



# Dedication

To all true believers of every age who gave their lives to glorify God and counted it as nothing for the sake of knowing Christ.

## PART ONE

### The Early Church (30-410 A.D)

The Church Is Spiritual .....	05
Martyrdom of the Twelve .....	16
Mass Martyrdom under Rome .....	23
Reign of Constantine the Great .....	32
False Doctrines Creep in .....	38

## PART TWO

### The Middle Ages (500-1500 A.D)

Fall of the Roman Empire .....	43
Emergence of Monasteries and Missionaries .....	50
The Birth of European Nations and Kings .....	53
The Crusades and Inquisitions .....	61

## PART THREE

### The Renaissance (1375-1517 A.D) and Reformation (1517-1660 A.D) Period

New Discoveries ... ..	73
The Protestant Reformation .....	76

The Counter Reformation ..... 96

PART FOUR

The Age of Revolutions (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries)

The Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment ..... 101

Evangelical Revivals ..... 106

American and French Revolutions ..... 113

The Industrial Revolution ..... 116

The Problem of Science and Religion ..... 121

The Second Great Awakening ..... 124

PART FIVE

The Modern Era (1918-)

Post War Events ..... 125

In the Sixties ..... 128

The Church Today ..... 131

# 01

## *THE CHURCH IS SPIRITUAL*

The history of the early Christian Church recorded in the New Testament is both very important and unique; as it laid the foundation for all later expressions of the Christian Faith. What the Apostles taught and practiced was to be the true pattern for all later teaching and practice, and the standard by which they would be judged.

The basic claims of the Apostles were that Jesus was the promised Messiah and God-incarnate, and the only means by which human beings could be reconciled to God. Through His death and resurrection, Christ offered a lost world, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, forgiveness from sin through repentance and faith in His atoning sacrifice, peace with God, hope for the future and eternal life.

Up until that time God's people consisted only of Jews, whose relationship to Him was based on the Mosaic Covenant. But after Jesus' substitutionary death on the Cross for the sins of the world He would make both Jew and Gentile into one new group and establish a new way for both parties to approach Him:

*But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.*

*He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might*

*reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death the hostility through it.*

*(Ephesians 2:13-17)*

## **Objections to the Truth**

In response to Peter's inspired confession that Jesus was the Messiah, and Son of God, our Lord uttered these very powerful, but hotly debated words:

*Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

*(Matthew 16:17-20)*

Throughout the history of Christianity, no other words have been so misunderstood and misapplied as these. Ignorance as to their true meaning, which should be interpreted in light of other Scripture, has been a fertile source of bigotry, sectarianism and outright persecution.

For centuries, the Church of Rome has fought, contended, persecuted and killed un-told numbers of true believers; claiming it was necessary to belong to *their* organisation to inherit salvation, and if one did not, then he did not belong to Christ.

In all their strife and contention to obtain religious power over their subjects, they have lost sight of the true Church, which is spiritual in nature and outside of which there is no salvation at all:

*Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

*(1Peter 2:4-6)*

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

*(Ephesians 4:4-7)*

As can be seen from a close examination of these, and many other New Testament writings, the Church which Jesus promises to build upon a rock is not the visible church of any individual nation or place, but the company of all believers, “*From every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages*” and religious denominations, who have been joined to Christ through the New Birth. Moreover, the true Christian Church has only one Head, Jesus Christ Himself:

*He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church.*

*(Colossians 1:17-18b)*

It will not matter on Judgement Day where we have worshipped, or which religious organization we have belonged to – whether we are Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Methodist or other – if we are not found to be members of *this* Church, the *spiritual house* of God.

## No Other Foundation

If what we have said above concerning the true identity of the Christian Church is true and in accordance with Scripture, then how are we to interpret those remarkable words of Jesus to Peter, “*You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church?*”

Does this teach that Peter was the rock upon which Christ would build His Church? And does it prove that the Roman Catholic Church, which claims to be built upon Peter, is God’s true Church?

Absolutely not! First, if this was the case, our Lord would have said to Peter, “*And on you I will build my Church.*” Second, to say that an erring, fallible human being could be the foundation of God’s spiritual Temple is not only exceedingly improbable, it also contradicts and violates other plain teaching of Scripture where Jesus the Messiah and Son of God is the rock upon which the Church is built:

*By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Christ Jesus.*

*(1Corinthians 3:10-12)*

*Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scripture: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; and this was the Lord’s doing and it is amazing in our eyes.’”*

*(Matthew 21:42)*

Further, if Peter was appointed by Christ at that time as the “first pope,” and if all popes are infallible, one would never have guessed it from Peter’s performance. Just a few moments after



Jesus had praised Him for his open confession of Christ as Lord and Messiah, Peter insisted that his Master should not die on the Cross; a blatant denial of the central doctrine of Christianity. “*Get behind me Satan,*” was Jesus’ reply.

The papal system was certainly off to a bad start. And if Peter did not receive “papal infallibility” from Christ at that moment, then when did he receive it?

On several occasions our Lord also rebuked His disciples for arguing over who was to be the greatest in His Kingdom. If Peter was to have any precedence, any of these would certainly have been the right moment to declare it, yet Jesus does no such thing.

In addition, there is not the slightest proof from Scripture, or early Church history, that the other Apostles recognized Peter as superior to themselves in any way, or as having any rank or dignity above the rest of them.

On the contrary, on one occasion the Apostle Paul actually rebuked Peter for hypocrisy, and from the Book of Acts we learn that it was James, the brother of Jesus, who was the actual head of the early Jerusalem Church and he passed sentence in the Council even though Peter was present.

Paul also rebuked believers at Corinth for considering one Apostle higher than another. He corrected them about it in his first Letter to the Corinthians:

*For it has been reported to me by Cloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas,” or “I belong to Christ.” Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

*(1Corinthians 1:11-14)*

*What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.*

*(1Corinthians 3:5-8)*

Finally, let us not forget that Peter also denied his Master when He was on trial and being condemned to death at the home of the high priest. Yet Rome has excused and justified the sins of her popes, which have included some of the greatest monsters ever to have existed, by saying that, “There is a difference between infallibility and impeccability.”

This means popes are infallible when they make a declaration on faith or morals to the entire Church, even when they deny biblical truths with their lives, a concept unknown in Scripture and the early Church.

And both denials of truth uttered by Peter above pertained to faith and morals. And most certainly they were also stated to the entire Church; for they are in the canon of Scripture.

However, in spite of evidence to the contrary, out of that simple statement Jesus made to Peter, basically the same one He made to *all* the disciples on other occasions (see *Matthew 18:18-19; John 20:23-24*), the Roman Catholic Church has manufactured a papal office, papal infallibility, apostolic succession, a magisterium which alone can interpret Scripture, a celibate priesthood, to whom Roman Catholics must confess sins, and which alone can administer grace through seven sacraments, and much more.

Any person can examine the Scriptures a million times over and never find justification for these practices. Not only is there nothing in the Bible that warrants such an office as pope, in fact,

Jesus Christ actually forbids any man from holding such a position (see *Matthew 28:8-10; 1Timothy 2:5-7*).

## **True Meaning of Rock**

There are two different Greek words used for Peter and rock in *Matthew 16:18* quoted above. Peter's name in Greek is *Petros*, meaning a *piece of rock*. In contrast, the word translated *rock* in the same passage is *Petra*, which signifies a massive *rock*, which certainly refers to Jesus Christ the *Chief Cornerstone*. Peter had just confessed, through a revelation given him by the Holy Spirit in that moment, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and it was upon this truth that Jesus would build His Church.

It is as though Jesus had said to Peter, "You are rightly called by the name Peter, or rock, because you have confessed that powerful truth on which, as on a rock, I will build my Church." But by his faith in Jesus as the Christ and by his confession of Him as such to the world, Peter became a *piece* of the rock, and a *part* of the foundation upon which the Church is built. The Apostle Paul confirms this when he wrote:

*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

*(Ephesians 2:19-21)*

Notice that in the above quotation Paul states that *all* the Apostles are part of the foundation stone of Christ's Church and the same Scripture again mentions Jesus as the *Chief Cornerstone* (see also *1 Peter 2:6-8*).

## Keys to the Kingdom

Having established the true meaning of the word rock in Christ's statement to Peter, what are we to understand when we read the promise which our Lord makes to him concerning the keys to the Kingdom?

*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

*(Matthew 16:19-20)*

Do these words mean that Jesus gave to Peter the right to admit souls into the Kingdom of Heaven, and that he was to have some kind of primacy over the rest of the Apostles in this regard? Not at all. Throughout Scripture such an office is the special prerogative of Jesus Himself:

*These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.*

*(Revelation 3:7)*

*I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.*

*(Revelation 1:17c-19)*

When anyone studied under a Jewish rabbi, it was the custom of the rabbi to give him a key when he had passed his examination for the high position of a doctor of the Law, meaning that he had become perfect in the doctrine and was able to unlock the secrets

of the Kingdom to others. Christ's words to Peter in verse 19 of Matthew refers to this custom.

Peter had proven that the Father was revealing the truth to him and Jesus foresaw the day when, filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter, and all the Apostles, would be guided into all truth and so be competent to unlock the Kingdom to men:

*But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

*(John 16:13-14)*

The true meaning, then, of the promise to Peter, is that he was to have the special privilege of being the first to open the door of the Kingdom to both Jews and Gentiles, a fact to which Peter himself seems to have been sensible to when he said:

*My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers.*

*(Acts 15:7b)*

This was fulfilled to the letter when Peter preached the Gospel to the Jews on the day of Pentecost and three thousand entered the Kingdom that day, and again in Acts 10 Peter used the keys to unlock the truth to the Gentiles and a whole household got saved. Every time anyone preaches the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit he is using the same keys that Peter and the other disciples used.

## Who Can Forgive Sins?

Finally, what are we to understand by Jesus' words to Peter when He said, "*Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven?*" Does this mean that Peter was to have power to forgive sins, and absolve sinners?

Such an idea shows contempt to Christ's special office as our High Priest as outlined in the Book of Hebrews and elsewhere in Scripture. The power to forgive sins is a power to which we never find Peter or any of the Apostles once using. They always referred men to Christ.

Binding and loosing were also common expressions in Jesus' day for forbidding something or permitting it. What a rabbi forbade, he was said to *bind*, and what he permitted, he was said to *loose*. Again, as Spirit-filled men, Peter and the other Apostles would have discernment to know what God permitted and forbid and so be equipped to lay down rules and regulations for the guidance of the Church on disputed matters.

The decision of the Council at Jerusalem that the Gentiles need not be circumcised was an example of the exercise of this power (*Acts 15:19*), but it was a commission specially confined to the Apostles. With them it began and with them it finished!

## Other Uses of the Word *Church*

As we underlined at the beginning of this chapter, in New Testament terminology the word *church* is used, first and foremost, to describe the whole body of believers in Jesus Christ of every age, Jew and Gentile alike (see *Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47, 20:28, Ephesians 2:11-22, 5:24-25; 1Peter 2:4-6;*

*Colossians 1:18, 24; Revelation 5:9-11, 7:9-11*). Second, it is used for a local congregation meeting regularly for worship, teaching, and the breaking of bread – for example, the Church of the Thessalonians:

*To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace.*

*(1Thessalonians 1:1)*

Finally, the word church is used to describe believers gathered together in any one place in Jesus' name – for example, the brothers and sisters that met in Rome in the home of Prisca and Aquila:

*Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Greet also the church in their house.*

*(Romans 16:3-5b)*

The title *catholic church*, which means the *church universal*, was originally given to the Christian Church on account of its embracement of all nations and not being confined to the Jewish people only. The earliest use of the title was about 166 A.D. and bears no connection to the Roman Catholic Church, which did not come into existence until centuries later, long after the time of Emperor Constantine.

# 02

## *MARTYRDOM OF THE TWELVE*

The early believers followed Jesus' greatest Commandment and practiced a new ethic of love for one another; a love that extended even to their enemies. Many early converts were first attracted by the love they saw manifested by the Lord's true followers.

Other hallmarks of Apostolic Christianity were simplicity and caring for the community. The Christian Faith was simple because it had very little formal organization, such as church buildings or membership rolls, and taught very easy to understand doctrines.

However, it was the Apostles' evangelistic zeal that led to the rapid growth of Christianity in a hostile world in such a very short time. One of the obvious reasons for this zeal was due to their personal conviction of Christ's resurrection from the dead. When Jesus was arrested and charged, the Apostles deserted Him and fled in fear and confusion. But after the resurrection, they became mighty preachers and courageous martyrs of the faith.

As we will demonstrate in this chapter, many of the historical records handed down from the first century reveal that almost every one of the Twelve Apostles faced a cruel death without ever denying their faith. And through their testimony many other disciples were willing to follow in their footsteps down through the centuries.

### **The Greatest of all Martyrs**

The first person to suffer for the Church was its very founder, Jesus Himself. He was not a Martyr as such, but the inspiration and source of all martyrdom. The story of His suffering and



crucifixion is so well told in both the Old and New Testament that there is little need to give further documentation here.

It is sufficient to say that His glorious and triumphant resurrection from the dead defeated the intent of the religious establishment and gave fresh courage and new direction to the hearts of His disciples for all generations.

## **Martyrdom of Stephen**

After Jesus Christ, the second person to die for the faith was Stephen, whose name means crown. His story can be found in the Book of Acts chapter six. The religious leaders who had killed Jesus became so enraged at Stephen's preaching that they drove him out of the city and stoned him to death.

Stephen's martyrdom came about eight years after Jesus' crucifixion and generated a great persecution against all the fresh converts to Christianity (*Acts 8:1*). In fact, during this time about two thousand believers were martyred, including Nicanor, one of the seven deacons appointed by the Church (see *Acts 6:5*).

## **Martyrdom of James the Greater**

James the Greater, the son of Zebedee and Salome, and elder brother of the Apostle John, was the first of the twelve Apostles to be martyred (see *Acts 12:2*). As a strong leader of the Church, James was beheaded at Jerusalem by the orders of King Herod Agrippa I of Judea in A.D. 44. His martyrdom may have been a fulfilment of what Jesus foretold about him and his brother John in *Mark 10:39*.

The eminent writer Clemens Alexandrinus wrote that the Roman officer who guarded James while he was being led to his execution was so impressed by the Apostle's courage that he fell on his knees and declared his new-found faith to the judge. He said that James should not die alone and accepted beheading as a Christian.

### **Martyrdom of Matthew**

Many historical accounts record that the Apostle Matthew suffered martyrdom in the city of Nadabah, or Naddayar, Ethiopia in around 60 A.D. They say he was pinned to the ground and beheaded with a halberd.

### **Martyrdom of James the Just**

James the Just was the half-brother of Jesus and the writer of the New Testament Epistle of James. We learn from Scripture that he was the leader of the early Church in Jerusalem (see *Acts 12:17, 15:13-29, 21:18-24*) According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, the High Priest Ananus ordered James to be killed by stoning.

However, another early historian, Hegesippus, quoted by the third-century historian Eusebius, said that James was cast down from the Temple Tower when he refused to deny his faith. According to this version of the death of James, when the religious leaders and authorities saw that he survived the fall, they beat him to death with a fuller's club.

## **Martyrdom of Matthias**

Matthias, the Apostle that was chosen by the Apostles to replace the traitor Judas, is reported to have been stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.

## **Martyrdom of Andrew**

The Apostle Andrew was the brother of Peter, both of whom were fishermen by trade when Jesus called them to the ministry. Church tradition says that Andrew preached the Gospel to many Asiatic nations and was eventually martyred in Greece by being crucified on an X-shaped cross, which came to be known as Saint Andrew's Cross.

His followers reported that when Andrew was being led towards the cross, he saluted it with these words: "I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it."

## **Martyrdom of Mark**

Very little is known about Mark except what is written in the New Testament about him. Tradition says he died in Alexandria, Egypt after being dragged by horses through the streets when he spoke out against a solemn ceremony for their idol Serapis.

## **Martyrdom of Peter**

An early account of the martyrdom of the Apostle Peter comes again from the writer Hegesippus. When Peter was old the Roman emperor Nero planned to put him to death. But upon hearing this

the disciples begged Peter to flee the city immediately, said to be the city of Rome, to which the Apostle agreed to do.

However, when he reached the city gate, he saw Jesus coming toward him. Peter fell to his knees and asked the Lord where He was going. To this Jesus replied, “I have come to be crucified again.”

By this Peter knew that his time had come to glorify God, as Jesus had also warned him after His resurrection in *John 21:18*, and went back inside the city. According to Church tradition the Apostle Peter requested that he be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus had died.

### **Martyrdom of Jude**

Jude, another half-brother of Jesus, and to whom is credited the small New Testament Epistle of Jude, was martyred through crucifixion at Edessa, an ancient city of Mesopotamia in around A.D. 72 when he refused to deny his faith in Christ.

### **Martyrdom of Bartholomew**

Bartholomew, also known in Scripture as Nathanael, preached the Gospel in several countries and then translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of East India where he also taught. It is also believed that he preached the Gospel in Armenia, where he was eventually flayed to death by a whip by his pagan enemies.

## **Martyrdom of Thomas**

The Apostle Thomas preached the Gospel in Persia, Parthia, and India, where he was stabbed with a spear by angry pagans and thrown into the flames of a burning hot oven.

## **The Persecution of John**

The Apostle John, brother of James and author of the Gospel of John, the Book of Revelation, and the three Epistles of John in the New Testament, is credited with having founded the Seven Churches listed in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation. Church tradition reveals that John was arrested in Ephesus and later sent to Rome where he was cast into a large vessel filled with boiling oil that did not harm him.

As a result, he was released and banished by Emperor Domitian to the Isle of Patmos, where he received his fantastic visions for the Book of Revelations. John was later freed and returned to serve as Bishop of Edessa in modern Turkey. There it is believed that he died as an old man, the only Apostle to escape a violent death, as Jesus had foretold before His Ascension.

## **Martyrdom of Luke**

One ancient source says that Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, went to Greece to evangelize after the execution of the Apostle Paul, and was martyred there by being hung from an olive tree in Athens in A.D. 93.

## Martyrdom of Paul

The Apostle Paul endured a long imprisonment in Rome from A.D. 61 which allowed him to write some of his many Epistles – *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, and *Colossians* – to the churches he had founded throughout the Roman Empire during his missionary trips.

