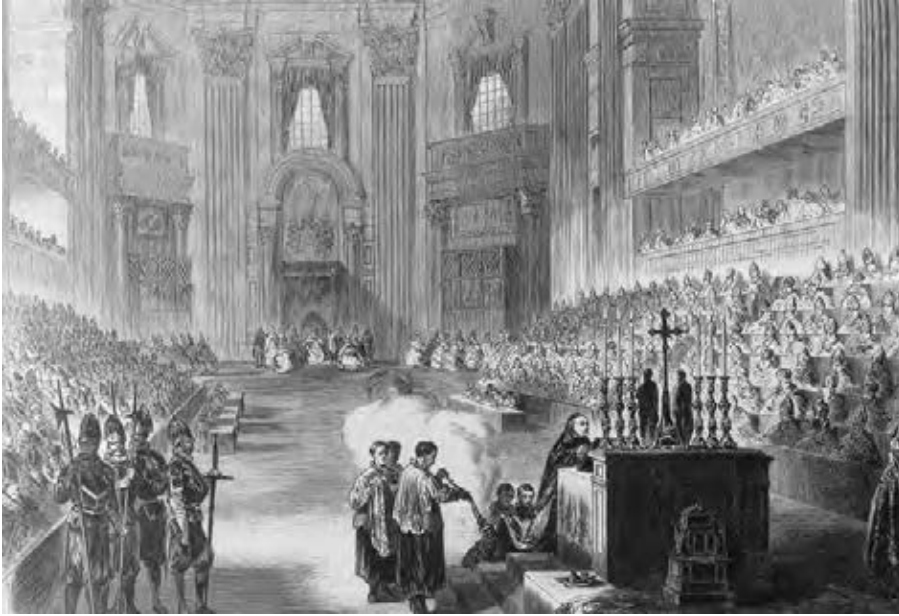


earth. She had forgotten the companion of her youth and the covenant of her God.⁴ By uniting herself with the state she showed herself to be “of the world” and immersed in world affairs,⁵ contrary to the words of her now-forsaken Master as He faced the cross:

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight... But my kingdom is not of this world. (John 18:36)

In the most tragic of ironies, soon those who called themselves His servants, in contempt of His words, would take up worldly weapons and wage war under the banner of the cross, shouting the battle cry, “God wills it!”⁶

¹A.T. Innes, *Church and State*, p. 30 ²Revelation 11 & 18 ³Tony Lane, *The Lion Book of Christian Thought*, Lion Publishing PLC, 1992. ⁴Proverbs 2:16-17 ⁵John 17:16



they had put the Savior to death three centuries prior.

Imagine the inner thoughts of one of those distinguished bishops as wonder fills his heart that perhaps after all the Kingdom of God has come to earth:

It is called the First Ecumenical, or universal, Council because it included bishops from the East and from the West. To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of his reign, Constantine invited the assembled bishops to dine with him. When those who had survived the great persecution filed between ranks of Roman soldiers to sit down with the emperor, one of their number wondered whether the Kingdom of God had come, or whether he dreamed.³

This was no ordinary gathering of clerics. Constantine didn't simply command them to come; he paid their expenses and even provided their means of getting there. In his famous *Life of Constantine*, the bishop and church historian Eusebius wrote of the gathering:

Nor was this merely the issuing of a bare command but the emperor's good will contributed much to its being carried into effect: for he allowed some the use of the public means of conveyance, while he afforded to others an ample supply of horses for their transport. The place, too, selected for the synod, the city Nicaea in Bithynia

(named from "Victory"), was appropriate to the occasion. As soon then as the imperial injunction was generally made known...⁴

This "imperial injunction" was the compelling force that brought about the Council of Nicaea. Was the very setting of the councils their message? If so, then their statements of faith are insignificant in the history of Christianity in comparison to their setting. The bishops gathering at imperial expense, presided over by the emperor himself, whose decrees were upheld by his power, then becomes the essential message of the council. Almost every historian says the church married the state under Constantine, but maybe it did far more than that. Maybe it actually merged with the world.

These councils and the creeds that came forth from them are held in the highest regard in Christianity. They form the basis of identifying what is and what is not Christian faith, practice, and doctrine ever since. From then on, they have formed the foundation for all orthodox Christian "faith and practice."

The counsel that came forth at imperial command was argued in the most bitter, even violent terms, which resulted in exile or death for the losers, their books being burnt, their churches confiscated. All of these evils were manifested at the first of the Ecumenical Church Councils. The participants, in the obvious belief they were setting a pattern worthy of

imitation, recorded them without any sense of shame. And as even a very limited knowledge of Church history shows, this pattern was followed.

The first of the ecumenical councils, that of Nicaea in 325, became a model for many that followed. It was ecumenical in the sense that bishops were summoned from the whole inhabited world. It was ecumenical in the more technical sense that its decisions were meant to be binding on all Christians, and not merely on those of this or that diocese or patriarchate. It was called in the face of the special crisis arising from the spread of the Arian heresy. It was conducted by means of free debate; but when the decisions were reached (e.g., to define Jesus Christ as "True God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the father"), the Bishops who were recalcitrant were subject to ecclesiastical excommunication and political exile. Although the emperor convoked the council, paid the expenses, was present at some of the sessions and punished the recalcitrants, it seems to have been understood that he had acted with the consent of the bishops and particularly, of Pope Sylvester.⁵

The seven ecumenical councils, which form the universal foundation for both the western and eastern branches of Christianity, followed this pattern. Like the first, they were called to do the bidding of the emperor. Six of those seven ecumenical councils either occurred in or near Constantinople, another reflection of their total domination by the secular power of the Eastern emperor.

The Curses of the Councils

The bishops called down curses on those who disagreed with them concerning the creeds. They were called *anathemas* in their creeds and in their dogmas, after the Greek word the apostle Paul used:

³ Roland H. Bainton, *Christianity* (American Heritage Library, 1964), p. 9

⁴ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, Book III, ch. 6ff.

⁵ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. VI, pages 587-588 (1957)

If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come! (1 Corinthians 16:22)

The bishops at their councils called down *anathemas* on those with incorrect doctrine, while Paul had used it for something else entirely. He said those who didn't love the Savior were accursed, for their disobedience to His commands was destroying the very fabric of the church. In the gospels, He had very clearly defined loving Him as obeying Him:

If you love Me, keep My commandments... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him... Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will

come to him and make Our home with him. (John 14:15,21,23)

The early church obeyed His commandments, which is why abundant grace was upon them all.⁶ They were able to forgive their enemies and live quiet, godly lives.⁷

Paul's use of the word *anathema* was based upon the Savior's words of instruction about those who would not listen to their brothers, but persisted on in sin:

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let

him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:15-17)

That Paul understood excommunication to mean exclusion from the church alone is evident by these words, "not to keep company" with the immoral:

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people... But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside

⁶ Acts 4:32-34 ⁷ Acts 7:59-60 and 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Saint Nicholas Strikes Down Arius

Old Saint Nick has another side to his character. Here he is seen striking down Arius, speaking at the invitation of the assembled bishops at the Council of Nicaea, in AD 325. They had gathered to judge Arius' doctrine, and so watched in astonishment as Bishop Nicholas of Myra rose up and struck him forcefully to the ground.

For acting in this illegal and shocking manner before the Emperor Constantine, the bishops removed Bishop Nicholas from their council and stripped him of his office of bishop. Legend holds that both the Virgin Mary and Jesus visited him that night in jail, asking him why he was behind bars. "Because of my love for you," was the reply.

Mary and Jesus restored to him his bishop's robe and gave him the Holy Scriptures to study while in jail. When Constantine heard of this "miracle," he restored both the bishop's office to Nicholas and his place at the council. Not surprisingly, the council ended up siding with Nicholas and against Arius. Arius and the bishops unwilling to agree with the Emperor's theology were excommunicated and exiled.

Constantine was playing for keeps! A few years later he ordered the burning of the works of Arius and made the mere possession of them a crime punishable by death.

So, the real meaning of the Council of Nicaea for the Church is found in the little story of Nicholas and Arius: the people with the right doctrine would strike down the people with the wrong doctrine.

The Church would never forget this lesson!

As the painting (*left*) glorifies the assault, its story and the legends around it were presented to subsequent generations as an example to follow. The theologian Augustine would remember this "love" in some of his most influential words:

If, then, we are willing to speak or to acknowledge the truth, there is an unjust persecution which the wicked inflict on the Church of Christ, and there is a just persecution which the Church of Christ inflicts on the wicked... Therefore she persecutes out of love, they out of hatred..." 🌿

Saint Augustine Letters, Vol. VI (165-203), Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1955, p. 151-152.



*God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."
(1 Corinthians 5:9, 11-13)*

A serious problem arose when there ceased to be an *inside* and *outside* in regards to the church and society. When the church encompassed society, and the emperor stood as head of both state and church, excommunication took on an entirely new terror. When the councils spoke of *anathemas* from the time of Constantine on, it was the state that would impose the full range of penalties of those under the curse of the church.

*With the beginning of the Christian empire under Constantine and his successors in the fourth century, Christian authorities gained the opportunity to persecute their Jewish rivals and every other non-Christian group. From the time of Constantine to our own twentieth century, Christians have made frequent use of this opportunity.*⁸

Coming under an *anathema* (a curse) could mean one, more, or all of the following: losing your priesthood or other office (even of government), having your possessions confiscated, having your writings burned, being exiled, being tortured, and ultimately, being executed. Such a curse could befall you for a mere turn of phrase. The Nicene Creed of AD 325 ends with the words:

But, those who say, Once He was not, or He was not before His generation, or He came to be out of nothing, or who assert that He, the Son of God, is of a different hypostasis or ousia, or that He is a creature, or changeable, or mutable, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them.

The Second Council of Constantinople ends with the following words. The theology is abstruse, but the curses are very readily understood :

... If anyone does not confess that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one nature or essence (reality), one power or authority, worshipped as a trinity of the same essence (reality), one deity in three hypostases of per-

sons, let him be anathema. For there is one God and Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, to whom are all things, and one Holy Spirit, in whom are all things.

Subsequent councils also ended with *anathemas*, not only against errant Christians, but even against the Muslims, calling forth the Crusades.⁹ Do you suppose



that the Second Vatican Council in 1963 would have been held in such esteem by the world's press if the assembled cardinals and bishops had called upon the nations of the European Union to punish dissenting churchmen and heretics as past rulers had? Of course not! They would have cried in horror, "Intolerance! Murder! Bigotry! Persecution! God is not in your midst!" And so did many in the past, just before they were silenced, exiled, or burned at the stake. Why is it always those with "good doctrine" who persecute and kill those with "bad doctrine"?

You will know a Tree by its Fruit

So, is this intimate cooperation and compromise with worldly power, which is all the Seven Ecumenical Councils can be called, a good tree from which to pick

fruit? Can the obvious conclusion be avoided that such collusion undermines the integrity of the councils to judge spiritual matters? Or to put it another way, were they only natural men, devoid of the Spirit?

Agreement with the historic creeds is considered one of the foundational proofs of orthodoxy in the Christian religion. But the Son of God said that genuineness is known by the fruit it produces.¹⁰ He said His disciples would be known by their love.¹¹

A "watchdog" of modern heresies and advocate of the historic creeds once wrote, "Biblical love is the hallmark of a truly vibrant Christian witness, however, love is always the handmaiden of sound doctrine and not the other way around."

Therefore, if the ecumenical councils indeed formulated sound doctrine, the councils themselves and the fruit which came from them would be as undeniable a witness and testimony of love as the creeds are true to what the Bible teaches. Sound doctrine would not be without her handmaiden, love.

Some of the earliest participants – as early as the fourth century – saw so much personal animosity and selfish ambition at the councils they sought to avoid attending them whenever they could:

*"Venerable bishops," said Gregory of Nazianzus ironically, "who put their personal squabbles before questions of faith... For my part, to speak the truth, I prefer to avoid all councils of bishops. I have never seen a council which ended well or cured evils – on the contrary."*¹²

Was the handmaiden granted a leave of absence during the councils? Some would say Christian history proves she's been granted a nineteen-hundred-year leave of absence. 🐾

⁸ Marc Edwards in *Luther's Last Battles, Politics and Polemics, 1532-1546*, page 117. ⁹The Ninth (1123), Eleventh (1179), Thirteenth (1245), and Eighteenth (1512-1517) all called for crusades of one kind or another. ¹⁰ Matthew 7:16-20 ¹¹ John 13:34-35 ¹² *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 6, p. 634 (1971).

THE LEGACY OF AUGUSTINE

The Pedophile Priest Scandal

There is a famous cartoon showing Cardinal Law, formerly head of the Boston Archdiocese, surrounded by wolves. Drawing the cardinal with shepherd's staff in hand, a confused look on his face, and putting the words in his mouth, "You mean, I'm supposed to be protecting the sheep?" cartoonist Mike Luckovich captured the bewilderment of a nation about the Catholic Church sex scandal. How could the overseers of people's souls shuffle priests around whom they knew preyed upon vulnerable boys and youth to satisfy their own selfish desires? There are countless records of priests serving for years – for decades, in fact – with such sins on their conscience, *with the full knowledge of their superiors*. How could the bishops and cardinals allow such evil to go on by men representing, according to their religion, Christ himself, dispensers of His grace through the sacraments? Is there any greater betrayal of trust?

As one of the victims put it, who said a Boston-area priest abused him from 1968 to 1975, "These people knew that pedophiles were coming to town. They had advance warning. We didn't."¹

How could they send them?

How could they remain silent?

How could they believe, as Cardinal Law wrote in 1996 to Father Shanley, one of the worst offenders, that such men as Shanley had brought God's Word, love, and Spirit to others?

For thirty years in assigned ministry you brought God's Word and His love to people, and I know that continues to be your goal despite some difficult limitations... Without doubt over all these years of generous and zealous care, the lives and hearts of many people have been touched by your sharing of the Lord's Spirit.²



This was to the same Father Shanley who had said in a 1977 speech, "no sexual act causes psychic damage, not even incest or bestiality," and that in pedophilia, "the adult is not the seducer – the "kid" is and further the kid is not traumatized by the act per se," but by being dragged in for questioning by the police. Further, "Homosexuality is a gift from God," Shanley said, "and should be celebrated."³ The report of this speech had been on file for nineteen years, during which time Father Shanley repeatedly acted on his beliefs, at the expense of the youth of his parishes, by the time Cardinal Law wrote his letter.⁴

How could this be?

The answer is tied up in an ancient controversy of the Christian Church, one

in which the sinfulness of the priest was explicitly considered in regards to his ministry. And the answer, just as decisively, came down that a sinful priest could continue to serve as a conduit of Christ's grace. It was not *the priest's* status that mattered in the sacraments, but Christ's, who is, of course, beyond reproach. So, in regards to their most essential functioning in the Roman Catholic Church, these men's flagrant sexual immorality had no bearing on their priesthood.

In one case, church records show that a priest left the woman's bedroom after the mother of four (two of them his) took an overdose. Her children found her dead the next morning. This man, Father James Foley, went on to serve for several more decades as a priest in Boston.⁵ The stories go on and on, one more incredible than the other, as are the sheer numbers of abusive priests involved, and their legions of victims. But most incredible of all is the theology behind it, which takes us back to the religious controversy of sixteen



centuries ago. In it, the great Catholic theologian Augustine formulated his famous doctrine regarding the sacraments: the efficacy depends on the grace of Christ alone.

Early in the fourth century, a bishop named Donatus insisted that the sacraments, ministered by unclean hands, conferred no grace. He believed that priests who had betrayed the faith in the last persecutions of the Roman Empire in the early 300s were traitors to the faith, and so could not resume their positions once the persecution ended. This controversy lingered on for close to a hundred years over the general issue of the sinfulness or the righteousness of the priest. Augustine in the early 400s articulated the Catholic position. It remains doctrine to the present day, which this deluge of controversy, lawsuits, and public shame over pedophilia in the priesthood has not changed *in the slightest*.

¹ G. Frost, "Files on Boston priests yield sordid details," Reuters, December 4, 2002

² Bernard Law, Letter to Robert Shanley, February 29, 1996.

³ Dolores Stevens letter of October 4, 1977 labeled "Report of Rev. Paul Shanley's talk to Dignity-Integrity 9-23-77 St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Rochester, NY"

⁴ W. Robinson and T. Farragher, "Shanley's record long ignored," April 9, 2002

⁵ S. Kurkjian and W. Robinson, "A classic misuse of power" *Boston Globe*, December 29, 2002



Augustine poses the essential theological (not moral) question at work regarding these predatory priests: "There stands before us one that is faithless ready to baptize, and he who should be baptized is ignorant of his faithlessness: what think you that he will receive?" Augustine draws no line regarding the state of the priest's conscience, not even when "the conscience of the giver [the priest] may be in such a condition as to be accursed and defiled" – which certainly speaks of the consciences of those preying on innocent children year after year.

The heretics were charging that baptism conducted by an unworthy priest was of no effect. No one was saved, in other words. If anything, guilt was communicated to the seeker. Augustine faced the issue head-on: "For we find that it is possible that a man should receive faith even from one that is faithless, if he be not aware of the faithlessness of the giver."

The man seeking baptism does not know, then, that the priest at the baptismal font is living in sin. What is the consequence of his priest's sin? Nothing at all, for saving grace still comes to him, as long he is ignorant of the priest's sin. And the reason for this is the believer's reliance on Christ to save him, not the priest, as Augustine eloquently puts it:

Can it be, that when he who is baptized is unaware of the faithlessness of his baptizer, it is then Christ who gives faith, it is then Christ who is the origin and root and head? Alas for human rashness and conceit! Why do you not allow that it is always Christ who gives

*faith, for the purpose of making a man a Christian by giving it?**

A: a WOLF in SHEEPERD'S CLOTHING.

because it is accomplished by the word of the Creator and not the merit of the priest. Thus the wickedness of the priest does not nullify the effect of the sacrament, just as the sickness of a doctor does not destroy the power of his medicine. Although the 'doing of the thing (opus operans)' may be unclean, nevertheless, the 'thing which is done (opus operatum)' is always clean." – Pope Innocent III (1160-1216)

And this teaching is also upheld by the Anglican Church:

Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their [a minister's] wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith, and rightly, do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men.⁷

Faithlessness... wicked priest... wickedness... none of these matter! It's official doctrine. The knowledge of these facts from history and theology makes it easier to understand how the hierarchy of the Catholic Church of America could, systematically and knowingly, employ such depraved individuals as priests.

According to their greatest theologian, Augustine, it simply didn't matter. Nothing else can explain the report from February of this year, by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops National Review Board, which "revealed that 10,667 children were allegedly victimized

by 4,392 priests from 1950 to 2002, but said the figures depend on self-reporting by American bishops and were probably an undercount."⁸

Besides the moral questions, several others remain. Augustine does not deal with the complicity of the Church and its hierarchy in knowing of the services and the sins of wicked priests. But it is clear from his words, and from history, that that doesn't matter either. Christ's grace is still communicated through wicked ministers whose overseers know are wicked. In fact, they know they are hurting very deeply the sheep under their care, acting like wolves instead of shepherds, and *still*, they minister grace through the one, *holy*, Catholic Church through the sacraments.

Paul said that those who practice such things will *not* inherit the Kingdom of Heaven⁹ and that "such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified,"¹⁰ and the Son of God said the one who seeks his own glory (how much *more* his own pleasure) is false.¹¹ Yet according to the official doctrine of the Church, it is obvious the minister could be going straight to the lake of fire forever, and still minister Christ's grace on the way!

Does their Christ not have any say in the matter, or care that His name, and His grace, are dragged through the sewer? Could this basic Christian teaching actually be true? Or could it be evidence that those who teach and practice such things do not know God at all, but have created a mechanical religion that functions like a machine, independent of the goodness or badness of the operators? ☹

⁶ Augustine quotes are from, "In Answer to the Letters of Petilian, the Donatist, Bishop of Cirta" (c. A.D. 400), Book I

⁷ Article 25, Articles of Religion, Book of Common Prayer (p. 873)

⁸ D. Zabarenko, "Study Finds 10,600 Children Abused by U.S. Priests" for Reuters on February 27, 2004

⁹ Galatians 5:19-21

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 — Note that it does *not* say, "Such are some of you."

¹¹ John 7:18

THE LEGACY OF AUGUSTINE

The Wars of Christendom

No more striking contrast between the words of Christ and His apostles, and the deeds of Christians exists than on the subject of war. From Constantine to the present day, the might of Christendom on the battlefield has been awesome and with a few notable exceptions, unstoppable. It is history's premier warrior religion, surpassing by far militant Islam in the number of her slain and the vast nature of her wars and conquests. There has never been anything like it.

Yet, unlike Islam, whose foundational teachings regarding war and society have changed very little over time, everyone actually *knows* that Christianity did not begin this way. The acceptance by Christians of this contradiction, and others like it, defines in a peculiar way how the rest of the world sees Christianity.

One could even say, in comparison with the origins of each, that Christianity has degenerated and Islam has not. For when Muslims wage war, they follow the example of their prophet and expect the rewards he promised them for doing so. When Christians wage war, they directly

contradict the teachings and examples of their Savior and His apostles.

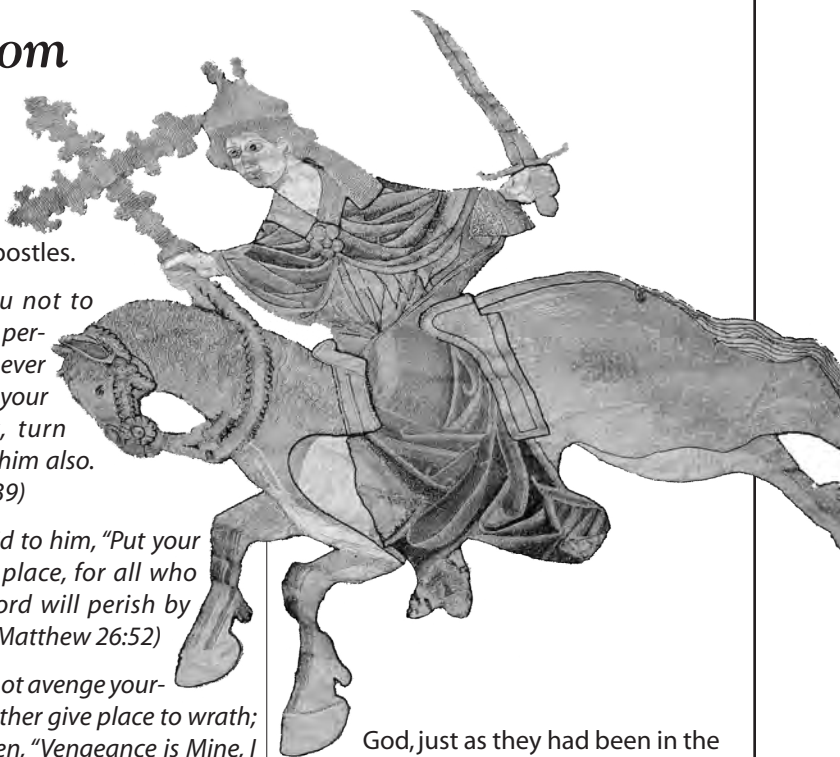
But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (Matthew 5:39)

But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52)

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

(Romans 12:19)

In regards to Christians taking up the sword, Western history may be divided into three great periods. First, from the Day of Pentecost to the day of Constantine's favor, believers did not wield the sword, amass great wealth, or participate in the secular government that ruled over them.¹ Second, there was a time of transition, best characterized by the contrast between the beginning and end of the fourth century AD. In the early 300s, almost no soldiers were Christians. By the early 400s, almost all soldiers were Christians. The third and longest period continues to this day, characterized by complete participation by Christians in every sphere of society. Wars were waged for the glory and at the command of



God, just as they had been in the Old Testament.

The time of transition, when new ideas were accepted – and even enforced upon Christians reluctant to go along with them – is when Christianity *became* the world religion it now is. In terms of the day-to-day life of the believer in the world, by the end of this transition, the New Testament church had changed beyond recognition² — not as a source for religious instruction, but as a way of life. The message of the Savior was still there, but His many commands about war, wealth and possessions, and His Kingdom – His principle teaching – were not.³ They had essentially evaporated.

The relationship between the believer, the state, and the world, had reverted to the Old Testament. The chief architect of this transformation was Augustine, bishop of the Catholic Church in the North African city of Hippo, who lived from AD 354 to 430.⁴ By the end of his life not only were Christians waging just or unjust war at the command of their sovereign, they were being persecuted for refusing to wage war. Indeed, a Christian historian can write that Augustine's justification of Christian participation in war was doubly dangerous:





Not only did it allow the existence of the 'just' war, which became a commonplace of Christian moral theology; but it discredited the pacifist, whose refusal to fight a war defined as 'just' by the ecclesiastical authorities became a defiance of divine commands. Thus the modern imprisonment of the conscientious objector is deeply rooted in standard Christian dogma. So is the anomaly of two Christian states fighting a 'just' war against each other.⁵

Augustine and War

Augustine is frequently given credit (or blame) for the 'just war theory' of Christian theology. He is certainly the most influential of the Church Fathers to teach upon it. He is not given credit for what he actually taught, which was that Christians can participate in any war their sovereign orders, by which he means their secular ruler:

Since, therefore, a righteous man, serving it may be under an ungodly king, may do the duty belonging to his position in the State in fighting by the order of his sovereign, – for in some cases it is plainly the will of God that he should fight, and in others, where this is not so plain, it may be an unrighteous command on the part of the king, while the soldier is innocent, because his position makes obedience a duty, – how much more must the man be blameless who carries on war on the authority of God, of whom every one who serves Him knows that He

can never require what is wrong?⁶

The Christian soldier is innocent in waging an unrighteous war, and blameless in waging a war "on the authority of God," which, as the historian Johnson noted in the quote above, is deter-

mined by the clergy and their theologians. However rarely it has happened that religious leaders have declared a war unjust, the Christian soldiers may, and indeed *must*, according to Augustine, still wage that unjust war, for "his position [as a soldier] makes obedience a duty."

If Christian soldiers were continually judging the directions of their commanders and political leaders as just or unjust, and refusing to uphold what was unjust by the lethal force in their power, then those seeking to wield power in this world would have little use for them. Christian history would be far different if Augustine had not directed Christians to fight any war called by their leaders. Of course, this is what leads to the appalling reality of Christian nations fighting one another while, presumably, praying to the same God. On the other hand, applied consistently, such a teaching would render invalid many of the convictions of Nazis at the Nurnberg Trials:

[The International Military Tribunal's judgments of September 30-October 1, 1946] rejected the contention of a number of the defendants that they

were not legally responsible for their acts because they performed the acts under the orders of superior authority. According to the tribunal, "the true test ... is not the existence of the order but whether moral choice (in executing it) was in fact possible."⁷

For the soldier, that moral choice is removed by Augustine's and Aquinas' just war theories. Can we justly accuse the Tribunal of heresy?

Inward Disposition

The New Testament Scriptures, such as the three quoted at the beginning of this article, would seem to militate against violence done by believers, either individually or as part of a nation state.⁸ To deal with it, Augustine laid the cornerstone of Christian theology and life – one's inward disposition is all that matters, not one's outward actions.

"I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but if any one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left also," the answer is, that what is here required is not a bodily action, but an inward disposition.⁹

If he could have known how many millions of Christians would say this to justify ignoring so many portions of Scripture, perhaps Augustine would have



hesitated to teach this. Millions, if not billions have used this rationale to justify not giving up all of their own possessions, not turning the other cheek, not taking oaths, to name just a few, as well as taking up the sword their Savior commanded them to lay down.¹⁰ Augustine, in fact, was preaching the heresy of antinomianism here.

Antinomianism is defined in the dictionary as *the theological doctrine that by faith and God's grace a Christian is freed from all laws (including the moral standards of the culture)*. Where an authoritarian society and church exist, the people's inclinations to ignore certain scriptures or laws can be restrained – by force. In more liberal societies, this approach to Scriptures leads to a free-for-all of personal interpretations, destroying any semblance of unity among those who claim to believe.

It is striking to find such spiritual anarchism in Augustine, but to transform the command to lay down the sword to its exact, unconditional opposite, required *extreme* measures. Others after him have made the logical connection between his teaching about war – that waging war was permissible to the Christian, if he has the right attitude about it – and every other command or restraint of the New Testament.

The Punishment of Pacifists

Augustine's use of Old Testament passages to justify waging war, and to condemn those who refused on grounds of conscience, was highly selective. He chose verses which supported his argument while ignoring the Old Covenant teaching on it. For the Law makes provision for those unwilling or afraid to fight. The list is extensive in Deuteronomy 20:1-8. The man who has planted a vineyard and not eaten its fruit, built a house and not lived in it, become engaged to a woman and not married her, or who is just plain afraid, *"Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart."*¹¹

By implication virtually any reason or excuse a man might care to offer to avoid battle is covered in these verses. The remaining Israelites, however few they were, were to go into battle know-

ing that, *"the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."* The story of Gideon's army in Judges 7 is a prime example of obedience to this teaching. The God of Israel would only fight for those who had the faith to go in weakness, knowing that He was going before them.

So, where is compulsion? It is justified neither in the Old Covenant nor in the New. Augustine's "just war" theology is not supported by the Bible, but is merely the creation of his fertile mind to suit the needs of empire, not those of the King of Kings, who went to the cross with these words on His lips:

My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm. (John 18:36)



¹ In fact, at the beginning of this time, they lived together and shared all things in common: Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37.

² "Between the years A.D. 100 and A.D. 500, the Christian Church changed almost beyond recognition. [At first] the organization of the church was still fluid... there were no creeds to be recited, no set forms of worship... [By A.D. 500] the worship of the church was entirely liturgical with fixed, set forms of prayer... Most of these changes came gradually over four hundred years. On the whole they were for the good and reflected healthy growth on the part of the church. But not all these changes were necessarily for the better. Many today would consider the alliance with the state and the transformation of Christianity into an official religion to be at best a mixed blessing, if not actually a curse. Many would be less than enthusiastic about the pattern of ministry that emerged and about the suppression of the free forms of worship." (Tony Lane, *The Lion Book of Christian Thought* (Lion Publishing Company, Batavia, Illinois, 1984), p. 8.

³ H.G. Wells captured the contrast well: "As remarkable is the enormous prominence given by Jesus to the teaching of what he called the Kingdom of Heaven, and its comparative insignificance in the procedure and teaching of most of the Christian churches. This doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, and which plays so small a part of the Christian creeds, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought... Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts?" H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, Vol. 1, p. 426 (1961)

⁴ Properly speaking, Augustine was the architect of this regression, which the dictionary definition of as a psychological term fits what he and the other Fathers of the Church accomplished precisely. Regression: a retreating, a moving backward; return to earlier levels of development; the manifestation in older individuals of more primitive levels of behavior.

⁵ Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, Atheneum, New York, 1976, p. 242.

⁶ Against Faustus, the Manichaeon, Book XXII, Paragraph 75.

⁷ "War Crimes Trials," *Encyclopedia 2000*.

⁸ They were chosen because Thomas Aquinas opened his discussion of the Just War – exactly paralleling Augustine's theory – with them. (*Summa Theologicae*, Part II, II, Q. 40, Articles 1-4)

⁹ Against Faustus, the Manichaeon, Bk XXII, Par. 76

¹⁰ Luke 14:26-33, Matthew 5:39, 5:36-37 – and virtually the entire Sermon on the Mount, to pick one portion of the New Testament.

