



Are We Like Christ?

The Pattern of Christ
In the Church's History

Steve Phillips

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By

Steve Phillips

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Patricia Phillips

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A composite English translation of the Bible
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1 Begin Here

All histories are selective short accounts. The Bible itself is condensed narrative. In the bibliography are listed 47,618 pages of references used in writing the 336 pages of this book. The content that has been included has been selected in order to lead the reader to follow the Pattern of Christ based upon the Word of God alone.

The perspective of this book is that there exists one unchanging Pattern for the church which is Christ Jesus Himself. In character, teaching, and in method of ministry, He is the perfect example and standard for all who follow Him. All that He was and everything He did had the full approval of His Father in heaven.

No improvement can be or ought to be made upon this Pattern. Nothing is to be ignored or deleted. Likeness to Christ will always meet with the Father's, "Well done."

Departure from Him will ever be encountered otherwise. All is to be evaluated and adjusted in light of the perfect Pattern of Christ according to His Word which cannot be broken [Jn.10:35].

"Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven" [Ps.119:89]. This is the unchanging reference point for all things pertaining to life and godliness by which we become partakers of the divine nature [2 Pet.1:3,4]. This Word abides forever [Isa.40:8], is right concerning everything [Ps.119:128], and apart from which, there is no light [Isa.8:20].

The very words of the Bible are inspired [Mt.5:18] and alone are authoritative for all believers in every generation and in every place [I Cor.1:2; 4:17; 14:37]. It is the Word of Christ that will judge one and all on the last day [Jn.12:48].

Therefore, nothing else is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness except the teaching that is according to the inspired Scriptures [2 Tim.3:16,17]. All else is worthless to produce godliness, but actually is deadly to spiritual health and one's eternal well-being [Mk.7:5-9; Col.2:16-23].

This is the outlook from which this book has been written. The sincere prayer of the author is:

[1] To stimulate the brethren to love and good deeds by reorienting our hearts and churches back to the only enduring foundation of Christ and His Word.

[2] To encourage brethren who are being persecuted by prevailing institutional religions to endure all with patience and joy without compromise out of love for Christ.

[3] To provide a biblical and historical frame of reference for Christian beliefs and practices among West African brethren especially.

Christ and His Word: All else will be swept away in an overflowing flood [Mt.7:24-27] and rise in disastrous smoke [I Cor.3:10-15]. May the Lord preserve us for Himself without spot or blemish or any such thing that we might become His devoted and loving bride [Eph.5:27]. To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, both now, and unto all generations. Amen.

Test all things; hold fast what is good
I Thess.5:21

They received the Word with all eagerness,
And searched the Scriptures daily
To find out whether these things were so
Acts 17:11

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1

In the Fullness of Time

“In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law” -Gal.4:4. It was the right time for Christ to come and die for the ungodly [Rom.5:6]. Then He, the Desire of all nations, came to fill His house with glory [Hag.2:7].

All great movements in the soul of a man or in the history of the world need proper preparation. God is never in a hurry and does all things well without regret. And this is how He prepared the world for the coming of His Son.

The Roman Preparation

Under the mighty leadership of Caesar Augustus just 27 years before Christ, the Roman Empire asserted its world rule. Three major changes took place that prepared the world for the spread of the gospel of Christ.

[1] Men were united under a system of law as citizens of one kingdom. Tribal fighting, revolt, and independent governing were not tolerated, and men were expected to submit to a law that was not their own, but was imposed on them by their conquering king.

Such was to be the coming of the kingdom of heaven. Christ would unite all of His own from various tribes and peoples under His kingship according to the law of His Word. That Lordship established a new kingdom and culture for all whose “citizenship is in heaven” -Phil.3:20.

[2] The *Pax Romana* [Roman Peace] was enforced by the military throughout the Roman world making travel safe from armed robbers once again. Since their excellent road system radiated out from Rome to every strategic center of the empire, movement throughout was made without difficulty.

[3] As the Romans conquered different lands, it was viewed by the people as a conquering of their gods as well. They believed that the Roman gods must be stronger than their own. But when they learned about the Roman gods, they knew that they were no better. This disillusionment led many to look for a true God to replace their own weak and useless ones.

Stop and Think: How does tribalism and lawlessness hinder the preaching of the gospel? How can even war lead a people to reconsider whether their gods are true or powerful?

The Contribution of the Greeks

The Greeks, who were the world rulers before being defeated by Rome, developed and spread a universal trade language known as *Koine* [common] Greek. This was the language in use in New Testament [NT] times.

It was also the language into which the Old Testament [OT] translation known as the *LXX* or Septuagint was made [*LXX* “Seventy,” since it was claimed that seventy scholars produced it in seventy days]. This translation made in the 200's BC was the Bible version used by the believers at the time of Christ and in the years following. The NT was written in this same *Koine* Greek and was the language that the gospel was preached in by the Apostles on their missionary journeys.

Stop and Think: How can the Bible being available in a common tribal or trade language be useful in preaching God's truth?

Israel's Condition

Many things had changed in the nation of Israel between the time of Malachi [writing in 400 BC] and the coming of Christ. And these are the conditions that Jesus met when He came.

Israel: Synagogues

Synagogues [a gathering together/assembly] came into being probably after Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Israelites who were in the foreign land of Babylon as captives for seventy years met together in a synagogue wherever ten families could gather.

Even after returning to the land of Israel and the Temple was rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews continued to meet in their local synagogues throughout the land. In these meetings, rabbis [teachers/masters] translated and explained the Hebrew OT into the local language and the people joined in prayer together. Each year the entire OT was read and taught in each synagogue and any male was free to teach, though prominence was given to the rabbi or scribe among them.

Differing schools of thought arose around prominent rabbis who gained a following. Pupils studied the commentaries of their rabbi rather than the text of the OT itself. Over time the “correct” interpretation of the rabbi came to have as much authority as the text of the OT itself in the minds of their followers.

Eventually the scribes, who faithfully copied the text of the OT onto hand-written manuscripts, feared to proclaim any understanding of Scripture unless it was backed by the “authority” of some master. But this was an “authority” of a man-made office from which doctrine that was nothing more than human opinion was taught.

This is how the “tradition of the elders” spoken of in the NT developed. It is also why Jesus' teaching amazed men, for His authority and message was drawn from the eternal spring of wisdom itself.

The thoughts of man became elevated to the same level as the Scriptures themselves and the ceremonial took on the same significance as the moral and spiritual. Whenever this occurs, the text of the Word is soon neglected and forgotten while true godliness declines and disappears.

Stop and think: What are the dangers of basing your faith on the explanations of men rather than knowledge of the text of the Word of God itself?

Israel: Pharisees

In the years preceding Christ's coming, many Jews were being influenced by Greek culture to compromise their faith and practices. As a result of this, the Pharisees [separated ones] arose in order to instruct the people to follow the law of God more strictly. But their teachings from the Scriptures too soon turned to little more than the burden of traditions that “neither our forefathers nor we have been able to bear” -Acts 15:10.

Jesus condemned these man-made rules as worthless to make men acceptable to God [Mk.7:5-13]. They thought that obeying their commands would prevent men from disobeying God.

For example, some Pharisees taught that it was illegal to spit on the ground on the Sabbath. They explained that the spit would “plow” the dust and thus the man would be “working” on the Sabbath.

Thus the people were taught oral traditions from these rabbis as being more important than the Law itself. Pharisees insisted that their oral tradition was given by God at the time of the giving of the written Law on Mt. Sinai.

This, they claimed, explained and “corrected” anything that the Scriptures did not seem to agree with. And so it was that man-made opinions were exalted above the Word of God and chaff was fed to multitudes as if it were the bread of God.

Stop and think: How can oral tradition actually cancel the Word of God? Why is its teaching called leaven? [Mt.15:11,12].

Israel: Sadducees

A second major group arose during the years before Christ who were willing to accept many aspects of Greek culture. They rejected the Pharisees’ strictness based on oral tradition in preference for the wealth and power that befriending politicians brought them.

These Sadducees [the righteous ones] were the rulers of the Temple ceremonies and even bought and sold the office of the High Priest among themselves. Since they did not believe in the resurrection, angels, or spirits [Acts 23:8], they imagined that worldly prosperity was an indication of God’s favor upon them.

Love of money, political and social influence, joined with a despising of the poor and unfortunate were what characterized their miserable and heartless lives.

Though they could not escape close association due to the common Temple they frequented, Pharisees and Sadducees actually hated each other: the Pharisees because they viewed the Sadducees as abandoning true religion, and the Sadducees because of the arrogance of their imagined social and religious superiority since they were the wealthy elite and the High Priesthood was under their control [see Acts 23:1-10].

The Council or Sanhedrin [a seating together] was made up of seventy-one prominent members of the High Priest’s family, Jewish elders, and scribes. It served as a Jewish supreme court of sorts in judging cases involving interpretation and violation of the Law.

Both Sadducees and Pharisees were members of the Council. It was this Council that ordered the crucifixion of Christ, the stoning of Stephen, and attempted to kill Paul [Acts 23:1-10].

Stop and think: What happens when the moral and spiritual aspects of the kingdom of God are replaced by the material and political?

Israel: Essenes

Some Israelites did not accept either the traditions of the Pharisees or the corrupted influence of the Sadducees in the Temple. The Essenes believed themselves to be the true Israel and withdrew from Jerusalem by forming their own separate communities. There they lived apart from fellow Israelites in a disciplined and simple manner.

Each member of the Essene community was expected to be devout and regular in his study of the Scriptures and other religious books. Manual labor was expected of all in order to make the community self-supporting. They shared things in common and submitted to strict discipline enforced by an overseer.

Sabbath keeping was taken to an extreme, God-ordained sacrifices and feasts were rejected, and marriage was either discouraged or forbidden. Many thought that matter and the physical body were evil. They believed that physical isolation from corrupted conditions would make them holy before God.

Stop and think: Why can isolating oneself from corrupted situations never purify either you or those whom you have separated from?

Israel: Zealots

Roman rule was not popular with most Jews. The Roman yoke was a reproach and a bondage to the Israelite. The Pharisees viewed Roman oppression as a judgment of God for the sins of the nation that must be patiently borne until God was pleased to remove it. Many expected the promised Messiah [Christ/Anointed One] to free them from it.

Some were violently opposed to Rome and refused to pay taxes to Caesar and even led followers in revolt. These were the Zealots. They advocated taking up the sword against their enemies as did Israel of old. Various of their leaders perished in their rebellions as did Theudas and Judas [Acts 5:35-39].

Even one of Jesus' own disciples came from this background [Lk.6:15]. Eventually the Zealots succeeded in winning the majority of the people to their side. Their continual increasing defiance of Rome finally brought about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Stop and think: Why is using political force not part of the gospel of Christ?

Israel: Samaritans

During the days of Nehemiah around 430 BC, one of the grandsons of Eliashib the High Priest married the daughter of Sanballat, the enemy of the Jews. This wicked man, Sanballat, furiously opposed Nehemiah's rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem [Neh.4:1,7,8].

When Nehemiah learned that this unholy marriage had taken place defiling the priesthood, he drove Sanballat's son-in-law out of Jerusalem [Neh.13:28]. As he left he carried with him a copy of the law of Moses which later came to be known as the Samaritan Pentateuch [the five books].

They settled in the area between Jerusalem and Galilee, establishing a religion centered in Mt. Gerizim. They claimed that this was the place of blessing where God commanded His name to dwell, and not Jerusalem, according to their understanding of Deut.12:11; 11:29; 27:12,13.

This was why such hostility developed between the Jews and the Samaritans [Jn.4:9] since both claimed to have the true religion [Jn.4:20], even though Samaritans worshiped ignorantly without salvation [Jn.4:22].

Stop and think: How does unholy compromise lead to false religion? If the root is corrupt, what of the fruit?

Israel: Apocalyptic Literature

Many writings before the birth of Jesus claimed to be prophetic of the coming kingdom of the Messiah. In these apocalyptic [revelation] works the promised kingdom was represented as an earthly paradise for the Jews with Jerusalem as its capital.

These ideas filled the minds of the multitudes and probably accounted for Jesus' popular reception as He rode into Jerusalem as their King [Mk.11:9,10]. It explains their enthusiasm to take and make Him King by force, because He had prospered them with gain without their labor when the loaves and fish were multiplied [Jn.6:14,15].

Stop and think: How can popular ideas about Jesus keep someone from truly knowing Him as He is?

The Life Was Manifested

Christ the Pattern

Christ Jesus the Lord is the Pattern for His people. He came, delighting to do the Father's will. He emptied Himself of honor to take the form of a servant in order to deliver men from sin. This is the NT Pattern for the church.

Glory was revealed in His flesh [Jn.1:14]. Men heard, beheld, and handled that manifested life [I Jn.1:1,2]. The excellence of God's character was manifest in His own body on earth. So it is now that His body, the church, is the visible expression of Christ, her Head.

The church is the city set on a hill, the light of the world [Mt.5:14], like unto Christ, the true Light of men [Jn.1:9; 8:12]. "As He is, so are we in this world" -I Jn.4:17: in truth, holiness, and love.

Christ Jesus is the Pattern for the church in character, ministry, and method. Conformity to Him is the standard. His mind is to dwell in His own and govern their every thought and action in all humility, considering others as more important than self [Phil.2:3-5]. In this, as in all things, the Lord Jesus is our example that we "should do as I did to you" -Jn.13:15.

Jesus was utterly unlike the religion that He came to dwell among, both in character and in approach to teaching, training, and influencing men. Because He was greater in love, humility, and service, He called those whom lesser men cast away: fishermen, lepers, children, women, uneducated, and the poor.

Unlike the Pharisees, He was not rigid in self-devised regulations which they imposed upon multitudes that they despised. He was no Sadducee, compromising the Word by courting the favor of the political and influential out of a heart filled with greed.

Though a King indeed, he used no force to promote religious ends as did the Zealots. The corruption of the Temple in Jerusalem did not impel Him to physically isolate Himself from sinful men like the Essenes thought they must. He was even known as the friend of tax-gatherers and sinners while maintaining spotless integrity among them.

Stop and think: Will following the Pattern of Christ Jesus lead us to conform to popular religious ideas and practices surrounding us?

Birth

Jesus came, obscure and humble, amid a religious routine of disinterested and even antagonistic scribes [Mt.2:4-6] who handled truth with no intent of following its light from heaven [Mt.2:2,9,10].

Yet into the darkness of this hollow religion the true Light shown, being witnessed by shepherds who gathered around the Lamb of God. There in Bethlehem [house of bread] the true Bread of heaven was laid in a crude feeding box to be partaken of by all who hungered and thirsted for righteousness [Lk.2:15-20].

Wise men from the East, men of the world as they were, nevertheless, were led by stages with light from above to finally bow in worship before the Christ of God [Mt.2:2,9-11]. It is God's way to lead from the imperfect to the perfect, from the vague to the clear without berating error or chastising the ignorant.

Rather, He sets forth truth to enlighten and clarify instead of merely pointing out errors without providing solutions. And so in the end, these strangers to Israel were shown to possess more wisdom than all of the scribes in Jerusalem combined.

Stop and think: How is Mt.13:12 illustrated both in the wise men from the East and in the scribes of Jerusalem?

World

Herod fitly shows the fury of the world's power as set against Christ [Mt.2:16]. The heart of man will tolerate no rival King; two cannot reign from the same throne. And so, from the days of Cain, the wicked have always determined to eliminate the righteous and to silence the troublesome conviction of conscience that they bring.

It is no wonder, then, that His followers would also suffer at the hands of the world. If the Lord of the house is blasphemed and cast out as Beelzebub ["lord of the house" of demons], how could the members receive anything less [Mt.10:25]? Christians "walk in the same manner as He walked" -I Jn.2:6 and therefore must suffer with Him whom they follow [Jn.15:18-23].

Yet this is a blessed condition indeed: persecuted, rejected, and scorned. Such occasions caused the Lord Jesus to rejoice greatly in the Holy Spirit [Mt.11:20,25; Lk.10:21]. And these times are our opportunity to also do the same [Mt.5:10-12].

Stop and think: Why is it normal for a Christian to suffer, and what blessing is associated with it? [I Pet.2:20; 4:14-16; Phil.1:28-30].

Genealogy

His incarnation [taking on of a body] exposes once and for all the misguided idea that matter is evil and spirit is good. His very birth shows the error and folly of imagining that severe treatment of the body or subjecting it by external rules could ever be a means of spirituality [Col.2:20-23].

Christ's becoming flesh is carefully noted in Matthew and Luke's genealogies [Mt.1; Lk.3]. These link Christ to the entire history of humanity as well as to that of the nation of Israel.

Matthew's connects Christ to all that is of God from the past though showing a new element of life from above through a virgin birth. Though associated in background and history with the nation of Israel as their rightful King, He was independent from them as His source of life was from above [Mt.1:20,23].

He came as the fulfiller of the Law and Prophets, not as the perpetuator of them [Mt.5:17]. He was the messenger of a new law and a new covenant, launched from the platform of the old but soaring aloft into a new realm while leaving the old behind. His repeated words, "You have heard...but I say to you..." [Mt.5:21,22,27,28,31-34,38,39, 33,44] usher in a new standard of life, holiness, and love.

Luke shows Christ as true man and partaker of the human condition, traceable back to the first man, Adam. He comes as Head of a new race, a new humanity, as the second Man and last Adam [I Cor.15:45-49]. Christ sympathetically identifies with all men and their common lot in life though He is separate from the human corruption which is our natural state due to sin.

Genealogies inform us that a man's condition can be traced to a root cause. They show that no man lives unto himself, that our lives influence others for good or ill. And most significantly, they show that it is only grace that can interrupt and transform the natural tendencies inherited from forefathers.

Stop and think: How is it possible for a man to be free from the prejudices and defilement of one's ancestors? [I Pet.1:18,19; Col.1:13,14].

Preparation

Silent years passed in Nazareth of which the Lord in His Word has revealed nothing. We are cautioned thereby not to intrude by imagination into what God has kept concealed [Deut.29:29]. The false "gospels" of Christ's infancy "miracles" incorporated into the *Quran* testify to the vanity of speculation where heaven is silent.

What is recorded, however, is most instructive. It reveals that the Lord Jesus passed through a perfectly natural development process into maturity of wisdom and stature [Lk.2:52]. The means at His disposal to this end were not extraordinary, but were the common portion of all men.

In an obscure village where the totality of the individual life is seen and neighbors known thoroughly, is where He spent these quiet years. The rumbling bustle of the city where more are

seen and fewer known was not the arena for His upbringing. It was in the sanctity of the commonplace that the virtue of His life blossomed into full fruitfulness.

By prolonged quiet reflection through the means available to all is how His character thrived: in the care of godly parents, meditation upon the wonders of the natural creation, habitual gathering with the people of God, secret communion with the Father, and by pondering the depths of the Scriptures.

This became the Pattern for Christianity: to flourish in the commonplace, in the home in contrast to the public concourse. Thus the home was converted into a “church” and parents into “ministers” by the example of our Lord during His days in Nazareth.

Here quiet development of character is cultivated. Consistency of life, regular recourse to secret devotion, and practical usefulness is ingrained.

Out of His thirty-three years of earthly life, only three were engaged in ministry. The remaining 91% were passed in quiet development of character and obtaining a comprehensive grasp of eternal purposes into which the unique contribution of His life would fit.

Though at age twelve He was fully conscious that He “must be about My Father’s business” [Lk.2:49], that business for the next eighteen years was that of simple submission in the carpenter’s shop [Mk.6:3]. In such humble scenes one learns the discipline of the often repeated mundane tasks that fit the soul for future larger responsibilities [Lk.16:10].

Faithfulness is cultivated, not in dramatic public exploits, but in the daily sweeping of planer shavings. Through such menial chores one learns the discipline of self-restraint even though one’s thoughts and ambitions are grand, lofty, and godly.

Preparation precedes service. God must first make the man before He can send him. Character is the bedrock of usefulness in the design of heaven. A bench poorly crafted disqualifies a man to fashion eternal souls.

Over the years in the synagogue of Nazareth, Christ habitually devoted Himself to the Scriptures and gathering with the people of God even though the majority had not the mind of God [Lk.4:16]. In this He has shown us to endure patiently with the ignorant and misguided though we may be advanced spiritually beyond those we associate with.

Stop and think: How do the length of years and type of preparation that the Son of God experienced explain why there are few laborers in the Lord’s harvest? [Mt.9:37,38; Prov.25:19; 26:6].

Baptism

All OT priests before entering their service must wash at the laver and then be anointed with oil as consecration for the solemn task before them [Ex.29:4-7]. So it was at the beginning of Christ’s ministry that our great High Priest was dipped in the waters of Jordan followed by the Spirit then coming upon Him [Mt.3:13-17].

His great task as both priest and sacrifice depended upon His identification with defiled humanity. He came to take upon Himself the sins of the world and to carry them away in His own sinless body on the cross [I Pet.2:21-24].

At the Jordan He publicly became as a sinner in the eyes of all who lined the stream bank and witnessed His baptism. John protested, knowing that He had nothing to repent of. But Christ did not hide His face from such humiliation and reproach [Isa.50:6].

That process which would fulfill all righteousness could not be accomplished if Jesus did not become “a reproach of men and despised by the people” [Ps.22:6]. Everlasting righteousness could never have been accomplished had Christ not been “numbered with the transgressors” [Isa.53:12].

And thus He submitted to baptism “to fulfill all righteousness” [Mt.3:15] and thereby set His face as a flint on the course of shame and reproach that the remaining years of His life would righteously fulfill.

Stop and think: What happens to fulfilling all righteousness when men do not wish to be identified with people who might bring shame to their reputation? [Gal.2:11-14].

Temptation

Christ was assaulted with the fiercest storm of temptation ever encountered by a man. He repelled every attack from the same storehouse of ammunition; “It is written” -Mt.4:4,7,10 effectively nullified every evil suggestion hurled against Him.

Satan unsuccessfully employed every wicked scheme in his arsenal against our Lord. His three mightiest weapons were launched against the Lord of glory to no avail. At the battle’s end, Jesus’ testimony was that He was “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” -Heb.4:15.

“The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” -I Jn.2:16 had no effect upon Him who steadfastly fought against them with the Spirit’s mighty two-edged sword [Heb.4:12; Eph.6:17]. See how He met each one unshaken and victorious.

Turning stones into bread was a temptation to rely upon one’s own wisdom and ability to provide for self without reference to the God of heaven. This, Christ refused utterly because He lived, not by His own words, but “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” -Mt.4:4. This was victory over the appeal to the lust of the flesh.

He was assailed next with the presumptuous arrogance that would make God His own servant rather than Him, the servant of God. It was a test whether He would distort the Scriptures to His own end in order to “compel” God to respond to His will instead of Him humbly submitting to the will of the Father. “You shall not tempt the Lord your God” -Mt.4:7 silenced this wicked suggestion to indulge the pride of life.

Finally, the lust of the eyes was presented before Him in all of its glory; kingdoms, wealth, and universal dominion were to be His if He would but deviate from His appointed course. It was a temptation to visualize the end and possess it without regard for the means by which it was gained [Rom.3:8].

This was a devilish allurement to begin at the end rather than the beginning: to embrace the outward in its developed form though obtaining it by compromise under the delusion of filling it with spiritual reality afterwards.

See the devil flee before the Spirit’s sword: “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’” -Mt.4:10. May we go and also resist the enemy in like manner.

Stop and think: There are no other temptations facing us other than three [I Jn.2:15-17]. What is the perfect Pattern for resisting evil?

Teaching

Christ in the midst of Judaism is the Pattern of the true church in the midst of a professedly Christian religion. Though Jews considered themselves to be the true people of God, heirs of the Covenants, and those who habitually kept holy days, heard the Word, and offered sacrifices, they did not love, obey, or know God [Jn.5:42,45-47; 8:19].

Outwardly they were circumcised but inwardly the flesh had never been cut out of their hearts [Rom.2:28,29]. Among these Christ moved uncompromisingly and undefiled while graciously speaking the truth in love [Eph.4:15] and alternatively, thundering with reproof [Mt.23].

It was not from the scribes that He learned the words of life or the ways of righteousness. He owed nothing to human wisdom, its schools or literature: religious or otherwise. He drank from the eternal fount of God Himself through the conduit of His Word.

This was the cause of the multitudes’ amazement. Where did He get these things? [Mk.6:2]. Never did a man teach like Him [Jn.7:46], teaching with “authority, and not as their scribes” -Mt.7:29. They wondered because “He speaks boldly” -Jn.7:26 and they “marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” -Lk.4:22.

Such was His doctrine, derived with authority from the throne of God itself, fearlessly proclaimed with all boldness [Mk.11:15-18], and mingled with the grace that had been poured upon His lips [Ps.45:2].

The common language of the people was used by Him. Rarely did He speak words of more than two syllables. His appeal was to the heart, not to the intellect. His longest single

uninterrupted message was but 18 minutes. His method rather employed an exchange of ideas through participatory dialogue: His truth illuminating error and delusion.

Analogy was always present in His message. Vivid, sometimes startling imagery, borrowed or even wrested from the commonplace of life, was transported by Him into the realm of timeless spiritual truth.

Masterfully a single point was deeply brooded over so that its full spectrum was gathered into a memorable condensed expression. Christ's teaching compressed the greatest volume of truth into the smallest capsule of conveyance: capable of being memorized in a moment, but taking a lifetime to unravel.

Paul's expositions were fluent and closely reasoned like carefully forged links in a chain attached to a weighty logical conclusion as its anchor. Those of Christ were filled with the proverbial, pictorial, and expressed as parables without systematizing doctrine. His design was to conceal truth from the casual, disinterested, and carnal [Mt.13:10-15], while gladly expounding their depths to those who desired to know and follow [Mk.4:10,11].

His audience was as varied as the landscape of humanity: from swelling multitudes to single individuals, learned doctors to cherished children, rich princes to decrepit beggars, immoral women to indignant synagogue rulers, amongst eager disciples or hostile opponents, in Temple courts or fishing boats, by blazing well-side or evening's cool: He preached the Word, in season and out of season for our everlasting enlightenment.

Stop and think: Neither human wisdom, tradition, nor His own opinion was the source of Christ's teaching. Where must we obtain our doctrine and how should it be spoken? [Jn.7:15-17; 2Tim.3:15-17; I Pet.4:10,11; Jer.23:18,22; Eph.4:15].

Miracles

Christ went about doing good [Acts 10:38]. Compassion moved Him to His works of mercy [Mt.14:14]. Yet not everyone who received the miraculous was spiritually benefitted thereby [Mt.11:20; Jn.12:37]. And should the spirit of a man remain untouched though his body has been relieved, the last state has become worse than the first.

By definition, a miracle is an abnormal event brought about by supernatural power. Miracles are not to be expected as a regular normal course of life. They are periodic and unusual, not customary and routine. Otherwise, they would cease to be miraculous.

Few men in the pages of Scripture performed miracles. There have only been three main times in all of biblical history that it was so.

Moses and Joshua were the first. Centuries later Elijah and Elisha were the next, followed some eight-hundred and fifty years afterwards by Christ and the Apostles. The point is that miracles were never designed to be normative for the believer: neither the receiving nor performing of them.

Jesus' miracles served three main purposes: [1] They lovingly relieved the temporal miseries of sin that afflict men, [2] thereby Divine proof was offered that God was in Christ in all of His fullness, and [3] they provided parables of a deeper and lasting salvation, the healing of the soul.

These last two aspects are why John refers to Christ's miracles as "signs." The literal events point to something far more significant and enduring than the immediate blessing received. Physical diseases removed portray pictorially the greater work of restoration of the inner man for all eternity.

Bread that is multiplied reveals the true Bread from heaven who gives everlasting life to the world [Jn.6]. Blindness healed leads to the opening of the eyes of the heart to see Christ for who He truly is, unless one refuses the entrance of that Light which alone can enable one to see [Jn.9; Mt.15:14].

Leprosy pictures the inner working of deadly corruption that manifests itself through outbreaks of the flesh. Lameness shows the inability of man to walk in God's ways: deafness, the hardened heart that will not listen to God's Word: the withered hand, the powerlessness to perform any work that is good.

Healing of our souls is what we need [Ps.41:4]. Indeed, from the sole of our foot to the crown of our heads, we are sick in rebellion [Isa.1:5,6]. Only the touch of Christ, the Great Physician, can cure us of such unrighteous illnesses of the heart [Mk.2:17].

Stop and think: Compare one whose body was healed but not his soul, with one who endures bodily affliction in this life but whose soul is delivered from sin. Now, define blessing and the focus of ministry.

Prayer

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His godly fear [Heb.5:7].

Prayer, for Christ, was the habitual means of regular communion as well as the recourse of special petition at crucial junctures. He would often slip away [Lk.5:16] and pray to His Father in secret [Lk.9:18].

There, apart from the rumble of toiling towns and the silly emptiness of its endless round of amusements, He sought privacy both in time and place. In the quietness of early morning [Mk.1:35] or in the stillness of the night [Lk.6:12], in the freshness of mountain heights [Mt.14:23] or in the sanctity of the inner room [Mt.6:5,6], His voice was heard on high.

When pressed by the external demands of the thronging multitudes' incessant needs, He then withdrew for prayer [Lk.5:15,16]. For Him it was a reason to pray, not an excuse to neglect it. Or when faced with major decisions of weighty consequence, prolonged prayer always preceded them [Lk.6:12,13].

Yet not all praying is meant to be in private. He prayed in the company of men also [Mk.14:22,23], giving thanks to the Father for all good things [Jn.6:11], and encouraged His followers to do likewise [Mt.18:19]. Corporate earnest united prayer stimulates the spirit like a meaningful conversation does the mind.

It was His delight to pray with the children [Mt.19:13-15] and equally His solemn obligation to intercede for erring Apostles [Lk.22:32]. His consistent devotion to prayer drew out the desire of disciples to be like their Master in this most spiritual grace [Lk.11:1] and, as well, rebuked their failure in the same [Mt.26:40].

While praying at His baptism, heaven was opened and the Spirit of God descended as a dove upon Him [Lk.3:21,22]. Revelation of His glory shone forth on the mountain as He was praying [Lk.9:28,29].

Agonizing cries split the night air from His prostrate form in Gethsemane's gloom [Lk.22:44]. While He was strengthened from heaven during His utter abandonment of self-will [Lk.22:41-43], disciples received no power to resist temptation due to their carnal indulgence when they ought to have prayed [Lk.22:46]. And when the hour and power of darkness came upon them, they who boasted self-confidently of their devotion unto death, all left Him and fled [Lk.22:53; Mt.26:56].

No thoughts of self can be discovered in any of His prayers. Ever and always the glory of His Father and the welfare of His brethren filled His petitions, even just some few hours before the cross [Jn.17].

Jesus died praying: praying for enemies' forgiveness [Lk.23:34] and humbly expressing with His last breath what could well be the hallmark of His life, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" -Lk.23:46.

Stop and think: If the Lord of glory thus resorted to and needed prayer, being what He was, how much more us, being what we are?

Scriptures

One does not need to read far in the Gospels to see that Christ, the living Word, had treasured the written Word of God richly within Himself. So thoroughly familiar was He with the Scriptures that on the strength of a single text the devil fled [Mt.4:10,11], mouths of contradicting

wise men were stopped [Mt.22:41-46], and centuries of foolish human tradition was confounded [Mt.12:2-7].

So accurately did He know God's Word that His explanation of the tense of one verb in one quotation exposed the error and scattered the doctrine of His strongest religious opponents [Mt.22:31,32]. Down to the smallest letter of the alphabet and the tiniest stroke of the pen is how holy and unchanging the entire Law and Prophets were to Him [Mt.5:17,18].

He knew the hidden and less traveled paths through the Word and was able to pluck unusual phrases from obscure places to address the needs of the moment [Jn.10:33-36]. Not only was the text precisely in His mind, its truest meaning and intention dwelt in His heart in fullest measure [Mt.5:27,28].

Wherever one could conceivably turn in the pages of the Bible, He was no stranger there but rather the Master of it. Whether the histories of David and the kings [Mt.12:3,4,42], that of the prophets [Lk.4:25-27], or of Noah, Abraham, and the patriarchs [Mt.24:37; Jn.8:39,40; 1:51], the details of all were His familiar delight.

Israel's wanderings in the wilderness were fertile fields for His preaching and doctrine [Jn.3:14]. He could, as well, visit Hosea [Mt.9:13], borrow from Micah [Mt.10:35,36], announce Zechariah [Mt.26:31], or bring forth Malachi [Mt.11:10]. Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Isaiah, like intimate friends, were frequented and invited forth more often than any others during His discourses.

The whole of God's revelation was possessed comprehensively in addition to its countless particulars. Sweeping themes of deepest insight were His studied portion. Words of grace lay ready upon His tongue having been received morning by morning through His awakened ear [Isa.50:4].

At once He could tell with authority which were the greatest commandments and declare that the entire Scriptures were summarized thereby [Mt.22:36-40]. Capably He surveyed the whole of the revelation of God from beginning to end while pointing out its spiritual consequence [Mt.23:34,35]. With burning conviction from Genesis to Malachi, He explained everything in all of the Old Testament pertaining to Himself [Lk.24:25-27].

The Scriptures testify of Christ [Jn.5:39], and throughout all of His life He testified of them, both by word and by deed.

Stop and think: If the Lord of glory thus resorted to and needed the Scriptures, being what He was, how much more us, being what we are? By what means are we to become like Him in His knowledge of and dependence upon the Word of God? [Prov.2:1-12; 2 Tim.2:15; Ps.119].

Holy Spirit

Dependence upon self never characterized the Lord Jesus. Though being "God manifest in the flesh" -I Tim.3:16, He did not rely upon His own wisdom or ability. From His birth to His resurrection, He was dependent upon the Holy Spirit [Lk.1:35; Rom.1:4].

In the spotless Lamb of God, the Spirit of God found One that He could rest upon and abide with [Jn.1:33] without ever being grieved. During the days of Christ's flesh He was full of, led by, and walked in the power of the Spirit [Lk.4:1; Mt.4:1; Lk.4:14].

All of His preaching of the gospel [Lk.4:17,18] and teaching of the doctrine of God [Jn.3:34] was done under the influence and revelation of the Holy Spirit. Miracles performed by the Son of God were the expression of that power that descended upon Him at His baptism [Lk.5:17; Mt.12:28].

Strength for obedience, even to the death of the cross, was received by the Lord Jesus from this same eternal Spirit [Heb.9:14]. And it is this very Holy Spirit that our Lord Jesus has sent as an everlasting Comforter to abide with all who love Him in truth [Jn.14:16,17].

Stop and think: How does Jesus' life in the Holy Spirit relate to the history of the wisdom, schemes, and programs of the church? [Jn.6:63].

Disciples

Disciples are yoked to Christ as learners who walk with Him in meekness and lowliness [Mt.11:29]. By definition, a disciple is a learner. The goal of such association is conformity to the Master [Lk.6:40] through denial and even hatred of self [Lk.9:23; 14:26] by willingly suffering all for His name's sake [Lk.14:27].

Apprenticeship was ever Christ's method to instruct, train, and equip disciples. His practice was that His followers would learn spiritual principles by observation and participation.

His life and teaching both in public and private were observed by them and later explained apart from the multitudes [Mk.4:34]. They also participated in serving men by way of preaching, teaching, healing, and giving to the poor.

For them to be able to repeat mechanically memorized information gained in a classroom setting was never His purpose. Rather, on the shores of Galilee or along the highways and in the marketplace, His school required men to reason about spiritual issues for themselves.

By encountering life's situations with the Word of God and by the use of repeated questions, disciples' inner character was developed. The barrenness of a mere academic exercise of mind was not His aim and could never be thought of as training.

Jesus brought no gold from heaven to fund the work committed into their hands. As He trusted in His Father, so must His disciples.

He built no temples, established no ceremonial procedures, and founded no institutions: a maximizing of power with a minimum of machinery. None of these external things can ever maintain godliness, only men who have been transformed by the Son of God.

No human means, entertainment, or enticements were used to attract men to Himself. Christ alone is the single desire of a disciple, not the bait of gain or interests of any other kind.

Stop and think: We are commanded to make disciples [Mt.28:18-20]. Based on what we see in Jesus, what does this involve?

Apostles

Jesus Himself was The Apostle [Heb.3:1] and knew what was required to be one. The word "apostle" means "sent forth." It describes one who by character, understanding, and practice can represent the interests of the one who sent him.

Christ did nothing except what He saw and heard from His Father; therefore apostles must go forth with no novelty of message and representation. They are ambassadors, and an ambassador dare not speak or act beyond what he has been authorized to do.

As The Apostle, He only did what He had authority to do from His Father. No independent message and judgment is fitting in an apostle.

"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" -Jn.5:30.

"I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak" -Jn.12:49.

This is the apostolic process: Men are chosen to first be with Him, separated from the unbroken tradition of their customary life until transformed. They then could be sent forth back into that culture without being overtaken by it when conformity to Christ's character and message was consistent with His own [Mk.3:14].

This explains why laborers are yet few. The Father does not send just anyone into His vineyard.

In the extension of the kingdom of heaven, Wisdom dictated to perpetuate life by life, not by pen or sword: the number of trees in one pawpaw cannot be counted. Grace dictated that those chosen be from the mainstream of common humanity and not from the exceptional or elite, that no flesh may boast in His presence.

And thus it was that unlearned fishermen [Acts 4:13], a tax collector, a political zealot, and volatile sons of thunder became chosen vessels of worldwide blessing. It was a grassroots endeavor so that whatever noteworthy and commendable would be attributable to Christ and not to man.

Christ's prayer summarizes His apostolic work: "I have given to them the Words which You have given Me; and they have received them" -Jn.17:8. Two by two they were thus sent forth, vindicating the wisdom of a three stranded strength entwined together with His own [Eccl.4:9-12].

Stop and think: How can the difference be known between one who has been sent, from him who has merely gone? [Jer.23:21,22]. Why were they sent two by two?

Sinlessness

In self-forgetful humility, Christ is the perfect Pattern of sinlessness. We are not to think of His holiness as a detached and rigid correctness while isolated from men and the concourse of life in this world.

Jesus' perfection was rather seen in a pure expression of an uninterrupted love for God and man which never was provoked to act unbecomingly by seeking His own interests [I Cor.13:5,6].

All beatitudes found their full expression in Christ [Mt.5:1-12]. Emptied of His riches in glory, He dwelt below in the humility of poverty [2 Cor.8:9]. As the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief [Isa.53:3], His mourning was blessed.

Who can attain to His meekness, unstained by even one spot of pride? Have any hungered and thirsted for righteousness as He, unspoiled by self-seeking in the least? Bitterness and revenge found no place in His bosom full of mercy.

Purity of heart was His constant portion. He is our peace and peacemaker, the One who even joyously endured the despising and persecution of men [Heb.12:2].

Sinlessness was evident in every aspect of His life from His earliest days: in submission to parents [Lk.2:51] and in patient endurance of brothers' scorn [Jn.7:3-5]. During long years of tireless carpentry in Nazareth, not one annoyance boiled within.

When disappointed [Mt.26:40,41], insulted [Jn.8:46-49], or falsely accused [Mk.15:55-61], nothing clouded the clarity of His soul. Though unappreciated and dishonored [Lk.17:17], no revenge or self-pity could be detected within.

Even His treacherous betrayer was called, "Friend" [Mt.26:48-50]. No matter how He is examined, in any situation and in every aspect of character, sinless purity is discovered.

Stop and think: How do pride, anger, and vengeance spoil purity?

Controversy

Willingness to engage in controversy stems from the joyful and certain sense of possessing the truth while being convinced of its value for all men. This conviction is what makes error hateful and inspires the determination to sweep it away in truth's blessed light.

But in the midst of controversy, we must distinguish between the propagators of heresy and those who are ignorant and misguided that are influenced by error [Heb.5:2]. The former we may well rebuke to silence their evil folly [Tit.1:9-13]. The latter must be dealt with gently if perchance God would open their hearts to repent and come to the knowledge of the truth [2 Tim.2:23-26].