Paul's imprisonment ended three years later in May A.D. 64 (see *Acts 28:30*), the year that Rome was burned. During this brief release, Paul is believed to have visited Western and Eastern Europe and Asia Minor. It was during this period that he wrote his First Epistle to Timothy and his Epistle to Titus.

At first the insane and evil emperor Nero was blamed for setting the city of Rome on fire; so, to divert the blame away from himself, he blamed the Christians. As a result, a fierce persecution broke out against the Church.

During this persecution, the Apostle Paul was arrested and sent back to prison where he wrote his Second Letter to Timothy, which was also be his last contribution to the New Testament. Not long after the Apostle was tortured and then beheaded by Nero in Rome in the year A.D. 67, just before the fall of Jerusalem.

# 03

## ***MASS MARTYRDOM UNDER ROME***

### **Emperor Nero (A.D. 54 – 68)**

The first intensive effort by the Roman Empire to eliminate Christianity came about after the burning of Rome, during the reign of Emperor Nero in A.D. 64. Some say Nero was not in Rome when the disaster happened. Whatever the case may be, the Church was blamed for the fire that lasted almost nine days and was persecuted and tortured for the rest of Nero's reign.

The barbarous acts against believers in this period were worse than those seen previously, especially those committed by Nero himself. Some of them were forced to wear shirts stiff with wax and then tied to poles in Nero's garden and set on fire to provide light for his garden parties.

Other believers were sewn inside skins of wild beasts and torn to pieces by wild dogs. Some of the twelve Apostles and of the seventy appointed by Jesus (see *Luke 10:1*) were martyred during the reign of Nero.

### **Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81 – 96)**

Domitian was an extremely cruel emperor who harshly persecuted Christians and Jews alike, and even killed his own brother. He issued an order stating that no Christian, once he or she was brought before the tribunal, should be exempt from punishment unless they renounce their faith. Also, during Domitian's reign money was offered to anyone who would bear witness against a Christian and so many of the believers were killed for financial

gain. The most familiar martyr of that time was Timothy, disciple of the Apostle Paul and overseer of the church at Ephesus until A.D. 97. He was attacked and beaten with clubs when he blocked the way of a pagan procession called Catagogion.

### **Emperor Trajan (A.D. 98 – 117)**

During this third persecution of the Church, a Roman Consul and writer known as Pliny the Younger, wrote a rather detailed report to Emperor Trajan to seek counsel as to how he must treat the Christians who refused to acknowledge the emperor as God. He explained that he had been killing so many that he wondered if he should continue to kill all who were Christians or only certain ones. He wrote:

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, not to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it.

Whether Pliny's letter helped the cause of Christians and lessened the persecutions against them is not certain, as many continued to be martyred. One of the martyrs during this time, and of whom we are probably most familiar with, was Ignatius, the overseer of the church in Antioch, the capital of Syria and the place where believers were first named Christians (*Acts 11:26*). Ignatius was sent to Rome for preaching the Gospel, but before arriving he sent message to the church there and appealed to them



not to try and deliver him from his martyrdom, as this would deprive him of that which he most longed for. Written below are his last words:

Now I begin to be a disciple. I care for nothing of visible or invisible things so that I may but win Christ. Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let the breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil, come upon me; be it so, only that I may win Christ.

When Ignatius was sentenced to be food for hungry lions and heard their roaring, he was filled with such desire to suffer for Christ (*Acts 5:41*) that he said: "I am the wheat of Christ; I am going to be ground with the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread."

Emperor Trajan was succeeded by Adrian who continued this third persecution with even more cruelty. Thousands of Christians were martyred during his reign. Some were crowned with thorns, crucified and had spears driven into their sides in mockery of Christ's death.

When Adrian died in 138 A.D., he was succeeded by Antoninus Pius, believed to be one of the most amiable monarchs that ever reigned in Rome. He was responsible for stopping all persecutions against Christians, giving them respite for a few years.

## **Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (A.D. 162 – 180)**

Marcus Aurelius was a philosopher and Stoic and therefore encouraged severe and merciless measures against Christians, whom he neither liked or understood. The cruelties against the Church in these persecutions were so devilish and inhumane that many of the onlookers were both horrified and astonished at the courage of the martyrs.

Polycarp, a student of the Apostle John and overseer of the church in Smyrna, and Justin the Greek theologian, who founded a school of Christian philosophy at Rome and wrote the “Apology and Dialogue” were just two of the thousands martyred during the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

After Polycarp was sentenced to death by his accusers, the governor said to him, “Reproach Christ and I will release you.” To this Polycarp answered, “Eighty-six years I have served Him, and He never once wronged me. How then shall I blaspheme my King who has saved me?”

These brutal and relentless persecutions against believers in Christ continued for many centuries under the reign of Emperor Lucius Septimus Severus (A.D. 193-211), Emperor Marcus Clodius Pupienius Maximus (A.D. 164-238); Emperor Decius (A.D. 249-251); Emperor Valerian A.D. 253-260); Emperor Aurelian (Lucius Domitius Aurelianus (A.D. 270-275); Emperor Diocletian A.D. 284-305).

## **Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 284 – 305)**

All previous persecutions against the Christian Church prior to the reign of Emperor Diocletian were only preliminaries in

comparison, as the cruelties under this man's reign were by far the worst of all. It was during Diocletian's reign that Galerius his adopted son and successor, who was agitated by his pagan and bigoted mother, convinced the emperor to eliminate all Christians from the Roman Empire.

This, together with the fact that Diocletian desired to revive the old pagan religion of Rome, led not only to what was to be a mass slaughter of Christians, but the last major persecution under Roman Emperors. At first Diocletian was quite favourable towards Christians. Nevertheless, several were martyred before any major persecution broke out. Here are just a few examples given by John Foxe in his fantastic *Book of Martyrs*:

In Rome in A.D. 287, Quintin and Lucian were determined to preach the Gospel in parts of Gaul. For a while they preached together in Amiens in northern France. Then Lucian went to another city where he was martyred. Quintin went to Picardy, and was fervent in his evangelism. Not long after going there, however, he was arrested and condemned to die for being a Christian.

For his death agonies, ropes were tied to his arms and legs and he was stretched with pulleys until his joints dislocated, then he was scourged with a wire whip, had boiling oil and pitch poured on his naked body, and had fire applied to his sides and armpits. After these tortures, he was put back into prison where he soon died from his wounds. A heavy stone was tied to his body and it was thrown into the Somme River...

On June 22, 287, a Christian named Alban became the first British martyr. The city of St. Alban's in the country of Hertfordshire is named after him. Alban was originally a pagan, but a Christian minister named Amphibalus convinced him of the truth of Christ. When Amphibalus was sought by the authorities because of his religion, Alban hid him in his house. When soldiers came there seeking him, Alban said he was Amphibalus in order to give him time to escape. The deception was discovered and the governor ordered Alban to be scourged and beheaded.

The Venerable Bede, the Anglo-Saxon theologian and historian who wrote the Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation in A.D. 731, states that Alban's executioner suddenly became a convert to Christianity and begged Alban that he be allowed to die for him or with him. He was given permission for the latter, and they were both beheaded by a soldier who volunteered to act as executioner.

## **The Scheduled Day of Persecution**

The scheduled day to begin the bloody work of eliminating Christianity from the Roman Empire was February 23, 303 A.D. It began in Nicomedia, the capital of Diocletian's Eastern Roman Empire. He had divided the Empire into East and West in A.D. 286 in an attempt to rule the territory more effectively and the persecution was especially brutal in the East which was under his rule. In A.D. 293 Diocletian made Aurelius Valerius Constantius, father of Emperor Constantine the Great, Caesar of the Western areas of Gaul and Britain.

In the early morning of February 23, 303 the chief of police and a large number of officers made way to the main Christian church building, forced open its doors and ransacked the building, burning all its sacred books. Following this, Diocletian issued an edict that all Christian churches throughout the Empire were to be destroyed and all Christians were to be arrested as traitors to the Empire.

Every Christian in Nicomedia was arrested and put into prison, and to make sure they would be severely punished, Galerius secretly ordered the imperial palace to be set on fire and Christians blamed for the disaster. This incident provoked a general persecution throughout the entire Roman Empire that lasted for ten whole years, and during which thousands of believers were persecuted and brutally murdered despite their age, sex or cultural status. Again, John Foxe records these cruelties:

Christian became a hated name among the pagans, and any who bore that name received no mercy from them. Once again they were blamed for every disaster and misfortune that befell the pagans. The worst lies and most unreasonable stories could be told about them and they were believed.

The forms of torture that were devised exhausted imagination. Many Christian houses were set on fire, with entire families perishing in the flames! Heavy stones were hung about the necks of many and they were tied together and driven into the sea of Marmara. Racks, scourges, fire, swords, daggers, crosses, poison and starvation were all used individually and collectively.

In the region of Phrygia, a city in which all the citizens were Christians, was burned and all the inhabitants forced into the flames to perish.

Finally, weary with the slaughter, the governors of several provinces appealed to the Emperor on the basis that such conduct on the part of Romans was improper. Thus, many Christians were saved from death, but were mutilated in such ways as to make their lives miserable.

Many had their ears cut off, their noses slit, one or both eyes put out, bones torn out of their sockets, and their flesh burned in conspicuous places so they were marked as Christians.

In A.D. 305 Diocletian resigned as supreme emperor of Rome and he turned the empire over to Aurelius Valerius Constantius, whom he made Caesar of the West in 293, and Gaius Galerius Valerius Maximianus, who was his son-in-law and who had reigned as co-emperor with him in the East.

Constantius was a man of good character and temper. During his rule the Christians in the West had their first real respite from persecution that they had had in many years. However, in the East the persecutions continued under the rule of Galerius, the man who had incited Diocletian to perform the great persecution intended to erase every trace of Christianity from the Roman Empire.

But it failed to do so, as have all the other persecutions that followed against the true Church of Christ. In fact, instead of killing the spirit of Christianity, the persecutions only served to strengthen it.

It is a well-known fact that from the first century to this very day millions of believers have died heroically for their faith and relatively few of them ever recanted. So impressive was their courage in the face of such opposition and torture, that many others were only glad to follow in their footsteps. As Tertullian observed: “The blood of the martyrs is seed.”

# 04

## *REIGN OF CONSTANTINE THE GREAT*

When Constantius died in A.D. 306 the army hailed his son Constantine as Caesar. Flavius Valerius Constantius (Constantine) was born about A.D. 280 in the city of Naissus in the Roman province of Moesia, Serbia and is best known for his support of Christians. Following centuries of persecution under his predecessors, Constantine decreed freedom of worship by the Edict of Milan in 313, sponsored the first large churches in Rome and allowed bishops to take an increasingly important role in politics.

When Emperor Diocletian retired in A.D. 305, his system of four rulers, the Tetrarchy, fell apart, and by 310 there were no less than seven emperors competing together. However, in the civil wars that followed, Constantine triumphed over all, first defeating Maxentius at the famous Battle of Milivian Bridge in 312 and then finally in 324 his defeat of Emperor Licinius at Chrysopolis, making him the unchallenged sole emperor over the Roman Empire.

### **Story of Constantine's Conversion**

Some historical records say Maxentius was addicted to the magical arts and often invoked demons for help to frustrate the wars that he believed Constantine was preparing against him. However, because Constantine himself was also influenced by pagan superstitions, he became worried about Maxentius' so-called power of sorcery and sought of a way to overcome it before confronting him in battle.



A story is told that as he drew near Rome, Constantine looked up many times towards the sky hoping to see a sign that would help him. One evening he looked up toward the southern sky and saw a great brightness in the form of a cross, upon which was written the following inscription: *In hoc vince*, which means *in this overcome*. It is said that same night Christ appeared to Constantine in a dream and told him that if he would make such a cross and carry it into battle with him, then he would have the victory.

### **Beg to Differ**

Some scholars have argued it is more likely Emperor Constantine realized how the Christian attitude and loyalty towards the governing authorities and fellow citizens could be of benefit to his empire.

Christians were honest hard-working people, who even prayed for the Roman Emperors and other magistrates and soldiers that persecuted and killed many of them. So, in order to further this strategy, Constantine made an alliance with the Church and accepted Christianity as the official state religion.

Whatever the truth of the matter is, Constantine declared himself a Christian, although he continued to be *Pontifex Maximus*. The college of pontiffs (Latin: *Collegium Pontificum*) was a body of the ancient Roman State, whose members were the highest-ranking priests of the state religion. The college consisted of the Pontifex Maximus and other pontifices.

Pontifex Maximus was the chief high priest of the college of pontiffs in ancient Rome. This was the most important position in the ancient Roman religion, open only to patricians until 254 B.C., when a plebeian first occupied the post.

Obviously, it was Constantine's duty as emperor to head the empire's official pagan religion, and the Church excused this abomination; probably in view of his permission to build Christian churches and of his allowing bishops to take a role in government, among other advantages. It is also possible the Church saw this emperor as a second Moses sent by God to deliver them from persecution.

However, as a result of this compromise, the church at Rome became Roman in its organization and began to embrace many of its pagan religious ceremonies and beliefs. One of the most prominent cults that mixed with Christianity was the worship of the Mithras, which was the main competitor to Christianity during the development of the early Church.

When Constantine recognized Christianity together with the old paganism of the Roman Empire, he assumed leadership of the Church and took the title *Vicar of Christ*. From then on it became a great advantage to be a Christian.

The previous centuries had brought outright persecution and even death for believers, but now to succeed in business, politics or the military a person had to become one. Consequently, conversions of convenience multiplied and the Christian Faith began to attract men whose ambitions were a far cry from reaching the lost souls for the Kingdom of God.

Later, in 380, Emperor Theodosius (379-395) recognized the majority position of Christianity in the Roman State by making the faith the only official state religion. He required Roman subjects to accept Rome's version of Christianity and all those who refused to comply, pagans, Jews and Christians alike, were branded as heretics and punished.

As Rome was an important city, the Bishop of Rome had great prestige power and material possessions. Over the centuries his power increased and his title changed to pope.

Interestingly, worshippers of the Mithras; believed by the Romans to be a mediator between the sun god and humanity, followed a leader called *Papa* (pope), who ruled from the Vatican Hill in ancient Rome.

Over the following centuries, the popes claimed that Constantine had given them his authority and imperial power, and to this very day they proudly take his three religious titles – *Pontifex Maximus, Vicar of Christ, and Bishops of Bishops*.

To support this claim, they circulated a document known as the *Donation of Constantine*, which today is recognized to have been a complete forgery, even by Catholic historians. As one Christian commentator aptly commented:

That such a document was needed is more than enough proof that the doctrine of papal succession, upon which today's popes rely as proof of their spiritual authority, was a much later invention.

With the passage of time the Church of Rome became the wealthiest institute on Earth and accumulated earthly treasures in total disobedience to the commandments of the Lord Jesus and the Apostles.

Even worse than this, much of her wealth was gained through shedding the blood of innocent victims and by selling salvation. Such was the birth of Roman Catholicism; a corrupt power which would dominate the world from that moment on.

## Preview of the Dark Ages

The corruption that began following Emperor Constantine continued to worsen down through the following centuries; bringing with it a new wave of persecution for true believers. Abandoning the truth of Scripture, the Church of Rome took up the sword against any who opposed their false doctrines, traditions and pagan practices, that were materially and socially beneficial to its clergy in giving them total dominion over their subjects.

Anyone who dared to disagree were branded as heretics and forced into agreement with the papal church by whatever means necessary. During the Inquisition period in Europe laws were issued that made possession of a Bible illegal for any layman and there were appalling penalties for anyone found in possession of one.

Many faithful servants of God were burned at the stake for attempting to translate the Scriptures into the common language, in the hope that the simplest peasant could read for himself the message of God's salvation.

In that period the Roman Catholic Church justified the horrors they inflicted by twisting Old Testament Scriptures and by appealing to Augustine, who interpreted *Luke 14:23* as endorsing the use of force against heretics: "*Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in so that my house will be full.'*"

During the Dark Ages practicing Catholics believed that the Roman Catholic Church and its sacraments were necessary to get to heaven; so excommunication was considered to be a sentence of damnation to hell. The only remedy was to submit to the pope and beg him to repeal the sentence.

Even the secular governments recognized Rome as the only true Christian Church. Most emperors were terrified at the threat of excommunication. This gave Rome absolute power over the secular authorities, who in turn executed those whom she considered heretics. Therefore, to this day Rome excuses herself for the martyrs of the infamous Inquisitions, for their actual executioners were, in most cases, carried out by the state.

# 05

## ***FALSE DOCTRINES CREEP IN***

By the end of the first century Christianity had spread to all parts of the known world and attracted people from all walks of life. Naturally, as the Christian Faith expanded, so did the possibilities for deviations from the pure Gospel that was handed down through the Apostles.

In order to refute the claims of movements such as Gnosticism, Marcionism and Montanism, the Christian leaders of the second and third centuries attempted to settle once and for all exactly what Jesus and the Apostles taught.

Among these leaders was Ignatius of Antioch, who in the early second century forcefully defended the Church against the misleading teachings of the Gnostics and Docetists, both of which heretical movements taught that Jesus was something other than the God-Man of Christian Orthodoxy.

### **The Arian Heresy**

In the early Church one of the most well-known denials of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ came through a man from Alexandria, Egypt by the name of Arius (256-336). He published a doctrine which taught that Jesus was not of the same substance as the Father but was a lesser god. To deal with this doctrine Emperor Constantine called an ecumenical council to convene in Nicea in 325 A.D.

At the Council the Arian heresy, as it became known, was debated and refuted by Athanasius, the Greek Patriarch of Alexandria, who showed from Scripture and the witness from the early Church Fathers that Jesus was not a created Being, but existed from

eternity, “being of one substance with the Father.” Athanasius won the debate and the Council agreed to the following statement about the identity of Jesus in the Nicene Creed, that greatly aided the future cause of Christianity in its struggle against heresy and deviation:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made, who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made Man; He suffered, and the third day He rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

However, in spite of the decisions made at the Council of Nicea, the problem of the Arian heresy was not completely solved. The first reason was that when they were defeated at Nicea, the Arians fled to the lands north of Constantinople, outside of the imperial jurisdiction, where, with the help of a man named Ulfilas, they converted the German Goths to Arianism in 340.