¹¹ Also, Deuteronomy 24:5 commands the Israelite to leave the newly married man at home for one year. And the reason, evidently of comparable importance to victory for the nation, "to cheer up his wife."

THE CRUSADES

“God Wills It!”

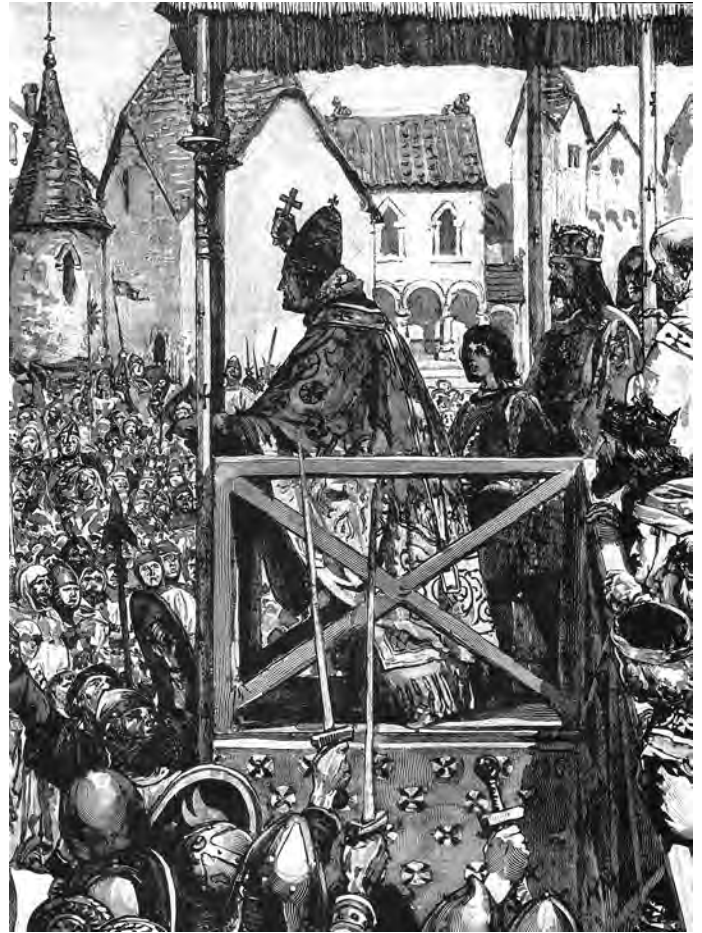
The Crusades are the most well known events of the Middle Ages, a bitter flowering of “faith” that saw vast armies clash over God and gold. Pope Urban II’s call to arms in November 1095 ignited the first of eight Crusades.¹ The cataclysm of violence unleashed against the “enemy” – whom he called “*an accursed race, a race wholly alienated from God, a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God*” – affects the world to this day, and so does the reasoning that launched such wars... The Pope’s wording allowed such enemies to be found not just in the Middle East, but wherever were found those who did not have the Crusaders’ “*Catholic faith*,” who did not give “*the honor which you render to the holy Church*.”²

This “*enemy*” – the Seljuk Turks – threatened no Roman Catholic nation. They did not even border one. For many years they had allowed Christian pilgrims access to their holy places in Palestine. This “*accursed race*” of the Turks, and in a larger sense the Muslim society of which they were a part, gave many signs of *not being “alienated from God”* in their consciences, as their dealings with one another and even their enemies showed.

The Muslims seem to have been better gentlemen than their Christian peers; they kept their word more frequently, showed more mercy to the defeated, and were seldom guilty of brutality...³

In reality, the Muslims showed far more evidence of “*setting their heart aright*” with God, as seen in their actions, than their Christian opponents.

For five centuries, from AD 700 to 1200, Islam led the world in power, order, and extent of government, in refinement of manners, in standards of living, in humane legislation and religious toleration, in literature, scholarship, science, medicine, and philosophy.³



This was beyond the understanding of European Christians. Their religious concepts did not take into account the natural law — the instinctive knowledge of good and evil. They especially had no concept that the instinctive knowledge was at work in those *outside “the holy Church.”* In such an amoral faith, all unbelievers were by definition evil and almost certainly not worthy to live.

The Seljuk Turks did threaten the Eastern Roman Empire, but as events

Christian Pilgrims visiting the Holy Land



would prove, they were not as great a threat as the Christian Crusaders. In a shocking display of violence and cruelty, the Fourth Crusade captured, looted, and slaughtered the Greek Orthodox capitol in AD 1204. What the Turks did provide was a common enemy against which to unite, and a source of land and plunder the Crusaders could have with more than a "good conscience." They could have it with the blessing of God.

Telling them Europe is "too narrow for you" Urban admonishes them, in what is surely the most remarkable aspect of his world-shaking speech, to "Let hatred depart from among you" and go forth instead to take the land "from the wicked race."

Hence it is that you murder and devour one another, that you wage war, and that very many among you perish in intestine strife. Let hatred therefore depart from among you, let your quarrels end, let wars cease, and let all dissensions and controversies slumber. Enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulcher; wrest that land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourselves.⁴

Their hatred need not depart from "the wicked race" who barely qualified as human beings. Foundational to their Christian theology is the teaching that all men are totally depraved, whose only possible rescue is faith in the Church. All unbelievers were sure candidates for eternal destruction, so there was little hesitation and little to no wrong in violently sending them there early.

More than Just War

According to the teaching of Augustine, the greatest Christian theologian, the Crusades were "just" wars — not because they were devoid of "the

real evils in war," which he said were the "love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust of power, and such like."⁵ Far from it, as the Crusaders' own histories tell.⁶ They were to be considered "just" for the most fundamental reason of all: that they were waged at the command of God! In Augustine's own words:

How much more must the man be blameless who carries on war on the authority of God, of whom every one who serves Him knows that He can never require what is wrong?⁷

And who better to declare a war just than the Pope himself, the Vicar of Christ on earth? In the Roman Catholic Church, a vicar is a priest who acts for another higher-ranking clergyman. The Vicar of Christ acts for Christ. On that fateful day in November, over nine hundred years ago, after Pope Urban II promised the Crusaders "remission of their sins" and "the assurance of the reward of imperishable glory in the kingdom of heaven" for waging war, they all cried out in unison, "It is the will of God!"

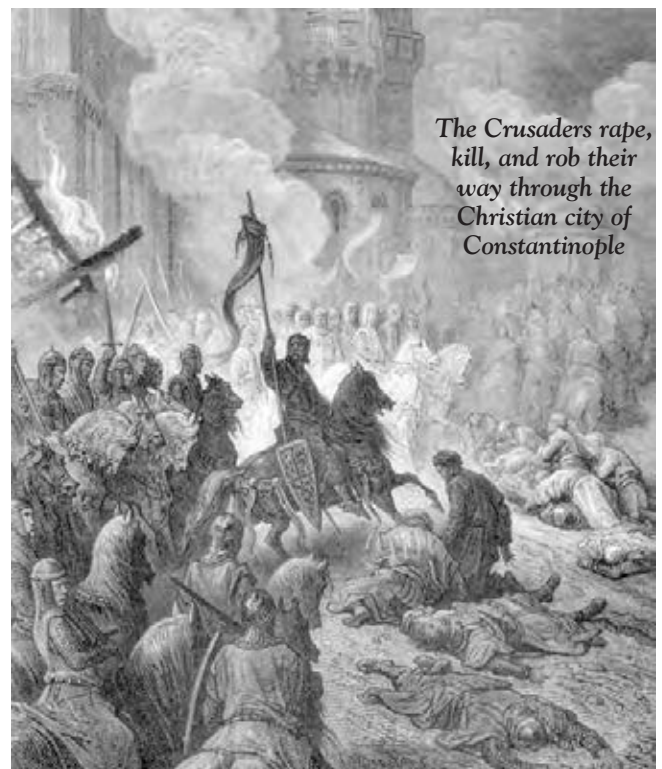
In response, Pope Urban told them that Christ was in their midst and God in their spirits. Therefore, when they attacked the enemy, it was the will of God.

"Most beloved brethren, to-day is manifest in you what the Lord says in the Gospel, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them'; for un-

less God had been present in your spirits, all of you would not have uttered the same cry; since, although the cry issued from numerous mouths, yet the origin of the cry was one. Therefore I say to you that God, who implanted this in your breasts, has drawn it forth from you. Let that then be your war cry in combats, because it is given to you by God. When an armed attack is made upon the enemy, let this one cry be raised by all the soldiers of God: 'It is the will of God! It is the will of God!'"⁸

Being thus equipped with the boundless confidence of doing God's will, the Crusaders set off for the east. They were a new kind of pilgrim, no longer humble and lowly, but great and mighty. At the end of their pilgrimage they attacked the "enemy" in the holy city of Jerusalem, raising the cry, "It is the will of God!" Or more simply put, "God wills it!"

Our men chased after them, killing and dismembering as far as the Temple of Solomon. And in that place there was such a slaughter that we were up to our ankles in their blood. Our pilgrims entered the city, and chased the Saracens, killing as they went... In the morning our men climbed up cautiously to the roof of the Temple and



The Crusaders rape, kill, and rob their way through the Christian city of Constantinople

¹ First: AD 1096-1099; Second: 1147-1149; Third: 1189-1192; Fourth: 1202-1204; Fifth: 1218-1221; Sixth: 1228-1229; Seventh: 1248-1254; Eighth: 1270-1272 ² "Pope Urban's Clermont Address," as recorded by Robert the Monk, in Encarta 2000 Encyclopedia ³ W. Durant, *The Age of Faith*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1950, pp. 341-342 ⁴ See footnote 2. ⁵ Augustine, "Against Faustus, the Manichaeon," Book XXII, Par. 74. ⁶ "Wonderful things were to be seen. Numbers of Saracens were beheaded. Others were shot with arrows, or forced to jump from the towers. Others were tortured for several days and then burned in flames. In the streets were seen piles of heads and hands and feet. One rode about everywhere amid the corpses of men and women." (Eyewitness account of Raymond of Angilles, which all other accounts substantiate) ⁷ Augustine, "Against Faustus, the Manichaeon," Bk XXII, Par. 75 ⁸ See footnote 2.

attacked the Saracens, both male and female, and beheaded them with un-sheathed swords. The other Saracens threw themselves from the Temple.

Then our men held a council, and gave out that everyone should give alms and pray that God would choose whom he wished to reign over the others. They further gave orders that all the Saracens should be cast out on account of the terrible stench: because nearly the whole city was crammed with their bodies... Such a slaughter of pagans no one has ever seen or heard of; the pyres they made were like pyramids.⁹

God Willed It?

But is the slaughter of pagans or infidels the will of God? Most Christians today would answer, "No, it isn't."

The weight of Christian history, however, comes down hard on the affirmative: the killings of non-Christians are acts of violence without guilt, if not of positive merit. Augustine's doctrines of war and persecution of heretics and non-believers would fuse into a deeply held belief that the sword could advance the cause of Christ and His Kingdom.

What made the Augustinian teaching even more corrupting was the

association in his mind between 'war by divine command' and the related effort to convert the heathen and destroy the heretic – his 'compel them to come in' syndrome. Not only could violence be justified: it was particularly meritorious when directed against those who held other religious beliefs (or none).

The Dark Age church merely developed Augustine's teaching. Leo IV said that anyone dying in battle for the defense of the Church would receive a heavenly reward; John VIII thought that such a person would even rank as a martyr...¹⁰

Worse than an Unbeliever?

It is possible, according to the New Testament, to be worse than an unbeliever.¹¹ Saladin, the great leader of the Muslims, recaptured Jerusalem from the Christians in AD 1187. Even today, the memory of the Christian conquest of 1099 has not faded yet in the Middle East. It certainly hadn't then. Yet when

the lives of the descendents of that conquering hoard were in his hands, Saladin the unbeliever extended to them what

their fathers had shown none of — mercy. As soon as the Christians surrendered, the killing stopped. The survivors were even granted safe passage back to their lands. Behavior like this accounts for the enduring fascination Western writers and historians have had for Saladin, and the paragon of princely virtue Muslims

have made of him, for this "barbarian" was obviously more just and humane than his Christian opponents.

Pope Urban II had sent the Crusaders off to "rescue" the Holy Land from the hands of the infidels in memorable and poetic words:

Jerusalem is the center of the earth; the land is fruitful above all others, like another paradise of delights. This spot the Redeemer of mankind has made illustrious by his advent, has beautified by his sojourn, has consecrated by his passion, has redeemed by his death, has glorified by his burial.¹²

History records that in the ardor of their perverted faith, they covered "this spot" with undying shame and disgrace as they waged this most "just" of all wars. For in spite of the words of their supposed Savior, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy,"¹³ they showed no mercy. How then will they escape the righteous judgment of God? ☠

For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. (James 2:13)



Crusaders returning from the First Crusade



⁹ The anonymous chronicler of the *Gesta Francorum*, quoted by Elizabeth Hallam, editor, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, Godalming, U.K. Bramley Books, 1996, p. 93. ¹⁰ P. Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, Atheneum, New York, 1976, p. 242. Leo IV reigned as pope from AD 847-855 and John VIII from AD 872-882. And later, of course, Urban II promised them heaven. ¹¹ 1 Timothy 5:8 ¹² See footnote 2. ¹³ Matthew 5:7

THE CRUSADES

The Reward of Imperishable Glory?

The Crusades were such an evil witness of Christ. It has been centuries since the Crusades, but even today Muslims hate Christ because of them. Can the blood ever be washed off the Church that called for them? The same Church and the same pope that forgave the Crusaders for their sins in advance, assured them "of the reward of imperishable glory." Yet the horror of the Crusades far exceeds what happened to the "infidels" in the Middle East, as unbelievable as that may be. Steven Runciman, modern historian of the Crusades, writes "*The harm done by the Crusades to Islam was small in comparison with that done by them [the Crusaders] to Eastern Christendom.*"¹

The Fourth Crusade made it as far as the capture and looting of the Eastern Capitol of Constantinople, whose church and people, although Christians, were not under the authority of the Pope. The Byzantine Empire would never recover from this blow, which further alienated the Eastern and Western divisions of Christianity.

Max Dimont, writing in his history of the Jews, *The Indestructible Jews*, says the Christians suffered at their brother's hands far worse than the Jews:

*Jews who had the bad luck to reside in the paths of Crusaders en route to the Holy Land were the first to feel the lethal effects of their mobilized zeal. Their stores were ransacked, their women violated, their communities burned. But though they suffered grievously, the devastation which befell the Jews does not compare in total horror to what befell Christians also in those same paths.*²

Dimont goes on to list in numbing detail the trails of blood the Crusaders left within Europe itself as they marched across their own continent, fighting, plun-

dering, and dying at the hands of their fellow Christians.³ Among "*the most reprehensible Crusades*" he writes, was the Albigensian Crusade of the early thirteenth century,⁴ where more than 99% of the sect was eliminated — close to a million people — in "*a holocaust more devastating to the Albigensians than the Nazi holocaust to the Jews.*"

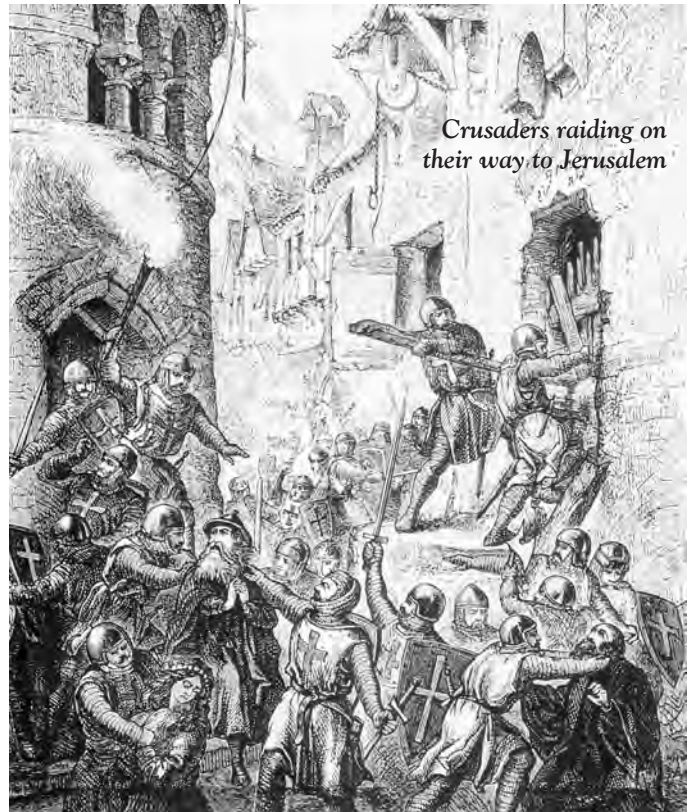
So, the historian Runciman writes the Crusades were "a tragic and destructive episode" where:

*There was so much courage and so little honor, so much devotion and so little understanding. High ideals were besmirched by cruelty and greed, enterprise and endurance by a blind and narrow self-righteousness; and the Holy War itself was nothing more than a long act of intolerance in the name of God, which in itself is a sin against the Holy Ghost.*⁵

So, were the Crusades the will of God or the will of the devil? Can you know a tree by its fruit? The evidence demands the verdict of the Epistle of James about these wars, the Crusades.

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.



Crusaders raiding on their way to Jerusalem

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. (James 4:1-3)

How many others of the many, many wars of Christendom does this apply to as well? All? Know for sure that where James 4:1-3 applies, so does verse 4:

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 🍌

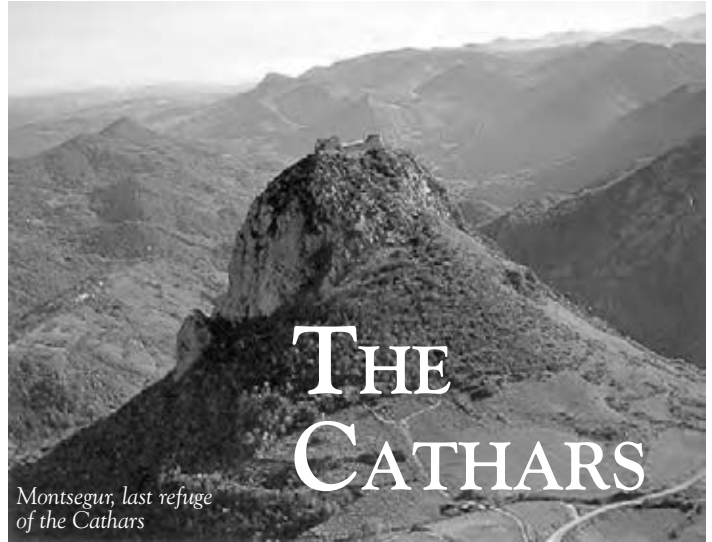
¹ From the conclusion to Steven Runciman (1954), *A History of the Crusades: Volume III: The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 0521347726) ² M. Dimont, *The Indestructible Jew* (Signet reprint of the New American Library hardcover edition, 1973), p. 272-275

³ For instance, of the 600,000 men who began the First Crusade, 25,000 remained alive three years later to capture and slaughter the inhabitants of Jerusalem. "The rest had perished of disease and hunger, or had died gruesome deaths in revengeful uprisings by the Christian populations whose lands the rapacious Christians had traversed." (Dimont, p. 273-274)

⁴ Known in Europe as the Cathars. ⁵ S. Runciman, quoted in J. Riley-Smith, "The Crusading Movement and Historians," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, p. 6.

“The Roman Church is not ashamed to say that they are the sheep and lambs of Christ, and they say that the heretics they persecute are the church of wolves.

But this is absurd, for the wolves have always pursued and killed the sheep, and today it would have to be the other way around for the sheep to be so mad as to bite, pursue, and kill the wolves, and for the wolves to be so patient as to let the sheep devour them!”
(from the writings of the Cathars)



While the waves of Crusaders were crashing on the shores of Palestine, the common people of Europe were experiencing a crisis of faith. They could not find God in the churches, with their corrupt clergy and droning Latin liturgy, and were turning elsewhere in their groping for Him.

Everywhere in Europe the leaven of religious dissent was spreading. New and diverse sects were sprouting up everywhere, sharing in common a thirst for the pure source of the gospel, and a return to the pattern of the primitive church. There emerged two main trends: one leaning towards poverty and preaching (such as the *Waldensians*), and the other leaning towards hard work and ritualistic life (such as the *Cathars*). An important common attraction to these movements was their preaching in the language of the people. They were also characterized by their common and dangerous conviction: “It is better to obey God than to obey men!”

Men and women sought a rampart against the evil they saw present everywhere. They scoffed at the superstitious practices of the Church, criticised infant baptism and denied the validity of sacraments given by a corrupt clergy. They preached detachment from this low world, whose prince is Satan, and waited for the promise of “a new heaven and a new earth where justice will dwell.”

The 11th century was the century of monks and knights, but also of religious dispute. As such, it was the century of heretics. The papal church often referred

to them as *Manicheans*.¹ The name, once given, provided a convenient link to the historical use of force against such heresies and also by naming them so, the heresy was branded as an Eastern dualist movement,² effectively disqualifying them and keeping the debate away from the errors of Roman Catholicism. With violent reaction, the Church opposed those whom the clergy named as false prophets and servants of Satan, compelling the state to enact her repressions: floggings, branding with hot irons, expulsions, and inevitably, executions. Seven centuries had passed since the execution of a Christian for heresy,³ but the new millennium would begin with 13 heretics being burned at the stake in Orléans in 1022. It marked the beginning of the violent and systematic religious repression which would be the Church's practice for centuries.

Heretics Everywhere

Heretics were discovered in Champagne, in Aquitaine, in Périgord, and also in Arras where the bishop “reconciled” many in 1025. In northern Italy, an important and active group was collectively burned at the stake around the same year. Then in 1184 the Synod of Verona put forth the mandate for the Inquisition:

In order to do away with various heresies which have recently started to proliferate in several parts of the world, it is necessary to rouse the force of the Church... Therefore we decree that first of all the Cathars and Patarins be permanently anathematized, then those who falsely call themselves the Humble or Poor of Lyon, and... all those, either forbidden or not sent, without authorization by the Holy See or the local bishop, who are so presumptuous as to preach in public or in private, as well as all those who do not fear to think or teach about the Eucharist, baptism, confession, marriage and the other sacraments in any way other than that which the sacrosanct Roman Church preaches and observes, and generally anyone who has been judged as a heretic by the Roman Church herself.⁴

All over Europe the sects, as soon as detected, were destroyed, their leaders tortured and the followers dispersed. New movements continued to appear, sometimes even churches were organized, but always in a general climate of clandestine activity, suspicion, and often of terror.

The land of Languedoc⁵ provided asylum for the sect known as the *Cathari* or

¹ Augustine refuted Manichaeism around the year 400, and in 405 the Synod of Carthage endorsed the use of force by the state when persuasion failed to convert the heretics.

² The belief that good and evil are equal opposing forces in the universe.

³ Priscillian, Bishop of Avila, was beheaded in 385 — the first recorded instance of a Christian being executed based on condemnation by fellow Christians on points of doctrine.

⁴ Giovanni Gonnet, *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, tome 19 n°4, p. 325

⁵ Languedoc, literally “language of yes,” or Occitan, spoken in southern France.

Cathars,⁶ first because of their good reputation with both lords and the common people, and later because of the castles of the region in some of which they took refuge. So, in spite of the preaching campaign of St. Bernard in 1145 to convert the heretics, the Cathar Church organized itself with the open complicity and tolerance of the great barons.

Perhaps in this tolerance there was a degree of indifference regarding religious issues. It seemed natural to the Occitan people that one could profess the religion he chooses. Even the Count of Toulouse, Raymond VI, displayed a benevolent tolerance toward those who did not pray like him. Jews, heretics, and Muslims lived on his lands and thus were under his protection. By accepting the dissidents, the counties of Languedoc were acknowledging more the right to be a heretic than the heresy itself.

The Golden Age of Catharism

By the beginning of the 13th century, the Cathars were long established in this favorable environment and living in peace. In the south of France, the nobles built around their castles big fortified villages where all the social classes cohabited. This gave the Occitan feudal society its original character of conviviality and allowed social interaction which was an important factor in the growth of Catharism.

Those Cathars who had taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to the Holy Scriptures lived in separate

communities of men and women. Their beliefs led them to not lie, kill, judge, or take oaths. They prayed constantly, night and day, refrained from eating meat or animal products, and many fasted three times a week with only bread and water. They made copies of the New Testament in the Occitan language, many having with them at least the gospel of John. This was the simple life observed by those around them, in embarrassing contrast to the opulent and pampered lives of the bishops.

The Cathars worked for their living by spinning, weaving, working with wood or metal in shops that were places for apprenticeship, but also preaching. In their houses, located in the heart of the village, they cared for the sick, the needy, and the traveler. Those houses were meeting places where rich and poor could interact naturally as they listened to their teaching. Their simple solutions to the moral problems and spiritual concerns of their day attracted the nobles as well as the common people.

Called by their neighbors the "good Christians," they gained the respect of all, and their faith propagated quickly, threatening the spiritual and material dominion of the Catholic Church. By their words the Cathars were opponents, as they rejected the dogmatic authority of the Church, considered its sacraments as null and void, and denied the legitimacy of the Pope. They neither owned nor desired riches or power, and

demanded no taxes. Theirs was not an attempt to reform Catholicism, but to separate from it and band together in a life of purity and devotion to God, as they understood Him. It was a more brotherly, egalitarian society, freed from the heavy hierarchy of the Roman Church. Catharism may well have become the dominant religion of the people of southern France, if left in peace.

"Above Peoples and Kingdoms"

In 1198, Innocent III ascended to the supreme spiritual power with a well-set goal: to restore the Church in its worldwide dominance. He drew his conviction both from the sacred writings and from history, declaring in his inauguration speech:

*"To me the word of the Prophet applies: I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, that you may uproot and destroy, and that you may build up and plant."*⁷

"God has established us above peoples and kingdoms. Nothing of what goes on in the universe must escape the Pope's notice or control. God, creator of the world, has placed two big heavenly bodies in the firmament in order to give it light: the sun which presides over the days, and the moon which orders the nights. In the same way, He has instituted two high dignities in the world: the papacy which reigns over the souls, and the royalty which dominates the bodies. But the former

⁶ Some say that *Cathari* comes from the Greek *katharoi*, meaning *the pure*, but never would the Cathars call themselves "the pure" or "the perfect" as they were called. By their neighbors, they were simply called "the good men" or "the good Christians." However, Nicolas Gouzy of the Centre d'Études Cathares (Center of Cathar Studies) writes, "It seems almost certain today that *Cathars* is more comparable to an insult and would mean "cat worshippers" or "catists" which is supported by the use of the adjective *catier* ... and would derive from the Low German *ketter* (cat); also the German translation of the word *heresy* is *die Ketzerei*, same root. In the iconography of the moralized Bibles of the XIth century, they were almost always accompanied by cats, symbol of evil for all of medieval Christendom." (Private e-mail, May 22, 1997)

⁷ Michel Roquebert, *L'EPOPEE CATHARE*, p. 129



is very superior to the latter. As the moon receives its light from the sun, which shines much brighter than the moon, so the royal power draws all its splendor and prestige from the power of the Pope.⁸

The power which the princes exercise had only been delegated to them, as it were, and the fullness of power ultimately belongs to the Church:

"Christ, he writes, has not only given Peter ruling power over the Universal Church, but over the whole age. The princes have been given power on earth; the priesthood has been assigned the power on earth as well as in heaven."⁹

The Albigensian Crusade¹⁰

Since Catharism represented such a danger to Catholicism, the new Pope decided to take the situation in hand by using "the force of the material glaive [double-edged sword], by means of the princes and the people" to prevail against the heretics and those who protected them, namely the Occitan lords.

On March 10, 1208, Innocent III sent to the bishops, counts, and knights of France, and even to the king, a virulent call for holy war:

"Forward then, Christian knights! Forward, courageous recruits of the Christian army! May the universal cry of distress of the Holy Church lead you along! May a pious zeal set you on fire to avenge so great an offense against your God! ... They say that the faith has departed, peace is dead,

and the heretical pest and the warring fury have regained new strength: the ship of the Church will suffer total shipwreck unless it gets some strong help in this unprecedented storm. This is why we ask you to give heed to our warnings, we exhort you with kindness, we order you with confidence in the name of Christ, in the face of such peril we promise the remission of your sins, so that you may thwart such great dangers without delay. Make every effort to pacify these populations. Be diligent to destroy the heresy by any means God will inspire you to use. With greater assurance than with the Saracens, since they are more dangerous, fight the heretics with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. As far as the count of Toulouse is concerned, who seems to have made an alliance with death without considering his own, if by any chance torment is going to give him understanding, and if his face covered with ignominy starts to implore the name of God, continue to lay threats on him until he satisfies us, the Church, and God. Drive him and his accomplices out of the tents of the Lord. Strip them of their land, so that Catholics may replace the eliminated heretics and serve in God's presence in holiness and justice according to the discipline of your orthodox faith."¹¹

For ten years he had tried in vain to launch this crusade, coming up against the resistance of the princes as well as the nonchalance of the prelates. He had to content himself with opposing the Cathars by preaching, and that without

much success, as he had only the force of conviction and persuasion of the Dominican and Franciscan orders.

The murder of the Pope's legate in the Toulouse region provided the Pope with the pretext he needed to convince the lords of France to take up the crusade, called *Negotium Pacis et Fidei* ("the business of peace and faith"), expressing well that this military campaign had both political and religious goals. Ultimately, it would increase the spiritual and temporal power of the Pope.

In 1209 the papal legate, Arnaud Amaury, surged towards the land of Languedoc at the head of a huge international army. Béziers was the first besieged city. Refusing to hand over to the crusaders the 220 heretics living there, the city was plundered and burned and its 20,000 inhabitants slaughtered in a morning's work. "Kill them all; God will know his own," was the sadly famous command given by the Pope's legate when asked how to distinguish heretics from Catholics. "The divine revenge marvelously struck the city; we killed them all," wrote Amaury to the Holy See.

For nearly 15 years, the crusade ravaged the country. The Occitan lords, accused of protecting the heretics, were utterly dispossessed. Any resisting city was treated without pity. Whole communities of Cathars were burned at the stake: 140 in Minerve, 400 in Lavaur, 200 in Montségur¹²... However, the "Holy War" did not achieve its goal of eradicating Catharism, and a counter-offensive from the Occitan lords ended with the departure of the crusaders in 1224. Through this re-conquest the lords of the south recovered their goods and some of their cities, and Catharism reappeared in open



The massacre at Béziers

⁸DOCUMENTS ET CIVILISATION, de la Préhistoire à nos jours, classiques Hachette, p. 37

⁹Roquebert, p. 130

¹⁰Another term for the Cathars, from *Albi* in southern France, where they dwelled.

¹¹Monique Zenner-Chardavoine, *LA CROISADE ALBIGEOISE*, p. 76

¹²Montségur was the last stand of the Cathar Church in 1244, some 20 years after the crusade, marking the grim success of the Inquisition with the corporate burning alive of over 200 "Perfects" in one terrible bonfire. After Montségur there was no organized Cathar Church anymore, but it would take about 80 more years to completely eradicate Catharism.

day. Their churches were reorganized and the communities flourished again.