As the King of Truth [Jn.18:37], Christ was a controversialist who had to assail nearly the entire religious system of His day. Yet though He contended earnestly for the truth, Jesus possessed fervency of spirit while tempered with self-restraint, even in the midst of murderous antagonists.

Hypocritical Pharisees intent upon His destruction were exposed and rebuked for their wickedness [Mt.22:15-22]. Yet one from among them [Mt.22:34-36], who was not of their spirit of malice, asked a reasonable question and was answered with truth and grace [Mk.12:28-34].

Jesus then turned back to His adversaries who willfully neither understood the Scriptures nor the power of God, and silenced their nonsense with truth that could not be refuted [Mk.12:35-40].

Stop and think: How does zeal for truth blend with grace in the Lord Jesus as an illustration of Prov.26:4,5?

Hated

Simply stated, Jesus was hated by the world because He loved what men hated and hated what men loved. "But of the Son He says...You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness" -Heb.1:8,9.

"This is the condemnation, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed" -Jn.3:19,20.

His testifying to the world that its deeds were evil made Him the object of their scorn and anger [Jn.7:7]. He viewed their man-made traditions as one of the greatest evils of His day while refusing to practice any of them in the least. This provoked the world's fury to the fullest.

Particularly, His disregard of their arrogant lording their views of the Sabbath over men provoked their rage. That very day of rest, joy, and blessing from God had been turned by them into a curse and grievous burden that no man could bear.

Christ purposefully performed the merciful and beneficial works of His Father on this day. By doing so, He consciously rebuked the wicked maliciousness that exalts religious observance above relieving human misery.

Yet so entrenched were they in their delusion, that the miraculous works themselves became no testimony to them of His person and mission. Rather, since He set aside their invented religious rules, it merely proved to them that His mission was devilish and not Divine in their distorted delusion.

Underlying all their malice was the fear of losing their following [Jn.12:19; Mk.11:18], and ultimately, their favor with Rome [Jn.11:47] along with the earthly rewards that would bring.

Stop and think: What is gained and what is lost through compromise?

Kingdom

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" [Mt.3:2; 4:17]. This is a call for slaves to submit to sovereign rule under a new King. In it there is a new means of access to God with a different kind of righteousness, beyond that of scribes and Pharisees [Mt.5:20].

Old wine, to its last dissatisfying drop, has finished. New wine along with its new wineskin has come [Lk.5:37-39]. It is a kingdom of Spirit and truth rather than one governed by externals and tradition [Jn.4:20-24]: coming not with signs, but one that is within you [Lk.17:20,21].

In this spiritual and internal kingdom of character [Rom.14:17], earthly and outward qualifications of rank and regiment have no recognition and do not reign. Here, none can make Him King by force and demand loaves from His hand ever after, for this is not what the kingdom of heaven is [Jn.6:14,15,26,27]. Those attempting to, stumble over their own bellies and go their way without bread or Christ either one.

The kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor and persecuted [Lk.6:20; Mt.5:10], not to the aggressive and triumphant, the proud Pharisee, luxurious Sadducee, or schooled scribe [I Cor.1:26-29]. Entrance is obtained by all who are born again [Jn.3:3,5] who thereby gain victory to overcome the world [I Jn.5:4,5], not by might or sword, but by being slaves to the truth of which Christ is the King [Jn.18:36,37].

Stop and think: What is the single concern of a slave? Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world [Jn.18:36]. Describe the place that politics, tribal preference, and social status have in His kingdom.

Leadership

Christ's moral and spiritual superiority qualified Him to lead by truth and example and not like the majority of men who use dominating force in the absence of both. The rulers of the world exercise authority and lord it over those whom they view as under and less than themselves [Lk.22:25,26]. But not Christ.

Such hierarchy is not to be found among leaders in His church. There the greatest are servants, the first the last, and leaders are as the youngest, performing lowly unwanted tasks. True leadership in the church is patterned after the Son of Man who "did not come to be served, but to serve" -Mt.20:28.

It is the Life that is the Light of men [Jn.1:4] and the beholding and handling of it that leads to fellowship [I Jn.1:1-3].

Dictating from a distance is not the Pattern of Christ. Precept lacks power unless it is incarnate.

Only as the truth is lived will weight be lent to words [Prov.26:7; 29:19]. Christ has not only told us the way [Jn.12:49,50], but He has shown it to us as well [Lk.22:27; Jn.13:12-15; 14:6].

Nothing in true godliness or leadership is produced by force, compulsion, or external codes. Christ's object and method was to persuade and win the hearts of men, not to subjugate them or merely modify outward behavior.

His manner that we must follow is that of a compelling example of love and holiness merged with the persuasive power of truth. Lord of all that He is, He has provided a servant's Pattern for us to imitate, not that of lordship. See **Appendix 1 NT Leadership**.

Stop and think: How does the rule of a man over one's soul prevent someone from following Christ? What is the true Pattern of leadership in the church of the Lord Jesus?

Love

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them" -Lk.6:32. Being perfect as the Father in heaven, is defined in terms of one's love [Mt.5:43-48]. And in this, our Lord Jesus excelled all men.

None were excluded from the broad self-sacrificing benefit of His loving heart. Neither a rich ruler nor miserable beggars were refused. Whether the most notable among teachers or be they ignorant multitudes, all were loved.

Children were embraced and violent persecutors prayed for. Repulsive lepers were kindly touched and weeping harlots washed His feet with their tears of sorrowful shame.

No distinctions of social status, nationality, age, gender, disease, occupation, education, religion, morality, tribe, or wealth determined His love. He loved because He was full of God, and God is love.

Love moved Him to pity and relieve the world's misery. Love compelled Him to speak the truth to expose the secrets of hearts [Mk.10:21]. And love for His Father led Him to lay down His life in obedience to His every command [Jn.14:31].

Stop and think: Without love we are nothing [I Cor.13:2,3] and our religion stinks. Define love by considering the life of Christ.

Cross

"And what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But for this purpose I came to this hour" -Jn.12:27. The cross was the grand climax of Christ's coming to this world [I Tim.1:15].

It was because the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins that a body was prepared for Him [Heb.10:4,5]: a body in which iniquity would be taken away according to the will of God [Heb.10:6-10].

He was crucified through weakness [2 Cor.13:4]; there is no other avenue for the power of God to be revealed [2 Cor.12:9,10].

The cross, a seeming triumph of wickedness over all that is righteous and good, was actually the ultimate victory over it. Shame and reproach borne righteously leads to glory and honor unendingly.

This cross was described by Him as a baptism which would plunge Him into darkened depths of sorrow and judgment [Lk.12:50]. It was His cup received from the Father's hand [Mk.10:38; 14:36]: a cup of deepest red [Ps.75:8], full of horror and desolation [Ezek.23:33], fire, brimstone, and burning wind [Ps.11:6].

From it He would drink down the wrath of heaven to its last bitter drop. Thereafter, the cup we share became the cup of blessing [I Cor.10:16].

Yet when He speaks of His cross, that of our own is not far behind [Mt.16:21,24]. A grain of wheat that falls to the ground must surely die in order to bear much fruit. This He spoke regarding His glorification at the cross and, as well, of his servants who must hate and lose their own lives in order keep them unto eternal life [Jn.12:23-25].

"It is finished" -Jn.19:30 announces a debt discharged: a payment made in full. Thus the cross of the Lord Jesus once and for all settled every obligation of guilty man, paid every offense, and satisfied the demands of the righteous Judge against sinful men.

Nothing can, or need be, added to it. The ransom is paid, souls have been purchased, and pardon obtained. Hallelujah for the cross.

Stop and think: Christ has by Himself fully paid the debt to release us from sin's penalty. What then remains for us in order to fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions? [Col.1:24 to 2:2; 2 Cor.4:7-12].

Resurrection

Christ is the Resurrection and the Life [Jn.11:25]. It was a moral requirement that He not be held in the power of death [Acts 2:24], since He voluntarily entered into it, being sinless [Jn.10:17,18]. The gospel writers all portray the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus as the spiritual pivot of human history.

Matthew emphasizes the glory, majesty, and authority of the risen Christ as triumphing over all wisdom and power of men until the end of the age. Mark presents the historical reality of repeated appearances that convince the reluctant and unbelieving.

Luke sets forth the spiritual necessity of Christ's death and resurrection as foretold in the words of the Law and Prophets. John's record shows the transforming power of the risen Lord in the midst of His own as seen in Mary, Thomas, and Peter.

All carnal objections to the resurrection of Christ are crushed beneath the historical, logical, and moral weight of the rolled-away stone. See **Appendix 2 Resurrection**. But it was not that disciples met an empty tomb that convinced them, it was that they met a living Lord.

Christianity itself underwent a resurrection of sorts after the Lord Jesus was raised. As Christ was raised in a transfigured body, so also were His followers.

Apostles who fled identification with Christ and who hid in fear and gloom were raised up unto power and fearless proclamation. They who were clothed with the carnal dress of worldly desires and hopes, cast those garments of death aside leaving them in the darkness of the tomb.

No more were they disputing who was the greatest among them [Mk.9:33,34]. Gone was self-confidence in their own commitment and carnal methods [Mt.26:35,51,52].

Forgotten was their desire for honor in the coming kingdom [Mk.10:35-37]. Instead, spiritual concerns for the glory of Christ and testifying to the souls of men consumed them though faced with persecution and death.

And thus, it was not their verbal testimony alone that provided the undeniable proof that Jesus was risen from the dead. It was that they themselves were also transformed and possessed that very life which can only be explained as coming from the living Christ.

Stop and think: How are Mt.10:26-33 and Jn.13:34,35 illustrated in the resurrection of the disciples?

3

So Send I You

As the Father has sent Me, so send I you
Jn.20:21

Whom Does God Send?

The work of the gospel is a work of transformation into the image of Christ. The Lord Jesus is the Pattern for both the one proclaiming and the one receiving the message of Life. Conformity to Christ, in character, doctrine, and in method, is required if one will be sent.

It is why laborers continue to be few though harvests are great [Mt.9:36-38]. God does not, no, rather, He cannot send forth workers into His harvest who neither are moved with the compassion of Christ for downtrodden sheep, nor capable of expounding the gospel of the kingdom.

Small boys are unfit to do a man's work. God is no fool. He does not entrust the eternal well-being of undying souls into the hands of those who are unlike His Son. The whole purpose of the sending forth of the gospel is that men "might gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ"-[2 Thess.2:14.

How then could God conceivably send forth someone with His approval who is unlike the Lord Jesus Christ in character, doctrine, and method of ministry? A laborer who is lacking in any of these three essentials, could not possibly be fit to serve the purposes of the God of heaven.

Many have gone forth, few have been sent. The necessity to pray to the Lord of the harvest for suitable laborers is still quite relevant. Ripened harvests lacking suitable laborers spoil and rot with all as loss.

The following will focus upon four who were sent by the God of heaven. The apostolic period served as a transition from the visible and physical presence of Christ with His people, to being wholly cast upon the invisible presence of Christ by the Spirit. Four major phases of that transition took place through Peter, Stephen, Paul and John.

Peter

Keys of the kingdom [Mt.16:19] were placed in his hands by the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter was the initiator, a pioneer, who accessed several new gateways into fresh spiritual realms for the saints of God to follow thereafter.

Pentecost found him unlocking the stiff rusty gate of tradition unto the flooding light of salvation and a New Covenant for the Jew. 3,000 gladly rushed through that opened passageway to eternal life, accessed by the Key of the Gospel in his hand [Acts 2:14-42].

Through him doors of mercy swung wide unto the afflicted and sorrowing. Miracles were first introduced through the church to a suffering world at the Temple's Beautiful Gate [Acts 3:1-10], and Peter held that Key of Compassion.

It was Peter who first passed through the door of persecution, imprisonment, and stripes for the sake of the Name [Acts 4 & 5]. The Key of No-compromise gained admittance to that prison cell of suffering in behalf of Christ.

Reluctantly, a key was withdrawn from an Israelite's robe to extend salvation's blessing beyond the borders of Judea unto the remotest part of the earth. Peter's narrow thinking required arresting by repeated visions before that key would be inserted to unlock blessing to the "unclean" Gentiles [Acts 10:9-16].

Yet he yielded to the message from heaven. Peter arose without misgivings and threw open the barred door to the heathen in Cornelius' house [Acts 11:1-18]. Thereafter, every tribe, people, tongue, and nation have thankfully streamed through that portal to the glory of God.

This final Key pulled from Peter's robe, was the golden one of Obedience: Peter's own obedience, which led to "the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake" -Rom.1:5.

Stephen

Stephen is the link between Jerusalem and the uttermost parts of the earth. In him the church moved from being merely another Jewish sect to becoming the universal body of Christ. Stephen's teaching and death was Peter's forerunner leading the way out of a narrow Judaism unto reaching every tribe and people and nation.

That same doctrine and self-sacrifice were the goads that pricked the conscience of Saul of Tarsus. Stephen's prayer was heard by the risen Christ [Acts 7:60] and eventually Saul became Paul, the Apostle to the nations. What Peter began in the house of Cornelius, Paul continued to the regions beyond, and Stephen was their common host to both.

How did he do this? It was by his deep insight into the truth of Jn.4:21-24 coupled with his death to self for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

In answering his accusers' charges [Acts 6:10-15], he showed that the God of glory is not restricted to any one people or "holy" place [Acts 7:1-8]. He demonstrated that though they possessed the Law, the Jews had never kept it from the moment it was given [Acts 7:38-41].

What had they ever done but reject and kill the servants of the God they claimed to serve? [Acts 7:51-53]. Finally, the very Christ of God was despised, rejected, and slain in their wicked malice.

His martyrdom was truly as a grain of wheat falling to the ground, dying, that brought forth much fruit. It was the seed sown of an eventual vast host of Greeks who then indeed would see Jesus at long last [Jn.12:20-26].

Stop and think: Stephen was the first Christian martyr [a witness who died for his faith]. Tertullian of Africa [c. 200 AD] said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." What did he mean by that and how can this be seen in Stephen? [Acts 8:4; 9:1-6; 11:19-26].

Paul

Jesus never traveled even up to 120 miles from His birthplace. Paul, in about ten years' time, had established the church in four major regions of the Empire where there had been no churches before: in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. Yet he too had not reached all peoples with the gospel.

Like that of the Lord Jesus, the scope of his work was foundational, not one from start to finish. The growth and development of it he entrusted into the hands of faithful men as did His Lord.

Whatever may have developed afterwards could not be attributed to a faulty foundation on his part. Like Christ [Jn.17:4], He could truly say that his work was done, though vast regions were left unvisited by him. In his final letter he could truthfully proclaim, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" -2 Tim.4:7.

Paul's early days were spent as a disciple at the feet of one of Israel's best and most noble rabbis, Gamaliel [Acts 5:33-39]. This man, respectfully referred to as the "Beauty of the Law," trained his scholars diligently by the study of the Scriptures.

They were required to memorize it and learn the views of Jewish commentators. Open forum discussions were an essential part of their training where minds were sharpened by successive rapid-fire questions.

But brilliance and education did not save his soul. Even the memorizing of the Word of God and careful attention to ancestral tradition could not transform him from the outside in.

Christianity begins with God arresting our maddened course, striking us to the dust where we abandon all for the sake of the Christ of Glory. On the road to Damascus [Acts 9:1-19], the Lord of Glory brought him into the Light and his transformation began then and there.

Serving the High Priest of Jerusalem was forgotten in the presence of the great High Priest who had entered the heavens. His all-consuming mission at Damascus was abandoned in the

realization that he did not even know what the Lord wished him to do [Acts 9:5,6]. Awaiting him was a new mission assignment unto the nations [Acts 9:15].

Saul, who had caused so much suffering and sorrow, must be shown “how much he must suffer for My Name’s sake” -Acts 9:16. The persecutor must become the persecuted.

Weighty letters from the highest religious authorities [Acts 9:2] were dropped and scattered along the road. His hands must be free to receive and pen thirteen letters from the throne of God to be included in the NT Scriptures. Saul of Tarsus, mighty in Israel, was struck to the dust and became Paul [small], lowly and despised.

His conversion on the Damascus road was the seed of his entire doctrine. Life as he knew it came to an abrupt end; he had been crucified with Christ. The totality of his previous life was of no account and suitable only to be unceremoniously buried along the road in Damascus dust.

Saul of Tarsus died that day. Paul arose in his place. He was no more Saul, the captain of his own soul and leader of men. That day he became Paul the slave, blinded and led by the hand into the knowledge of Christ and of a God he had never known.

“Who are you, Lord?” -Acts 9:5 signaled his fresh beginning. He confessed that he knew nothing, that before now he had been a self-willed rebel.

Christ Jesus was seen to be Lord, and Paul a slave: the basis of his repeated theme of believers being servants/slaves of Christ [Rom.6:14-23]. Christ’s reply, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting”, pierced his soul with a terrifying realization.

Hatred of Christians was actually hatred of Jesus Himself. Jesus and His people are one [I Cor.12:12,13].

This was the initial revelation to his heart of his loftiest and most frequently repeated doctrine: the believers’ Union with Christ. His epistles are full of phrases such as “in Christ,” “by Christ,” “through Christ,” and “with Christ.”

He learned that day that love for the church, the body of Christ, is the most practical and fundamental expression of love for Christ Himself [I Cor.13:1-3]. Christ in glory ever after was his focus. It was this that he wrote of and prayed that God would grant insight into by the illumination of the Holy Spirit [Eph.1:15-23; Col.1:9-12].

In one blazing burst of Light he learned that circumcision, law-keeping, and religious tradition are vain hopes of attaining unto salvation. They had not assisted him in the slightest, but were actually his greatest hindrance.

Christ did not improve upon a righteousness that Paul already had by these means. Rather, Paul’s was cast out as so much worthless dung in order to attain the righteousness that comes by Christ alone [Phil.3:4-9].

Law was ordained of God to demonstrate the utter failure of human nature to attain unto righteousness, even among the most devoted and privileged among men, i.e., the Jews. The Cross, however, God appointed to resolve the problem of human nature.

The flesh must be crucified, not modified through religious exercise [Gal.2:20,21]. This, only union with the living Christ will accomplish. And Paul saw it, beginning from that day forward.

In Jerusalem, Paul and Peter met and together resolutely resisted the entangling vines of fleshly tradition threatening the church [Acts 15:1-29]. Left unchecked, those tentacles would have wound about the neck of the Bride and strangled her, ere the Bridegroom could kiss her with the kisses of His lips.

They steadfastly refused and rebuked the distorted view of the Law’s crushing burden of man-made tradition. At the same time, they guarded against that false form of liberty that imagines freedom as being license without restraint.

While declaring that circumcision cannot save and sanctify, they did not ignore that idolatry destroys and corrupts. No alliance with blood, images, and immorality could be tolerated any more than a Jewish yoke of legal observance.

This is what was forbidden to Gentiles in the decision of the brethren in Acts 15: not a carnal accommodation to Jewish prejudice, but a repentance from all idolatrous practices and associations.

The idolatrous Mystery Religions among the Gentiles involved a variety of myths about a virgin-born savior-god who died and was brought to life again by *Magna Mater* [The Great Mother]. Many had rituals involving eating the flesh of a slain bull still dripping with blood.

This, they supposed, made them partakers of the life of the god and possessed of its spirit. Not infrequently, sacred and sometimes wild dancing was practiced along with fornication as part of their “worship.”

For Paul and Peter, opening salvation’s door to the Gentiles was not an invitation for their idolatry to follow along into the church with them.

Paul had been cut free from the bigotry of bondage, but never fell into the bigotry of liberty. He neither tolerated evil, nor did he compel the immature to follow his liberty though their conscience had not yet been developed to that point.

He consistently rose above the mere logic of his own position into wider, nobler, and loftier realms. Love transcended his personal convictions and maturity to embrace and assist the weak, immature, and the small of soul [I Thess.5:14].

For Paul, labor was always based upon thought, and life upon doctrine. Harmony between truth and practice is a necessity in Paul. He could never be content with correct doctrine, even in a Peter [I Cor.15:11], which was not matched by correct example as well [Gal.2:11-14].

Paul had attained to a degree of likeness to Christ worthy of imitation [I Cor.11:1]. Perhaps this is nowhere seen more clearly than in I Thessalonians chapter 2 where he describes his deepest convictions, longings, and affection. May we also imitate this Pattern of Christ.

Stop and think: What correspondences between Paul and Christ can be seen?

John

John was the last of the Apostles who made the final contributions to the NT revelation. His writings set forth Christ as the sufficiency for the church during the following centuries up until His return.

In the history of God’s people, the time came when it was announced, Moses my servant is dead [Josh.1:2]. Some years afterwards, Joshua and the elders who survived him had been gathered to their people. And then the people of God were tested as they had not been before.

The test was this: What is to be done in the absence of notable spiritual leaders? How will the kingdom of heaven advance in the hands of the average believer when these notable pillars are gone?

The answer to those questions is little different for the church today as it was for Israel following Joshua’s departure. Like them, the church has recourse to the Lord Himself, His revealed Word, and the fellowship of like-minded brethren. These are the means for sustained victory in accomplishing the will of the Lord in our generation [Jud.1:1-4].

John is the bridge from apostolic beginnings, to a church that is completely dependent upon the Lord apart from her founding human leaders. His five writings set forth Christ in the glory of His perfect example and boundless supply. This is what will preserve the church: to be cast wholly upon Him as Support, Guide, and Pattern.

What shall we do when Peter is no more among us to feed [Jn.21:15-17] and guide the flock of God [I Pet.5:1-3]? We have the abiding presence of Jesus, “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” -I Pet.2:25.

How can the whole counsel of God be maintained when all have turned away from the Apostle [2 Tim.1:15] and Paul has departed to be with Christ? We are left with “the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus [to] guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the good deposit which has been entrusted to [us]” -2 Tim.1:13,14.

Before departing from this life, John left the church with an abiding legacy, sufficient for all time and effective in every situation. His Gospel summarizes the blessed portion of those who have not seen either Jesus or the Apostles, “and yet believed” -Jn.20:29. Chapters in John’s Gospel are noted in [] following.

[1] Jesus is the Word, the full and final revelation of the unseen God. He is the Lamb, the one Sacrifice that has forever satisfied the righteous demands of the holy God against sinful men.

[2] Worship is in Christ, the true Temple, where the glory of God is fully revealed.

[3] If we look to Christ in simple trusting faith as Israel looked to the Serpent in the wilderness, salvation from sin's deadly poison will cleanse the heart. The Lord Jesus is the church's Bridegroom: loving, nourishing, and cherishing His devoted bride.

[4] Living Water springs up unto eternal life within the heart of even the most corrupt and destitute who drink from Him. Worship is universally accessible to all who approach the Father in Spirit and Truth.

[5] Jesus is the life-giver whom all are to honor.

[6] Those feeding upon Christ, the living Bread, will be filled and strengthened, never to hunger again.

[8] Revelation and guidance radiate upon the path of life from Jesus, the Light of the world. Jesus is the eternal and unchanging reference point, the everlasting God, the great I AM.

[9] Christ alone opens the eyes of the blind that no man or tradition could ever do.

[10] The Good Shepherd leads, protects, and feeds His own sheep who hear and follow His voice. Jesus the Lord is the Door to salvation's pastures and refreshing streams.

[11] Dead men in trespasses and sins have but one hope, Jesus Christ, the Resurrection and the Life.

[13] Cleansing from defilement, washing from sin, is only performed by God's lowly Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[14] How shall we walk? Where shall we go? What is true and right? Where shall enablement come from? All direction, reality, and transforming power come from Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

[15] Life-bearing sap courses in the fibers of every branch joined in a living union with the true Vine, ensuring the bearing of fruit unto the glory of God.

John's Gospel contains seven miracles that he calls signs. A sign points to a reality beyond itself. It is not that reality, but indicates aspects about it while pointing the way to its realization.

These signs set forth the Lord Jesus Christ as the supernatural source of all spiritual blessing for His people. They show what He can and will do for His church though physically absent from their midst. The seven signs are these:

[2] Water to Wine. They have no wine. Empty stone water pots bring no word of a ready supply, but rather only a message of discomfort and alarm.

Jewish customs of purification are empty expectations. Nothing is there to gladden the guests awaiting to partake with joy.

Jesus Himself fills, transforms, and provides the joy of purification at the blessed wedding feast. Servants alone know the source of this best supply of New Covenant wine which "cheers God and man" -Jud.9:13.

[4] Nobleman's Son. The Word of Jesus delivers from the cause of death and heals the sickness of our souls [Ps.41:4]. He does so from far distances apart from the agency of man while He Himself is physically absent.

[5] Lame Man. Sin has left us enfeebled and helpless for so long a time. No man can help. No angel can strengthen and raise up.

Pharisees' only concerns are arresting violators of their laws. Only Jesus' compassion and power can make a man walk on the straight path and narrow way.

[6] 5,000 Fed. Meager substance placed in the hands of Christ becomes sufficient provision for weary thousands. Taken, blessed, broken, and given is the spiritual sequence for multitudes' blessing [Mt.14:19]. Jesus' abundance is not dependent upon the disciples' vision, purse, or village stores.

[6] Stilling the Storm. Storms and darkness descend upon disciples' struggle against tempest's blast. And Jesus has not come to them.

Seemingly abandoned to the threatening waves with no light to guide, He yet sees them from upon the mount. The Lord Jesus is sovereign over darkness, storms, and disaster and will come to guide our craft safely to harbors of rest on heavenly shores [Ps.107:29,30].

[9] Blind Man. From birth, all has been darkness. Not one glimmer of hope had ever penetrated the gross blackness. Stumbling beggars and groping for mercy are we, one and all.

These are the ones that the works of God can be displayed in: possessing no insight, wisdom, or vision of their own. Sight is received by washing according to the Word of Christ.

The one who has seen the Light can never be convinced that he is yet in darkness, or that religious darkness is Light. Only those who imagine that they see apart from the touch of Christ will insist that it is so. Their darkness remains, as they abide in willful blindness as strangers to the Light of day, though they vainly protest that they see.

[11] Lazarus Raised. By this time he stinks. Death's corrupting odor of decaying flesh repulses one and all. Hear them hopelessly wail in the finality of death's despair.

Both the living and the dead are helpless in death's wake. The living weep and the dead rot: both impotent to reverse the stroke of this final enemy.

Jesus but speaks the Word and the spirit returns, the soul awakes, and the body pulses revitalized. Death to life abundant is the portion of all the dead who hear the voice of the Son of God.

Jesus assured us, "It is to your advantage that I go away" -Jn.16:7.

We have Christ and He is sufficient for all things needful for the life and maintenance of His people. He is our Pattern; every other standard and system only obscures or corrupts His own.

His Word is our portion and possession, what then might councils, confessions, and codes add to that? This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, not the priestly rulers and ceremonies of Christendom.

Cathedrals and sanctuaries are empty buildings of men, but not the true Temple of God which is Christ Himself. Forgiveness and cleansing, healing and restoration come by simple faith in Christ alone, the true lifted Serpent in religious wastelands.

Affection poured upon any other than the Bridegroom of the church becomes spiritual harlotry. Ceremonies can never open a springing fount of Living Water.

Worship is no more defined by sacred places, priestly sacrifice, feasts and fasts, or holy days and seasons. The heavens are open to the simplest believer through the Spirit and Truth as it is in Christ.

Souls are fed, strengthened, and blessed by partaking directly of Christ, the Living Bread, apart from priestly mediators. Decrees, councils, traditions, and pronouncements of men provide no light for the pathway; Jesus is the Light of the World.

Sovereign and all-sufficient is the great I AM who needs nothing aside from His own limitless self-existence to supply everything necessary for life and godliness in His church.

Sight to our souls results from the washing of Christ, not from the blind leading the blind in the synagogues of man. Cast out we may be from those darkened gatherings, but He will find and console our hearts.

Doors to the Father, ways to forgiveness, and means to eternal life are not many and varied, but only one. Christ is the Door. Through Him alone we must enter to partake of His Shepherd care that no man, organization, or system can provide.

What possible benefit can ceremonies provide for a dead man? Will they raise him to life again? Are they not shown to be meaningless religious traditions in the presence of the Resurrection and the Life?

Which of the religious rulers of men will set aside his honor and position, appear as a lowly servant, and do the work of a slave in behalf of the brethren? Even if they would, who can cleanse from the defilement of sin? None but Christ, the true Servant.

Any man, ministry, or denomination claiming that spiritual progress will be hindered or impossible apart from themselves, is a false and wicked perversion of the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Brethren, apart from Christ, the true Vine, we can do nothing.

This is what we must do since Christ is not physically present with us and the Apostles are no more: “[Look] unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith” -Heb.12:2. The promise of His Word abides. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?” -Rom.8:32.

Brethren, we have Christ. This is the sufficiency for the church throughout all generations, despite the departure from the Pattern of Christ all around. He is yet present to all who will draw near to Him by faith.

“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” -Mt.28:20. “He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” -Heb.13:5.

4

The Storm Breaks

Persecution and Its Causes

While Christianity was viewed by Rome as a sect of the Jews, it did not draw their attention since Judaism had legal status in the empire. But as Christianity increasingly became separate from the synagogues and spread throughout the Roman world, it was recognized to be an illegal religion and persecution broke out.

Persecution moved in ten waves from the time of Nero in 64 AD to Diocletian in 303 AD. The first was fairly localized in the immediate area of Rome.

That of the last was enforced throughout the empire. Between times there were periods of relative peace for the church, sometimes only a few years and at one time nearly forty.

The real reasons behind the persecutions were hatred of the light [Jn.3:19,20] and the fact that Christians had a Lord and an absolute standard in the Scriptures which judged the empire. No authoritarian rule can tolerate citizens who have a reference point other than itself.

But to justify their cruel assault upon the law-abiding Christians, Rome accused them of four crimes:

[1] ATHEISM because they refused to worship the Emperor as Lord. This, Rome claimed, was treason against the state.

[2] HATRED of mankind because they despised their games, amusements, and theatre.

The theatre portrayed drunkenness and shameless immorality in the most graphic scenes, often literally performed before the admiring and lustful audience.

At the games, 180,000 spectators would crowd the *Circus Maximus* [The Greatest Stadium] to witness the day-long chariot races. There they foolishly gambled away their earnings and frequented the legalized booths of harlots surrounding the arena.

Emperors had huge man-made lakes constructed for multitudes to witness re-enactments of famous naval battles where thousands of live combatants slaughtered themselves before cheering audiences. In the Colosseum [another large stadium], elephants, tigers, lions, apes, crocodiles and other wild beasts were made to fight to the death before the delighted crowds.

Captives of war, condemned criminals [including Christians] or disobedient slaves were thrown before ravenous beasts or compelled to engage in deadly combat as gladiators. Blond-haired Germans, blacks from Africa, even dwarfs and women entertained the populace by their brutality and slaughter.

Nero himself would join in the bloody battles for the morbid delight that murder brought to his demented soul. The public applauded this inhumane cruelty and reveled in their fellow humans' flow of blood that one Roman historian called, "a cannibal banquet for the soul."

It is of little wonder that Christians who attended the games and the theatre were excommunicated from the church. Tertullian [c.200] wrote, "With such dainties, let the devil's guests be feasted."

[3] IMMORALITY and cannibalism because they had no temples, priests, or ritual ceremonies. Therefore they were viewed as an immoral secret cult society that they imagined fed on the flesh of Jesus.

[4] CALAMITY. The image makers, who were losing money [Acts 19:24-27] along with the pagan priests and occultists, incited the popular prejudice against the Christians. They blamed the Christians for all calamities, wars, tempest, and pestilence which plagued mankind, saying that the gods were angry because the people had left off the old ways.

Nero and Diocletian

Nero was the first to unleash the fury of imperial Rome against the saints. He was an almost indescribably wicked and perverted man. At night he would disguise himself as a common man and roam the streets of Rome with other rogues, raping women and murdering young boys.

His own mother was a victim of his assassination. His favorite wife that he had seduced from her husband, was kicked to death by him when she was fully pregnant. Afterwards, he found a young boy who resembled her, had him castrated, and used him as his new homosexual "wife."

Christians were fed to his crocodiles to the amusement of his guests while the night skies were lit up from other believers who served as human torches around his gardens. Paul was beheaded under his regime and Peter crucified upside down during Nero's reign.

Imagining to rebuild Rome to his own glory, he had the city set ablaze in 64 AD. Nearly seventy percent of the city rose in smoke and thousands went homeless with countless businesses ruined. Rumors spread quickly among the hostile population that he was to blame.

In order to divert suspicion from himself, Nero charged the Christian "haters of mankind" for the wicked deed which turned the unreasoning mobs against the brethren. And thus the houses of believers were broken into and the disciples dragged off to be beaten, tortured, burnt, crucified, or thrown to the beasts and gladiators at their games.

Diocletian instigated the last and most furious of the ten waves of persecution. In 303 he issued a decree for all church buildings to be destroyed. All copies of the Bible were to be collected and burnt. Christians were deprived of all civil rights and government employment.

All were to sacrifice to the gods or be executed. Any groups meeting as Christians were to be put to death. Some Christians were sunk by whole shiploads in the depths of the sea. Others had eyes, ears, nose, or hands cut off and were left to wander about as a warning to other yet undiscovered Christians.

Eventually he commanded all provisions sold in the markets to be sprinkled with sacrificial wine. This was done so that the church would be forced into either apostasy or starvation. It was a horrific fiery trial whose smoke engulfed the Empire for ten dreadful years.

Catacombs

Yet the Catacombs, a maze of underground burial tunnels beneath Rome, preach their silent testimony of the triumph of the gospel. Though skeletons of the saints have heads cut off, ribs and shoulder blades broken, or bones blackened by fire, nevertheless, the inscriptions found breathe forth a peace and rest unknown to the unbelievers.

“Here lies Marcia, put to rest in a dream of peace.” “Lawrence to his sweetest son, borne away by angels.” “Victorious in peace and in Christ.” “Simplicius, may you live in Christ.”

Contrast these with those of the pagans, such as: “Live for the present hour, since we are sure of nothing more.” “I lift my hands against the gods who took me away at the age of twenty though I had done no harm.”

“Once I was not. Now I am not. I know nothing about it, and it is no concern of mine.” “Traveler, curse me not as you pass, for I am in darkness and cannot answer.”

Stop and think: What distinguishes Christian death and burial from the traditional burial in your tribe? Is there a clear difference?

Following are some accounts of various faithful martyrs who testified the good confession. They endured as seeing Him who is unseen, not accepting their release, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

In the face of unspeakable horrors, they joined in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God and entered into the joy of their Lord. [“c.” is an abbreviation for the Latin *circa* meaning, “about”].

Clement of Rome c.30 - 100 AD

Clement, the fellow worker of Paul [Phil.4:3], wrote a letter of encouragement to the brethren at Corinth to strengthen them in the midst of sufferings. The following is a brief portion of that letter:

Be contentious, brethren, and jealous about the things that pertain to salvation [probably a reference to Jude 3]. You have searched the Scriptures, which are true, which were given through the Holy Spirit; and you know that nothing unrighteous or counterfeit is written in them.

You will not find that righteous persons have been thrust out by holy men. Righteous men were persecuted, but it was by the lawless; they were imprisoned, but it was by the unholy.

They were stoned by transgressors; they were slain by those who had conceived a detestable and unrighteous jealousy. Suffering these things, they endured nobly.

Stop and think: Often the godly who say that the Word of God must be obeyed are accused of being unreasonable or causing division. What was the view of these early brethren about such things? [3 Jn.9,10].

Ignatius c.35 - 107 AD

Emperor Trajan had offered sacrifices to the gods in Antioch for victories he gained in battle as if his triumph came from them. When Ignatius learned of this, he reproved the Emperor openly before many in the pagan temple itself.

As a result, he was led bound to Rome in order to be executed publicly by being torn to pieces by wild beasts in the Colosseum. Along the way he wrote several letters to encourage the brethren. In one of them are recorded these words:

“Come fire and cross and grappling with wild beasts...crushing of my whole body, come cruel tortures of the devil to assail me. Only be it mine to attain unto Jesus Christ. Only pray for me, that inward and outward strength be given me, not only to speak or write this, but also to perform and endure it, so that I may not only be called a Christian, but also be found one in truth.”

Godly Ignatius was brought forth into the midst of the arena with the assembled multitudes who gathered gladly for the spectacle. He boldly raised his voice and addressed them all: “O you Romans, all you who have come to witness with your own eyes this combat, I am the grain of God.

“I am ground by the teeth of the beast that I may be found to be a pure bread of Christ, who is to me the Bread of Life.” Thereupon the gates to the pits were opened and two raging lions rushed upon him leaving but a few mangled bodily remains, whose soul had departed to eternal safety in Jesus.

Polycarp c.69 - 156 AD

As Timothy was to Paul, so Polycarp was to the Apostle John.

Polycarp’s own disciple, Irenaeus, said this about him: “He always taught what he had learned from the Apostles.” And indeed, his letter to the brethren in Philippi is interwoven with quotes from Paul, Peter, and John.

Distinguished for his godliness, this dignified servant of Christ met his end at the hand of persecutors after living into his eighties. The account of his martyrdom is as follows.

When his friends discovered that he was to be taken by the haters of Christ, they urged him to flee to the next city. Though reluctant, he was persuaded by their appeals to Mt.10:23 and thereby joined some friends in a nearby farm. While there he devoted himself night and day to prayers for the churches throughout the world.

Having eventually been discovered, he kindly welcomed his persecuting captors in Christian hospitality by preparing a table and inviting them to dine. He asked and received permission from them to pray yet one more hour which he did in their presence to their amazement, shame, and even leading some of them to repentance.

Then, taken before the proconsul [a Roman official], he was repeatedly commanded to worship Caesar and deny Christ. Polycarp replied: “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong; and how can I now blaspheme my King who has preserved me from all evil, and so faithfully redeemed me?”

Next the proconsul threatened him with being torn to pieces by wild beasts or being burned alive to which he answered: “You threaten fire that burns for a moment and is soon extinguished, for you know nothing of the judgment to come and the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the wicked. But why do you delay? Bring what you wish; you shall not, by either of them, move me to deny Christ, my Lord and Savior.”

And upon saying this, Polycarp was led to the place of execution. He stood upon the pile of wood about to be lit and consume him while praying with thanksgiving.

He blessed the Lord for being considered worthy to suffer as a sacrifice thus for “Thy well-beloved Son, the eternal High Priest, unto whom, with Thee and the Holy Spirit, be the glory, now and forever. Amen.” Upon which the fire was lit, but it seemed not to affect him at all, and so a sword was plunged into his aged form and his soul ascended to everlasting comfort in Jesus.

Stop and think: How did Polycarp interpret Jn.18:36 and James 5:6?

Felicitas c.164 AD

A Christian widow at Rome along with her seven sons and the church that met in their home, were used of the Lord to convert many to Christ. Full of fury, the pagan priests raised complaint to the Emperor and caused them to be brought before Publius, the Roman judge.

At first, using flattery, fair words, and false promises, he attempted to persuade her to deny Christ. But seeing that this did not move her, these soon were turned to violent threats.

Felicitas simply replied: "I am neither moved by your flatteries and entreaties, nor am I intimidated by your threats; for I experience in my heart the working of the Holy Spirit, which gives me a living power, and prepares me for the conflict of suffering, to endure all that you may lay upon me, for the confession of my faith."

Trying yet another devious means, he then attempted to persuade her by appealing to her womanly affections. "At least have pity and a mother's compassion on your sons by telling them to escape your fate!"

To this she stated: "Your compassion is pure wickedness, and your admonition is nothing but cruelty, for, if my sons should sacrifice to the gods, they would not ransom their lives, but sell them to the hellish fiend, whose slaves in soul and body they would become, and be reserved by him in chains of darkness for everlasting fire."

Then turning away from Publius, she exhorted her sons: "Remain steadfast in the faith, and in the confession of Christ. Behold, heaven is open before you; therefore fight valiantly for your souls and show that you are faithful in the love of Christ."

While she spoke thus to her sons she was beaten repeatedly in the face with her tormentors' fists, but even this did not silence her.