At the same time, other Arian missionaries worked to convert many of the scattered tribes of Eastern Europe. Second, Emperor Constantius II, Emperor Constantine’s son, supported Arianism after his Father’s death, as did Valens, one of his successors, who shared rule of the Roman Empire with his brother Valentinian I.

When Constantius was on the throne, the Arian’s rose in power and began to persecute Orthodox Christians; that is, believers who held to the belief of Christ’s divinity. Athanasius, the great defender of Christian Orthodoxy, together with many of his

bishops, were banished from Alexandria and their positions filled with Arians.

A commander of the Roman forces in Egypt by the name of Artemius, who admitted to being a true Christian, had his commission taken from him, then his property and eventually his head.

Later, the Council of Constantinople, called by Emperor Theodosius in 381, affirmed the Nicene Creed of 325 and once again fixed Trinitarian beliefs in Orthodox Christianity.

With the help of Athanasius; Basil the Great; the fearless preaching of such individuals as Bishop John Chrysostom of Constantinople (344/354-407), and of the efforts of great missionaries such as Martin of Tours in France (335-400), and Ninian among the Picts in the British Isles (c.400), Orthodoxy had triumphed once again in Eastern and Western Europe by the end of the fourth century.

In the mid-second century, Justin Martyr skilfully exposed Marcion's heresy that was similar to Gnosticism, and other aberrations of the Christian Faith. Tertullian (160/170-c 215/220), with great vigour also upheld Orthodox Christian beliefs against popular heresy and misunderstanding.

These Christian intellectuals, generally referred to as Church Fathers, also had to decide which of the Books and Epistles already circulating in the Christian communities were genuinely Apostolic.

Athanasius (296-373) gave us our earliest list of New Testament Books that is exactly like our present New Testament. He provided that list in a festal letter to the churches. Shortly after, Athanasius had circulated his list.



Jerome and Augustine followed in his footsteps, defining the New Testament Canon of twenty-seven Books and Epistles. The final list was drawn up in 391 A.D. by a Council at Carthage in North Africa after all the evidence was thoroughly reviewed.

This Council was called to exclude any unauthentic writings and to authorize a list, not to declare the Books or Epistles inspired, but to exclude any writings which did not originate from the living witnesses of Christ's life, death and resurrection.

It is important to note that the Church did not create the canon, it did not determine which books would be called Scripture, the inspired Word of God. Instead, the Church Fathers recognized which Books had been inspired from their inception.

Put more simply, a Book is not the Word of God because it was accepted by the people of God, rather it was accepted by the people of God because it was the Word of God – inspired by God the moment the Holy Spirit gave His message to the Apostles and Prophets.

## **Reasons for Collecting New Testament**

As early as A.D. 140, the heretic Marcion had developed his own incomplete canon of so-called Christian writings and began to propagate it. Therefore, the Church needed to counter his dangerous influence by collecting all the Books of the New Testament Scriptures. In addition, many Eastern churches used books in services that were definitely counterfeit, calling for a decision concerning the canon.

And, as we mentioned above, Christianity had spread rapidly to other countries, so there was need to translate the Bible into those other languages. As early as the first half of the second century the Bible was already translated into Syriac and old Latin.

But as the missionaries could not translate a Bible that did not exist, attention was obviously given to the question of which books really belonged to the Bible.

Finally, probably the most important reason for collecting and preserving the inspired Books of the New Testament, was that they were prophetic. That is, since they were composed by an Apostle or Prophet of God, then they were of great value, and if valuable, then they should be preserved.

This reasoning was apparent in apostolic times by the collection and circulation of Paul's Letters to the various churches (see *2 Peter 3:15-16; Colossians 4:16*).

# 06

## *FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE*

The ancient Roman Empire came into existence in 60 B.C. and continued in power until 1453 A.D., when the Byzantine Eastern Roman Empire was finally conquered by Islamic forces.

By 395 A.D. the empire had split into two political areas of rule: the Latin speaking West, with its capital in Rome, and the Greek speaking East, with its capital in Constantinople, modern Istanbul. The Western part began to collapse due to ineffective rulers and Barbarian invasions from the Goths, Vandals, Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Franks in the fifth and sixth centuries.

The Barbarians not only made raids; they seized land on which to settle. Much of Spain and Gaul was lost to the Visigoths and the Franks in the first part of the fifth century, and the grain-rich provinces of North Africa were lost to the Vandals between 429 and 439 A.D.

Britain broke away from the Roman Empire in 410, the very year the city of Rome was sacked for the first time in 800 years, by Alaric, the Goths greatest war leader. And the ineffective rulers Honorius (395-423), and Valentinian III (424-455) did nothing to stem the tide of the Western movement of the Huns in the 430s.

In 476 the Germanic general Odovacar demanded land to be given him in Italy for his soldiers, but when the puppet emperor Romulus Augustulus stubbornly refused, he was immediately deposed. Odovacar did not bother to appoint a new emperor, but became king himself.

As a result, the Roman Empire in the West came to an end, leaving an enormous military vacuum in most of Europe, and set the stage for the Dark Ages – a thousand years of intellectual, religious, economic and military chaos. Much of the Eastern

Empire was shielded from such attacks and invasions and survived for another thousand years before being invaded by the Seljuk Turks in 1453.

## **East and West's Religious Division**

After the division of the Roman Empire into East and West became permanent 390 A.D., both the Latin Church of the West and the Eastern Orthodox Church of the East began to take root. It was around this time that Western Christians began to lose contact with many of their fellow-believers in the East.

After Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople in 330 A.D., Rome and all of Italy came more and more under the influence and control of the Bishop of Rome; although the emperor in the East continued to claim jurisdiction over the West for many years.

However, the last emperor to maintain any authority beyond the Byzantine East was Justinian, called the Great (A.D. 527-65). It was under Justinian that the dream of restoring the old Roman Empire almost became a reality.

Belisarius and other Byzantine generals reconquered North Africa, most of Italy and parts of Spain. But the Byzantine's spoke Greek instead of Latin and so the Europeans exchanged them for foreigners, not Romans.

It is reported that Justinian's intolerance of other Christians in the East also badly divided the Eastern part of Europe and opened the way for the conversion of large numbers of Christians to Islam in the next century. It was not long before the Byzantines also began to lose the lands they had reconquered, and eventually contact with Western Europe.

After the reign of Justinian, the dream of restoring the empire in the West to its former glories became even less probable. Under Pope Gregory (590-604) the papal office became more fully established and the pope became widely recognized as the single most important public figure in Western Society.

In the East several national churches emerged, most of which gradually drew together under the leadership of the patriarch of Constantinople. However, the great church of North Africa was lost in 707 to the new religious movement of Islam.

From its original base in central Arabia, the Muslim faith spread quickly throughout the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa. One by one the old Christian centres of Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria succumbed to its military might.

## **Two Major Rival Powers**

With the elimination of these centres, the two surviving major centres of Christianity emerged as rivals in the early Middle Ages. Rome under the guidance of the pope, and Constantinople under the leadership of the patriarch.

At first the patriarch seemed to be the most powerful leader in the East, but as time passed it became clear that he was subservient to the Eastern Roman emperors. The emperors were actually seen as God's representatives on Earth. In art they were shown with a halo over their head, like a saint.

The Eastern Church used the Greek language, not Latin, and had different religious ceremonies than those of Rome. It was growing arguments over these ceremonies that drove the Roman and Byzantine churches further apart, so that in 1054 they became completely separate.

## Reasons for Divisions

As we pointed out in chapter one, the popes say they can trace their lineage back to the Apostle Peter. As this line from Peter, known as the *apostolic succession*, is said to connect the pope directly with the first followers of Christ, they believe and teach this gives the Catholic Church a unique authority – the pope is considered to be infallible (incapable of error) when ruling on key articles of faith.

Obviously, the Eastern Christian communities, led by the patriarchs, did not agree with Rome on this aspect of doctrine. Friend, it is a wonderful biblical truth that true Apostolic Succession is bestowed upon every person who becomes a believer in Jesus Christ.

All Born Again Christians have been given the privilege, responsibility and power to preach the true Gospel to the world that the Apostles preached, because we are disciples of those made disciples by them. This is the true Chain of Command.

Other disagreements centered around the Western Church's belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both God the Father and the Son, as agreed in the Nicene Creed, whereas the Eastern Church saw the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father only.

In addition, the Western Church tended to stress mankind's sinful nature, while the Eastern Church recognized more man's essential goodness. Other differences included the issue of whether or not the clergy could be married (East), or whether they were to remain celibate (West).

These, and other matters, came to a head in 1054 A.D., when the Western Church, using their claims of succession from Peter and the *Donation of Constantine*, ex-communicated Patriarch Michael Cerularius, who in turn excommunicated the papal legates of Pope Leo IX that delivered the Latin sentence of excommunication.

After the Great Schism of 1054 relations between the Western and Eastern churches continued to deteriorate, until by the mid-fourteenth century it became clear that the rupture was final.

I believe this division will be healed in the future as we get closer to the coming of Antichrist. It is also evident from numerous Scripture passages that religion will play as important a role in the revived Roman Empire as it did in the ancient one.

Just as the popes had a close relationship with the kings and emperors in past history, the Roman pontiff will play a key role in assisting the Antichrist in his reign and in preparing the world for his coming.

## **The Fall of the Byzantine Empire**

Although the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire survived the fall of Rome, the Byzantine emperors also experienced centuries of Barbarian invasions; together with periods of resurgence and re-conquests, and Muslim–Arab invasions, that took away half their territory.

By the early twelfth century the Byzantine Empire had already begun to experience a fatal decline in its territory. The Normans had taken parts of Italy, and in the Balkans the Slav kingdoms had grown much stronger. And even the most energetic emperors could do very little to slow down the relentless pressure from the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks.

By the early fifteenth century the Byzantine Empire had under its control just a few remaining territories. Finally, in the month of May 1453, 1,000 years after the fall of Rome, the army of Ottoman Sultan, Mehmet II, stormed the city walls and the Byzantine Empire came to its end.

## **Eastern Orthodox Churches**

The Eastern Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe and Western Asia arose from a split between the Western Catholic Church and the Church of the Byzantine Empire in the year 1054. All of the Orthodox churches celebrate seven sacraments, like those of the Catholic Church, but they are referred to as mysteries.

The mystery at the heart of the faith is emphasized by the fact that large parts of the Eastern Orthodox service take place out of sight of the congregation, behind a screen called the iconostasis. The action of opening the door in the iconostasis symbolizes the revelation of Christ to the people.

Orthodox churches are also famous for their icons – small stylized images of Jesus, Mary, or the saints. These paintings are intended to show how God has worked in the world through such figures.

## **Oriental Orthodox Churches**

The Oriental Orthodox churches include the Armenian Church, the Coptic Church and those of Syria and Ethiopia. These all share the view that Christ has one nature, that is, that His human and divine aspects are inseparable. All the Oriental Orthodox churches say they trace their origins back to the early centuries of Christianity.

The Coptic Church is Egypt's national Christian church and has its roots in the third-century; although Coptic Christians claim St. Mark as their founder. St. Pachomius, who died in 346, created the first Christian monasteries in Egypt, which is still a strong element of that church.



The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was founded around 340 A.D., as a branch of the Coptic Church; although it follows several Jewish-influenced practices, such as observing the Sabbath-day rest, circumcision, and certain dietary laws given by Moses in the Old Testament.

The Syrian Orthodox Church has members in Southern Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and India, as well as in Syria itself. The leader of this church, the Patriarch of Antioch, is based in Syria's capital city, Damascus. The Syrian language is used in worship, and the liturgy is said to be one of the richest of all Christian churches.

The Armenian churches are very simple and have two kinds of priests: parish priests, who, unless they are monks, must marry before ordination, and doctors, who are celibate and may become bishops.

Armenia was actually the first country to make Christianity its state religion. St. Gregory converted its ruler King Tiridates III in the late third century. Today, Armenian Christians worship in their own language using a fifth-century translation of the Bible, and have survived in spite of the terrible persecutions by the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

# 07

## ***EMERGENCE OF MONASTERIES AND MISSIONARIES***

The earliest well-known Christian hermit was the fourth-century Coptic peasant Anthony of Egypt (251-356). It was not long before a more organized form of asceticism followed suit, so that by the end of the fourth century cloistered life had quickly spread from Egypt to other parts of the Christian world.

Gradually communities arose with fixed codes of conduct, such as the *Rule* of St. Benedict of Nursia, Italy (480-550). It was actually Benedict of Nursia who carried this concept to the West and became “the father of Western monasticism,” when he founded the influential Benedictine Order at Monte Cassino in 529.

Early monasticism also became especially strong in the Celtic lands, especially in the Carolingian Empire of France, where wealthy monasteries such as that of Cluny (910 A.D.), belonging to the Benedictine order, were founded. These later became a target for Viking raids.

### **Irish Christianity and Missions**

In Ireland, outside the Roman sphere, a much purer expression of the Christian Faith arose among the Irish people. St. Patrick of Britain (390-461) began to convert the Irish in the fifth century; building upon much earlier vestiges of Christianity. Not long after, Christianity became a vibrant faith in much of the country; placing much emphasis on the Bible and cloistered life.

Irish missionary monks such as Columba (521-597) and Columbanus (543-615) were responsible for converting much of the British Isles and Central and Western Europe to the Christian Faith. This missionary zeal was also vibrant in Celtic Britain and continued unabated for more than four hundred years.

Probably the most famous of the British missionary monks was Boniface (680-754), who, in the eight century, served both the papacy and the Frankish rulers, and attempted to unite Christian Europe.

### **Missions from Rome**

Rome itself was also missionary-active in this period. In 596 Pope Gregory I (590-604) dispatched the Roman monk Augustine, later Augustine of Canterbury, to convert the Anglo-Saxons of Britain. He completed this task by the year 600 and became the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

The different Celtic and Roman versions of Christianity finally came to terms at the *Synod of Whitby* in 660, when representatives of both expressions of the faith made their cases before King Oswy of Northumbria. Unfortunately, Oswy decided in favour of the Roman party, which brought the British and Celtic lands within the grasps of Western Christendom under papal power.

### **New Orders Spring up to Replace the Old**

The beginning of the tenth century brought with it the founding of new religious orders. This started with the foundation of the monastery of Cluny in central France in 910. Cluny was founded mainly to rejuvenate Christian monasticism by a stricter observance of the Benedictine Rule.

The Cluniacs became the focal point of a new reform movement in the West which intended to work from the top downwards through a spiritually revived pope, who would share in their reforming goals. They accomplished this goal in the person of Pope Gregory VII (1077-1085).

In the eleventh century, other new monastic orders replaced Cluny when it wavered in its zeal for reform, beginning with the *Carthusians* founded by Bruno of Cologne around the year 1082. The *Cistercians* followed in 1098 and insisted on a more rigorous life of manual work and devotion to prayer.

Like those that went before them, the reformist zeal of these communities had begun to ebb away by the thirteenth century; so further monastic orders sprang up, the most notable being the *Franciscan* orders and the *Dominican* friars.

They were known as *mendicants*, from the Latin word for *beggars*, because it is said they gave up all personal property and were unattracted to richly endowed abbeys. They were dependent on charity and donations for financial support, which very often brought them into contact with the ordinary people.

In particular, the Franciscan friars, founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1210, aimed at a return to the simplicity, and to what he believed to be the poverty of the early Church.

The Dominicans, on the other hand, became more committed to education and the fight against what they considered to be heresy. Yet it was not long before the popularity of these new orders became the root of their downfall, as they too received bequests, grew wealthy, and became corrupt organizations that were far removed from the declared objectives of their founders.

# 08

## *THE BIRTH OF EUROPEAN NATIONS AND KINGS*

By around the sixth century A.D., the chaos caused by the Germanic Barbarian tribes on former Roman territory had resolved itself and a new series of successor European states emerged. Between the fifth and tenth centuries the invading European tribes formed Christian kingdoms and culture ruled by warrior kings and based, in part, on a form of social and political structures known as feudalism, that persisted through wars and crises into the middle of the fifteenth century.

The most successful of these kingdoms was the kingdom of the Franks. These were at first a confederacy of Germanic tribes in the area of modern Belgium and Holland united under the leadership of Clovis (ruled 481-511), who conquered most of the old Roman provinces of Gaul.

Clovis is said to have converted to Christianity through missionaries and was baptized an Orthodox Christian on Christmas Day 496 after he had experienced victory in battle by relying on the help of Christ.

This was quite a divergence from the religious beliefs of many other Germanic kings, who had adopted the Arian heresy of the fourth century priest Arius. Clovis' descendants were known as the Merovingians and ruled France until the eight century.

The Goths, who had threatened the Roman Empire in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, split into two groups – the Visigoths and Ostrogoths. The former settled in southwest France under Theoderic I, but was pushed out by the Franks in 507 and finally settled in Spain.

The kingdom of Clovis was divided between his four sons after his death, establishing the Merovingian Dynasty. It continued to expand, taking the rest of Gaul by 536, with the exception of Brittany and Septimania, and northern Italy in the 540s and 550s. However, in the seventh century, after Dagobert I (622-638), the power of the Frankish kings began to decline, as many of them died young in battle and rival aristocratical factions started to compete for power. One of these factions known as the Carolingians emerged as a dominant power in the eight century.

### **Leadership of Charlemagne**

In 768 Pepin III (ruled 747-768) obtained papal approval to depose the last Merovingian ruler and became the first king of the Carolingian dynasty. Under his son, Charlemagne the Frankish kingdom reached the height of its power; he united the Franks under his rule in 771.

Charlemagne was said to be a skilful ruler as well as a great conqueror, and his military campaigns resulted in conquests in Saxony, the annexation of the Lombard kingdom of Italy in 774, and other victories as far as the lands of the Avar Empire in Pannonia, on the Danube (modern Hungary), in the 790s.

Charlemagne reigned during an age of cultural achievements, which was why it was later named the Carolingian Renaissance. He built up a beautiful new capital at Aachen, Germany which became Europe's most important centre of learning in the ninth century. He modelled aspects of his rule upon the Romans.

Under Charlemagne's rule the Roman Catholic Church and the state established a close relationship of convenience, each using the other for personal achievements. The pope expected everyone to follow his rule, owned a lot of land and had great authority, but no army! He badly needed an ally, a powerful ruler who would

support the Church, using force when necessary. They found that ally in Charlemagne, and he in turn used their spiritual authority to further his personal interests.