In 1226 a second crusade was roused by the Pope, headed up by the new king of France, Louis VIII himself. Drained by years of battle and attrition, Occitany finally surrendered in 1229. It was the end of the crusade, but not the end of the Cathars. Politically the crusade was a success for the king of France. The royal house of Capet emerged victorious from this 20-year-long war launched by the Pope against the lords of the south, resulting in the annexation of the Languedoc to the royal domain. As for the Church, the crusade had torn apart social bonds and opened wide the way to eliminate the heresy once and for all. "Negotium pacis" was done, "negotium fidei" was still left to do.

The Inquisition

Where the sword had not been able to destroy the heretics, Rome was going to find more effective means. A council held in Toulouse in 1229 ordered:

"That in every parish three commissioners be appointed who are especially charged with seeking out the heretics from the cellar to the attic, and denouncing them to the bailiffs.

That the converted heretics be interned in Catholic cities lest they backslide; there they will wear two crosses on either side of their chest which are of a different color from their clothes, so they can be recognized.

That every heretic whose conversion was not obtained by devotion but by fear of the laws, be detained in a fortress, so that he cannot defile others...

That no one keep either the Old or the New Testament in his possession, but only the collection of psalms, the book with excerpts of the gospels, and the daily prayer book, and let these books not be translated into the common language."¹³

But by 1233, the papacy under Gregory IX, conscious of the failure and reluctance of the local clergy to enforce these measures, created a repressive institution under its direct control: the Inquisition was officially born, a tribunal whose mission was to eradicate heresy.

According to the law we apply the term heretic in very specific cases: A heretic is any excommunicated person, any sorcerer, anyone who opposes the Roman Church and dares contest the dignity which she has received from God, as well as anyone who commits errors in the explanation of the Holy Scripture, or anyone who creates a new sect; also anyone who does not receive the Roman doctrine regarding the sacraments, who interprets one or several creeds differently from the Church of Rome, or who doubts the faith."¹⁴

Many have argued that Pope Gregory IX, by entrusting the Inquisition to the Dominicans, was hoping to ensure the defense of the faith and the re-conquest of souls by persuasion. But the Dominicans proved to be so severe and excessive that the Pope associated the Franciscan monks to them in 1237, "to moderate the rigor of the formers by the leniency of the latter."

The inquisitors organized their institution with great zeal, with rigorous procedures and thoroughly recorded depositions. Through threat, cunning and sagacity, the inquisitors sought to obtain confessions. In 1252, in the bull "Ad extirpendam" Pope Innocent IV officially authorized the use of torture "to help determine the truth!"

To begin with, the inquisitor advocates imprisonment which, when cleverly prolonged, "enlightens" the prisoner and inclines him towards converting. The penitentiary system includes first fasting, then putting the feet in shackles, then putting the hands in chains, then other more cruel forms of torment. If the prisoner turns out to be non-repentant we will subject him



to torture. An order is given to avoid mutilation or mortal danger."¹⁵

The inquisitors created an atmosphere of general suspicion which undermined the whole society by destroying solidarity, trust, and friendship in the once-tolerant and welcoming Languedoc. Everyone trembled. Because of a mere denunciation one might lose his freedom, all his goods, and even his life.

Though the stated goal of the Inquisition was to combat heresy, not to kill, it brought many to the executioner:

The Church does not even consider the penalties she imposes as real punishments. She gives them the nature of penances which are useful for the spiritual well-being of those accused of heresy. The heretic who stubbornly refuses to renounce his errors and the backslider are handed over to the secular judicial authorities. This decision protects the inquisitor from committing an irregularity by being involved in a capital sentence."¹⁶

By means of large-scale police operations, sometimes rounding up whole villages, the inquisitors dismantled the clandestine Cathar Church. One after the other, the fugitives were denounced and arrested. In 1321, the last known Cathar, Guilhem Belibaste, was burned at the stake. It had taken a century for the Inquisition to totally eradicate the dissenting church. ♣

¹³ Jules Isaac and Henri Béjean, *LE MOYEN AGE*, classe de cinquième, p. 130 ¹⁴ The inquisitor Nicolas Eymerich, 1376, quoted in Laurent Albaret, *L'Inquisition, Rempart de la foi*, p. 99

¹⁵ The inquisitor Bernard Gui, 1322, Albaret, p. 101 ¹⁶ Albaret, p. 102



THE INQUISITION

Legal and Historical Roots

The nightmare known as the Inquisition is many centuries older than its first use against heretics at the end of the twelfth century. It began with the degradation of the once noble system of Roman justice in the first three centuries of the Christian era. Its corruption proceeded from one source above all others – the accumulation of power in the hands of the emperor. Once it began and the ancient rights and privileges of Romans began to disappear, there was no stopping the process until Roman law, Roman religion, and Roman government spoke with one voice – the emperor's.

And in the end, the entire concept of individual rights that government and law must respect had been obliterated. Edward Peters, a historian of the Inquisition, put it this way:

With the transformation of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire during the reign of Augustus (31 BC – 14 AD), an enormous number of powers came into the hands of the emperor, and the structure of the Republic was transformed... it is clear that the emperor and his servants assumed more and more direct control of legal procedure, at first paralleling surviving courts and procedures, but eventually superseding them. Gradually the sources of law were narrowed down to one – the edict of the emperor.¹

Nor was this process limited to the legal sphere. Ancient Rome became the world's first totalitarian state whose high taxes and pervasive control of human life were upheld by brute, often sadistically

cruel force. When this process ended, a new legal officer with extraordinary powers had emerged, the *inquisitor*. In his hands lay the entire judicial process from beginning to end: investigation, accusation, and conviction. He was policeman, prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner rolled into one. To assist him the inquisitor had an army of informers and the power to torture those accused on even the flimsiest of evidence. The effective chains of this totalitarian society grew tighter with every increase of the inquisitor's power.

This was the characteristic of Roman criminal law when the Empire converted to Christianity in the fourth century, and this was the law that Christian emperors applied to heretics.²

This "conversion" did not change the barbaric and unjust Roman system of justice. Indeed, even the destruction of the Empire did not, although her conquerors replaced Roman justice with their own, often superior systems based on the natural law. The Church did what the shattered Empire could not do — carefully preserve the detailed regulations of the Inquisition and keep its memory alive. When she decided to rule over men's thoughts and beliefs, there was no greater weapon in her arsenal than the Inquisition.³ It was greater even than the internal crusades

she launched against European "heretics" like the Cathars in southern France.

Papal supremacy, corresponding exactly in its effects to the accumulation of imperial power, required the destruction (or submission) of all other spiritual powers. The process to elevate the bishop of one city, Rome, over all other bishops and Christians, was relentless.

Indeed, it has continued to this present day until the Catholic Church, an organization of over one billion souls, speaks through the voice of one man. Starting in the late twelfth century, and continuing for six centuries, that power was guarded by the Inquisition, whose denial of rights, oppression, use of torture and terror exceeds its dark reputation.

The greatest pope of the Dark Ages, Pope Innocent III, articulated with earth-shaking clarity the nature of that power when he took the throne in AD 1198. Papal supremacy reached out from the church to encompass *the world* in a bid for power undreamed of by the Roman emperors the papacy was modeled after.

(continues next page)



It is to me that applies the word of the Prophet: I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, that you may uproot and destroy, and that you may build up and plant...

God has established us above peoples and kingdoms. Nothing of what occurs in the Universe must escape the Pope's notice and control...

He has instituted two high dignities in the world: the papacy which reigns over the souls, and the royalty which dominates the bodies. But the former is very superior to the latter.

As the moon receives its light from the sun, which shines much brighter than the moon, so the royal power draws all its splendour and prestige from the power of the Pope. Christ has not only given Peter ruling power over the Universal Church, but over the whole age. The princes have been given power on earth; the priesthood has been assigned the power on earth as well as in heaven.⁴

Nor was this a mere empty word, the bombast of a deluded religious leader. This was policy, which the Catholic Encyclopedia approvingly notes that he consistently sought to carry out. "There was scarcely a country in Europe over which Innocent III did not in some way or other assert the supremacy which he claimed for the papacy."⁵

And this was the Europe of the Inquisition — the Pope's Europe. 🕊

¹ Edward Peters, *The Inquisition*, The Free Press, New York, 1988, p. 14-15 ² Peters, p. 16-17 ³ A very good case could be made that George Orwell's "thought police" in his famous novel, *1984*, is based on the structure and tactics of the Inquisition, whose records of investigation, trial, and punishment were excellent. ⁴ *DOCUMENTS ET CIVILISATION, de la Préhistoire à nos jours*, classiques Hachette, p. 37 ⁵ "Innocent III" (newadvent.org)



THE INQUISITION

Religious History

Freedom of Religion in Early Christianity

In the early 200s Christians were faced with state-mandated worship of gods they did not believe in. Thomas Jefferson, one of America's founding fathers, could have spoken Tertullian's stirring words about the rights of man in response to this persecution:

However, it is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions: one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion – to which free-will and not force should lead us – the sacrificial victims even being required of a willing mind. You will render no real service to your gods by compelling us to sacrifice.¹

Indeed, the Catholic Encyclopedia notes in its article about the Inquisition that religious liberty was orthodox Christian teaching for its first three centuries; the time closest to the pattern and example of the apostolic church:

The Christian teachers of the first three centuries insisted, as was natural for them, on complete religious liberty; furthermore, they ... urged the principle that religion could not be forced on others...²

Oh, that such had been the teaching of the Church for the following seventeen centuries! How much peace the world would have known instead of bloodshed, religious war, and strife. Most of all, the *Inquisition* would not have darkened the name of Christ and would not still inspire shock and shame in both non-Christians and Christians to this day.

Coercion: the Pollution of Religion

More than a few historians have noted that the persecuted, when the tables are turned, often become the persecutors. It is objective evidence of the fallen human desire for revenge that burns within them while suffering persecution. The greatest and most unfortunate example of this, in terms of the suffering that came to others, is early Christianity. From the gracious

soul liberty she spoke of while powerless, once in power she turned into a greater oppressor than Rome had ever been. Another example is the Puritans fleeing England, seeking liberty in New England. Once established there, they harshly imposed their own views of church and state on all within their reach.

Some of the most eloquent defenses of liberty then, have come from those not yet ascended to earthly power and its corrupting influence. Christianity had such a moment in the year AD 308. The Emperor's persecutions of Christians had ended only three years before, when Lactantius, an apologist for the Christian faith, wrote this impassioned appeal for religious liberty:

For religion is to be defended, not by putting to death, but by dying; not by cruelty, but by patient endurance; not by guilt, but by good faith... it is necessary for that which is good to have place in religion, and not that which is evil. For if you wish to defend religion by bloodshed, and by tortures, and by guilt, it will no longer be defended, but will be polluted and profaned. For nothing is so much a matter of free-will as religion; in which, if the mind of the worshipper is disinclined to it, religion is at once taken away, and ceases to exist.³

If only the popes and inquisitors had learned this lesson by heart! But as it was, both the Church Fathers and Scripture

itself were set aside in the urgent hunt for heresy that would dominate Europe for centuries, polluting and profaning everything it touched. For Lactantius echoed the famous words of the rabbi Gamaliel that were recorded in the New Testament, in Acts 5, when he admonished his fellow Jewish leaders to leave the disciples alone. For, he reasoned, if they were mere men, their movement would fail, and if they were of God, nothing could stop them.⁴ Time would tell; violence and persecution were unnecessary.

Nightfall

Even with the prospect of imperial support in the fourth century, many Christian leaders continued to oppose punishment for heresy. They argued that the mild and gentle laws of Christ annulled the severe degrees of the Old Testament. His penalty for heresy was exclusion from the social life of the faith: "treat them as a tax-collector."⁵ But the fact that the church was now joined with the state, which was led by men like Constantine who viewed themselves as spiritual leaders, meant that the bishops would now take their lead not from Scripture, nor from the early church fathers, but from the Emperor himself.

This irrevocably changed the church. It would make possible the embrace by the Church of many other powerful leaders down through history. It was the cost the earthly power demanded for its protection of the spiritual power of the Church. When the Bishop of Seville in Spain was executed in AD 385 for heresy, Ambrose, one of the greatest of the Church Fathers, called it a crime. But this could not stem the tide. Soon, the torture and execution of heretics were being justified by appeals to the Old Testament, as though the Empire had become the Israel of God.⁶ It was as though, practically speaking, the New Testament had evaporated.

Dominican Friars were the Inquisitors



The first believers had taken the types of the Old Testament spiritually – as spiritual lessons – seeing, for instance, their warfare now as spiritual, and no longer against flesh and blood.⁷ The New Testament was profoundly ill-suited to be the religion of state or empire. Its moral demands were too many, its contempt for the motivating factors of wealth and power too great, its determination to obey God too high for mean, small-minded men to build their kingdoms with. It had to go.

When No Man Can Work

His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:2-5)

Night fell – the Dark Ages came – and all those who sought to actually live by the words of the New Testament could not do so. They were forcibly stopped, driven from society, and killed. They were denied "the common air in which to breathe"⁸ by bishop, emperor, and inquisitor. And even when the Protestant Church broke away from the Roman Church, it was not the dawning of a new day. On the contrary, it continued with ill-will and violence to fulfill this prophecy, thinking all the while they, like their counterparts, the Catholics, were doing God a favor.⁹

¹ Tertullian, *To Scapula*, Ch. 2, Anti-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3 ² Article "Inquisition," Catholic Encyclopedia (newadvent.org) ³Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, V:20 ⁴ Acts 5:33-39 ⁵ Matthew 18:17 ⁶ "But, say you, the State cannot punish in the name of God. Yet was it not in the name of God that Moses and Phineas consigned to death the worshippers of the Golden calf and those who despised the true religion?" – Optatus of Mileve (De Schismate Donatistarum, III, cc. 6-7) ⁷ Ephesians 6:12 ⁸ So spoke Roger Williams when driven from Massachusetts into the New England winter by the Puritans of Boston. ⁹ John 16:1-3

THE INQUISITION

“By Way of Fire”

In response to the request of their Catholic majesties, Isabella and Ferdinand, for the Inquisition to come to Spain, Pope Sixtus IV ordered that heretics be rooted out “by way of fire.” So began the most famous Inquisition, the Spanish Inquisition, in AD 1478, and its way was the way of all the inquisitions. The first Inquisition had been against the Cathars (or Albigensians) of southern France, following the terrible crusade (holy war) against the Cathars called by Pope Innocent III in 1208, which was not “successfully” concluded until 1229.

The King and nobles of France were promised full and complete indulgence (forgiveness of sins) to help the Pope destroy the Cathars. The brutal and barbaric nature of that war shocks the conscience even to this day. Further, the Pope’s strategy of holding out the confiscated lands of the heretics as bounty had a terrible effect. The crusade attracted the worst elements of northern France, and the result was horror.

In 1209 Arnold Amaury exulted to the Pope that the capture of Beziers had been “miraculous” and that the crusaders had killed 15,000, “showing mercy neither to order, nor age nor sex.” Prisoners were mutilated, blinded, dragged at the hooves of horses and used for target practice. Such outrages provoked despairing resistance and prolonged the conflict. It was a watershed in Christian history.¹

Yet even this was not enough to deal with this obstinate heresy, whose last known member would not be burned at the stake until 1321. The subjection of men’s minds and hearts by force would take more than even the horrors of war. Another subtler, more evil tool was required.

However subtle were its methods, the effect of the Inquisition on the entire fabric of medieval society was anything but subtle. It was like a battering ram, overturning both law and justice at their foundations in order to assail men in the privacy of their minds and the sanctity of their beliefs:



Torquemada persuading Ferdinand and Isabella to bring the Inquisition to Spain

Convictions of thought crimes being difficult to secure, the Inquisition used procedures banned in other courts, and so contravened town charters, written and customary laws, and virtually every aspect of established jurisprudence. The names of hostile witnesses were withheld, anonymous informers were used, the accusations of personal enemies were allowed, the accused were denied the right of defense, or of defending counsel; and there was no appeal... The prosecution could use the evidence of criminals, heretics, children and accomplices, usually forbidden in other courts.²

The Spanish Inquisition

Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain at first resisted those calling for the Inquisition to finally come to Spain. Isabella’s confessor, the infamous Tomás de Torquemada, finally found a way to persuade Ferdinand. It was money. A deal in Spain’s favor would be cut with the Pope, yielding to the crown all lands

and property seized from heretics in Spain. When Ferdinand added his voice to the others clamoring for the Inquisition, Isabella finally yielded. And so did the Pope.

Spain had already forced both Jews and Moors to convert or perish,³ so the Inquisition there was devoted above all to punishing these “converts” for any lapses in their newfound “faith.” Hunts were made for any habits indicating loyalty to their old faiths, including whether smoke rose from someone’s chimney on the Sabbath, for the Mosaic Law required that no fires be kindled on that day.

In a lesson taken straight from the pagan Roman Empire, the Inquisition hired informers (called “familiares”) whose job it was to spy on the people. So pervasive was the scrutiny that in 1538 a man wrote:

Nobody in this life is without his policeman... Bit by bit many rich people leave the country... in order not to live all their lives in fear and trembling... for continued fear is a worse death than the sudden demise.⁴

The Inquisition presumed the guilt of everyone arrested. As if in proof of this, nearly everyone *was* found guilty. Torture was the standard method to acquire the “evidence” needed for conviction. The shock lingers to the present that those who proclaimed belief in the Son of God tortured and murdered tens of thousands, while imprisoning, maiming, and impoverishing hundreds of thousands more.

The detailed records show that in nearly every guilty plea the defendants said, under torture, exactly what the inquisitors wanted them to say. Yet even the secular courts of Europe knew that confessions exacted under torture, even under the threat of torture, were unreliable and hence were no indication of

guilt. Their judges were more righteous and just than the priests.

The Spanish Inquisition “raised the dead” in a grim sort of way – by unearthing the bodies of dead heretics in order to put them on trial, convict, and “punish” them. This procession of dead bodies through the streets was one of the most ghastly sights of the infamous *auto-da-fé* rituals.

What a strange spectacle, found in no other court in the civilized world, is the spectacle of a vengeance which reaches into the grave to exhaust its fury... against a person whose soul has passed beyond the inquisitor's reach.⁵

One can only ponder in shocked disbelief the minds that would place corpses

on trial, as though the soul and spirit of the person were still present.

Responsibility

Apologists for the Catholic Church now try to absolve themselves of the actual killing and burning of heretics, but Innocent III had been very clear from the beginning of his rule:

We give you a strict command that, by whatever means you can, you destroy all these heresies and expel from your diocese all who are polluted with them. You shall exercise the rigor of the ecclesiastical power against them and all those who have made themselves suspected by associating with them. They may not appeal from your judgments, and if necessary, you may cause the princes and people to suppress them with the sword.⁶

It was the popes themselves, functioning as the Vicar of Christ, who were the authorities behind the Inquisitions. They were greater than the kings of the earth. All those murders down through history were commanded and carried out by the authority of the Pope. Their motto was, “It is better for a hundred innocent people to die than for one heretic to go free.” This horrendous doctrine was maintained through pope after pope. Although Pope John Paul II apologized recently for the guilt of “the sons of the church” in the horrors of history, he was careful to uphold the innocence and purity of the Church and the papacy. But that Church is no more innocent than Innocent III, stained with the blood of many martyrs. ☩



¹ Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, Atheneum, 1976, p. 252. The city resisted rather than yield up 220 of her citizens deemed to be heretics. The common bond of decency was more important to them. ² Johnson, p. 253-254. ³ It is true they were sometimes given the option of exile, which hundreds of thousands took, usually leaving their possessions behind. ⁴ Quoted in Henry Kamen, *Inquisition and Society in Spain in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, p. 164 ⁵ John O'Brian, *The Inquisition*, New York: Macmillan, 1973, p. 21 ⁶ *On Heresy: Letter to the Archbishop of Auch*, 1198 (*Medieval Sourcebook*, Innocent III: Letters on Papal Policies)

Fathers of the Protestant Reformation



Martin Luther, John Calvin, and several others are recognized as the fathers of the Protestant reformation.¹ The word *fathers* used this way means those who originate or institute something. They surely did so, bringing about one of world history's most important revolutions. They split up the international Church of Rome and replaced it with national, or state churches, mainly in northern Europe. They are known as the *magisterial* reformers.

For historians and theologians, this name serves two purposes. First, it identifies their cooperation with the princes and governing authorities of their realms, which they thought necessary for the success of their reforms. Secondly, it distinguishes them from the radical reformers, who are much less well-known figures – men like the Anabaptists Conrad Grebel and Menno Simons.

These radicals, also known as *evangelicals*, had departed from the historic foundation of Christianity laid by the emperor Constantine and the popes as to the proper relationship between church, state, and society. What had happened twelve centuries before with Constantine was (and in many ways, still is) the normal condition by which Christians judge their participation in the world.

One historian said much about it in these few words:

The conversion of Constantine had aligned the Roman Empire with the Christian Church in a working partnership. But the empire, as the earlier institution, had changed the less of the two; in some ways it had barely changed at all – it had replaced one State religion by another. The Church, by contrast, had changed a great deal.

It had adapted itself to its State and imperial function; it had assumed worldly ways and attitudes, and accepted a range of secular responsibilities; and in the emperor it had acquired a protector and governor whom it might influence but could not directly control. Hence the Church, by marrying the imperial Roman State, was necessarily influenced by changes which overcame that State in the fifth and sixth centuries.²

The magisterial reformers had not departed from this foundation, merely seeking to reform the church in matters of doctrine. As a consequence, they were continuously caught up, as the church of the fifth and sixth centuries was, with the fortunes and changes affecting the worldly powers they were aligned with. While seeking to be advisers to princes on matters of conscience, they were transformed, as many before (and after), into “relievers” of conscience.

Elector Johann Friedrich was prone to solicit advice from Luther and Luther's colleagues only after policy had been set: The original function of the Wittenburg opinion, to advise con-

science, was increasingly transformed by Johann Friedrich into the function of relieving consciences, as a religious sanction and assurance.³

If such was the case of Luther, what was the situation with less influential reformers?⁴ The radicals harkened back to an earlier time, seeing no Scriptural basis for such involvement — even collusion — with the state. So they reaped, as oth-

¹ They are counterparts to the early church fathers, men like Augustine and Ambrose, who are widely accepted by the Catholic Church as authoritative witnesses to its teachings and practices. ² Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, Atheneum Macmillan Publishing Company, 1976, p. 126 ³ Marc Edwards, Jr., *Luther's Last Battles, Politics and Polemics*, Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 205.



Martin Luther

ers had before them, the same treatment at the hands of the state and its church. The radicals viewed such reformers as hopelessly compromised, protected and upheld, as they were, by the power of the state.

On their part, the magisterial reformers viewed the radicals as dangers to societies, if not heretics. Using their connections with the princes, they caused the radicals to be hunted down. Thousands were put to death in a persecution that both Protestants and Catholics could agree on. The principle issues, but not the only significant ones that caused them to kill the radicals, were their opposition to the state church, infant baptism, and war. The magisterial reformers clung to these as essential supports in maintaining order in both society and church.

But there were others for whom this was only half a reformation... The "evangelicals" were the largest and most important group. They desired a more thorough reform in the light of the Bible. They rejected the idea of a state church and infant baptism, which inevitably accompanied it. Their opponents seized on their practice of 'rebaptizing' those baptized in infancy and called them 'Anabaptists' or 'Rebaptizers.' This was a convenient label as rebaptism was already a capital offense.⁵ The Anabaptists were bitterly persecuted and largely exterminated, but their ideas survived

and have become steadily more influential."⁶

The effects of the reformers' accommodation with the state (not to mention the Catholic Church for a millennium before them) defines Christian history in a way that is profoundly at odds with the witness of the New Testament church. No search of the Scriptures can find infant baptism, state church, taking oaths, believers waging wars, or even the clergy-laity system that marks all the great divisions of Christianity – Eastern, Roman, and Protestant. Yet there have always been those (out of the mainstream to be sure) who cannot believe in things that are not in the Scriptures, no matter how well accepted they are culturally.

By Your Words You shall be Justified

The beginnings of the Reformation are well known. Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Church in 1517. His prodigious output of tracts, books, and even songs, propagated by the printing press, changed the world.⁷ Not least by his translation of the Bible into the German of the people, he transformed Germany, which bears his mark to this day. John Calvin wrote his first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536. His awesome intellect influenced the world of the Reformation at least as much as Luther's.

The beginnings of the radical reformation are not well known.⁸ In the very early years of the Reformation, in the city of Zurich, the radicals and the mainstream reformers enjoyed a brief time of fellowship.

In the early years of the reformation, Zwingli worked hand in hand with a group of radicals — Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz and others. They maintained a common front until 1523. But the issues of the state church and infant baptism divided them. It seems that Zwingli himself opposed infant baptism for a time — but drew back when he realized that it is essential if a state church is to be maintained. The radicals' opposition to infant baptism hardened and in 1525, after a public disputation with Zwingli, they began to (re)baptize believers. The town council responded by ordering the exile of all those rebaptized, and in the following year the death penalty was introduced for rebaptizing. In January 1527 Felix Manz was executed by drowning.⁹



Ulrich Zwingli

⁴ In a more recent example, the powerful and popular Pope John Paul II worked with Presidents Reagan and Bush in a highly cooperative and effective fashion in bringing down the Iron Curtain. Yet his support of American goals there and in Central and South America did not matter much when he attempted to influence American policy in Iraq in Gulf Wars I and II. The iron of the state prevails over the clay of the church unless the state is very weak. See Carl Bernstein's and Marco Politi's *His Holiness: John Paul II & the History of Our Time*, Doubleday, 1996. ⁵ The Justinian Code, published in three books from A.D. 533-565, forms the basis for the law of many European nations to this day. One provision, no longer observed, mandated the death penalty for the "crimes" of denial of the doctrine of the Trinity and denial of infant baptism. ⁶ Tony Lane, *The Lion Book of Christian Thought* (Lion Publishing Company, 1984), page 121 ⁷ His collected works in English are fifty-five large volumes long, the last being an index. He is probably the most prolific author in the history of the world, writing a book or pamphlet every two weeks, on average, his entire adult life. ⁸ The victors in every struggle write the histories, dominate the universities, and control the media. They lay claim not merely to the battlefield, but to the future. ⁹ Tony Lane, quoted in "A Historical Survey of Baptism" by B. Gordon at solagrati.org/article.cfm?id=97

A most unusual event forced the “hardening” of the radicals’ position: the wife of Conrad Grebel had a baby, which they did not want to baptize! The City Council ordered all families to baptize their children within eight days or leave Zurich. Thus, a great movement was born. They suffered relentless persecution for their opposition to the pillars necessary to uphold the state church. Conrad Grebel was soon imprisoned for life for his actions.¹⁰

Luther finally took a decisive stand against them in 1531 over the issue of whether believers could rise in church and interrupt the preacher. This was, in his opinion, “the sinner’s right from the pit of hell,” and “even though it is terrible to view,” he gave his blessing to the death sentence for the Anabaptists issued by the princes on March 31, 1527.

They called this the “sinner’s right” and calmly implied that they, when moved by inner conviction, had as great a right to speak and to act as any pastor, any priest, any reformer or bishop or pope.¹¹

Luther’s chief concern was that the Anabaptists “brought to nothing the office of preaching the Word.” He cared not that he indicted Paul in this, for the apostle had *instructed* the members of his churches to stand up and speak when one of them had a revelation, inspiration or teaching. When this happened,



Paul taught, the one already speaking should *sit down!*

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification... But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. (1 Corinthians 14:26,30)

This was not the first time in Christian history that people were executed for obeying the Word of God by those who were disobeying it. While the contrast between the disobedience of the orthodox and the obedience of the unorthodox has been a frequent occurrence – almost defining the two, one could say – seldom has the contrast been so extreme as in this instance. Over the twenty following years, no less than 116 laws were passed in the German lands of Europe that made the “Anabaptist heresy” a capital offense.

What will a man die for?

“Stranger than fiction,” the old saying goes about the truth. The tales of history and the events of today prove this to be true, practically on a daily basis. There is a man unique in all history: burned in effigy¹² for heresy by the Catholics and burned in reality by the Protestants!

The sentence of the Inquisition against Michael Servetus in the Catholic city of Vienne, France, that “he should be burned at a slow fire until his body was reduced to ashes” was carried out, at the instigation of John Calvin, by the Protestant city of Geneva, Switzerland.¹³ And burned at the stake for what? The Protestant historian Roland Bainton would write in his book, “Travails of Religious Liberty” that “he put the adjective in the wrong place.”¹⁴

The judges wrote that Servetus deserved to die for dividing the church of God and thereby ruining many souls. This, of course, was exactly the charge the Catholic Inquisition made in their death sentences against Protestants and



Anabaptists. For both, such spiritual ruin was tantamount to murder. The fact that both could not be right at the same time did not bother either the Protestants or the Catholics. The possibility that maybe neither were didn’t even occur to them. The endless possibilities of interpreting theological truths did not give them pause that perhaps they shouldn’t enforce their beliefs on others.

The end was neither merciful nor swift. What was exacted of him “for setting yourself against the divine majesty” calls into profound question how those who could do such things could know, in any way, shape, or form, the Prince of Peace.

A crown of straw and leaves sprinkled with sulphur was placed upon his head. His body was attached to the stake with an iron chain. His book was tied to his arm. A stout rope was wound four or five times about his neck. He asked that it should not be further twisted. When the executioner brought the fire before his face he gave such a shriek that all the people were horror-stricken. As he lingered, some threw on wood. In a fearful waft he cried, “O Jesus, Son of the Eternal God, have pity on me!” At the end of half an hour he died.¹⁵

¹⁰ He escaped with the help of friends and died less than a year later of the plague (1526).

¹¹ Peter Hoover, *The Secret of the Strength*, Benchmark Press ¹² *Effigy* — a likeness of a person, often roughly and insultingly made. ¹³ Roland Bainton, *Hunted Heretic*, p. 3, 165 ¹⁴ Roland Bainton, *The Travail of Religious Liberty: Nine Autobiographical Studies*, (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1951), p. 94 ¹⁵ *Hunted Heretic*, p. 212

William Farel, Calvin's mentor, and the man who persuaded him to make Geneva his home, steps into Servetus' story at this point. He accompanied Servetus to the stake, pleading with him "openly to admit his errors and confess that Christ is the eternal Son of God."

Do you see the turn of phrase for which Michael Servetus died?

In Conclusion

The magisterial reformers believed that the support of secular, worldly power was necessary for the success of their reformations.¹⁶ Governments punish criminals by the sword. With Christian involvement in government, matters of conscience – even of private beliefs – become criminal matters. This had been the case since Constantine. None of the magisterial reformers objected to this. In fact, they supported such authoritarian and intolerant governments enthusiastically. They saw societies filled with a variety of religious sects as the great danger lurking in freedom of conscience.

Lending all the power of their persuasion and prestige as men of God to their governments, these men supported, with very few exceptions, the decisions, policies, and even wars of their rulers. Or, as not infrequently happened, they urged on their rulers and their societies to shed blood, either in religious persecution or war. Calvin taught that mercy is not allowed in the defense of good doctrine and the punishment of bad doctrine:

Whoever shall maintain that wrong is done to heretics and blasphemers in punishing them makes himself an accomplice in their crime... There is no question here of man's authority; it is God who speaks... We spare not kin nor blood of any, and forget all humanity when the matter is to combat for His glory.¹⁷

This was published after the execution of Michael Servetus.