Seeing that she would not deny the Lord Jesus, each of her sons were tortured and executed before her eyes: some by being whipped to death, others by beatings with rods, still others by being thrown off high places or beheaded. At last, this saintly soul was killed by the sword and joined her faithful sons in the everlasting arms of Jesus.

Stop and think: Who overcame in this conflict, Felicitas or Publius? [Rev.12:11].

Sanctus c.172 AD

This dear brother, a deacon who ministered to the poor, was captured and tormented by the enemies of Christ. Red-hot copper plates were applied to all parts of his body until he was little more than one continuous wound from head to toe.

All along they constantly questioned him in order to obtain information to betray others. Though greatly afflicted he would simply say: "I am a Christian; that is my name, my parentage, and my country; indeed, I am altogether nothing else than a Christian." Throughout all, he remained fearless and unmoved, for the fire upon his body was tempered by the heavenly comfort of Christ in his soul.

Blandina c.172 AD

Blandina, noble and godly, was released from her earthly body after having been made the public mocking sport of a pagan multitude for several days. Subjected to severe whippings, beatings, and being cut, carved, and torn with all manner of hooks, knives, and claws of iron, she was placed in their midst and commanded to deny Christ and swear to the gods.

Not only did she refuse, but openly reproved the folly of their idolatry which brought their fury to a climax. Blandina was then roasted over an open fire, bound in a net, and thrown to the wild bulls in their stadium as the crowd cheered. After being repeatedly tossed high into the air upon piercing horns, she thus was ushered into the glory of her Lord that she had so faithfully testified to.

Stop and think: To what extent should Mt.10:24-33 govern our actions?

Perpetua c.202 AD

A beloved African sister of wealthy and noble birth, highly educated and honorably married, was taken captive by persecutors of the faith. Only twenty-two years old and with babe at her breast, she was begged by her aged and pagan father to deny Christ because of the shame that she was bringing upon the family.

What a scene it was! Before the court and a great assembled multitude, he threw himself at her feet, pleading with her tenderly, weeping and kissing her hands. "My daughter," he appealed, "pity my grey hairs, pity your father, if I am still worthy to be called your father. Do not expose me to such shame before men! Look upon your child - your son - who, if you die, cannot survive without you!"

Imagine the pull upon this daughter's heart: the threats of merciless Rome, the honor and loving tears of her elderly father, the cries of her infant son. How they all pressed to the depths of her young soul! "Offer sacrifice for the welfare of the Emperor!" demanded the governor.

And thus she stood before her judges, the assembled crowd, her pathetic father, the admiring hosts of heaven, and the hateful legions of hell. But firmly and calmly like Abraham, whose eye was not upon his son but upon the God of resurrection, she said: "That I cannot do. I am a Christian."

Her condemnation was sealed by that simple statement and so was led to the stadium before the bloodthirsty throng. Yet even this did not silence Psalms of praise to God from pouring through her pure lips before them all.

Only the tossing and goring upon the horns of the wild bull put an end to her song here below. But she continues singing above, having entered into the joy of her Lord where she was received with: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Stop and think: How does honoring Christ relate to honoring parents, family, and the government? [Mt.10:34-39]. What would you have told Perpetua to do?

Cassian c.302 AD

A teacher of children by profession, his judges pronounced this sentence upon him because he was a Christian. "Let the schoolteacher be pricked, cut, and stabbed to death by his own scholars [students] with pens, knives and other sharp instruments such as they use in school."

Thereupon he was stripped naked with hands bound behind him while the children fell upon him with stones, boards, and sharp tools. After unspeakable torment, his body could endure no more of their torture and so departed this life into that painless eternal rest above.

Eulalia c.302 AD

Not more than twelve or thirteen years old, this lovely girl was filled with fervent devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. Boldly she appeared before the judge and all the officials saying: "Are you not ashamed to cast your own souls and those of others at once into eternal judgment by denying the only true God, the Father of us all, and the Creator of all things?"

"O you wretched men! Do you seek the Christians, that you may put them to death? Behold, here am I, an adversary of your satanical sacrifices! I confess with heart and mouth God alone; but Isis, Apollo, and Venus are vain idols!"

Whereupon the judge, filled with rage, called for the executioner with this charge: "Strip her and inflict various punishments upon her so that she may feel the wrath of the gods of her fathers and learn thereby that it will be hard for her to despise the command of our Prince" [i.e. the Emperor].

After further threats of unspeakable torments, she was urged with these soft words: "Daughter, you can escape all these tortures with little trouble if you will only take a few grains of salt and incense on the tips of your fingers, and sacrifice it."

Without a word she replied by pushing far away from her the wretched images, altar, and sacrificial book, sending all scattering to the floor. Instantly, two executioners tore open her sides down to the ribs with sharp hooks so that her young blood flowed freely down her sides.

Eulalia, counting the gashes on her body exclaimed: "Behold, Lord Jesus Christ! Thy name is being written on my body; what great delight it affords me to read these letters, because they are signs of Thy victory! Behold, my purple blood confesses Thy holy name."

This she proclaimed without shame, fear, or self-pity, but even rejoiced to suffer such for her Lord. Provoked by such "stubbornness," the merciless pagans applied burning torches to her open wounds and, catching her hair on fire, she was consumed in its smoke and flame.

Justus c.303 AD

A father and his two sons, while journeying along the road, had been accused to the soldiers of Diocletian by evil informers. Justus, the youngest son, learned of their evil intent and quickly rushed to warn his father and brother to hide in a nearby cave while he kept a watch out for the Emperor's horsemen.

Upon their approach, he went forth and replied to their questions about his identity and the location of his companions in this way: "I am called Justus, and I freely confess that I am also a Christian. But since I regard you as persecutors of the Christians, it is not lawful for me to betray my companions."

To this, they drew their swords and threatened to slay him on the spot if he did not betray his fellows and lead them to their place of hiding. Justus replied: "Truly, I shall consider myself happy, if I may be permitted to suffer all manner of punishment, yes, death itself, for the name of Christ; for I am ready to lose my soul in this world that I may keep it unto life eternal." Having said so, the sword flashed in fury and struck off his head and he entered into that life that he had so faithfully testified to and longed for.

The Scriptures: What Will I Die For?

Diocletian's edict that all the sacred books of the Christians should be burned was a fiery trial for the saints of God. Since the copies were hand written and not the common possession of all as our printed Bibles are to us today, the leaders of the churches were particularly sought after and afflicted in this way since they surely had copies with them.

It was a circumstance that required the church to seriously face the question: "What are we willing to die for? What books are actually the Word of God; which are merely the words of men?"

The authority of the NT writings had long been recognized and accepted by the church [I Cor.14:37; 2 Pet.3:1,2,15,16; compare I Tim.5:18 with Lk.10:7]. No Council told the Christians what to believe. The Spirit of God who was the Supreme Author of the Word of God did that [2 Pet.1:20,21; I Jn.2:27; Jn.16:13].

Including the NT books in a Council's declaration did not give them authority; they had authority already as from God and were included by the Council because of it. The Synod of Carthage [397 AD] merely stated what was already common knowledge and believed when it canonized [accepted as genuine and inspired] the 27 books of the NT.

The Apocrypha [14 books written before the time of Christ] was rejected by Christ, the Apostles, and the believers following them, and not included as part of the NT Canon; only the Roman Catholic Church incorporated them officially as "inspired" in 1546 AD in order to buttress their false claims.

Felix c.303 AD

Felix, a bishop in the church of Thibaris in Africa, was arrested and brought before the Procurator [Roman official] who demanded from him his copies of the Word of God in order to burn them. Their conversation went as follows:

"It were better, that I should be burned than the divine Scriptures," testified the godly Felix.

To this the Procurator replied: "Nevertheless, the command of the Emperors must have the precedence over your word." Felix responded: "God's command comes before the commands of men. We must obey God rather than men."

"O Felix, why will you not deliver up the books of the Lord your God? Or perhaps, you do not have any?"

"Indeed, I have them, but I do not wish to give them to you."

"Put Felix to death with the sword."

Then did Felix raise his voice loudly and exclaim: "I thank Thee, O Lord, that You have redeemed me and I have lived to be fifty-six years old. I have kept myself pure, have kept the Gospels and evangelical books, and have preached the faith and truth in their purity.

"O Lord God of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ! I bow my neck to the sword, as an offering unto Thee, who abides in eternal glory and majesty forever and ever. Amen." And so saying, he joined the hosts of martyrs above who had sealed their testimony with their own blood.

Stop and think: Comment on the statement, "If the truth is lost, all is lost."

Primus & Felician c.303 AD

These two aged brothers were brought bound before their accusers who demanded: "Will you sacrifice to the gods, and live in honors and see good days, or be tortured unto death?" Felician replied: "How can you speak to me of pleasant days? I am now eighty years old, and have been enlightened with the saving knowledge of Christ for about thirty years; yea, I am still finding the greatest joy of my heart in His service.

"And you would persuade me to forsake my Savior, and accept instead of Him the vain lusts of this world! Far be it from me; for I have resolved to cleave to Christ, my Lord and my God, to the very last breath of my life!"

He was then thrown back into prison while they did what they could to convince his brother to deny the faith. "Your brother has apostatized and sacrificed to the gods. Be wise and do likewise and you will go free."

Primus, however, was persuaded in his heart that this was not so and said: "That is a lie." Seeing that their devices had failed, his tormenters proceeded to beat him with sticks, burn his flesh with lamps, and pour molten lead down his throat.

Thereafter, his brother was brought forth from his cell, afflicted with whipping, nailed through hands and feet, and inhumanly tortured. When both were dead, the judge cast their corpses out for the birds and wild dogs to devour.

Lapsed

For the first three hundred years, persecution came in ten "waves," with periods of relative peace between. Many were faithful and did not yield to temptations to deny Christ. These were the Confessors [faithful survivors of torture and prison] and Martyrs.

Others weakened and compromised their faith out of fear, cowardice, or unbelief. Yet when the "wave" had passed and persecution had died down, multitudes of these Lapsed [fallen/apostate] sought to be received into the fellowship of the church once again.

Some had actually sacrificed to the pagan gods. Others had paid to obtain false documents saying that they had sacrificed. *Traditores* [traitors] handed over the Scriptures to be destroyed in order to spare their lives.

What was to be done? Should they be restored and received back into the church? If so, on what basis? These questions caused serious division in the churches throughout the empire.

Some said that those who sacrificed could not be re-admitted until their death-bed or until they proved themselves faithful during the next persecution. Others said they must be restored because of the forgiveness of Christ, while others proposed various forms of discipline for the Lapsed to show their sincerity.

Who should decide? Many thought that the Confessors should be the ones to make that judgment. Few Bishops agreed, thinking this would weaken their authority over the churches.

Stop and think: In your church gathering is the widow of a Martyr along with her children, a Confessor who is partially crippled due to his sufferings, and several others who had homes and businesses destroyed by persecution. The persecution has ended for the moment and three Lapsed request to join you at the Lord's Supper. What should that church do?

5

Leaven in the Meal

The kingdom of heaven is like leaven,
Which a woman took and hid
In three measures of meal
Till it was all leavened
Mt.13:33

Inward and Outward Kingdom

Leaven, in the Scriptures, represents a corrupting influence [I Cor.5:6-8]. It is what the kingdom of heaven is like.

Early in its development, this leaven of corruption entered within the pure meal that was the church. It was a living, progressive, and transforming power that changed it from what it was at the beginning.

This is a mystery, though well established as fact. Jesus said that the “sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” -Mt.8:12. Yet at the same time, “many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” -Mt.8:11.

Many will be in the kingdom of heaven while the very sons of the kingdom will be cast out. This is surely a mystery.

There is an outward and an inward kingdom. One has all the external features of that kingdom, but none of its essential spiritual realities. The other may not even be associated with the former in its outward form, but possesses the true life of that kingdom within.

Such were the Jews in Jesus’ day, full of form and ceremony though their hearts were far from Him: sons of the kingdom but cast out. Such was the tendency of the church in Jerusalem as seen in Acts 21.

There they boasted in their shame, zealously promoted law above grace, and embraced tradition as godliness. They required obedience to worthless ceremonies while offering vain assurances that they had not abandoned their previous convictions [Acts 21:17-26].

Though Galatians had already been penned, Paul agreed to their carnal scheme. Their leaven spread to him because he was explicitly disobedient to the Spirit of God by even coming to Jerusalem [Acts 20:4].

A vital lesson is gained by this. Only spiritual men can maintain spiritual simplicity. As soon as we lean on the arm of the flesh, immediately tradition, ceremony, and religion promoted by worldly means begin to take over.

It is why the old leaven must be purged. Left within, the whole becomes affected throughout. But it can only be removed when the heart is broken and contrite and trembles at His Word [Isa.66:2].

The pulling down of temples, as happened to Jerusalem in 70 AD, does not clean the leaven from the heart. Twenty years afterwards, Diotrephes demonstrates the effect that tolerating its presence brings.

He loved to take Christ’s place of preeminence in the church. Truth was set aside for his own doctrine and tradition. The truly godly and spiritual were slandered and warned against. Any who disagreed with him were persecuted, punished, and cast out of “his” church [3 Jn.9,10].

Our Lord Jesus warned us of wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing who would not spare the flock [Mt.7:15]. Paul warned of leaders arising, speaking perverse things to draw disciples away after themselves [Acts 20:29,30]. And he confirms to us that the mystery of lawlessness is already at work [2 Thess.2:7].

Peter assures us that false teachers will secretly bring in destructive heresies. Many will be captured through covetousness to follow deceptive words and the way of the truth will be blasphemed [2 Pet.2:1-3].

Jude exhorts us to contend earnestly for the faith because men such as these have crept in unnoticed into the midst of the brethren [Jude 3,4]. And by the time John writes, already many antichrists had gone out into the world [I Jn.2:18; 2 Jn.7].

“Watch yourselves that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward” -2 Jn.8. But gradually, more and more were slowly seduced from the simplicity of Christ [2 Cor.11:2-4] and drifted from the Word of God [Heb.2:1] into the traditions of men. And thus the leaven began its subtle work.

Authority

Beginning in the first century, the OT divisions of High Priest, Priests, Levites, and Israelites became associated with the Bishop, Presbyters [Elders], Deacons, and Laity [common people] in the church. The brethren in the churches released their responsibilities and privileges to the Presbyters, the Presbyters to the Bishop, and the Bishops eventually to the universal Bishop, who came to be called Pope.

The movement in authority was from the individual assembly being subject to Christ alone, to handing themselves over to the Episcopate [the Bishop ruling over the congregation]. The Bishops of the various congregations relinquished themselves to the Metropolitans [the city Bishops as having more authority than the rural ones].

These Metropolitans bowed themselves to the Bishops of the Apostolic Mother Churches [those churches that the Apostles ministered in and wrote letters to]. Above these were the Patriarchs [the political and religious capitols of the Empire: Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople]. Finally, all churches and Bishops were required to acknowledge Rome with its Universal Bishop, the Pope, as the supreme head of Christendom.

Worldly Practices

At first, Christians met in private homes for teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Later, during times of relative peace from persecution during the 200's, special buildings began to be used for worship meetings. Incense, a sign of respect for the emperor, began to be burned in churches as part of Christian worship to show “honor” to God.

Special dress for the officiating ministers began to be worn. Gestures of respect, once reserved for the emperor, were now expected to be given to ministers. Choirs and processions similar to imperial pageantry were introduced into church gatherings.

Several centuries passed before all of these factors fully developed. Leaven does not spread through the whole all at once, but begins its work internally and unseen in its initial stages. Eventually, its hidden work within manifests itself by the outward transforming effect it has upon the dough. And these were the initial stages.

Ignatius c.35 - 107 AD

In this man, so admirable in many ways, were to be found seeds of an emphasis which eventually blossomed into widespread departure. And as with any sowing, the extent of the eventual harvest was not immediately evident. A shift from the foundation, however small that shift may be, signals eventual disaster for whatever is erected upon it.

Such was true of Ignatius' ideas about the place and role the bishop had within a local assembly. To him, the Bishop [Overseer] and the Presbytery [Elders] were conceived of as separate and distinct “offices,” with the Bishop over all. See **Appendix 1 NT Leadership**. In his seven letters, quotes such as these are to be found:

“Your bishop presides in the place of God and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the Apostles.” “Let all reverence the bishop as Jesus Christ...and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God.”

“It is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold a love-feast.” “He who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop renders service to the devil.”

Stop and think: How is the command of I Thess.5:21 to be applied in examining Ignatius’ life and teachings?

Irenaeus c.180 AD

Irenaeus followed Ignatius by about two generations and laid emphasis upon unbroken episcopal [bishops] succession traced back to the Apostles as a testimony to apostolic teaching and as a defense against heresies. He was the first to use the title *Potentioorem Principality* [highest power/ruler] with respect to the Bishop of Rome as over other bishops.

Cyprian c.250 AD

Cyprian promoted the episcopacy as a special priesthood that offers sacrifice which mediates between God and the people. He called the bishop of Rome the successor of Peter, and the church of Rome as the “chair of Peter and fount of priestly unity.” Yet he opposed Pope Stephen of Rome, accusing him of error and abuse of power, calling tradition without truth as “old error.”

To Cyprian, the Catholic [Universal] church must have visible unity. Whoever separates himself from the Catholic church is a foreigner, a profane person, an enemy, condemns himself, and must be shunned.

“No one can have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother,” he argued. Like the ark of Noah, salvation is only within the church as the bearer of the Holy Spirit and of all grace.

His error was in blindly identifying the spiritual unity of the church with outward uniformity of association. There was only remaining one step from his false teaching that, “Apart from the visible church, there is no salvation,” to the complete error of Romanism: “Apart from the Roman Catholic Church, there is no salvation.”

Stop and think: How does John 14:6 relate to Cyprian’s ideas about the church and salvation?

Augustine 354 - 430 AD

In his great treatise, *The City of God*, Augustine took the prevalent ideas about the church to their logical conclusion. He contended that through the Church alone, God mediates His grace to men. Outside the communion of the visible Catholic Church, he claims, there can be no salvation.

His view of the church as an earthly organization with an external visible unity led him to adopt carnal means to see it built up and established. He even advocated the use of force, if need be, to “compel them to come in,” based on a perversion of Luke 14:23.

Tradition, intercession of saints, ceremonies, purgatory, the Apocrypha, infant baptism, and the use of relics were some of the errors that he approved of. Yet he also spoke clearly about the grace of God alone as being sufficient unto salvation. He was a man of mixture, like many who possess extreme abilities of mind and character.

On the one hand, his own conversion was brought about through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God alone. On the other hand, he was willing to replace that spiritual influence by threats of pain inflicted by man in order to extort a confession of salvation from others.

These errors became the basis of Roman Catholic theology and led to the unspeakable suffering and evils that darkened the history of Christendom throughout the following centuries.

6

Until All Was Leavened

Babel's Legacy

Since the days of the tower of Babel, deeply ingrained in all cultures is the demand for a priest and a shrine along with authoritarian rule. The church was originally persecuted for not having temples and priests along with rituals and idolatrous sacrifices. But that spiritual simplicity gradually gave way to leaning wholly on the arm of the flesh [Jer.17:5-10] in the outward form of the kingdom that developed.

Initially, through meekness, love, and purity, Christianity had spiritually triumphed over Rome. Yet in the end, through compromise, greed, and lust, pagan Rome triumphed over the church.

It was the church's choice to erect its own shrines complete with images, priests, superstitious rituals, and oppressive rule. And, like heathen Rome but even more furiously so, the Church of Rome persecuted those who did not bow at their altars and acknowledge their priests and pontiffs.

Thus the church that had triumphed outwardly, perished inwardly. It is not elephants that spoil the vine, it is the little foxes [S.of S. 2:15]. As God gave Israel a king in His wrath [Hos.13:11] because they did not want Him to reign over them [I Sam.8:7], so He gave His professed people the Roman Catholic Church.

Christ's warnings about leaven went unheeded: warnings about the leaven of Pharisees, Sadducees, and that of Herod [Mt.15:12; Mk.8:15]. And so it was that through the next centuries, the traditions of the Pharisees, the luxury and philosophy of Sadducees, and the politics of Herod spread their corruption throughout the whole.

"An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so! But what will you do in the end?" -Jer.5:30,31.

Constantine 309 - 337 AD

On the eve of the decisive battle for control of the Empire, Constantine saw a vision of a cross and heard a voice saying: "In this sign conquer." Taking this as a Divine sign, he went forth and defeated the rival emperor at Milvian Bridge at the banks of Tiber River. He entered Rome as the undisputed ruler of the West and issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD that proclaimed tolerance of all religions and restoration of the Christians' properties taken by Diocletian.

Caesar had met Christ in the arena and Christ emerged as the victor. The church had not only survived, but triumphed against all of the savage and carnal means hurled against it by the world.

The cross had gained the victory through spiritual weapons alone. Thereby the weakness and foolishness of God was shown to be superior to the strength and wisdom of men [I Cor.1:25-29].

Yet two evils proceeded from this otherwise triumph of Christianity over paganism. First, Christianity became accepted and even desirable to multitudes. Countless numbers swelled the ranks of the church in order to earn the approval of the State who now promoted this new religion.

Secondly, the State was granted say in matters belonging to the church. Constantine himself called for the Council of Nicea and presided there as the overseer of the doctrine being debated amongst the assembled bishops. His word prevailed in the verdict to ban the Arians, though he later recalled them and banned Athanasius who had contended for the true teaching of Christ!

Though he assumed such roles, Constantine himself rarely conformed to the requirements of Christian worship and cared little for discussion about differences in Christian truth, even

respecting the person of Christ Himself. His interest in religion and the council was simply political, not wanting there to be a division between East and West factions within his Empire.

He continued to offer the imperial sacrifices to the Roman gods as the *Pontifex Maximus* [the highest priest] of the Apollo cult. Pagan magic formulas to protect crops and heal diseases continued to be his trust. Images of the sun god were not removed from newly made imperial coins.

A violent temper characterized him, even to murdering his son, a nephew, and brother-in-law. Actually, he proved to be little more than a politician who delayed his baptism until his death bed saying: "Let us now cast away all duplicity" [compromise/deceit], hoping thereby to "insure" his entrance into the kingdom above.

Stop and think: What expectation does someone like Constantine have as he faces death? [Lk.9:23-26].

Worldliness

With the new capital of the Empire now moved to Constantinople in 334 AD, bishops who once were fed to wild beasts in the Empire's arenas now dined with the Emperor at the palace. Those who had properties, possessions, and positions wrenched from their hands, now had all restored and their purses fattened from the imperial treasury.

Persecution for righteousness' sake once was their portion, now promotion and enrichment. Once shame and reproach, now pride and exaltation. Crosses, once for crucifixion and self-denial, were now glittering ornaments.

The world, formerly the church's savage enemy, now reclined comfortably in her bosom. Thus, though outwardly Christianity had converted the world, the world in turn was rapidly converting the church.

The devil, who has come only to steal and destroy, has more than one masquerade to achieve his ends. The roaring lion of Diocletian knew how to quickly slide into his subtle serpent's skin during the reign of Constantine and seduce the church into his coils. What he did not achieve through fire, he managed to do by friendship.

The following are highlights of how the leaven spread throughout the whole until it all became leavened.

Prayers for the Dead

Around 300 AD, prayers for the dead began to be made in various places. John Chrysostom [c.450 AD] urged all his listeners to pray to dead saints who, when they show the marks of their martyrdom in heaven, "they can persuade the King to do anything."

Stop and think: What change can take place in a person's condition after death? [Heb.9:27; Lk.16:22-26]. To whom do we pray? [Mt.6:9]. Do the wounds of martyrs persuade God to grant their requests? [Rev.6:9-11].

Arian Heresy

During the reign of Constantine, many of the bishops believed the heresy set forth by Arius. The essence of this error was that the Son of God was the first and highest of all created beings: neither God nor man, but mediator between the two.

Arius popularized and spread his deadly doctrine by putting the teaching into verse that was enjoyed and sung by the wayward church. This false teaching, which continued for nearly three centuries, is found even today in religions such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.

Stop and think: What difference does it make whether we believe one thing or another about Jesus? [Mt.16:13-17; 2 Jn.9-11; Col.2:8-10].

Flattery of Eusebius

Eusebius, an Arian bishop and close advisor to and historian under Constantine, spoke these flattering words about his ruler after the Emperor had assumed leadership of the church: “His character is formed after the Divine original of the Supreme Sovereign, and whose mind reflects, as in a mirror, the radiance of His virtues. Hence is our Emperor perfect in prudence, in goodness, in justice...in devotion to God.”

Stop and think: How should Eusebius’ conduct be seen in light of Prov.26:28; Job 32:21,22; and Ps.12:1-3?

Monasticism

In reaction to the corruption and worldliness spreading through the visible Catholic church, about 251 AD a number of hermits [people who lived apart from others] began to isolate themselves from people and the church into religious solitude. As their fame for devotion spread, others followed, eventually forming monasteries [religious groups living together by themselves bound by rules of their abbot/leader].

Many imagined to drive sinful desires from themselves by fasting, prayer vigils, toil, and self-inflicted torture: the body itself being seen as evil rather than its deeds. Even one hermit, Simon Stelites, lived on top of a pole for several years trying to “deny” the flesh thereby.

Some monastic orders [groups] were noted for their study and copying of manuscripts within their compounds which served to preserve reading and the Scriptures during the darkness of the Middle Ages. Others wandered from place to place, teaching and helping the poor while begging for their food. There were even monasteries [convents] for women who called themselves nuns.

These very monasteries that were established for deliverance from sin and worldliness eventually became breeding grounds for the very evils they were designed to overcome. As early as 450 AD, Augustine said that he found among the monks and nuns both the best and worst of humanity. During the 1200's up until the 1500's, they were infamous as dens of iniquity, and many served as some of the fiercest persecutors in behalf of Romanism against the true believers of Christ.

Stop and think: How did Jesus relate to the evils encountered in His day; how did the Essenes? Which is our pattern?

Ungodliness

Augustine of Hippo in North Africa [354-430 AD] said about the church in his day: “The man who enters is bound to see drunkards, misers, tricksters, gamblers, adulterers, fornicators, people wearing amulets, clients of sorcerers, astrologers...He must be warned that the same crowds that press into the churches on Christian festivals, also fill the theatres on pagan holidays.”

Worship of Mary

Though the veneration of angels, dead saints, and images was present for some time, by about 431 AD, the exaltation of Mary as the “Mother of God” became officially recognized. In both the Eastern and Western church she was hailed as “the queen of heaven, the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity, the bridge from God to man, through whom the nations are converted, and the fallen creature raised to heaven.”

Rapidly during the fifth century, many churches were dedicated to the “holy Mother of God, the perpetual Virgin.” In 608 AD, Pope Boniface IV turned the Pantheon in Rome [the temple dedicated for the worship of all pagan gods] into a temple of Mary and the martyrs.

By the 1200's, she was firmly exalted in the eyes of the common people as being the co-mediator between God and man: the one who would intercede with her Son, Jesus, in behalf of sinners. The worship of Mary turned their religion of terror into one of mercy and love.

Perhaps the harsh, unreasonable, and torturous cruelty of the Inquisition was what led multitudes to seek the compassion and tenderness of a Mother-goddess to appeal to her angry and terrible Son. At least this was how the Popes, the false visible representatives of Christ, had made Him to appear.

Stop and think: See John 2:3-5. Who obeys whom? Does Jesus accept the appeals of His mother as a mediator between men and Himself? Who is mediator and whose name saves? [I Tim.2:5; Acts 4:12].

Infant Baptism

One of the most popular preachers of his day, John Chrysostom, taught in about 450 AD: “We baptize infants also that there may be added to them saintship, righteousness, adoption, brotherhood with Christ, and to be made members with Him.”

Stop and think: If baptism saves, why did Christ not send Paul to baptize? [I Cor.1:17,18].

Tradition

Archbishop Hilary [c.440 AD] said: “The heretics all cite the Scriptures, but without the sense of the Scriptures; for those who are outside the Church can have no understanding of the Word of God.” On this subject, the monk, Vicentius [c.450 AD], stated what became the standard in the Roman church, declaring: “We must hold what has been everywhere, always, and by all believed.”

Stop and think: How do these ideas relate to Acts 17:11; I Cor.10:15; 14:29; and I Thess.5:21?

Mohammad

As the professed church proceeded in its idolatry and immorality, the God of heaven allowed the deceiver, Mohammad [c.570-632 AD], to arise and punish this wayward harlot of a “church.” His fierce insistence upon monotheism unleashed his sword upon all who did not worship the one true God, Allah, alone. So far had the church corrupted itself in the worship of Mary that Mohammad’s *Quran* portrays the trinity as “the Father, the Son, and Mary.” See **Appendix 3 *Islam and Christianity***.

Purgatory

The doctrine of Purgatory was established by Pope Gregory I in 593 AD. Purgatory [to purge/ cleanse] is an imaginary place where baptized Catholics who have not been good enough to enter directly into heaven must go after death. There, it is supposed, they will suffer for their own sins for a time before being released into heaven.

This teaching became a source of great wealth to the Roman church. It was proclaimed as an official doctrine by the Council of Florence in 1438 AD. The living were told that the buying of indulgences or paying for Masses to be said for the dead would release their departed loved ones sooner from Purgatory’s torments.

Stop and think: How does Lk.16:22-26 relate to Purgatory?

Pope as a Title

The title of Pope [Papa/Universal Bishop] was given to Boniface III by Emperor Phocas in the year 607 AD.

Stop and think: What titles did Jesus authorize? [Mt.23:6-12].

Heretical Pope

Pope Honorius I [625-638 AD], was condemned as a heretic by the Sixth Ecumenical [general/world-wide] Council in 678-687 AD. For centuries afterwards, each Pope had to swear by oath that he was rightly judged by that Council as heretical. Until now, he remains on the official list of Popes as one of Peter's "infallible" successors.

Corrupt Priests

St. Boniface wrote to Pope Zachary [741-752 AD]: "Young men who spent their youth in rape and adultery were rising in the ranks of the clergy. They were spending their nights in bed with four or five women, then getting up in the morning to celebrate the Mass!"

Pseudo-Isadorian Decretals

About the middle of the 800's, one of the greatest forgeries of all history appeared in the form of a document called, *The Pseudo-Isadorian Decretals* [false statements of Isadore, who died c.636 AD]. In it were a vast number of "official" declarations of Popes and Councils supposedly from the time of Clement of Rome [c.63 AD], to Gregory II [c.731 AD].

Binding regulations with respect to all manner of practices about worship, feasts and fasts, costumes, and sacraments [religious ceremonies believed to be means of divine grace] were listed. In it, the Popes and the Roman Catholic priesthood were said to be the one mediator between God and men. To sin against the priesthood was to sin against God.

Therein the Pope was set forth as the fountain of all power and authority: subject to no questioning and being the ultimate decider of all controversy. Its genuineness was not doubted throughout all the Middle Ages and served to establish the papal claims as authentic.

Its forgery was later exposed and denounced by all historians, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant. Yet the effect it had upon the development of papal tyranny and church doctrine up until the present could not be reversed. Though the human author is still unknown, undoubtedly the collection and contents of the Decretals can be traced to the father of lies.

Stop and think: Relate the Decretals to Isa.8:20 and Mt.7:15-20.

Image Worship

Through deceit and treachery, the reigning Patriarch [similar in office to the Pope] of the Eastern Orthodox Church was banished and tortured by those who insisted on worshipping images. Bishops trembled and agreed to erect images or were thrown out while the people rejoiced.

Thus in Constantinople in 842 AD, anathemas [delivering over to eternal judgment by the church] were pronounced upon all who reject traditions and refuse worshipping images of Christ, Mary, and the saints. By decree from Empress Theodora, systematic slaughter, beheading, burning, and drowning of believers rejecting image worship raged as a result. An estimated 100,000 souls perished between 842 and 867 AD.

Political Power of Popes

Pope Nicholas I [858-867 AD] arrogantly warned the world: "Fear, then, our wrath and the thunders of our vengeance; for Jesus Christ has appointed us [Popes] with His own mouth [as] absolute judges of all men; and kings themselves are submitted to our authority."

As his forces defeated the Holy Roman Emperor, King of Germany and Italy, Pope Alexander III [1159-1181 AD] declared: "The power of Popes is superior to that of Princes."

Stop and think: In what way is this following the Pattern of Christ? [Lk.12:13-15; Jn.3:17; 8:15; 12:47,48].

Forgiveness for Slaughter

Pope John VIII [872-882 AD] promised to soldiers fighting bravely against the pagans, the rest of eternal life and forgiveness of sins.

Stop and think: Was this Jesus' method and promise to His followers? [Jn.18:36; Mt.26:51,52].

Multiplied Wickedness

In eight short years between 896 and 904 AD, ten Popes occupied the chair of St. Peter in Rome. At least one was strangled to death while two others were murdered in prison by a rival Pope.

It became the custom of the common people, whenever a Pope died, to raid the palace, stealing whatever of value they could lay hands on. It was an almost indescribably wicked and depraved period.

Pornocracy

Thus began one of the darkest periods in the history of the Roman Catholic Church known as the Pornocracy [rule by harlots]. The Popes, through fear, ruled kingdoms by the sword of Emperors on the battlefields of the world. At the same time, Theodora and her daughters, through lust, ruled Popes with their harlotry in the bedrooms of palaces.

Sergius III [904-911 AD], after murdering two preceding Popes, obtained his title by relying on the support of the most powerful political and military clan among the Roman nobility. Theodora, the harlot wife of the clan head, was the most influential of all among them.

Her daughter, Marozia, though married and a mother, became Sergius' whore through whom he bore a son that later would become a Pope.

Pope John X [914-928 AD], adulterous lover of Theodora, tried to assert his authority over the Roman nobility who had put him into power. But he was no match for the wicked cunning of these women.

Marozia had his own brother slain before his very eyes and then threw the Pope into the dungeon where he was smothered to death. She thereby became the undisputed mistress of Rome, maneuvering two Popes into power in three years, before making her own bastard son through harlotry with Pope Sergius the new Pope.

He assumed the title, John XI [931-936 AD]. Marozia, to gain yet further power, offered her love to the step-brother of her conveniently late second husband. Alberic, her son by harlotry through her first "husband," revolted against the couple and locked his mother up for the rest of her days.

Alberic sponsored several Popes of his own and shortly before his death had the Romans elect his own teenage son [Marozia's grandson] as the next Pope.

This eighteen year-old took the name of Pope John XII [955-963 AD] and reigned as a depraved monster of iniquity. No woman was safe in the papal halls. A Roman Synod [an assembly of religious leaders] had him removed from his office. The charges?

"Pope John XII has mutilated a priest, set houses on fire, committed murder and adultery, has violated virgins and widows, lived with his father's mistress, converted the papal palace to a brothel, drunk to the health of the devil, and invoked the names of Jupiter and Venus and other heathen demons while gambling."

Before he could be sentenced, he was murdered by an enraged husband who found the Pope in bed with his wife.

Simony

Buying and selling religious position and influence

At the age of about twelve years, Benedict IX [1033-1045 AD] was made Pope by purchasing the position. He ruled as a captain of thieves who murdered and stole from pilgrims on the graves of martyrs, even slaying his victims and committing adultery in broad day-light. After stealing the papal treasury of everything of value, he sold his office for one or two thousand pounds of silver to the next Pope.

Celibacy

About 1079 AD, The celibacy [forbidding of marriage] of the priesthood was decreed by Pope Gregory VII. The two main reasons for this demonic doctrine [I Tim.4:1-5] and unnatural arrangement contrary to God's created order were these:

[1] Priests, Bishops, and Popes must not have families to leave their wealth to after their deaths. All must go into the treasury of Rome.

[2] The rulers of the Roman Catholic Church were to be without the natural loving loyalty to wife and family so that they might be wholly devoted to the will of the Popes.

Thus, marriage itself became a sin for the priesthood, but not fornication, adultery, or homosexuality. Mistresses, prostitutes, and sodomites, though officially condemned, were tolerated as long as the priests did not marry.

Pope Honorius II [1124-1130 AD] forbade the clergy of England to marry, yet cardinals and clerics alike lay with prostitutes almost without exception.

Stop and think: Did Jesus support or disapprove of marriage among His followers? [I Cor.9:5; Mt.19:4-6; Heb.13:4; I Tim.4:1-5].

Thievery

Gregory VII [1073-1085 AD] was the first Pope to literally dethrone kings by decree. He proclaimed that the power to bind and loose granted by Christ to Peter gave the Popes "the right to make and unmake kings" and to set up and bring down governments, seize lands and properties and "bestow it upon those who would hold it subject to papal authority."

Stop and think: What was Jesus' political involvement and which lands did He seize for His use and that of His followers?

Rosary

Between c.1090-1150 AD, praying with Rosary beads [reciting fifteen *Pater Nosters* {our Father} and one hundred and fifty *Ave Marias* {hail Mary}] was begun by pilgrims and Crusaders, adopted by Dominican monks, and thereafter widely accepted throughout the entire Roman Church and practiced worldwide up to today.

Stop and think: How did Jesus teach us to pray? [Mt.6:5-7].

Crusades

Between the years of 1095 and 1270 AD there took place seven Crusades promoted and funded by the Roman Catholic Church. The Crusades were armed pilgrimages to Jerusalem under the banner of the cross in order to reclaim the "Holy Land" from the hands of the Muslims.

The highest and best participated; kings and emperors, women of nobility and queens, priests and high ranking churchmen swelled the ranks. So did the worst of humanity: thieves, murderers, liars, and rogues of all classes.

These "holy" warriors were promised cancellation of all debts and forgiveness of any and all sins committed in the course of their "divine" mission. Bernard of Clairvaux [c.1146 AD] led the second Crusade and declared: "The righteous fear no sin in killing the enemy of Christ.

“When he slays, it profits Christ. The Christian exults in the death of the pagan because Christ is glorified thereby.”

He later saw the folly of such thinking and practice, but this expresses the fervency and excesses of the times. He continued, however, in his intolerance against the true believers. Those who did not have Peter as their apostolic founder, he said, had demons as their origin.

The Holy Land, in the minds of the Crusaders, was a land of wonders filled with the divine presence of Christ. As such, it could never be fitting for it to be held in the hands of Muslims. It must be reclaimed.

And so Jerusalem was conquered in 1099 but lost again in 1187: reconquered in 1229 and lost once more in 1244. But Christ wasn't there. He had risen and ascended over one thousand years before.

The chaplain of the archbishop during the third Crusade [c.1190 AD], was made sick unto death by what he witnessed among the “holy” Crusaders. He reports, “The army is altogether dissolute [completely wicked] and given up to drinking, women, and dice [gambling]. The Lord is not in the camp.”

Rape was common, even forceful orgies in convents of women dedicated to the church, such as occurred in the fourth Crusade. Yet they were granted an unlimited Indulgence [forgiveness of sin] by Popes for their service to this “holy” cause.

It is estimated that more than a million souls perished during these years of religious wickedness. Even one of the Crusades was made up of tens of thousands of children between the ages of ten and twelve.

Based upon a vision of one youth in 1213 AD, they marched to conquer the Muslims armed only with the singing of hymns and prayers as their weapons. Many simply died of starvation and weakness along the way while others were captured or deceived and sold into slavery.

Stop and think: What means did Jesus use to influence the world?

Inquisition

The Inquisition, referred to as the “Holy Office,” was instituted by the Synod of Tours and the Council of Verona between 1163 and 1184 AD. The Inquisition [a seeking of truth/information] was a thoroughly papal institution established to discover, root out, and destroy all heretics [i.e. anyone who did not openly agree with and practice Roman Catholicism]. It lasted into the 1800's.

Civil authorities were authorized and commanded to seize property, imprison, enslave, and execute all heretics. Those who would not, had their kingdoms taken from them and came under suspicion of heresy themselves.

Bishops were required to appoint a priest and a layman to enter private homes in order to “inquire” after heretics. Boys above fourteen years old and girls older than twelve were forced to report any heretics to church authorities or suffer their own cruel punishments.

Torture became a regular part of the process in order to extract “confessions.” The methods employed were of evil genius, exceeding even those of the pagan Roman Empire in the early centuries.