## **Power Struggles**

When the Roman Church in the West was not fighting to stem the wave of Muslim invasion, or struggling to absorb the invaders from the East, its leaders were battling with great temporal lords, such as Charlemagne, for control of the institutional church. The situation was further complicated for the popes of this period due to their continuing struggle with the patriarchs in the East for supremacy in the Christian world.

This problem was partly resolved when Pope Leo III (795-816), in an attempt to establish independence from Constantinople once and for all, revived the Old Roman Empire in the West by crowning Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day 800. He later appeared on coins wearing the military cloak and laurel crown of a Roman ruler.

However, Charlemagne did not desire to owe his crown to the pope, and for the next fourteen years he set about to dominate the papacy. This interference in church affairs by temporal rulers led to further attempts by the Roman Church to strengthen the papacy, which naturally consumed much of the energy of successive popes and diverted their energies.

## **Birth of a New Dynasty**

When Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious died in 840, the empire was divided between his three sons. Due to their squabbles, and

the further division of the empire among their heirs, the power of the Carolingian dynasty began to decline.

The situation got even more serious with the growing number of Viking raids from the North and invasions from the East. Finally, a Frankish aristocrat by the name of Hugh Capet deposed the last Carolingian king, Louis V, in 987, and formed a new dynasty called the Capetians.

However, the idea of a Christian Empire lived on in the hearts of the popes; in the tenth century they crowned the German king, Otto I, Holy Roman Emperor, though he controlled only what is now Germany and Italy. This title was held by German kings for almost a thousand years of history.

## **Church and State at Its Lowest**

In the eleventh century relations between the secular rulers and the Roman Catholic Church was at its lowest. Pope Leo IX (ruled 1049-54) tried to limit practices such as clerical marriage and simony – the purchase of positions in the church hierarchy. His protégé Pope Gregory VII tried to expand the church's power even when this provoked clashes with the authority of ruling princes and kings.

In 1075, a dispute broke out over investiture – the right to appoint bishops, which the pope declared to be his right, but to which the emperor had historically laid claim. As a result, the German emperor, Henry IV, persuaded his bishops to declare Gregory deposed, and the pope responded by excommunicating the emperor. King Henry was forced into doing four days of public penance in Canossa, Italy in 1077, after which he received absolution.



Historical records reveal that Pope Gregory VII and his successors also used a number of forged documents in order to expand the power of the papacy and that some Roman Catholics tried to expose these forgeries, but they were excommunicated for it.

This conflict between papal and secular authority continued for some time and was only partly resolved at the Concordat of Worms in 1122.

In the thirteenth century Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) built upon the foundations laid by Gregory VII a hundred years before and reached the zenith of papal power by establishing a papal monarchy.

This pope called and presided over the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the most important ecumenical gathering in the Middle Ages. The Council dealt with problems of renewal and reform and authorized further crusades against heretics and Islam, all of which added to papal power and authority.

The Albigensians and the Waldensians were the largest and the most influential of these so-called heretical movements. Rome reacted to these movement in a variety of ways. The most popular were persecution, repression and torture. They established an Inquisition in the twelfth century, charged with the identification, punishment and eradication of the heretics. We will pick up on this again in the next chapter.

## **The Great Papal Schism**

Most damaging to the Roman Church in the thirteenth century was the increasing number of disputes between the popes and secular rulers. This came to a head in 1303 in a confrontation between Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) and King Philip IV (1285-1314),

over whether it was the pope or the king who had final jurisdiction over the Gallican (French) church.

Using armed force King Philip challenged and humiliated the pope by securing the election of a Frenchman, Clement V (1305-14), as pope. Later he literally carried off the College of Cardinals to Avignon, a new papal state surrounded by the kingdom of France. So, from the period of 1309 to 1377, often called the *Babylonian Captivity*, the seat of the papacy was at Avignon.

Eventually the College of Cardinals elected an Italian as pope, Urban VI (1378-89), who returned to the City of Rome. This caused a split in the College, with the majority voting to depose Urban, elect a new French pope and go back to Avignon.

These events led to a period in Catholicism known as the *Great Papal Schism* (1378-1417), where there were first two popes, and then three, all of them laying claim to be the true successor of the Apostle Peter.

## **Responses to the Schism**

The papal Schism was probably the major cause of the decline in papal prestige and authority during this period of history. The rulers and people of war and plague-devastated Europe were divided by their loyalties to the competing popes in Rome and Avignon, and eventually to any type of pope at all.

Finally, with the help of Emperor Sigismund 1410-1437, Pope John XXIII (now an antipope) convened the Council of Constance from 1414 to 1418. This resulted in the election of Martin V (1417-1431) to replace the other three claimants to “Peter’s throne,” and to restore the papacy, bring the infamous schism to an end.

The success of the Council of Constance also led to the summoning of another important gathering, the Council of Basel (1431-1449), aimed at resolving other pressing problems of the Roman Catholic Church. However, in spite of these councils, the papacy could do nothing to heal its spiritual malaise. Reactions to the problem took on very different forms, some positive and others negative.

The German priest Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471) attempted to encourage piety through mysticism. His fifteenth-century manual of devotion, *Imitation of Christ*, has remained a classic to this day. Others, such as witches and so-called heretics began to seek for an alternative spirituality to church leadership.

Witchcraft, which was regarded by the Roman Church to be a form of heresy, was a major concern of many churches, especially in France and Germany during the so-called *Witch Craze* (1400-1700).

Fortunately, in this period more important movements were initiated by reformers such as John Wycliffe (1329-1384) in England and John Huss (1369-1415) in Bohemia.

Wycliffe, a priest and Oxford don, became restless because of the corruption and decadence in the visible Church. His solution, like the reformers that followed, was reform along biblical lines. Wycliffe's numerous books, and English translation of the Bible, (1384) served as the focal point for a movement of lay preachers called *Lollards*; these preached a Gospel in England reminiscent of the early Church.

Wycliffe's theological work also stimulated John Huss to advocate reform in Bohemia. After a series of clashes with the ecclesiastical authorities of that day, he was summoned to the Council of Constance by Pope John XXIII to defend his views and was promised safe conduct by Emperor Sigismund.

However, Huss was deceived, tried and condemned to be burned at the stake. His heroic death made him a martyr to both the cause of church reform and eventually Czech nationalism.

# 09

## *THE CRUSADES AND INQUISITIONS*

During the Dark Ages the popes had Crusades to take the Holy Land from Muslim occupation. After the capture of Jerusalem by Muslim armies in 637, Christian pilgrims were still able to make the journey to their roots in the Holy Land; but in the eleventh century the expansion of the Seljuk Turkish Sultan threatened to prevent access to non-Muslim pilgrims.

When the Eastern Emperor, Alexius I (1081-1118), sent envoy to the West to plead for assistance against the Muslims, who had not only conquered Jerusalem, but were now threatening Constantinople itself, Pope Urban II (1088-99) willingly responded by launching the First Crusade (1096-99).

The Crusaders are often portrayed as holy men on the road from Europe to Jerusalem pursuing a righteous cause with the blessing of the pope, but nothing could be further from the truth. They were an assortment of peasants, thugs, thieves, robbers, murderers, knights, and religious zealots, motivated by a mixture of religious idealism, greed for plunder, and the attraction of a “sanctioned” fight.

Some were given indulgences from the pope with the promise that if they died while on the Crusade, their sins would be remitted and they would go to heaven. And any “holy warrior” who answered the pope’s call of the Crusade could consider all his financial debts to any Jewish creditor cancelled. For any man looking for an adventure, this was an instant to become debt free.

## **Under the Banner of the Cross**

When the First Crusade under Godfrey reached Jerusalem in 1099, there was a massive slaughter of Jews and Muslims alike. In a desperate attempt to save their lives, over six thousand Jewish men, women and children ran to take refuge in a synagogue where they were burnt alive.

While these victims cried for mercy, the Crusaders rode around the synagogue singing triumphantly, “Christ We Adore You.” Thirty thousand Muslims also took refuge in the famous Dome of the Rock and were slaughtered there. Some Crusaders dismembered the bodies of people who had been killed and made piles with their heads, hands and feet.

All this and much more was done by people who claimed to be followers of Christ, under the banner of the Cross! Many atheists, agnostics and pagans show internet articles which claim that the Crusades and Inquisitions show the true nature of Christianity.

But there is absolutely no justification in the New Testament for any of these actions. Jesus and the Apostles actually give clear warning against it. Therefore, it is wrong to blame Christianity for the erroneous doctrines and cruel behaviour of misguided religious zealots, who have misinterpreted and misapplied the Gospel message. Christianity’s track record for transforming lives for the better in a dying world is still unparalleled in human history.

## **Territory Gained by Crusaders**

The Crusaders established a series of small states along the coastline of Palestine and inland in Syria, chief among them being the City of Jerusalem. They formed military of knights – the

Templars and Hospitallers – who were sworn to monastic-type vows, but defended the Holy Land with the sword instead of by prayer.

Although the first “holy war” to stem the Muslim tide and recapture the Holy Land achieved most of its goals, its gains were not permanent and successive crusades ended in complete disaster. The Muslim forces regrouped and began to regain the crusader states, taking Edessa in 1144, and most of Syria and Palestine in the 1180s.

The Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) to drive out Muslim occupation became a grotesque perversion of the crusading ideal altogether. Unable to even reach the Holy land, the participants of this Crusade turned and sacked the fellow-Christian City of Constantinople, the centre of the Orthodox Church, its ruler the patriarch, and of Hagia Sophia its greatest and most famous Cathedral.

They killed the men of Constantinople, plundered the city and set it on fire, raped and murdered matrons and Orthodox nuns, and vandalized the tombs of Orthodox emperors. They also desecrated the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia and took the icons and religious objects of value as plunder.

### **Very Dark Indeed**

Although there was no longer a general persecution of Christians after the reign of Emperor Constantine, some believers still suffered for the faith in isolated areas of the world during the years of peace that followed from 320 A.D. to 1079 A.D.

However, while up to this period most of the persecutions came from the pagan world and were spasmodic, this time they came from those who claimed to be Christians, and whose fury and

devilish actions against the true Church far exceeded the cruel practices of the pagans who went before them.

For centuries, the papal church raged throughout the world like a hungry beast slaughtering thousands of true believers and pagans alike. It was the Dark Ages of the Church indeed.

Fortunately, in around 1000 A.D., when the light of the true Gospel had almost been extinguished by the darkness scheming popes and priests had raised over it to blind people and hide its true message, God set apart some true Christians who became determined to reveal the Gospel in its real purity.

They worked so hard that by the year 1140 A.D., there were so many reformed believers that the pope became alarmed and wrote to many princes ordering them to drive the heretics out of their principalities. The Waldenses in France were the first victims of this papal fury.

## **Persecution of the Waldenses**

In 1173 A.D., a wealthy Lyon merchant by the name of Peter Waldo, well known for his piety and learning, gave his possessions to the poor and became a travelling Evangelist and was much opposed to papal prosperity and oppression. Shortly after, a large number of the reformed in France joined Waldo and they became known as the Waldenses.

At first Waldo sought papal recognition, in the hope that he could somehow influence Rome, but was instead excommunicated for heresy in 1184. In 1208 the pope authorized a Crusade against the Waldenses, who had by that time developed a separate church with its own ministers.

In 1211 eighty of Waldo's followers were captured in the city of Strasbourg, tried by the Inquisitions and burned at the stake. After this, many of the Waldenses withdrew into the Alpine valleys in



northern Italy to dwell there. Waldo himself died in 1218, still preaching the true Gospel.

## **Persecution of the Albigenses**

As we said in the previous chapter, the Fourth Lateran Council was held in 1215 during the reign of pope Innocent III to deal with heretics. This evil pope declared the pope to be ruler of the world and that every priest and bishop should obey him, even if he commands something evil. Pope Innocent III further stated that no man had a right to judge the pope and decreed that all heretics were to be turned over to secular authorities and killed.

He also forced the king of France to kill hundreds of thousands of innocent French citizens to eliminate the Albigensian heretics. As the Albigensians lived mixed among the French Roman Catholics, this ungodly pope commanded every person in the region to be killed.

The Albigenses were reformed religious people who lived in the Southern France during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They inherited the name from the French town of Albi where they were centred. These believers followed a rigorous ethical code and had many prominent people among their community, such as the Count of Foix, the Count of Toulouse and the Count of Béziers.

In order to suppress the Albigenes, the Roman Church sent Cistercian and Dominican friars to their region to reaffirm papal teaching. But neither this, nor the threats from the Second, Third and Fourth Lateran Councils (1139, 1179, 1215 A.D.) – each of which prescribed imprisonment and confiscation of property as punishment for heresy, and the threat of excommunication of princes who failed to punish heretics – was able to bring any of the Albigenes back to the Roman fold.

To further his strategy, in 1209 Pope Innocent III used the assassination of a Dominican friar, in the dominion of Count Raymond of Toulouse, as justification to begin a Crusade of persecution against the Count and the Albigenses.

He sent agents throughout Europe to raise forces against the Albigenses and gave the Crusaders a special indulgence that guaranteed their sins would be remitted and they would go to heaven, if they died in battle. In addition, any Catholic who helped exterminate heretics were promised the same indulgences and privileges as the Crusaders.

During this so-called Holy War, which lasted from 1209 to 1229, Count Raymond defended the city of Toulouse and other places under his domain against the army of Simon de Montfort, the Count of Montfort, with great courage and bravery.

When the pope's army saw that they were unable to defeat Count Raymond, the king and queen of France and three archbishops raised an even greater army, and on this basis, convinced Count Raymond to come to a peace conference, promising him safe conduct. But when the Count arrived, he was seized, imprisoned and forced to appear barefooted and bareheaded before his accusers to humiliate him, and by various tortures was forced to recant all oppositions to papal doctrines.

At the very beginning of the Albigensian Crusade in 1209, Simon de Montfort treacherously massacred the citizens of Béziers; a small taste of the cruelties that the pope's army brought against the Albigenses for almost twenty years. During the massacre, a soldier asked how he could separate Catholics from the heretics, to which his leader replied: "Slay them all. God knows his own."

After the capture of Count Raymond, the pope decreed that the laity should not be allowed to read the sacred Scriptures, and for the rest of the thirteenth century, the Albigenses, together with the

Waldenses, and other reformed groups, were the main targets of the Inquisition throughout Europe.

## **An Un-Lawful Court**

The Inquisition was actually a Medieval Roman Church Court appointed to prosecute heretics, the name given to people who opposed the errors and false doctrines and superstitions of the papal church.

In the Crusade against the Albigenses, Pope Innocent III appointed special Inquisitors, such as the friar Dominic, who actually founded the Dominicans during the Crusade in 1215. But there was not yet a specific office of Inquisitions. This took a change in 1231, when Pope Gregory IX formally instituted the papal Inquisition.

Copying a law that Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II enacted for Lombardy, Italy, in 1224, and extended to his entire empire in 1232, Pope Gregory ordered convicted heretics to be seized by the secular authorities and burned alive. He also ordered that heretics be sought out and tried before a church court.

This task was entrusted to the Dominican and Franciscan order of friars who received the right to preside over the various courts of Inquisition; have unlimited powers as judges in place of the pope; and power to torture, execute or excommunicate any person accused of the slightest heresy or opposition to the papal government.

The pope gave the Dominican and Franciscan friars the authority to function independently of any local church officials, and to include them in their Inquisition if they interfered with their work. According to one historical record:

Each Inquisition consisted of about twenty officials, including a grand inquisitor; three principal inquisitor judges; an official to receive and account for money fines; an official to confiscate property; a finance supervisor; a jailer; counselors to interview and advise the accused; executioners to conduct tortures, stranglings and burnings; surgeons to repair body damage caused by torture; clerks to record the proceedings and confessions in Latin. Each trial also had witnesses or informers against the accused, and favoured visitors who were sworn to secrecy concerning the procedures and events that they witnessed.

At first the Inquisition was only concerned with charges of heresy (people who disagreed with any Catholic doctrine or papal pronouncements), but later it expanded its authority to include absurd charges such as sorcery, alchemy, blasphemy, sexual aberration, reading the Bible in the common language, or reading the Jewish Talmud or Muslim Qur'an.

The Inquisitors also required Catholics to report on family members, friends and relatives who said or did anything suspicious. Children were even required to tell if their parents did such things as reading a forbidden book or eating meat during the period of Lent.

### **Deprived of Self Defence**

Any defence before the Inquisition was of no benefit whatsoever, for being charged in the first place was sufficient evidence of being guilty. Moreover, the richer the person being accused was,

the greater his danger; for more than often a person was executed not for heresy, but for his money and property.

Very often great lands and homes, and even provinces and principalities were confiscated by the papal church, or by the sovereignty cooperating with the Inquisition in the work. The Inquisitors even dug up dead men, convicted of heresy, and took their property, inherited by their families.

Regardless of the charges and evidence against a person, the Inquisitors performed their examination with terrible severity and had no mercy on anyone no matter what their age, sex, race, social status or physical and mental condition. They were even more cruel to those who were once Catholics but converted.

Every evil method known to man was used to make the individual being accused confess to the charges, and therefore convict themselves. If a person confessed, he would usually be sent to prison. If any person denied the charges against him, or persisted in the heresy, they were sentenced to death, usually burned at the stake. In Latin America other forms of execution were used; heretics could be impaled or slowly roasted over a fire.

In its great hypocrisy, the papal church said it was not allowed to kill anyone; so they turned the condemned heretic over to the secular authorities for punishment and execution. If the civil authorities failed to cooperate, then the Inquisitors accused even them of heresy. As a result, the civil authorities became victims of the system.

## **Methods Used to Force Confession**

The papal church devised another way to keep its hands clean of bloodshed. To force a confession, they used methods of torture which caused intense pain but no bleeding – the stretching of

limbs; burnings with live coals and heated metals; breaking fingers and toes; pulling out teeth; inserting hooks into fleshly parts and pulling the hooks out through the flesh; cutting of large pieces of flesh from the body; inserting pins under fingernails or toenails; severe beating with clubs, fists and rods; twisting limbs and dislocating joints. Other methods used by the sadistic inquisitors are too numerous and horrendous to mention.