Among his many calls to arms, Luther's most famous, which also contains an interesting doctrine of works salvation, was against the peasants of Germany:

Stab, beat, strangle to death whoever can. If you lose your life in doing so, blessed are you; you can never attain to a more blessed death. For you die in obedience to the divine word and command.¹⁸

In his famous "Table Talk" – notes of conversations around the table in his house, Luther

commented on the war.

Preachers are the biggest killers of all. For they stir up the rulers to resolutely carry out their duties and to punish pests. I killed all the peasants in the riot; all of their blood is on my neck. But I blame it on our Lord God; it is He who commanded me to speak thus.¹⁹

It is easy to be offended by the many extreme and radical things Luther said and miss the power and influence they had in his day — and that they still have in our day. Of course, such exhortations to pick up the sword are not new for Christians. Neither is the credit — or the blame, depending on one's point of view — for inciting bloodshed. Pope Urban II ignited the fire that burned through eight crusades in his call to arms in 1095.²⁰

Many of us grew up as patriotic Americans who made, even in this day, a strong connection between God and country. So it is hard, even at the distance of centuries, to ask the question, "How could the Prince of Peace be served by so much bloodshed?" If we were to ask it, then inevitably our thoughts should carry us to the present day, where it is natural and easy to assume that every use of the sword by our nation is justified — if not divinely sanctioned. And so has every generation justified the sword, and in many nations, religious persecution.

Martin Luther often condemned the pope as the antichrist. Protestants used to say this a lot, but it is politically incorrect today. But what could be more contrary to Christ than Luther's calls for violence and death against the Jews, the Anabaptists, and his outright calls for war against the Catholics and the Turks? What could be more antichristian than to attach the name of Christ to war and wealth, or as cynics put it, "God, gold, and guns"? 🐘

By Grace through Faith?

Every attempt of men to bring heaven to earth through law — *and not through grace* — has ended up freely shedding blood to do so.

So the question must be asked of all sincere believers: were Calvin, Luther, Zwingli, and many others, correct in their view that heretics should be executed? And what does it say about them if they were wrong? Calvin even counseled other sovereigns to execute heretics! He wrote King Henry the Eighth, "It is better to burn a few [Anabaptists] at the stake, than for thousands to burn in hell."

If it was right to execute heretics back then, then why is it not right now, also? This is what many people fear whenever talk of making America a *Christian nation* comes up. On the other hand, if it is wrong to kill heretics now, was it not wrong then?

So, what then is the condition of the tree from which today's mainstream Christianity has branched forth? This is no light issue. The answers to these questions can help determine which of the two women spoken of in the Book of Revelation each of us is a part of: the Bride of Messiah (Revelation 19:7-8) or the Harlot drunk with the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:6). By this criterion, of which woman were the Magisterial Reformers part?

¹⁶ Edwards, p. 208: "Through compromise and accommodation to political realities, [Luther] tried to maintain his influence in order to preserve his central insights into Christian faith." ¹⁷ Quoted in J. W. Allen, "History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century," (London, 1951), page 87 ¹⁸ "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants," Werke, Der dritte Teil (Jena, Germany: Donatum Richtzenhain, 1560), vol. 3, pp. 124-125 (tr. Andreas Merz, 1997) ¹⁹ Dr. Martin Luthers Werke - Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden (Table Speeches), (Weimar: O. Brenner, 1914), vol. 3, p. 75 (tr. Andreas Merz, 1997) ²⁰ See the article, "God Wills It!" on page 22 of this paper.

THE SEVEN THESES OF THE ANABAPTISTS

The ninety-five theses Martin Luther posted on the door of Wittenberg Church on October 31, 1517, are very famous. They began a revolution in world affairs religiously, politically, and even socially. Four years later he was called to account before the greatest spiritual and secular powers on earth: representatives of the Pope and Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Luther's answer still rings out as a monument to the freedom of conscience and the dignity of the individual. Indeed, his stand that day has been called one of the greatest moments in history:

Unless I am convicted by scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me, Amen!

Just ten years after Luther's ninety-five theses shook the world, another young priest posted seven theses on the door of the same cathedral in Worms in which

Luther was called to account by the Imperial Diet.¹ The seven articles of Jacob Kautz were posted in exactly the same style and for exactly the same purpose as Luther's ninety-five theses — to stimulate discussion and debate. However, Kautz and his movement, the

Anabaptists, met the fate the Pope desired for Luther's Reformation also — fire and the sword.

The Threat of the Anabaptists

They achieved the dubious and dangerous distinction of being labeled heretics by both Catholics and Protestants. And why?

This was because their radical theology was a threat to the existing social order in which church and state were collaborators. This radical criticism of the very structure of society resulted in the unrelenting attempts of Catholics and Protestants to stamp it out.²

To understand why they were viewed that way takes us to the heart of Christian theology and its age-old insistence on encompassing all of society in an authoritarian embrace



Anabaptist baptism

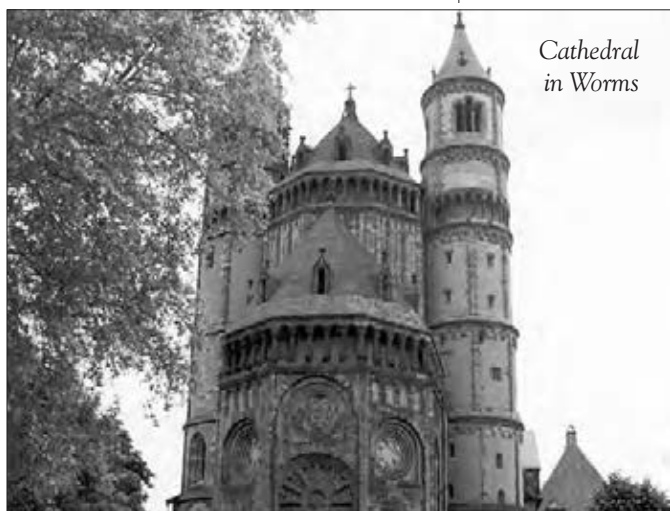
— no exceptions allowed. And in many ways, even today in nations where church and state are separate, this fundamental world view remains in Christian theology, and its expression may well see the darkness of night once again.

Infant Baptism and Free Will

Jacob Kautz and two others, Hans Denck and Ludwig Haetzer, defended the seven articles in the town square of Worms on June 13, 1527. The third thesis they had posted on the door of the cathedral struck at what many saw as a pillar of society — infant baptism. One was tied from birth to his church and to his state. But these men objected:

The baptism of infants is not of God. It is against God and his teaching given to us through Christ Jesus, his beloved Son.³

This rejection of historic Christian doctrine was founded upon two things. First, the baptism of infants was found nowhere in the New Testament, and secondly, infants could make no free choice in the matter. Anabaptists could



Cathedral in Worms

¹ Official government and religious council. ² F.F. Hiebert, "The Atonement in Anabaptist Theology," *Direction Journal*, Vol. 30, #2, p. 122-138. ³ Peter Hoover, *Secret of the Strength*, Benchmark Press, Shippensburg, PA (chapter 7).

Burning an Anabaptist



not stand Luther's insistence that man's will was enslaved, either to God or to the devil, and man could not freely choose whom he would serve.⁴ This was a point of contention between not only the Reformers and the Anabaptists, but between the Reformers and the Catholics.

The Protest against the Protestants

The essence of what the Anabaptists said, which got them in so much trouble, was that the *life* of believers had to be *different* or else the Reformation was just a farce. People had to live their convictions out. Their challenge to the Reformers in these Seven Articles was simple: "How can you say all these things and not live them?"

The sixth thesis of Worms said that if they weren't living them out, then all that Christ had done for them was of no value. In other words, the Anabaptists taught that whoever did not follow Christ and obey His commands did not believe in Him. For them, Christ may as well not have come:

*Jesus from Nazareth did not suffer for us in any way, he did nothing to satisfy God for us, as long as we do not follow him in the way he went before us — unless we follow the commands of the Father, like Christ follows them — every man according to his ability.*⁵

This was revolutionary talk! Two weeks later, the councilors of Worms

expelled the "troublemakers" from their midst. They dared to expose the Reformation's nakedness, like the child in Hans Christian Anderson's famous parable, *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Just as the foolish emperor's "new clothes" were imaginary, so was the Reformation's

connection to Christ. It was, in their view, only adorned with the intellectual doctrines of clever men like Luther.

Naturally, the Reformers responded on the basis of theology, not on whether their religious instruction made any difference in the lives of the people. Indeed, it was an essential aspect of their theology that the Reformation need make no radical difference in the lives of the people. Their works were irrelevant to God. Only their "faith" mattered. To expect the Reformation to make the people more holy or godly would be advocating "works righteousness." This charge was hurled at the Anabaptists.

Church, State, School, and Army

There were areas where Luther *did* want his reformation to make a difference in society. One of them was compulsory education. He compared it to the state's supposed right of appropriating a man's life and compelling him to bear arms and kill other men in war. If the state could do one, it could do the other.

But I hold that it is the duty of the temporal authority to compel its subjects to keep their children in

*school, especially the promising ones we mentioned above... If the government can compel such of its subjects as are fit for military service to carry pike and musket, man the ramparts, and do other kinds of work in time of war, how much more can it and should it compel its subjects to keep their children in school.*⁶

The state could compel citizens in this manner because to Luther the citizen was the property of the state. So you can see how Reformation theology would be very useful to princes! In fact, the Reformation, especially that part of it under Luther's leadership, ended up exalting the authority of the state even more than it was under Catholicism. He upheld in his teaching what scholars call "princely absolutism."

Because they taught that believers should imitate Christ and obey His commands (including the commands to lay down the sword, to not take oaths or serve in government), the Anabaptists were charged with preaching "works righteousness." Disobeying Christ's commands was not "works," but to put any urgency on obeying them was. For this heresy, the state churches, Catholic or Protestant, ruthlessly persecuted the Anabaptists.

Atonement

Underlying this charge against the Anabaptists was the theological issue of the atonement of Christ for sin. What was its nature? Or to put it another way, since the Reformers and Anabaptists believed similarly in many ways about the atonement, what was man's part? What was his response to the atoning sacrifice of Christ? Luther gives the typical Reformation response — man has no part in or response to atonement at all:

There was no counsel, help, or comfort until this only and eternal Son of

⁴ They were appalled by Luther's ascription to God of evil-doing, which Luther both did and denied doing in the same breath: "Here then you see, that, when God works in, and by, evil men, the evils themselves are inwrought, but yet, God cannot do evil, although He thus works the evils by evil men; because, being good Himself He cannot do evil; but He uses evil instruments, which cannot escape the sway and motion of His Omnipotence." (Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, Discussion: Second Part, Section 84. Luther was a master of the use of contradiction in his logic (and his life).

⁵ Hoover, *Secret of the Strength*, chapter 7. ⁶ Martin Luther, "Sermon, that children should be Kept to School." Luther's Works, Vol. 46 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967], pp. 213-57.

God in His unfathomable goodness had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness, and came from heaven to help us. Those tyrants and jailers, then, are all expelled now, and in their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation, and has delivered us poor lost men from the jaws of hell, has won us, made us free, and brought us again into the favor and grace of the Father, and has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection, that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness.⁷

This view of man's redemption as something doctrinal, relating to man's legal status before God, as essentially something done to him, profoundly shaped Reformation theology. But such a view of the atonement was inadequate or insufficient for the Anabaptists, since,

It concentrated chiefly on Christ's death and had been reduced to a passive or forensic doctrine which concerned only a change in humanity's legal status before God. It was an external benefit bestowed by God regardless of human involvement. No wonder that Luther and Calvin who followed this line of thinking resorted to the Augustinian doctrine of predestination.⁸

The benefit of Christ's atonement was bestowed on those who, like the citizens in Luther's Reformation, had no more choice in the matter than they did in schooling their children or waging war. So Luther quite rightly regarded his book, *The Enslaved Will*, as his greatest work, for it encapsulated his whole view of humanity's relationship with God and the devil. For the Anabaptists, such views of God and man were contrary to Scripture and abhorrent to conscience.

Atonement was far more than a legal transaction in the heavenly court. It meant "at-one-ment" with God and referred to all the ways in which God and humans have been reconciled through the work of Jesus Christ... In what way does the atonement bring God and humanity back together again? To them Christ was not only

redeemer, he was also example. The gospel was not only the good news of salvation but also a series of directives for the Christian on how to live, how to follow Christ the example. And in following Christ, humanity could be brought back into the life of God.⁹

Death of a Movement

Yet in the end the Anabaptists proved that they also lacked the power to overcome sin in their lives. Their keen understanding of Christ's work towards them and in them, which set them apart from their fellow Christians (who murdered them), did not, in the end, keep them from relentlessly dividing. Whatever kept their groups together through the intense persecution they endured from

without was not sufficient to deliver them from the disputes within. The evangelistic fire was quenched and they took their ranks among the legions of Christian laity silenced under their preachers and their doctrines.

But the memory of the often noble lives and courage of the Anabaptists serve as stepping stones for those who would someday go beyond them to restore all things that have been lost. For all things must be restored, beginning with the good news. The Scriptures promise it will happen.¹⁰ ♣

⁷ Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, Part Second, Of the Creed, Article II. ⁸ Hiebert, "The Atonement in Anabaptist Theology" ⁹ *Ibid* ¹⁰ Mark 9:11-12

The "New Zion" of Münster

Just as the specter of Jonestown brands anyone who tries to live communally today, a far more serious tragedy darkened the Anabaptist movement in the sixteenth century. Anabaptist radicals seized the city of Münster in February 1534, to create, by force, a "New Zion." It was actually a reign of terror marked by enforced communism, forced "re-baptism," polygamy upheld by the sword, and brutal enforcement of all laws, many by execution on the spot. The Münster commune lasted only a year, but its reverberations haunted Anabaptists for many decades. It was the charge always hurled at them, and it made *Anabaptist* the dirtiest name one could be called in Europe.

Anabaptists maintained then, and historians agree now, that the incident was entirely out of character for their movement, which is historically known for renouncing the use of the sword. Catholics and Protestants of that day, however, saw the incident as revealing the true nature of Anabaptism, if left unchecked. And to check it they devoted great energies in hopes of utterly destroying it. Most of the Anabaptists they killed didn't resist them, believing, unlike the radicals of Münster, that they were to imitate Christ, the Lamb of God.

The persecution of the Anabaptists is one of the darkest episodes of European history. Accounts of it fill their record of the time, *Martyr's Mirror*. The "New Zion" of Münster, however, was another mirror. It mirrored what was happening all over Europe!

Without justifying this evil, however, it must also be pointed out that the Münsterites simply were doing what was being done by Protestants and Catholics all over Europe which was the coercion of people toward a religious faith with the power of the sword.¹

Judged so evil that the bodies and skeletons of the leaders were displayed in cages for centuries, against whom do they bear witness? Against the few militant Anabaptists who used coercion, or against the society that hung them there for practicing the same coercion on a continental scale? The victors write the history and have the privilege of being the pot that calls the kettle black!

¹ Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant* [Waterloo, ON: Conrad, 1981]

TILL KINGDOM COME

The Pilgrims were part of a greater movement – stretching back to Wycliffe and Tyndale – to place the Scriptures into the hands of the common man. Yet what they tried to do with those Scriptures is virtually unknown, even though their moving story is told year after year in America. Vivid images remain with us: fleeing persecution in England, leaving Holland, crossing the perilous sea, settling in Plymouth, suffering heroically through their first winter, receiving gracious help from the Indians.

For most of us, their story ends a few months later with the first Thanksgiving. They went on with a life we know very little about, and eventually this great and free nation was born. It is not too clear in the textbooks anymore, but somehow the two – their life and our nation – are connected. These brave but simple and humble men and women had more in their hearts than the great idea we associate with them: religious freedom.

That was part of it, but they came for more than a safe haven for their children from the worldly temptations of Holland. They actually came to recreate on the shores of America the life of the first church – what the world saw in Jerusalem in the first century. We tend to see “the Pilgrims” in a certain way that makes it hard for us to understand what their life together meant to *them*.

They shared all things in common, not just as a business arrangement with their financial backers, but as an expression of their fervent faith. They were out to bring the “Kingdom of God” to earth. At the least, they sought to be “stepping stones” for those who might come after them, “one small candle” that “may light a thousand.”¹ But they wanted to be stepping-stones to somewhere, a *light* on the path there.



In their own estimation, *they failed*. They didn't become what they wanted to, but settled for something far less. This was their sorrow, their heartache, and their profound disappointment. They dreamed much more greatly than we have understood, even though the whole story is written in Bradford's own journal, *Of Plymouth Plantation*. In their own words, the Pilgrim story raises profound questions about the dream, the cost, and even the possibility of bringing the Kingdom of God to earth.

That such a goal filled the hearts of a group of English countrymen is perhaps the greatest wonder of the story, which begins, in this sense, long before any of them were born. It begins with the “morning star” of the Reformation, John Wycliffe, whose work was continued a century later by William Tyndale. Tyndale's translation remains the foundation of English translations of the Bible to this day. In them burned a fire to purify the church and to give the common man the word of God. For many centuries it had lain hidden in the hands of the clergy and in the dead languages of scholars. They thought that perhaps if the common people had the Bible, the first, pure love of the primitive church might blossom on the earth again.

What will the plowboy do with the Word of God?

In the most famous incident of his life, Tyndale insists on the necessity of the common man knowing the Scriptures

and no longer being held in ignorance. When confronted by a clergyman as to what was wrong with their ignorance, since they have the Church to teach them, Tyndale cuts to the heart of the matter. What about the times when the pope is at variance with God's laws? The priest responds that it would be better to do without God's laws than the pope's. In the answer that shaped his life, and secured its violent end, Tyndale vowed, “*I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scripture than you do.*”

Some seventy years after his death, that plowboy – that *everyman* – joined a group of Separatists in Scrooby, England. They were the most radical of the Puritans who believed in complete separation from the established church.

That twelve-year-old boy was William Bradford, whose devotion to the cause cost him the loss of his family, for they disowned him. But his decision meant much more than alienating his family. It placed him at odds with the governing authorities of the English church and state, at whose hands he and the others suffered persecution.

Bradford saw this treatment as nothing less than the opposition of Satan. As he would write in his journal, the evil one was “*loath his kingdom should go down, the truth prevail and the churches of God*

¹ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Random House (paperback edition), 1981, pp. 26, 262.

*revert to their ancient purity and recover their primitive order, liberty, and beauty.*²

The desire to see the churches restored to how they were at first, back to their “primitive order,” was the powerful motivation that sustained the Pilgrims through all their difficulties. It is why they were given the despised name of “Separatists” and known as radicals and driven out of England. It set them on a course to the “wilderness” and “strange lands” and a life filled with “weal and woe.”³ They knew blessings and the keenest of sufferings in a way those who safely adventure less in life will never know.

It was through Bradford’s eyes that history would see the Pilgrims, as his journal, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, forms our chief record of their remarkable life. His poetry and history reveal the deep stream from which this spiritual movement flowed, and the rocks over which it floundered, and upon which it died.

The depth of the bond these men and women had, and the cause to which they dedicated their life, can be glimpsed in this passage from Bradford’s journal, concerning their time in Leyden, Holland:

Being thus settled (after many difficulties) they enjoyed many years in a comfortable situation, enjoying much sweet and delightful society and spiritual comfort together in the ways of God, under the able ministry and prudent government of Mr. John Robinson and Mr. William Brewster. . . So as they grew in knowledge and other gifts and

*graces of the Spirit of God, and lived together in peace and love and holiness and many came unto them from different parts of England, so as they grew a great congregation.*⁴

Of this great congregation, fifty or so would adventure the journey to America in 1620 after lengthy discussion of the dangers and the costs, and the rewards. Concerning the hope that filled them, Bradford wrote:

*Lastly (and which was not least), a great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancing the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work.*⁵

Of all that happened to them there, many books are written and many stories are told. It is part of America’s rich heritage of freedom and courage. Many even take note of what they say was their brief flirtation with communism. Later editors even use the word to subtitle that portion of Bradford’s journal. Yet such was not their word for their way. Rather, it was

their *common course*, which was to them the *ancient purity and primitive order, liberty, and beauty* of the first church, where “all who believed were together and had all things in common.”⁶

The End of the Common Course, AD 1623

After sufferings greater than most of us have known, they faced another lean year, with little prospect of supplies coming to them from England. One issue above all dominated discussion – their “common course” was not working. “So they began to think how they might raise as much corn as they could, and obtain a better crop than they had done, that they might not still thus languish in misery. At length, after much debate of things, the Governor [Bradford writes of himself] gave way that they should set corn every man for his own particular, and in that regard trust to themselves.”⁷

And this decision “*had very good success, for it made all hands very industrious. . . and gave far better content.*”

Among those who had survived those first terrible years only a few were left for whom the common good made them *very industrious* and gave them *far better content*. Bradford notes very wisely that

² Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, pp. 1-2 ³ And at the end of his life, Bradford would say those things had been “the means of grace” and through which “a pilgrim passed I, to and fro.” Poem written on his deathbed in 1656, which may be read at: www.pilgrimhall.org/bradfordwilliampoem.htm ⁴ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 17-18. ⁵ Bradford, p. 26 ⁶ Acts 2:44 ⁷ All quotes in this section about the common course: Bradford, p. 132-134





such a “common course and condition” will not work among men, as generation after generation of utopians, socialists, and communists have learned to their hurt (And to the hurt of countless others). Bradford says they dream that the “taking away of property and bringing in community into a commonwealth would make them happy and flourishing.” Then he tellingly adds, “as if they were wiser than God.”

For this community (so far as it was) was found to breed much confusion and discontent and retard much employment that would have been to their benefit and comfort. For the young men, that were most able and fit for labor and service, did repine that they should spend their time and strength to work for other men’s wives and children without any recompense... And for men’s wives to be commanded to do service for other men, as dressing their meat, washing their clothes, etc., they deemed it a kind of slavery, neither could many husbands well brook it... Let none object this is men’s corruption, and nothing to the course itself. I answer, seeing all men have this corruption in them, God in His wisdom saw another course fitter for them.”

No, they couldn’t live this way. They could separate from the corrupted church, cross the ocean to escape the corrupt societies, but they could not escape the corruption of man’s condition. Nor have others been able to live this way. All who try strike hard against selfish human nature. Alas, the “common course

and condition” is the way of dreamers... but still, Bradford writes: charge nothing against “the course itself.” The pain he felt at giving way to the grim taskmaster of necessity he hid away. There was no time to think of it with their survival at stake. But the ache and the doubt and the sorrow never went away.

Had they abandoned the gospel way, the “primitive pattern” and settled for something much less? That it was God’s way for men today he had no doubt, for creation and the nature of mankind bore witness to it,⁸ but long ago, when the church was young, in the days of their “ancient purity... order, liberty, and beauty,” they had done it. What had changed from the days of the apostles? Why couldn’t they do it now? Bradford turned away from the question, unable to face the answer.

The Fair Pretense of Necessity

Time, diligent labor, and the chances of history – all these brought prosperity, finally, to the little band of Pilgrims. The second decade of their existence, the 1630s, saw the Great Migration of Puritans fleeing England to

establish their own theocracy in the Bay Colony just to their north. Trading with them changed everything:

And no man now thought he could live, except he had lots of cattle and a great deal of ground to keep them; all striving to increase their flocks.⁹

But as the Pilgrims spread out, Bradford recorded in his sorrow:

The church also was divided, and those who had lived so long together in Christian & comfortable fellowship now parted and suffered many divisions. And thus was this poor church left, like an ancient mother, grown old, and forsaken of her children.

Sometime after 1650, historians believe, several years after his last entry, Bradford was reading over his journal. An old man then, he came upon a section he had written in 1617. As he read, his heart was pierced with sadness as it spoke of how his people had once been...

⁸ For more on this understanding, see *What about the Heathen?* on page 78 ⁹ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 281-282 (both quotes)



So that it is not with us as with other men whom small things can discourage or small discontentments cause to wish themselves home again. For we were a body in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant together, the violation of that bond was a serious matter. In that bond we held one another strongly tied to care for each other's good, and for the good of the whole...

Suddenly, the compromises they had made became blindingly clear to him. He took his pen to the original manuscript and penned words in the margin that are still legible. They tell us a great deal of the deep regret of Bradford's last days. His words ring out as a death knell through the bells of time, telling of a movement overcome by the very sins it strove to escape:

"O sacred bond, whilst inviolably preserved! How sweet and precious were the fruits that flowed from the same. But when this fidelity decayed, then their ruin approached. O, that the ancient members had not died or been dissipated (if it had been the will of God) or else that this holy care and constant faithfulness had still lived, and remained with those that survived, and were in times afterwards added unto them.

But (alas) that subtle serpent, the devil, has slyly wound himself among us under fair pretenses of necessity and the like, to untwist those sacred bonds and tried, and as it were insensibly by degrees to dissolve, or in great measure, to weaken the same.

I have been happy, in my first times, to see, and with much comfort to enjoy, the blessed fruits of this sweet communion, but now it is a part of my misery in old age, to find and feel the decay and want therefore (in a great measure) and with grief and sorrow of heart I lament and bewail the same. And for others' warning and admonition, and my own humiliation, I do here note the same.¹⁰

Many have taken Bradford's warning and learned his "lesson" not to share all things in common. But was he merely telling us that it doesn't work? If this is

truly what he meant, then the stepping stones the Pilgrims laid lead nowhere man has not already gone time and time again. But if the Pilgrims began to walk the way of the primitive church in *purity, order, liberty, and beauty*, as the believers in Acts 2 and 4 did; if they thought they were no longer natural men, bound to seek after all that the Gentiles seek after, but that by seeking first His Kingdom, God would supply all these things to them;¹¹ then anything less than what the Pilgrims adventured is far, far from the path of those stepping stones, in some great darkness away from the light of their one small candle.

Bradford's humility allowed him to face the reality of why their "common course and condition" ended: the devil prevailed over them, dividing them as he has always divided men, in the fear for their own lives and prosperity. If you feel his sorrow, then perhaps you will, like we did, hold the stones of Zion "dear, and have pity on its dust," and sense that now is the time for compassion and favor upon her.

You will arise and have compassion on Zion; for it is time to be gracious to her, for the appointed time has come. Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones and feel pity for her dust... He has regarded the prayer of the destitute and has not despised their prayer. This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.
(Psalm 102:13-14, 15-18, NAS)

King David wrote this long ago. He was speaking of the spiritual nation that would yet bear the fruit of the Kingdom and become the witness of the Kingdom of God to all the earth.¹² Its beginning will be nothing less than the place the early church began, which the Pilgrims had the courage to attempt, even if they lacked what they needed to finish.¹³ They will know that the belief in the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16, is realized in Acts 2:44-45:



For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16)

Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.
(Acts 2:44-45)

And they will understand that there is a way to know they have passed from death and into life:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.
(John 5:24)

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. (1 John 3:14)

Any spiritual movement not built on this foundation will see the gates of hell prevail against it, even as William Bradford saw happen to his Pilgrims. 🐾

¹⁰ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Introduction, p. xvi. ¹¹Matthew 6:31-33 ¹²Matthew 21:43 and 24:14 ¹³Luke 14:26-33

ROGER WILLIAMS Father of Religious Freedom in America

Roger Williams came to the New World in 1631 with much the same hopes as the first Pilgrim Separatists. His heart's desire was to see a pure church raised up, with no ties to the Church of England and its corruption, compromise, and oppression. Ironically that desire is what led to his banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony at the end of 1635. His outspoken zeal for "soul liberty" proved too radical for the Puritan leaders of the colony, who had brought with them the same spirit of religious intolerance from which they had fled.

Slipping away just before his arrest, Roger Williams fled into the wilderness and found refuge among the Indians. In later writings, Williams recalls how he was "*denied the common air to breathe... and almost without mercy and human compassion, exposed to winter miseries in a howling wilderness* [for fourteen weeks] *not knowing what bread or bed did mean.*" During this time, whatever shelter he found was in the dingy, smoky lodges of the Indians. Their hospitality to him in his time of need was something he sought to repay with kindness all the rest of his life.

In early 1636, Williams purchased land from the Indians and with a few friends founded a settlement they called *Providence Plantations*, which soon became a refuge for those "distressed of conscience." Williams eventually obtained a royal charter for the colony, which later became the State of Rhode Island, based on this mandate:

No person within the said colony, at any time hereafter, shall be anywise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any differences in opinion in matters of religion ... but that all persons may ... enjoy their own



Roger Williams fleeing arrest by the Puritans of Massachusetts

judgments and consciences in matters of religious concernments.

What is most significant about the royal charter is that it acknowledges at the foundation of Rhode Island's government two important principles: *republicanism* (democratic governments made up of representatives elected by its citizens) and *religious liberty*. These principles characterize our American government and are later expressed in both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

Neither republicanism nor religious liberty can be found in any of the charters of the other colonies in which the church and state were united. It is therefore easy to determine the original source of those principles which have protected our religious freedom and made America a refuge for the oppressed of every land. The nation's debt to Roger Williams is a debt that can never be canceled.

The Bloody Tenent

His bitter experience of the English Reformation, from the acrid stench of men burning at the stake in England to his banishment from Massachusetts, caused Roger Williams to write his famous *Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* in which he argued his case for something hitherto unseen in the Western world — the complete separation of church and state. The Puritan society of Massachusetts, through the civil magistrates, attempted to force its religious conscience on all who lived there. This was consistent with the whole bloody history of Christendom since the reign of Constantine. Such persecution revealed to Williams "that religion cannot be true which needs such instruments of violence to uphold it."¹

In the great struggle of his soul, Roger Williams finally came to the conclusion

¹ Roger Williams, *Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (1644), p. 139

that the true church had long ago ceased to exist on the earth:

*The Christian Church or Kingdom of the Saints, that Stone cut out of the mountain without human hands, (Daniel 2) now made all one with the mountain or Civil State, the Roman Empire, from whence it is cut or taken: Christ's lilies, garden and love, all one with the thorns, the daughters and wilderness of the World.*²

*Christianity fell asleep in the bosom of Constantine, and the laps and bosoms of those Emperors who professed the name of Christ.*³

So, when did the church die? The trail of evidence that proved the death of the church led from the Puritan society of New England all the way back to Constantine's nationalization of Christianity in the fourth century. Since that time, Williams concluded, the world had been under the dominion of the "anti-Christian" Roman Catholic Church.⁴ Gone was the cultural and spiritual wall that had separated His garden, the church, from the wilderness of the world.⁵ As legal scholar Timothy Hall described it:

*"According to Roger Williams, there was no garden to be protected any longer. Weeds grew where cultivated flowers once bloomed. He did not advocate a wall between church and state; he mourned the wall's destruction and the destruction of the church. There was no church left to be separated from the state. The most that true believers could do was wait in expectation that God would one day send apostles who would replant the garden."*⁶

There are some who credit Williams with founding the first Baptist church in America, and point to the fact of his baptism in Providence. It is true that Roger Williams and eleven friends formed the first Baptist church in America in Providence, Rhode Island. Ezekiel Holliman baptized Williams by immersion in March of 1639. He had followed Williams from the Salem church where Williams had briefly taught several years before. Williams then proceeded to baptize Holliman and ten friends. Shortly after this, however, he came to a most

remarkable conclusion, as one of those friends describes:

*I [Richard Scott] walked with him in the Baptists' way about three or four months, in which time he brake from the society, and declared at large the ground and reasons of it; that their baptism could not be right because it was not administered by an apostle. After that he set upon a way of seeking (with two or three other men that had dissented with him) by way of preaching and praying; and there he continued a year or two, till two of the three had left him.*⁷

Roger Williams' actions declared what his later words would make abundantly clear: all Christian baptisms were and are invalid, unless apostles, like those of the first-century church, administered them. Roger Williams expressed this in his radical statement regarding the conversion of the Indians of New England:

*How readily I could have brought the whole Country to have observed one day in seven; ... to have received a Baptism ... to have come to a stated Church meeting, maintained priests and forms of prayer, and a whole form of Anti-christian worship in life and death ... Why have I not brought them to such a conversion as I speak of?⁸ I answer, woe be to me, if I call light darkness, and darkness light ... woe be to me if I call that conversion unto God, which is indeed subversion of the souls of millions in Christendom, from one false worship to another, and the profanation of the holy name of God.*⁹

In Roger Williams' eyes the church had died and would remain dead until God rekindled the spark of the early church through the love and authority of the apostles he would raise up at some point in the future. It did no good to try to convert people to a dead religion. Williams began to call himself a "waiter," for he saw no alternative but to wait patiently until

that restoration.¹⁰ Meanwhile, he and the rest of mankind must find a way to live in peace and practice their diverse and divided religions according to the persuasion of their own conscience.