Women of 86 years and girls of 13 were stripped to the waist and publicly whipped. Foreheads were branded by hot irons with an image of a fox. Others were sold as slaves to row in galley ships.

Eyes were gouged out to scoff at their “blindness” to the “truth.” Thousands, after a mockery of a church trial, were burned alive at the stake. Countless hundreds of thousands of innocent citizens and true believers perished during this reign of terror.

Not satisfied with merely the murder of “heretics,” the Scriptures themselves became the object of their hatred. The Word of God itself was officially forbidden to the laity and placed on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* [List of Forbidden Books] at the Council of Toulouse in 1229. The reading of the Bible was punishable by death.

Pope Gregory IX [1227-41 AD] appointed Dominican monks to enforce the Inquisition even against Bishops and thundered that the Pope was “Lord and master of everyone and everything.” With his approval, his Inquisitors burned or buried alive countless hundreds of Christians.

Reading or possessing the Bible, along with any literature that did not meet with their approval, was mercilessly punished. In Spain, all copies of the Scriptures were seized and burnt beginning in the middle 1500's and continued to be completely forbidden up into the 1800's.

Stop and think: What is the difference between the Inquisition and true church discipline? [Mt.18:15-20; Rom.15:14; Gal.6:1,2; 2 Thess.3:14.15].

Relics

Though the worship of Relics [sacred objects believed to possess spiritual power to bless and heal] had been practiced from as early as the 300's AD, the return of the Crusaders from the Holy Land raised this form of idolatry to new heights. Great sums of money were paid by eager churches for all manner of "holy" objects recovered in the divine wars.

Noah's beard, Christ's tears, Thomas' finger that was thrust in Jesus' side, milk from Mary's breast, John the Baptist's head, the spear still fresh with Christ's blood, thorns from Christ's crown, straw from Bethlehem's manger, and countless other frauds were sold to the highest bidders and enshrined upon church altars.

Three times complete corpses, all claiming to be that of Mary Magdalene, were bought by different churches. So many pieces, and even complete versions, of the original cross of Christ were sold that it was believed that the wood had the power to miraculously multiply itself. All became the holiest objects of adoration in this dismal time of darkness.

Stop and think: What is the danger of such religious objects? [Ex.32:1-8; Jud.8:27; 2 K.18:4].

Indulgences

Indulgences gained official approval at the beginning of the 1200's AD. An Indulgence is the power of the Pope to release people from sin and its punishment by drawing upon the Treasury of Merit.

This Treasury was believed to be the stored up good works of Mary and the Saints that are so abundant that they can pay off all moral debts of the living. The Pope, since he stands in the place of Christ, can distribute this merit and release sinners from punishment, even as Christ did to the woman caught in adultery.

How can an Indulgence be obtained? By contributing to the support of the Roman Church, either by certain good works, but most especially, by paying money into the church's earthly treasury.

As if this filthy lucre was insufficient, Pope Sixtus IV [1471-1484 AD] also provided that indulgences could be sold for the dead to free them from Purgatory. Pope John XXII [1316-1334 AD] even published a list of prices to sell forgiveness for every conceivable sin, from murder to incest to sodomy. Nothing became too shameful for the "church" in order to collect money from the living for their deceptive and evil purposes.

Stop and think: On what basis are sins forgiven? [Ps.32:1-7; 49:7,8; Mk.2:5-10; I Jn.1:9].

Blasphemy and Persecution

Pope Innocent III [1198-1216 AD] gathered all of his cardinals, archbishops, and bishops upon his ordination and applied the words about Christ to himself in this way: "Am I not the bridegroom, and every one of you a friend of the bridegroom? Yea, I am the bridegroom; for I have the noble, rich, and highly exalted, yea, the honorable, pure, gracious, and holy Roman Church for my bride, who, by the ordinance of God, is the mother of all the faithful, and the supreme mistress over all the churches."

He declared that all who "blaspheme God and God's Son" [by not following the Pope and Roman Catholicism] should be "punished with death and confiscation [seizing] of goods." On one occasion, some four hundred true believers were committed to the flames at once. He says: "An Emperor is simply the arm of the Universal Church that wields the sword."

Besides those against the Muslims, several Crusades were instituted by him against the brethren, the Albigenses. Promise of entrance into the heavenly kingdom was given for all who will “oppose the agents of anti-Christ and fight against the servants of the old serpent.” Nearly twenty thousand were slain in one city alone: men, women, and children alike.

At this time, Emperor Frederick II, who carried out the Pope’s decrees for the Inquisition, labeled heretics [the true believers] as “fierce wolves, most wicked angels, and serpents vomiting out poison.” Their punishment was to have their tongues torn out of their mouths, be publicly burnt alive, or perish by the sword of his raiding soldiers.

The Mass and Idolatry

At the Lateran Council in 1215 AD, Transubstantiation and Auricular Confession were adopted as official doctrines of the church. Transubstantiation is the doctrine that the bread and cup at the Lord’s Supper become the literal flesh and blood of Christ by the “miracle” of the Mass performed as a sacrifice by the priest, “outside of which there is no possibility of salvation.”

Auricular Confession required the confession of one’s sins to a priest instead of to God. Adoration [worship] of the Host [communion wafer] became official doctrine under Pope Honorius III [1216-1227 AD].

Stop and think: How often has Christ been sacrificed? [Heb.9:26-28; 10:10-14]. To whom do we confess our sins? [Ps.32:5,6; I Jn.1:9].

Harlotry

In the 1200's, St. Bonaventure, cardinal and general of the Franciscans [a group of Roman Catholic monks], said that Rome was just like the harlot of the book of Revelation [Rev.17].

The papal court of Innocent IV [1243-1254 AD] was described by a Roman Catholic cardinal as “one brothel that extends from the West to the East gate.”

Pope Boniface VIII [1294-1303 AD] had both a mother and her daughter as his mistresses together.

During the reign of Pope John XXII [1316-1334 AD], he had one of his illegitimate sons raised to the rank of cardinal. Rome had the infamous reputation of having more harlots than any other city in the world during the days of Pope Sixtus IV [1471-1484 AD]. He took full advantage of this situation by imposing a church tax upon the earnings of all harlots and a separate tax upon all mistresses kept by the priests.

The magnificent artwork on the ceiling of the Pope’s private Sistine Chapel in Rome painted by Michelangelo was commissioned by Pope Julius II [1503-1513 AD]. This man bought his position as Pope for a fortune and had countless fornicating women who bore him numerous illegitimate sons.

Three Popes

Pope John XXIII [1410-1415 AD] had the godly John Huss and Jerome of Prague condemned and burned at the stake at the Council of Constance. It was also at this time that the cup was forbidden to the laity during the communion.

Later, that same council condemned this same John XXIII, one of the three rival Popes at the time, “for being a mass-murderer, mass-fornicator, a pirate, rapist, and sodomite,” decreeing that no Pope is above the authority of a duly gathered ecumenical council. After spending three years in prison, he was released and promoted as a cardinal by his successor, Pope Martin V.

This same Martin V [1417-1431 AD] wrote to the king of Poland to utterly exterminate the followers of John Huss. His letter commands: “Make it a duty to exterminate the Hussites. Remember that these impious persons dare proclaim principles of equality; they maintain that all Christians are brethren...they call the people to liberty...While there is still time, then, turn your forces against Bohemia; burn, massacre, and make deserts everywhere, for nothing could be

more agreeable to God.” He also reversed the decision of the Council that appointed him, saying that the Pope is subject to no council.

Society of Jesus or Jesuits

About the year 1534 AD, the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuit order, was founded by Ignatius Loyola. Its pledged purpose was to “serve the Roman vicar” [the Pope as the personal representative of Christ on earth] and to “execute immediately and without hesitation or excuse all that the reigning Pope or his successors may enjoin upon them.” Absolute obedience to Loyola, its general, and, in turn, to the Pope was mandatory.

Though approving of the Inquisition, they proceeded to advance Roman Catholicism by strict disciplined educational and moral means. He wrote “The Book of Exercises” that taught men how to obtain their own conversion.

It was claimed that it “was truly written by the finger of God, and delivered to Ignatius by the Holy Mother of God.” They became one of history’s most powerful promoters of Roman Catholicism.

Tradition and Apocrypha “Inspired”

At the Council of Trent [c.1545 AD], Tradition [the practices and decisions of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the centuries], was decreed to be of equal authority with the Bible along with the Apocrypha [the false fourteen books written between the time of Malachi in 400 BC and the coming of Christ].

Infallibility of Popes

The Syllabus of Errors, proclaimed by Pope Pius IX [1846-1870 AD] and incorporated into the Vatican I document, condemned freedom of religion, conscience, speech, press, and scientific discoveries which are disapproved by the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope’s infallibility in matters of faith and morals and temporal authority over all civil rulers was made official doctrine.

Ecumenism

Pope John Paul II [c.1978] gathered one hundred and thirty of the world’s religious leaders to Assisi, Italy, for a day of prayer for world peace. Praying together were snake worshipers, spiritists, animists, North American witch doctors, Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus, as well as representatives of major Christian denominations and Roman Catholics. The Pope declared that all were “praying to the same God,” each according to his tradition and understanding.

Stop and think: Whom did Jesus direct us to join together with in prayer? [2 Cor.6:14 - 7:1].

Thus we will close this wearying chapter and thankfully turn to a survey of those faithful brethren who neither loved this vile world, the empty and wicked religion of men, nor their own souls, even unto death.

Remnant

Though the number of the sons of Israel
Be like the sand of the sea,
It is the remnant that will be saved
Rom.9:27

Spontaneous Expansion

There was nothing artificial about the beginnings of Christianity. The church received her life from the Holy Spirit of God and this became their testimony both by word and deed. The progress of the kingdom of heaven was due to the efforts of spiritual common believers and not from “professional” preachers [Acts 8:4; 11:19; I Thess.1:6-8].

Apart from organized campaigns and without exhortations to do so, simple Christians spread the Word of life throughout the known world. The church in Rome began and developed this way without Apostolic presence. The NT pages are refreshingly free from the appeals for funds and pleas for laborers so prevalent in our day.

Spontaneous expansion begins with the joy of a new found love and purity in the light. It breaks out in a spiritually instinctive desire to help and bless others. Love must have an outlet, for it can only but extinguish if expended upon self.

Purity’s radiance cannot be hid. Truth’s compelling persuasion to the soul swells within seeking to vent its internal pressure. These are the deep well springs of an unrestrained expansion of true faith.

Yet means of expansion such as these are distrusted and avoided by the heart of man. Unspiritual men want to control their religion. An uncontrolled force, capable of sweeping away both the man and his carefully invented channels of restraint, is instinctively feared by him.

We fear this surging power of God in two ways. We first of all imagine that it must necessarily be disorderly and thus undesirably evil. And secondly, we are terrified of where it might take us.

But these fears are spiritually ungrounded. Our God is a God of order, not of confusion [I Cor.14:33,40]. And, the mighty flow of God from the throne only brings blessing and healing wherever it goes [Ezek.47:1-12]. It is not the Spirit of God that breeds fear, disorder, or evil; it is the spirit of pride and human control.

Nevertheless, the carnal imagine that their exercise of authority and establishment of laws and institutions are the safer and preferable course to take. Thus the Spirit of God is quenched and grieved [I Thess.5:19; Eph.4:30], while men carefully manage and direct their own religious affairs: maintaining a form of godliness, void of its power.

The early Christians feared the human inventions of learned “wise” men. They maintained and advanced the purity of Christ’s doctrine by simple faith and love with clear explanation to the common people. The wayward Church distrusts and opposes any but their self-appointed ruling clergy to instruct men in the Word of God.

In the histories of this expansion, often the only records we have of faithful brethren are preserved in the writings of their enemies. These accounts were regularly falsified in order to justify the execution of the “heretics,” while the original writings were destroyed by their persecutors.

For this reason, there regularly exist gaps in the historical account. Even so, the very things said about them by their opponents give evidence that their “heresies” and Christian character actually agreed with the Scriptures.

Names of these various groups frequently were given to them in hateful mockery by their foes and did not represent how the brethren identified themselves. Usually they simply referred to themselves by descriptions such as, “brothers,” “friends of God,”

“Disciples,” “Christians,” or other similar biblical terms.

Following are representative individuals and groups who, in one way or another, maintained devotion to Christ in the midst of crooked and perverted generations. In some, wheat and chaff can be seen mixed together in one individual or movement. Let us ever remember that Christ alone is the Pattern for His people.

Justin Martyr c.100 - 166 AD

Justin writes thus in defense of Christianity: [Selected Portions]

They think us senseless because we worship this Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, as God next to the Father. But they would not say so, if they knew the mystery of the cross. By its fruits they may know it.

We who once lived in debauchery, now study chastity; we, who dealt in sorceries, have consecrated ourselves to the good, the uncreated God; we who loved money and possessions above all things else, now devote our property freely to the general good and give to every needy one;

We who fought and killed each other, now pray for our enemies; those who persecute us in hatred, we kindly try to appease, in the hope that they may share the same blessings which we enjoy.

Epistle to Diognetus c.160 AD

Selected Portions

Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs. For they do not dwell somewhere in cities of their own. Neither do they use some different language nor practice an extraordinary kind of life.

They dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians and follow the native customs in dress and food and the other arrangements of life. Yet the constitution [manner of life] of their own citizenship is marvelous.

They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners [temporary residents]. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign. They marry like all other men and they beget children, but they do not cast away their offspring.

They have their meals in common, but not their wives. They find themselves in the flesh, and yet they do not live according to the flesh. Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.

They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men, and they are persecuted by all. They are put to death, and they are endued [filled with] life.

They are in beggary [poor], yet they make many rich. They are in want [lack] of all things, and yet they abound in all things. They are dishonored, and yet they are glorified in their dishonor.

They are evil spoken of, and yet they are vindicated [shown to be in the right]. They are reviled, and they bless; they are insulted, and they respect. Doing good, they are punished as evil-doers; being punished they rejoice, as if they were thereby made alive.

War is waged against them as aliens by the Jews, and persecution is carried on against them by the Greeks. Yet those who hate them cannot tell the reason for their hostility against them.

Montanists c.156 - 500's AD

As the Catholic Church moved more and more towards formalism with authority increasingly in the hands of the bishop, a movement began led by Montanus which emphasized the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Prophecy was prominent in contrast to the increasing ceremonies of the Catholic church.

As earnestness and standards of godliness were declining in the traditional church, the Montanists exhibited warmth of fellowship, zeal for the Lord, spiritual enthusiasm, and moral conviction. After a time, this “new wine” could no longer be contained in the old skins of the Catholic church and so new congregations were formed.

There were excessive reactions among some of them against the developing formal trends of the Church. Unbalanced and highly emotional extremes with wild speaking in “tongues” characterized some of their meetings. Nevertheless, a much needed call to the life of the Spirit in true devotion to Christ was raised.

Few lapsed from their ranks. There were notable martyrs among them such as Perpetua and Felicitas previously mentioned. The godly and influential Tertullian identified with them in the 200's.

The last of the Montanists were persecuted and brought to an end by the Emperor Justinian I [527-565 AD]. He had dedicated his throne under special protection of the Virgin Mary and thus purged the land of “heretics” who would not bow before either her or the Church.

Tertullian c.150 - 220 AD

Tertullian was a mighty rushing torrent of a man. Between the ages of thirty and forty, he was deeply convicted of his immorality and spiritual blindness and turned wholeheartedly to the Lord Jesus.

When converted, he hurled all of his intensity into strict godly living and the defense of Christianity against paganism as well as rebuking the wayward church. His keen legal mind, sharp wit, and fiery zeal were all employed, by both pen and tongue, in a single-minded devotion to the cause of Christ.

From his primary sphere of ministry in Carthage, North Africa, he exhorted the church against the worldliness of the Roman games. “What a man should not say, he should not hear. All licentious [lawless and evil] speech, nay every idle word is condemned by God. The things which defile a man in going out of his mouth, defile him also when they go in at his eyes and ears.”

Religious rulers envied, feared, and insulted him for his upright insistence upon worship in Spirit and truth. However, he was not intimidated by man. Of the lax bishop of Rome he said: “He has executed in Rome two works of the devil: He has driven out prophesy and brought in heresy; has turned off the Holy Spirit and crucified the Father” [referring to the Pope's error that the Father died for our sins].

Taking Paul's words in Col.2:8 and I Tim.6:20,21 to heart, he rejected the influence of philosophy as useless and dangerous to the spiritual life. He said:

It is this philosophy which is the subject-matter of this world's wisdom. In fact, heresies themselves are prompted by philosophy. It is ever handling questions but never settling anything.

What is there in common between Athens [the center of Greek philosophy] and Jerusalem [where the message of Christ first went forth]? What between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Away with all projects for a [philosophic] Christianity! After Christ Jesus, we desire no subtle theories.

Athanasius c.303 - 373 AD

Against all the spiritual and temporal powers of the world he stood without shaking. To the Emperor Constantine and the Arian bishops at the Council of Nicea, he thundered with unanswerable Scriptural evidence that both shamed and confounded his opponents. The Lord used him to save the church from plunging headlong into this serious error about the person of Christ.

Both political and religious hatred was aroused against him because of the truth he fearlessly proclaimed. He was condemned by imperial power five times to be cast out of his native Alexandria. Though slandered, brought before tribunals, and taking his refuge in the desert, nothing shook his testimony to the truth of the blessed Redeemer.

The Emperor, Julian the Apostate, who rejected his ceremonial Catholic upbringing for pagan occultist witchcraft, invited Athanasius back to Alexandria, hoping that he would politically serve his purposes against his enemies. He was to be greatly disappointed. Athanasius gladly returned from exile but rather devoted himself to extensive evangelism for some time before Julian again banished him.

At one time he was rebuked with the warning: "Athanasius, don't you know that the whole world is against you?" His reply? "Then I am against the whole world."

Pricillianists c.354 - 554 AD

Around the year 354, a remarkable move to return to complete dependence upon the Word of God alone began in Spain, spreading eventually to both France and Portugal. The Lord raised up a Spaniard named Pricillian as His chosen vessel to bring many to the light of the gospel.

Sincere and practical expositions of the Scriptures attracted multitudes who put their trust in Christ. His godly character and popularity among the then enlightened common people, inflamed the malice of the Roman clergy against him.

They falsely charged him with heresy in 380 of which he was shown to be innocent. The attack was renewed by the envious and hateful priests in 384 and this time, the Emperor granted permission to execute him and several of the brethren on the charges of "heresy, immorality, and sorcery."

In reality, the Roman church could not tolerate any who did not subject themselves to their authority and doctrine. As a result, Pricillian was beheaded and his numerous writings were searched out and destroyed, led by the evil Bishop Ithacus. This was the first execution of Christians by the Church itself.

However, in the year 1886, eleven of his writings were discovered in Germany, which give glowing testimony to his upright character, loving devotion to the Lord Jesus and the people of God, and soundness of his doctrine. Everything he taught was shown to be squarely based upon the Word of God which he said was the only valid rule for faith and practice.

He taught that Christians are called to a holy life which is the result of communion with Christ through love and faith alone. All believers are brethren, with no distinction between clergy and laity.

All believers alike partake of the Holy Spirit who instructs them through the Word. Therefore, the teaching of the Word is open to all according to the Spirit's good pleasure and is not dependent upon a designated leader.

By faith, one's entire being, body, soul, and spirit, becomes the habitation of the Spirit by union with Christ. This is rest in Christ, the experience of divine love and leading, and the fount of incorruptible blessing.

The contrast between this brother's simple explanation of the plain meaning of the Word itself cut to the heart of the Roman Catholic system. Because this move of God was not based upon a man, but rather upon true fellowship with Christ Himself through His Word, it continued for some two centuries after Pricillian's death.

Augustine c.354 - 430 AD

Augustine was the son of a vulgar, sensual, and rough man who encouraged his son in the same. His mother, Monica, however, was an ideal Christian woman. She prayed, wept, and exhorted her son to turn from his evil ways to true faith in Christ. This he refused for many years.

Forsaking all his good training at home, he went to Carthage for studies while living with a prostitute for fourteen years. During that time he fathered a son whom he named *Adeodotays*, Not Given of God.

Monica would faithfully visit him from time to time and plead with him to repent of his ways. His soul began to be troubled about his immoral life. The writings of some philosophers made him begin to question the wasting of his life in that way.

He explored the teachings of some false religions but found no satisfaction in their shallow answers to the deep issues of life. During this time of unrest, he heard Ambrose preach and his messages began to deeply trouble his soul.

Thinking to settle him by a change of scenery, one of his friends invited him to come and visit for a while. As he was there, his friends began discussing about two coarse army men who became converted to Christ, dropped their evil habits, and studied the Scriptures together.

Augustine thought within himself: "Here I am, supposed to be educated and cultured, yet my life is still a rotten mess." This testimony greatly convicted him and he withdrew to the far side of the garden where, in his own words:

I flung myself down under a fig tree, giving free course to my tears.

I sent up these sorrowful cries, 'How long, how long? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?' I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, I heard the voice as of a boy or girl, coming from a neighboring house, 'Take up and read! Take up and read!'

I rose up, interpreting it no other way than as a command to me from Heaven to open the book [Bible], and to read the first chapter I should light upon: "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" -Rom.13:13,14.

This was as the light of heaven to his darkened soul. He gave himself wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ and was converted on the spot. Immediately he informed his friends of the miraculous cleansing of his heart by the grace of Christ through faith alone. This became one of the major themes of his important writings that influenced men unto true salvation down through the centuries.

Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan whose preaching had initially impressed him, baptized Augustine on Easter day. His mother Monica's joy was unbounded. About one year later, as he and his saintly mother were about to board a ship on the Mediterranean Sea, she passed into the arms of Jesus, believing that her work on earth had been done.

Few men in the history of the church have had a more profound contribution to the course of Christendom than Augustine. On the one hand, his writings about the depravity of man's sin and salvation by grace through faith alone were a strength to the Reformation. However, his doctrine about the visible church being the only means of salvation, fueled the fires of persecution and untold evils in the hands of Roman Catholics throughout the ages.

Patrick c.440 - 493 AD

Patrick was captured by pirates and enslaved in their galley ships during his youth. The Lord allowed him to escape after years of earnest prayer. After that he saw in a dream a man who handed him countless letters from Ireland, begging him to come over and help them.

He responded, and for the rest of his days, Patrick devoted himself to tireless missionary work in obedience to the heavenly vision. Many thousands were baptized by him making him justly deserving of the designation, "The Apostle of Ireland." In his own words he relates: "I am greatly a debtor to God, who has bestowed His grace so largely upon me that multitudes were born again to God through me. The Irish, who never had the knowledge of God and worshiped only idols and unclean things, have lately become the people of the Lord, and are called sons of God."

Columba c. 521 - ? AD

One of the most powerful movements to stem the tide of paganism through the British Isles and eventually into Europe began with Columba. A native of Ireland, he spread the gospel in that land before establishing a center in Iona, a small island belonging to Scotland. From there he made numerous trips to the main body of land that forms the countries of Scotland and England.

He gathered twelve disciples about him, trained them, and they went forth with the light of the gospel. Fearing no danger or hardship, their love for Christ spread throughout those regions.

Their method was to establish a missionary village with a simple wooden church building in the center surrounded by classrooms and huts for the monks. There they learned the Scriptures, the language of the people, and translated portions of the Word of God and hymns into the local dialects.

New converts who proved faithful were taught how to teach the Word as well as some trade, so that they might carry on the work of the gospel among their own people. Rather than attacking the errors of the pagans, they preached the truth to enlighten with the Scriptures as their only source of faith and life. Justification by faith was preached and no appeals were made to the state for funding.

Columba was both a man filled with the love of Christ but, at the same time, a man of great physical strength mixed with a hot temper. This quality led him into numerous quarrels and even into a battle.

In that conflict, he was responsible for the deaths of between 3000 and 5000 lives. After that tragic war, he immediately departed to Iona in 563, vowing in true repentance to convert as many souls as had fallen on the battlefield.

His biographer relates how the Lord demonstrated through Columba His own superiority of power over the works of darkness. Spiritist Druids who inhabited those lands, confronted Columba and the gospel workers with their own miraculous signs, even as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses in Pharaoh's court [2 Tim.3:8,9]. And as was the case with those two, they made no further progress and the Lord exposed their folly before all.

Paulicians/Armenians c.650 - 850 AD

These devoted and simple brethren bore a strong witness for Christ in contrast to the corrupt Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church of their time. With a firm commitment to the Scriptures alone, they testified to NT doctrine and godly living, both by word and deed.

With no central authority and apart from a controlling creed, each assembly looked to Christ as their Head while maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Teachers gifted by the Holy Spirit moved from place to place to encourage, edify, and admonish the brethren similar to Paul's methods in the book of Acts.

A book by an unknown brother among them, *The Key of Truth*, was written to give the new converts "the holy milk whereby they may be nourished in the faith." The teaching of this book is most revealing about their doctrine and practice.

It states that our Lord asks first for repentance and faith and then gives baptism [showing the folly of baptizing infants and the unrepentant]. When anyone is baptized, it should be at his or her earnest request. Baptism should be in rivers or other water in the open air.

The one to be baptized should, on his knees in the midst of the water, confess his faith before the congregation present, with great love and tears. When a child is born, he should not be baptized, but rather the elders of the church should give counsel to the parents that they may train the child in godliness and faith.

Regarding ordaining an elder, great care is to be taken lest anyone unworthy be chosen. He is to be a man of perfect wisdom, love [which is the chief of all], gentleness, humility, justice, courage, sobriety, and eloquence [able to express truth well].

With prayer and the reading of suitable Scriptures he is asked: "Are you then able to drink the cup which I am about to drink?" And the reply is:

I take on myself scourging, imprisonment, tortures, reproaches, crosses, blows, tribulation, and all temptations of the world, which our Lord and Intercessor and the Universal and Apostolic Holy Church [not the Orthodox Church, nor their own denomination, but the one true church which Jesus is building] took upon themselves and lovingly accepted them. So even do I, an unworthy servant of Jesus Christ, with great love and ready will, take upon myself all these until the hour of my death.

With respect to image worship and the use of relics, the author says: "In this matter some have denied the precious mediation and intercession of the beloved Son of God, and have followed after dead things, especially images, crosses, waters, and all other vain things. As they worship them they offer incense and candles, and offer victims, all of which are contrary to the Godhead."

Between 715-775 there was no persecution and their numbers greatly increased. But by 780, an imperial edict was issued forbidding the practice of their "heresy." During those sixty years of rest from the sword, spiritual devotion had declined among many and others joined them with little spiritual understanding and commitment. These were willing to fight back with the sword.

This provoked Empress Theodora, a fanatical image worshiper who had restored this idolatry in the churches throughout the Eastern Empire in 842. She then ordered the massacre of 100,000 of them which occurred with brutal slaughter between the years of 842 and 867.

In retaliation, numbers of Paulicians allied themselves with Muslims against their common enemy, the corrupt Orthodox Church. In league with the Muslim Caliph, they defeated the Emperor Michael the Drunkard, son of Theodora, capturing cities as far as Ephesus. Images were destroyed in the captured cathedrals whose sanctuaries were used as horse stables in contempt of the statues and relics contained therein.

But such fleshly recourse and momentary victory proved to be in vain, both spiritually and militarily. Having taken up the sword, they perished by the same, were finally crushed by the Emperor's forces, and thus came to a shameful and tragic end.

As for the persecuting Orthodox Church, this systematic murder of the Paulicians so weakened the empire that the way was open for the eventual Muslim destruction of Constantinople in 1453, the capital of the Eastern kingdom, thereafter named Istanbul in Turkey of today.

Constantine Silvanus c.653 - 684 AD

One of the notable men among the Paulicians was Constantine Silvanus, a man of passionate devotion to Christ. His conversion came about after he had graciously entertained a traveling Armenian in his home who had escaped from Muslim captivity. It was in the year 653 that this persecuted brother explained the gospel to Constantine Silvanus.

His visitor recognized that his host was a man of unusual capabilities and was led of the Lord to leave him with a gift of incalculable value, a hand-written manuscript containing the Gospels and Paul's epistles. Perhaps never was a gift put to better use.

The entrance of the Word through the illumination and conviction of the Spirit of God brought the light of salvation to his soul. He began testifying of the gospel and soon found a group of brethren who shared his love for the Lord Jesus and met together in simplicity according to the Pattern as it is in Christ.

Constantine changed his name to Silvanus, the companion and fellow-worker of the Apostle Paul, and devoted the rest of his days into similar traveling preaching and teaching. Along the Euphrates valley in the east, and into Asia Minor in the west he was used of the Lord in the conversion of multitudes of Catholics and pagans alike.

So influential was his ministry that in 684, the Emperor issued a decree against the Paulicians and Silvanus himself. An officer from Constantinople, Simeon, was sent into Armenia to enforce it. Simeon placed stones in the hands of Silvanus' friends and ordered them to stone the teacher whom they had so long loved and honored.

At the risk of their own lives, they dropped the stones, refusing to have a hand in such evil betrayal of innocent blood. However, a young man named Justus, whom Silvanus had adopted as his son and brought up with tender care, hurled a stone at his aged father and benefactor, killing him on the spot. Simeon praised him, comparing the deed with that of David slaying Goliath.

Simeon

But this is not the end of the story. Simeon was highly impressed by the calm strength of Silvanus and the other brethren that suffered under his hands. He made serious inquiry from the Paulician believers about their doctrine and manner of life.

After returning to the Emperor, he spent three years with a tormented conscience before he at last became converted. Very soon afterwards, he took up preaching the same gospel that he had been sent to destroy. Such a testimony has great power [Acts 9:21; Gal.1:23].

Simeon found that as a Christian, he could no longer perform service for the Emperor and was required to flee Constantinople. He then took the name Titus, and for two additional years continued the gospel work of Silvanus who had testified the good confession to his soul.

But like Judas Iscariot, this same Justus told the Bishop where Simeon Titus could be found. The Bishop informed the Emperor who then sent and had him captured and burnt him to ashes along with a large number of these dear brethren who did not love their own souls, even unto death.

Sergius c.800 - 834 AD

It was a simple question raised by a godly sister that led to Sergius' salvation. "Why do you not read the Gospels?" He replied that only the priests might do that, and not the laity.

She replied: "God is no respecter of persons, but desires that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. It is a trick of the priests to deprive the people of their share in the Gospels."

It dawned on him that the Word of God was meant for all and not merely for the Romish priests. Through reading of the Scriptures then, he became born again, filled with burning zeal for the truth, and transformed in heart and life.

Sergius labored with his own hands, supporting himself as a carpenter, as he traveled far and wide preaching and teaching the truth, as he said: "until my knees were weary." His numerous letters were widely circulated among the churches and used of God to both instruct and heal many problems that inevitably arise among brethren. His testimony was such that he could ask from those who knew him if he had ever taken advantage of any, or ever lorded it over anyone.

But his ministry did not go unnoticed by the organized Church. They persecuted this devoted and useful brother unto death. In 834 he fell asleep in Jesus, having been cut in two with an axe at the hands of his pursuers.

Claudius c.814 - 839 AD

This brother stood against the prevailing image worship that was throughout the Italian churches. He insisted that: "We must worship the Creator, not the creature. Whoever seeks from any creature in heaven or on earth the salvation which he should seek from God alone, is an idolater."

He strongly attacked the superstitious use of the sign of the cross. He argued: "If we worship the cross because Christ suffered on it, we might also worship every manger because He was laid in a manger, or worship every donkey because He rode into Jerusalem on one. We should bear the cross, not adore it."

Pictures, crosses, and crucifixes were banished from the churches under his urging as the only way to purge these superstitions. He was reproved by Popes and Bishops, and found no sympathy among the people, becoming an object of scorn even to his neighbors.

Bogomils "Friends of God" c.850 - 1463 AD

Through the sympathy of the Emperor Constantine V who also opposed images, some Paulicians had immigrated to Constantinople in the middle 800's. From there they spread to other areas, preaching the gospel, and many churches were established.

Life begets life and is not dependent upon particular men or institutions to reproduce the Pattern of Christ. His indwelling presence in obedience to His Word is sufficient to keep and extend His church despite any power of earth or hell against it. If the church is put to death in one area, it will only resurrect vibrantly in another.

These Friends of God gave no special honor to Mary, crosses, or other relics. They maintained that the Roman Church celebrated the Lord's Supper superstitiously and not according to the Scriptures. Rome's priests were held in contempt because of their notorious corruption.

It is not amazing then that they were persecuted. Some of their foes charged them with immorality in a similar way that pagan Rome had done in the first century. Others freely recognized their high standard of life and morals, their love and grace, and humility and simplicity of life. But they claimed that they only behaved this way in order to deceive the people into their heresies.

Homes or simple structures were their places of meeting. They adorned them with no crosses, altars, bells, and candles. Plural elders provided spiritual leadership with all believers recognized as priests. Money was given freely to support the poor and sick along with teaching brethren who were devoted to moving from group to group to encourage the assemblies.

Catholicism had lost its hold upon the land of Bosnia by the end of the 1100's. Multiplied thousands of Bogomils filled the country with their testimony of truth and godliness, even among their Bans [rulers].

With the help of the King of Hungary in 1203, Pope Innocent III pressured the Bosnian leaders into once again adopting Roman Catholic practices in the churches. But the godly common people would not be so easily won over.

They had tasted the blessed life of freedom in Christ through the Word of God which was not dependent upon their Bans. They therefore peaceably resisted and refused to submit to Rome's decrees now accepted by their Ban. In response, Rome launched repeated and violent persecutions.

When these failed to persuade them to abandon the faith once for all delivered to the saints, the furious Pope ordered the Hungarian king to invade Bosnia and destroy the heretics. Years of war ensued which ravaged and devastated the land.

In the year 1291, to Rome's cup of iniquity was added the terror of the Inquisition with its torture and murder of the brethren. This continued for over one hundred and fifty years until the Muslim Turks invaded and conquered Bosnia in 1463. The harassed Bosnians made no resistance, Islam being perhaps the lesser of the two evils to them than that of the "Christian" Inquisition.

But under the new rule, the bright witness of the Friends of God waned and finally extinguished. Bosnia entered a four hundred year period of spiritual darkness and stagnation under Islamic rule.

Basil c.1070 -1119 AD

Supporting himself as a physician, this faithful brother tirelessly preached and taught the Word of God for forty years. His good example of diligence in labor rebuked the lazy lives of those who made religion an excuse for begging.

After these long years of spotless and fruitful testimony, the Emperor Alexius himself summoned Basil to the palace. The invitation stated that he admired Basil's character, and wished a serious explanation of his doctrines because he desired to be converted to the true way.

Basil was entertained at the Emperor's table as he spoke to Alexius earnestly about the doctrines of the Scriptures. After some time, suddenly the Emperor threw aside a curtain, revealing a scribe who had taken down in writing every word of the conversation.

Servants were ordered to put Basil in chains and then to be thrown in prison where he was kept for four miserable years. Seeing that he would not abandon the truth for Orthodoxy, his words at the Emperor's table that night were used as evidence to condemn him. Basil, along with other faithful Friends of God, were led to the Hippodrome [arena] in Constantinople and publicly burned to death as heretics.

Cathars c.1100 -1250 AD

Catholics complained that groups of heretics were to be found everywhere from the Black Sea to the Atlantic. Indeed, brethren who shared simply in the common life of Christ as their Pattern abounded. In northern Italy and southern France were brethren similar to the Bogomils that their enemies called "Cathars" [Puritans].

Peter of Brueys and Henry of Cluny were noteworthy as fearless preachers of the scriptural gospel of salvation. Many were led to true life in Christ and saw the error of Romanism. Peter was eventually arrested and burned by the Church in 1226.

One of the remarkable aspects during this period was a conference for teachers of the Word held in 1167. Elders from many countries, all from independent groups of believers with no denominational ties, gathered in France from as far away as Constantinople in Turkey. Such loving devotion and unity of the Spirit based upon devotion to the truth as it is in Christ alone, bears witness to the widespread blessing of fellowship apart from organizational association and central control.

Waldenses/Albigenses c.70 - 1700's AD

Waldenses: Beliefs and Practices

There is no accurate record of the origins of these brethren. They themselves traced their beginnings back to apostolic times. They claimed that the faith of the NT had been handed down from father to son over the centuries. In their own estimation, they were not reformers but rather had simply held to the Pattern of Christ over the centuries.

In the Taurus Mountains and Alpine valleys of Europe, were found multitudes of quiet settlements of true believers. These brethren were characterized by their notable reverence for the Word of God which they embraced as their only valid source for godly living and doctrine.

Following Christ was their chief theme and aim by obeying His words and imitating His example in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. They believed that it is only Christ through His Spirit that can give understanding to His words.

The foundational clearly revealed truths of the Word were held by one and all apart from any formal creed and organizational ties. Wide liberty was allowed in those disputed and unclear aspects of Christian practice that were not directed by command and precept in the Scriptures.

No authority of any man was allowed to set aside the authority of the Bible, no matter how prominent or gifted he may be. Practical holiness of life was expected of and evident among them all. They opposed the use of force in matters of faith and did not approve of the shedding of blood, though many allowed self-defense.

Salvation was by faith alone and evidenced by the fruit of love, apart from the Church of Rome or any other systems and creeds. The true church, they believed, has always been in existence as a testimony of Christ in every generation [Mt.16:18; Eph.3:21].

Churches and elders accepted their God-given responsibilities with fear and godly seriousness. In all matters concerning the church, including discipline, all the believers took part [Mt.18:17; Acts 6:5; 15:22].

Poor and aged were cared for by each assembly. The Lord's Supper was not a sacrifice, but a remembrance for all true believers of Christ's redemptive death as well as a strong exhortation to yield themselves wholly and be broken in humility of spirit for His sake.

Baptism was only for true believers and not for infants and little children. They simply cited our Lord's words in Mk.16:16 in response to their critics. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," they said, "but a child does not yet believe."

"Apostles" among the Waldenses traveled continually, visiting and building up the churches. They had no property, goods, homes, or families; if they had these, they left them [Mk.10:28-31]. Their life was one of utmost simplicity, self-denial, hardship, and danger. They went forth without money or a second change of clothes, trusting the Lord to supply their needs through the brethren to whom they ministered.

When they went forth, they always traveled two by two as the Lord had sent out his own Apostles. Due to the dangers of moving about as missionaries because of the Roman Church, they often traveled as businessmen, carrying small items for sale, such as knives, needles, etc. Begging they never did and some undertook serious medical studies in order to be of help to the sick they met along the way.

Great care was taken in commending men to this work. It was believed that one genuine devoted man was of more value than a hundred who were less consecrated and prepared. Education as well as spirituality was valued among them so as to devote all of one's abilities to the service of God: to love Him with all of the mind, as well as the heart and body.

Regular individual reading of the Scriptures along with family worship and frequent conferences were the most highly prized means of maintaining spiritual life among them.

Participation in the governments of this world was not their practice. They reasoned that, "The Apostles of our Lord were often brought before tribunals, but it is never said that they sat there as judges."

Waldenses: Peter Waldo

The name "Waldenses" came to be applied to them by their enemies due to the fame of one of their leading teachers. While discussing with other prominent citizens of Lyons, France, in about 1160, one of these leaders suddenly fell to the ground and died. Fear naturally gripped every heart, but especially that of a wealthy businessman, Peter Waldo. He was convicted that this was a sign of coming wrath upon his own life.

This was the circumstance that led to the conversion of one of the great teachers of the Word of God during the Middle Ages. He resolved to repent and to live soberly and righteously in the fear of God for the good of others and unto the glory of Christ.

Soon thereafter, he began to give for the blessing of the poor, and to instruct and admonish others to repent as well. And so by word and deed, his testimony became established.

More and more came to him to learn from the Words of life that he read and explained in their own native French dialect. This, of course, attracted the attention of the Bishop of the Roman Church who, though having the key of knowledge in his hand, neither entered in himself nor allowed any others to do so [Lk.11:52].

Not to be easily intimidated by threats from official religious authority, brother Waldo continued to teach the people who eagerly pressed to his door daily to hear the true Word of God. The Light from heaven exposed the folly, corruption, and man-made traditions of the Church, and the people rejoiced in the liberty of sins forgiven.