### **The Sermon Generalis**

After the Inquisition completed its judgements, a solemn ceremony was held at the place of execution. This was known as the *sermon generalis* (general address) and *auto-de-fè* (act of faith) in Spain. This was attended by local officials, the papal clergy, and the general public, and was used to instil fear into the hearts of the people against committing heresy or opposing papal doctrines. But for the true believers the courage the martyrs displayed was a sign of God's grace sustaining them through the flames.

### **The Spanish Inquisition**

Of all the offices of the Inquisition throughout the world, the Spanish Inquisition was probably the most active and evil. It is certainly one of the darkest moments in Spanish history. In the year 1483 Pope Sixtus IV created an independent Spanish Inquisition to be presided over by a high council and grand Inquisitor. This was done at the insistence of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, the Roman Catholic rulers of Spain at that time.

With the support of Roman Catholic rulers, the early Spanish Inquisitors were so savage in their methods of torture and terror, it is said that even Pope Sixtus IV cringed at the reports he heard. There were seventeen tribunals in Spain and each is estimated to have burned an average of ten heretics a year; not to mention the thousands of others that were mutilated and never were able to recover from their wounds.

Over the years of the Spanish Inquisition it is estimated that about 32,000 people were tortured and then burned alive for nothing more than disagreeing with Roman Catholic doctrines, or holding to superstitious beliefs. Thousands of others were burned in effigy or condemned to penance, which usually meant exile, confiscation of all property and severe physical punishment. Yet the cruel Inquisition of Spain knew nothing of pure evil and cruelty until Tomas de Torquemada became leader.

### **The Savagery of Torquemada's Rule**

In 1487 Pope Innocent VIII appointed a Spanish Dominican monk, Tomas de Torquemada, as Inquisitor General of Spain. Under this man's authority thousands of Christians, Jews, Muslims and suspected witches were killed or tortured. Torquemada was the most feared man in Spain and his name became synonymous with cruelty, intolerance and hate.

From 1487 to 1498 he personally ordered more than 2,000 people to be burned at the stake. In 1492 the Inquisition was used to expel all Jews and Moors from Spain or to force them to convert to Roman Catholicism.

At the urging of Torquemada, Ferdinand and Isabella expelled from Spain more than 160,000 Jews who refused to convert. The Inquisitors also held their cruel investigations among the Spanish colonists and converted many Indians in South America.

The Spanish Inquisition was also one of the main reasons why the true and full Gospel failed to gain support in any parts of Spain.

### **Modern-Day Inquisitions**

Although the papal Inquisition declined in its cruelties over the centuries, it was never abolished but remained in effect in one form or another until the early nineteenth century; 1834 in Spain and 1821 in Portugal. After that period the Inquisition was renamed and reorganized under the title *Congregation of the Holy Office*, and redefined during Vatican Council II in 1965 by Pope Paul VI as the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith*.



# 10

## *NEW DISCOVERIES*

The Roman Catholic Church's inability to solve the widespread spiritual unrest spoken of previously increased in the following years, as its energies and financial resources were diverted by a new cultural movement of the time, now known as the Renaissance.

By the mid-fifteenth century, Europe had fallen behind other parts of the world both culturally and politically. Although famous classical authors such as Aristotle had formed part of the curriculum taught in universities, their works had been interpreted very much in the light of Catholic teaching.

But at this time an artistic and literary revolution began in Italy that would resound for centuries to come, while increasingly centralized monarchies emerged in England, France and Spain that were preparing to build global empires.

Scholars in Italy became interested in a wider range of classical literature, and especially more secular works that predated the rise of Christianity. The individuals who studied and taught the secular classics became known as *humanists*.

They began to emphasize both the style and the values of the ancient Greeks and Romans, including their emphasis on man as the measure of all things; a great challenge to the God-centred worldview.

Latin works were also unearthed, including those of Vitruvius, whose treatise on Roman architecture greatly influenced fifteenth-century Florentine architects such as Filippo Brunelleschi. And previously neglected authors such as Cicero and Virgil enjoyed a new vogue.

In painting and sculpture, the influence of ancient Greece and Rome was even more apparent, for there was a great interest in the nude human body, as can be seen in the works of Michaelangelo Buonarroti. Other famous artists of this time were Raphael and Leonardo.

Although this cultural movement was the domain of a small intellectual and artistic elite of that time, and barely affected the masses of ordinary people, its discoveries and re-discoveries were to have an enormous impact on the thinking of Christian Europe in the future years to come and especially for the people of God.

From Italy, the movement spread northwards and produced figures such as the Dutch humanist Erasmus (1466-1526) and the English statesman Thomas More. These northern humanists were more inclined to study the Christian classics than the secular ones.

With the slogan of *ad fontes, back to the sources*, they concentrated on the Old and New Testament teaching and the writings of the early Church Fathers. As they did this, they discovered the hundreds of discrepancies between the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, and those of the Apostles and early disciples.

In particular, they noted that the early Christians lived very simple lives based on faith in God, and not for money or notoriety, and that the New Testament emphasized servanthood, not hierarchy.

In his work, *In Praise of Folly*, Erasmus, an ordained priest and scholar, criticized the corruption of the Roman Church, and advocated a life of moral and religious principles based on New Testament teaching, especially non-violence and love for our neighbours.

Erasmus was so certain that the Scriptures contained the key to renewal that he published an edition of the New Testament based on the best available Greek manuscripts in 1516.

This scholarship of biblical texts helped pave the way for the Reformation.

## **Renaissance Popes**

By the mid-fifteenth century, the papacy desperately tried to recoup its losses by electing popes who were in tune with the new culture. They were sophisticated, talented, and ambitious, but at the same time worldly, corrupt and un-godly.

One of the most scandalous of all popes during this period was Rodrigo Borgia, who became Alexander VI (1492-1503). The corruption during the papacy of Alexander VI came to the attention of a reformed-minded Dominican monk in Florence, Italy, by the name of Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498).

During his assignment to the monastery of San Marco in Florence in 1482, Savonarola found the Renaissance Centre full of corruption and vice. This man was a powerful preacher and his Christ-centred message of repentance and personal reformation soon attracted great crowds of converts to the faith.

This in turn led to great spiritual renewal and the establishment of a virtual theocratic republic in 1494. Shortly after, Pope Alexander VI had Savonarola tried and executed with the accusation of heresy.

# 11

## *THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION*

By the 1500s the papal church had become very rich and powerful in every country in Europe. Each European town and city had several churches that were managed either by ordinary parish priests or by religious orders such as the Franciscans or Dominicans.

However, their rulers gave most attention to worldly matters such as wars and politics. Many of them lived in palaces and owned very large amounts of land, while others took part in governments and stayed away from their dioceses to live at kings' courts.

Although abuses – such as pluralism, the holding of more than one church position at the same time; nepotism, the appointing of one's own relations as cardinals or bishops, whether they were suitable or not; simony, the buying or selling of important church positions; and absenteeism, a priest or bishop living away from his own parish or diocese – existed in every European country, nowhere were they more evident than in the city of Rome.

As previously noted, one of the most notorious popes of this period was Alexander VI. It is widely believed that he bribed the cardinals who elected him (*simony*) and gave important church positions to his own children (*nepotism*).

It became obvious to true believers within the Roman Catholic Church that something was wrong and in need of reform. It was only a matter of time before God would raise up believers to bring this reform about. Initially, that person was Martin Luther (1483-1546). Together with a number of other churchmen, Luther began a movement that became known as the Reformation.

Its supporters believed the Bible, being the inspired and living Word of God, was the only authority and not Roman Catholic traditions. They also taught that Christians did not need a priestly hierarchy in order to come to God and that faith in Christ, not church membership, was the way to salvation.

At first these reformers hoped to change the Roman Church itself, but seeing the impossibility, they soon began to start break-away churches of their own. These were the first Protestant churches and they established the new reformed faith in many countries of Europe, including the Netherlands, Germany, France, Switzerland and Great Britain.

### **Luther's Personal Testimony**

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Saxony on November 10, 1483; an era ripe for religious reform. According to his father's wishes Luther went to university at Erfurt to study law. In July 1505, while returning to the university from a visit home, he was caught in a terrible thunderstorm and knocked to the ground by a bolt of lightning.

As Luther lay on the ground in fear, he realized that his temporal life had little value and that only the eternal life of his soul was important. To his father's dismay the young student decided to abandon his law studies, renounce the world, and enter the monastery of the Augustinian Hermits at Erfurt.

In 1508 Luther was ordained a priest at the monastery, and in 1509 was sent to the University of Wittenberg where he continued his studies and lectured in moral philosophy. But it was not long before he discovered that becoming a monk did not bring him peace of mind.

Although Luther was well acquainted with Roman Catholic scholastic theology, he still struggled with the age-old Christian question of how an individual can be saved.

In the theology he had been taught, he could not find the answer to his concern over the demands of God's righteous and holy Law and man's inability to live up to that Law. To resolve this severe personal crisis, Luther made study of the Bible the centre of his work, especially the Epistles of the Apostle Paul and his emphasis on grace through faith for salvation. It was through a detailed study of the Book of Romans that he finally found the answer:

In the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, God has reconciled humanity to Himself. Christ was now the sole Mediator between God and man, and forgiveness of sin and salvation are affected by God's grace alone, and are received by faith.

What was required, therefore, was not a person's strict adherence to the law or the fulfilment of religious obligations, but a response of faith that accepted what God had done in the finished work of Christ. As such faith matured, it would lead to obedience based not on fear of punishment, but on love.

Through his intense study of Scripture this reformer recovered the Pauline teaching of justification by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross on our behalf. Such a teaching was radically different from the traditional beliefs and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which states that an individual is saved by faith and works, and not *faith alone (sola fides)*.

This revelation from the Bible greatly affected Luther in a personal way, and it was not long before he became totally against Roman theology, which emphasized man's role in his own salvation; together with many other un-biblical practices.

## **First Confrontation with Rome**

In 1517 Luther had his first direct confrontation with the religious authorities over the selling of indulgences. In order to raise money to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Pope Leo X started selling indulgences to Roman Catholics.

According to their teaching an indulgence promised a cancelling or a shortening of the time a soul must spend in purgatory after death for their sins. Anyone gaining an indulgence could apply it to themselves or to their dead relatives who might already be in purgatory.

Soon after, some of the more cunning clergy saw the sale of indulgences as a means to raise money for their local churches or themselves. Luther considered himself an honest priest and therefore strongly objected to this practice because it was un-biblical and degrading to the suffering and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus on the sinner's behalf, and to the forgiving grace of God.

In October 1517, a Dominican friar named John Tetzel came to preach the pope's indulgence near the town of Wittenberg in Germany. An account dating from that time describes Tetzel's arrival:

All the priests and monks, the town council, schoolmasters, scholars, men, women and children went out to meet him with banners, songs and processions. Then all the bells rang. He was

conducted into church, a red cross was placed in the midst of the church, and the Pope's banner was displayed. In short, God himself would not have been welcomed with more honour.

When Luther, a professor at the University of Wittenberg at that time, heard of Tetzels arrival in the area, he became infuriated and immediately clashed with Pope Leo over these abuses in the church.

But when the pope considered Luther's objections to be of little consequence, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 1517 Luther nailed to the main door of the castle church in Wittenberg a document, his *95 Thesis*, for scholarly debate.

Among other things, this document especially questioned and contested the entire medieval system of the selling of indulgences by priests for the pardoning of sins. Luther later attacked other precepts of the Roman Catholic Church; such as their dogma of transubstantiation, the belief that the bread and wine at communion transforms into the literal body and blood of Christ, and of papal supremacy.

Using the newly-invented printing press, Luther's Thesis was quickly distributed all over Germany. It appealed to the German people and princes, as they resented paying taxes to the pope and were against imperial power. More importantly, it became a call for them to re-examine the theology of the Roman Catholic Church in light of the Holy Scriptures.

## **Luther's Most Famous Works**

In 1520 Martin Luther completed three books in which he declared his views. The first of these works was the *Christian*



*Nobility of the German Nation*, in which he encouraged the German princes to take the church reform into their own hands.

The second of his works was a *Prelude Concerning the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in which he attacked the Roman Church's theology of sacraments.

The third was *On the Freedom of a Christian Man*, in which Luther defined his position on justification and good works. In his first book to the nobility of Germany, Luther addressed several matters such as:

1. The pride of the pope is not to be permitted.
2. Too much money is sent from Germany to the pope.
3. Priests should be permitted to have wives.
4. Liberty ought not be restrained in eating meats.
5. Wilful poverty and begging should be abolished.
6. Emperor Sigismund should have stood with John Huss and Jerome.
7. Heretics should be convicted by God's Word and not by fire.
8. The first teaching of children should be centred on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and not on the traditions of the Roman Church.

Taking the side of Rome, many friars, clerics and doctors from Louvain and Cologne condemned his books as heretical. Luther in

return charged the clergymen involved with being obstinate, violent, malicious and impious.

On the fifteenth of June 1520 Pope Leo X issued a bull, *Exsurge Domine*, that gave Luther sixty days to recant, but it had no effect on him or his doctrines, for they were rooted and grounded in Scripture. On the fifteenth of December 1520 Luther publicly burned the pope's decree and the bull that was decreed against him.

Other reforming works of Martin Luther during subsequent years included the writing of the *Small and Large Catechisms*, sermon books, hymns, over a hundred volumes of tracts, treatises, biblical commentaries, thousands of letters, and the translation of the whole Bible into German. In 1530 the *Confession of Augsburg* was published. This was a statement of the doctrine and customs of the Lutheran Church.

## **Persecution and Charges against Luther**

At the time of the Protestant Reformation, Germany was divided into 300 small states; each with its own ruler or prince. Over all these rulers was the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, who ruled from 1519 to 1598.

This was the emperor who united the Habsburg dominions in Austria with Spain and Burgundy, and later Spain's colonies, that became a vast European realm. He was also the nephew of the Spanish princess, Catherine of Aragon, who became the first wife of King Henry VIII. It is said that fear of the emperor's wrath is the reason Pope Clement VIII refused to annul this marriage, which caused England's split with Rome.

After many failed attempts to reconcile Martin Luther under Roman religious authority, Pope Leo X condemned him for heresy

and issued a Bull of Excommunication (*Decret Romanum Pontificem*) against him, and ordered Emperor Charles V to execute it.

In April 1521, the emperor called a Council (*Diet*) at Worms in Germany and summoned Luther to appear before him. When they questioned him concerning his religious beliefs during the session, he implored the emperor and noblemen not to compel him to go against his conscience, which he said was confirmed by the Holy Scriptures. Luther concluded his response with these direct words: "I am tied by the Scriptures."

During a three-week reprieve, Emperor Charles V and the pope devised a plan together. Charles V directed that a solemn writ of outlawry be issued against Luther and against all those who took his part, and that wherever Luther was to be found he should be arrested and all his books be seized and burned.

Luther was condemned by the Diet and declared an outlaw and a heretic in the *Edict of Worms*. Yet not all of the princes agreed with the attack against him. Duke Frederick III of Saxony came to Luther's rescue and he lived in seclusion for eight months in the safety of Frederick's castle in Wartburg, where he also translated the New Testament into German and wrote a number of other pamphlets explaining his religious beliefs.

About this time, King Henry VIII of England wrote against Luther, reproving him for his position concerning papal pardons and he also defended the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. For his hypocritical support, he was honoured by the pope with the glorious title, *defender of the faith*, for himself and his successors.

## **Persecution Under Pope Adrian VI**

In November 1521 Pope Leo X was hit with a violent fever and died a month later at the age of forty-seven. Many believed that he had been poisoned. His successor was Adrian VI, a native German who was brought up in Louvain. This pope had also been the schoolmaster of Emperor Charles V.

Although he was the first pope to respond to the Protestant Reformation by attempting to reform the Roman Catholic Church, he still considered Martin Luther an enemy of that church and of the papacy.

Therefore, shortly after his appointment to the role of pontiff, the emperor called for another assembly of the German states to be held in Nuremberg in 1522. Here Pope Adrian addressed a letter to the assembly in which he expressed unbiblical views against Luther and his reform doctrines and what should be done about it. The princes responded to the pope's call for Luther's punishment with a letter of their own. Below is a paraphrase of the content of their response:

We understand that his holiness is afflicted with great sorrow with regard to Luther and his sect. We also recognize that the souls who are influenced by him are in danger of eternal perdition. We share in your sorrow.

Many people in Germany hold views similar to Luther's and this is why formal punishment of Luther has not taken place heretofore. This would lead to great upheaval, possibly even war, within the empire. Unless these grievances among the general population can be reformed, there is no hope of harmony in this matter between the secular and the

church. Therefore, we recommend that the pope should, with the emperor's consent, summon a Christian council at some convenient place in Germany as soon as possible. At this council people should be encouraged to speak freely.

We recommend that Duke Frederick would see to it that Luther and his followers not be permitted to write, set forth, or print anything else. And that all preachers in the duke's dominion be forbidden from preaching any of Luther's views. Any ministers who do not comply with this directive should be punished. Any new books should be submitted to church authorities for approval before being sold. Priests who marry or leave their authorities should be punished by established church officials...

Immediately after Pope Adrian's letter against Luther, one of his followers of Wittenberg, by the name of Andreas Carolostadt, stirred up the people to take action against the pontiff and his high-ranking members of the clergy.

Among other things, Carolostadt encouraged the people to destroy and tear down altars, statues and images in the Roman churches. It is said Luther was outraged at such violence and grieved at the disturbances his reform doctrines had provoked. He returned to Wittenberg to restore order against these over enthusiastic iconoclasts.

## **A Europe Divided**

From the year 1520 until Luther's death in 1546, at the age of sixty-three, his reformed Christianity had spread very rapidly. It became known as Lutheranism and eventually became the main

religion of northern Germany, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. With the help of the German theologian Phillip Melanchthon and others, Luther organized the Evangelical churches in the German territories whose princes supported him. He also abolished many traditional un-biblical practices, including confession and private mass.

However, while many German princes supported Luther, many others supported the Roman Catholic Church, which led to political struggle and outright war for the next thirty years.

### **Reform Works of John Calvin**

John Calvin was born in Noyon, northern France. He studied theology for a while in Paris, but later became a student of law at his father's request. In 1533 Calvin decided to leave the Roman Catholic Church and follow the teachings of Martin Luther.