The Separation of Church and State

This conclusion brought Roger Williams to his understanding of the proper role of the state. He realized that the affairs of the state ought to be purely secular. He rejected John Winthrop's "City on a Hill" vision of the Puritan colony in Massachusetts, in which the civil government had the power to enforce *religious correctness*. He believed that no nation had a mandate from God to bring His redemptive plan to the world,¹¹ therefore the affairs of the state should be separate from the affairs of religion. Individual believers of all faiths should be protected from the tyranny that results when religion forms an alliance with secular government.

It was from this conviction that Roger Williams established the colony called Providence Plantations, which later became the state of Rhode Island. Nowhere in the colonies was there more personal freedom and acceptance of diverse religious expression. Williams believed that government in the nations was "merely human and civil." He did not see civil government as redemptive. He recognized that the political skills and moral fortitude necessary to preserve civil peace might easily be found among Jews, or Turks, or Chinese as among people who professed Christianity.¹² As Timothy Hall observed, "Although they had the wherewithal to dictate the terms of Providence orthodoxy and thus erect their own brand of religious establishment, they declined to do so."¹³

One hundred years later, the foundation of secular government laid by Roger Williams in Rhode Island came together with the social and political views of John

²*Bloudy Tenent*, p. 174 ³*Bloudy Tenent*, p. 184 ⁴*Bloudy Tenent*, p. 184; Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy*, p. 442 ⁵*Bloudy Tenent*, p. 174 ⁶Timothy L. Hall, *Separating Church and State* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1998), p. 25 ⁷Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, volume 1, page 222. ⁸The trust the Indians accorded him because of his friendship, fair dealing, and the effort he put in to learn their language, made him uniquely qualified to do this. ⁹"Christenings Make Not Christians," *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, vol. 7, pp. 36-37. ¹⁰Hall, p. 27; *Bloudy Tenent*, pp. 293-294 ¹¹*The Godless Constitution*, p. 50-51 ¹²*Ibid*, p. 54 ¹³*Ibid*, p. 100

Locke, who lived in England in the mid-1600s. Locke proposed a radical view of government that consciously separated the realms of church and state. Locke and others like him in England who promoted this new model of government were not so much concerned about the purity of true religion. Although they came from a completely different perspective than Roger Williams, Locke and others contributed powerfully to the ideals that triumphed in the American Constitution.¹⁴

In a letter written to the town of Providence in 1654 or 1655, Williams addressed in more general terms the relationship between civil duty and individual conscience. His analogy of the seagoing vessel has become perhaps the most famous excerpt of all his writings:

There goes many a ship to sea, with many a hundred souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common; and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or a human combination, or society. It has fallen out sometimes, that both Papists and Protestants, Jews, and Turks, may be embarked into one ship. Upon which supposal, I do affirm, that all the liberty of conscience, that ever I pleaded for, turns upon these two hinges — that none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews, or Turks, be forced to come to the ship's prayers or worship; nor, secondly, compelled from their own particular prayers or worship, if they practice any. I further add, that I never denied, that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of this ship ought to command the ship's course; yea, and also command to that justice, peace, and sobriety, be kept and practiced, both among the seamen and all the passengers. If any seamen refuse to perform their service, or passengers to pay their freight; — if any refuse to help in person or purse, towards the common charges, or defense; — if any refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship, concerning their common peace or preservation; — if any shall mutiny and rise up against their commanders, and officers; — if any shall preach or write, that there ought to be no commanders, nor of-

*ficers, because all are equal in CHRIST, therefore no masters, nor officers, no laws, nor orders, no corrections nor punishments — I say, I never denied, but in such cases, whatever is pretended, the commander or commanders may judge, resist, compel, and punish such transgressors, according to their deserts and merits.*¹⁵

The civil government in the Providence Plantation had legitimate authority over religious conscience in certain areas basic to maintain civil order. However, Williams recognized that civil government's authority over conscience was *only* within the specific scope of government's ordained responsibilities. "He had confidence in the universal recognition of certain fundamental moral precepts whose violation could be punished as 'incivilities.' He believed that there was 'a moral virtue, a moral fidelity, ability and honesty' that all individuals, Christian and non-Christian, could recognize."¹⁶

Williams recognized that all men are accountable to the instinctive moral law that God has put in every man's conscience, which is the basis upon which civil authorities can "praise those who do good and punish those who do evil." His theory of government rested on both civil authorities and individuals of all religious persuasions respecting that covenant of conscience. He established in Providence the beginnings of a society in which the civil government could allow religious freedom of conscience, and individuals could respect the legitimate authority of the civil government. Without this mutual respect for

the legitimate spheres of authority of each, democracy could not work.

These principles of government won the debate a century later in the drafting of the Constitution which established the legal foundations of the United States of America. In establishing the first truly secular¹⁷ state Roger Williams opened the door to the freedom necessary for the restoration of the true church — a land where every man's right to grope for God would be protected.¹⁸

In that protected ground, and in the fullness of time, "Christ's lilies, garden and love" could again be planted. But it would be another two hundred years before the fullness of time would come. ☸

¹⁵"Roger Williams to the Town of Providence," c. Jan 1654/55, in *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, ed. LaFantasie, 2:423-24. For a similar use of the ship metaphor, see Williams, *The Examiner Defended*, p. 209 ¹⁶Hall, p. 110; *Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy*, p. 365

¹⁷Secular means not bound by religious rule; it does not mean Godless. ¹⁸Acts 17:26-27



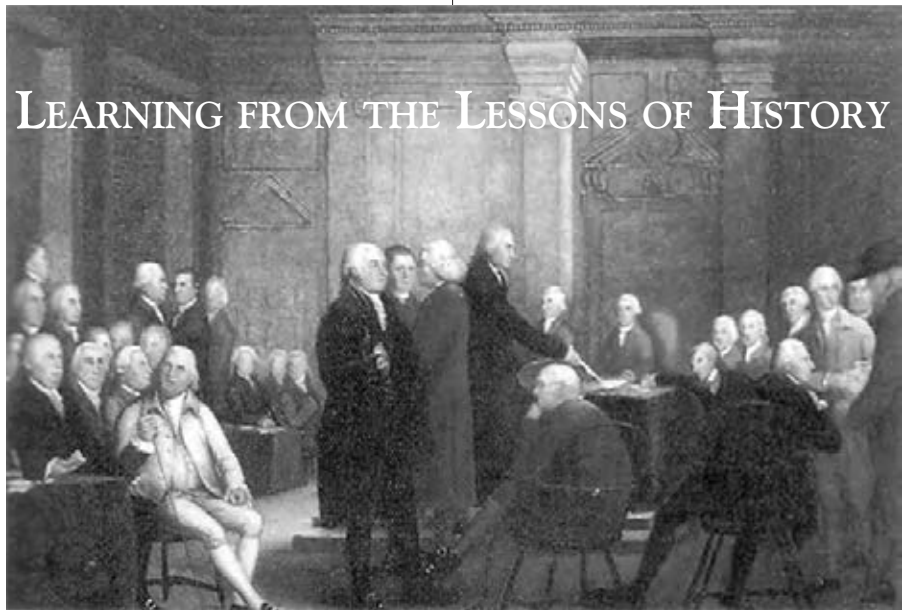
What is it about the nature and history of Christianity that caused the founding fathers to fear its grip on the reins of power?

The Founding Fathers who created the American system of government understood well the lessons of history, from the early days of the Crusades through the Inquisition, the Reformation, and into 16th and 17th century England. This bred in them a deep mistrust of religion — any religion — if it were combined with the power of the state. It was little different in the New World. In almost every colony, one religious persuasion would gain the reins of civil government to persecute those of any other persuasion.

The Declaration of Independence established “the laws of nature and of nature’s God” as the standard by which civil government should function. Natural law is instinctive in every man’s conscience regardless of his religious beliefs. It is from natural law that the Founding Fathers agreed upon the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The language of the First Amendment is clearly written from the perspective of natural law and not from any particular religious belief. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were worlds apart in their religious beliefs, but in regard to the principles of American government, they were of the same general mind because they both recognized and respected the difference between religious belief and natural law.

Civil government must function from natural law, the law of conscience. The Christian church functions from religious principles. Trouble stems from the tendency of both religious and governmental leaders to overstep their bounds and meddle in each other’s affairs, as John Locke observed:

I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other.¹



The Founding Fathers of America included deists like Thomas Jefferson, devout Christians like James Madison, and Freemasons like George Washington. This was perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of the American Revolution. Never before had men of such different beliefs joined together in a civil government to preserve not only their own rights and freedom, but the rights and freedom of all.

Thomas Jefferson gleaned from the writings of Roger Williams the term “wall of separation,”² which he used to make his very famous declaration in 1802, acknowledging that through the First Amendment,

...the whole American people... 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.³

All of the colonies except Rhode Island, where Roger Williams had established in its charter a clear separation of church and state, were afflicted with conflicts between those two spheres of authority. It was to just such a conflict that James Madison returned after graduation from college, which he described in a letter to his college friend, Bradford, in January of 1774:

...There are at this time in the adjacent country not less than five or

six well-meaning men in close jail for publishing their religious sentiments, which, in the main, are very orthodox. I have neither patience to hear, talk or think of anything relative to this matter, for I have squabbled and scolded, abused and ridiculed, so long about it, to little purpose, that I am without common patience. So I must beg you to pity me, and pray for liberty of conscience to all.⁴

Madison came to understand that the real issue was greater than mere “toleration of religion” as espoused by John Locke. He saw the issue as “free exercise” of religion, or “full and equal rights of conscience” for the individual.⁵ He understood that government should protect every man’s freedom of conscience, and that this was the limit of the government’s role in religious matters. What James Madison, one of the principal authors of the Constitution, saw from the perspective of civil government, Roger Williams had understood spiritually 100 years before him.⁶

Dictates of Conscience

The importance of the freedom to follow the dictates of one’s conscience is clearly evident in the way the First Amendment of the Constitution, which guards this liberty, came to be written. The writing of the Constitution took place in the midst of great struggle and turmoil. Some colonies wanted a state religion; others wanted no part

of any state-controlled religion. So at the Second Continental Congress, one of the main issues was the degree of control the state should exercise over the practice of religion, and the degree to which any *particular* denomination could be established as a state religion. These conflicts were fierce and the issues were thoroughly debated among the delegates present. Ultimately a majority emerged who favored the spirit of religious liberty established in Rhode Island's charter, thus it was incorporated into the Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution.⁷

The fact of this decision raises a troubling question: What is it about the nature and history of Christianity that caused these great statesmen to fear its grip on the reins of power? Their decisions expressed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights sent a prophetic message to the whole world, calling for an end to the tyranny of the church-state liaison.

The "Myth" of Separation

Yet today there are Christians in America who claim it is a myth⁸ that the framers of the Constitution wanted a complete separation of church and state. They seek to tear down the wall of separation in order to bring the moral principles of Christianity to bear on the decisions of civil government. The spokesmen of this movement claim that America was established as a Christian nation and therefore the



"separation of church and state" is a myth. They intend to make America into the theocracy⁹ which, they claim, the early colonists were seeking. They argue that the "wall" was originally introduced [by Jefferson] as, and understood to be, a one-directional wall protecting the church from the government.¹⁰ Roger Williams, however, made it clear that the wall of separation must go both ways:

*On the other side, the Churches as Churches, have no power ... of erecting or altering formes of Civil Government, electing of Civill officers, inflicting Civill punishments ... as by deposing Magistrates from their Civill Authoritie...*¹¹

By calling for the abolishment of separation, these Christian activists cite numerous examples of leaders in the colonial era "never separating the struggle for freedom from Biblical principles ... For Samuel Adams there was no separation between political service and spiritual activities."¹² But the proper context for public service being guided by right moral principles is the "dictates of [each individual's] conscience" and not as legislated dictum that forces the beliefs and practices of a particular religion upon all citizens.

The last 200 years of American history illustrate this tension in the grappling of those on both sides of the wall as to where to draw the line between the legitimate spheres of authority of the state and the church. Where would we be as a nation without the foundation of the First Amendment that gives civil government

the freedom to rule according to conscience for the good of all its citizens and gives individuals the freedom to believe and practice whatever their conscience dictates to them?

Since the days of Constantine, the state and the Christian religion have been continually jockeying for position to use

one another for their own ends. It is no different today with movements like "Reclaiming America for Christ." Christians are involved at every level of American government in the guise of seeking moral reforms. But in doing so, they are seeking not merely to bring this country's rulers back to a standard of conscience, but to establish a broad-based and intimate merger of the interests of the state

with the doctrines and political agendas of Christianity.

The stage is now set for the final drama of human history. As the world plummets into moral chaos and unpredictable outbreaks of terrorism, people are sacrificing their personal freedoms for the apparent security of increased governmental control over every facet of life. It will take a world government to restrain the global forces that threaten global destruction.

At the same time, the divided camps of Christianity are drawing together in a superficial unity that will culminate in a world religion bent on shaping the policy of the emerging world order. The wayward daughters will come diplomatically back under the wing of their mother, the Roman Catholic Church, and together they will mount the state once more and ride into temporal power.¹³ True to her nature, she will once again seek to silence every dissenting voice.

But in these last days the age-old story of religious oppression will have a new twist. For in the ranks of the ostracized and persecuted will be a people, a kingdom which the God of heaven will set up. Despite all opposition, their emerging culture based on self-sacrificing love will prove indestructible. Their life will be a demonstration of the righteous standard of God, by which He will judge the nations of the earth, bringing an end to both the political and ecclesiastical powers of wickedness, and ushering in a new age of peace. ☪

¹ J. Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration," in *6 Works of Locke*, (London 1823 and 1963 photo reprint), p.9. ² John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution* (MI: Baker Book House, 1987), p. 243; David Barton, *The Myth of Separation* (Wall Builder Press, 1992), p. 42. ³ Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson Writings*, Merrill D. Patterson, ed., p. 510, January 1, 1802 ⁴ Rives, *Life and Times of Madison*, vol. I, p.43. ⁵ Hunt, James Madison and Religious Liberty, 1 Ann. Rep. Am. Hist. A., p. 163, 166. ⁶ Michael McConnell, "Origins of Free Exercise," *Harv. Law Rev.* (May 1990), vol. 103, p. 1926. ⁷ "Origins of Free Exercise," p. 1949. ⁸ *The Myth of Separation*, p. 91-46 ⁹ *Theocracy*: a type of government which recognizes God as the supreme ruler and which gives temporal authority to the church to interpret and enforce His laws. ¹⁰ *The Myth of Separation*, p.42. ¹¹ *Bloudy Tenent*, p. 248. ¹² *The Myth of Separation*, p. 94. ¹³ Revelation 17:1-3

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION Just War or Holy War?

You may think it absurd to suggest that the American Revolution was a Holy War. The term conjures up images of wild-eyed religious fanatics seeking the glory of martyrdom. However, in view of the historical revisionist tactics of the Christian Right, the question should be asked plainly: Was the American Revolution a holy war?

The most objective indication of the motivations of those early Americans in separating from England is the Declaration of Independence. This document states that all men are given certain rights by God that cannot be revoked, and it is only when a government becomes destructive of those rights that the people then have the right to oppose it.

The Declaration of Independence listed the "long train of abuses" that justified their revolt, for this was a decision they did not take lightly. It stated that the king "plundered [their] seas, ravaged [their] coasts, burned [their] towns, and destroyed the lives of [their] people." It accused England of inciting violence between Americans, as well as stirring up the natives against them, along with many other acts of cruelty.

The American war for independence represented the struggle of men who had endured under great tyranny until their consciences would no longer permit them to remain passive. If ever there was a *just war*, they were persuaded that this was it. Certainly there were Christian zealots on both sides who pounded the pulpits claiming that God was on their side, but on America's side it was a resistance to tyranny, not a war of conquest in the name of Christ.



Today there are those who claim that America was established as a "Christian Nation" founded on "Christian values" and are lobbying for its return to that foundation. Using carefully selected quotations apart from their historical and cultural context, they imply that those who fought the revolution were fighting for a Christian cause. However, the leading statesmen of that day declared explicitly the opposite. For example, the Treaty of Tripoli, drafted and signed under President Adams in 1797, put it quite bluntly: "The government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion..." It was intended to assure the Muslims of Tripoli that they had no need to fear American aggression or prejudice

due to religious conviction.

One of the foremost revisionists of the Christian Right, David Barton, was forced to admit the use of fraudulent quotations in his book, *The Myth of Separation*, to strengthen his case that the founding fathers of America never intended there to be a wall of separation between church and state. He asserts that what they really intended was a semi-permeable barrier that would keep the state from controlling the church, but allow the church to influence the state. His argument merely illustrates the fact that Christianity cannot be trusted to stay within the boundaries established by Christ Himself.

If it actually were a Christian cause that the early Americans were fighting for

*Whether they
waged a “just war”
in the eyes of God
is not for us to say.*

— that is, a war compelled by the teachings of Christ — they would certainly not have been fighting with *physical* weapons, but rather *spiritual*.¹ For Christ taught His followers to “love their enemies” and to “turn the other cheek.”² If they were fighting for *His* cause they would have to remember that He said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but my kingdom is not of this realm.”³

Benedict Arnold was a famous traitor of the war whose action led to the king’s advantage. However if America was truly establishing itself as a holy nation, then Benedict Arnold should have been *applauded* for his service to the king. For the New Testament scriptures say, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority... not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh... if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.”⁴

Now obviously Benedict Arnold deserves no such honor. Clearly he was not motivated by such noble ideals. But the high standards of Messiah’s teachings are not binding upon natural men. The writings of the New Testament are addressed to the followers of the Messiah — those who have fully surrendered and devoted themselves to Him. Such men and women are fully persuaded that God will protect them from their enemies if they are doing His will; or if it pleases Him to allow their death, they are content to die rather than defend themselves.

But natural men are accountable to natural law — the instinctive law of the conscience. As the Apostle Paul said, “Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves,

even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”⁵

The founding fathers of America were God-fearing “Gentiles” who understood the natural laws of conscience. Their heart-wrenching decision to fight for their independence from England was borne of their conviction in their conscience that their cause was just, not from a religious zeal that demonized their enemy. Whether they waged a “just war” in the eyes of God is not for us to say, but clearly it was not a “holy war” such as Christians had waged for nearly

fifteen centuries. The founding fathers of America would have no part of that. 🙏

“During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution.”⁶

~James Madison, fourth President and father of the Constitution

¹ 2 Corinthians 10:4 ² Matthew 5:39,44 ³ John 18:36 ⁴ 1 Peter 2:13,18,19 ⁵ Romans 2:14-15 ⁶ James Madison, *A Biography in his Own Words*, edited by Joseph Gardner, p. 93



THE CIVIL WAR REVIVALS

The American Civil War was a failure of Christianity as much as anything else.

Over the past few years much attention has been drawn to the “culture wars” over issues such as abortion, Christian symbols in public places, and homosexual marriage. Millions of Americans see their nation in a moral and political decline, and many Christians see themselves as the true custodians of American History, having the key to restoring its greatness. According to many “born again” or “Evangelical” Christians, America’s true foundation is religious, but secular philosophies, widespread irreligion, and immorality have all but eroded it.

But was there ever an American “Golden Age” as they claim? Was there ever a time when the children were obedient, the cities safe, and Americans mostly “saved”? Well not exactly, but there was a time when a fervent Protestant faith dominated the American public life. But far from producing a “Golden Age” it fired the fierce passions released in the Civil War, inspiring hundreds of thousands of young American men to kill their fellow citizens by the hundreds of thousands. The fact that they could fight so passionately on opposing sides, both calling on the same God, speaks volumes of the true nature of that Christianity.

Even before the American Revolution, the English Colonies of America experienced massive outpourings of religious



feelings, where thousands of ordinary citizens had strongly emotional “born again” experiences. These outpourings of emotion and conviction took place in public gatherings called *Revivals*. Baptism and a morally changed life usually followed.

After the founding of the US republic under the Constitution, continual waves of such enthusiasm swept over the American cultural landscape, shaping the American soul even until today. They believed they would see the end of this age in their lifetime, and that their society should prepare for it. However, although the message both North and South was characterized by the same impassioned



preaching and emotional responses, it produced vastly different effects. Far from uniting American Christians, it accelerated their growing divisions.

In the North, the revivals produced a desire for personal change, which in turn produced a desire to organize change in the larger society. The modern missionary movement, the temperance movement, and the moral reform crusade (a movement to end prostitution, obscenity, and lewdness) began through groups of de-

termined Christians becoming organized in order to secure their goal of a reformed society, even working to change society by law. All these efforts stemmed from the traditional Christian belief that the truth of the Gospel of Christ should be *brought* to all. And if they were unwilling to *receive* it, it should be imposed on them.

In the South, the revivals had an equal or greater emotional intensity, which often produced deep personal convictions to live as better individuals and family members. The fierce individualism of southern culture would hear nothing about organizing into groups to effect larger social changes. They drew strength from the simple elements of their society: family, church, and local community. The Jeffersonian tradition of strictly limited government was practically sacred writ to them. The governmentally mandated social changes of the North seemed dangerously subversive to that concept.

The institution of slavery, above all other issues, brought to the surface the great division growing amongst American born-again believers. As the North and South in general took differing views of owning slaves, the Christians of those regions typically took the extreme positions.

The great evangelical churches of the day — Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian, all born in the fires of revival to become great national institutions — could not overcome this growing divide. Their annual conferences, the visible expression of the Christian bonds tying



together the sections of the new nation, broke up one by one with bitterness and mutual condemnation. In 1837, the Presbyterians split north and south, with the passions greatly inflamed over the rightness or wrongness of slavery. In 1844, the Methodists divided north and south explicitly over slavery, followed in 1845 by the Baptists. They all claimed the same Christ as Savior, by grace through faith. As Abraham Lincoln would put it, "Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other."

Christians of the North began to talk of slavery being the obstacle to God's purpose for America, that its existence was preventing the earth being made ready for Christ's return. Southern Christians defended slavery as being the essential element of upholding their civilization, stating that they promoted the Christian faith among their slaves. Furthermore, they cared for those people in their charge, while the North trapped them in wage slavery. The war, they declared, was God's judgment on America for the Northern toleration of ungodly social practices such as labor unions, women's rights, and abolition of slavery.

The politicians found no way around these aroused passions. When the three-way 1860 election gave Abraham Lincoln a majority of electoral votes and a plurality of the popular vote, South Carolina seceded. A flurry of last-minute maneuvers got nowhere. While a number of voices looked for some compromise, Northern and Southern moral outrage, inflamed by Christian zeal, would not be pacified.

"When the cannons roared in Charleston harbor," American religious scholar Sydney Ahlstrom wrote, "two divinely

authorized crusades were set in motion, each of them absolutizing a given social and political order. The pulpits resounded with a vehemence and absence of restraint never equaled in American history."¹

"To judge by

the many hundreds of sermons and specially-composed church prayers which have survived," historian Paul Johnson wrote, "ministers were among the most fanatical on both sides. The churches played a major role in the dividing of the nation, and it is probably true that it was the splits in the churches which made a final split in the nation inevitable. In the North, such a charge was often willingly accepted. The Northern Methodist Granville Moddy said in 1861: 'We are charged with having brought about the present contest. I believe it is true we did bring it about, and I glory in it, for it is a wreath of glory about our brow.'"²

Both sides understood, or thought they understood, God's purpose for their side of the struggle. They saw themselves engaged in a struggle that was paving the way for the return of the Son of God. The Northern Christians were fired by the faith expressed in the lines of the "Battle Hymn of The Republic," by Julia Ward Howe:

*In the beauty of the lilies Christ
was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that
transfigures you and me;
As He died to make men holy,
let us die to make men free.*

When the armies marched, both sides took thought for their eternal souls and moral strength. Both sides had well-known generals who would not fight on Sunday if they could at all help it, out of respect for the Christian Sabbath. Veterans of both sides wrote later of victories or deliverances that came about because of such acts of military faith.

The war's atmosphere of extreme tension and loneliness in a cause promoted

as the very cause of God resulted in revival after revival on both sides, particularly on the eve of the great battles. In 1864, in both Virginia and Tennessee, Southern armies were swept by great waves of revivals. According to J. William Jones, Confederate Chaplain and author of one of the best documentaries of the Great Revival, virtually every Confederate brigade was affected.

USCC records show that similar events were happening in the North's principal eastern army, the Army of the Potomac, at the same time. Brigade chapels were so full that many men were frequently turned away. One Union general wrote that he had never seen "a better state of feeling in religious matters" as in the Army of Potomac.

In the Fall and Winter of 1863, the Union army in Chattanooga, Tennessee, had been besieged by a strong Confederate force, strongly entrenched in the mountains around the city. The Union soldiers were deeply affected by the revival, and many attributed their surprising victory over the Confederates as "a visible interposition of God." Soon after their victory at Chattanooga, the Union troops were pursuing their enemy as they retreated towards Atlanta. The fires of revival continued for them in Ringgold, Georgia, where hundreds were baptized in Chickamauga Creek.

The Confederate's Army of the Tennessee, retreating towards Atlanta, had also experienced the fires of the great revival. During their retreat from Dalton, Georgia, Rev. C.W. Miller tells of a Confederate brigade called together for worship in a field. They read the Bible aloud, sang a song of praise, and began to pray. While one of the soldiers was praying aloud, and his comrades were kneeling in silence, they all heard the distant report of artillery and were soon greeted with the burst of a 32-pound cannon shell overhead. More shells shrieked towards them, and shrapnel fell nearby, but the men continued their prayers as if there was no danger. Finally, the chaplain pronounced the benediction and everyone calmly sought cover.

Ironically, the revivals continued with Sherman's troops as they marched across Georgia and through the Carolinas. When the soldiers stopped for the night, they

frequently assembled in local churches and worshipped. Yet Sherman's troops were infamous for their unbridled destruction of civilian property as part of a campaign to "make Georgia howl." Somehow these men found it possible to "find Christ" while laying waste to unarmed civilians' homes and businesses.

It is estimated that over 100,000 Confederate and somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 Union troops accepted Christ during the Civil War — roughly ten percent of the men engaged. There are many accounts of the change that took place in the men, both during the war and afterwards, as a result of the many revivals. This may warm the heart of the sincere Christian, but surely someone has to ask, "Would Christ empower His followers to wage war against each other?"

The issues of the war were clear and the faith of the born-again believers on both sides played a major role in strengthening the resolve of each government. Only with such wholehearted support could they continue to pay the high cost of blood and destruction that each day of fighting exacted. The reality is that the evangelical or born-again Christians of that day could not see the contrast between the words of the Son of God and the terrible demands of war.

In his unpublished story, *The War Prayer*, Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) tried to express the horrible incongruity of such a religion. In that story a typical war-time church service was described with mention of the heartfelt prayer of the pastor for the safety of one side's troops and victory in their battles:

Then came the "long" prayer. None could remember the like of it for passionate pleading and moving and beautiful language. The burden of its supplication was that an ever-merciful and benignant Father of us all would watch over our noble young soldiers and aid, comfort, and encourage them in their patriotic work; bless them, shield them in His mighty hand, make them strong and confident, invincible in the bloody onset; help them to crush the foe, grant to them and to their flag and country imperishable honor and glory —

In the midst of the prayer, Twain imagines a heavenly messenger appearing to the congregation and trying to help them see what they were really praying for.

*...O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it — for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet!*³

No one who saw the awful reality of the Civil War up close would deny the

truth of those words. Go to a Civil War battlefield cemetery; note carefully the acres of neatly arranged markers where the thousands of battlefield dead were laid. They went to battle thinking they were obeying Jesus Christ, and so did those who put them in their graves. Was Christ really calling them to slaughter each other?

"Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword,"⁴ was our Master's word to Peter in the moment of His arrest in Gethsemane. Who of the North or South heard this word?

There was a time when a Samaritan village scornfully rejected a visit by the Messiah. His disciples asked if they should call down fire from heaven on them. His response was a stinging rebuke: "You do not know what spirit you are of. The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."⁵ There is a profound lesson here. 🙏

¹ Sidney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Yale University Press

² Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1976, p. 438.

³ *Europe and Elsewhere*, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (Harper & Brothers, 1923)

⁴ Matthew 26:52 ⁵ Luke 9:51-55



The Legacy of Martin Luther



The Warsaw Ghetto, April 1943

Christianity's persecution of the Jews has dominated Jewish history since the Christianization of the Roman Empire under the Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century AD. To the Jews, the cross has been as much a symbol of persecution and terror as the swastika, only provoking dread. Under the banner of the cross and in the name of Christ, the Jews have been cast out of nations, confined to ghettos, lost their possessions and frequently their lives. They have been forced to convert to a Christianity which compelled them to break the Sabbath, to not circumcise their children, and to eat swine. They had to disobey the Bible to become Christians.

Everyone blames the Nazis for the Holocaust, yet their treatment of the Jews was rooted in the Christianity that shaped the German nation. It has to be remembered that the Nazi Holocaust was nurtured in the land of the Protestant Reformation. In fact the seed of all that Adolf Hitler would do was carefully transplanted from the Catholic Inquisition into Protestantism by none other than Martin Luther, the greatest spokesman

of the Reformation and one of the most influential men in all of history.

Is this a shocking accusation? What could such a hero of the faith have to do with the nightmare of the Third Reich and the demonic figure of Adolf Hitler? Surely, the man who liberated the Gospel from the grasp of meaningless tradition and restored the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone would not be guilty of such things, would he? Yet Martin Luther's violent, venomous views and bitter treatment of the Jews was not something he sought to hide. Far from it. By every means at his disposal — the pen, the pulpit, and persuasion — he sought to gain not merely acceptance of his views but concrete, violent action against the Jews.

His Three Treatises

Martin Luther was certainly not ashamed of his words. He wanted them to be remembered and obeyed. It is only his followers who would like to have his words forgotten, since they seemingly invalidate all that he stood for. And so the chances are almost certain that you have never heard of the three treatises

Martin Luther wrote against the Jews in 1543: 1) *On the Jews and Their Lies*; 2) *On the Ineffable Name*; and 3) *On the Last Words of David*.

These treatises represented a lifetime of thought concerning the Jews. His first attempt to win them was by persuasion.