After some time, Waldo and many of those whom he taught were forcibly driven out of Lyons. But this only served to further spread the doctrine of God throughout many lands. After making ample provision for his wife and family and giving the rest to the poor, he departed to

devote the rest of his days to preaching and teaching the Word of God. Waldo died in Bohemia in the year 1217.

Mockingly and in hatred, they became known as Waldenses as well as by many other names. They were called “The Poor Men of Lyons” because of being driven out of that city with next to nothing. In England, Germany, and other places they called them “Lollards,” [Babbler /Weed] since Rome said they should be rooted out from the true corn of God.

Italians referred to them as *Fratricellii* [Little Brothers]. Some parts of Germany tagged them *Gazares* [Accursed/Abominable]. Those in Flanders were designated *Turilupini* [Dwellers with Wolves].

Waldenses: Their “Crimes”

Reinerius, a Dominican priest and Inquisitor writing sometime in the middle 1200's, catalogs their “crimes” according to the Roman Catholic assessment:

Among all the sects that ever were, there is none more pernicious [destructive, deadly, evil] than the Lyonists [Waldenses], and this for three reasons. Firstly, because it is the most ancient, for some say it has existed from the time of the Apostles. Secondly, because there is no country where this sect is not found. Thirdly, because this sect has a great semblance [appearance] of godliness, because they lead a godly life before men, and have a true belief in all things concerning God, only they condemn the Roman Church and the clergy.

This is what the Roman Catholics themselves said about these brethren. The following are some of the charges against them which led to their persecution unto death, also written by the Inquisitor, Reinerius. He represents the Waldenses as saying:

That the Church of Rome is not the church of Christ, is full of all sins and defects, and is the whore described in John’s Revelation. That the Pope is the head of all errors. That the prelates [Roman clergy] are scribes, Pharisees, and murderers. That only God is to be obeyed, not prelates. That all human rules are Pharisaical institutions. That no one is greater than another, but all are brethren. That no titles such as Pope or Bishop should be used. That no one may bow his knees before the priest. That men should not give tithes to the clergy. That no force should be used to compel any to the faith.

Thus from the writings of their enemies themselves, there has been preserved a testimony to their simplicity in following the Pattern of Christ. This is further seen in the next quote that was written about fifty years after those mentioned above.

Pope John XXII issued a decree against apostates in 1315 in which he accused the Waldenses in this manner:

They assert that there were two churches; the one, carnal, abounding in riches, luxuries and lusts of this world, polluted with all manner of sin and shame, and governed by the Pope of Rome. The other [is] spiritual, temperate, pure, virtuous, honorable, and poor; to which they and their adherents [followers] alone belong.

Throughout all of Europe, in Eastern realms, and in parts of the Mediterranean their influence was felt. Their simplicity of devotion to the Pattern of Christ was paving the way for the world to be loosed from the oppressive bondage of Rome: whose lies and murders had led more than a million souls to cruel deaths. But more horrific than this carnage, are the countless other millions of Catholics led to eternal doom by the deadly doctrines of Rome.

John Wycliffe c.1324 - 1384 AD

Wycliffe: Beliefs

Called the “Morning Star of the Reformation,” John Wycliffe had profound effect upon all of Europe. A professor at Oxford University by age twenty five, he was used of the Lord to powerfully confront his generation with simple biblical truth.

Fearlessly he pointed out how the Roman clergy had kept the truth of the Scriptures from the people. In his book, *Of the Truth of Holy Scripture*, he repeatedly proclaimed that the Bible is the final and only authority for faith and life.

He says its interpretation is not in the hands of a man or an organization. The Holy Spirit makes clear its meaning to any person who will seek God for understanding in humility and trust.

Christ Himself is found in the Scriptures; to be ignorant of them is to be ignorant of Him. The Word of God is infallible [without error] and to place human tradition and ordinances alongside of it is blind presumption.

Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture, not as tearing verses out of context as do heretics. The primary and literal sense of a passage is to be first considered, then its further figurative or secondary sense. Paul was very careful in his use of words, it is therefore important to pay close attention to the exact words of the Bible.

Though he was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church until the day of his death, he did not hold to their superstitions, traditions, and errors. He clearly taught that the church was not a visible religious organization with the Pope as its head.

Rather, Christ’s church is made up of all of God’s chosen true believers, whose only Head is the Lord Jesus. Its only recognized leaders are elders and deacons and all believers are priests with equal access to the throne of grace.

To him, salvation is by grace through faith alone, but true saving faith will assuredly issue in a holy life. Transubstantiation is a blasphemous deceit and superstitious ritual void of any miraculous power of priests. This, in particular, struck at the root of Roman domination over the souls of men and resulted in even his supporters and university forsaking him.

Wycliffe: Works

Wycliffe wrote numerous tracts that were distributed far and wide. Perhaps his greatest work was the first English translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible, which had been the standard “inspired” version of the Scriptures throughout the Roman Catholic Church since the time of Jerome in 400 AD.

Until then, the Latin Bible was in the possession of the Roman clergy alone, a language that none of the common people understood. Now, hand copied portions, complete New Testaments, and whole English Bibles shed their life-giving beams into the darkened corners of the English speaking world.

The Word of God is what sets men free from the systems of men. This, the Pope realized all too well. And so, in 1377 he excommunicated Wycliffe from the Church, banishing him to eternal destruction.

The Lord used two things to protect His servant from the wrath of Rome. King Edward III of England was determined that he would be sovereign over his own country, and not Rome, and thus refused to act upon the Pope’s order against Wycliffe.

Secondly, in less than a year, the excommunicating Pope had died and the Roman Catholic Church was split in one of the greatest scandals of its history. For nearly forty years the Great Schism [division] continued, with one set of popes in Rome and another group of popes in Avignon, both claiming to be the true successors of Peter.

The Catholic nations were divided, some siding with the “Pope” in Rome, and some with the one in Avignon, and so were confused and distracted from pursuing the “heretics” for a season.

Thus, while the rival “heads” of Christendom hurled anathemas at each other, the true Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, protected His servants and brought many souls to Himself through their preaching. When his life work was finished, Wycliffe peacefully passed into

the presence of the Lord in 1384, having righteously served his generation and countless generations to come.

Wycliffe: Legacy

He trained and sent out a number of young men as preachers who were received by both rich and poor, illiterate and educated alike. Their message was no mere condemnation of Rome's folly. But rather, they proclaimed the gospel of grace through Christ as the liberating power of God unto salvation.

All were persecuted by Rome as "Lollards," and had to flee from place to place. But the light of the Word they brought remained and endured in the hearts and lives of multitudes. So widespread had the influence of the gospel gone, that it became a common saying: "If you meet two men upon the road, you might be sure that one was a Lollard."

At the Council of Constance in 1414, because the effects of his life and teaching continued to speak though he was dead, Wycliffe and his doctrine were condemned as heretical. Furious Roman Catholics dug up his remains, burned them to cinders, and cast the ashes into the river. But the living legacy of the Word of God could not be silenced and disposed of, despite all the rage of Hell's gates put together.

John Huss c.1369 - 1415 AD

Jerome of Prague had come under the influence of Wycliffe's teaching while he was at Oxford, and returned to preach in his city with great zeal for the truth of God. One upon whom his words fell with power and conviction was John Huss.

Huss was from a peasant family, but rose to become rector of one of the leading universities in Europe, simply because of his outstanding abilities. There at the University of Prague, his fiery preaching of the truth and fearless rebuke of the corruption of the Roman clergy won many to the way of Christ and aroused the wrath of the Pope.

He ordered the writings of Wycliffe, the root of the "heresy," publicly burned, as well as excommunicating Huss from the Church. Cast out of Prague, he wandered through the fields of Bohemia, often with large crowds attentive to his teaching. He may justly be called the "John the Baptist of the Reformation."

On such an occasion he cried out with a loud voice, "The wicked have begun by preparing a treacherous snare for the goose [Huss means goose in his language]. But even if the goose has broken through their toils [snares], other birds, soaring more boldly towards the sky, will break through them with still greater force. Instead of a feeble goose, the truth will send forth eagles." This prediction was fulfilled by the Reformers of the next century.

Believing that it was his duty to bear witness to the truth of Christ, he was invited and so traveled to attend the Council of Constance. The Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Sigismund, promised that he would be granted safety to and from the gathering. Huss took this as the Lord's opening to present the truth of the Scriptures before one of the largest gatherings of Church dignitaries ever assembled.

He was wickedly betrayed. Upon arrival, he was immediately and "safely" conducted directly into a dismal and stinking prison. The Council declared that they had received an infallible revelation from the Holy Spirit that was forever binding, saying: "No Council is bound to keep faith [fulfill a promise] with a heretic." Meanwhile, the city itself was the scene of extravagant luxurious entertainment, shameless wickedness, and unrestrained immorality among the assembled prelates of Rome.

In prison, he was subjected to every type of ill-treatment in order to persuade him to denounce his teachings, the "leprous infection of the Waldenses," that he was accused of. This he refused to do, and when brought before the Council, they mocked his speech and despised his person. He simply replied: "I am ready to retract anything that I have taught, provided it can be shown from Scripture wherein I have been in error."

He was escorted back to his miserable cell while his judgment was being determined. Two weeks before his death he wrote to some faithful brethren from his cheerless confinement:

I am greatly consoled by that saying of Christ, 'Blessed are you when men shall hate you.' [This is] the best of greetings, but difficult, to live up to, for it bids us rejoice in these tribulations.

Even that bravest Soldier, though He knew that He should rise again on the third day, after supper was depressed in spirit. On this account the soldiers of Christ, looking to their Leader, the King of Glory, have passed through fire and water, yet have not perished.

But [they] have received the crown of life, that glorious crown which the Lord, I firmly believe, will grant to me - to you also, earnest defenders of the truth, and to all who steadfastly love the Lord Jesus.

O most Holy Christ, draw me, weak as I am, after Yourself, for if You do not draw us we cannot follow You. Strengthen my spirit, that it may be willing. If the flesh is weak, let Your grace precede us; come between and follow, for without You we cannot go for Your sake to a cruel death.

Give me a fearless heart, a right faith, a firm hope, a perfect love, that for Your sake I may lay down my life with patience and joy. Amen. Written from prison, in chains.

On his fateful final day, he was brought once again before the Council. There they condemned him to be burned to death, stripped him of his priestly robe, and placed a paper crown upon his head which was painted with devils along with the words, "A ringleader of heretics."

When he saw it, he said: "My Lord Jesus Christ, for my sake, did wear a crown of thorns; why should not I then, for His sake, wear this light crown, be it ever so ignominious [shameful]?" As it was set upon his head the Bishop proclaimed, "Now we commit your soul to the devil!"

Huss lifted his eyes towards heaven and said: "But I commend into Your hands, O Lord Jesus Christ, my spirit which You have redeemed!"

When chained to the stake and the wood was piled up to his neck, he said to the executioner, "You are now going to burn a goose, but in a century you will have a swan [a large white goose-like bird] which you can neither roast nor boil."

And this prophetic word was indeed fulfilled one hundred years later when Martin Luther arose and shook the known world with the truths that Huss had lived and died for. The symbol of Luther's family clan was the swan, and though hunted and persecuted throughout his life, Luther died in peace at the end of his days.

William Tyndale c.1494 - 1536 AD

Tyndale: Early Years in England

At Oxford University, William Tyndale was a fellow student of Erasmus, who had compiled and published the first Greek New Testament. Through the study of the NT in the original Greek, light flooded his soul and transformed his life.

From there he moved to Cambridge for further studies, after which he came to live in the home of an influential knight as tutor of his children. Since Sir John Walsh, his employer, regularly entertained the learned and high ranking prelates of the Church, Tyndale constantly was engaging them in discourses upon the Scriptures.

Tyndale's knowledge of the Word exposed the ignorance and folly of Roman tradition. In one conversation, a Reverend Doctor burst out with these blasphemous words: "We would be better to be without God's laws than the Pope's!"

Full of godly zeal, Tyndale retorted, "I defy the Pope and all his laws!" adding, "If God spares my life, before many years I will cause the boy that ploughs the field to know more of the Scriptures than you do!"

Already, seven brethren had recently been burnt to death by the Roman Church for the "crime" of teaching their children the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in English. This mounting persecution forced him to flee to London where he stayed for one year with Humphrey Mummuth, the mayor's assistant.

There he studied night and day, preparing his great work of translating the first NT from the original Greek into English. While residing in London, he gained firsthand exposure to the pomp, pride, and wickedness of the clergy which fired his righteous soul yet even more.

Tyndale: Flees Persecution

Persecution by the ambitious and evil Cardinal Wolsey, a hater of the Bible who hoped to become the next Pope, forced him to depart from England altogether. He never again set foot on English soil.

Traveling to Germany, he was able to meet and discuss with Martin Luther, though he still was required to remain in hiding. Secretly, he moved from place to place, always hiding his precious manuscripts from which his translation of the NT was done.

Tyndale was thoroughly convinced, and rightly so, that without the Scriptures in the hands of the people, the enemies of the truth would quench, pervert, and replace the message with their own wicked doctrine and traditions. The lack of the Word available to the common man he saw to be the chief cause of all the evils in the Church.

By 1525, unlike Wycliffe's hand-copied versions, his first edition was printed by the thousands, and many copies were smuggled into England at great risk of life. The Bishop of London and Sir Thomas More did all that they could to discredit and destroy the New Testaments that were coming into the land. They called the NT of Tyndale, "a pestiferous [deadly infectious] and most pernicious [wicked] poison."

Such was the blind hatred of the light, that More said Tyndale's NT was so full of errors that "to tell all would be to rehearse the whole book...to search for one fault [alone] would be like studying where to find water in the sea." Yet the exacting diligence and godly fear of Tyndale in the accuracy of his translation was vindicated at last, as are all of wisdom's deeds. The King James translation of 1611 adopted his wording, almost without change, so excellent was his work.

Meanwhile, the light of the Word in the language of the people was greatly blessed of God throughout England to the salvation and liberty of multitudes from Rome's yoke. But the Bishop of London did not remain inactive. He threatened excommunication of any who had a copy in his possession. Many were put to death for owning or distributing the NT in English.

The Bishop offered large sums of money to buy copies of the New Testaments in order to publicly burn them and thus purge England from their "evil and heretical" effects. But, unknown to the Bishop, the merchant he bought numerous copies from at a very high price, was a Christian and friend of Tyndale.

All money was sent to Tyndale in Germany and there printed three times the number of copies that the Bishop had bought! All were sent to England and distributed throughout the land.

Later, when Sir Thomas More had apprehended this same merchant, he demanded that he betray the ones who were funding Tyndale's work. Brother Packington truthfully replied: "My lord, I will tell you truly, it is the Bishop of London who has helped us. He has bestowed among us a great deal of money upon New Testaments to burn them. That has been, and still is, our only help and comfort."

The work proceeded with great danger through many obstacles. On one journey from the Netherlands to Germany, the vessel he was on suffered shipwreck on the coast of Holland and he lost all of his books and writings. The manuscript of his translation of Genesis through Deuteronomy perished in the sea.

What did he do? He started all over again and the Lord sent the able encouragement and help of Miles Coverdale to assist in the translation of the OT.

Tyndale: Prison and Death

It was while he was thus engaged that a spy from the English clergy came to his residence in Belgium, pretending to be a merchant and in agreement with Scriptural teaching. After some time, Tyndale was arrested and imprisoned for eighteen months awaiting his execution.

During that time, his godly character and words of truth were used of the Lord to convert the jailor, his daughter, and other members of the household. His testimony throughout the castle was such that even the unbelievers said: "If he is not a good Christian man, then we know not whom we might take to be one."

In the year 1536, he was tied to a stake, strangled, and then burned to ashes. His last cry with loud voice from fervent lips was: "Lord! Open the king of England's eyes!" Unknown to Tyndale, his beloved co-worker, Miles Coverdale, had completed and printed the first entire English Bible the year before which were already in circulation at the time of his death.

By 1538, just two years after his martyrdom, Bibles were to be found in every church in England. By royal decree from King Henry VIII, the very king Tyndale had prayed for, copies of Coverdale's Bible containing Tyndale's NT were placed in every church for the edification of all who desired to read.

"He who goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" -Ps.126:6.

Thus did William Tyndale lay down his life for the sake of his nation, that the gospel might burst the darkened dungeon of religious bondage and set the captives free. In commenting upon his translation in a letter to brother Frith, he declared: "I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience, nor would do this day, if all that is in earth, whether it be honor, pleasure, or riches, might be given me."

8

THE LIGHT DAWNS

Reformation of the 1500's

In the year of Martin Luther's birth, 1483, a remarkable prophesy was uttered. The Inquisitor, Henry Institoris, who had condemned a Roman Catholic Cardinal to imprisonment and death because of his rebukes against the evil lives and doctrines of Rome, said this:

"There is no human power that can reform the Church. The Most High will find other means, which are at present unknown to us, although they may be at our very doors, to bring back the Church to its pristine [uncorrupted] condition." More than one Caiaphas has unknowingly spoken forth truth from his own wicked lips [Jn.11:49-51].

Dispersed from the babel of Romanism, emerged a multiplicity of Christian groups, each speaking its own language and adhering to its own customs. The Reformation thus scattered the Babylonian-like uniformity of the popes, and halted the erection of that monstrous tower against heaven.

Yet, as in the days of Nimrod, the resultant groups carried with them many of the same customs and orientations derived from their center in the spiritual plains of Shinar. Brick was still used for stone and slime for mortar.

Human substitutes for God-given materials and methods characterized most. Rome lived on in her rebellious sons.

Nimrod's mighty hunting before the Lord was continued by the emergent Protestant churches who persecuted and even put to death those who deviated from their new found truth. Conscience continued to be enforced by the sword in the recently born and now-reigning state churches of Europe.

Lutherans fought Zwingli and his followers. Zwingli and his band fought Catholics on the battlefield and executed Anabaptists in their cities. Calvin ordered Servetus burnt to death for heresy. Anglicans persecuted, drove out, and had Puritans and non-conformists put to death.

Paul's questions to the Galatians may well be asked to the reformers: "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected in the flesh? You were running well, who hindered you from obeying the truth?" -Gal.3:3; 5:7.

Though there is much to be commended in the Reformation, there is also much to be lamented. It has not been observed in the history of the church that any system has been reformed from within. God separates His people from corruption and brings to the established order from without a fresh, vital, and transforming power: that is, should they be willing to receive it.

It was so with the Lord Jesus. He forged no alliance with Jerusalem's status quo [existing condition]. He came, bringing new wine in its necessary new wine skin.

It is here that the reformers fell short of the Pattern of Christ. Luther, for example, wished to hold onto all from the Roman Catholic system that was not positively forbidden in the Word. He even longed to eventually see a merger of his "new" doctrine with the existing Church order.

That was doomed from the outset. A little leaven, leavens the whole lump, and so it came to pass. It is not Christ's Pattern.

But, we are anticipating what is yet to be described. Let us return to the preparations for this remarkable period of man's history.

Preparations

As was true before the momentous event of Christ's birth, God had prepared the world for His coming. And He did so at the time of the Reformation as well.

Reformation cannot thrive in ignorance. The dismal bondage of humanity's mind during the Dark Ages must come to an end. The Lord wants the common man to know the truth that he might be set free.

And so it was that a wonderful invention was perfected that forever after completely transformed the lives of men and the history of the world. In 1456 Gutenberg had completed the first printing press with movable type. His initial production was two hundred copies of the Word of God printed in Latin.

By 1483, numerous printing presses throughout Europe were producing many different books in a wide range of languages. Printing and literature in the hands of the literate cannot be underestimated in the progress of reformation.

God is literate. He not only speaks, He writes. Paul commands that his letters be read to all the brethren [I Thess.5:27; Col.4:16].

Common men are commanded to read and reason from the written Word of God for themselves [Isa.34:16]. Even children are to gain their doctrine from the Scriptures directly [2 Tim.3:15].

When asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied: "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" -Lk.10:25,26. A thrice repeated, "It is written" -Mt.4:4,6,10 effectively silenced the oral assaults of the devil.

Literacy transports a man beyond the narrow circle of his immediate environment and the smallness of his own thoughts. By writing, the living thought is captured as a word and imprisoned on paper and continues to live therein.

Thus the printed page provides an unchanging reference point for repeated reflection. By it, thoughts and convictions can span generations. Thereby waywardness can be arrested by bringing original declarations into present circumstances [Isa.30:8].

Writing cancels the bondage of hierarchy stemming from oral tradition. By it each must judge for himself the message received. Writing provides an external referent independent of the one speaking it. And that of the Scriptures thereby judges all men [Acts 17:11; I Cor.10:15; I Cor.14:29].

Though Revelation and Inspiration ceased with the Apostles, understanding and apprehension continues and develops. We can expound upon but not add to the Revelation of God's Word. But we need not be able to read them in their original Hebrew and Greek languages to do so.

The truth of the Scriptures can be expressed in writing in other languages outside those of the original written revelation. This is shown by the NT's use of the *LXX*, the Greek translation of the OT [c. 225 BC], which was the same common language of the people of the first century.

And thus by the NT's use of the *LXX* OT, the Bible itself prepared the way for its translation into the language of all peoples. Gutenberg and those after him were granted wisdom and skill to print the Word in durable quantities so that its blessed light might radiate into the hearts of the world's millions.

John Reuchlin [1455-1522 AD] of Germany traveled to the University of Paris [c.1473] where he studied Greek and Hebrew brought to the West by scholars from Constantinople. He became the foremost Hebrew scholar of the OT Scriptures. This arrival of the Hebrew OT and the Greek NT was the fount of an ever increasing enlightenment of the Word of God throughout Europe.

Since as early as 1397, there had been a steady migration of learned Greeks from the capital of Byzantium into Italy and France, bringing their precious manuscripts with them. By 1453, Constantinople [modern day Istanbul, Turkey] had fallen to the invading Muslim Turks.

This rising threat of Islam caused the flow of ancient literature and knowledge into the West. It also fueled the Renaissance [rebirth] of culture and signaled the end of the Middle Ages.

Erasmus 1466 - 1536 AD

Erasmus distinguished himself as the most learned and able Greek scholar of his day. He wrote an immensely popular satire and attack on the abuses and evils of the monks, clergy, and popes entitled, *In Praise of Folly*. It was translated into every European language and probably did as much as nearly any other single contribution to arouse popular discontent against Roman Catholicism.

His greatest work, which was mightily used of the Lord in establishing the truth, was his publishing of the Greek NT in the year 1516. This was the Greek text of Tyndale's translation for the English speaking world and of Luther's to the Germans. It was a giant step forward in the discovery of new spiritual worlds, far more significant than Columbus' discovery of America.

He insisted that students in the universities study the Scriptures themselves, and not merely the writings of Catholic churchmen. Reuchlin and Erasmus were used of the Lord to bring

the Scriptures in their original languages to the learned: Luther and Tyndale, to the multitudes in their own native tongues.

By Erasmus' restoration of the NT, he restored what that revelation taught. His object in publishing his NT was to "obtain a knowledge of the pure and simple Christianity of the Bible."

Yet he was not the kind of man that reformations are made of. Luther said of him: "Erasmus is very capable of exposing error, but he does not know how to teach the truth. I fear that Erasmus knows little of the grace of God."

He was a man of learning first and foremost, and only a Christian secondarily. His character was one of timid caution rather than determination and courage.

Hesitatingly, he advocated moderation and shifted between the two camps, that of Rome and that of the Reformers. He thus compromised the very blazing light that he had put into the hands of men and was unwilling to abide by the consequences of doing so. He feared where the mighty tide of truth might take them and was not willing to launch forth from shores of security, sand though they were.

Both Rome and the Reformers caused him to tremble. "It is dangerous to speak," said he, "and it is dangerous to be silent." Finally, out of his unwillingness to displease any, he offended all.

He recanted [publicly withdrew] his opposition to Rome, but the furious prelates and monks would not forgive. And at the same time, by recanting, he lost all trust and respect from those who willingly chose to lay down their lives for the sake of the truth.

Stop and think: What results from compromise?

The Reformers themselves were not notable men. God's way is to effect great things through small means. Not many mighty, noble, and wise according to the flesh have ever filled the ranks of God's chosen vessels. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" -Jn.1:46 echoes this Pattern throughout the ages.

And so it was with the Reformers. Luther came from the cottage of a poor miner, Zwingli from a shepherd's hut, and Melancthon emerged from a metal-working shop. Thus the power that toppled the empire of Rome was made perfect in vessels of weakness.

Reformation in Germany

Martin Luther c.1483 - 1546 AD

Luther: His Early Days c.1500 - 1517 AD

Son of a miner, his father had ambitions for Martin to become a lawyer. He therefore studied law at age eighteen at the University of Erfurth in the year 1501. Blessed with a fruitful memory, strong imagination, and quick mind, he soon excelled.

But weighing upon him heavily was the concern for the salvation of his own soul. In the library of the university, he discovered, held, and read with great excitement for the first time, a copy of the Bible.

That Book, hidden on darkened shelves and closed for so long, was soon to become opened for the nation and the world through the hands of that young man.

On returning one evening from a visit to his parents, a fierce and sudden storm came upon him. A fearful bolt of lightning with its deafening clap of thunder blazed and boomed at his feet. Luther threw himself upon his knees, with terrifying thoughts of final judgment flashing through his horrified mind.

Amid trembling thoughts of death, he vowed that if the Lord spared his life, he would abandon the world and devote himself entirely unto God. But how could he stand before the judgment of the living God, the all-consuming fire, in his present condition?

He must become holy. But how? He resolved to withdraw from the university and enter an Augustinian monastery, hoping to be relieved of his terror of judgment, burden of guilt, and obtain the holiness he lacked.

Through prayers, fasting, and severe treatment of his body, he discovered no peace within, but rather matters grew worse. His superior, Johan Staupitz, counseled him to read the Scriptures, and pointed him directly to Christ as the only means of salvation and peace with God.

Though he often read and reflected upon the one chained Bible present in the monastery, his heart remained chained in its dungeon of sin and despair. The gospel's blessed light had not yet burst his bonds.

After three years as a monk, Staupitz arranged to have him appointed as a lecturer at the University of Wittenberg in 1508. There, through the study of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, finally, glad light entered Luther's heart; he had found that "the just shall live by faith" -Rom.1:17. "Justification by faith alone" became his theme and the burning passion of his preaching thereafter.

Persuaded by Staupitz, he took up preaching at the old and battered chapel of Wittenberg, a small decaying wood structure measuring twenty by thirty feet. In this wretched place, reminding one of the crude manger-birth of the Son of God, the preaching of the Reformation was born.

Never had such preaching been heard. Before then, preachers had sought to amuse or impress their hearers, not bring the conviction unto eternal life. Multitudes flocked to hear him, for he spoke with authority, and not as their scribes. Soon the little chapel could not contain them.

But his lecturing and preaching were interrupted by a necessity laid upon him to represent the Augustinian monks in Rome itself. It was God's preparation for his servant to witness firsthand the luxury, decay, and evils of the center of Christendom.

When the city of seven hills first came into sight, he fell to his knees with this exclamation: "Holy Rome, I salute thee!" He was to be shockingly disappointed when he saw her naked before him, stripped of her legendary fame. He too soon learned why men used the popular proverb: "If there is a hell, Rome is built over it; it is an abyss from which issues every kind of sin."

Luther returned to Wittenberg sobered and with a deeper sense of the wonders of the just living by faith, and not by the vanity of religious works. There, he obtained his doctorate in divinity and continued to proclaim the Word of God to the blessing of many.

Luther and Tetzel

Since the year 1502, an infamous inquisitor named Tetzel had been unashamedly selling indulgences for forgiveness of sins. Found guilty of adultery by the Emperor Maximilian, he was condemned to be put in a sack and thrown into the river to drown.

Only through the intervention of Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, was his life spared. Even so, he did not fear or repent, but proceeded all the more in his wicked trade of lying deceit.

Solemn processions into every town with ringing bells, lighted candles, and incense announced the arrival of the sellers of indulgences. Tetzel, with red cross in hand upon which the Pope's sign was shown, captivated his audiences with dramatic and emotionally moving sermons in the public squares.

Alternately he would plead and then bellow, move to pity and then thunder against the illiterate and astonished crowds. With great power, words such as these convinced multitudes to part with their money.

Indulgences are the most precious and noble of God's gifts. This red cross has as much efficacy [power to effect results] as the very cross of Jesus Christ. The Lord our God no longer reigns. He has resigned all power to the Pope!

I would not change my privileges for those of St. Peter in heaven; for I have saved more souls by my indulgences than the Apostle by his sermons! There is no sin so great, that an indulgence cannot forgive! Come, and I will give you letters by which even the sins that you intend to commit may be pardoned!

But more than this, indulgences are effective not only for the living, but for the dead. Priest! Noble! Merchant! Wife! Youth! Maiden! Do you not hear your parents and your friends who are dead, and who cry from the bottom of the abyss: 'We are suffering horrible torments! Only some small coins will deliver us; you can give it, and you will not!'

O stupid and beastly people, who do not understand the grace so richly offered! Now you can ransom so many souls! Stiff-necked and thoughtless man! With twelve coins you can deliver your father from Purgatory, and you are ungrateful enough not to save him!

Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see: For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them!

Bring! Bring! Bring! As soon as the money in the coffer [box] rings, the soul from Purgatory's fire springs!

The effect that such preaching had upon the superstitious and ignorant masses can easily be imagined. The people pressed forward eagerly to purchase such wondrous provision. The poor borrowed in order to not miss out on this rare privilege.

Yet not all were deceived by such imposture. One knight purchased from him at a costly price, an indulgence for a sin he had not yet committed. Later, this same knight attacked Tetzel along the roadside and stole all his indulgence money.

When Tetzel protested, the knight replied: "You should not be so quick to sell forgiveness for sins not yet committed." And so, according to that true Word, "evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" -2 Tim.3:13.

Luther: Ninety-Five Theses 1517 AD

This wanton deception of the indulgence trade was the final provocation to Martin Luther. On October 31, 1517, he posted his ninety-five theses [arguments] for the reform of this evil upon the door of the palace chapel in Wittenberg for all to read.

The news spread like wildfire. By two weeks later, all over Germany copies of his bold declarations were hailed as the words of a liberator from the shackles of Rome. As if borne upon angels' wings, within four weeks, the hammer blows that posted the Theses were ringing in the ears of all of Christendom and in the papal palace of Rome itself.

Selected portions of the statements from the monk who shook the world are listed below:

27. They preach mere human follies who maintain, that as soon as the money rattles in the box, the soul flies out of Purgatory.

28. This is certain, that as soon as the money tinkles, avarice [greed] and love of gain arrive, increase, and multiply.

32. Those who imagine themselves sure of salvation by indulgences will go to perdition [eternal ruin] along with those who teach them so.

36. Every Christian who truly repents of his sins, enjoys an entire remission both of the penalty and of the guilt, without any need of indulgences.

37. Every true Christian, whether dead or alive, participates in all the blessings of Christ or of the Church, by God's gift, and without a letter of indulgence.

43. We should teach Christians that he who gives to the poor, or lends to the needy, does better than he who purchases an indulgence.

45. We should teach Christians that whoever sees his neighbor in need, and yet buys an indulgence, does not buy the Pope's indulgence, but incurs God's anger.

52. To hope to be saved by indulgences is a lying and an empty hope: though even the Pope himself should pledge his soul to guarantee it.

53. They are enemies of Jesus Christ who, by reason of the preaching of indulgences, forbid the preaching of the Word of God.

62. The true and precious treasure of the Church is the Holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.

76. The indulgence of the Pope cannot take away the smallest daily sin, as far as regards the guilt or the offense.

79. It is blasphemy to say that the red cross adorned with the emblem of the Pope is as effectual as the cross of Christ.

92. Would that we were rid of all these preachers who say to the Church: Peace! Peace! And there is no peace.

94. We should exhort Christians to diligence in following Christ, her Head, through crosses [self-denial], death and hell.

95. For it is far better to enter into the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation, than to acquire a carnal security by the consolations of a false peace.

Thus was the axe laid at the root of the tree. Though indulgences were the primary focus of the Theses, the principle of full and free justification of sins by grace through faith alone shone through. And it was this that spelled the demise of the whole Roman system.

Philip Melanchthon 1518 AD

One of the most remarkable associations of all time came into being at the University of Wittenberg in 1518. As a student of the learned Reuchlin, Melanchthon rapidly rose above his fellows in academic excellence. Shy, calm, yet brilliant in mind, Melanchthon was immediately attracted to Luther and placed his scholarship in Greek at his disposal.

Though two more opposite personalities could not be imagined, yet they both had a deep love and respect for the other that lasted throughout their lifetime. Luther was full of zeal and strength, and his companion was known for calm determination and discretion.

Without Luther, the re-discovered truths of the Scriptures would not have reached the multitudes. Without Melanchthon, they could not have captured the scholars of Germany. Both were needed in the providence of God.

Luther himself described their differences in this way. "I am rough, stormy, and altogether warlike. I am born to fight against innumerable monsters and devils. I must remove stumps and stones, cut away thistles and thorns, and clear wild forests.

"But Master Philip comes along softly and gently, sowing and watering with joy, according to the gifts which God has abundantly bestowed upon him."

Melanchthon's encouragement and help on the translation of the Scriptures into German cannot be overestimated. Luther shared his knowledge of the Word with him while Melanchthon tutored him on fine points of Greek. Truly they loved each other as did David and Jonathan, and the Lord used this fellowship of kindred minds for the blessing of the German people and of the world at large.

Luther: Leipzig Debate 1519 AD

It was not Luther who separated from Rome; it was Rome who separated from him, and set aside the ancient faith of the Apostolic church which Luther now represented. Dr. Eck, the foremost disputant of Rome, arrogantly imagined entrapping and defeating Luther and his influence at this debate.

The key issues were rationalism [man's thinking] and hierarchy [men as ruling authorities]. Both issues were essential to the existence of Romanism.

Luther maintained that the Papacy is a human institution and is not necessary to the church. The church's Head is Christ Himself, not the Pope.

Popes are by human appointment. "It is not in the power of Roman popes to make new articles of faith. The Christian believer acknowledges no other authority than Holy Scripture."

"Both Wycliffe and Huss proclaimed doctrine that is thoroughly Christian," said Luther, "when they maintained that, 'There is but one universal church,' and, 'It is not necessary for salvation to believe that the Roman Church is superior to all others.'" Luther boldly told the assembly: "It is of little consequence to me whether these things were said by Wycliffe or by Huss; they are truth."

This caused an uproar: that a simple monk would dare to call into question the determination of an official Church Council that had condemned both Wycliffe and Huss. The students of the Leipzig University followed the debate closely and recognized the superiority of Luther's replies.

He appealed to the Word of God as his authority while Eck relied upon his own trickery of human wisdom, philosophy, and tradition. After the debate, the students fled Leipzig where Eck taught for other universities, especially Luther's Wittenberg where the enrollment nearly doubled.

The result of the debate for Luther personally, was that he saw that appealing to the Roman hierarchy was futile. He described it as his "moment of emancipation from the papal yoke." During this year he published his commentary on Galatians in which he fully set forth his teaching of justification by faith.

The debate caused him to write the tract, *An Address to the Christian Nobles of the German Nation*. This was an exhortation for them to end the tyranny of papal rule in civil life and be active in the reform of the Church themselves.

In it he rejected any special priesthood as in the Roman system: affirming that all believers are priests of God, can understand the Scriptures, and have direct access to God apart from human mediators.

He attacked the "Three Walls" of the Roman Catholic system by which they dominate men: [1] That the popes and prelates alone can interpret the Scriptures [2] That their spiritual power is claimed to be above the temporal governing powers of kings [3] That only the popes and their representatives can call a general council of the Church.

Luther: Wittenberg Bonfire 1520 AD

Rome responded to the debate by issuing a Bull [letter from the Pope] of Excommunication against Luther. Luther replied to this by building a bonfire in the public place of Wittenberg and casting copies of the Bull, the Pseudo-Isadorian Decretals, and Catholic Canon law into the flames. Both citizens and students looked on with hearty approval.

Luther: Diet of Worms 1521 AD

Summoned to the Diet [formal public assembly] in the city of Worms [pronounced "Vorms"] by the Emperor in 1521, Luther proceeded as if on a march of triumph. Friends and foes alike, however, scattered clouds of warning about the outcome.

Luther replied to all of these threats, real and imagined, saying: "You may expect everything from me except fear or recantation. I shall not flee, still less recant."

“May the Lord Jesus strengthen me. I am more afraid of my own heart than of the Pope and all the Cardinals. I have within me the great Pope Self.”

He told his life-long co-laborer, Melancthon: “If I do not return and my enemies murder me, I solemnly charge you, dear brother, to persevere in teaching the truth. Do my work during my absence; You can do it better than I. If you remain, I can well be spared. In you, the Lord has a more learned champion.”

Before his arrival, the Emperor issued a decree in Worms forbidding the sale of any of his books, and that any already in possession should be seized. Timid friends reminded him of the fate of John Huss when he attended a similar assemblage.

Luther replied: “Though Huss was burned, the truth was not burned, and Christ still lives. I shall go to Worms, though there were as many devils there as tiles on the roofs.”

Upon his arrival, the watchman atop the cathedral tower announced his presence with the blowing of a horn. Thousands of people gathered to gaze at the “heretic” who attracted more interest than even the Emperor himself. That evening, he stood before the newly appointed Emperor, his ministers of state, the Pope’s representatives, archbishops, princes, and ambassadors of foreign governments.

There he was confronted with a pile of his publications and asked whether he acknowledged them all. “Do or do you not repudiate your books and the errors they contain?”

His first answer echoed that of Christ: “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, then why do you strike me? If you can convict me of error by the Scriptures, I will revoke my books, and be the first to commit them to the flames.”

He concluded his first defense with a warning to the Emperor not to begin his reign by condemning the Word of God, reminding him of the judgments upon Pharaoh, the king of Babylon, and the ungodly kings of Israel.

The assembled dignitaries were offended and refused to answer him, saying that such heresies as taught by Wycliffe and Huss had already been condemned by the Council of Constance. A straightforward answer was demanded from him.

His reply became the memorable declaration of freedom of conscience recorded in the histories of religious liberty. With clear firm voice heard by all in the overcrowded hall, he declared:

“Unless I am convicted by testimony of Sacred Scripture or by plain reason [I do not accept the authority of popes or councils, for they have often erred and contradicted each other], my conscience is captive to the Word of God.

“I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against my conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen.”

Luther was dismissed in the care of Frederick, Elector [one of six high-ranking princes in Germany] of Saxony while the Diet decided on his case. They published their verdict after some days, charging Luther with all manner of outlandish and false allegations, which only served to expose their own malice and folly before all generations to come. They claimed:

This devil [Luther] has brought together ancient errors into one stinking puddle, and has invented new ones. His teaching makes for rebellion, division, war, murder, robbery, arson, and the collapse of Christendom.

He lives the life of a beast. We have labored with him, but he recognizes only the authority of the Scripture, which he interprets in his own sense. His followers also are to be condemned. His books are to be eradicated from the memory of man.

Luther: Castle of Wartburg 1521 - 1522 AD

As Luther was escorted away from the Diet, he was waylaid by a group of horsemen and kidnaped. Their captive was taken to a castle in Wartburg where he remained for one year.

It was later discovered that Elector Frederick had ordered the apparent “murder” of Luther in order to protect him from the storm of Rome that he knew would surely come upon him. There in his kindly “prison,” perhaps his greatest work was accomplished: the translation of the

NT Scriptures into German; and from then forward, the light broke forth radiantly upon the common man.

Luther: Peasant's Revolt 1524 - 1525 AD

Carlstadt, a reformer, advocated the complete overthrow of civil power. Luther, on biblical grounds [Rom.13:1-7], was absolutely opposed to this.

But as mobs are generally ruled by their passions and not their reason, they were stirred into violent revolt, and Luther's doctrine was blamed. Though he tried to mediate and settle matters peacefully, his efforts proved fruitless.