In France at that period it was very dangerous to be a Lutheran, as King Francis I (1515-1547) believed that Lutheranism would divide the French people and lead to civil war. In spite of the danger, in October 1534 the French Lutherans put up posters of a Protestant sermon around the king's castle at Amboise.

King Francis was enraged by their actions and began a severe persecution against the reformers. Fearing for his life John Calvin fled to Switzerland and settled in Basle where for the next three years he produced his work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, written in Latin and later translated into French.

From 1541 until his death John Calvin ruled over the Swiss city of Geneva, where he had the opportunity to put his religious ideas into practice. His religion became known as *Calvinism* or *Presbyterianism*, from the Greek word *presbyter*, meaning *priest*.

Presbyters, or ministers, were the highest officers in Calvin's Church, as there were no bishops or popes.

### **Calvin's Strict Rules**

Calvin organized his church along very strict lines, which consisted of preachers, deacons, teachers and elders. The ruling presbytery was made up of six preachers and twelve elders, the latter being laymen. These laymen were given a lot of power in the church, including the right to elect their own ministers.

One of the worst punishments in Geneva was excommunication from the church, as such a person would be avoided by others and could no longer have a job or earn a living. Because of the strictness of Calvin's rule, Geneva became known as the *City of God*.

Despite such drawbacks, Calvin's Geneva also had a very good record in the area of education. Many schools were set up and in 1559 the Academy of Geneva was established – at first a training college for church ministers, and later a university where protestants from all over Europe could come to study and to observe Calvin's religion for themselves.

### **Uproars in France**

John Calvin's reform doctrines began to spread far beyond Geneva to other parts of Europe, dominating all of Switzerland and forming large minorities in France, the German lands, Poland and Hungary.

A reformer named John Knox brought Calvinism to Scotland, where it eventually became the main religion. From there it later spread to Northern Ireland, where Scottish settlers arrived after

1600. The publication of William Tyndale's (1494-1536) English New Testament in 1525 further opened the door to Protestantism in Great Britain, though Tyndale himself was fed to the flames in 1536.

However, the history of Calvinism in France, where the Calvinists were called *Huguenots*, was quite turbulent, and eventuated in the so-called *Wars of Religion* (1562-1598) between Catholics and Protestants.

The French Protestant movement was badly crippled by the *St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre* in 1572, where nearly the entire Protestant leadership and thousands of the Huguenots in Paris and the provinces were slaughtered.

Peace was eventually restored with the *Edict of Nantes* in 1598, through which King Henry IV (1584-1610) granted toleration and effectively partitioned France between the majority Catholics and minority Protestants.

This solution held together until the Edict of Nantes was revoked by King Louis XIV (1643-1715) in 1685, resulting in more deaths and numerous forced re-conversions, as well as a massive exodus of Protestants from the country.

## **New Protestant Movements**

The Protestantism of Martin Luther and John Calvin eventually divided into four movements – Lutheran, Calvinist (Reformed and Presbyterian), Anglican (Church of England), and Anabaptist. Calvin's work not only gave rise to Presbyterian and Reformed churches, for example, in Scotland and the Netherlands, but also to the Puritan movements in England and America.

Not all of the reform movements of that period were satisfied with the reform emphasis of Luther, Calvin and others. Some considered it more important to go back directly to the model of



the New Testament Church, as opposed to reforming the old one. The most important expression of this radical reformation in the sixteenth century was the Anabaptism Movement.

Unlike Luther and Calvin, the Anabaptists rejected the possibility of a territorial or national church and instead emphasized what they claimed was the biblical concept of a *gathered fellowship* composed of baptized believers only. For them the true Church included only Born Again believers who had openly confessed Christ and followed Him in baptism. Many present-day restoration movements owe their existence and impetus to this movement.

### **The Middle Way**

The Church of England was also revived by the Reformation Movement. From the initial separation from Rome under King Henry VIII (1509-1547); formalized by the Parliamentary Act of Supremacy in 1534, reforms developed over the course of the sixteenth century.

Under Queen Elisabeth I (1558-1603) a religious compromise was reached which allowed most English people considerable freedom in their worship, as long as they officially conformed to the new political and religious regime.

This so-called *middle way, via media*, originally between the extremes of Romanism and Puritanism, has characterized the Anglican Community ever since. The Anglican expression of the Reformation was important for many reasons, including the impetus it gave to the rise of English nationalism.

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* of 1552 was also instrumental in helping to create both a national church and an English nation.

In addition, the King James Version of the whole Bible of 1611; translated under the sponsorship of James I (1603-1625), helped unite both Protestantism and the English nation, by providing English-speaking believers with a standard translation of the Scriptures for the next three hundred years.

## **St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre**

In the year 1572 King Charles IX of France (reigned from 1560-1574) arranged a marriage between his young sister, Margaret of Valois, and the young King Henry of Navarre, a leader of the French Calvinist Protestants, called Huguenots, in the hope that such a union would settle the antagonism between the Roman Catholic majority in France and the Protestants.

The Protestant armies, under the leadership of Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, had defeated the French royal army on several occasions. When King Charles' father, King Henry II, was accidentally killed during a jousting tournament in 1559, Admiral Coligny joined himself with the prince of Conde, Louis I, to lead the French Huguenots and later demanded religious tolerance from the new King Charles IX, who was a Roman Catholic.

Although Coligny made every effort to obtain a peaceful solution to the religious troubles between the Roman Catholic government and the French Protestants, civil war was inevitable.

In 1569 Louis I was killed at the Battle of Jarnac, when the Duke of Anjou's army defeated the Huguenots, and it was at this time that Admiral Coligny became head of the Protestant armies. Shortly after, in June 1570, Coligny marched his army across France and defeated the king's army at Arnay-le-Duc.

As a result of this victory, Coligny was able to obtain a truce, and after appearing at the royal court some months later, he quickly

gained favour with the young King Charles and often counselled him in matters of the kingdom.

This friendship between the king and Coligny displeased the queen mother, Catherine de Medici, as she saw it as a threat to her evil ambitions. After the death of her husband, King Henry II, she had wielded great power over her son Charles and wanted things to remain that way. But Coligny's friendship and counsel were beginning to weaken that power.

Four days after the wedding of Margaret of Valois and King Henry of Navarre, Admiral Coligny was wounded in both arms by an assassin hired by Catherine and members of the Guise family. In an attempt to avenge this attack against his confidant and friend, Charles immediately ordered that an investigation be carried out.

In order to hide her involvement in the assassination plot against Coligny, Catherine, with the help of her most intimate associates, persuaded the king that it was all part of a Protestant plot to start another uprising, and that he should immediately order all Huguenot leaders to be killed.

Fearing for his own life Charles agreed with their advice, which included the death of his friend and counsellor Coligny. So the order went out. At midnight, August 24 1572, the Feast of St. Bartholomew, the Roman Catholic majority began a mass slaughter of all French Protestants in Paris, beginning with the Huguenot leaders from different parts of the country, who were already in Paris for the wedding festival of Charles' young sister.

From there the slaughter spread quickly to other parts of France and continued for two months, until they had savagely and brutally murdered almost one hundred thousand Protestants. A report from that time says:

It was as if an unholy plague had gripped the papists until they were more animal than humane in their zeal to kill every protestant in France. No one tried to stop them, and there was no punishment no matter how many they killed.

It would require much time and space to tell of all the brutal forms of savagery that were inflicted upon these poor victims during these two months of massacre, and by those who called themselves Christians. But a few examples will be sufficient to give an idea. Another report says that in the village of Barre the papists cut open the stomach of small children and pulled out their intestines, which they chewed upon in insane rage. A second witness to the truth of this massacre against the Huguenots comes from an educated Roman Catholic and quoted by John Foxe in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. A small extract from his written record says:

Some days after this horror in Paris took place, the French parliament tried to make the massacre seem less serious and justify it by putting the blame on Admiral Coligny, and accusing him of a conspiracy against the king, which no one believed.

They then sought to defile his memory by hanging his body by chains in public view. The king himself went to see this shocking spectacle. When one of his court attendants advised him to withdraw, complaining of the corpse's stench, he replied, "A dead enemy has a good smell."

The massacres of St. Bartholomew's Day are painted in the royal exhibition hall of the Vatican in Rome, with the inscription: *Pontifex, Coligny necem probat*, which means, *the Pope approves of Coligny's death*.

### **An Un-Godly Celebration**

In the city of Rome itself a day of festivity and jubilee was declared over the joy they felt for the St. Bartholomew's Day victory. Those who celebrated the day, with every form of gladness possible to express, were given free indulgences, and the man who carried the ungodly news to Rome was given a thousand crowns by the Cardinal of Lorraine.

Also, King Charles commanded that the day be kept in remembrance with great joy and gladness, for he was convinced that the whole race of Huguenots had been exterminated and the true Gospel of Christ along with them.

But it was not, of course. On the contrary, not long after the event, the king became greatly disturbed by the whole thing and fell into a great melancholy, and remained in this state until his death two years later of a fever.

### **Paris Is Worth a Mass**

Charles was succeeded by his brother Henry III as king of France, who immediately made peace with the remaining Huguenots. This act greatly enraged the Roman Catholic leaders, who immediately formed a powerful league, led by the house of Guise, to oppose the new king and to have him removed from office.

But when he was declared deposed, Henry III retaliated by having Henri Duc de Guise and his brother, the Cardinal of Guise, murdered. He also made an alliance with the young Henry of Navarre, and in 1589 they both began a military advance on Paris. However, Henry III was assassinated by a Roman Catholic fanatic, Jacques Clement, at St. Cloud, but before his death he acknowledged Henry of Navarre to be his successor, making him King Henry IV.

Obviously, the powerful Roman Catholic league, together with the pope, refused to recognize him as king and were supported in this by King Philip II of Spain.

When Henry's attempts to overcome them and regain the throne in Paris had failed, it is believed that he converted to Catholicism, which gave him the support he needed to reach his goal in 1594. By 1598 Henry IV was in complete control of the French Empire. It is reported that he justified his conversion by saying, "Paris is worth a mass."

But immediately after assuming total control over France, he issued the *Edict of Nantes*, which ended a half century of war and gave the Huguenots equal political rights with the Catholics. It also granted them a few strong places as cities of refuge where they could escape to from persecution and be protected if they managed to get there. One such place was the municipality of La Rochelle in Western France on the Bay of Biscay. The *Edict of Nantes* remained in force until it was revoked by Louis XIV in 1685.

During his reign as king of France Henry IV, the former Henry of Navarre, did much to improve the living conditions of the French people and to explore the New World. He was killed by a religious fanatic in 1610 while riding through Paris.

## **Areas of Protestant Expansion**

The main areas of Protestant expansion outside Europe during the Reformation era, and the centuries that followed, occurred in the British colonies, which eventually became the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Northern Ireland.

Many of the early settlers to these lands were fleeing Europe from some form of religious persecution. In the seventeenth century increasing numbers of Reformed and Lutheran Christians arrived to escape oppression by the Roman Catholic rulers in France and parts of Germany. Others were fleeing from the radical wing of Protestantism – Puritans, Independents, Quakers and Baptists.

# 12

## *THE COUNTER REFORMATION*

The criticism and threat from the Protestant Reformers set off a Catholic reform movement, known as the *Catholic Reformation*, or the *Counter Reformation* (1534). It began with the election of Pope Paul III in 1534.

When this pope was elected, he appointed a commission of cardinals to prepare a report on “church abuses,” and in 1540 gave approval to the most powerful and wicked religious order of the Counter Reformation – the Jesuits.

In 1542 Pope Paul III also set up the Roman Inquisition, encouraged by Cardinal Carafa, who later became Pope Paul IV (1555-1559), to continue their aggressive attack against reformed doctrines.

The Roman Inquisition stamped out much of the Protestantism that had existed in Italy and remains the same to this day. It was also responsible for the condemnation of the brilliant Italian scientist Galileo Galilei.

However, among those of the Catholic Reformation, there were some men of the Catholic hierarchy, such as Cardinal Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542), who tried to understand Protestant concerns, and made attempts to reconcile both parties.

Finally, Pope Paul III set up the Council of Trent (1545-1563) to clarify previously held Roman doctrines and define a hard-line response to heretics. This council met in the little town of Trent in Northern Italy on and off for nearly twenty years, and did nothing to break down the barriers between Catholics and Protestants. Instead, it made those beliefs that had caused the Reformation in the first place more clear and evident to all. Concerning church discipline the decisions of the Council of Trent were as follows:



1. Bishops must live in their own dioceses.
2. Simony and nepotism are strictly forbidden.
3. Seminaries are to be set up in each diocese to educate priests.
4. An index of forbidden books is to be drawn up.
5. No Catholic can read books on this list without permission.

Concerning doctrine, the Council of Trent made the following statements:

1. Both faith and good works are needed to save a person's soul.
2. Both the Bible and the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church must be followed.
3. There are seven sacraments.
4. The mass is a true sacrifice.
5. Christ is truly present at Holy Communion, known as transubstantiation.
6. The pope and his bishops are appointed by Christ to rule His Church.
7. Praying to our Lady and the saints is good and worthwhile.

8. Purgatory exists and masses and prayers for the dead should be said.

## **More on the Jesuits**

The Jesuit order, or Society of Jesus, became a key element in helping to restore power to the Church of Rome and deter the spread of Protestantism. It was founded by Spanish-born Ignatius Loyola in 1534. It is said that while he was fighting against the French at Pamplona in 1521 Loyola was seriously wounded and almost died. While recovering from his injuries he read a book on the life of Christ and shortly after decided to become a priest.

Loyola studied at universities in Spain and France and was a student at the University of Paris at the same time as the Protestant reformer John Calvin. During his period in Paris Ignatius Loyola gathered around him six companions on the *Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady* (15 August 1534) and they took vows of poverty and chastity, and of absolute obedience to the pope, in a little chapel on the hill of Montmartre.

Loyola also wrote a famous book called *The Spiritual Exercises*, to guide the Jesuits in their search to live “holy lives.” The order was modelled on an army; the head was called the General and all the Jesuits were taught to obey orders without question.

The Jesuits were known for their teaching abilities and their system of education was advanced for that time. They believed they could gain influence over rich and influential Catholics through education and therefore set about to create schools and colleges all over Europe, including the famous Gregorian University in Rome. They also built many church buildings and began a new style of architecture called *Baroque*.

The Jesuits also invested in aggressive missionary activities around the world in their struggle against Protestantism. They sent Jesuit missionaries to Asia, Africa and South America and succeeded in restoring the Catholic faith in Poland, southern Germany and parts of the Holy Roman Empire, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Their most famous missionary was Francis Xavier (1506- 1552) who reached Japan and brought the Catholic faith to India and the East. I will finish this chapter with one commentator's very apt description of the nature and goals of the Jesuits:

The mission of Ignatius Loyola was to assist the pope to restore the power to the Roman Catholic Church, which was waning due to the return of biblical truth and freedom to the people of Europe as a direct result of the explosive power of the Reformation.

The Jesuits began a programme of subversion to infiltrate governments in Europe; fomenting revolution and war by destabilizing monarchies through conspiracy, propaganda intrigue and assassination, in order to reiterate Catholic leaders in every country.

This programme of terror has continued unabated to this present day ... They continue to perpetuate their instrument of control instituted by the Dominicans, called the Inquisitions, by which millions of people were tortured and murdered as heretics for refusing to bend the knee to the pope and the authority of the Roman Church and to denounce their faith in Jesus Christ.

From the 1540s to this present day, a successive pattern of wars can be seen erupting at regular

intervals across the world, revealing upon close scrutiny a diabolical hidden hand at work.

The Jesuits were expelled from over eighty-three countries between 1555 and 1931 for trafficking, deception, spying, infiltration, assassination and revolution. They were considered by many authorities to be the most dangerous organization in the world.

They used Adam Weishaupt to form the Illuminati of Bavaria as a smokescreen in order to covertly extend their control over governments and rulers. This secret organization is still working behind the scenes today through many round table committees, such as the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the Trilateral Commission (CR) and the Bilderberg Group.

# 13

## *THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT*

Before the seventeenth century most scientific advances and philosophical thought were held back by the Roman Catholic Church that punished anyone whose ideas disagreed with their own. But the following centuries began to see a metamorphosis in European thinking about the natural world.

Just as the Renaissance had transformed art and produced many developments in architecture and Literature, and the Reformation had loosened the shackles of religious slavery, so now a third revolution began to provide a whole new view of the Universe, made possible through the invention of instruments such as the telescope and the microscope.

With these improvements in technology many began to undermine the long-held theories of an Earth-centred model of the Universe. In the Middle Ages the standard textbooks on astronomy were still the ancient work of the second century Egyptian astronomer Claudius Ptolemy, whose major thesis was that all heavenly bodies in the Universe revolved around the Earth.

This view was first challenged in 1543 by the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, whose research provided compelling evidence that the Earth rotated around the Sun, and therefore the Sun was the centre of our Solar System. The religious establishment resisted his discovery, as they claimed it was a contradiction to the Scriptures. However, the Bible never makes any such claim that the Sun revolves around the Earth.

Later on, in 1610, the Italian astronomer and physicist, Galileo Galilei, came to the conclusion that Copernicus' discovery was

correct. Using a new improved telescope, he showed that changes in the appearance of the planets revealed that they were circling the Sun, thereby proving that the Earth was not, as previously believed, the centre of all motion in our Universe.

Because of this discovery, Galileo was too at odds with the ecclesiastical authorities of his day and was placed under house arrest for the rest of his life.

This incident is worth repeating here because it has long been used by atheists to argue that these discoveries disproved the Bible and did away with the need for a Creator. Such an argument can easily be disproved.

First, Galileo's disagreement was not only with the Roman Catholic Church, but with seventeenth century science as a whole; between astronomers who supported Ptolemy and those who supported Copernicus.

Second, to say that seventeenth century theologians and clergy members giving their consent to a false unbiblical model from ancient Egypt discredits the Bible and destroys the whole idea of God is illogical and nonsense.

The answer to why some planets moved around others was provided by the renowned English scientist Isaac Newton (1643-1727), who discovered the Law of Gravity. Newton discovered that the force of gravity found on Earth, that caused objects to fall when released, might extend into outer space and be generated by all objects possessing mass. He published his famous work *Principia Mathematica* of 1687, one of the most influential works in the history of science.