As a young man, Luther had written, "If we wish to help them, we must practice on them not the papal law but rather the Christian law of love, and accept them in friendly fashion, allowing them to work and make a living, so that they gain the reason and opportunity to be with and among us and to see and to hear our Christian teaching and life."¹

It was only when such preaching and persuasion failed ("soft mercy" in Luther's theology) that more forceful measures were taken. For over the course of Luther's life it became apparent to him that the prejudices against the Jews he had sought to combat in his earlier writing were justified. In his mind they were accused blasphemers whose Lord was the devil and any suffering inflicted upon them would remind them that they were God's rejected people.

Luther's Legacy

The following measures are in a sense Martin Luther's last will and testament, his legacy to the world. The legacy of a man is what his descendants derive from him, a living memorial to who he was long after he is dead. In one of these formal, systematic presentations of his mature convictions he summarized the wisdom his 32 years of Bible study had gained for him into seven recommendations:²

What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming. If we do, we become sharers in their lies, cursing, and blasphemy. Thus we cannot extinguish the unquenchable fire of divine wrath, of which the prophets speak, nor can we convert the Jews. With prayer and the fear of God we must practice a sharp mercy to see whether we might save at least a few from the glowing flames. We dare not avenge ourselves ... I shall give you my sincere advice:

- ✓ *Set fire to their synagogues and schools, burying and covering with dirt what won't burn, so no man will see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and Christendom.*
- ✓ *Second, I advise that their houses be seized and destroyed.*
- ✓ *Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings be taken from them.*
- ✓ *Fourth, I advise that the rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of life and limb.*
- ✓ *Fifth, I advise that safe conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews, for they have no business in the countryside, since they are not lords, officials, or tradesmen. Let them stay at home.*
- ✓ *Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and all cash and treasures be taken and kept for safe-keeping.*
- ✓ *Seventh, I recommend putting a flail, an axe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hands of young, strong*

Jews and Jewesses, letting them earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, as was imposed on the children of Adam (Genesis 3:19). For it is not fitting that they should let us accursed Goyim toil in the sweat of our faces while they, the holy people, idle away their time ... boasting blasphemously of their lordship over the Christians by means of our sweat ... For, as we have heard, God's anger with them is so intense that gentle mercy will only

tend to make them worse and worse, while sharp mercy will reform them but little. Therefore, in any case, away with them!

To Martin Luther, this "sharp mercy" was needed to bring them to repentance, since they were not being converted by the gospel he was preaching. This was not a passing mood on his part; once he came to these conclusions he never wavered from them. Martin Luther's last sermon, preached just days before his death, was





brimming over with biting condemnation and vulgarities for the Jews. He planted the seed of hatred in fertile soil, and it grew over the centuries.

You Shall Know them by their Fruit

Those with even a modest knowledge of the brutal history of the Third Reich know that the Nazis put into practice all of Martin Luther's recommendations against the Jews, and more. They burned their synagogues in honor of the "positive Christianity" Adolf Hitler claimed to stand for; they seized and burned their houses; they took public delight in destroying their holy books; they separated life and limb from the rabbis; they certainly abolished safe travel for the Jews (the only travel they had was a one-way trip on cattle cars); they took every bit of their wealth away from them (even the fillings in their teeth and the hair on their heads); and the ones the Nazis didn't kill immediately they put to demeaning slave labor. All this they were justified in doing, according to Martin Luther, with prayer and the fear of God.

Julius Streicher, one of the most notorious anti-Semites even in the perverse world of the Third Reich, used Martin Luther's seven recommendations in his defense at the Nuremberg Trials. He even took as the motto for his newspaper, *Der Sturmer* (the Nazi hate paper) a direct

quote of Martin Luther, *Die Juden sind unser Unglück*, or, "The Jews are our misfortune."³

There was another prominent Nazi who saw Luther in a positive light: "Luther was a great man, a giant. In one go, he broke through the dawn; he saw the Jew the way we only start seeing him now."⁴ The speaker? Adolf Hitler.

In the World but Not of It?

Make no mistake about it: In spite of being a devoutly Christian nation, the Germans were under no illusions as to Adolf Hitler's intentions towards the Jews. He had told them a thousand times. Many of the tens of thousands of Protestant and Catholic clergy openly supported Hitler. The rest stayed in the passive state they had always maintained. William L. Shirer, author of, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, understood how they came to be in this condition:

...in his [Martin Luther's] utterances about the Jews, Luther employed a coarseness, brutality, and language unequalled in German history until the Nazi time. The influence of this towering figure extended down through the generations in Germany, especially among the Protestants ... In no country with the exception of Czarist Russia did the clergy become by tradition so completely servile to the political authority of the State.⁵

In the light of God's word, how shall we judge Luther's wisdom?

Is it the pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable wisdom from above, full of mercy and good fruits?

When the clergy were given the choice of joining Hitler's state church or going to prison, the overwhelming majority quietly chose the former. Becoming the religious arm of the Third Reich, the pastors, both the enthusiastic and the reluctant, *had* to support it, since they looked to it to define what was right and wrong. It was far too *personally* dangerous to let God do this through the Holy Scriptures. To do so was to say that there was a greater authority in men's lives than the Third Reich. This was treason to Hitler.

So, they adorned their churches with swastikas, closed their eyes, and pretended they didn't know what was going on. It is much easier to remember the heroic few like Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who chose the concentration camp rather than be silent in the face of such monstrous evil, than to consider the hundreds of thousands of German Christians who filled up Hitler's armies, police forces, death squads, and pulpits.

Like Mother, Like Daughter

The development of Martin Luther's thinking was a gradual process, taking shape during his entire adult life. He grew up in Roman Catholicism, for that was Europe's only religion. It was the binding force in society and government by which everyone knew their place, and heaven was the reward for the generally short and harsh lives people lived. Anything besides strict adherence to Catholicism was perceived as a threat, not only to this life, but to the next. For if the Catholic Church was not the only truth, then heaven might not await good Catholics, and they may have lived their lives in vain. So ingrained was this view of reality that often the Church had to restrain the common people from taking the lives of Jews and other non-Catholics into their hands.

*Or is it the earthly,
natural, demonic wisdom
that comes from below?*

Martin Luther, like other Catholic theologians before him, thought that earthly punishment inflicted by the Church, and where necessary by the state, was actually the working of God's grace to save some from the flames of hell. In other words, it was always done for *their own good*. And not only their good, but the good of society as a whole — for unbelievers in a "Christian nation" represent faction and division, and must be dealt with, or else the society cannot be blessed by God.

This has been the story of practically every nation and society where Christianity has been the predominant influence. It is part of the essential nature of Christianity. For when Christians take the reins of power, ultimately the denial of rights to nonbelievers is considered inconsequential, because they are all going to hell anyway.

Responsibility

It is entirely fair to give Martin Luther the credit (he would not see it as the blame or the shame) for all future Christian rulers who treated the Jews according to the wisdom of his policies. In the light of God's word, how shall we judge this wisdom? Is it the pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable wisdom from above, full of mercy and good fruits? Or is it an earthly, natural, demonic wisdom that comes from below? What then was the source for Martin Luther's words, that with them he could bless Jesus Christ his Savior and with them lay the most bitter curses on men made in God's image?⁶

There are other guidelines in the Word regarding

righteous judgment as well. The Son of God never said that you would know false prophets by their *doctrine*. He said you shall know them by their *fruit*. He also said that a good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. If Martin Luther and the Reformation were a good tree, then it cannot have produced bad fruit. If it has produced bad fruit, it cannot have been a good tree. These are the words of the Son of God of which we are not to be ashamed.⁷ He also said:

But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is within you is darkness, how great is the darkness! (Matthew 6:23)

Is not Martin Luther the "eye" through which Protestantism saw her clearest doctrines? How did the clarity of his doctrines carry through to the purity of his deeds? So then, if the "eye" is bad, isn't the whole body of the Protestant church full of darkness? How great is that darkness!

The writer to the Hebrews wrote, *Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*⁸ We will all receive the reward we merit for the faith we imitate. For each person's faith is known by his conduct, or as James

put it, his works.⁹

For Martin Luther and those who received his legacy, this faith could be so far removed from their works that they could murder the Jews without invalidating their claim on eternal life. It is obvious that the faith Martin Luther made so much of was not saving faith, or he never would have done and said the things he did. He would have had the heart of the Apostle Paul towards the Jews, for the Savior whom Paul served is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.¹⁰

¹ Martin Luther, "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew," published 1523. ² The whole tract may be found in English in "Luther's Works," Vol. 45, pp. 199-229. A number of English books have translations of these directives. Among them is "The Christian in Society," ed. Franklin Sherman (1971), pp. 268-272. The "Ideas in Conflict" book, "Religion and Politics — Issues in Religious Liberties," by Gary E. McCuen, also quotes them on pages 16-23. ³ For a sample cover, see the Time-Life World War II series, "At the Center of the Web" (1989). ⁴ Dietrich Eckart: Dialogs Between Adolf Hitler and Me, 1924, p. 35 quoted according to Friedrich Heer, God's First Love, 1967, p. 380 ⁵ The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, A History of Nazi Germany, by William L. Shirer, page 327 of the 1962 paperback edition. ⁶ James 3:9-18 ⁷ Matthew 7:15-20 ⁸ Hebrews 13:7 ⁹ James 2:17-20 ¹⁰ Hebrews 13:8



Which contradiction is more blatant to the gospel message of love and forgiveness, Christians killing infidels or Christians killing Christians? Killing an infidel ends his chances of being “saved,” while a dead Christian, presumably, is going to heaven. Perhaps not surprisingly, though, the wars of Europe, especially World Wars I and II, have presented a greater conflict in the minds and hearts of believers everywhere, as believers stabbed, shot, gassed, or bombed other believers. For those who thought about it, such things were very hard to reconcile with the Christian message.

Fortunately for the political leaders of these nations, almost no one thought about that at all. The only discernable influence of Christianity on the campaigns of the World Wars (marked as they were by the mass slaughter of the soldiers on the field and of civilians in the cities) was to cheer the boys on.

Lacking religious leaders whose authority and responsibility spanned nations, especially those in conflict, Protestants were spared the ludicrous situation Pope Pius XII faced at the beginning of World War II. To the Catholics in all the European nations at war he gave the most insipid, inane, and inarticulate advice ever given to enemy combatants sent out to destroy each other. They were “to fight with valor and charity.”¹

There were other voices. The English bishop, George Bell of Chichester, published an article in November of 1939. It was called, “The Church’s Function in Wartime.”

He [Bell] argued that it was essential that the Church should remain the Church, and not “the state’s spiritual auxiliary.” It should define basic principles of conduct, and “not hesitate... to condemn the infliction of reprisals, or the bombing of civilian populations, by the military forces of its own nation. It should set itself against the propaganda of lies and hatred. It should be ready to encourage the resumption of friendly relations with the enemy nation. It should set its face against any war of extermination or enslavement, and any measures directly aimed to destroy the morale of a population.”²

The Allies as well as the Axis powers — with the knowledge and encouragement of the churches — broke all his words, even though they seemed to reflect basic Christian teaching. In the midst of the grim reality he had sought to avoid, Bell wrote in September 1943:

To bomb cities as cities, deliberately to attack civilians, quite irrespective of whether or not they are actively contributing to the war effort, is a wrong deed, whether done by the Nazis or ourselves.³

The firebombing and atomic bombing of cities across Germany and Japan incinerated hundreds of thousands: Dresden, Tokyo, Hamburg, Kobe, Hiroshima, Nagasaki... men and women, boys and girls, infants and the aged all perished in their own city-wide holocausts. Continuing his campaign to end indiscriminate

bombing, Bell eventually forced a vote in the House of Lords in February 1944. His speech provoked comment and thought. The military analyst Liddell Hart said about it:

The historian of civilization, if that survives, is likely to regard it as better evidence for Christianity and common decency, than has been provided by any other spokesman. It represents the longer view and the higher wisdom.⁴

The strategic bombing doctrines of the nuclear powers since World War II reveal that Bell’s view and wisdom are yet far off. Given the demonstrated impotence of Christianity to translate its doctrines into reality, or to lift human beings above the cycle of violence and revenge, if man’s only hope of an age of peace was the Christian message, it is unlikely that age will ever dawn.

A new thing must spring forth on the earth, which is in fact the restoration of all the things that God ever intended His church to be. It will not sweep aside the political systems of the world to create a one-world government. It will be the true witness of the Kingdom of God on earth, a life of love, of community, of trust in the protection of God, not in the arms of men. After this, the end will come! (Matthew 24:14) ♣

¹ Quoted in Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, Macmillan Press, 1976, p. 490.

² *Ibid*, p. 493 ³ *Ibid*, p. 494. ⁴ *Ibid*, p. 494.



THE LONGER VIEW AND THE HIGHER WISDOM

GOD, COUNTRY, and the AMERICAN DREAM

We have to remember the deep roots of post war American culture established in the 50s in order to really understand the social, political, and spiritual upheaval of the 60s in the United States and its effect throughout the world. The end of World War II marked a turning point, one that fundamentally reshaped the landscape of the western world. Finally, after half a century of war, there was peace on earth — or at least it seemed that way. In World War II, the nations on both sides were praying to their God for victory. In the end it was the God of the Allies who gave *them* the victory. From that point on, God and country went hand in hand in the victorious western countries, and especially the United States.

The allied countries had suffered enough in the two world wars and the great depression of the first half of the century. Now America was ready to enjoy



their hard-earned prosperity. Gone was the anxiety that had held them back from buying life's indulgences during the Great Depression and World War II. Americans were ready to forge their dreams into a universal vision of the future, a vision for the whole world to follow: the *American Dream*.

The end of World War II signaled the beginning of the Cold War, with the US employing a policy of containment of Russia and any other countries that violated the Truman Doctrine, which essentially stated: "The United States will defend free people and their free institutions at any place at any point in the world where outside communist aggression threatens that nation's internal stability."

Along with this policy came increased government spending, which started the American economy rolling. Big government contracts were increasingly available for private American businesses as the policy of containment meant keeping ahead of the Russians in every

way. This incentive fueled by the threat of nuclear war formed what President Eisenhower termed the "military-industrial complex." Companies that had never held military contracts came to see the Department of Defense as their best customer. By the mid-1950s there were over 40,000 defense contractors working for the federal government. By the 1960s, more than half of all government expenditures went to the military. By the 1970s, the Department of Defense had more economic assets than the 75 largest corporations in America.

President Eisenhower, in his farewell address to the nation in 1961, warned that the growing relationship between defense contractors and the federal government was a threat to the well-being of America and its values. Many Americans ignored his warnings. After all, why worry when the economy was prosperous? Americans made up only 6% of the world population, yet they produced and consumed one third of the world's goods and services. During the 1950s, America's Gross National Product (GNP) increased 51%, largely fueled by Defense spending.

Along with increased government spending came another form of economic prosperity. Soldiers who came home from the war wanted to start a new life on their own. This prompted William Levitt



President Eisenhower at a family Thanksgiving in 1953 that epitomized the good times.



Levittown

to design and build two thousand suburban houses in May 1947. Thus “suburbia” was born. As construction spread to other areas, the economy continued to prosper. Factories flourished as they were being pushed to make refrigerators, washing machines, and dishwashers to equip the houses of Levittown and its many sister projects around the country. Auto makers responded to the demand of families who had moved to the suburbs and now required two cars per family. This led to 8 million cars being sold in 1955 alone. The growth of suburbia eroded urban neighborhoods that had for centuries supported the social and economic needs of families. Yet America thanked God for its growth and prosperity, little realizing the price to be paid in the eventual disintegration of both the family and the local community.

In the 1950s the American Dream had some very powerful components — a home in the suburbs, job security in a large corporation, and a new car every few years. It meant open doors of opportunity in education, business, leisure time, and a sense of security based on ever-increasing prosperity. GIs returning from World War II and the Korean War were eager to spend money and to have children. This was the “baby boom” generation, whose parents wanted to spare them the uncertainties they had

endured in the first half of the twentieth century.

In the 1950s, 29 million new Americans were born — a birth rate comparable to that of India. To meet the consumer demands of this increasing population, American industry expanded at an amazing pace, turning out new cars, clothing, Frisbees, and a plethora of other consumer items with the help of factory automation technology.

In the 1940s, only 9% of Americans were considered to be “middle class.” By 1960, more than 30% of the population was middle class, with corresponding increases in the demand for education and housing. The year 1960 marked the first time in United States history that

a majority of high-school aged people actually graduated from high school. Those who grew up in that decade believed that their education was the key to a successful and happy life. Their good education was going to land them a good job and lay the foundation for a secure future.

The biggest consumer revolution was the growth of the television industry. In 1946, there were 17,000 television sets in the nation, mostly in the East. By 1949, Americans were purchasing TV sets at the rate of 250,000 *per month*. By 1953, two-thirds of American homes had at least one TV. This new medium of communication and entertainment changed the world forever, making vast amounts of information on any topic available to every ordinary citizen.

The prosperity of the ‘50s in the United States was unprecedented in history, and that desire for financial success and *careless ease* has been the underpinning of American culture ever since. American Christianity went right along with this growing culture of the

A gnawing emptiness began to grow in the baby-boom generation who were coming of age in the '60s, along with a deep resentment of the new war in Vietnam

American Dream. In fact there was virtually a seamless unity between the two. Indeed, God did get the credit for America's prosperity and Christianity experienced tremendous growth because of it. "In God We Trust" was placed on American currency in 1955. "Under God" was added to the pledge of allegiance in 1954, reflecting President Eisenhower's assertion that "our government makes no sense unless it is grounded on a deeply felt religious faith."

These expressions of "God and Country" reflected the confidence Americans felt that America was God's chosen land, and that "chosenness" was expressed in the level of economic prosperity the middle class was experiencing. The age-old values that America was founded on, of staying within the boundaries of conscience, gave way to measuring your connection to God by the prosperity you enjoyed. This way of thinking brought a sense of unity and prophetic destiny to the American people. Remember the good feelings we got from singing, "God Bless America"? God was indeed on their side and Americans could now become the saviors of the world in more ways than just sending her young men to fight for the causes of freedom throughout the world.

The understanding that God and the prosperity of the country went hand in hand, reinforced by media-propelled evangelists like Billy Graham, was the "prophetic vision" for the multitudes to relate to the modern culture and new world they were a part of. By 1960, over 30% of Americans lived in suburbs. The stereotypical images of suburbia presented so clearly to us by "Father Knows Best" and "Leave it to Beaver" expressed the fact that the nation was becoming a conformist society: Levittown houses, housewives alone at home with their



soap operas, children in public schools, husbands struggling their way up the corporate ladder, watching sports on TV, and backyard barbecues on the weekends...

The *status quo* became the program in the '50s. Gant shirts, alligator belts, Bass Weejuns and Canoe were symbols of success and acceptance for the growing generation of baby boomers. Those few "cultural rebels" who despised the cultural underpinnings of "The Establishment" and who didn't accept the established norms of '50s America were looked upon with disdain.

Although Congress had added "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" to the nation's currency, real spirituality was hard to find in the culture of the American Dream. A gnawing emptiness began to grow in the baby-boom generation who were coming of age in the 60s, along with a deep resentment of the new war in Vietnam that was claiming the lives of so many of their friends and family. The horrors of that far-away and bewildering war invaded the living rooms of America like never before, thanks to their hundred million TV sets. Was this seemingly pointless war and the empty materialism of their middle-class inheritance the blessing of Billy Graham's God?

For the '60s baby boomers with their '50s roots, God was dead and the Ameri-

can Dream was becoming a nightmare. They began to question their roots and look for real answers outside the mainstream, no matter what the cost. Little did they realize the power of those cultural roots that were emblazoned on their souls or the cost to them and to society for their attempt to find something real. The '50s left its mark in a very deep way.

What is seen as the rebellion of the '60s was really an attempt to break free from the power of their roots in the '60s. It was not about doing drugs and hating God and rebelling against authority as an end in itself. The Movement of the '60s is often seen that way. But the heart and soul of the Movement came from a stirring in the soul of a generation who wanted to be cut free from the binding power of a dead society with a dead God. In the early days, young people took drugs to expand their consciousness in hopes of finding a real answer. It was their response to the stirring. Their teachers didn't have the answer and neither did the preachers.

The stirring didn't go away, but did that stirring become a true Movement? Why couldn't the baby boomers escape from their roots to become the true Movement that could bring lasting peace and justice to the earth? Will we ever have answers to these questions? Many from that generation still reflect on why the Movement never got off the ground. 🐾



Sir Thomas More

had his tongue in his cheek when he wrote about Utopia.

He was kidding when he described his "perfect" island where everything was ideal. The very name, utopia, means "no place" — the nonexistent land of man's dreams.

But no one told us that utopia wasn't real.

Even if they had, we wouldn't have believed them because

deep inside we all wanted that idealistic life to be real.

Somewhere along the line we decided that utopia

must be possible.

So with all ardor and enthusiasm,

we made our plans, dreamed our dreams,

and set out to find a place for our own free society.

We could not find an island like in More's 16th century dream,

but we settled for something a little bit less

... Haight Ashbury!

What magic these two words had in our minds!

A society of free young spirits founded on love, peace, and freedom,

where equality and fraternity could just be!

From far and near we grabbed our backpacks and left home.

We dropped out of school and hit the road.

By air, foot, bikes, or hitching, our 20th century exodus had begun. Our Moses was Timothy Leary. Our Promised Land was San Francisco across the Golden Gate.

When we arrived, we were accepted. No one asked any questions. No one made any demands. No one was watching. No one had to prove anything. We were just ourselves and everyone was happy. We were really living our dreams. We could come and go as we pleased. We could wear what we pleased. There were no deadlines, no grades, no projects, no points to score.

We did not care about money, no one was trying to impress, material things didn't matter. Only people mattered. Easy alliances were formed. Love was free. No demands. No commitment. Old taboos were ignored, barriers knocked down and spirits were high. No one was killing anybody, and people were beautiful.

It happened in Monterey, June 1967. The first Rock festival was born, giving birth to Woodstock, Isle of Wight, Altamont, Atlanta, and an endless procession ever since! All day and night the music rocked and rolled on & on. We listened with remarkable fortitude for days. At the festivals we could sense what seemed to be the endless love we had always hoped for. In fact, a revolution

of love was beginning. We could feel it everywhere. The world would never be the same. We were determined to make this hope, this life, this togetherness last forever.

Joan Baez called it togetherness, and she was right. Men and women throughout all generations have been looking for that bond of love that would make them one. The desire for an end to estrangement and hostility runs deep in the human soul. The toughest nut will crack under the right pressure and the hardest heart will yield to love, understanding, and a little kindness. The most estranged and antagonistic person will respond to interest and concern, once his suspicions have been allayed. This togetherness is what we wanted and what we thought we had found.

This was the life of the flower children, the beautiful people. If we needed anything, we would just ask someone. If they had it, they would share it. If they didn't, no one thought any less of them. We panhandled to meet pressing needs and sold our art to the curious. But, it was the curious from plastic mainstream America that began to undermine our utopia. Tourists arrived by the thousands. They looked at us "hippies" the way kids look at giant pandas in the zoo.

"Look, a real live hippie."

"He's got nice eyes."

"He stinks. Let's buy some beads."

These sensation-seeking middle-class American tourists with their pudgy stomachs swamped the serenity and devoured the distinctiveness of our youthful dream on Haight Street. As time went on, we flower children became more and more the center of attention and a phenomenon the media quickly exploited. Things started getting crazy as more and more people came to San Francisco and the good vibes produced by Orange Sunshine began to give way to paranoia and an increased fear of "The Man." The Buffalo Springfield captured this sense with these words from their famous song, *For What It's Worth*:

*Paranoia strikes deep.
Into your life it will
creep.*

*It starts when you're always afraid.
Step out of line the man comes and
takes you away.*

You better stop now.

What's that sound?

Everybody look what's going down!

Old-fashioned greed began to show its ugly head among us, and we began to insist on our rights and our own individualities. It didn't take long for many of us to see what was coming. Heroin and speed dealers moved into the Haight, the riot squad invaded our district, beating anyone they could find, and the utopian state sank in a pool of blood when the killing started. The peace we thought was ours began slipping away as an elusive dream. Like everywhere else and everyone else, we, the "love people" and "peace people," were seeing in ourselves the same rotten seed we thought we'd left back home.

But where could we go and what could we do now? Go back home? No! We had made a few mistakes, but the dream was still attainable. It became clear that the peace we wanted couldn't be found in the city. So we headed for the hills. Alternative people USA! We would do it! There is hope! We will make it! There

is true love and true peace! A guru will show us the way! Which one should we follow? Who offers the best vibrations? Everybody seemed to have their own answer, their own separate trip.

As we went down endless roads wherever our own trips led us, there was an increasing sadness growing in our hearts, a sadness brought about because most of our dreams and visions proved to be unattainable. The highs went away and our experiments with community failed.

Then, we began to ask the question, "What is the use of anything at all?" The reality of people living in peace and unity as God intended is what we were looking for. But we needed to know how to find it. Our generation

is going mad because we can't find it after thirty years of looking for it. We hated authority because the authority we observed growing up was filled with hypocrisy, prejudice, and glory seeking. We had our fill of the kind of authority that says, "Don't do as I do, but do as I say." What was needed was good authority to make it happen! We needed leaders who could lead us by their example and who wouldn't compromise.

We wanted to conquer the world with love and bring the healing balm of peace to this earth, but there was no foundation, no blueprint to bring our vision into a lasting demonstration. Our love failed.

Some people turned to Jesus in search of this foundation of love. The Jesus of the Jesus People seemed hip enough, but didn't have the power to bring about the life either. We turned on the TV and heard Christian preachers talking about how we should live — something we knew that they knew nothing about. A life of love and unity is what they promised, but we knew we

were not going to get it because those making the promises weren't doing it either. Someone said, "A student will be like his teacher when he is fully trained." So all we could see was another form of Christianity.

So what's the use getting our hopes up in one more empty sermon? Who wants to claim to see like the blind teachers leading us? "If the blind lead the blind, they will both end up in the ditch." Can their Jesus save others when he can't save them? And if they are just saved from hell but not saved from this wicked society, who wants that salvation anyway? We aren't blind! A plastic Jesus who makes his plastic converts comfortable in a plastic society headed for destruction is what we detested and despised. The utter failure of this "salvation" was the very cause of our rebellion. Their failure to produce the "utopia" they spoke of is what drove us to Haight Ashbury in the first place!

So now where are we to look and in what place can we find a hope that does not disappoint us? Where is the real love of God that can fill our hearts? Preachers or teachers who promise us that we can know the Source of love and the Author of peace and the meaning of Truth, but are divided among themselves, cannot



communicate love, peace, and unity to anyone's conscience. Mere mental concepts are all they can offer since they have a life filled with the same old selfishness and greed that we took to Haight Ashbury.

So where do we go from here? I'm so tired of chasing after rainbows only to find a false light at the end of my journey. How can I ever find my elusive dream? 🌈

Between 1967 and 1972 the Vietnam War caused a deep unrest in the youth of America to come to

the surface. Along with the three assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy (1963-1968), growing anti-war sentiment catapulted that restlessness into a movement that could not be contained...

SHATTERED DREAMS

At first it was not so clear that there was an underlying spiritual hunger in the youth of America.

Their collective cry reverberated feelings that "We are not our parents," "We are not university trustees," "We are not American capitalists," and "We do not want to die in a senseless war." They had given up on the values of past generations and were willing to strike a new course, even though they did not know where it would lead. They saw established Christianity as having nothing and doing nothing about the problems they were concerned about. The last thing they wanted to do was to sit on a pew and hear another sermon that fueled the status quo of mainstream American life.

There was also a very strong reaction against the misuse of America's great wealth. The '60s was the height of the empire, a time when the government and the people had access to the most money ever available. But in the eyes of this generation, America's wealth was being squandered building a war machine and fattening the pockets of giant corporations while many lived beneath the poverty line in a near welfare state. Neither the politicians nor the preachers were doing anything to end the economic injustice this generation saw all around them. This environment was the hotbed of rebellion for that whole generation.

Love was the answer! LSD was the way! A revolution had begun! "Make love, not war" was the philosophy that caused the youth at Berkeley and all across the land to shed their parents' values, their religion, and their American dream. They cast off restraint and followed their own dreams. In their search for a place to belong they participated in "acid tests," went to Merry Pranksters events, "Hu-

man Be-Ins" in Golden Gate Park, Whole Earth Festivals, Grateful Dead shows, and experiments with communal living.

But it didn't take long for the dreams to shatter. The leadership of the Movement was a disaster, old-fashioned greed began to raise its ugly head, and the LSD didn't work. Drugs only eased the pain but didn't change the reality. John Lennon's song *Imagine* was only good ideas with no way to attain to them. Free love didn't last, so neither did relationships. A lot of young people were deeply damaged by this. They still wanted love. They wanted something radical. They wanted something real, not just a utopian ideal.

Even before the hippie movement crashed, the preachers were ready to cash in on it. They, too, showed up for the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley and took advantage of the opportunity to speak out on campus. They latched onto the same themes of the '60s and pointed the disillusioned hippies to Jesus. These preachers had long hair, wore beads and blue jeans. Through their dark shades and hip talk, they promised these searching young people that Jesus would give them love, he would solve their problems and he would heal the damage from the failed Movement of the radical hippies.

These brand new "Jesus Freaks" heeded the call, thinking they were being led out of the camp of dead religion that had no answers and no life and into the camp of Jesus where they would find the love they were looking for. This was the real revolution... the Jesus Revolution! They had finally found a life of love — Jesus' love! It looked so real and it felt so real to them. After all, these preachers were part of them, or so it seemed. Gone was the rigid structure of organized religion they had known growing up. They were not meeting in church buildings but

on beaches and in parks. They weren't singing stuffy old hymns, but *their own* music, with beautiful melodies played on acoustic guitars. Love, peace, and harmony were possible and they believed it couldn't fail. They were getting high on Jesus and didn't need anything else. There was a free-flowing stream of good feelings, good vibes, and praise to the Jesus that made it happen. Yes! This was real, and this was going to last forever.

The Jesus People thought they had truly escaped the mainstream camp of dead religion that Jesus said you had to leave in order to follow Him.¹ However, as time went on, the beach ministries moved into buildings and things began to shift back toward what the Jesus Freaks thought they had left behind. Some old skeletons began to raise their ugly heads. More than a few fell into sexual immorality, and the age-old plague handed down for generations in Christendom — division.

History is a great teacher, if we will pay attention. Time and time again, the voice that has led disillusioned believers out of their dead churches has not had the authority to restore the church to the dynamic life of love it once had in the beginning. It has not had the power or the authority to call people outside the camp and into the place where the Messiah truly is, because those making the call are entrenched inside the divided camp themselves.² The Jesus Movement was no exception. This is the history and legacy of Christianity.

But the spirit of Christianity is a powerful drug. Even though it doesn't have the authority to call anyone out of the camp, it does seduce those within its ranks into accepting the old established norms of society and religion. Now that

the Jesus Movement has proven to be just a contemporary expression of the divided and corrupt religious camp most thought they were leaving behind, it would be fair to ask old Jesus Freaks if they got hoodwinked into smoking the spiritual opium that sedates the masses.