As the revolt worsened, Luther wrote a fiery pamphlet to Frederick, Elector of Saxony, and the other German princes, to crush the peasants unmercifully. Thus, urged on by Luther's awful foolishness, the uprising was drowned in a frightful bloodbath that Luther ever after deeply regretted.

Luther: Diet of Speier 1526 - 1529 AD

At the first gathering, it was decreed that each of the ruling princes of each German state could order and arrange the religious affairs of his own domain. However, at the second convention in 1529, the Catholic majority ordered that no further religious changes could be made in the states. Catholic regions must remain so without influence from the new Lutheran teaching.

The evangelical minority in the Diet objected to restricting the progress of the truth. It is from this protest that the term Protestant came into being. As a result, the Protestant Princes formed a league as did the Catholics, each ready to advance or defend their territories by the sword.

Luther: League of Smalcald 1531 AD

This became the final stage in the developing state Lutheran Church. There, nine princes and eleven free cities bound themselves together as Protestant powers in Germany, both religiously and politically.

Luther: Compromise

Luther had been brought into sympathy with the Brethren [those faithful believers through the centuries as noted in Chapter 7] by his early influence from Staupitz. But as the conflict with Rome developed, he increasingly took refuge in the protection of the Princes of Germany.

This association gradually led to the formation of the Lutheran Church. The simple Pattern of Christ that he knew was correct was slowly abandoned as the new state Church under his name emerged.

Alongside the revival of much Scriptural truth about individual salvation, was an inclusion of many aspects of the Roman system. The baptism of infants was kept along with the idea that baptism somehow is the means of regeneration [new birth].

He kept the Roman system of parishes merged with the union of church and state administered by a clergy over a nation considered to be Christianized. The sword of the state was accepted as a proper means of converting or punishing those who did not follow the new Church system.

His emphasis upon the lack of man's free choice in conversion, and the insistence that salvation is by the grace of God alone, led to the neglect of godly living among many.

Staupitz, his beloved and aged spiritual guide, warned Luther of this tendency. He admonished him: "May Christ help us that we may live according to the gospel which now sounds in our ears and which many have on their lips. For I see that multitudes misuse the gospel to give liberty to the flesh."

But his appeals were not well heeded. Eventually, Staupitz saw that their paths were taking different directions and wrote to Luther about the growing number of nominal Christians in the church, saying:

It is the fashion now to separate faith from evangelical [godly] life, as though it were possible to have real faith in Christ and yet remain unlike Him in life. Oh, the cunning of the foe! Oh, misleading of the people!

Hear the speech of fools: "Whoever believes in Christ requires no works." Listen to the saying of truth: "Let him who serves Me, follow Me."

The evil spirit tells his fleshly "Christians" that a man is justified without works and that Paul preached this. This is false.

He did indeed speak against those works of law and outward observances in which men put their trust for salvation. But he never thought evil of or did anything but praise those works which are the fruit of faith and love and obedience to the heavenly commandments.

Luther knew this by his own admission, but he did not follow the conviction of his conscience in this. He compromised in allowing and encouraging the National Lutheran Church to come into existence.

See the contrast between what he knew was true and what he actually did. In 1526 he wrote:

The right kind of evangelical order cannot be exhibited among all sorts of people [the Church at large]. Those who are seriously determined to be Christians and [obey] the gospel must meet apart, in one house, for prayer, reading, to baptize, to take the Lord's Supper, and exercise other Christian works.

With such order it would be possible for those who did not behave in a Christian manner to be known, reprov'd, restored, or excluded, according to the rule of Christ [Mt.18:15]. Here also they could, in common, willingly give and distribute alms [charitable gifts] among the poor according to the example of Paul [2 Cor.9:1-12].

Here it would not be necessary to have much or fine singing. Here a short and simple way of baptism and the Lord's Supper could be practiced, and all would be according to the Word and in love.

But I cannot yet order and establish such an assembly, for I have not yet the right people for it.

Thus he very excellently set forth the simplicity of following the Pattern of Christ. But he turned aside from this in pursuit of what became the state Church of Germany even though he knew very well that there were many "right people" for it: those whom he himself described as "true, godly, holy children of God."

Even so, he did not view the Lutheran Church as being the best form of religion. He rather lamented what he saw, admonishing them in these words:

If we look aright at what people now do who reckon themselves as Evangelical and know how to talk much about Christ, there is nothing behind it. Most of them deceive themselves.

They learn indeed to speak words, as a parrot repeats what people say, but their hearts do not experience them. They remain just as they are; they neither taste nor feel how true and faithful God is.

They boast much of the gospel and at first seek it earnestly, yet afterwards nothing remains; for they do what they like, follow their lusts, become worse than they were before. Peasants, citizens, nobles, all are more covetous and undisciplined than they were under the Papacy.

Ah, Lord God, if we only practiced this doctrine aright, then at last we would become a Christian assembly, where now we are almost utter heathen with the name of Christian. Then we could separate from ourselves those of whom we know by their works that they never believed and never had life, a thing that now is impossible to us.

The Church, once joined to the power of the state, could not be retrieved. Luther referred to the Protestant Princes who governed the Church as “Makeshift [temporary solution] Bishops,” but they actually became their permanent fixtures.

He often expressed his regret for the loss of liberty of the individual Christians and congregations that had once been his aim. There were now two state-church systems, that of Rome and the other of Luther. The brethren who desired to maintain simple conformity to the Pattern of Christ, now found themselves between the swords of both.

Luther and Zwingli

The cities of Wittenberg, Zurich, Geneva, and Canterbury were sisters, not mother and daughters. It was not Luther that gave birth to the Reformation in Switzerland, France, and England; God fathered the return to His Scriptures and His family independent of each other.

The term Reformation best describes what took place in Germany in the Lutheran church that emerged there. The movements headed by Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox are aptly referred to as Reformed. To the Anabaptists, the term Restored best expresses their practice of holding to the simple Pattern of Christ.

Luther desired to maintain in the Church all that was not expressly contrary to the Scriptures. Zwingli purposed to abolish all that could not be proved by them.

Lutheranism claimed the priesthood of all believers, but only in theory. Still, everything proceeded from, and nothing was counted valid in that Church system that did not proceed from the pastor/priest. This was not true in Switzerland.

There, the brethren were encouraged to judge all things by the Word of God that was in their hands. It was their emphasis that the spirit of faith, wisdom, comfort, and light is not bestowed upon a pastor only, but every man is called upon to employ his gift for the profit of all. Thus the passive state of the Church was changed into one of general activity and spiritual responsibility in the Reformed churches, in contrast to the generally compliant and subservient congregations under the Lutheran clergy.

The Reformation in Switzerland

Ulrich Zwingli 1484 - 1531 AD

Zwingli: Early Days

Zwingli had no communication with Luther at the beginning and did not receive his gospel from him. "I began to preach the gospel," says Zwingli, "in the year of grace, 1516. It is not from Luther that I learned the doctrine of Christ, but from the Word of God. If Luther preaches Christ, he does what I am doing; and that is all."

Many were the leaders of the Swiss reform scattered in the various democratic canton [district/states] valleys separated by the mountain peaks of the Alps. Among these, Zwingli towered aloft in influence upon his nation and generation.

Deriving his doctrine entirely from the study of the Word, the gradually increasing illumination of the Scriptures to him became Switzerland's first steps toward Reform. "I began to earnestly entreat the Lord to grant me His light. Though I read the Scriptures only, they became clearer to me than if I had read all the commentators."

His early preaching, in contrast to Luther's thunderous denouncing of Rome's abuses and sins, instead attempted to impart truth to the hearts of the people. He reasoned: "The spring is the season for sowing. If the people understand what is true, they will soon discern what is false."

But needed reform cannot be achieved or sustained by this alone. There necessarily is required a season of boldly pointing out error as well. Thus was Christ a controversialist, and overseers must be able both to instruct as well as refute and silence those who contradict [Tit.1:9-11].

Zwingli's day came. In 1518, at the annual pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Einsidlen, he startled the multitudes. Inside the "holy place," a carefully preserved image of the Virgin was believed to dispense miracles and forgiveness for any and all sins. Boldly he cried:

"Do not imagine that God is in this temple more than in any other part of creation. Can pilgrimages, images, or the invocation of the Virgin secure for you the grace of God? Christ, who was once offered upon the cross, is the sacrifice that has made satisfaction for the sins of believers to all eternity."

All were astonished. Some fled in horror at the "heresy." Others hesitated, while many came to Jesus and carried away their candles that they had thought to bring to the Virgin. Crowds returned to their homes, everywhere proclaiming, "Christ alone saves, and He saves everywhere!"

Often whole groups turned back and did not even complete their pilgrimage to the shrine. Mary's worshippers dwindled daily.

Such preaching and the resultant loss of pilgrim's offerings could not go unnoticed by Rome. But, unlike the threats of excommunication hurled against Luther, the Church offered instead her favors and rewards to Zwingli.

They were merely two means to the same end. Neither was effective. Cardinal Pucci arranged to have Zwingli nominated as acolyte [assistant] to the Pope. He declined the offer.

Zwingli: Indulgences

That same year, a Franciscan seller of Indulgences, Samson by name, came to Zwingli's canton proclaiming: "Heaven and hell are subject to my power; and I sell the merits of Christ to any who will purchase them by buying an indulgence for money!"

Zwingli's zeal took fire as he heard the imposter. With energy and indignation he preached: "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has said: 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Is it not then the greatest folly and rash senseless boldness to declare: 'Buy letters of Indulgence! Hasten to Rome! Give to the monks! Sacrifice to the priests!' Jesus Christ is the only sacrifice, the only Way!"

Soon, throughout the canton, Samson was called a cheat and a seducer and he was forced to slink away in disgrace. Almost immediately upon his departure, a citizen of the place became suddenly impoverished.

He appealed to brother Zwingli for assistance, and daily for some time, he and his family were blessed out of his loving generosity. The people witnessed that the brethren would give while Rome would take.

Zwingli: In Zurich

As the Lord would have it, Zwingli was appointed as teacher at the College of Canons in Zurich. His enemies were alarmed and tried to impress upon him the responsibility that he had to collect tithes, offerings, and payments of levies from one and all.

His reply was to simply state that, "The life of Christ has been too long hidden from the people. I shall preach upon the whole of the Gospel of Matthew, chapter after chapter, according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, without human commentaries, drawing solely from the fountains of Scripture.

"It is to God's glory, to the praise of His only Son, to the real salvation of souls, and to their edification in the true faith, that I shall consecrate my ministry."

Such language and approach to instruction made a deep impression upon his superiors, some with horror, others with joy. And when his first message was spoken, the people marveled, exclaiming: "We never heard the likes of this before!" Thus began the Reform in the most influential city of Switzerland.

Many stopped attending the regular services of the Catholic churches. Fusslin, poet, historian, and councilor of state said: "I obtain no instruction from the sermons of these priests. They do not preach the things belonging to salvation, because they do not understand them. I can see in these men nothing but greed and wickedness."

Henry Rauschlin, treasurer of state, remarked: "The priests met in thousands at the Council of Constance [where John Huss and Jerome of Prague were martyred] to burn the best of them all."

Thereafter, these two became some of his closest friends. Rauschlin remarked: "This man [Zwingli] is a preacher of the truth. He will be our Moses to lead us forth from this Egyptian darkness."

The monks renewed their attacks against him and his doctrine. But this did not turn him aside from the Lord and His truth.

Zwingli was known to say frequently: "If we desire to gain over [to win] the wicked to Jesus Christ, we must shut our eyes against many things," meaning, that one must not take offence against, but rather forgive the insults and hatred of men. It was sound advice [Prov.10:12].

He continued to preach the love of Christ as the all-effective power of godliness. He says: "The Christian delivered from the law, depends entirely upon Jesus Christ. Christ is his reason, his counsel, his righteousness, and his whole salvation. Christ lives and acts in him. Christ alone is his leader, and he needs no other guide.

"What other power could implant righteousness, truth, and love among men? O God, most gracious, with what love you have embraced us, Your enemies! You will, by this unspeakable love, to constrain us to return love to You, because of Your love to us!"

Zwingli: The Zurich Council

The year 1523 found him before a great council in Zurich, called to examine, correct, and refute his doctrines. Some six hundred clergy from the canton and other distant parts, along with many citizens, scholars, and men of rank thronged the conference hall.

Though repeatedly asked to do so, none of his opponents had a word to say against him. It is often the case that those who most loudly slander and accuse in private, stubbornly and shamefully have nothing to say in public [Mk.3:4-6].

The result was that the president of the council decreed that, since Master Zwingli had repeatedly challenged his adversaries to refute his doctrines by Scriptural proofs and had failed to do so, "He should continue to announce and preach the Word of God, just as he has been doing up until now.

“Likewise, all other ministers of religion, should stop teaching anything that they could not prove from Scripture. Furthermore, they should stop making charges of heresy and other scandalous allegations, on pain of severe punishment.”

This was decreed from the civil magistrate, and, like Luther’s Germany, the state took over the church. This was to have disastrous results though it initially furthered the spread of the gospel in the various cantons.

Most of the priests accepted the Council’s orders, as those who did so were assured a salary from the state. Constantine’s leaven continued to produce its same results: in Switzerland then, as it yet does up to today.

The Catholics refused and established their own League of five cantons to suppress all Hussites, Lutherans, and followers of Zwingli. Thus the country was divided, religiously and politically.

By 1524, in Zurich, both civil and church authority was merged into one Council with Zwingli as its unofficial head. As with Calvin later, the OT ideal of the prophet guiding the state was realized.

Zwingli increasingly devoted himself to writing on a variety of subjects to set forth the teaching of the Bible while tensions mounted between the Catholics and the Reformed brethren. The year 1529 brought significant events that signaled the approaching end.

Zwingli and the Sword

While the Council deliberated about whether the Mass should be forbidden, eight hundred impatient extremists stormed into the Catholic churches in Basel with hammers and axes, destroying all images and paintings. Three months later, a Protestant missionary from Zurich was burned at the stake in the Catholic city of Schwyz.

War was declared. Throughout his life, Zwingli clung to a deep patriotism which led him more than once into armed combat. The conflict that he led on this occasion never actually came to blows, but it foreshadowed what was soon to come.

This willingness to take up of the sword became, in a very solemn and literal sense, the cause of his downfall according to the Word of Christ. “All who take up the sword, shall perish by the sword” -Mt.26:52.

Zwingli and Luther on the Lord’s Supper

Six months later found him and Oecolampadius [House light], his learned and mild companion, along with other Swiss reformers, face to face with Luther, Melancthon, and other German Protestants. Discussion was centered around various doctrines of the faith. On fourteen issues they all signed an agreement, except on the meaning of the Lord’s Supper.

Zwingli rightly held that the bread and cup are symbols only. Luther stubbornly refused to listen to sound Scriptural reason. He insisted fiercely that Christ’s words, *Hoc est corpus Meum* [Latin for: This is My body], was literal; Christ is actually present in the bread and cup.

On the last day of the conference, Zwingli approached Luther with hand outstretched and tears in his eyes. Luther refused to shake Zwingli’s hand, saying: “Your spirit is not our spirit. I am astonished that you wish to consider me as your brother. It shows clearly that you do not attach much importance to your doctrine.”

Then, turning to the Swiss brethren, those from Germany said, “You do not belong to the communion of the Christian Church. We cannot acknowledge you as brethren.”

They were only willing to include them in that universal charity which is owed to enemies even though they were in absolute agreement on the doctrines of the Trinity, the person of Christ, His death and resurrection, original sin, justification by faith, and the Holy Spirit’s work. The Roman Catholics delighted in the schism.

This was devastating to Zwingli. He returned to Zurich and faced the growing political, religious, and social unrest there. His sermons lost much of their conviction and weight, being clogged with earthly political concerns.

Zwingli's End

In 1531 it was determined that the Catholic cantons should be compelled to allow freedom of Reformed preaching in their areas. Zwingli proposed war and the council decided to stop all exports of wheat, salt, and wine to the Catholics.

This provoked the Catholics to actual conflict. Eight thousand troops met Zwingli's 1,500 soldiers at Cappel, and the Catholics prevailed. Five hundred fell on the field from Zurich, never to rise again.

Zwingli was among them. His body was cut into four pieces, burned upon a pile of dung, his ashes mixed with those of swine, and scattered to the four winds of heaven. His last words were: "What matters this misfortune? They may kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul."

The Reformation in France

Jacques LeFevre c.1455 - 1536 AD

LeFevre's lectures on the Word of God were instrumental in the conversion of two key men who influenced the Reformation in France. Through him, William Farel was raised up by the Lord to thunder the gospel message far and wide. One with quite a different sphere of influence was also touched with the gospel truth.

Brissonnet, bishop of the palace, placed the Word of God before King Francis I and Margaret, Queen of Navarre, his sister, for their consideration.

The king hardened his heart against it and finally became a persecutor of the brethren. Margaret, on the other hand, received its blessed light and sheltered the brethren at peril to her own life, often rescuing them from the hand of her own brother.

Together with Brissonnet, LeFevre translated the Scriptures into French with the whole NT being published in 1524. In the city of Meaux where they now labored, Brissonnet taught and put the Word into the hands of the common man along with free copies given to the poor. It was daily read in private homes and workshops, rapidly becoming the talk of everyone and the blessing of many.

The simple people quickly became better instructed than the Franciscan monks. From Meaux arose the first Protestant church in France. So profound had the transformation been because of the gospel truth that throughout France their witness became proverbial. Whenever someone believed the gospel, it was said: "He has drunk at the well of Meaux."

As is always the case when light shines in the darkness, there was reaction from the Prince of darkness through his servants. The monks traveled to Paris with the charge of heresy which fanned into flame the fires of persecution.

Brissonnet himself turned back. He was intimidated by threats of imprisonment and death and so denied the faith and re-established public prayers to the Virgin Mary and the saints. He also agreed to destroy Protestant writings and punish any who possessed them.

The city of Meaux was dismayed. LeFevre and other faithful leaders were forced to flee with heavy hearts. Farel made his way to Switzerland where he was greatly used of the Lord. LeFevre died peacefully in his 92nd year under the protection of Margaret.

Guillaume [William] Farel c.1489 - 1565AD

William Farel is called the Elijah of the French Reformation and the "scourge of the priests." He viewed the Pope as the Antichrist, the Mass as idolatry, and pictures, images, and relics as pagan idols to be destroyed.

He never used violence himself though he was regularly assaulted with firearms and clubs wielded by the priests. The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, was his only weapon.

His fiery preaching of the gospel in French-speaking Geneva, Switzerland, brought many to the Lord though he was fiercely assailed by the Catholics. He thus served as the forerunner to Calvin's coming with his profound influence upon that society.

John Calvin c.1509 - 1564 AD

If Luther emphasized forgiveness through justification by faith, Calvin was the champion of God in His overall sovereignty. His greatest contribution to the Reformed faith was his book, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

This was a defense of Protestantism presented to King Francis I of France in which he set forth the essentials of the faith in a systematic manner. It established the standard of basing practice upon doctrine with God at its center.

Farel compelled Calvin to dwell at Geneva with threats of God's judgment if he did not. Calvin conceded. He remained and threw himself into teaching and administration of the city's citizens.

Geneva was consciously considered to be the new Israel of God. They stood for the purity of the worship of Jehovah against all the seductions of the Baals of Rome and the threats of the political Moabites and Amalekites surrounding them.

Strict discipline prevailed inside the city. Fines were imposed for making noise in church. Nuns were offered the option of marrying or leaving Geneva.

Denying the doctrine of predestination meant banishment, and rejecting that of the Trinity resulted in death, as in the case of Servetus. Catholics were eventually forced out of the city.

The object was to create a select community of the elect, ruled by God according to OT law. But nothing in true godliness is brought about by force or threats or codes of conduct.

A state-church system of outward enforcement of spiritual principles was doomed to failure from the outset. Only a form of godliness can be achieved thereby, but its power can never be secured by such means.

John LeClerc

Other brethren scattered from Meaux, like those of Jerusalem at the time of Stephen's persecution, went everywhere in France, preaching the Word [Acts 8:4]. The common poor people who could not flee, were left to face the storm.

Among them was John LeClerc, who collected and hand processed the wool of sheep as his means of livelihood. Without formal education or man's ordination, he was well grounded in eternal truth, and used of the Lord to greatly encourage the brethren.

The frenzied monks seized upon him, led him bound throughout the streets of Meaux, whipping him for three days. Finally, they branded "Heretic" on his forehead with a red-hot iron.

In the midst of the raging crowd, a woman's voice rang out: "Glory to Jesus Christ and His witnesses!" It was his mother. The astonished and now awestruck mob gave way for this daughter of Sarah to pass through their midst unmolested.

Her son was banished from Meaux and eventually was mutilated and roasted to death in Metz by Rome's fury. His fate was sealed when he, Gideon like, tore down their shrine and image of Mary on the eve of their pilgrimage to obtain from her forgiveness of their sins.

Louis Berquin

Louis Berquin, an officer of the king's bodyguard, became a notable witness for the cause of Christ in France. Had Francis I been to him as Elector Frederick was to Luther, France would have had another Luther on its own soil.

He was honest, forthright, and compassionate to the poor. He employed his learning in translating the works of Luther and Melanchthon into French which greatly furthered the dawning of the light and return to the Scriptures.

Berquin was arrested and imprisoned on four occasions, being rescued each time by the appeals of Margaret to her brother, the king. Finally, Romish spies reported him as saying: "It is the Holy Spirit that is to be invoked before the sermon, not the Virgin." Like the Sanhedrin, Rome needed no further testimony.

Dressed in his noble attire, he was led to the place of execution. When he tried to speak of the Lord Jesus to the poor multitudes gathered at the spectacle, the priests raged and shouted so he could not be heard. The fire was lit, the brother was reduced to ash, yet his death spoke to all France in tones that no priest could silence.

Placards

These examples of the numerous horrors unleashed against the brethren show the hostility of Rome against peasant and prince alike. Yet this did not halt the progress of the light.

A protest against the abuses of Rome was written, some say by Farel, and distributed throughout the country. It was a thunderbolt, flashing with fearful power into the darkness of Catholic tradition. The night of October 18, 1534 was chosen to post its message across the land.

Placards [public posters] containing the same message were prepared and fixed to the doors of Catholic chapels and schools during the night. One was even attached to the very door of the King's chamber. Popes, cardinals, bishops, monks, and every tenet of Romish belief were sharply attacked in its long indictment.

Bold letters headed the startling announcements: "True articles on the horrible, great and intolerable abuses of the Popish Mass: invented in direct opposition to the holy supper of our Lord and only Mediator and Savior, Jesus Christ."

It ended with: "In conclusion, Truth has deserted them, Truth threatens them, Truth chases them, Truth fills them with fear; by all of which, shall their reign be shortly destroyed forever."

No language can describe the one universal cry of rage and disturbance of mind which rang throughout all of France on the morning of the 19th. The priests stirred up the mentality of the mobs, saying that the Lutherans were plotting the burning of churches, overthrowing towns, and massacring everyone.

"Death! Death to the heretics!" resounded everywhere. And so the frightful storm broke in its awful unreasoning fury. Francis I, incited by advisors, trembled with wrath and proclaimed: "Let all be seized, and let Lutheranism be totally exterminated!"

Wanton slaughter by torturous means followed in the streets of Paris. Even Margaret was summoned to appear before the king. Her pleadings with him, however, secured her own safety and that of three preachers, but did not stem the tide of destruction.

She withdrew from Paris and fled her brother into her own domain of Bearn, an ancient province of France. Many preachers of the truth and notable men of France found safety under the protection of her realm. There she passed into glory in the year of 1549, having suffered for the truth and provided refuge for the afflicted in the name of Christ.

Catherine De Medici and the Huguenots

Francis had died two years before and was succeeded by his son, Henry II. He became the husband of the notorious Catherine de Medici, an unparalleled Jezebel against the true saints of God. Like Ahab of old, he was inflamed against truth and righteousness by his crafty wife, and so continued the persecutions. But, as God sets up and dethrones kings [Dan.2:21], he died in a sporting accident.

His son, Frances II, only sixteen years old, reigned in his place for less than eighteen months. Upon his death, Catherine placed her next son, Charles IX, a mere lad of nine years, upon the throne of France.

She assumed guardianship of the king and this Italian mother became the undisputed power in the nation of France. Some years passed while her devilish ambition formulated one of the most ghastly intrigues in all of history.

In the meantime, true faith continued to spread despite the persecutions of the French Catholics. Farel and other French exiles in Switzerland flooded France with religious books and Bibles from Geneva. These were distributed by peddlers who traveled from place to place at great risk to their lives.

Among the many disciples were a growing number of men of high rank and nobility. Kings, dukes, generals, governors, and princes swelled their ranks as well as an increasing number of educated and talented citizens. By 1559, there were over one thousand Calvinistic congregations distributed across the land.

They determined to unite together in a general Synod [assembly] which took place in that year. Here the basis of French Protestantism was laid in the establishing of four levels of power, or church courts: the individual churches' leaders, the district level, the provincial [state] synod, and the national assembly.

Over time, these began to wield political and military authority beyond simply religious influence, as did those of Germany and Switzerland. Mixed with the true believers were a growing number of liberal minded individuals who did not support Rome.

All were accounted "Huguenots," a term applied to any who did not favor the papacy.

St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre

Several battles had taken place between the forces of the French Catholics and the Protestant Huguenots in which the Catholics could not obtain a victory. And thus a plot, like an adder's egg, was hatched between Catherine, the queen-mother, King Charles IX, her son, and Pope Pius V.

Charles had been convinced by the treachery of the Pope that God had placed him as king over France, like Saul had been made king of Israel. It was his duty, therefore, to kill all of the unbelieving Amalekites and spare not one according to the word of the Lord. Failure to do this would result, as it did for Saul, in the loss of his kingdom and of his life.

Thus was Charles manipulated by the Pope's perversion of Scripture to lend his hand in the horrific plot. Charles pretended an earnest desire for establishing a lasting peace between the Catholics and Huguenots. Therefore, a marriage was proposed between his own sister and the young king Henry of Navarre, the leader of the Protestants.

To entice them to gather in Paris for the grand celebration, Charles declared that he was giving in marriage his sister, not only to the prince, but to the whole Huguenot people. Admiral Coligny, a true Christian and godly man and the most skilled leader of their armies, allowed himself to be deceived. He thought that the word of the king should be trusted.

Arrangements were made. Protestants by the thousands gathered to Paris for the marriage amid great festivities and hypocritical affection. The mother of King Henry, Jeanne d' Albret, the godly daughter of Margaret, was received with tender caresses by Catherine, the queen-mother. Charles called her, "My great aunt, my all, and best-beloved."

Admiral Coligny knelt before King Charles, but the king raised him up, embraced him three times, saying: "My father, you must stay with us now. This is the happiest day of my life!" The deception was complete.

Thus the marriage took place outside the great cathedral of Notre Dame on August 18, 1572. Days of feasting and rejoicing followed for the assembled Catholics and Protestants. All were hopeful for an end to the civil strife and bloodshed that had plagued them for so long.

But at the height of the gaiety and celebration, Charles and Catherine had arranged a predetermined signal to launch their wholesale slaughter of the Protestants. In the dead of night on the eve of the feast of St. Bartholomew, the great bell of St. Germain's cathedral rang out. Soon every bell in Paris sounded the note.

Thousands of rogues, priests, soldiers, and Catholic citizens stormed through the streets with white crosses upon their hats to distinguish them from the hunted. Chaos prevailed. Gunshots, screams, bells, cursing, howling of murderers, “Kill them all! Kill the heretics!” filled the thick darkness.

Priests ran through the streets holding crucifixes: shouting, raging, urging on the vast carnage. Blood flowed in the streets of Paris.

Few escaped, thousands perished. The corpses of the Huguenot leaders, specially invited by Charles and hosted like royalty, lay scattered like dung in the mire or floated down the river Seine.

All over Paris, any who did not have the white cross displayed were dragged out of their homes and butchered: men, women, and children alike. The carnage went on for four days. Priests, ankle deep in blood, celebrated with extraordinary gladness.

In Rome the news was received with jubilation. The bearer of the glad tidings was presented with a thousand pieces of gold. The Pope proclaimed a jubilee and made a medal with the inscription, “Godliness has awakened Justice.”

The slaughter extended to the provinces throughout France against the now defenseless Huguenots. In many cities, every Protestant perished in the most barbarous manner.

Estimates vary on the extent of the slaughter. At least 30,000 souls, some claim up to 70,000 or more, perished in this holocaust, qualifying it as the single greatest and darkest crime in the records of Christendom.

The Reformation in Scotland

John Knox c.1505 - 1572 AD

Knox who had spent over a year and a half as a galley slave aboard a French ship, escaped, and later was trained under Calvin. Returning to Scotland, he shook his native land with his fiery preaching. Justification by faith alone along with severe rejection of the Pope as the antichrist and the Roman Church as the “Congregation of Satan” were his themes.

Under his leadership, the Scottish “Reformation Parliament” of 1560 officially abolished Catholicism, and established Calvinist Protestantism as the state religion. Knox and his followers drew up the *Book of Discipline* that defined their doctrine and purposes by which Scotland was now ruled. The Mass was abolished.

He wrote many tracts, among which was, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment [rule] of Women*. In it he denounced all female sovereigns, aiming at Mary Tudor of England [Bloody Mary] and Catherine de Medici in France. He argued that women rulers are contrary to nature, as well as to God and His Word [Isa.3:12].

Mary, Queen of Scots, a Romanist, was offended and held a series of private interviews with Knox to try and get him to retract his views on Rome and women. Knox fearlessly rebuked the Catholic Queen, calling her receiving of Mass idolatry, while openly referring to her as a whore due to her immoral intimacy with her advisor, Bothwell.

In one such interview, Mary asked Knox if he thought subjects might resist their princes. “If their princes exceed their bounds, Madam, it is no doubt that they may be resisted even by power.” When Mary protested that the Apostles did not resist their persecutors with force, Knox replied: “The reason for this was solely due to their lack of funds.”

Knox thundered from the pulpit the doctrines of Calvin and followed them up with political force in Parliament. Mary eventually was forced to flee to England due to her own lusts, intrigue, and disfavor with the Scottish people. There Queen Elizabeth, her rival to the English throne, had her imprisoned for nineteen years and eventually beheaded for her part in a plot to assassinate Elizabeth.

The Reformation in England

The Result of the Scriptures

The true cause of the Reformation in England resulted essentially from the effect of the Scriptures in the hands of the people. The efforts of Wycliffe, Tyndale, and those with them in this regard have already been noted.

No single man blazed the trail as was true in Germany, Switzerland, France, or Scotland; No Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, or Knox stood head and shoulders above the English host of individual reformers.

True reform is not dependent upon man. It is the result of the activity of God through the agency of His Word by the power of the gospel embraced and preached by thousands of common men.

While great upheavals took place in international politics during this period, the work of the Spirit of God in England was not dependent upon such. The personal and political intrigues of King Henry VIII did not account for the spiritual transformation of England.

At the time of Henry's first blows against the authority of the Pope in Rome, was also the same time in which he began to shed the blood of the disciples of the Lord. Rejection of evil does not mean righteousness is embraced. Refusing Rome is not receiving Christ.

It is neither to Henry VIII nor to the councils of Parliament that we must look to discover the true children of the Reformation. We rather must go to the Lollards' towers [prisons] and the bishop's cellars where they were found chained, tortured on the rack, and burned at the stake.

There one will find the godly who called upon the sole intercession of Jesus Christ, the only Head of His people. Others were forced to wander from place to place, deprived of everything, and scoffed at, scourged, and afflicted. But you will find them, like their Master, enduring all patiently and graciously with faces set like flint towards their Jerusalems of sorrow.

These were the disciples of the Reformation in England. The purest church is the one found under the cross, not in the palace of kings. No, Henry was not the father of this church in England; he was its executioner. The Father of this church was in heaven, not in London.

Nevertheless, the events of his reign must be described in order to understand what took place in this land that so mightily affected the expansion of Christianity thereafter on a global scale. God's time to break Rome's iron yoke upon the nations had come.

Henry VIII 1491 - 1547 AD

Henry was a Roman Catholic in religion, immoral in his person, and a politician foremost of all. Circumstances prevailed at the time to effect an outward change in the church in England.

Charles V, in 1527, was at once both the King of Spain as well as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. His troops had just recently taken control of Rome itself, and the Pope was under his control.

Henry VIII happened to be married to Charles' aunt, yet all five children she had borne him had died, except one, Mary. Catherine, his wife, was now over forty and unlikely to provide him with a male heir to the throne.

Though Henry already had an illegitimate son born ten years after his wedding to Catherine, he could never be his heir, having not been born by the queen. And Mary, as a girl at that time in England, would never be considered for the throne.

What to do in order to get an heir? Divorce was out of the question due to Catholic doctrine and the personal and political fury this would arouse against him from the powerful Charles V.

A crafty solution was invented by Henry. Have the Pope annul his marriage to Catherine since he "unlawfully" married her according to Henry's convenient interpretation of Lev.20:21, "If a man take his brother's wife it is an unclean thing. They shall be childless."

At age sixteen, Catherine had been married to Henry's brother, Arthur, aged fourteen. He died six months later. Henry's father betrothed her to Henry [only ten at the time of Arthur's death], having obtained a special permission from Pope Julius II to do so. Thus in 1503 when Henry was twelve years old, the marriage was announced though not officially joined until 1509 when he was eighteen, the year he assumed the throne of England.

Henry's "Divorce"

About the year 1514, Henry began considering an annulment after the death of four of his children. Beginning in 1518, he took at least two mistresses up until around the time of 1527 when his lust focused upon Anne Boleyn, maid to Catherine.

So now, reasoned Henry, why not have Pope Clement VII set aside Pope Julius' permission as invalid since it was contrary to the Scriptures? The Pope at first suggested that Henry merely take another wife alongside of Catherine to solve his dilemma of a "lawful" heir.

Actually, the Pope was reluctant on two accounts to annul the marriage. First, it would be embarrassing to revoke the decision of his previous "infallible" predecessor. Secondly, it wouldn't be safe; Catherine was the aunt of the Emperor who had just defeated him in battle.

Like Pilate sending Jesus to Herod for judgment, the Pope referred the decision to the English court. They tried to get Catherine to agree and become a nun. She refused, saying that the English court had no jurisdiction over her, and that her marriage to Arthur had never been consummated. Therefore, no violation of Leviticus existed.

Under directives from the Pope, the court stalled for time and continued to do so for several years! Henry, under increasing pressures, not the least of which was his growing desire for Anne, decided to take matters into his own hands.

In 1531, he abandoned Catherine, never to see her again. Her royal jewels were promptly handed over to Anne. In 1532 he managed to convince Parliament that it was unlawful and improper to transfer English funds to the Papacy.

Henceforth, all revenue for the bishops and the church in England would be paid from state English funds, not from Rome. The bishops, happy that their authority and purses would remain undisturbed, agreed.

By February, 1533, Parliament passed legislation that all matters formerly sent to Rome for judgment would now be decided in the "spiritual and temporal courts" of England. Events were racing in rapid succession now. They had to be.

Anne Boleyn

In January, 1533, Henry had married Anne who was already four months pregnant. Quickly following the February legislation, on May 23, 1533, Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, pronounced his marriage to Catherine as null and void, and on May 28th, pronounced Henry and Anne as lawfully wedded.

Three days later Anne, crowned with royal robes and jewels, rode to her coronation as Queen of England in a magnificent pageant. The disapproving crowd stared in silence. In July, Pope Clement decreed Henry's marriage to Anne unlawful, all future offspring illegitimate, and excommunicated the King.

This did not halt Henry or the English Parliament. In 1534 the King, with their approval, announced himself as "Supreme head on earth of the English Church." The breach with Rome was complete.

Thus it was that Henry VIII gave birth, not to the Reformation, but to the Anglican Church, while his Anne gave birth to Elizabeth on September 7, 1533.

Yet in the following years, she produced no male heir to the throne. This, along with her increasingly arrogant demands and hot temper, wearied the king, who turned his attention to her maid, Jane Seymour. By 1536, Henry had devised a means to obtain her as his new wife: have Anne executed for adultery.

She was beheaded on May 19, 1536 and Henry and Jane were betrothed the next day, with the official wedding following ten days later. On the fourth of June she was crowned Queen. Four days later Parliament decreed that both Elizabeth and Mary were illegitimate and not rightful heirs to the throne.

Henry's Heir and Authority

Finally, on October 17, 1537, a male heir to the throne was born, Edward VI. The unfortunate new Queen, however, died twelve days afterwards due to complications in the delivery of the child.

Before his break with the authority of the Rome, Henry had been awarded the title, “Defender of the Faith,” by the Pope for his resistance of Luther’s “new” doctrine and his persecution of those who held it. He faithfully continued to attend Mass as a dutiful son of the Church. He was a political Protestant though Romanist at heart.

Catholic citizens were now required to confess Henry as the Supreme earthly head of the Church of England rather than the Pope: and this was demanded on political grounds, not religious. They had escaped from the hands of an “infallible” Pope into the arms of an absolute monarch.

Sir Thomas More, the King’s minister of state and chief persecutor of the brethren, was beheaded for treason because, as a true Catholic, he still confessed the Pope as his spiritual sovereign. A wave of terror then passed through England and a shudder of horror throughout Europe as they realized the merciless ambition of the King. The year was 1535.

Henry’s Last Days

By 1540, in order to fill the bankrupt treasury of England, all 578 Catholic monasteries were forcibly closed and their riches and relics seized. The monks and nuns were out of business and the King was wealthy once again. Such were Henry’s means to his end.

Thankfully, God’s work was not dependent upon the likes of Henry VIII of whom one English historian said, “There was no Tudor king more hated than him.” Nevertheless, these ambitious and bold moves against the Papacy paved the way to an eventual casting off of Rome’s yoke altogether.

As we have seen, in 1538 in answer to Tyndale’s dying prayer, Henry had placed a copy of the English Scriptures in every church building in the realm. Perhaps this was the single greatest spiritual contribution that Henry made to the liberation of countless souls from the shackles of Rome.

When Henry was laid in the grave in 1547, the reign passed to Edward VI, though just nine years old. Advisors seized the opportunity and promoted legislation favoring Protestantism, Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer being prominent. The gospel flourished for a season, but young Edward only lived to his fifteenth year.

“Bloody” Mary 1516 - 1558 AD

Upon his death, the Romanists maneuvered Henry’s daughter, Mary, onto the throne as England’s first Queen. Parliament reversed their former decree of illegitimacy and now proclaimed that she was the rightful heir to royalty. Politicians are loyal to power and purse, not to principle.

Her reign began gently and cautiously. Gradually however, Roman Catholicism was first allowed, then encouraged, and finally in 1544, completely re-instated. Protestantism and other “heresies” were made illegal and all such preaching or publications were prohibited.

Now at thirty-seven years old in 1554, Mary was faced with the same dilemma of lacking an heir to the throne as had her father, Henry. Where might she obtain a husband?

Emperor Charles V conveniently offered his son, Philip, as the preferred choice. He would even offer a life-long pension to Mary should she accept. Mary was delighted and England was horrified.

Troops were gathered in order to de-throne her and promote Elizabeth in her place. The revolt was defeated, heads rolled, and Mary from then on was no more gentle. From 1554 to 1558 “Bloody Mary” reigned.

The marriage took place and Philip remained with her for thirteen months without her conceiving a child. On a pretense, he left her, departing to another European country in order to assist his father. Mary now turned her attention to re-establishing her beloved Roman religion.

With renewed threats of insurrection and even assassination of the Queen herself, she gave permission for the reign of terror to begin. Up until the time of her death in 1558, countless men and women were burned for their “heresies.”

The leading advisors to her half-brother Edward were notable. In 1555, Ridley and Latimer were burnt for their faith. They knelt together and prayed in front of the place of execution.

Then, chained to the posts with bags of gunpowder around their necks, the wood was kindled. The 80 year-old Latimer turned to his beloved brother with these words: “Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out!”: Noble words that the Lord honored in the coming centuries for the testimony that went out from that land.

Mary condoned the persecutions until the day of her death. Childless, perhaps insane, she passed the crown jewels to her rival, Elizabeth, on the 6th of November. Early on the morning of the 17th she heard Mass for the last time and died before dawn that same day.