## **Advances in Medicine**

Although the most sensational discoveries of the Scientific Revolution were in the areas of mathematics, physics and astronomy, progress was also made in the area of biology and medicine. In his atlas of anatomy, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543), the Flemish doctor and scholar Vesalius described the organs of the body with drawings based on his dissections. This helped the Englishman William Harvey, who was the personal physician to Charles I of England, to better understand how blood circulates through the body and to yield the first accurate description in 1628.

As a result of the amazing scientific discoveries of this era, many universities began to take science seriously. Gresham College in London (1575) had lectures in astronomy; Newton could study mathematics and science at Cambridge; and from 1660 scientific societies, or clubs, like the *English Royal Society* and the *French Academy of Science* was founded. By bringing scientists together in this way to discuss their ideas, they encouraged further scientific progress.

## **A New Way of Thinking**

The Enlightenment, which had its roots in the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century, was an intellectual movement which gave its name and image to an era called – the *Age of Reason* (1660-1789). Just as the Scientific Revolution had grown from a new freedom in scientific thinking, the Enlightenment gave freedom to philosophy.

The intellectuals of this era; such as John Locke (1632), Francois-Marie Arouet, known as Voltaire (1694-1778), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), David Hume (1711-1776), Adam Smith (1773-1790), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Rene Descartes (1596-1650), to mention a few, believed that through *reason* one could understand and master nature, and that this, in turn, would lead to social progress.

Their view was also an extension of the Renaissance idea that human beings could do anything if they took control of their own lives.

## God Out of the Picture

Rene Descartes, believed to be the “father of modern philosophy,” argued that only through reason could mathematical and universal truths be discovered. In other words, through a critical exercise of reason, human beings could arrive at a natural understanding of themselves, of religion, of philosophy, of law and of the whole Universe, which itself was governed by natural laws.

These thinkers of the eighteenth century, known as *philosophes*, applied most of their ideas from the advances in scientific discoveries to challenge the way others thought about government and society, and in an effort to replace tyranny, injustice, and the religious superstition of that time, with equality and tolerance.

The most influential tool or spreading these values was Denis Diderot’s 28-volume *Encyclopédie*, which included a great number of contributors such as Voltaire and Rousseau. The aim of this work was to assemble all existing knowledge in clear, accessible prose.

Another favourite target for the *philosophes* was royal absolutism. Montesquieu’s celebrated treatise, *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), proposed a limited monarchy based on a three-way division of



powers between the executive, the king, the legislature, the parliament, and the judiciary. Such notions greatly influenced both the American and French revolutions within the next half-century. Most Enlightenment thinkers abandoned organized religion, but some instead embraced an outlook called *Deism* – the belief in a God who created the world like a Great Watchmaker, but then relinquished control of His Creation and allowed it to run without intervention and according to natural laws.

# 14

## *EVANGELICAL REVIVALS*

Although the Enlightenment brought us enormous progress in the areas of science, technology and medicine, it also produced some devastating effects on man's response to Christianity, and the Church itself. Before that period, reason was viewed as a tool for understanding, but was subordinate to the revealed truth in Scripture, which was seen as completely supernatural. Now it was the other way around; the miracles of the Bible, and all traditional concepts about God and His Creation began to be explained rationally. Evangelical revivals became necessary.

The first spiritual awakening started in Germany and then spread to Scandinavia and Switzerland, producing what was known as Pietism. These early revivals were led by several men such as Philipp Jakob Spencer (1635-1705), August Francke (1663-1727) and Count Ludwig Von Zinzendorf (1700-1760).

The Pietists emphasized the simplicity of New Testament believers and their emphasis on the necessity of a personal religious experience with Jesus Christ for salvation. They were also concerned for missions and evangelism as well as social ministry. One of the most intensely missionary-focused Christian church was the Moravian church, founded under Zinzendorf.

### **The English Revival**

The same pattern of revivals occurred in Britain and America in the eighteenth century. The situation England faced in the early 1700s was not so different from the moral collapse we are witnessing in Western Society today.

In his popular book, *Discourse Addressed to Magistrates and Men in Authority* (1738), Bishop George Berkley wrote that the level of public morality and religion had collapsed in Britain, “To a degree that has never been known in any Christian country... our prospect is very terrible and the symptoms grow worse from day to day.” Many other writers and observers of that period, such as Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson confirmed that England was at the point of moral collapse in the early part of the 1700s, and the reasons for this were many and quite obvious.

In the previous century, the official Church of England had severely suppressed other Christians through strict laws, such as the *Act of Conformity*, that forbid “non-conformists” – independent pastors not endorsed by the Church of England – from teaching or preaching the true Gospel. As a result of this law, many of the greatest preachers in England were cast out of their congregations for refusing to respect it.

In addition, when the Great Plague of 1665 was taking the lives of one in every five people in London, everyone who could, fled from the city, including many leaders of the official Church of England and government.

However, non-conformist pastors and preachers decided to ignore the harsh laws and health risks and return to help their dying churches by preaching the only hope for them was by trusting in the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In response to these faithful ministers of truth, the apostate British government passed the infamous *Five Mile Act*, that prohibited any of the expelled clergy from approaching within five miles of their former church. Because of this law over four thousand pastors were cast into prison. In 1714 the *Schism Act* prohibited anyone from teaching anywhere in England without a special licence from his bishop.

As the moral code broke down, and the crime rate rose, the ruling classes naturally responded by fearfully demanding severe laws to restrain crime; laws that showed no mercy to those violating them. Both adults and young children were subject to a hundred and sixty different laws that resulted in hanging for petty crimes, such as shoplifting, stealing a sheep or gathering fruit from someone's property.

Public drunkenness was so widespread that many adults and even children died as alcoholics. Moreover, millions of women and young children were forced to work in terrible conditions in factories and mines with terrible low wages and no safety rules whatsoever.

Yet into this moral and spiritual wasteland, God sent the only hope for England's recovery – His everlasting and Holy Word. His servants for the task were John and Charles Wesley.

### **A Personal Encounter with the Risen Lord**

Being concerned about his salvation John Wesley (1703-1791) finally had a revelation that one must look to Christ alone. His New Birth served as the impetus for a fresh wave of pure Gospel preaching to England's largely un-evangelized population. Together with his hymn-writing younger brother, Charles Wesley (1707-1788), he soon won thousands of converts for Christ and brought about a spiritual revolution to England and a return to a true faith in the Bible as the Word of God.

The spiritual energy of this renewed preaching of the Gospel also produced a series of other Bible-believing Christian preachers, such as John Milton and John Bunyan. It is said their preaching of pure truth not only re-kindled the evangelical zeal of the Church of England, but provided a great passion for righteousness and freedom that saved England from moral collapse.

## New Denominations and Social Reform

Some new converts of the Wesley brothers left their organized religious group and joined various Evangelical denominations, such as the Baptists and the Congregationalists, while others formed *societies*, which became the Methodist Church.

The Wesleyan Revival also gave birth to a new wave of Christian social activism, especially in Great Britain. An informal network of Anglican lay leaders, known as the *Clapham Sect*, because most of them lived in the London suburbs of Clapham, was to have a lasting effect on the course of political and social reform in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

One of them, William Wilberforce (1759-1833), led a campaign to abolish the slave trade (1807) and then slavery itself in the British Empire. Wilberforce also secured an Evangelical chaplain, Rev. Richard Johnson, to accompany the first fleet of convicts bound for Australia in 1788. Johnson was the only clergyman on that voyage, therefore making modern Australia's earliest heritage Evangelical.

This man's associates led the way in educational and prison reforms, making education more accessible and prisons more humane. The imprisonment of debtors and children became illegal and schools were opened to every child who wanted to learn and receive an education in the English nation.

Also harsh penal laws and child labour in mines and factories ended. The Clapham Sect was also instrumental in the establishment of the *Church Missionary Society* (1799) and the *British and Foreign Bible Society* (1804).

## **Lessons to Learn**

Many Christians say that John Wesley was one of the greatest Englishmen that ever lived, because he practically changed the outlook and even the character of England. While this may be true, it was, in reality, a return to the Bible, the living Word of God, that did the work of transforming England from a moral wasteland into a land based on biblical principles and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Mediator between God and Man. And this is the only hope for Western Society today.

## **The American Awakening**

It was not long before the Evangelical Revival in England spread across the English-speaking world and caused thousands of conversions. In America, the First Revival is most closely associated with Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) and its beginnings in New England. This Revival, or the First Great Awakening (1740-1743), as it is usually called, is said to have been a spiritual awakening of major proportions.

## **Generating Heroic Missionaries**

The spiritual revivals of the eighteenth century made it possible for a very significant development in Christian history to gain ground – the modern missionary movement. Out of the Evangelical Awakenings emerged new desires and efforts to bring the Gospel to other nations that had not yet heard the Good News of God's grace and love in His Son.

In 1792 a Christian by the name of William Carey (1761-1834) persuaded his fellow believers to organize the Baptist Missionary Society. One year later Carey himself sailed to India and spent the remainder of his life there in Christian service.

In 1795 many Evangelicals from several denominations organized the *London Missionary Society*; and in 1797 Dutch Christians started the *Netherlands Missionary Society*. In 1810, some Evangelicals from the United States began the *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*. Finally, in 1815, European Pietists established a missionary training school at Basel, Switzerland. This was also an age of many missionary conferences, such as the first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910.

### **Missionary Persecutions Begin**

As can be expected, with the arrival of large numbers of Christian missionaries from Europe and America, significant numbers of converts to Christ began to increase in previously non-Christian countries.

These converts often suffered reprisals or outright persecution from their government and fellow countrymen. Sometimes the persecutions, together with the mistreatment of missionaries, eventually led to European intervention in the internal affairs of non-European powers.

An example of such an intervention can be given from the so-called *Boxer Rebellion* in China in 1900. Here resentment at the growing influence of Christian missionaries led to an uprising by the Boxers, also known as the *Righteous Fists of Harmony*, whose aim was to expel all foreigners from China.

Supported by Empress Ci Xi, the Boxers marched on Beijing in May 1900, where they besieged the foreign legations for nearly two months. Fortunately, an alliance of eight foreign nations, including Britain, France, the USA and Japan, sent a relieving force and crushed the rebels. With its credibility compromised after this event, the Qing regime was finally replaced in 1912 by a Republic of China, led by Sun Yat-sen.

Other countries reacted to Christian missionaries by closing their borders to any type of missions, while some were more receptive and national Christians soon emerged to assume leadership positions.



# 15

## *AMERICAN AND FRENCH REVOLUTIONS*

In addition to the spiritual revivals in Britain and North America, this was also an age of political upheaval and revolution, the two being greatly connected. Concerning America, it was the First Great Awakening that paved the way for colonial unity; in terms of a common Evangelical faith and common values and principles. Therefore, it is only natural that the American Revolution of 1775 received strong support from most Protestant denominations, except the Anglicans, who were torn by loyalty to the English throne and hindered by the authority structure of their church.

By 1750 virtually the whole of the Americas was occupied by the Spanish Portuguese, French and British Empires, with a few remaining islands and enclaves occupied by lesser powers. In contrast, by 1914, only a few areas remained as European colonies, as the rest had experienced over a century of independence. In the case of the United States and Spain's American colonies, independence was won from the mother country through revolutionary wars.

### **An End to British Control**

In the years that followed the Great Awakening, believers in North America invested much of their energy and religious enthusiasm into the creation of a nation on Earth that would both emphasize Christian values and republican principles.

This came about in the 1760s when the American settlers began to resent British rule in their thirteen North American colonies. Consequently, fighting broke out between the two parties of

colonial militias and British regular forces in the year 1775. After a series of negotiations among themselves, the American colonies agreed on a Declaration of Independence in July 1776, contributed mainly to the skills of Thomas Jefferson, who later became the third United States president.

An American victory at Saratoga in 1777 brought France in on their side and inhibited the British to beat down American resistance marshalled by Commander George Washington, who later became the first United States president.

Again, in 1778, the British main army was trapped in Yorktown, Virginia, and in October 1781 surrendered to the colonists. By the Treaty of Paris (1783) England recognized the independence of the United States.

After the Declaration of Independence, the Constitutional Convention of 1787 drafted the United States Constitution which incorporated the novel notion of religious liberty and the separation of the institutions of Church and State in its *Bill of Rights*.

### **A Change for the Worse**

As a study of history reveals, the American and French revolutions transformed Western Society in a number of ways. However, the results of these revolutions were quite different; the United States emerged as a fully functioning democracy based on biblical principles, while the great revolution in France destabilized the country for almost a century and created a sharp reaction against organized religion and the Roman Catholic Church.

In the early days of the French Revolution (1789), the revolutionaries and new leaders, building upon the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers and regarding the State Church as part of

the old regime that needed to be changed, made drastic attempts to banish the Roman Church, and indeed any form of Christianity, from French life once and for all. The new leaders tried to get control of the people by changing everything that grew out of Christianity or Christian tradition.

They set up a new calendar by which years were numbered, not from the birth of Christ, but from the date of the Revolution. They issued decrees to change all Christian churches into *temples of reason* and to melt down church bells for the metal. They even tried to replace the seven-day week established by God to a ten-day week.

Unlike the United States of America, where Evangelical faith and republicanism were in mutual agreement, the French Revolution made it very difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to be both a republican and a Christian in revolutionary France. On the positive side, the bitter struggle between church and state led to a series of laws that severely restricted the powers of the Roman Church that, on the surface, continues in French life today.

# 16

## ***THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION***

The Industrial Revolution spawned many profound social changes and gave rise to innovations in technology that were to fuel incredible economic growth in the following centuries.

From the late eighteenth century in Britain, a wave of industrialization swept across Europe and North America transforming the Western World from a rural society into an Urban one, and set the stage for modern capitalism.

Through the abundance of natural resources, such as coal and iron, the British were enabled to take full advantage of new developments in technology. In the 1770s James Watts developed an improved steam engine which could provide the necessary power for various industrial uses; from pumping mines to running machinery in factories and mills of the early eighteenth century.

Also the textile production mechanized particularly; by the year 1835 there were more than 120,000 power looms in textile mills. This led many men and women to flock to the towns where these factories were situated.

But the working conditions in these factories were terrible, as people, even young children, worked extremely long hours in dangerous and unhealthy conditions with very low pay. These abuses went on until the rise of trade unions; that began to curb the exploitations of factory owners.

### **Secular Responses to Exploitations**

From the early nineteenth century, British workers had begun to organize themselves into groups to protect themselves from exploitation. But their *combinations* were sometimes illegal and so

their employers frequently oppressed them. This took a change in 1824 when the British government repealed the anti-Combination laws, and trade unions became lawful for the first time.

In 1829 John Doherty established the *Grand General Union of the Operative Spinners* of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This was the first attempt at a national union that started a trend which would be followed by other trades. The rapid economic progress of the 1840s also led to the strengthening of the unions, and in 1868 the forerunner of the modern *Trades Union Congress* was established.

In the meanwhile, the growth of trade unions had spread overseas through the formation of the *National Labour Union* in the United States in 1866.

## **Socialism and Marxism (Europe 1800 – 1917)**

Another major response to the masses of oppressed workers was the un-godly philosophy of Socialism and Marxism. Socialism argued that wealth should be divided and shared by putting it in the hands of its creators. Sentiments such as these had inspired the German *Peasants Revolt* in 1532-1534, and unrest in England after the Civil War of 1642-1649.

Yet the nineteenth century certainly provided the first arena for socialist ideas to be put into practice. By the early twentieth century, many European countries had established socialist parties, including the *Labour Party* in Britain (1900) and the *Socialist Party* in France 1902.

But the more radical ideas were of the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx (1818-1883), who viewed history as a series of class struggles that would lead to the end of capitalism. Marx

helped to establish the *International Working Men's Association* in 1864, which served as a platform for the dissemination of his revolutionary ideas.

Although Marx believed that the full revolution would break out in France or Germany, it was actually in the under-developed country of Russia that Marxist ideas were to eventually seize power in 1917.

Karl Marx was also very hostile to the churches and branded religion as the *opiate of the people*. His popular *Communist Manifesto*, co-authored with Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), and his *Das Kapital* attracted large numbers of intellectuals and working people to his movement.

## **The Christian Response**

The strongest Christian response to the problems of the Industrial Age came about in Britain and America, where many believers were working on peaceful reforms and change. Evangelical zeal for reform in the nineteenth-century Victorian Britain were expressed in a variety of ways.

By the fervent desire of the Clapham Sect to abolish slavery and correct other social abuses in the British Empire; Lord Shaftesbury's (1801-1884) parliamentary factory legislation and mining reform, that restricted the working hours of children; W.E Gladstone's (1809-1898) liberal, political and educational reforms that were passed through parliament in the period 1864-1894; and by the founding of the Salvation Army in 1865 to encourage charity to London's slum dwellers.

## **Slavery Abolished in the United States**

In America, the struggle against human right's abuses was also strongly supported by many Evangelical Bible-believing Christians. The Civil War over the slavery issue sharply divided the new-born USA and created bitterness which alienated them from one another for many decades later.

After the American Civil War, the Southern states underwent a process of *Reconstruction*, intended to prepare them for re-admission to the Union. The former Confederate officials were banned from holding public office and veterans were required to pledge allegiance to the Union; a regime that bred much resentment in the Southern States.

Reconstruction continued until 1877, when a deal known as the *Compromise* was struck to allow a withdrawal of the final Federal Forces from the South. In spite of these drawbacks, nineteenth-century America was characterized by the steady growth of Evangelical Christianity, democracy and political and social reform.

## **Rome's Response**

The Roman Catholic Church's response to the problems of the Industrial Age, and the revolutionary ideas which it gave birth to was the election of Pope Pius XI (1846-1878). During his papacy, he condemned nearly all modern movements in religion, politics, society and the intellectual world with the publication of his *Syllabus of Errors*.

He also called and presided over the *First Vatican Council* (1869-1870), which promulgated the dogma of papal infallibility in matters of faith and doctrine.

It was not until the papacy of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) that the Roman Church began to come to terms with the concerns raised by the growing Marxist movement in Europe, and the modern and changing world in general, and adapt a milder approach.