Getting high on Jesus has, 30 years later, led the throngs of people “saved” in the Jesus Movement back into the status quo. In fact, the Jesus Movement has become the status quo for thousands in mainstream America. It now occupies the same place in their lives that “old time religion” did in their parents’ lives. It is truly the opiate of the masses.³ People used to be burned at the stake for disagreeing with the favored denomination. Now they are so numbed by the ecumenical spirit that they don’t even notice when others divide. Chuck Smith, the founder of Calvary Chapel, sedates his followers with this powerful drug. He even says it right on his website: “The more spiritual a person becomes, the less denominational he is. We should realize that we’re all part of the Body of Christ and that there aren’t any real divisions in the Body. We’re all one.”

Today that spirit isn’t allowed to kill people who disagree, so it must be content to sedate them into staying inside the camp, becoming ever more comfortably conformed to the traditions and ways of the world around them. These

“drugged” followers readily accept Billy Graham’s kissing the ring of the Pope. They accept their pastors committing adultery without stepping down. They barely muster the strength to discipline priests who sexually abuse children. This is the ecumenical spirit that is taking over the world.

T rue sheep know they are trapped by this spirit in Christianity but they don’t see a way out. Always, always, always the tendency is to believe it can’t happen, that there can’t be a witness of love demonstrated in hundreds of communities that are in true unity, at least not until Jesus comes back. If this is true, it means that the Holy Spirit is not great enough to bring about the unity John 17: 23 describes, so another spirit leads Christians to just overlook their differences.

But the true Messiah prophesied that a visible witness of the kingdom will be raised up in the last days to be a light to the nations that puts the evidence of God’s love before all — and then and only then will the end come. When this happens, it will be a Jesus movement that never ends, that will not be given to another people.⁴ When God raises up true messengers on the earth that are actually sent by Him, they will have the authority to call His sheep out of the divided camp of lifeless religion, just as Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, and Messiah Himself did. This is the voice of

the true Shepherd that has authority to save people from their sins and from this wicked and perverse society.⁵

This voice is the one that will give hope to old Jesus Freaks if they still have a nagging conscience about what they and the Jesus Movement have become. True sheep have nagging dissent in their heart — not rebellion, but dissent — because they really want to do God’s will. True sheep hear His voice and they never quite get high on the spirit that tells them division in the church doesn’t matter. They know they are lonely and that they really don’t have the radical life Messiah called His disciples to spend their lives establishing.⁶

¹ Matthew 21:43; Hebrews 13:13

² John 12:26

³ What Karl Marx really said is more interesting, for he actually saw the comfort religion provides in “a spiritless world,” which is all one is left with trapped in a system without the Spirit of love quickening and gathering the disciples into true community. “Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.” (*Marx’s Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (1843), Cambridge University Press, 1970. Ed. Joseph O’Malley; translated by Annette Jolin and Joseph O’Malley)

⁴ Daniel 2:44

⁵ Acts 2:37-42

⁶ Matthew 24:13-14



A New Hineskin

California, 1971. The Jesus Movement was in full swing. There was an excitement there such as Gene had never seen in all of his religious childhood...



...It was easy to get involved — praising the Lord, witnessing on the streets, and passing out Jesus tracts to the endless stream of hitchhikers traveling up and down the coast of California. He volunteered to work in a rescue mission and developed a special burden for this radical generation of youth. It wasn't long before he realized that most people in the movement did not have a deep conviction in their heart, but were just caught up in the impulsive enthusiasm of the times. He observed that even the sincere ones did not seem to have the power to overcome the sins of their former life. Despite the popular movement's outward zeal, which Gene so admired, he could see that their fire was only a fading ember. Already the seemingly radical changes in people's lives were beginning to wear off, and they began settling back into the status quo of rote religion.

In the midst of these circumstances, walking alone on the California beach, Gene came face to face with the truth of John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." If his life was to mean anything, if he was going to actually do what he had been created for, it could only come about through obeying and utterly depending on his Savior — and teaching others to do the same. Eventually Gene left California and headed east to the Rocky Mountains. He had heard there were lots of "flower children" disillusioned with the "Woodstock Nation" and people who had dropped out of traditional lifestyles who were living in the mountains trying to find peace. Perhaps there he would find people who wanted to hear the good news of the salvation he had found in

Jesus, the Savior of the world.

A Radical Atheist

In a small, unspoiled mountain village in Wyoming lived a young woman named Marsha. Unlike Gene, she had been raised knowing nothing about the Bible and could count on one hand the times she had even been in a church building. Her college philosophy courses, combined with the religious hypocrisy she had seen all her life in southern California, had convinced her there couldn't be a God. She couldn't believe the Christians who said they had a "personal relationship with God" when their lives were full of the same ambitions, pleasures, pursuits, and mundane daily routines as her own. She knew in her heart that if there really were a God and someone actually knew Him, that person would be radically different!

The emptiness of college and the shallow relationships there had caused her to drop out and move to that small village, looking for love and peace and a life that was closer to nature. There she had found others who seemed to want the same thing — to really live and be real. But before long her friends traded in their ideals for a subtle conformity. Their passion for justice and love started gradually being replaced by the

same old greed and selfishness they had all tried to leave behind.

When Gene showed up in the village, she admired his passion but was offended at his Bible. Yet when he read to her about the love of this man called Jesus and the high standard of justice His words called for, she was intrigued. If people actually did what this man said, it would result in a society that was everything Marsha had always dreamed of. She barraged Gene with challenging questions: Why had she never seen these words lived out? Why did Christians do little more than dress up in fancy clothes and meet in elaborate buildings, even in countries racked with poverty? For these questions Gene had no answers.



All he knew was that the Son of God had saved him, had filled his heart with a love for others, and would do the same for anyone who sincerely called out to Him. It wasn't the Savior's fault that people weren't obeying His words.

Marsha couldn't ignore the truth of what she was hearing. Amazingly, this confirmed atheist put her trust in the Son of God, for she had become convinced that He was mankind's only hope. Soon afterwards, she and Gene returned to California and were married — joined in a covenant that has withstood the test of time for over three decades.

The Last Place on Earth

Even though Gene had a new life and was married to a woman who shared his convictions, he knew that many things from his old life in Tennessee were unresolved. And he could not be devoted to the purpose God had called him to until his conscience was completely clear. Facing his past in Chattanooga was painful for Gene, and the south was the last place on earth that Marsha wanted to be, steeped as she was in the stereotypical prejudices of her California upbringing. But their lives no longer belonged to themselves. They were living for their Savior now, so off they went to Gene's hometown.

They both got jobs there, and soon all the debts were paid and (as much as possible) all the wrongs were righted. During this time they attended services at several of the churches in the area where their zeal for the Lord attracted much attention. They also opened their home to anyone who wanted to come and learn about their Savior. Many young people came to meetings in their living room just to sing and talk about Jesus. Because of the things they heard and the love they experienced there, many teenagers quit taking drugs. People hailed their ministry as "a great work." Every Sunday they would bring a truckload of young people to the different churches they attended. Their little group was popular, and everyone was happy.

The Light Brigade

The little brown house on Ringgold Road where Gene and Marsha lived became known as *The Light House*, and the

little band of believers began sharing their faith through an "underground" paper called *The Light Brigade Freepaper*. They were excited about experiencing love, a clean conscience, and a new life. Whenever there was a concert or other public gathering, the Light Brigade would be there handing out papers.

The response was amazing. Teenagers showed up at all hours of the day and night. Some had nowhere else to go and needed a place to stay. But how would Gene and Marsha have time to care for these people if they continued working their regular jobs? Unwilling to turn away anyone sincere, they were in need of a bigger house. But how would they make ends meet? Asking for donations was out of the question. The Bible taught them to do honest work with their own hands to have something to share with those in need.² That's just what they wanted to do — work together and share everything they had with each other.

Thus was born *The Yellow Deli* restaurant. They did yard work to get a few dollars together and rented a small building. After a couple of months of renovation and a coat of bright yellow paint, the cozy little sandwich shop was ready to open. It was a place where they could work for a living and still be together, learning all about their Savior and His teachings. Anyone who came in to get a meal could also get a glimpse of the new life they had found — the result of being forgiven and having the Holy Spirit living inside. On the menu they printed, "We serve the fruit of the Spirit. Why not ask?"

People loved to come in and talk and sit for hours in this restaurant. It was a peaceful place, not full of the usual tense atmosphere of a typical sandwich shop. The local papers did big full-color stories about them, giving glowing reports of their work and their menu.

For a reasonable price they were able to find a big house in need of much repair, which they fixed up and began living in. It just happened to be on "Vine Street." The name reminded Gene of the Bible verse he had come to know so well: "I am the

vine, you are the branches; apart from Me you can do nothing," so they called their new home *The Vine House*.

They still attended services at various churches, but problems were beginning to surface. There were murmurings in the congregations about the "hippies" and black people invading their respectable gatherings. The young disciples were starting to ask difficult questions, too. They wondered how the people they went to church with could be so wealthy when there were so many poor people around. And why did they act so cold and distant? Hadn't Gene told them that Christians were called to live a life of selfless love for their neighbor?

The Super Bowl

One Sunday it all came to a head. The church they were attending cancelled their evening service because the Super

Bowl game was going to be on TV. Even though the preacher had many good things to say in his sermons, it

didn't seem to make much difference in the lives of the people. Their priorities seemed to be like the ones Gene had given up when he was saved.

From that day on, the little band of disciples stopped attending services. Instead they just went to a nearby park on Sunday mornings to sing and worship. After all, the Bible never said there had to be a preacher in a pulpit and everyone else listening quietly in pews. On the contrary, the Bible taught that everyone should bring something to say, or a song to sing.³

That choice was very significant. When we stopped "going to church" and started



We recently noticed another church making room for the Super Bowl in their worship

being the church something wonderful began to happen. We began discovering who we were, and what God wanted to have happen on the earth. Verses in the Bible that we hadn't really noticed before began to stand out. With excitement we discovered that the disciples in the first century lived just as we were living. Acts 2:44 said, "All who believed were together and had all things in common." And Acts 4:32 was even clearer: "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had."

The Vine Christian Community

From that time on opponents rose up from the ranks of the religious against our little band of disciples. No longer were we just a nice little ministry to young people that made up for how the churches were failing to reach the youth. Now we had become an independent entity, *The Vine Christian Community*. We weren't asking the churches for donations, teachings, seminary training, or approval. We were paying our own way and raising up our own leaders. People who hadn't wanted us at their churches in the first place were now offended that we had stopped coming. We didn't really understand what was going on and tried to make peace, but found all our efforts futile. When we tried to explain that according to the Bible we were just doing what was normal for believers, it only made matters worse. "You're saying that you're the only ones!" was the most common response. Lies and slanderous rumors began to surface about us. Suddenly we weren't so popular anymore.

All this time, however, our numbers were growing. We had to buy another house to accommodate all the people who came to live and work with us. And when a disciple from a nearby town wanted a *Yellow Deli* back where he had come from, we moved people there, got a house, and found a building for the restaurant. Then came more houses and more delis. Within four or five years' time we were running seven delis and occupied a dozen large houses in Chattanooga and the surrounding area. And we still handled all of our assets as we had at first — voluntarily sharing all that we had.



And so it went. Often because of difficult circumstances, and always at great personal cost, disciples were sent out to establish communities. But that, after all, was the foundation we had been on from the beginning: meeting meeting the pressing need, giving out of what sustained us, doing whatever love demanded. We hadn't sat down and planned out how to spread our beliefs or our lifestyle. We hadn't anticipated becoming more than what we started in Tennessee. Nevertheless, by 1990, communities had been established in four other countries, several were going in the New England area, and one in the Midwest. By the year 2000, communities had begun in several other countries, as well as in many other parts of the United States.⁴

Dry Bones

Just as we had never intended to become a worldwide movement, we had also never imagined ourselves to be a part of the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. But over the years it gradually became clear that a restoration was taking place in our midst, and that we were living at a very significant time in history.

In the 1970s we knew from our heart and our experience that there was more to following the Savior than going to church. As we tried to pursue our desire to live a life pleasing to our Savior, we began to see things in the Bible that confirmed us. The accounts we read of the first-century church portrayed people who lived a radical life of self-sacrificing love for one another and were distinctly different from the society around them. It was all too obvious that such a life was missing from the Christian Churches of

the twentieth century.

The reason was fairly obvious, too. There was no radical difference between churchgoers and non-churchgoers because there was no authoritative message being proclaimed to tell people what God wanted them to do. Jesus' love for His Father caused Him to obey His Father's word. He, in turn called His disciples to the same love. He went before them and was their example. His message called them to abandon their fishing nets and tax booths and to give away their personal possessions. He commanded them to sever their ties with any family members who opposed their devotion to the cause. The apostle Paul had even renounced his training as a Biblical scholar in order to know this Jesus whom his colleagues despised. But Christianity did not preach such "hard sayings." Instead, it has intellectually dissected the words of Messiah and rationalized away the need to obey them.

It wasn't hard for us to see why that authoritative message was missing in modern times. Someone would have to consistently live that life of self-sacrifice and care himself, because of his love for Jesus, before he would have the authority to call others to abandon everything to follow Him. Thus, a major focus for us in the 1970s was learning to be obedient to the message we had received.

During the 1980s we continued to seek in the Bible for the foundation of the early church to find our identity. Gradually it dawned on us what the first Church had been — not just a religion, but a nation.⁵ That nation had been known as the *Commonwealth of Israel*.⁶ It had been made up of priests (each one a representative of

God on earth) and had possessed its own culture. Piece by piece, the puzzle began to take shape. There had been a radical separation between the Church and the world in the first century and there had been a very good reason for it. The nations of the world functioned on the basis of Natural Law — the things that all men knew in their consciences to be true and right⁷ — but the priesthood had a higher law and greater accountability.

As we studied the history and prophecies of the Old Testament, passages from the New Testament became much clearer. Living according to Natural Law was not bad, and God had an eternal reward for all who struggled to do right (see *What About the Heathen?* page 78), but good morals alone could not accomplish the purpose of God on the earth. There had to be a holy nation that proved their love for Messiah before He could return to the earth to establish His kingdom with them. There would have to be a people separate from the nations

of the world who would live their lives obeying His commands. Matthew 24:14 and 21:43 were very clear on this point. By the close of the 1980s, though, it became obvious that this holy nation would not even be able to exist on the earth apart from the influence of righteous men in the governments of the nations — men who would uphold freedom of religion and other basic human rights.

As we entered the 1990s, we began gathering every morning and evening to pray for the rulers of the nations in which we dwelt.⁸ At the same time, our message became much more sharply focused. We gained more understanding about the ways in which society was violating the Natural Law — to the point of calling evil good and good evil. It was becoming obvious that the time-honored ideals of the hard-working man, the submissive wife, and respectful children were under attack in the world around us. Men were striving for positions where they could make the most money with the least sweat possible. Women were demanding at least a 50-50 partnership where there was

no acknowledged head. Children were increasingly being left to themselves to choose their own course and form their own values. The concept of family was being re-defined to the point that homosexual partnerships were being given the same legal status as marriage in some places.

We felt a growing urgency to let people know about the good, clean life our Savior had given us. In addition to passing out literature at public events and backpacking in pairs across the countryside to share our message, we established a toll-free number and later a website where people with questions



could find answers. We continued to print our freepapers, calling our main publication *The Twelve Tribes Freepaper*.

As the twentieth century drew to a close, various Biblical prophecies stood out to us. Isaiah 49:6 spoke of the “*raising up of the tribes of Jacob to be a light to the nations so that salvation could reach to the ends of the earth.*” It was becoming clear that salvation reaching the ends of the earth (which Matthew 24:14 said must happen in order for Messiah to return and bring about the end of the age) depended on a nation composed of twelve tribes. These tribes, we came to understand, would not be the natural descendants of Jacob, but a spiritual Commonwealth of Israel⁹ — twelve self-governing tribes. Each tribe would be composed of the disciples in a geographical area, living a common life together that would be a light to the people around them. It would be restored gradually, like the vision of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, member by member becoming united together and fleshed out into a host of communities — the resurrection of a spiritual

nation whose hope had dried up at the end of the first century.

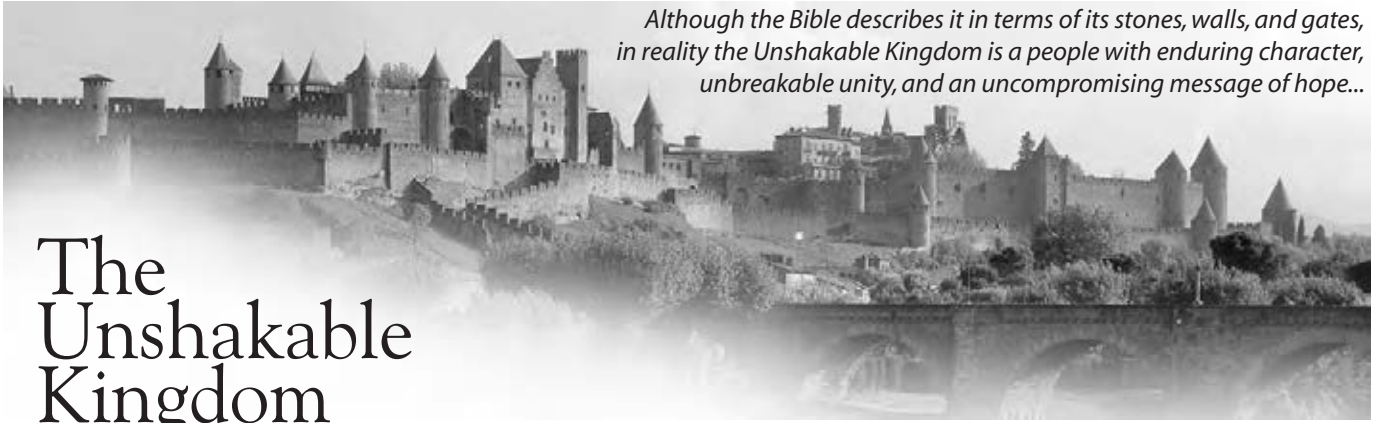
We realized that this was our future, if we proved worthy of it, but many movements have come and gone in the last nineteen centuries, and none have fully recaptured the fervor of the first-century disciples and spread it to the ends of the earth. Always there have been selfish motives, factions, corruption, and compromise. Never has there been a people such as the prophetic dream Daniel¹⁰ describes — a “stone kingdom” made up of people hewn from the mountain of the world “without human hands.” Attempts at restoration have always involved fleshly

human effort in forms such as political alliances between church and state, the use of military force, and persuasive propaganda. But the Stone Kingdom of Daniel’s prophecy can only be established through love, bonding people together by a deep affection based on the sacrifices they have made for each other.

And so we have reached a critical point. There are communities being raised up in

twelve geographical areas by responsible people who have been disciples for decades. Their children, for the most part, are building this nation with their parents. A rich culture is emerging in our midst. We have a clear vision for the future. But we face a supreme test. Will we continue to allow the new wine of the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts and change our lives? We will if we remain true to our Master’s words in John 15:5 — “*Apart from Me you can do nothing.*” The challenge is to rely on the Spirit of Love, and not on our own natural abilities, so that we will not fall prey to the pride, selfish desires, and compromise that have caused every other movement of the last two millennia to fail. Everything, quite literally everything, depends on this. And with this vision we press on, for the love of our Master Yahshua compels us.¹¹ 🙏

¹ Rote: routine or repetition carried out mechanically or unthinkingly. ² Ephesians 4:28 ³ 1 Corinthians 14:26 ⁴ See the back cover for addresses of some of our communities, or visit our web site for a complete list. ⁵ 1 Peter 2:9 ⁶ Ephesians 2:12 ⁷ Romans 2:14-15 ⁸ 1 Timothy 2:1-8 ⁹ Ephesians 2:12 ¹⁰ Daniel 2:31-45 ¹¹ 2 Corinthians 5:14-15



Although the Bible describes it in terms of its stones, walls, and gates, in reality the Unshakable Kingdom is a people with enduring character, unbreakable unity, and an uncompromising message of hope...

The Unshakable Kingdom

This mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

~Daniel 2:30

Some people scoff at the intense interest given to end-time prophecies. When the year 2000 rolled around, many people were on edge. And maybe they've got a point. The times we live in could make a person fearful. Think about the social, moral, and economic problems that face people today. Over 65 million people have contracted the AIDS virus (about 25 million having died from it), and about 5 million are being added yearly to the total. That's one issue that makes the world a little tense. Terrorism is another. And people feel insecure when they hear about tampering with the genetic makeup of plants and animals, or violating the structure of atoms. And since roughly half of all marriages end in divorce and growing numbers of couples don't even bother making a commitment to stay together, people tend to worry about the future of society.

The reality is, there never has been a time like this. Even when a nation or empire was in decline, or verging on moral collapse, there was always another society standing by, ready to take over when it fell. This is the only time in over 4000 years that a global civilization and a global culture have been within man's reach. Within a generation, the whole earth could very likely be united in a federation of governments, much like the European Union is today. And many

people fear that when this coming civilization falls, it's going to take everything down with it.

So there are good reasons why men are looking to Bible prophecies for direction. People want to have something secure and unchanging to put their confidence in. The world is mutating much too fast for them to keep up, and they have no assurance that most of the changes are for the better. They want to know how it's all going to turn out, and they've heard that the prophets in the Bible have been right. Haven't many of their predictions already come true?

The Fall of the Statue

The prophet Daniel is a good example of a man whose words are trustworthy. 2,600 years ago, he interpreted a dream for a Babylonian king. The focus of the

"Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

~ Daniel 2:35

dream was a huge statue with a gold head, a chest and arms of silver, a bronze belly, iron legs, and feet and toes of iron mixed with clay. From this dream he predicted a succession of empires which would dominate the earth. And history has proven him right. The Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires followed one another, corresponding

exactly to the statue, especially the legs of iron, which depicted the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire.¹

As for the feet and toes of iron mixed with clay, many scholars have imagined that this would be a revival of the Roman Empire in a modified form. Their speculations carry weight, because Roman law and culture under-gird all of Western civilization. The essence of Rome is like a seed waiting to sprout. The West is obsessed with a united world because they still remember the peace and prosperity that the Roman Empire enjoyed in its heyday – the "Roman Peace."

It is easy to see how the current movement toward world unity will bring about the feet of iron mixed with clay, ending with ten iron-and-clay toes.² Even now, forces are at work to unify all the organized religions for the purpose of making them a dominant political force in the world. When the Ecumenical Movement succeeds, the governments of all nations will see a need to incorporate the influence of religion as a stabilizing force in society. This mixture of the iron of government and the clay of religion will resolve itself into a federation of ten world leaders. Many people, even within Christianity, see this much about Daniel's predictions. What they do not understand, however, is the end of this vision.

The Mystery of the Stone

In the dream, a stone was mysteriously being hewn out of a huge mountain. Without human hands it was chipped away, little by little, until it broke free and plummeted toward the statue, striking it on the feet. The iron and clay mixture shattered, and the entire statue fell and

disintegrated. Then a mighty wind came up, blowing away the dust, until no trace was left of the once-mighty statue. Only the stone remained. Then, amazingly, that stone grew into a huge mountain that filled the earth.

The fifth-century theologian Augustine claimed that this stone was the Roman Catholic Church, and that it had already become the mountain that filled the whole earth.³ What Augustine failed to consider, however, was that the Catholic Church had not removed every trace of the Roman Empire, but was instead preserving it. In fact, the Roman Church was the beginning of the clay mixing with the iron, which will become the one-world empire of the last days.

Daniel made it clear that the stone is not merely a religion, but a kingdom.⁴ And it is not just any kingdom, but *the* Kingdom which the God of heaven will set up in the days of “those kings” — the ten kings of the world federation represented by the toes of the statue. This can only happen at one time in history — the last days of this age. Obviously so, because when the Stone Kingdom falls on the toes, it brings this age to an end.

The relentless progress toward religious and political unity that is now driving the Western world shows that we are clearly in the beginning stages of that federation of kings. Once again, Daniel’s interpretation of the dream is proving trustworthy. So we must also be living at the time when God is beginning to cut the stone out of the mountain of the world.

Not Subversive

Daniel said that this Stone Kingdom will not be left for another people. It will endure forever because it is completely separate from the society of the end times. This is the meaning of the stone being cut out of the mountain. Those who make up this kingdom are hewn out of the world, not by human effort, but by a divine act.

Many groups are forming today, taking their cues from such prophecies as Daniel and the book of Revelation. They are taking steps to isolate themselves from the corruption they see in society, and even to arm themselves for a conflict with the emerging one-world order. The

FBI estimates that there are hundreds of such private armies in the United States alone. These survivalist groups think that by stockpiling weapons and supplies, they can make it through the collapse of the present society and take over. But what they do not see is that, contrary to prophecy, they are trying to cut *themselves* out of the mountain *with* human hands.

*“And in the days of those kings
the God of heaven will set up a kingdom
that shall never be destroyed,
nor shall the kingdom
be left to another people.
It shall break in pieces
all these kingdoms
and bring them to an end,
and it shall stand forever.”
~ Daniel 2:44*

Such alternative societies are based on reactions to the current culture, hatred of other races or religions, and even insane plans to force a confrontation with the “antichrist government.” But their efforts will prove to be futile. Those who are subversive will be surrounded and disarmed, or perhaps even destroyed. And others will be assimilated back into society — as many have been already. A movement based on mere reactions to moral decline will not stand. Subversive or reactionary groups cannot overthrow the current order because they are still connected to its source. They are still controlled by the same spirits that control the society that they are reacting to. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.⁵ So the only society that will be able to endure is one that comes out from under the control of the evil spiritual forces that work in the unseen realm.

This is how the Stone Kingdom will bring an end to the kingdoms of this world — not through subversive activity against those kingdoms, but through overcoming the evil spiritual forces that control them. Those in the Stone Kingdom have been given power over the unclean spirits that stir up fear and hatred and greed and pride and every kind of selfish desire and self-centered thought.

The Radical Solution to Sin

The Stone Kingdom does something truly radical. It lays the axe to the root that has caused the downfall of every civilization since the beginning. That root is self-life. Self-life is the true meaning of the often-misunderstood word *sin*. Those who choose to follow the King of this kingdom choose to put self to death. This is called *repenting*. When they repent, their King lavishes on them a costly gift called *forgiveness*. Forgiveness causes something supernatural to spring up in their souls — *love*. This love is not just a good feeling, it is a good *motive*. This supernatural love causes them to do good things — kind things — that shine brightly to those around them. And those who see what they are doing start to appreciate the God who made them. They start to believe that the Creator is good and kind and wants to help them out of the predicament they are in.

The prophet Isaiah predicted that this kingdom would take the form of the *restored tribes of Jacob*. He said it would be a light to the nations, and would carry God’s salvation to the end of the earth.⁶ This is what Messiah was



referring to when He predicted that the good news of the kingdom would be proclaimed to set the evidence before all the nations, and then the end would be able to come.⁷ He also said that when this nation produced the fruit of the coming age, then the government of that age would be turned over to them. Then He added, "...on whomever this stone falls it will scatter him like dust."⁸ This is a clear reference to the Stone Kingdom in Daniel's prophecy.

These tribes of Jacob will be standing on an unshakable foundation. The God of heaven will give them a way of life that does not pass away, a way of life that can be passed on from generation to generation. This is what eternal life is. It is not just a religious belief about going to heaven

after you die. Eternal life is the life that will fill the earth like a mountain in the next age. It will be raised up in this age like a stone cut out of the world.

As the restored tribes of Jacob live in obedience to the commands of the Messiah, they will demonstrate the life that Israel was always meant to live. They will exhibit a culture that does not come from the world around them and is not a reaction to it. Their way of doing business, their art and music, and the festivals that celebrate their dependence on their Creator will be given to them from above and will have a radically different quality from the culture that surrounds them.⁹ Every part of their life will be focused toward the goal of being worthy to be that Stone Kingdom.

*"It is too small a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth."
~ Isaiah 49:6*

Even their obedience to the divine command that Israel should let their land rest one year out of every seven¹⁰ – a command which Israel of old never obeyed¹¹ – will prepare them to live a life that does not depend on buying, selling, planting, or harvesting.¹² And they will be able thus to endure in the wilderness for the 1260 days¹³ until the Jubilee, when Messiah returns and the whole earth is delivered back to its rightful Owner.¹⁴

This then is the message of the prophets for the end times. Daniel, Isaiah, and our Master Yahshua all point to the one life, the one culture, the one kingdom that will survive. If men derive any other message from the prophets and use it as an excuse for pursuing a course of their own invention, their plans will perish. It does not matter if they react militantly against the governments of this world or try to influence and dominate those governments, their agenda will perish. Only those whose life is based on love, who live the demonstration of the coming age, will endure. Whoever is truly looking to the prophets for direction — for a way out of the destruction and corruption of today — will only find it in this unshakable kingdom.¹⁵ ♣



¹ Daniel 2:36-40 ² Daniel 2:41-43

³ Augustine, *In Answer to the Letters of Petilian*, Book 2, Chapter 38, paragraph 90

⁴ Daniel 2:44-45 ⁵ 1 John 5:19

⁶ Isaiah 49:6 ⁷ Matthew 24:14

⁸ Matthew 21:43-44 ⁹ Colossians 2:16-17

¹⁰ Leviticus 25:1-10 ¹¹ 2 Chronicles 36:21

¹² Revelation 13:17 ¹³ Revelation 12:6,14

¹⁴ Revelation 11:15; Isaiah 61:2; Luke 4:19

¹⁵ Hebrews 12:28-29

An Unlikely Beginning

One day Yahshua went up on a mountainside in Galilee and looked with compassion at the multitudes of people who flocked to Him everywhere He went. They were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. When He found a suitable place and sat down, His disciples gathered around Him and He began to teach them.

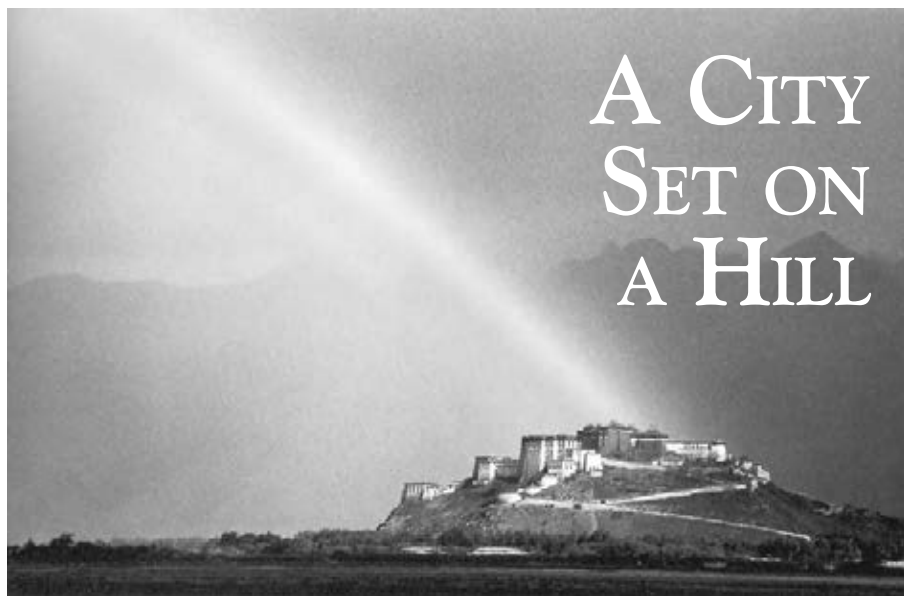
They themselves were a rag-tag bunch — a few fishermen, a tax collector, a political activist... no one of great significance. Yet the Master looked them square in the eyes and told them:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)

“Us? Is He talking about us? The light of the world? A city? Us?”