Her final years of brutality did as much to alienate the English people from Rome as did her father’s purposeful political manipulations. England was weary and ready for a change.

Elizabeth 1533 - 1603 AD

That change came under the reign of Elizabeth who was instrumental in the final triumph of Protestantism over Catholicism in England. She sided with the Protestants out of necessity; The Pope had decreed her illegitimate.

She had nowhere else to turn. England itself and its Queen were politically Protestant while the true work of God went on unaided by recourse to this political arm of the flesh.

Parliament approved *The Thirty-Nine Articles* as the creed of the Anglican Church in 1563. The Anglican system expressed therein borrowed elements from the hierarchy of Rome and merged these with gleanings from Lutheranism along with a sprinkling of Calvin and Zwingli. It was truly an unhappy mixture of light and darkness put down on paper.

Reformation and the Anabaptists

Anabaptists [to baptize again] were given their name for their insistence that only born-again adults should be baptized. They themselves did not accept the name given to them by their enemies, for they did not consider baptism of infants as being baptism at all.

This struck at the foundation of both Catholic and Protestant state churches. Their teaching that only repentant believers make up the true church along with their doctrine of the state and church being separate, undermined the whole fabric of medieval society. This was the real reason for their persecution, banishment, and execution by Catholics and Protestants alike.

The church, they said, is a voluntary fellowship of purified believers only. The church is a sacrificial body made up of suffering, cross-bearing members.

A strong sense of brotherhood along with strict discipline pervaded their ranks. Refusal to persecute or take part in war along with complete separation of church and state were their general beliefs.

Nine fundamental characteristics were held in common by the different groups known as Anabaptists though not stated as such in any formal code. [1] Brotherhood and self-denial: holding possessions subject to the need of others or even actual communal living among several groups. [2] Christ’s church is comprised of born again members only.

[3] They rejected infant baptism as a chief cause of corruption in the church. [4] The church and state are separate, with many believing that all forms of government are evil. [5] Christians should not be in political positions, take oaths, pay tithes, serve in military, or be an executioner in capital punishment.

[6] The individual has freedom of will to choose God; good works testify whether one is a Christian, not because parents are or by baptism as an infant. [7] Solemnity of the Lord’s Supper in which each individual judges self and renews consecration to Christ. [8] Separation from all

worldliness whether secular or religious. [9] Interdependence of churches with itinerant ministry.

Many were godly and simple earnest Christians. Zwingli, who persecuted them, had to admit: "At first contact their conduct appears irreproachable, godly; their lives are excellent." A Catholic observed in them, "no lying, deception, swearing, strife, harsh language, but rather humility, patience, uprightness, meekness, honesty in such measure that one would suppose they had the Holy Spirit of God."

However, others were fanatical and wicked in their "spiritual" excesses. With shouts of: "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life!" the NT was burned at the hands of some. Others fell into convulsions under their "revelations" from the Holy Spirit. One man even beheaded his own blood-brother under "inspiration" received as if it were the will of the Father. The civil authorities executed him as a murderer.

In certain other of the groups, multiple wives were taken by leading "prophets" and polygamy was practiced in some of the communes. In Holland, there were those who ran about naked in imitation of Isaiah the prophet [Isa.20:2,3]. Though most were pacifists, other groups among them took to the sword to establish and defend their "New Jerusalem" upon earth.

They were utterly exterminated or driven out of Germany and survived only in small persecuted groups in Holland and Switzerland. Persecution forced them to flee to Poland, Hungary, Moravia, and Russia.

Menno Simons, one of the most exemplary among them, sets forth the true Pattern of Christ when he says that true Christians must: "crucify the flesh and its desires and lusts, prune the heart, mouth and the whole body with the knife of the divine Word from all unclean thoughts, unbecoming words, and actions." An anonymous Anabaptist statement of a Swiss brother in about 1525 shows the true understanding of the Pattern of Christ that many held to and practiced.

Obedience is of two kinds, servile [like a slave] and filial [like a child]. The filial has its source in the love of the Father, even though no other reward should follow. The servile has its source in a love of reward or of oneself.

The filial ever does as much as possible, apart from any command; the servile does as little as possible, yea, nothing except by command. The filial is never able to do enough for Him; but he who renders servile obedience thinks he is constantly doing too much for Him. The filial rejoices in the chastisement of the Father; the servile wishes to be without chastisement although he may do nothing right.

The filial remains in the house and inherits all the Father has; the servile wishes to reject this and receive his lawful reward. The servile looks to the external; the filial is concerned about the inner witness and the Spirit.

The servile is Moses and produces Pharisees and scribes; the filial is Christ and makes children of God. The servile is either occupied with the ceremonies which Moses commanded or with those which people themselves have invented.

The filial is active in the love of God and one's neighbor; yet he also submits himself to the ceremonies for the sake of the servants that he may instruct them in that which is better and lead them to sonship. The servile produces self-willed and vindictive people; the filial creates peaceable and mild-natured persons.

The servile is severe and gladly arrives quickly at the end of the work; the filial is light and directs its gaze to that which endures. The servile is malevolent [wishing evil] and wishes no one well but himself; the filial would gladly have all men to be as himself.

The servile is the Old Covenant, and had the promise of temporal happiness; the filial is the New Covenant, and has the promise of eternal happiness, namely, the Creator

Himself. The servile endured for a time; the filial will last forever. The servile was a figure and shadow; the filial is the body and truth.

The servile was established to reveal and increase sin; the filial follows to do away with it. For if a man wishes to escape from sin he must first hate it, and if he would hate it he must first know it, and if he would know it there must be something to stir up and make known his hidden sin. Now it is Law or Scripture which does this.

Moreover, the law gives occasion to people to depart farther from God, not because of itself [for it is good] but because of the sin which is in man. This is also the reason why Paul says that the law was given that it might increase sin, that sin might thereby become known.

Yea, the law is the strength of sin and therefore it is just like the servile obedience, that is, obedience to law, which leads people into the most intense hatred of God and of one's neighbor.

Therefore filial obedience is a certain way through which man escapes from such hatred and receives the love of God and of one's neighbor. Therefore as one administers death, the other administers life. The one is the Old Testament; the other, the New.

According to the OT, only he who murdered was guilty of judgment; but in the NT, he also who is angry with his brother. The OT gave permission for a man to separate from his wife for every reason; but not at all in the NT, except for adultery.

The Old permitted swearing if one swore truly, but the New will know of no swearing. The Old has its stipulated punishment, but the New does not resist evil.

The Old permitted hatred for the enemy; the New loves him who hates, blesses him who curses, prays for those who wish one evil; gives alms in this manner that the left hand does not know what the right has done; says his prayer secretly without evident and excessive babbling of mouth;

Judges and condemns no one; takes the mote out of the eye of one's brother after having first cast the beam out of one's own eye; fasts without any outward pomp and show; is like a light which is set on a candlestick and lightens everyone in the house; is like a city built on a hill, being everywhere visible; is like good salt that does not become tasteless, being pleasing not to man but to God alone;

Is like a good eye which illuminates the whole body; takes no anxious thought about clothing or food, but performs his daily and upright tasks; does not cast pearls before swine, nor that which is holy before dogs;

Seeks, asks, and knocks; finding, receiving and having the door opened for him; enters through the narrow way and the small gate; guards himself from the Pharisees and scribes as from false prophets; is a good tree and brings forth good fruit; does the will of his Father, hearing what he should do, and then doing it.

The church of true believers is built upon Christ the Chief Cornerstone; stands against all the gates of hell, that is, against the wrathful judgment of the Pharisees, of the mighty ones of earth, and of the scribes;

Is a house and a temple of God, against which no wind and no water may do anything, standing secure, so that everything else which withstands the teaching which proceeds

from it, denying its truth, may itself finally give evidence that it is a dwelling of God – although it is now maligned by the Pharisees and scribes as a habitation of the devil:

Yea, they shall finally hear, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God” -Rev.21:3.

But of the house of the Pharisees and scribes, it shall be said, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” -Rev.18:2. But to God be all honor, praise and glory through His beloved Son, our Lord and Brother Jesus Christ, Amen.

Reflections Upon Reformation Church Systems

The Reformation effected a change in the prevailing doctrine of Christ along with the individual character of the believer. The failing of the movement was in the continuance of the system of Rome’s hierarchy being preserved as essential in the various state churches that emerged.

The basis of the true church is spiritual life: not acknowledgment of correct but abstract concepts that have not transformed one’s practice. True faith issues in a new creation [2 Cor.5:17]: Christ dwelling in the heart through faith [Eph.3:17]. And Christ so indwelling will, without fail, lead to a life of holiness and love in the truth.

Spiritual downfall resulted from the Reformation’s reliance upon carnal ability to withstand persecution. It paved the way to becoming dependent upon a man and a movement developing into a denomination, rather than upon living faith in Christ and His Word.

In the Reformation churches, Christ quickly became Head in name only: not truly Head to lead, guide, and direct among all believers who are equally spiritual priests. The evil of clergy and laity distinctions were rigidly maintained.

Creeds, catechisms, and councils were substituted for the Word. Vengeance was not left in the hands of the Lord, but was meted out by the sword in the hands of the Church leaders.

Only in Christ can king and priest be merged in one man righteously [Zech.6:12,13]. Among men, evil cannot but result when the executive, legislative, and judicial powers are concentrated in one ruling authority. This is clearly seen in Diotrephes in the NT [3 Jn.9,10]. Here in one man, were all three functions combined; and it was evil.

He legislated the terms of membership in the church according to his own law. No other administrative decision-making but his own was allowed in his executive office. Any who dared depart from his rule, suffered the judicial punishment that he inflicted upon transgressors of his system. See **Appendix 1 NT Leadership**.

While planting the seeds of salvation and reform of the church, at the same time, they planted the tares of its ruin. Baptism of infants as a sign of entering the covenant, consecrated multitudes into the churches who were strangers to the grace of God in Christ. Communion’s ceremony being viewed as partaking of Christ eroded the necessary foundation of personal living faith in Christ Himself.

With the Sword of the Spirit in one hand and the sword of the state in the other, citizens were compelled to outwardly conform to a religion that they did not embrace from the heart. Flesh was relied upon to enforce the Spirit, the sheep acted as wolves, and Calvary’s cross was exchanged for the judgment hall of Pilate.

Rome’s yoke had not truly been cast off. Babel’s legacy of a priest, shrine, and tyranny perpetuated by the popes was yet retained by Reformation Christendom. Whereas the Catholic Church had ruled the world, the world now ruled the church through its political princes. Constantine was resurrected.

Several similar systems were substituted for the one reigning in Rome. Though the Word was placed in the hands of the people, sight was not restored when forced to view it through eyeglasses provided by Protestant priests, now also their civil lords.

An Anglican bishop under King Henry VIII exposed the nakedness of the new Protestant denominations when he said to the King: "If we allow the people to have the Scriptures in their own language, they will convict us all of heresy!" Rome's reign remained.

Thus as the Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Presbyterian denominations expanded, He who has the seven Spirits of God looked on and said: "I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead" -Rev.3:1.

9 WOOL & LINEN

You shall not wear a garment of different sorts,
Such as wool and linen mixed together
Deut.22:11

Mixture

Linen permits priestly service to the Lord to be performed in purity [Ex.39:27-29]. Wool is refused as it causes the toiling flesh of man to sweat [Ezek.44:17,18].

Fleshly effort cannot be combined with true service to God. Such mixture corrupts all that is undertaken in the kingdom of heaven since the "flesh profits nothing" -Jn.6:63. The weaving of Spirit and flesh into one fabric of service must be diligently guarded against if a "Well done!" will be heard at the judgment of Christ.

The centuries following the Reformation witnessed a variety of declines and revivals among the people of God. Some of the greatest movements of the Spirit of God in the history of the church came from the periods between the 1600's and the 1900's. On the other hand, some tragic departures developed when the fiber of the flesh was interwoven with the thread of the Spirit. Let us consider what took place.

John Robinson gave this charge to the Puritans who crossed the Atlantic in the Mayflower for the New World of America in 1620:

I charge you before God and His blessed angels, that you follow me no farther than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveals anything to you by any other instrument [servant] of His, be as ready to receive it as you were to receive any truth by my ministry.

For I am verily persuaded that the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of those Reformed Churches which will go no further than the instruments [men God has used] of their Reformation.

The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; whatever part of His will our God has revealed to Calvin, they [Lutherans] will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet did not see all things. This is a misery much to be lamented, for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God.

Here, this brother neatly summarizes both the causes for the advance as well as the decline of the church in any era. On the one hand, there is freedom to receive from and progress by the illumination of the Word of God from anyone who is truly taught of the Spirit. On the other hand, the gathering around a man or particular emphasis of doctrine will cut oneself off from the benefit that one might otherwise obtain from all of the Lord's gifts to His church.

In the former, there is true fellowship in the Spirit around Christ as He is set forth in the Word. In the latter, there is the formation of sects and denominations which separate men from the unity of the body and the whole counsel of God into a narrow isolation from the fullness of Christ [Eph.4:11-16].

When independent congregations develop along a particular personality or doctrinal emphasis, denominationalism arises. This is an evil that the Scriptures have condemned as carnal [I Cor.1:10-13; 3:1-5].

Two things characterize the NT church: the Life of Christ evident in His people and their subjection to Him as Lord according to His Word. When these things are minimized or supplanted, departure from Christ sets in and evil confusion results.

Persecution throughout the preceding centuries, by and large, prevented the rise of denominational evil. When brethren and their leaders were scattered and put to death, there was no opportunity to become attached to one man. The Word of the Lord was their only recourse, not a man or a movement, and they gladly received teaching from any who brought the true message of the Word of life to their hearts.

However, with the military strength of Protestants and in the growing toleration of post-Reformation times, groups were increasingly formed around particular men or doctrinal emphases.

While Catholics had denied individuals fellowship with God, the Protestants now denied them fellowship among fellow-believers. Spiritual life faded as denominations rose and became established institutions.

Jacob Arminius 1560 - 1609 AD

Along with Calvin, whose teachings are set in opposition to his own, Arminius exercised a profound influence upon Christian thinking. A student of Calvin's, he was asked to prepare a summary of Calvin's teachings. As he studied, he discovered that a number of things he had been taught could not be supported from the Scriptures.

The main areas of difference between him and Calvin centered on the extent of God's sovereign choice of individuals for salvation or unto judgment. Arminius said that God is not the author of sin and that there are no limits to His saving grace.

Christ died for the sins of the whole world, not just for those of the elect as Calvin maintained. Man has a choice in responding to the gospel, and the offer of salvation is to be freely made to all.

Stop and think: How might have Paul's simple directive in I Cor.4:6 prevented centuries of controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism?

King James Bible of 1611

King James I of England, son of Mary, Queen of Scots, commissioned the translation and publishing of the Authorized Version, commonly known as the King James Version of the Bible. The translation was done by a committee of godly men, and became the standard translation of the English speaking world for centuries. Its message came with fresh power to the people and has had more influence over the civilizations of mankind than any other book in history.

The British Commonwealth

During the civil war of 1642-1646, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, Puritans, and Baptists had all fought together in the struggle. Such close association for the common life-threatening cause, resulted in a new respect and toleration for divergent beliefs.

Following the conflict, Oliver Cromwell established the British Commonwealth. Liberty of conscience and worship, as well as preaching and printing was allowed as had never before been done.

Romanists were excluded. It ushered in an era of greatly increased gospel preaching and an awakening to the needs of the unconverted heathen, initially in America.

Parliament constituted a corporation in 1701 for the *Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*. It was John Eliot [1604-1690 AD] who brought the needs of the pagans before the conscience of England. The closing note on his Indian grammar said: "Prayer and pains, through faith in Jesus Christ, will do anything."

He had been driven from England by persecution, preached to the Indians in America, and translated the Scriptures into their tongue along with other useful gospel materials. The Lord used him to bring about their conversion as well as many blessings in their daily manner of life.

Jan Amos Comenius c.1592 - 1670 AD

Driven by persecution from place to place, Comenius faithfully served the believers known as the United Brethren. He, along with 36,000 Brethren families were forced to flee from Moravia following the "Day of Blood" in which fifteen of the Brethren were beheaded. Both his wife and his child died along the way from the harshness of the cold and lack of food.

As they bid farewell to Moravia, he encouraged the brethren to trust the Lord that He might preserve there a "hidden seed" which would afterwards grow to bear fruit. Years later, Zinzendorf was to be the realization of Comenius' faith.

They found a place of refuge in Lissa, Poland in 1628. But once again, hatred of the light scattered their small band. Comenius lost everything a second time, including unpublished manuscripts that he had spent years preparing.

Though persecuted, nevertheless the Lord used him widely, not only in spiritual blessing, but in education. His fame went forth throughout Europe as having beneficially revolutionized methods of teaching in schools that continue up to today.

Thankfully, he continued to write as well, and several of his works remain. In 1650 he wrote to counsel the preachers of the Moravian Church who were left without a circle of fellowship due to the persecutions.

He exhorted them to accept invitations to teach the Word in other churches: not to flatter the listeners or encourage divisions. Rather, their aim should be to promote love and oneness of mind.

Those who were not preachers should join in fellowship in congregations where they were not forced to follow men but encouraged to follow Christ. In places where they saw the truth of the gospel of Jesus, they should pray for their peace, seek their growth and progress in godliness, and live as a shining example so that the wrath of the Almighty which is coming upon all of Christendom might at least be turned away from them.

From Amsterdam in 1660 he wrote *Voice of Mourning* where he said:

Even our Lord who had to endure a measureless painful, shameful, and sorrowful death, comforted Himself with this; The corn of wheat, if it does not die, remains alone, but if it dies, brings forth a rich harvest.

If, therefore, out of His wounds healing has sprung up, out of His death, life: out of His hell, heaven and salvation: why should not we, the little grains of corn, die according to the will of God? If the blood of the martyrs and also our blood shall be the seed of the Church for the increase later of those who fear God, ah, let us, weeping, scatter the precious seed that we may bring in the sheaves with rejoicing.

God will not destroy without building again. He makes all things new. God knows what He is doing; we must trust Him to pull down and to build up as He will.

At the age of seventy-seven he wrote these memorable words contained in his publication, *One Thing Needful*:

The great number of teachers is the reason of the multitude of sects, for which we shall soon have no names left. Each church reckons itself as the true one, or at least as the purest, truest part of it, while among themselves they persecute each other with the bitterest hatred.

No reconciliation is to be hoped for between them; they meet enmity with irreconcilable enmity. Out of the Bible they forge their different creeds; these are their fortresses and bulwarks behind which they entrench themselves and resist all attacks.

I will not say that these confessions of faith are bad in themselves. They become so, however, in that they feed the fire of enmity; only by putting them away altogether would it be possible to set to work on healing the wounds of the Church. To this labyrinth [confusing maze] of sects and various confessions [denominations] another belongs; the love of disputation [controversy/debate].

What is attained by it? Has a single learned strife ever been settled? Never. Their number has only been increased. Satan is the greatest sophist [philosopher /false reasoner]; he has never been overcome in a strife of words. In divine service [church meetings] the words of men are usually heard more than the Word of God.

Each one chatters as he pleases, or kills time by learned disquisitions [lengthy discussions] and disproving the views of others. Of the new birth and how a man must be changed into the likeness of Christ to become partaker of the divine nature [2Pet.1:4], scarcely anything is said.

The sacraments [baptism/Lord's Supper], given as symbols of unity, of love, and of our life in Christ, have been made the occasion of bitterest conflict, a cause of mutual hatred, a center of sectarianism.

In short, Christendom has become a labyrinth. The faith has been split into a thousand little parts and you are made a heretic if there is one of them you do not accept. What can help?

Only *the one thing needful*: Return to Christ, looking to Christ as the only Leader, and walking in His footsteps, setting aside all other ways until we all reach the goal, and have come to the unity of the faith [Eph.4:13].

As the heavenly Master built everything on the ground of the Scriptures, so should we leave all particularities of our special confessions and be satisfied with the revealed Word of God which belongs to us all. With the Bible in our hand we should cry: I believe what God has revealed in this Book; I will obediently keep His commands; I hope for that which He has promised.

Christians, give ear! There is only one Life, but Death comes to us in a thousand forms. There is only one Truth, but Error has a thousand forms. There is only one Christ, but a thousand Antichrists.

So you know, O Christendom, what is the one thing needful. Either you turn back to Christ or you go to destruction like the Antichrist. If you are wise and will live, follow the Leader of Life.

Stop and think: How did Comenius show the Pattern of Christ?

George Fox 1624 - 1691 AD

As a young man of nineteen, he left home for a period of four years, seeking spiritual enlightenment. Seeing the deadness of the professing religion about him, he sought for understanding directly from the Lord Himself based on his understanding of I Jn.2:27.

During his walks he would receive what he called “openings” from the Lord. While he held the Scriptures in high esteem, his emphasis upon “inner light” had a tendency to seek new revelation beyond that of the Scriptures.

Because of the great emphasis placed upon the internal and spiritual, the Lord’s Supper and baptism were minimized and even abandoned as being mere outward forms. Other characteristics were a refusal to bear arms or use of force in self-defense. Oaths are not to be taken and payment of tithes refused.

He began to break into the middle of church meetings and proclaim his doctrines. A following developed and meetings of the “Friends” began in many places with a needed emphasis upon the Holy Spirit’s work in the heart of the believer. Because of their radical practices with respect to established churches, they came under the persecution of both the general populace as well as the government.

Thereafter, they began to be called “Quakers” by their enemies. Fox himself was imprisoned repeatedly as well as the Friends, though they did not resist, and bore all patiently. It was through the early and persistent influence of Friends that major steps were taken to abolish the slave trade. See **Appendix 4 Slavery**.

Stop and think: Evaluate Fox’s emphasis and practices in light of Christ’s own Pattern. What is similar; what was different?

The Act of Uniformity of 1662

This legislation required every minister of every congregation to agree to all things written in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and obtain ordination from the Church of England. Two thousand servants of God, some of the most notable and godly in the land, refused to submit and were excommunicated.

Among them was Isaac Watts [1674-1748], whose beautiful hymns such as *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, Joy to the World, O God our Help in Ages Past*, are sung to the glory of God and blessing of Christ’s church even until now.

Another outstanding brother who refused man’s constraints was John Bunyan [1628-1688], who is known worldwide for his marvelous work, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, that has been read more than any other book besides the Bible. He wrote this during the twelve years he was cast into the prison of Bedford for refusing to stop peaching and teaching the gospel, though not ordained.

The Act divided England into clearly distinct groups: Anglicans and Nonconformists. The Nonconformists, or Puritans as they were referred to, were greatly used of the Lord to spread the gospel and teach the Word. It demonstrated once again that the Spirit of God cannot be confined to man’s institutions and constraints.

Jean De Labadie 1610 - 1674 AD

Labadie had been ordained as a Jesuit priest at age twenty five, and continued in the Roman Church for fifteen years. He was deeply concerned about reforming the corruption in Christendom for which he labored in home Bible studies to that end.

Finally he was forced to leave the Catholics due to mounting persecution and he took refuge with the Calvinists whom he had come in contact with. He had already concluded that attempts to reform the Church of Rome were futile and that he could never be reconciled with the Catholic clergy.

In Geneva, his Bible expositions had great blessing to the congregation that was declined in spiritual fervor. Especially beneficial were his home meetings in which the Word was taught, particularly so to the young Philip Jakob Spener, later to become a notable servant of the Lord.

In the city of Middelburgh, he was invited to live and labor by a godly group of men, well known for their spiritual testimony. Labadie was deeply disappointed at the state of the church

and their concepts of Christianity. He understood the NT to say that the church of the Lord Jesus is a company of born-again people, united and led by the Holy Spirit.

The Calvinistic state church he encountered, however, was full of Christians in name only. He introduced mutual edification of each other from the Word and praying from one's heart rather than reading a pre-written prayer. These practices were widely received by the people but led to conflict with the leaders.

If these practices were consistently followed, they reasoned, they will lead to the complete change of our whole church structure and system. Therefore, he and his followers were cast out of the Reformed Church. With about three hundred brethren, they formed a few independent congregations in the same city, but were eventually driven out altogether.

For twenty years he had attempted to effect change within the Reformed denomination, again, to no avail. From this he concluded that reform from within the established system was impossible, and that separation from these systems was the only means that biblical principles could be restored.

They found refuge in Amsterdam of the Netherlands, where they were received and found religious liberty. There the work started afresh with great blessing on simple Scriptural grounds. Many left the deadness of the institutional Reformed Church while many others were sympathetic to their teaching and life.

Leaders of the Calvinistic churches appealed to the government to outlaw them. This, however, was refused, and the brethren were allowed to continue.

When we stray from the infallible Word that is forever settled in heaven into man's inventions upon how to improve it, disaster always results. It was so in Labadie's later years.

The church is not the abode of Christian perfection, it is the abode of Christ's life within the regenerate that is developing and maturing through weakness and limitation. Labadie became zealous for full spiritual maturity of the Lord's people and thought that would be best served by forming a community where all could live together for mutual edification.

A "household church" was set up in a rented house. Some of his close associates objected to the venture as not scriptural. The angry exchange between them became a blot on their testimony in Amsterdam.

It was evident that a "perfect" fellowship had not been established. One calamity followed another and the un-Christ-like spirit and doctrine discovered among them led to their being asked to leave the city.

They re-grouped in a neighboring town and became increasingly withdrawn into their own small circle of association. Outside the household, Labadie was hated [I Tim.3:7]; inside he was venerated as an apostle. People hung upon his every word as if they had never known true communion before apart from him.

It degenerated into a tragic sect having virtually no outside influence with the gospel, so occupied were they with themselves. Sharing of all things in common was adopted and some began ecstatically speaking in "tongues."

Labadie died in 1674 and the group did not survive him but for a few years. The "household church" ended in failure as it surely must; it was not the Pattern of Christ.

Stop and think: In reacting against two authoritarian systems, Labadie eventually established his own. What was according to Christ in what he did, and where did he go wrong?

Philip Jakob Spener 1635 - 1705 AD

As a Lutheran, Spener saw that the mere orthodox profession of faith does not save a man. Only a deep heart response of godliness will save, and such salvation issues in the transformation of the believer into Christ likeness. This emphasis is what came to be known as "Pietism": the insistence that regeneration, sanctification, and devotion of heart become experiential realities.

Influenced by John Bunyan and others, he led in the call to return to a serious study of the Scriptures and the practical outworking of the priesthood of all believers. Meetings were held in his house in order to put into practice, "the old apostolic way of church meetings, as Paul in I

Cor.14 describes it. Those who have gifts and knowledge should also speak and, without disorder and strife, express their godly thoughts on the matters in hand, and that the others might judge.”

The believers came together regularly to study and discuss the Word with the men contributing, though the sisters were welcome to attend, and did so. He objected to names for the gatherings and allowed a loving and sensible range of expressions among them without legislating each group to conform to some central standard.

His desire was expressed in his own words: “O that I knew a single assembly upright in all things, in doctrine, order, and practice. All that would make it what an apostolic Christian assembly should be.” He wasn’t expecting an assembly, as he said, “without weeds,” but one in which the men would carry out their teaching and ministry responsibilities by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

His longing was for a gathering where the greater portion of the brethren were dead to the world and led a godly life. What he observed among Lutherans, however, was that the majority were not born-again and the professing ministers did not know the basics of Christian doctrine.

The average Lutheran was suspicious of him, and the official Church attacked and ridiculed him, but he continued on in this way until his death. His labors were a great blessing to many, among whom was the godly August Francke who would profoundly affect Zinzendorf.

August Hermann Francke 1663 - 1727 AD

Francke carried on the Pietist tradition of Spener in Halle where he served as a Professor of Greek at the university. There he became burdened for the distressful condition of the poor and set about to assist them as best he could.

He determined before God to erect a school for the poor which he did. This launched his life’s work. At his death, 134 orphans were being supported in his Home for Orphans, 2,200 children and young men were being taught in his different schools, mostly without charge, hundreds of poor students were fed daily, and there were a library, printing press, and hospital established.

All of this was carried on without appealing for money and without any visible means of support. It was done, he said: “solely and simply in reliance on the living God in heaven.”

There the young Zinzendorf from the ages of ten to sixteen was taught and learned, not only academics, but personal devotedness and holiness under the influence of Francke. In his master’s home he was also exposed for the first time to missionary work among the heathen, as he met and listened to the first missionaries among Protestants who were sent out from Halle to India in 1705.

Brother Ziegenbalg was just twenty-three when he set out with Francke’s blessing from Halle to India. Faced with endless difficulties, he only survived thirteen years, but accomplished much: not only among the Tamils of India, but also through his laying down of sound principles of missionary work.

Five principles governed his work: [1] Christians must be able to read and therefore must become educated. [2] The Word of God must be made available in the local dialect. [3] Preaching the gospel must be based on an accurate knowledge of the mind and culture of the people in order to clearly communicate the Word with them. [4] The aim of preaching must be unto a definite and true spiritual conversion. [5] At as early a date as possible, an indigenous church with its own indigenous ministry must come into existence.

Gottfried Arnold 1666 - 1714 AD

Though influenced by Spener, this brother could not abide the empty ceremonies of the Lutheran tradition which he labeled as “Babel” and incapable of being reformed. His first book, *First Love, that is a True Picture of the First Christians according to their Living Faith and Holy Life*, was a history of the Church up until Constantine. Portrayed in its pages were the evils of uniting the Church and the State.

He became increasingly impressed by the fact that, up until that time, church histories had been written by the dominant religious majority. He was therefore moved to write his most famous work, *Impartial History of the Churches and Heretics from the Beginning of the New Testament to the Year of Christ, 1688*.

In it, he traced the spiritual history of the church scattered in the world, rather than that of the main churchly organizations. He proclaimed that the brethren who had been condemned as heretics by the Roman Catholics through the centuries were biblical and their practices godly.

It caused a great stir. Many acclaimed his writing as being one of the most profitable books of all time.

Others condemned it as the most harmful book that had been written since the birth of Christ. Nevertheless, it opened the eyes of many to the spiritual continuance of the testimony of Christ over the centuries outside of the established and reigning Roman and Protestant institutions.

Count Nicolas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf **1700 - 1760 AD** **And the Moravians**

Zinzendorf: Early Years

After the death of his father when Zinzendorf was only six weeks old, he was raised by his godly grandmother who was a beloved friend of Jakob Spener. That type of ministry, study of the Scriptures, prayer, and the singing of hymns, were what filled his early years to age ten. Then, as was noted above, he was sent to Halle to further his education under the earnest and godly August Francke.

Notes in his diary summarize how these wonderful years were used by the Lord to prepare His servant for a life of usefulness in the kingdom of heaven:

“Daily meetings in professor Francke’s house, the edifying accounts concerning the kingdom of Christ, the conversation with witnesses of the truth in distant regions, the acquaintances with several preachers, the light of different exiles and prisoners, the cheerfulness of that man of God in the work of the Lord, together with various trials attending it, increased my zeal for the cause of the Lord in a powerful manner.”

While at an art museum in Paris where he had gone during the course of his studies, he was arrested by the painting, *Ecce Homo* [Behold, the Man! Jn.19:5]. The artist’s rendering of Christ’s thorn-crowned brow had this phrase attached to it: “All this I have done for thee, what have you done for Me?”

He determined then and there in his twentieth year, that he would devote his life for service to the Lord Jesus, however Christ might lead him. He increasingly became noted for his deep godliness and flaming spiritual vitality.

Zinzendorf: Herrnhut

His grandmother’s estate was purchased by him in 1721 and he was married the following year. Romance had little to do with his choice of a bride.

The idea that romantic love was the basis of a marriage relationship was the fruit of the Renaissance, not of the Reformation. Rather, he desired the most godly and like-minded sister for a wife: one who would share his burden to serve the Lord Jesus with heart, soul, and body.

He found her in the person of Countess Erdmuth Dorothea von Reuss. Their thirty-four years of marriage were blessed with twelve children, only three of whom lived beyond their parents.

Only some few months after the wedding, the first group of ten persecuted refugees from Moravia arrived at their estate, led over the mountains by Christian David. The Moravians were the heirs of John Huss, known as *Unitas Fratrum* [United Brethren] that have been mentioned previously.

This brother became one of the key contributors of the blessing to thousands that the new village community, *Herrnhut* [the Lord's Watch], became. Christian David took ten trips back to Moravia, trekking up to two hundred miles at a time, to lead groups of persecuted brethren to join the growing fellowship.

By 1726, there were some three hundred brethren from a wide variety of backgrounds living on the estate of the Count: Pietists, former Catholics, Reformed, Anabaptists, and some who could agree with no one. As surely it must be, as even among the Apostles of our Lord, conflicts arose: even bitter disputing, which threatened the unity and love of the new community.

Even some of Zinzendorf's closest brethren called him the Beast and False Prophet of Revelation. He endured all patiently, and through godly counsel and genuine love, was able to assist the brethren into harmony and fellowship.

Zinzendorf: Revival

1727 was a notable year for the brethren. On one of his travels, Zinzendorf came across a copy of Comenius' constitution of the ancient *Unitas Fratrum*. He discovered that the Moravian brethren traced their lineage of fellowship to long before the time of Luther.

Most striking of all is that it was so very similar to their own *Brotherly Agreement* drawn up among themselves just a few months before this discovery. The "hidden seed" had been preserved.

In that same month of July, they formed "Bands:" groups of two, three, or more of those who shared spiritual kinship. They met privately to converse concerning the state of their hearts, for exhortation, and prayer for one another.

Brethren began to meet regularly, sometimes all night, for mutual encouragement and prayer. With many tears and supplications, they pledged themselves to live together in love and unity.

Humility, conviction of sinfulness, and a sense of their helplessness came upon nearly one and all. Lofty thoughts of self were lowered and those towards the brethren increased in kindness.

The gathering of August 13, 1727 signaled what they later referred to as their "Pentecost." The entire congregation prayed with great conviction: weeping, rejoicing, with deep humility and earnestness for one another and their still persecuted brethren in Moravia. At the Lord's Supper, they were overcome with the love of Christ, the Lamb that was slain to take away the sins of the world.

At the close of the meeting, the whole congregation returned to their homes like "newborn children." They were truly then, one in spirit.

Zinzendorf: Missions

Anthony, a converted slave from the West Indies [islands in the Caribbean Sea], presented a moving appeal for the gospel to be brought to his people which greatly affected Zinzendorf. Anthony was brought to *Herrnhut* by the Count where he related the plight of the slaves on the sugar plantations where the only churches were exclusively for whites.

Leonard Dober and David Nischmann were commended to the Lord by the congregation to go forth as missionaries to the slaves in the West Indies. This was the first time that a church as a whole had considered sending out missionaries as their responsibility and God-given task. Dober,

a white man, pledged his willingness to even become a slave himself in order to reach Anthony's, a black man's, people.

On the night of the commendation, more than one hundred hymns were sung by the fervent congregation; songs like this Moravian hymn published in the early 1700's:

Let me dwell on Golgotha, Weep and love my life away, While I see Him on the tree,
Weep and bleed and die for me!

That dear blood for sinners spilt, Shows my sin in all its guilt: Ah, my soul, He bore
thy load; Thou hast slain the Lamb of God.

Hark! His dying words: "Forgive! Father, let the sinner live; "Sinner, wipe thy tears
away; I, thy ransom freely pay."

While I hear this grace revealed, And obtain a pardon sealed, All my soft affections
move, Wakened by the force of love.

Farewell, world, thy gold is dross; Now I see the bloody cross; Jesus died to set me
free, From the law, and sin, and thee!

He has dearly bought my soul; Lord, accept and claim the whole: To Thy will I all
reign, Now no more my own, but Thine.

They left on foot in 1732 with their only earthly possessions carried on their backs, with virtually no money, looking unto the Lord to direct their way. Both were skilled tradesmen and fully intended to work for their living as the need arose while they preached the Word.

For over one hundred years, no Moravian missionary received any salary at all. They worked with their hands to meet their practical needs of life [Acts 18:3,4; 2 Thess.3:6-10].

Their approach was to anticipate meeting individuals whose hearts had been prepared by the Holy Spirit of God, such as Cornelius [Acts 10] and the Eunuch of Ethiopia [Acts 8:26-40] or "the man of peace" mentioned by Christ [Lk.10:5-8].

These would be their "firstfruits." The Holy Spirit was the true "missionary," they were simply His agents [Jn.15:26,27; 16:7-11].

Christ was to be preached, not theology or convincing arguments. Reach the neglected people as did the Lord Jesus. These were their principles of ministry that they embraced and practiced which made them the greatest single missionary movement in the history of the church.

Many of the early brethren sent out to these tropical islands died of fever and other diseases. Nonetheless, this did not discourage the Moravian swelling tide of missionaries.

Within ten years, over seventy missionaries were sent out from their fellowship of six hundred brethren. May such "tithing" be rekindled in our self-centered churches of today!

They went to Greenland, Lapland, Georgia, Surinam, Africa's Guinea Coast, South Africa, to Jews in Amsterdam, Algeria, North American Indians, Ceylon, Romania, and Constantinople. Many were buried in the land of their labors, having laid down their lives as a glad sacrifice. In twenty years' time, the Moravians had sent out more missionaries than all the Protestant churches combined over the previous two hundred years.

Though remaining officially a Lutheran as did Spener, Zinzendorf possessed the true life of Christ along with great zeal to proclaim the Word. He himself traveled to Holland, England, the West Indies, and the southern Colonies in America for the sake of the gospel. He oversaw the Moravian missions and maintained a vigorous correspondence of sometimes hundreds of letters per month to encourage the brethren and the new converts.

And it was through the testimony of the Moravian brethren that John Wesley came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom we now turn.

John Wesley 1703 - 1791 AD

In Reformation England of the 1700's, unbelief and indifference to religion and morals prevailed. The upper class thought it was fashionable to be humanistic and immoral. The common people were plunged into grossest ignorance and sin. The clergy were no better.

Literature was atheistic and impure, drunkenness was not considered shameful, and violence and crime were everywhere. Excessive and brutal punishment of crime furthered the lawlessness of the people. Prison conditions were abominable and the illiterate poor and helpless multitudes were shown no mercy.

Into the home of Samuel Wesley, nineteen children were born from his one wife, Susanna. John and his brother, Charles, were among them. They were raised in strict but loving godliness by their devoted mother. Every day she set aside time with each of her children to teach them the Bible, the Anglican Prayer book, and to improve their conduct.

When they went to the university in London, she faithfully wrote to them with good advice and warnings against the snares of the world. Under the influence of his father, an Anglican minister, and his mother's teachings, John became thoroughly grounded in Anglicanism and good works as being necessary for salvation.

At his father's insistence, in 1725 he was ordained as an Anglican minister though he did not have assurance of sins forgiven or of the life of Christ within. He had not yet been born again and so, along with Charles, they sought to obtain holiness by religious devotion.

They founded what mockingly became to be called the "Holy Club." Discipline, prayers, Bible study, and helping the poor and in prisons became their agreed upon practices.

Every minute of the day was organized so that time could be put to the best use. Some began to call them "Methodists." Several students joined them, among whom was George Whitefield.

Radical changes were about to take place in John's soul. Believing that the Lord had called him to missionary work among Indians in Georgia of America, he left on the ocean voyage in 1734. In conversations with his Moravian fellow-travelers, he began to realize that he did not have true saving faith. He was soon to learn that he was not ready to die.

During a terrible storm, he frantically feared for his life while he watched Moravians, men, women, and children, calmly and joyously singing hymns of praise to God. When asked how they could sing during that life-threatening tempest, one brother replied: "Because we have known the Lord, and you have not."

His mission in America was a complete failure. His approach was to try and force a rigid discipline upon the settlers in Georgia which they resented and rejected.

Forced to leave, he returned to England in great distress of heart. He wrote in his journal on the return trip: "I went to America to convert the Indians; but O, who shall convert me?"

That prayer was soon to be answered. Back in London the Lord arranged for him to meet yet another Moravian, Peter Bohler, who discussed the way of salvation with him on many occasions. He was convicted that he was an unsaved unbeliever, but could not imagine how someone could be instantly converted. Even though he had not yet experienced true saving faith, Bohler encouraged him to "Preach faith till you have it; and then because you have it, you will preach faith."