# 17

## ***THE PROBLEM OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION***

As in other periods of history, this era was not without its intellectual attacks on the Christian Faith, and especially the divine authority of the Word of God. The long-held biblical affirmation that human beings and animal species were created by God was shaken by the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 and the *Descent of Man* in 1871.

Darwin's observation of finches on different islands of the Galapagos groups revealed that they had developed characteristics to suit their particular environments. He argued that through natural selection individuals in a species had competed against each other and those stronger or more able survived to pass on their genes.

In the *Descent of Man* Darwin argued that humankind had descended from an ape-like ancestor, a theory that survived to become scientific orthodoxy. This un-proven Theory of Evolution in the second half of the nineteenth century divided Christians between those who accepted the view and its implications on the authority of the Bible, and between those who rejected it.

As a side note, this has all changed quite recently through the explosive scientific discoveries of the incredible complexity of the DNA genetic code, the nature of the atom and the total lack of fossil evidence for missing links after decades of search.

These, and many other interesting facts, have motivated many scientists and academics – even evolutionists themselves – to totally abandon Darwin's theory. They now accept and are forced

to admit that the mathematical odds against life forming by random chance alone is quite impossible.

## **Birth of Theological Liberalism**

The emergence of Darwin's Theory of Evolution onto the stage of history gave rise to *Theological Liberalism* among Protestant leaders. Growing out of Enlightenment ideas, theological liberalism first appeared in Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century, and was anticipated in the work of the German Pietist scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).

Liberalism began as an effort to come to terms with modern knowledge and modern thought, in particular the new historical study of the Scriptures. It then evolved into a theological system based on rationalism and the scientific method, which naturally stripped biblical Christianity of its supernatural elements, such as miracles and the deity of Jesus Christ, to name a few.

Instead, this new theology taught what it considered to be the essential Christian virtues of the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man and the importance of living in love. The Bible, which was historically the sole authority for faith, doctrine and practice, was no longer considered trustworthy, but was said to contain errors, myths and contradictions. What a shame.

German rationalism, as it was also called, crossed over to the United States of America in the late nineteenth century and divided the Christian community between those who defended the historic Christian Faith, despite the so-called scientific evidence to the contrary, and those who accepted the new liberalism.

Both sides developed militants who composed doctrinal statements and manifestos which led to the terms such as *Fundamentalists*, those who held to certain *fundamentals* of the

faith, and *Modernists*, those who wanted to *modernize* the Christian religion along scientific lines.

# 18

## *THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING*

In spite of the theological disputes between Church leaders over the new proposals, preaching of the Gospel went on all the same. A Second Great Awakening ignited in the United States around 1800, that replenished and revived the churches, and continued unabated for over two generations, until quenched by the American Civil War in 1861.

In the late nineteenth century Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) and Billy Sunday (1862-1935), the former businessman and former Major League baseball player, drew large crowds to their evangelistic meetings.

Moody also reaped two successful periods of revival preaching in Great Britain in 1873-1875 and 1881-1884. Spiritual revivals were also common in other parts of the world during this period; in Scotland in the late 1830s, in France in the 1840s and in Wales in 1859 and in 1904. In 1879 Methodists William and Catherine Booth founded the Salvation Army in London's East End.

The Second Great Awakening also gave birth to a few new restoration movements such as Pentecostalism. This movement was born in 1905 and spread rapidly to Europe following World War I. It was also very successful in South America after World War 2, and in Australia beginning in the 1980s. In less than a century Pentecostalism had become a major force in the Christian world.

# 19

## *POST WAR EVENTS*

The out-break of World War I (1914-1918) literally shattered the dream of post-millennialists that thought they were on the brink of the Millennium Reign, and that they were helping to build a better world in which the Kingdom of God would finally appear on Earth and overcome the forces of evil.

Instead of the Golden Age appearing, there were four years of massive slaughter and wide-scale destruction, that burned out the reviving spirit that had flourished in America, Britain and France before the War and caused wide-spread pessimism and distrust to reign in its place.

In addition, there were no major revivals in the inter-war period, and evangelism and missionary work developed at a much slower pace than in the late nineteenth century.

One reason for the decline in evangelistic zeal and concern in this period was because many Christian leaders were investing their energies elsewhere; in particular, the continuing controversy over theological liberalism.

The most damaging and devastating of these confrontations between Evangelical conservatives and theological liberals took place in America in the so-called *Fundamentalist–Modernist* controversy.

For almost a generation true believers fought an exhausting war for the minds and souls of American Church members, a war that is still going on today, not only in America but in the entire Christian world. When the controversy came to a head nearly every major denomination had been affected and a great number of them split by the quarrel.

## Issues Under Discussion

The religious debate between theological conservatives and theological liberals often-centred around either the theory of evolution, or the so-called Social Gospel, which stressed right living and brotherly love – the liberals' main concern and reason for existence.

Naturally, most Evangelical Christians reacted to this ecumenical emphasis with great suspicion. First, because it down-graded the need for repentance and faith in Christ for salvation. Second, because it undermined the integrity of the Bible. Third, because it took institutional shape in the World Council of Churches, formed in 1946 at Amsterdam.

Ironically, while most of the Protestant denominations in America and Europe were fighting the theological warfare in the 1920s and the 1930s, many of their offspring in Africa and Asia were in the process of forming multi-denominational unions, such as the *Church of Christ* in China (1927), the *Church of Christ in Japan* (1940), and the *Church of South India*.

## Events Following World War II

As a knowledge of history demonstrates, World War II (1939-1945) brought even more incredible destruction and suffering to the world, as Nazi aggression and national interests caused people to ruthlessly slaughter each other. More than forty million lost their lives and another eighty million were wounded. In addition, nearly six million Jews died in Nazi concentration camps; many at the hands of those who called themselves Christians.

Yet even during this dark moment of human history the true Church of Jesus Christ was a light to the nations. Many Christians

saved the lives of numerous Jews, at the risk of their own lives and the lives of their families.

The post-War period also had its share of persecutions for the saints. In the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1990 Russian Orthodox and Baptist Christians suffered terrible persecution and oppression at the hands of the cruel Communist regime. These persecutions are still very much present in China, Indonesia, Africa and Muslim States today.

### **More Positive Post War Results**

The post-World War II Age became one of new discoveries and Bible translations, due to the extraordinary finds of ancient Hebrew manuscripts. The most sensational of these finds was the discovery of the *Dead Sea Scrolls* in caves near the north-western end of the Dead Sea in Israel.

These manuscripts proved to be invaluable for the study of the Old Testament texts and its textual integrity. Moreover, new English translations of the Bible have poured from the printing presses since then, many of them of great quality.

Also, Liberal Theology began to lose its appeal in the post-War world; although it remained alive in many Christian circles in the following decades, and has revived drastically in society today. After the War, it was replaced by the neo-Orthodox theology of scholars such as the German-Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968), and the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1893-1971).

These men called for a return to biblical authority and reformed doctrines, and for an end to the dominating and damaging doctrines of theological liberals in seminaries and universities. This helped to pave the way for a new Evangelical Awakening in the 1960s.

# 20

## *IN THE SIXTIES*

In the sixties life in the Western World became much less ideal than it had been in the 1950s; with the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 and America's involvement in the Vietnam War that followed shortly after. Events such as these caused student unrest to spread, causing great upheaval and revolution.

Yet, as often before, this social unrest made people more receptive to the Christian Gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Tired of the drug culture, many young people began to turn to Jesus.

This gave birth to the *Jesus Movement*, which in turn fed the *Charismatic Movement*, a new form of Pentecostalism, that spread rapidly to many Protestant denominations. Many Roman Catholics also became involved in the Charismatic Movement, beginning in 1967 at Duquesne University in the United States of America.

Another noted event of this period was the *Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization* in 1974. It called for a Christian mission, that included social and political action as well as evangelism and teaching.

As a result, the younger Evangelical leaders from Third World countries began to speak out; developments which added to a major resurgence of Evangelical Christianity in the world during the last half of the twentieth century.

### **The Roman Catholic Response**

Under the leadership of Pope John XXIII, the Roman Catholic Church responded to the twentieth century events with the ecumenical Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Among other



things, this council, in particular, sought to reduce tensions between Rome and the Protestant world and encouraged closer relations with other Christians.

Because of these changes many true Christians have been led to believe that a real spiritual renewal has taken place in the Church of Rome and that Roman Catholicism is a valid expression of the Christian faith working for the evangelization of the world.

This in spite of the fact that the Second Vatican Council did nothing to abolish the unbiblical, pagan practices that have been an integral part of their religion since the beginning. For example, concerning the practice of indulgences the Second Vatican Council had this to say:

Holy Mother Church again recommends the practice of indulgences to the faithful... Indulgences are the taking away of the temporal punishment due to sins when their guilt has already been forgiven. In granting an indulgence the Church uses its power as ministers of Christ's Redemption.

It teaches and commands that the usage of indulgences... should be kept in the Church; and it condemns with anathema those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them.

So much for a "church" that puts a curse on anyone who refuses to believe and practice what Jesus and the Apostles never taught or condoned! Regarding the use of scapulars and medals, the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed their use with the promise that:

The faithful who use with devotion an object of piety (crucifix, rosary, scapular or medal) after it has been blessed by any priest, can gain a partial indulgence. But if this object of piety is blessed by the Pope, or any bishop, the faithful who wears it with devotion can also gain a plenary indulgence on the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

The council also reiterated other teachings, such as Jesus being worshipped in the “sacred host” which comprises the blessed sacrament; and Masses for the dead, for which that same council had this to say:

Holy Mother Church is extremely concerned for the faithful departed. She has decided to intercede for them to the fullest extent in every Mass. The Church offers the Paschal Sacrifice (the Mass) for the dead so that the dead may be helped by the prayers, and the living may be consoled by hope.

These are just a few examples of the many pagan practices that were re-affirmed and re-iterated by the Second Vatican Council. Yet they are enough to show that it re-proposed the decrees of the Second Council of Nicaea, the Council of Florence and the Council of Trent. What they have long taught and believed is still taught and believed in Catholicism today.

The only real changes that have taken place since then are of a peripheral rather than theological nature. The Mass in the vernacular tongue instead of Latin, the type of music played during religious services; liberty to read the Bible on one’s own and so forth.

# 21

## *THE CHURCH TODAY*

Another idea of nineteenth-century liberal thinking was that all religions are just many different paths traversing a mountain in a variety of ways, but all eventually reaching the summit of God's presence.

Over the following decades this erroneous idea has prompted a vast number of attempts to promote active expressions of unity by means of ecumenical movements and interfaith events; which for the global-faith enthusiast is vital to the harmony and salvation of planet Earth.

Today this is the official religion of Western Society. To make any statement to deny this multi-faith view, such as Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, is considered the most politically incorrect statement that one could make.

### **Together with the UN**

The idea of unifying all religions has long been on the agenda of the Roman Catholic Church and they are the people who have been working to bring this about; by means of these interfaith gatherings and religious alliances, together with a number of international bodies, many of which are linked to the United Nations Organization.

A former Assistant Secretary General of the UN, Robert Muller, said: "My great personal dream is to forge a tremendous alliance between all religions and spiritual groups, and the United Nations. We desperately need a United Religions Organization to bring peace to all people of the world."

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair is credited with having made the following statement: “I will dedicate the rest of my life to uniting the world’s religions. Faith is part of our future, and faith and the value it brings with it are an essential part of making globalization work.”

The basic message of the 2010 World Religions Summit in Winnipeg Canada was that, “Religions need to unify if the planet is to survive.” An evangelical Christian who attended this meeting said: “Participants apologized for two millenniums of Christian evangelism which has proclaimed that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour of all and sought to make the whole world Christian.”

Again, the overall view at a *Rethink Conference* some years back was that Christianity, as we know it, has run its course and must be replaced. The speakers there insisted that Christianity must be *re-thought* and *re-invented* if the name of Jesus Christ is going to survive here on planet Earth; and much has been done since then to bring this about. Leader of the Emerging Church, Brian McLaren, said the future way of life for a Christian will:

Require us to join humbly and charitably with people of other faiths – Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Secularists and others – in the pursuit of peace, environmental stewardship and justice for all people, things that matter greatly to the heart of God.

Actually, it is a recurring theme throughout the whole New Testament, and prefigured in the Law and the Prophets, that the most important thing to the heart of God is that all men repent of their sin, renounce it, and believe on His Son for forgiveness, for He wants no man to perish (*2 Peter 3:9-10*). Today, McLaren’s theology is taught by a variety of different sources, especially from within many Protestant denominations.

The simple fact is that all religions cannot be the same. In order to be so, they would need to be united on the very issues where they are most divided – the existence and nature of the One True God, and the way *He* has established for man to approach Him.

As a Christian it is right and just to respect the right of every human being's freedom to worship the god of their choice, but it is quite another thing for a Christian to say that everyone's choice is the right one.

I repeat, we cannot defend *all* religions and say that *all* faiths are right, because each faith has beliefs that render those of other faiths false. This being the case, the idea that all religions are basically the same is clearly ridiculous, and even more ridiculous is the idea that they point in the same direction, or lead to the same destination.

## **What the Future Holds**

Many in the Body of Christ believe and teach we can look forward to a great, visible and spiritual awakening before the end of the ages and the coming of the Lord takes place, but Jesus Himself warns it will be the complete opposite:

*At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of many will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

*(Matthew 24:10-13)*

In his Second Letter to the Thessalonians the Apostle Paul echoes these words of Jesus in His famous Olivet Discourse and assures us that the day of the Lord will not come until the Antichrist is

revealed and the world has witnessed a widespread “*falling away*” from biblical truth:

*Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.*

*(2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)*

Paul’s use of the word “*that day*” is a shortened version of “*the day of the Lord,*” which he uses other times in his Epistles, and refers to the Second Advent of Jesus and His judgement on the nations.

The Greek word for falling away, or rebellion, is the word *apostasìa*, and is found also in *Acts 21:21*, where it is translated *forsake*. Paul is saying that before the Second Coming, and before the Antichrist is revealed, there will be a falling away, a forsaking of truth, on the part of professing believers.

In addition to these, there are many other biblical passages that tell us worldwide apostasy, and terrible persecution against true believers, will be one of the defining characteristics of the last days. Writing to his young friend Timothy the Apostle Paul declared:

*You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure than lovers of God, holding to an outward form of godliness but denying its power.*

*(2 Timothy 3:1-6)*

*For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.*

*(2 Timothy 4:3-5)*

What Paul is telling us here is that during the last days there will be especially difficult and terrible times of apostasy in the visible Church and the general trend will be for things to get worse as the Church Age draws to a close (see *2 Timothy 3:13*).

In his Second Epistle the Apostle Peter gives a very forceful rebuke and attack against these apostates that he predicted would come into the Church to deceive, deny and disobey the truth in the future:

*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive opinions. They will even deny the Master who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. Even so many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers the way of truth will be maligned.*

*(2 Peter 2:1-3)*

Also the Apostle Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote his entire Epistle as a warning that the apostates which Peter had warned about some years previously had already wormed their way in (see also *1 John 2:18-23*).

## **The Fifth Column Already Firmly Entrenched**

The Bible uses the word apostasy to describe opposition to the Christian Faith from people who claim to be believers in Christ, but believe and teach false doctrine and practice ungodly behaviour (see *Titus 1:16*). As we have demonstrated above, and in the previous chapters, we are already living in such a time. The fifth column is firmly entrenched in almost all major Christian denominations.

Many true believers are completely shocked with the faith compromises that professing Christian leaders and ministers have made in recent years. Some of them are blatantly obvious, while others are more subtle and deceptive.

For these apostates, essential biblical doctrines are unimportant, and are seen as divisive and even destructive. Naturally, with this wrong belief has come in its by-product – wrong behaviour. In the first chapter of the Book of Romans Paul describes the low moral level to which man has sunk apart from God. Shockingly, more and more individual Christians and even entire denominations are living this way today.

These apostates have denied their Master who bought them with His precious blood in order to sanctify them and have given into the pressure of this present-day, doctrine-less, permissive, anything goes, do not offend anyone new world religion.

## **Weeds Among the Wheat**

As always, together with the true Church of Jesus Christ in our world today, there is also an apostate church. This false bride, claiming to be of the Lord, openly denies Him as the only means



by which we can be saved and has made compromises with other religious faiths in an interfaith union.

According to biblical prophecy, this interfaith union will become the world's first super church, which the Apostle John refers to in the Book of Revelation as the *Whore of Babylon*; which many biblical prophecy experts believe to be the Roman Catholic Church. As we underlined in chapter six, this false religious system will promote and cooperate with the coming Antichrist during the first three and a half years of the Great Tribulation; and is indeed setting the stage for his coming right now.

John's description is a reference to her spiritual filth and unfaithfulness to God. It also alludes to her religious doctrines that are consistent with the ancient Babylonian religious practices of old.

Not only is this false church aggressively attacking biblical truths, historical facts and moral absolutes this very hour, her members are openly ridiculing and slandering true believers who practice and teach them; as she has done down through the centuries of Church history.

## **The True Revival**

Take courage, dear friends, while the Word of God predicts there will be a growing departure from the Lord as the Church Age progresses, those same Scriptures predict that its increase can be understood as a general indication that the appearance of our Saviour is near. Those same Scriptures also promise the true Church will be supernaturally protected and empowered by God to make Him known throughout the world because:

*This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

*(Matthew 24:14)*

Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us not consider the increase of apostasy and persecution as a sign to just give up and wait for Christ to return while a whole generation of people are being deceived. Our Lord left us very specific instructions on this matter. We are to do business until He comes. And this we will do, remembering the glorious promise the Lord made to His Church: “*The gates of Hades will not prevail against it.*”

## **Conclusion**

He that brought sin and death into God’s first Creation, by tempting Eve, shall never be able to bring destruction on the new Creation by resisting or overthrowing true believers.

Visible church buildings may come to an end and be destroyed, but the spiritual Church of Christ, the one and only true Church, though often persecuted, afflicted, killed and brought low, shall never perish or come to an end, but shall continue to defeat and outlive the hatred and wrath of emperors, dictators and popes until the coming of her Beloved Bridegroom. In spite of the world, the flesh, death and the devil, every member of it shall be brought home safe to glory. Therefore, let the Bride say:

*Make haste my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of spices.*

*(Song of Songs 7:14)*