Yes, He was talking about *them*, and those who would receive them,¹ and the communities full of wholehearted disciples that would result from them forsaking their old lives for His sake and the Gospel’s sake. There would be many “cities” set on hills, shedding light for the world around them to see.

You see, the pronouns “you” and “your” in that passage are *plural*, not *singular*.² He was speaking of them as a people, not as independent individuals. The light would emanate from the *city* and their *common works*. Even that word, *works*, is interesting. It means one’s *employment, an enterprise or undertaking*, not just some isolated good deeds. It is the effect of one’s life, or in this context, the *common enterprise* of the holy ones in their holy cities (communities). Their light would shine from its lampstand as long as it remained in its place.³



The Law and the Prophets

The Master did not say this to His disciples lightly or as mere poetry, but because this *enterprise* of theirs was to be the fulfillment of the prophetic word spoken of Him,⁴ and by extension, of *them* as His Body on earth. He would say many such things to them in the days ahead that would sometimes leave them bewildered. He wanted them to know who they were becoming, to be filled with vision about the great purpose for their lives, even if they didn’t understand it all at first. Later they would understand, and they would write from their understanding of His words and the words of the Prophets as He had taught them.⁵ For *everything* the Master said and did was to bring about the fulfillment of what was in His Father’s heart as expressed in the Law and the Prophets:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18)

Heaven and earth have not yet passed away,⁶ so clearly *all* has not been accomplished. Contrary to the opinions of many,

Messiah’s life, death, and resurrection did not fulfill all that is in the Law and the Prophets. It remains for His Body on earth — His bride,⁷ His suitable helper⁸ — to fulfill all things that remain to be fulfilled.⁹ He cannot return until she does.¹⁰

So we want to give you a glimpse of who the bride of Messiah is, according to the Scriptures, and of her great purpose, both in this age and for all eternity, for that is where we find our identity. And no one can reasonably claim to be included in His bride (which is the true Body of Messiah) who is not becoming who she is and doing what she does. So with the same awe and wonder as those first disciples had as they learned who they were, not yet having fully attained to it, we write of who we aspire to be, according to the Scriptures.

The Bride of Messiah — The Glory of His People Israel

A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel. (Luke 2:32)

She is the Israel of God,¹¹ the sons of God¹² who are being conformed to the image of the firstborn Son¹³ in this present age. As her Master is, so also is she in this world.¹⁴ She is the very embodiment of Him who is in heaven.¹⁵ She is, in His

¹ John 13:20; Matthew 10:40; Luke 10:16; John 17:20 ² Just as in 1 Peter 2:12 ³ Revelation 2:5
⁴ Luke 2:32 ⁵ Luke 24:27 ⁶ Revelation 21:1 ⁷ Ephesians 5:23-32 ⁸ Genesis 2:18 ⁹ Romans 8:4
¹⁰ Hebrews 10:13; Revelation 19:7-8; 2 Peter 3:12 ¹¹ Galatians 6:16 ¹² Galatians 3:26; Romans 8:19;
¹³ John 3:2 ¹⁴ Romans 8:29 ¹⁵ 1 John 4:17; John 14:12 ¹⁶ 1 John 4:15-17; John 14:20,23; 17:23

place, the Servant Israel who fulfills Isaiah's prophecy, becoming the light to the Gentiles,¹⁶ taking or literally being His salvation to the ends of the earth.

God is in the process of making for Himself an eternal dwelling place in us.¹⁷ This dwelling place is the twelve tribes of Israel, the bride and wife-to-be of the Lamb.¹⁸ God, who is Spirit, wants to make Himself visible in a body, a human body¹⁹ — not just one, but as many as can be sons of God. God needs to be seen in a human body — a many-membered Body²⁰ which is in complete unity²¹ and total coordination under the Head.²²

This is why Isaiah called her *sought out, wanted, necessary*.²³ Contrary to Calvinist doctrine, God actually needs redeemed human beings in order to accomplish His eternal purpose. They are essential and absolutely necessary to form His Body, His Holy Temple through whom He will rule the universe of men in the ages to come.

The Universe

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body,²⁴ the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22-23)

He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. (Ephesians 4:10)

"All things" includes the entire universe. What does it mean to be the fullness of Him who fills the universe in His many sons who are just like His first-born Son?²⁵

Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." (Revelation 21:2-3)

This passage is speaking of the eternal age that follows the millennial reign of Messiah on the earth, and the Last Judgment.²⁶ The "men" with whom God dwells in the eternal age are those who

pendent on us, just as Adam was made to be dependent on God. God makes them dependent upon His sons³¹ in whom He dwells. The nations of the eternal age will walk by the light of those who were the light in this age.³² All nations will serve and obey *them*,³³ the corporate Body of God.

God's Eternal Dwelling Place

God is Spirit,³⁴ therefore humans are unable to see Him unless He dwells in humanity. Redeemed humanity will reign over restored humanity.³⁵ The One who humbled Himself will then, with His many brothers who are like Him,³⁶ ascend to the oversight of the universe.³⁷ He who is the body of God now has His many brothers who

have been raised from the first death at the Last Judgment and have been judged not worthy of the second death.²⁷ They will live a second and eternal life instead, and God will dwell with them. How can He dwell with them? *In His dwelling place*, which is the bride of Messiah, the wife of the Lamb,²⁸ the very body of God.²⁹

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21:4)

Those who have been raised from the agonies of the first death and judged worthy of life will need healing, and their tears will be wiped away by the Lamb's wife in whom God dwells, who has the same compassion as Messiah.³⁰ *Reign* in Revelation 22:5 means exactly that. The nations will need to be taught how to live in the eternal age. They will be de-

are the corporate body of God. This is the "perfect man" of Ephesians 4:11-16, which is now in the making.

The dwelling place of God³⁸ is now in the process of being fitted together. The chief cornerstone is the support for the whole building. It is the foundation or basic element in the whole building.³⁹ The chief cornerstone is our Master, and we are His servants,⁴⁰ the living stones of 1 Peter 2:5. By the grace of apostleship,⁴¹ the stones are being placed and adjusted until they fit each other perfectly, making an eternal dwelling place for the Godhead to dwell in bodily form, in order to bring peace and order to the whole human family in the far reaches of the universe.

The whole universe will be qualitatively changed,⁴² with eternal planets and stars for the immortal humans who will occupy them all — the men⁴³ of the nations who were worthy of a second life will now be God's people, and He will be

¹⁶Isaiah 49:3-6; Matthew 5:17 ¹⁷Ephesians 2:21-22 ¹⁸Revelation 21:2-3,9-12 ¹⁹Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:12,19-22 ²⁰Ephesians 5:30; 1 Corinthians 12:12,27 ²¹1 Corinthians 1:10; John 17:23 ²²Colossians 2:19 ²³Isaiah 62:12 ²⁴Ephesians 2:21-22; Revelation 21:3; Ephesians 3:21 ²⁵Ephesians 1:23; Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2 ²⁶Revelation 20:6-15 ²⁷For more on this subject, see *What About the Heathen*, page 78 ²⁸Revelation 21:9,12 ²⁹Revelation 21:3 ³⁰Revelation 21:4; 22:2; 1 John 3:2-3 ³¹Hebrews 2:10-12 ³²Revelation 21:23-26 ³³Daniel 7:27, RSV, ESV, NJB ³⁴John 4:24 ³⁵Revelation 22:5; Daniel 7:27, RSV, NEV, ESV ³⁶Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2-3; Matthew 25:34-40 ³⁷Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:18 ³⁸Ephesians 2:22 ³⁹1 Corinthians 3:10; Ephesians 2:20; Psalms 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7 ⁴⁰John 12:26; Revelation 22:3-5 ⁴¹Romans 1:5; Ephesians 4:11,12,16; 1 Corinthians 3:10 ⁴²Hebrews 1:12; Psalms 102:26 ⁴³The Greek word for *men* here includes both genders.

their God through us, His temple or body, which houses His Spirit.⁴⁴

The Increase of His Government

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase⁴⁵ of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

There will be no end to the increase of His government, which is His bride, His wife in the eternal age.⁴⁶ She will be the nucleus through which the promise is fulfilled that Abraham's descendants will be like the sands of the oceans...⁴⁷ As Psalm 102 prophesies,

Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end. The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You. (Psalm 102:25-28)

The countless descendants, perpetually propagated through the spiritual union of Messiah and His wife,⁴⁸ will rule over restored humanity who fill up the earth and then colonize the "changed" heavens made habitable for them. Is there any end to the universe? Thus, as Paul prophesied, the glory of Messiah will reach to all generations, forever and ever.⁴⁹ There can be no end to the increase of His rulers who will reign forever and ever,⁵⁰ since there will be no end to the propagation of the restored men of the nations who can now go on to fulfill Genesis 1:26-28.

How will this happen? As Paul said, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things God has prepared for those who love Him."⁵¹ Yet we know where this

glorious future begins: right here in this present age. First God must have a people who love Him enough to obey Him, who do His will on the earth and cause His name to be hallowed.⁵²

First things First

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (John 14:21,23)



He will reveal Himself to those who obey Him, and that revelation will cause them to obey Him all the more,⁵³ so that they become a witness to His character, a living demonstration of Messiah on the earth. Only this will bring about His return and the end of this age.⁵⁴ We must fulfill what was spoken prophetically of our Master:

Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring⁵⁵ from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:78-79)

The "Dayspring" provides light and truth and true forgiveness of sins and the way of peace for the people blinded by the darkness of their sins,⁵⁶ and groping for truth in the midst of confusion.⁵⁷ If we are not this "sprout" or "dayspring" from on high, then we are just one more religion amongst all the confusion.

The light of Luke 1:79 and 2:32 emanates from the life⁵⁸ of the restored twelve tribes of Isaiah's prophecy, who are the embodiment of Messiah:

Indeed He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)

Paul understood that Isaiah was speaking prophetically of Messiah and His bride, and that it would take the light of the restored twelve tribes to bring salvation to the Gentiles⁵⁹ and ultimately to win his own countrymen.⁶⁰ We are here to carry on where Paul left off. To bring about this prophecy we labor night and day in one accord⁶¹ in order to be the light of the world,⁶² a city set on a hill, to enlighten those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,⁶³ to bring revelation to the Gentiles,⁶⁴ causing them to glorify God as He "visits" them through us.⁶⁵

We are in training now for what we will be doing throughout eternity. 🌱

⁴⁴Revelation 21:2,3,9,12,24; 22:2,5 ⁴⁵Increase is from a Hebrew word that means to become many, to multiply; the "increase of His government" is not only qualitative, but also quantitative throughout eternity. ⁴⁶Revelation 21:9-12 ⁴⁷Genesis 22:17; 32:12; Isaiah 48:19 ⁴⁸Revelation 21:9 ⁴⁹Ephesians 3:21 ⁵⁰Revelation 22:5 ⁵¹1 Corinthians 2:9 ⁵²Matthew 6:9-11; Malachi 1:11 ⁵³Only when the church is continually receiving revelation from the Father as Peter was in Matthew 16:16-17 is the promise of Matthew 16:18 relevant; see *Upon this Rock*, page 6 ⁵⁴Matthew 24:14 ⁵⁵The Greek word translated as "Dayspring" is *orient* or *dawn*, raising a light to orient people to the truth in the midst of religious confusion. This same word is also used in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) in translating the Hebrew word for "branch" or "sprout" in Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12, which is prophetic of the coming of Messiah. ⁵⁶Luke 1:78-79 ⁵⁷Which is what *Babylon* means, Revelation 17:3-6; 18:2. ⁵⁸John 1:4 ⁵⁹Acts 13:47; 26:23 ⁶⁰See the article *Foolish Nation* on our web site for more on this: www.twelvetribe.org/publications/foolish-nation.html ⁶¹Acts 26:6-8,23; John 17:20-23 ⁶²Matthew 5:14-16 ⁶³Luke 1:79 ⁶⁴Luke 2:32 ⁶⁵1 Peter 2:12

What about the Heathen?

*Are all men
doomed to eternal death
who have never heard
the gospel?*

This question looms in the minds of many Christians, and the classic answer, at least from the Calvinist camp, makes God out to be a vindictive¹ monster: *all men are born totally depraved, worthy of eternal damnation regardless of how they live their lives or whether they have ever heard of Jesus Christ.*

We utterly reject this misrepresentation of God's justice and would like to set the record straight from the Holy Scriptures. While it is *not* possible for a man to work his way to heaven, it is also *not* true that he is doomed to eternal death regardless of how he lives his life. What *is* the truth about man's eternal destiny?

First of all, it is true that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command in the Garden of Eden and ate the forbidden fruit, they incurred the sentence of death:

*And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."
(Genesis 2:16-17)*

Their physical death was not immediate, but their spiritual death was, and their fallen condition was passed on to their offspring, as the record shows, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."² Therefore, since "the wages of sin is death,"³ then "it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."⁴

This much is clear to most Christians, but what happens after the judgment? This is the part that is widely misunderstood. But remember, the Bible says "it is appointed for men to die *once*..." It doesn't say *twice*. Yet there is a *second* death:



*But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.
(Revelation 21:8)*

This verse identifies a certain character of people whose destiny will be a second and unending death in the lake of fire. But what about those who are not of that character? That is why there must be a judgment:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books

*were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.
(Revelation 20:11-15)*

Let's be clear: this is *not* the judgment of believers in Christ, for their eternal destiny does not depend on their works.⁵ This is the judgment of all those who died *without Christ*. They are raised from

¹ *vindictive*: disposed to seek revenge; showing malice and a desire to hurt; motivated by spite. ²Romans 3:23 ³Romans 6:23 ⁴Hebrews 9:27 ⁵There is a judgment of believers that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 5:10 and 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, but its purpose is to determine who is worthy to rule with Messiah during the Millennial Age. This judgment takes place at Messiah's return, 1000 years before the so-called "Great White Throne" judgment. But the eternal destiny of true believers is sealed according to Ephesians 1:13-14.

the *first* death to be judged as to whether they are worthy of the *second* death, based on how they lived their lives.

Now some will say this judgment is merely a formality — not a judgment at all, but a sentencing. They will say that no one's name was found written in the Book of Life because they didn't believe in Jesus,⁶ so all were cast into the lake of fire. They fail to distinguish between this "Book of Life" for the nations and the "Lamb's Book of Life" for the holy nation. They suppose that God raises men from the first death to stand before Him so that He can gloat at them while He pretends to look up their name in the Book of Life, knowing it will not be there. Then He callously casts them into the lake of fire. But this is not God's character.

Abraham, the father of our faith, when he appealed to God to spare the few righteous in Sodom, knew something about the character of God that escapes many Christians today:

Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Genesis 18:25)

Of course Abraham was especially thinking of his nephew Lot, and God heard his plea and rescued Lot and his daughters. Although he was not included in the covenant with Abraham, Lot is described as being *righteous*.⁷ And while this passage does not speak of Lot's eternal destiny, but merely his temporal deliverance from the destruction of Sodom, yet it speaks of God's character as understood by Abraham, the *friend of God*.⁸

We stand with Abraham, knowing that God will righteously judge all people according to their works, and not just throw them all willy-nilly into the lake of fire. Those who are not *worthy* of the second death will be granted a second life, and it is over them that Messiah and His Bride (those who have truly believed in Him) will rule throughout eternity.⁹

Now let's take a closer look at the basis of this judgment:

Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil..." (Genesis 3:22)

After Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would have to live by that knowledge, choosing to do the good and not to do the evil. Even though fallen man could not do this perfectly, God still held him accountable to exercise his will to overcome the temptation to do evil, just as He told Cain:

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it. (Genesis 4:7)

Of course, Cain did not master it, but all are not like Cain. All do not murder. All are not immoral. Many strive to do the good they know in their conscience, and are grieved when they fail, and do everything possible to make restitution when



they do wrong. These have a natural righteousness of their own, a natural faith or persuasion that God is good and that He will judge all men justly. They value the dignity of life. They recognize the image of the Creator in His creation. They work hard and are faithful in their marriages.¹⁰ They labor to put their values into their children. They bear suffering without growing bitter. They try to keep a good conscience. And God does not despise their efforts.

⁶ The "cowardly and unbelieving" in Revelation 21:8 are those who rejected the gospel as John 3:18,36 describes, not those who never heard the gospel. But some will say there is no excuse, because if anyone were really sincere, God would send a missionary to him, even in the remotest corner of China. Rightly did our Master say of such self-righteous judges: "Woe to you, for you travel over land and sea to win one convert, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves!" (Matthew 23:15) ⁷ 2 Peter 2:7-8 ⁸ 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23 ⁹ Revelation 22:3-5 ¹⁰ Genesis 3:16-19





True, all men sin and fall short of the glory of God, but not all fall *utterly* short. Glory means weight or value. Adam, before he fell, had great value, having been made in God's image. When he fell, God's image in him was marred, but not obliterated. This is very clear from what God said *after* Adam's fall, and in fact even after the Flood:

Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man. And you, be fruitful and multiply; abound on the earth and multiply in it.
(Genesis 9:6-7)

Man still bears God's image and has great value in God's eyes, as He requires capital punishment for any who would fail to respect His image in his fellow man to the point of committing murder. But beyond that, God commissioned Noah and his sons after the flood to be fruitful and multiply abundantly on the earth. If man was now worthless and totally depraved, why would a loving Creator want

to fill the earth with such creatures?

So fallen man still bears the image of his Creator and retains intrinsic¹¹ worth to the degree that he lives by the knowledge of good and evil, inherent¹² in his conscience. Even though he has an inborn inclination to sin, he is able and accountable to do the good that he knows in his conscience and to keep himself from the kinds of sins that would make him worthy of the second death.¹³

Yet regardless of how careful a man is to live by his conscience, he will not do so perfectly, for he is a fallen creature. He will sin, and his sin must be paid for, as it is an inviolable law that the wages of sin is death. A man's good deeds cannot save him from the consequences of his sin — the first death. His natural righteousness cannot restore him to fellowship with God, nor make him worthy of ruling and reigning with Christ. All of his good deeds are of no more value than filthy rags¹⁴ for obtaining the righteousness of God, which can only be imputed to a man on the basis of faith,

which comes from hearing the word of Christ from someone sent to preach the Good News.¹⁵

So whoever dies without Christ must go to the first death to pay the wages of his own sin, since he does not have a sacrifice for his sins. How then does he pay these wages? It is according to how much worth remains in him, how much integrity and courage he has to face the truth about himself. For in death he is finally alone with his conscience, forced to face his sin, with nowhere to hide and nothing to distract his mind from the awareness of his own guilt. Every evil deed, every base thought, every selfish motive comes out of hiding to torture him. Like a worm burrowing into the recesses of his memory, eating away at his every excuse, so is the path of his thoughts as his conscience fully awakens. The unquenchable fire of his self-inquisition leaves him either weeping in remorse or gnashing his teeth as he resists the truth about himself.¹⁶

Those who resist the truth, reasoning

away their guilt even in death, prove themselves unable to pay sin's wages. They are the same in death as they were in life — set in their ways, their hearts fully hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. A second death awaits them, where they will gnash their teeth eternally. There is a mystery here. King David wrote,

From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind; from His dwelling place He watches all who live on earth — He who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do. (Psalm 33:13-15)

The Creator of man forms, fashions, or molds each man's heart according to what he does or gives himself to. Eventually the heart, like clay, becomes "set" in its way, and so that person's character will remain eternally¹⁷ — some bent towards evil, and some towards good.

The latter, in death, will weep in remorse, accepting the full responsibility for their sins rather than blaming them on others. They are the ones who are able to pay sin's wages. When they are resurrected to stand judgment, they will have fully received the discipline of death and will find mercy and not condemnation. This mercy and comfort will come at the hands of the bride of Messiah, who, according to the Apostle Paul,¹⁸ will be judging the nations on God's behalf. They will wipe away the tears of those who were judged not worthy of the second death:



Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:2-4)

The "tabernacle" or "dwelling place" of God is the bride or wife of Messiah,¹⁹ who will dwell with men — the resurrected righteous people of the nations. That is how God Himself will be with them — through the wife of Messiah.²⁰ Redeemed Man will rule with Messiah over Restored Man,²¹ and the original commission given to Adam will be restored to him, once sin and death and the evil one himself are no more:²²

Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. (Genesis 1:28)

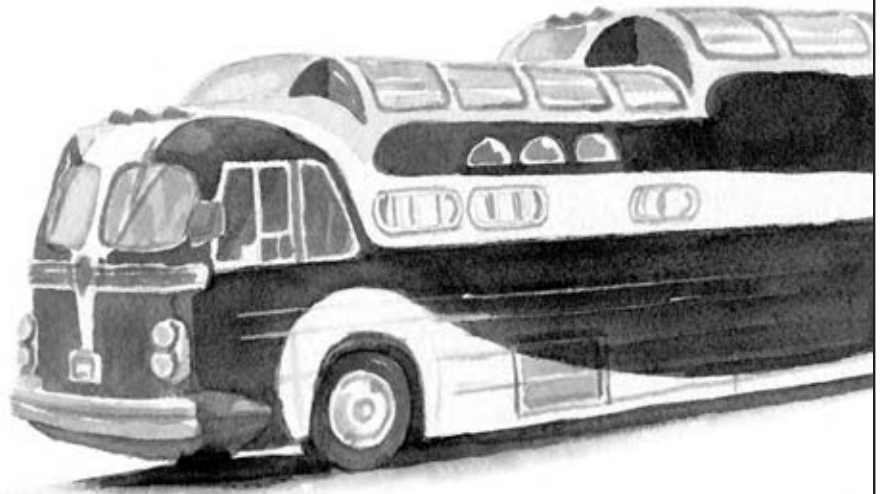
Amazingly, in Psalm 8, King David prophesied that man (both the redeemed and restored man) would rule over all the works of God's hands, including all the

galaxies of planets. Surely without death, restored man will quickly fill up the earth and go on to colonize the universe with restored humanity, under the ever-increasing government of God²³ — the redeemed corporate²⁴ man, which is the wife²⁵ of Messiah.

So we hope that you can see that there is a lot more in God's heart towards His highest creation, mankind, than to throw countless millions into the lake of fire for the crime of not having been born in the right place and time to hear the true gospel. If you are interested in reading more about man's eternal destiny, please visit our web site, www.commonwealthofisrael.org, and look for the section about *The Three Eternal Destinies of Man*. Or better yet, just come and visit one of our communities and we will be more than happy to talk with you. 🌱

¹¹*intrinsic*: belonging to a thing by its very nature. ¹²*inherent*: existing as an essential constituent or characteristic; in the nature of something. ¹³Revelation 21:8; 22:15; Romans 1:28-32 ¹⁴Isaiah 64:6 ¹⁵Romans 10:13-17 ¹⁶Romans 2:14-16; Matthew 18:34; Acts 2:24; 1 Corinthians 15:55-56 ¹⁷Revelation 22:11 ¹⁸1 Corinthians 6:2 ¹⁹Revelation 21:9 ²⁰Revelation 21:9,12 ²¹Revelation 22:5 ²²Revelation 20:10,14 ²³Revelation 21:24, NKJV; Isaiah 9:6-7 ²⁴*corporate*: composed of individuals acting together as one entity. ²⁵Revelation 21:9,12

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



Some time ago when I was in college, I was searching for something meaningful in life. I wasn't finding it in school. I had been primed all my life to go to college and then on to "life" — whatever that meant. Somehow, being one more cog in the machine didn't appeal to me. I wanted true friends and I wanted to do something with my life that really made a difference. I was experiencing neither.

A few years earlier in high school, I was at a concert in much of the same state of mind as I would be several years later — lonely and searching for something.

When I left the concert someone must have handed me a little paper. It was from some people who lived in a community. This was very interesting to me since I was looking for something like this. However, in the busyness of my life, I put it into my closet and forgot about it.

As the years went by, I would see them at many of the events that I went to. They were beginning to capture my interest. One day a friend and I happened to park right behind their big maroon-and-cream-colored bus. On the back it read, "We Know the Way, We'll Bring You Home." I thought to myself, "That's what I want, a real home." As we were sitting there, I asked my friend if he knew anything about them.

He answered, "Yeah, they are some community that follows God."

When he said this, my heart leapt inside. That was what I was looking for — a community where people loved God. So I asked him, "Do they believe in Jesus?"

"No way," was his reply, "they follow some guru called 'Yahshua.'"

"Yahshua," I thought to myself, "who is that?" I was disappointed, to say the least. These people seemed so nice, but if they didn't follow the Son of God then I didn't want to have anything to do with them. If there was one thing I didn't need to get involved with, it was some strange religion. So I decided to steer clear of them.

Eventually, there I was in college, still very lonely and still searching. Some friends had invited me to several concerts that would be happening that

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summer. I decided to go with them. At one of the first shows, I saw that same bus and I was instantly intrigued again. Something about these people seemed so special, but, I had to remind myself,

they didn't follow the Son of God. It had been a couple of years since I had first come in contact with them. I had gone my way, searching for something real, but had found nothing.

At one of those shows, I was walking through the parking lot and saw a good friend of mine. Oddly enough, he was sitting very near that bus. He was talking with someone and I sat down to join the conversation. After a few minutes, I asked him if he knew anything about that bus. He told me that I should talk to the other man, because he was part of the community that was traveling on the bus.

I was excited, since I had never actually talked to anyone from the bus; I had just heard things about them. The things I had heard about them following "Yahshua" had kept me away for almost two years. But I was full of questions about the community and what they believed. My first question was, of course, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

To my surprise, the man said, "Of course we do. Our entire life revolves around Him and His teachings!"

I could hardly believe it!

He went on to explain to me that while most people call the Son of God *Jesus*, they preferred His original Hebrew name, *Yahshua*. He told me that it actually meant "God's Salvation."

The more he talked, the more everything began to make sense to me. I had grown up in a society that had caused me to question everything, but somehow I had never questioned what had been handed down to me at church. I thought

that because these people didn't say *Jesus*, even if they were full of love and kindness, they must be bad. But what I found out was that *Jesus* wasn't even the Savior's name!

So now, as you have guessed, I am a part of this people who follow the Son of God, and I would like to share with you the amazing things I have learned about His name.

In the days of John the Baptist and the Son of God, the preserved language of the devout Jews was Hebrew. So, when the angel Gabriel brought the good news to the Hebrew virgin, Miriam (or *Mary* in English), that she would give birth to the Savior of the world, and told her what His name would be, what language do you suppose he spoke? Hebrew, of course! And certainly Miriam and Yoceph (or *Joseph* in English) named the child just as the angel had commanded them — *Yahshua*.

In Matthew 1:21, your Bible probably reads, "...and you shall call His name *Jesus*, for He will save His people from their sins." But the name *Jesus* is a modern English adaptation of the Greek name, *Iesous*, which is itself a corruption of the original Hebrew name *Yahshua*. The name *Jesus* or *Iesous* has no meaning of its own,¹ but the Hebrew name *Yahshua* literally means *Yahweh's Salvation*,² which makes sense out of what the angel said in Matthew 1:21, "...you shall call His name *Yahshua* [*Yahweh's Salvation*], for He shall save His people from their sins."

If you look in an old King James Bible, you will find the name *Jesus* in these two passages:

*Which also our fathers that came after brought in with **Jesus** into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David...*
(Acts 7:45, KJV)

*For if **Jesus** had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.* (Hebrews 4:8, KJV)

However, if you look in any modern Bible, including more recently printed King James Bibles, you will find that in place of the name *Jesus* they use the name *Joshua*, for in the context it is clear that it is speaking there of Moses' successor and not the Son of God. But in the Greek manuscript the name in both of these verses is *Iesous*.

You see, *Joshua* is the popular English transliteration of the Hebrew name *Yahshua*. *Joshua* of the Old Testament had the same name as the One called *Jesus* in the New Testament, for *Joshua* was the prophetic forerunner of the Son of God. He brought Israel into the Promised Land and lead them to victory over their enemies. But since the translators obviously know this fact, why do they only translate *Iesous* as *Joshua* in these two verses, and as *Jesus* everywhere else?

The fact is, the name of God's Son was not even pronounced as "*Jesus*" in English until the 16th century, simply because there was no "J" sound or letter in English until then.³ The modern letter "J" developed from the letter "I" which began to be written with a "tail" when it appeared as the first letter in a word. So in old English the name now written as *Jesus* was actually written and pronounced much like the original Greek *Iesous*. Eventually the hard "J" sound crept into the English language to accompany the different way of writing the initial "I" in the name.

You may also find it interesting that in Acts 26:14-15, it says that the apostle Paul heard the name of the Son of God pronounced "in the Hebrew tongue" by the Son of God Himself, so he certainly didn't hear the Greek name *Iesous* or the English name *Jesus*, but rather the Hebrew name, the name above all names, *Yahshua*.⁴

I'd much rather call the Son of God, my Savior, by His true name — the name His own mother, Miriam, and foster father, Yoceph, and all of His Jewish friends called Him. Not only have I found out what His true name is, but His true Body on earth as well. I am so thankful to have finally found true rest with the true Savior. Please take the time to read the other articles in this paper. You are always welcome to come visit us in any of our communities. Our addresses are on the back of this paper. ☸

~ Michael

¹ Some authorities say that *Iesous* is derived from an earlier form meaning "healing Zeus," the supreme god of ancient Greek mythology.

² *Yah* is the personal name of God, and *shua* is from a Hebrew root word that means "to save." God identified Himself to Moses as *YAH* (meaning "I AM") in Exodus 3:14, as in Psalm 68:4 ("whose name is *Yah*"), and as most familiar in the word *Halleluyah* ("Praise *Yah*"). And in John 5:43 and 17:11, *Yahshua* says that He came in His Father's name, "the name which You have given Me" (NASB), so it is not surprising that the Father's name would be incorporated into the Son's name, *Yahshua*.

³ *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 1496, 1507 ⁴ Philippians 2:9; Acts 4:12



EDAH — *The word for community in Hebrew is edah, which also means beehive. This word portrays the way a group of people or hive of bees live and work together with a common identity. Bees live a selfless life of devotion to the bee kingdom. They have no concern for themselves but only for the hive and the constant production of honey. So it is with those who are in the communities of God.*

Like a Swarm

Have you ever watched a beehive? It is fascinating seeing thousands of little bees working together to produce honey. As you come near the hive, you can hear an exciting buzz as they go about the many tasks necessary to keep the hive alive. The workers are responsible to collect nectar and guard the hive. The young bees keep the hive in good condition, feed the larvae, and support in other household chores. There is never a dull moment in the busy life of a little bee.

This is much like the life that we have. No matter what we do, we love to do it together. Daily we gather to thank our Master for His salvation, and to hear Him speak to us through one another. This gathering keeps alive a genuine love and care for each other. As we work, we take advantage of the daily situations, guarding ourselves from the selfishness and pride that would come in to separate us and take away our love. Our children are a vital part of our life. We not only educate them, but we work with them to accomplish the simple tasks necessary to maintain a family life. Our life is not a dull routine of chores, but is full of the warmth that comes from the sweet fellowship of friends speaking their hearts to one another, celebrating the Sabbath every week, and participating in weddings and festivals.

But there are a few things that differ in our life from that of a beehive. One is that we are not driven by instinct or controlled by something separate from our own will. Each of us is here because we chose to leave behind our own separate lives to increase the life of this hive. Our life is not enclosed like the hive of a bee, nor do we have a stinger to harm any uninvited guests. We welcome anyone to experience our life with us. Please come and see what it is like to be part of a beehive of people expressing the warmth and love of our Creator. 🌿

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