The day of his deliverance came on May 24, 1738. Reluctantly, because of his Anglican heritage, he attended a Moravian meeting where Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans* was being read. In Wesley's own words, this is what happened:

"While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ...an assurance was given that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Three days earlier, unknown to John, his brother Charles had also become born-again. The history of the world was, literally, about to be changed.

Three years before his own conversion, George Whitefield had been born again and had already begun open-air preaching with great impact. Whitefield soon drew John Wesley into this novel practice, though Wesley's churchly devotion made him very reluctant at first. He said about himself that up until then he had been so particular about every point of "decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church."

This means of preaching let loose a flood of conviction unto salvation of countless thousands throughout the British Isles. Again, contrary to his Anglicanism, Wesley had to yield to the undisputed work of the Holy Spirit who raised up numerous non-ordained but powerful preachers of the gospel.

While multitudes were saved, riotous mobs met them on every hand, attacking them and destroying properties. Once Wesley barely escaped with his life through a back door when he was locked in a house while the crowds pulled the building apart, piece by piece.

Charles Wesley's hymns, more than 6,000 in number, beautifully and truthfully set forth the doctrine of God in Christ and the deepest longings of the spirit to love and glorify the Lord Jesus. *And Can It Be* and *Jesus Lover of My Soul* are representative of the lasting value that his deep devotion to the Savior has had for the church through the centuries up to today.

Wesley diligently organized converts into "Bands" or "Societies" as a practical means of providing continuance to the work. These were not churches per se, as he endeavored throughout his life to stay within the Anglican system. The time came, however, when he had to admit that this could not be done.

The Anglicans seriously disowned and systematically opposed Wesley and the revival. When they refused to ordain his converts, Wesley was faced with the inevitable separation. Actually, what the Spirit of God was doing could not be contained in that old wineskin and had to exist apart from it.

After his death, an official "Conference" was established to try and coordinate and unify the "Methodists." Being an institution with clergy overseeing it, the inevitable jealousy and political maneuvering set in which led to divisions among them and spiritual decline.

With "all the world as my parish," John Wesley preached over 40,000 sermons in his lifetime. The revivals that God brought in the British Isles and America in which the Wesleys and Whitefield were prominent, prevented the horrors of the French Revolution from staining English soil with its blood.

It brought spiritual life and fervor to countless thousands and paved the way for the great missionary movements that launched forth from the United Kingdom at the close of the 1700's, as well as contributing to reforms in prisons and to the abolition of slavery.

George Whitefield 1714 - 1770 AD

While a member of the "Holy Club" he attempted to obtain sanctification through fasts and other religious disciplines. His health nearly failed in the process which led him to turn to the Word of God in 1735.

It was by the reading of the Scriptures that his soul was converted. He then confessed: "I got more true knowledge from reading the Book of God in one month than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men."

Whitefield preached his first sermon in 1736 with great fervor, insisting that a work of regeneration must take place in the soul. Afterwards there was a complaint to the bishop that he had driven fifteen people "mad." They had been truly converted and the religiously dead thus began their persecution against the living light of the gospel.

In 1739 many pulpits had refused to let him preach because of his practice of teaching the Word from house to house. Then he turned to open-air preaching.

This was a practice that had not been done previously. At first hundreds, and then multiplied thousands heard the true gospel of grace from his mighty and gifted voice.

The Lord greatly used him in the United Kingdom and in America. Along with Jonathan Edwards, The Great Awakening of 1740-41 was largely due to his tireless efforts in which thousands were converted unto godliness. Out of a total population of 250,000 people, 50,000 new converts were added to the churches in America during these times.

Whitefield and the Wesleys journeyed almost without ceasing, preaching the gospel. It is estimated that John Wesley alone traveled more than 250,000 miles, riding on horseback in all types of weather. His brother, Charles, wrote many of his hymns upon his horse while moving to their next preaching locations.

Differences on doctrine existed between Whitefield and the Wesleys, but not on the one gospel. Both preached justification by faith alone and the new birth.

Whitefield's eloquent, impassioned, and dramatic preaching emphasized the predestination of believers unto salvation as had Calvin. Wesley's style was clear, logical, and expository, believing that Christ died for all and not merely for the elect. Many who listened to Whitefield found that the Lord had chosen them, while many who heard Wesley made their choice to follow the Lord: same gospel, same salvation.

Whitefield had desired that they resolve their differences privately so as not to tarnish the testimony before multitudes. When the conflict could not be resolved between them, he withdrew from the public eye, saying: "Let the name of Whitefield perish and that of Christ be glorified, and let me be but the servant of all!" When they separated, Whitefield joined with Howell Harris and was used of the Lord in Wales during the mighty revival that took place in that land.

Even with their differences, they maintained correspondence and fellowship with one another though they could not continue working side by side [Amos 3:3]. Through them both, the Lord altered the course of nations and the history of the world by the multiplied thousands who were delivered from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God and His marvelous light.

Fittingly, as a testimony to Whitefield's spiritual greatness, John Wesley spoke at his funeral. He testified to his tenderheartedness and charitableness along with his "faith in the bleeding Lord, the love of God shed abroad in his heart, filling his soul with tender, disinterested [impartial] love to every child of man."

Robert [1764-1842] and James [1768-1851] Haldane

After serving in the Scottish navy, both of these brothers were converted and devoted themselves to diligent study of the Scriptures. By the time of the Haldanes, the State Church of Scotland, the heir of John Knox, had fallen into spiritual deadness and formalism. It was even a new idea to read the Word of God and pray together in one's home with the family at that time!

James began this worship in his home once per week with his family alone and in secret. He says, "I was unwilling to have it more frequently, lest I should meet with ridicule from my acquaintances.

"A conviction of duty at length determined me to begin to have it every morning, but I assembled the family in a back room for some time, lest anyone should come in. I gradually got over this fear of man, and began to expound the Scriptures to those who lived in my family."

Seeing the blessing that this was to his family, this greatly awakened in him the desire to preach to others. With this in mind, the brothers began to visit villages. One evening, the expected preacher did not arrive to preach at the church that was there. James therefore mounted the pulpit and preached his first gospel sermon in 1797.

This led them into speaking far and wide, in churches when they could, or schools, empty buildings, but mainly in the open air. They wrote, printed, and distributed tracts to all and the Lord drew hundreds and thousands to Himself through their earnest gospel messages.

But, as always, the Established Church reacted against them by passing legislation forbidding unlicensed preachers, "vagrant [idle wandering] teachers and Sunday schools, irreligion [ungodliness], and anarchy." They further condemned missionary activity and warned their members against "attending upon, or giving countenance to [favoring], public preaching by any who are not of our communion [denomination]." Any who would do so were excommunicated.

Preaching went on, however, with often thousands in attendance in those days of spiritual barrenness. Many were converted.

Since the Scriptures alone were the basis of the Haldane's faith and practice, soon they began to see that they ought to meet together as brethren in order to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread. This they determined to do in simplicity of gathering each week, without taking up collections, and with liberty for any of the brethren to bring a teaching to the group as led by the Holy Spirit.

As they continued, the two brothers became convicted that their baptism as an infant in the Scotch Presbyterian Church had not been biblical. They therefore refused to baptize any more infants and were themselves immersed as believers.

Others who also saw the same from the Word were persuaded and were also baptized. This, however, in no way constituted their basis of fellowship with the brethren: that was based on the common life of Christ received by faith, though some left them because of it.

In 1816, Robert and his wife made a significant journey to Switzerland where he had profound influence upon university students. There, in Calvin's Geneva where Servetus had been burned for denying the Trinity, professors denied the deity of Christ and taught heathen philosophy rather than the Scriptures.

The students they met there were completely ignorant of the way of salvation and had never studied the Scriptures at all. They were struck with the graciousness of Robert's character and astounded at his knowledge of the Scriptures and trust in them.

In their home, Robert held regular Bible studies on the book of Romans where they sat around a long table with Bibles in different languages. Haldane taught the Word and answered questions through an interpreter. Some twenty to thirty students attended, though forbidden by their professors from doing so. As a result, some were dismissed from school, thrown out of the Church, and even forced to flee the country.

Romans was expounded in detail with comparison with many other passages. At a later time, he put his teaching into a commentary that is still in use up to today.

Among those who attended were Adolph Monod who brought the doctrine of God to the French speaking world and J. Merle D' Aubigne, the godly historian of the Reformation whose work has blessed multitudes and was used in the preparation of this book.

Stop and think: What can preserve the truth of God unto the next generation in any locality? [2 Tim.1:13,14; 2:2].

William Carey 1761 - 1834 AD

Son of a weaver and only educated until age twelve, William Carey labored as a gardener and later as a shoemaker. After his conversion, he taught himself NT Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, and Dutch. During his life he learned and translated portions of the Scriptures into thirty-four other languages of India, including six complete translations of the Bible and twenty-four partially so.

How did such an impoverished shoemaker become known as "The Father of Modern Missions"? Through study of the Word he saw that the Great Commission of Matthew 28 was not for the Apostles alone as was popularly believed by virtually all in his day.

Reading *Captain Cook's Voyages* sparked his interest in foreign lands. In his shop he pasted together a map of the world on which he wrote notes about anything he could discover about the state of men in far off lands. It became his prayer-book and subject of conversation and preaching.

At his early suggestions that missionary work should be carried on among the heathen, a Baptist minister of his denomination rose and said: "Sit down, young man. If God is pleased to convert the heathen, He will do it without your help or mine!"

This did not discourage him, however, and in 1792 he published his thoughts about the necessity of converting the nations. The shorter title is, *An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. It probably had as much influence on the history of Christianity as did Luther's Ninety-five Theses.

This was followed by his famous sermon on Isa.54:2, "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes." In it he exhorted the brethren to, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God."

In 1793 he arrived in India with his family. Their son died of dysentery soon afterwards, and his wife, who had initially refused to go at all and regularly complained against him once there, became insane. Thomas, his co-worker, wasted all their money, and they saw not even one convert after seven years of labor.

The British East India Company were interested in their money-making ventures only and constantly tried to make life difficult for the missionaries. In 1812, a fire destroyed their print house along with several of his translation manuscripts that he had been working on for years.

What did he do? He lovingly cared for his unfortunate wife until her death in 1807, moved from place to place when persecuted, and, like Tyndale, began his works all over again until they were all completed.

In the town of Serampore, where he stayed for the remaining thirty-four years of his life, a harmonious fellowship was established from where their work began to reap fruit. One distinctive feature of their peaceful continued service together was the weekly meeting for prayer and discussion.

All were welcome and even expected to discuss any matter that was disturbing their hearts about each other or the work. All was required to be done in love and brotherliness and it proved to be a great blessing to all.

A training school was established to equip the Indian converts to evangelize their own people and establish their own churches on biblical principles, rather than on European concepts. He also taught linguistics and was instrumental in abolishing the custom of widows being burned alive on their departed husband's funeral fire.

Perhaps his greatest contribution, though, was his influence on the progress of missions worldwide. He outlined five principles of missionary work that formed the core of many groups who followed in his steps.

- [1] Widespread preaching of the gospel by every possible method.
- [2] The Scriptures in the language of the people.
- [3] Establishing a church at the earliest conceivable time.
- [4] Thorough knowledge of the culture of the people.
- [5] Quickly training indigenous ministry.

By his example and exhortations, numerous other mission agencies developed in Britain, Scotland, and America who sent forth workers into the entire world.

Missions in Africa

Traditions

In the Africa of the 1800's, the chief held an almost omnipotent place over his people and those he had happened to conquer. His word was law and he wielded the power of life and death; All of life revolved around him. No white man could ever move into an area without the approval of the chief.

Motives varied among the powerful chiefs in allowing white missionaries to come among their people. Some were clever enough to use the presence of the white man as a safeguard against the ever-present dangers to their tribe. Others viewed him like a milk-cow from which endless material and financial benefits could be extracted.

A few tolerated the white man as a curiosity, much like the prestige that having a tame elephant in one's own possession would bring. And there were some who outwardly accepted his Christianity because it was the superior religion of the conquering race and culture.

It is no easy thing to be a Christian and a traditional chief. Some would say it is impossible to be both. Certainly, true conversion necessitates the setting aside of idolatrous ways, both personally and officially. Thankfully though, there were true and genuine conversions to the Lord Jesus among some, though not without cost.

The conflicts for a chief between the two were many. Typically the dignity of the chief was measured by the number of his wives. He was the recognized head of the ancestor cult whose traditions he was expected to continue. When rain failed, he was counted upon to perform the proper rituals to secure its return.

As the sun cannot set without going down in blazing red, neither can a king pass away without carrying the blood of the living with him. Even whole villages of over one hundred have been entombed with the king and left to suffer and suffocate.

Proverbs and parables abound to express black Africa's view of life. Even his very manner of life is a parable, tangled and obscure at times.

Traditional thinking and practices present stony resistant walls against the truth of God. One of the greatest lessons in Africa is gaining wisdom to adapt the truth of the "what" to the truth of the "how" to that of the "when."

Consider the effect that these native traditions have had upon presenting the gospel. In modern times, some of the following observations have faded, but elements of all abide to influence the current African outlook.

Trails: Paths are narrow and single file: twisting like a serpent, never straight. The man behind follows the steps of him who is before: never looking for himself, only trekking where other steps have trod over a thousand generations.

Precedent, not principle is the law of black Africa. Antiquity means sanctity according to the ancient proverb: "An old well-worn path must lead up to a big chief." The few junctions of roads encountered become mystical places of power and magic.

Stop and think: What is the gospel call to the African trail? [Lk.3:4,5; Isa.35:8; Mk.7:5-9,13; I Pet.1:18].

Round Huts: Circular structures reflect unending and unbroken cycles: day to night, dry to wet, generation to generation, spirit of dead to spirit of living. Discussions and reasoning proceed in wide orbits, never coming straight to the point. All is bent in the African native realm, in morals and in discourse.

Stop and think: What do observing ceaseless cycles lead to apart from light from heaven? [Eccl.1:2-15; 2:11,17].

Lying: Only the "just" will be vindicated in the land of deceit where all are guilty until proven innocent. Truth is not defended where the liars subject the accused to the trial by poison, fire, or water: where it is presumed that the one in the right will not be harmed by the judgment imposed.

Stop and think: What sentence is to be passed against lying, and by whom? [Col.3:9; Jn.8:3-11].

Law: Penalties are imposed for violations incurred though law is not logical and logic is not law. Any tripping on a vine along the way sets laws of nature in motion which must be enforced though the codes and consequences for transgression defy explanation. Taboos have their roots in these tribal laws.

Law is a hopelessly tangled cause and effect litigation removed from the court of reason where it becomes wrong to affirm the right: a law of entrapment to deprive another on pretense in order to gain for self. Advantage, not justice, is the goal.

Stop and think: What does the gospel have to say to this type of "justice"? [Ex.23:1-9; Prov.17:15; 24:23-26; Isa.1:16,17,21-23; 5:21-23].

Tribute: "What did you bring me?" Every step in Africa is met with an outstretched hand demanding payment for the right to pass.

Every man is king of his own little dominion. Any hesitation to pay is met with a flood of questions to which no answer is sought.

Simply and only what is sought is a chance opening to press a "legal" claim against the intruder. All the while, dubious favors are promised in exchange for tangible goods demanded that then will gain admittance to his ash-heap kingdom.

Stop and think: How does Rom.13:6-8 relate to tribute in a local tribal setting? Is there a difference between this and bribery in today's context?

Names: Multiple names conceal multiple identities. With every twist of character another alias emerges. To the African, a new name indicates a new nature.

Stop and think: What is the significance of a new name in light of the gospel coming to a man? [Isa.56:5; 65:15; Jn.1:42; Rev.2:17].

Tribalism: Hear each tribe shout its own Pharisaical thanksgiving, “I am not like other men!” -Lk.18:11. Thus all others are despised as heathen and mocked for their ignorant practices derived from their inferior gods.

Stop and think: What effect must the gospel necessarily have upon this proud and arrogant assumed superiority? [Phil.3:20; I Pet.1:18; Col.3:10-15].

Tradition: “The voice of man is the voice of God.” God is the author of culture. God’s Law governs all native practices. “God is great; whoever conquered Him?”

Thus the name of God is attached to a dark fatalism where every deed is justified as being an outworking of the will of God. God Himself becomes the reason not to repent, for each African tribe is already performing His will.

Whatever is, simply is; it is the way things are, and have been, and ever will be. And God has ordained it all.

Stop and think: What are the traditions of the gospel that we are to maintain? [2 Thess.2:15; 3:6,14]. Which traditions are we not? [I Pet.1:18].

Community: “Ten trees in a clump shoot up like needles; one alone springs up crooked and twisted.” The African is molded by his family, clan, village, and tribe: pressed on every side to arise like the rest; there is no place for innovation, individuality, or inventiveness here. Yet apart from the gospel, this fellowship of conformity will only result in a uniformity of corruption [I Cor.15:33].

Stop and think: What is the difference between the gospel’s “clump of trees” and that of the traditional culture? [Eph.4:15,16; Heb.10:24,25; Prov.18:1].

Slaying infants: Twins must be murdered and the ones whose upper teeth show before their lower are to be killed. Any violation of rigid tradition from the past must be the invasion of the demonic into the land of the living. There is no room for deviation from the expected in Africa.

Stop and think: How is it that tradition has such a powerful sway over men that they will slay rather than offend? [Jn.8:36; Col.1:13; I Pet.1:18].

Cannibalism: Does not the lion consume its prey? Is not war simply the blood shedding of the leopard? Therefore we eat what we kill and the power of the victim becomes the portion of the victor. Here ritual merges with reality, appetite with avarice, and power with passion.

Stop and think: How does the revelation of the written Word condemn cannibalism? [Gen.1:26; 9:2-6; I Cor.15:39].

White men: Whites are, to the African, sons of the day, the pampered and petted children of a God who is the great “White Man.” Hear African reasoning: “Though whites dwell in the ‘City of the King,’ yet they killed the best among themselves, Christ, and then came to Africa to tell us blacks what they had done.” He concludes: “We blacks only kill criminals and enemies, how treacherous then is this white man, really?”

Suspicion ever meets the white man coming into Africa. Motives are distrusted and the “white magic” of his inventions are feared yet desired at the same time.

Stop and think: How can cross-cultural racial prejudice be overcome? [Lk.22:25-27; Phil.2:3-8; I Thess.2:7-12].

Writing: The African sees that the white man is ruled by paper. By paper, one may possess all: magical knowledge and paper wealth. Do not whites exchange paper for goods? Do they not covet and fight over amassing paper?

To him, writing is medicine: a mystical formula, a charm. Arabs have as their most potent cure a written line of the *Quran*, swallowed by the sufferer. “If leaves from the tree of life are medicinal, why not literal leaves from a book?” argues the Muslim.

And so the darkened oral traditionalist and the superstitious Ishmaelite approximate Jeremiah's delightful discovery: "Thy Words were found and I did eat them, and Thy Word became to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" -Jer.15:16.

Writing awakens at once the horrifying recognition to the African that the entire past history and record of his race has been lost through lack of literature. He has no past treasure of written wisdom, only the vagary of oral tradition which can so easily be twisted to meet the demands of the moment in the mouth of the one speaking it.

Promises, being merely verbal and not written, can conveniently be modified by him who shouts the loudest that it is so. The flow of devious twists of falsehood springs from the unwritten page. Expediency and deception dictate when definite data is unrecorded.

Stop and think: What is the gospel's advantage by being preserved in writing? [Ps.119:89; Jn.20:31].

Dreams: These are the windows into tomorrow, whispers from eternity to light the path in a land without the Book of God. Indeed, God still speaks to those to whom He has not written; "in a dream...then He opens the ears of men" [Job 33:14-18].

Stop and think: What is the relative value of dreams for those who have the written Word of God? [Eccl.5:3,7; Jer.23:28].

Youth: "Soon ripe, soon rotten." The youth who is a man at 14 must become a boy at 30. The African knows everything too early and therefore can learn nothing when it is too late.

Wine, tobacco, and hemp lead him astray to perversity and quarreling while forgetting what is decreed [Prov.21:1; 23:29-35; 31:5]. So from early days he errs in his reason and boasts in transgression [Isa.28:7; Hab.2:5], becoming a slave to a more cruel master, his thirst for drink.

Stop and think: What remedy does the gospel bring to this early ruin of the children? [Mal.4:6; Eph.6:4; Col.3:20; Deut.6:5-9].

Drums: Like the cricket's call and the rhythmic croaking of the frog's chorus, his drumming invites lovers to dance, to mate. In the night, that throbbing drone invokes the gods of darkness: during the day, summons the warriors for blood.

Stop and think: Will the gospel change the use of drums or forbid their use altogether? [Eph.5:17-19].

Nakedness: African shame has no covering. It is a flagrant exposure of a centuries' old reproach: rampant in the bush and passed down to the present.

Stop and think: What covering does the gospel bring? [Lk.8:27,35; Rom.13:12-14; Rev.3:18; Isa.61:10].

Seasons: Months of ceaseless rain follow multiplied weeks of nothing but dried dust: wet and dry, active and dull, life and death, awake and asleep. The African follows the cycle of nature. He dozes in the day until the first heralding crack of thunder startles him to arise to labor.

Stop and think: How does the gospel interrupt the cycle of activity and dullness in a man's life? [Prov.6:6-11; 10:4,5; 13:4].

Time: Nothing besides his blazing timepiece arching daily across the heavens dictates his movements. His thus imagines himself to be responsible to nothing and no one outside the natural realm of which his own desires are a part. "How can a clock dictate to me, a man?" reasons the African.

Stop and think: How does the gospel teach a man to value time? [Ps.90:10-12; Eph.5:16].

Burial: Here, the dead truly dictate to the living and bring them into bondage. Fear, debt, and ritual are demanded from beyond the grave to haunt the survivors who still see the sun and bow to "the head of my father" and the blood of my mother.

Stop and think: What constitutes Christian burial and how does it differ from traditional burial? [Mt.14:12; Lk.9:59,60; Jn.19:38-42; Acts 8:2; I Thess.4:13,14].

Blood: Without the shedding of blood in Africa, there is no – no anything. Blood purges, confirms, purchases, protects, overcomes, curses, blesses, appeases, begins, and ends: the blood of cocks, goats, rams, and men. Forgiveness is never obtained thereby, only a postponement of the inevitable: a temporary rest from cruel deities.

Stop and think: Contrast the blood of Christ with the blood of Africa [Heb.9:12-14,22; 10:19-22].

Mediator: Every fiber of the African's being fixes upon the man who will connect him with the unseen realm of spiritual power. He becomes his link to influences not at his disposal.

Such a messenger quickly is seen as a miniature messiah. Perhaps this is why the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip soon away from the first convert of black Africa [Acts 8:39].

Stop and think: How do the Apostles' words show that they truly believed I Tim.2:5? [Acts 3:12-16; 14:8-18].

Spirits: The spirit of the living is connected with the spirit of the dead through the mother's blood that still circulates in the living though she has now departed. "No man really dies" in Africa; there is only a transition to glory.

His connection with the mother spirit softens the harshness of a father he may never have known, while the spirits of the ancestors continue in the clan head to instill fear of temptations to wander. In all this, the Father God is silent and cold like the stars, doing nothing [it seems to him] in the unloved and unloving cruelty of Africa's hostile natural realm in which he must live.

Stop and think: How can the love of God be expressed to the African? [I Jn.4:7-12].

Polygamy: Precedent, not principle, is the law of Africa: what is observed in nature, not what is entombed in books. Do the beasts not teach us that there is a bull of the herd? As with the antelope and elephant, there exists a parallel between lust and land, wives and wealth.

And so a man's goats, gold, and girls share a striking resemblance in his possession. And, indeed, his wives are little more than goats to him: merely cooks, concubines, and consorts, but not companions.

Stop and think: What are the differences between polygamy and Christ and His one bride, the church? [Eph.5:25-33].

Eyes: Eyes reveal the soul of a man. An African will read the eyes of a man to see if they confirm the words of his lips. "Distrust a man who cannot look you in the face, and beware of the woman who can."

Stop and think: How blessed is that man whose eye is simple, single, clear, and good. How can this be brought about? [Mt.6:22,23; Mk.7:20-23; Lk.11:34-36].

Slavery: Body bondage means soul bondage: slavery of mind. A slave is a living coin of commerce and becomes as insignificant as any other means to an end: a commodity of exchange.

If you can buy a boy for a penny's worth of cloth to make a head-tie, there you have the value of the man. When a mother and child are sold for small bags of grain, then we can understand how "man eats maize, but maize can eat man."

Is it reasonable then, to imagine that the cash payment of an hour's abolition can redeem centuries of bred into the bone slavery and the growling grudge of that bondage? How then can the heart of a passive, fatalistic, and dulled humanity be opened, set free indeed, and reinvigorated?

Only with the key of opening one's own heart to theirs [2 Cor.6:11-13]: to exposing them to the love of Christ by honoring all men [I Pet.2:17]. A heart can be restored only by lovingly soliciting his perspective, inviting his contribution, and ennobling the mutuality of genuine fellowship.

By expressing a shared dignity and respect as co-recipients of the image of God and as heirs of the grace of life in Christ a life can be revived. By thoughtfully exploring a re-orientation

of thinking involving responsible reflection and voluntary obedience to the Word of God will achieve this.

Stop and think: Describe how slavery is the fitting expression of life in Christ in contrast to the wicked slavery of men [Rom.6:15-23; I Cor.6:19,20; 7:23]. See **Appendix 4 Slavery**.

Doors: The way into the heart of an African is to stoop lowly at the entrance of his dwelling. There is no other means of access.

Stop and think: In the presentation of the one Door unto salvation [Jn.10:9], how will entrance be granted by the hearer? [I Thess.2:5-13; 3:6-13].

Deeds: Actions are the only well-expressed words in Africa where hearing is done by the eyes, and not the ears. He learns by observation, not by precepts of instruction. An example that sets a precedent for his eyes is far more persuasive than a lecture carried on wind to his ears.

Stop and think: What additional weight is added to the conviction of the Spirit of God [Jn.16:7-11] in our presentation of the gospel? [Jas.2:14-18; Prov.29:19; 2 Thess.3:7-9].

Obstacles

Little was done to reach Africa with the gospel during the horrible centuries of the slave trade. See **Appendix 4 Slavery**. It was only after that abominable institution was abolished, on paper though not in fact, that European and American missionaries turned their attention in earnest to the souls of men.

Up until then, the occupation of their nations had been the buying and selling of their bodies. Strange that the church was not compelled by spiritual movements rather than political and economic gain to reach Africa's millions before this time.

South Africa was the first area of focus of missionary enterprise. Moravians were early there in the latter 1790's followed by the London Missionary Society, Robert Moffat being one of the most famous among them. Sierra Leone on the West Coast and Kenya and Ethiopia on the East were the other early centers of Christian endeavor.

It was from these initial efforts that Africa became known as the "White Man's Graveyard." Hundreds of the pioneering missionaries perished in the efforts to bring the gospel to black Africa.

Fever and other tropical diseases claimed many. Some perished in tribal wars. Still others were murdered by hostile and superstitious tribes.

Cannibals ate some. In Nigeria's Middle Belt, a white missionary was attacked and killed and the "demon" he rode, a bicycle, was mangled and hung on a tree in triumph over the oyinbo's [white man's] inferior "white magic."

Livingstone advocated the now famous approach that was widely adopted by governments and various missionary groups, Anglicans in particular, of the "3 C's:" Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization.

In light of the history following that, especially from the African's perspective, a fourth should be added, "Conquest:" something Livingstone did not approve of. Yet seeds were sown thereby which yielded bitter fruit afterwards in the rush for colonial domination in the following years.

"Commerce" was a well-intentioned, though human, contrivance to establish a commercial alternative to African slavery. This unequal yoke of Mammon with heaven was not a blessed union. It invariably led to the fifth dual serpent-headed "C:" Coveting/Corruption.

From the standpoint of the European nations, Commerce was the great objective and Civilization became merely a means to that end. Coveting and Corruption inflamed their Conquests while Christianity was only tolerated and sometimes a hindrance in the scramble to gain mastery over the continent. See **Appendix 4 Slavery**.

Central Africa

Patience is your key virtue in Africa. That patience, strengthened by humility and love, was rewarded in 1891 with the conversions of thousands in Lubaland of Central Africa, the domain of Mushidi the terrible.

Mushidi, vainly acting as husband to over five hundred women: wives, he calls them. Mushidi, who with his chiefs, swallow their local alcohol drinks served up in human skulls amidst hundreds of sun-bleached others scattered in piles around his compound. Mushidi, murderer, slaver, deceiver, tyrant, spiritist, drunkard, fornicator, part-time cannibal, and full-time rogue: for some twenty years he ate the sermons and spit out the salvation.

In an unfortunate and angry encounter with a British officer, this son of Belial, Mushidi, was shot to death. In the months of confusion and chaos that followed, the people turned to missionary Dan Crawford who had spent twenty-two uninterrupted years among them.

His self-sacrificing service of love to Christ and to the people had so impressed them, that they wished him to be their *Konga Vantu*, the gatherer of the peoples. And so, in effect, he became their new king, and, literally, gathered the people.

Moving them from the scenes of Mushidi's horrific rule that Crawford described as a "murderous monster-system of slavery," they founded a new Christian settlement, Luanza. Their novel village society was laid out, not overcrowded in squalor and contagion, but sensibly: separated and sanitized for reasons of sanctity and sanity. They themselves endorsed and encouraged the design.

There, on the northern shores of Lake Mweru in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, tribal differences and many traditional customs became things of the past. All were able to live in harmony as children of the one Father in heaven where local African ministry developed and flourished spontaneously.

Here is an African from among them, an elephant hunter and a missionary. His profession is elephants, but his confession is Christ.

Deep into isolated and unreached forests and bush his elephants and His God lead him. He is a true missionary, much more so than the committee appointed employees of religious societies who venture forth into comfortable and semi-civilized fields.

See him dressed in his plain loin-cloth, his very plainness rebuking this modern generation of overdressed Christians. He adorns the doctrine [Tit.2:10] while they adorn themselves. He is a mighty hunter, not merely of elephants, but in the truest sense, a mighty hunter before the Lord.

Through him and others like him, the question of Africa's long delayed deliverance from its generations of darkness and bondage was answered at last. Having laid at Bethesda's pool for so many wearying years, Africa had finally gotten a Man to lift them into the waters of blessing [Jn.5:2-9].

Yes, a Man with men, African men, to raise multitudes of sick, blind, lame, and withered into the healing of Christ. May you and I be counted worthy to be found among them, as healed and healers alike.

Uganda

King Mutesa of Uganda met his first white men in 1862 that he described in this way: "I have not heard a white man tell a lie yet. They bought no slaves, and the time they were in Uganda they were very good." It was thirteen years later that Henry Stanley met with the chief who had begun to come under Islamic influence.

Stanley, an explorer first of all and missionary only reluctantly and occasionally, tried to impress upon his mind the truths of Christianity. More significantly, he wrote to England that the king of Uganda was requesting that missionaries be sent. The call was heeded and the CMS [Church Missionary Society of the Anglicans] commissioned eight brethren to Uganda, Alexander Mackay remaining as the sole survivor after just only two years in Africa.

Mutesa and the intelligent lovable Baganda people received him into their midst. The king was an unpredictable tyrant who daily executed at least one of his subjects and is said to have had more wives than any man in recorded history.

He was known to have sacrificed 2,000 people in a single day in order to appease the gods that they might heal his loathsome incurable disease. Mackay said of him: "Mutesa is the greatest slave-hunter in the world, a monstrous murdering maniac, carrying on his raids on the strength of guns and powder brought up country by Arabs."

Both the king and his people were confused about the competing claims of their traditional religion, Islam, Anglican Christianity, and the soon to arrive French Roman Catholics. Numerous conflicts and discussions ensued, along with several attempts by Arabs and Roman Catholics alike to assassinate Mackay. He was repeatedly falsely accused before the king, yet he bore all meekly with grace.

Following the death of King Mutesa, his eighteen year old hemp-smoking son, Mwanga, became ruler and unleashed his fury upon the believers. Only three months after his father's death, he had roasted three Christians over an open fire for refusing to participate in his sodomite lust that he had learned from the Arabs.

After that initial outburst, many more martyrs followed during 1885 and 1886. On one occasion, thirty-two young men were slowly burned alive over a great fire while they committed their souls to God from the midst of the flames.

In 1887 the Arabs convinced Mwanga to drive Mackay out. He crossed into Tanganyika and continued his translation and printing of the Bible while working with Baganda refugees. There, at age forty, after only twelve years in Uganda, Mackay entered the presence of the Lord, having died of fever. The year was 1890.

Eventually, Mwanga was banished after he had convinced the pagan chiefs to abandon all Christian and Catholic leaders onto one of the river's islands to starve to death. He was driven out before that could be put into effect.

Strife between the rival groups became even more intense. British Christians and French Catholics maneuvering between Arabs and idolaters, led to the great and horrendous battle of Mengo in 1892. The conflict was only brought under control by British military intervention.

In the years following, the gospel was received among the Bagandas by the thousands. One of the early results was that this tribe realized that the gospel that was good for them was also good for others. They sent forth many preachers and teachers from among themselves with the gospel to other tribes.

The most famous of these African pioneers was Apolo Kivebulaya who sacrificed and suffered that the gospel might reach the deep forest peoples. He penetrated into the dangerous land of the pygmies [a people short in stature, under 150cm, some of whom were cannibals], having won their confidence by his loving service. He left them a lasting legacy in his translation of Mark's gospel into their own dialect.

Missions to Muslims in Africa

In Saudi Arabia in the year 1891, Thomas French and Samuel Zwemer arrived in Muscat in order to confront Islam head-on with the gospel. French, more full of zeal than prudence, was dead in three months. Zwemer lived more than sixty years and became one of the greatest scholars, teachers, preachers, and authors throughout the world of Christian missions to Muslims.

At the great Tambaram Missionary Conference of 1938, Paul Harrison, a long-time worker among Muslims, told of the conversion of the first five believers in fifty years of their mission's work. The staggering impact of his testimony was felt by one and all. Imagine! Five converts in fifty years of labor! He sat down with these quiet words: "The church in Arabia salutes you." Gospel work among Muslims is not a day's job.

Beginning in 1899, two brethren, Douglas Thornton and W.H. Temple Gairdner, began their work among Muslims in Cairo with a frank, friendly, and courteous approach to Muslims. One of the key means to their gospel presentation and inroads to the Muslim heart was their periodic publication, *Orient and Occident* [East and West]. It was a calm and sensible exposition of Christianity in relation to Islam, free from offensive and disrespectful verbal attacks, and the Lord used it.

Christian Brethren [Plymouth Brethren]

In the early 1800's there was a definite movement of the Holy Spirit from a deep study and dependence upon the Word of God. It resulted in simplicity of gathering in various places and in a practical expression of Christ being the Pattern and Head of His church.

Like the church in Antioch, the gatherings were blessed with a number of gifted teachers of the Word. And, like the Moravians, they dwelt together in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace though from wide backgrounds.

The British Isles were the center of what became one of the most influential movements among modern Bible believing Christians. Their teachings went forth into every continent via their publications and wide-spread missionary work.

Great scholarly work was done in NT studies, manuscript research, and Greek dictionaries by brethren such as Samuel Tregelles, J.N. Darby, Kitto, and W.E. Vine. Expository commentaries on virtually every book of the Scriptures were written by men like C.H. Mackintosh, William Kelly, C.A. Coates, F.W. Grant, and Samuel Ridout. Devotional studies on life in Christ, the church, the second coming of our Lord, and a whole host of topics were penned by others too numerous to recount.

Anthony Norris Groves was notable among the missionaries who went out first to Baghdad and then to India by faith alone apart from dependency upon any agency or society for support. F. Arnot and Dan Crawford pioneered in the Democratic Republic of Congo and northern Rhodesia. Hudson Taylor, who is so noteworthy for his exploits in China, was early in their fellowship among those meeting in Bristol along with George Mueller.

Mueller, without appeal for funds, provided for literally thousands of orphans on a daily basis by faith in the living God. During his life, he contributed over one million pounds to Hudson Taylor and the missionaries in China in addition to many other servants of the Lord in various ministries.

In Dublin, Ireland, a Roman Catholic medical doctor became converted. This brother, Edward Cronin, from his early days was impressed with the essential oneness of God's people as he studied the Word.

He made it a practice to visit various church meetings who were not part of the Anglican system to fellowship and break bread with them. He discovered, however, that these groups wanted him to forsake all others and join with them alone in order to continue in their fellowship. This, Cronin could not agree with.

He shared with a friend the perplexity this caused him, to cut himself off from others in order to identify with one group only. He saw that this would be participating in that forming of sects which Paul had condemned [I Cor.1:10-13].

They thus began to break bread together in their private homes. Soon others joined with them while still attending other gatherings of believers, but also meeting together in simplicity of devotion to Christ apart from denominational barriers.

At the same time in another part of the city, other believers unknown to each other were gathering in a similar manner. When they became aware of each other by the leading of the Holy Spirit, they gathered in the home of brother Hutchinson.

Rapidly the meeting outgrew the home and they rented a hall to meet in. J.N. Darby, an ordained Anglican clergyman, joined them and eventually devoted his complete efforts to ministering to the growing circle of simple gatherings throughout the British Isles.

Anthony Norris Groves 1795 - 1853 AD

Groves had thought that in order to do the missionary work that his heart was burdened for he must be ordained by the Church of England. As he traveled for his theological training to this end at Trinity College, he discussed the Word with J.G. Bellett on the subject. He realized from the Scriptures that the ordination of man was unnecessary for the work of the Lord.

It was a great joy for him to realize that, as he said: "We should come together in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on [depending on] any pulpit or ministry, but trusting that the

Lord would edify us together by ministering as He pleased and saw good from the midst of ourselves.”

His next thought was that he could still serve as a missionary layman under the Church Missionary Society. But he found that he would be forbidden to celebrate the Lord’s Supper as a non-ordained clergyman. It was then that he parted ways with the Anglicans and went forth in dependence upon God alone.

As their wagons slowly wound their way through southern Russia in 1829, and eventually into Baghdad in Iraq [biblical Babylon], he remarked:

I feel I am happy in having no system [denomination] to support, in moving among either professing Christians or Mohammedans [Muslims]; to the one, [I] can truly say, I do not desire to bring you over to any church, but to the simple truth of God’s Word. And to the others, we wish you to read the New Testament that you may learn to judge of God’s truth, not by what you see in the churches around you, but by the Word of God itself.

In the second year of their work in Baghdad, the horrors of a tremendous plague descended upon the whole city. Half the population fled though many were cut down by an advancing army.

Among the 40,000 remaining, the death rate soon reached 2,000 per day. To add affliction upon affliction, a great flood broke through the walls and swept away thousands of houses. In one month, 30,000 souls perished in the utmost misery.

With hearts torn by the suffering humanity around them, Groves was still able to write at that time:

The Lord has allowed us great peace, and assured confidence in His loving care, and in the truth of His promise, that our bread and our water shall be sure. It requires great confidence in God’s love, and much experience of it, for the soul to remain in peace, stayed on Him, in a land of such changes, without means of escape in any direction; surrounded with the most desolating plague and destructive flood, with scenes of misery forced upon [us], and to which you can administer no relief. Even in this scene, however, the Lord has kept us by His infinite mercy in personal quiet and peace, trusting under the shadow of His Almighty wing.

When the disease and flood had passed and not one of their household had been struck, his dear wife took ill and in a very short time was taken in death by the plague that she had tenderly nursed many through. Shortly thereafter, his infant child also followed its mother.

It was then that the enemy armies assaulted the city. Mob rule took over within. His house was repeatedly attacked and robbed, but, though all within were helpless and unarmed, none suffered bodily harm.

Cannon balls battered their building while shots rang around them and violence prevailed in the streets. Their eventual captors were far more merciful and orderly than the native populace who had degenerated into anarchy and looting.

These were the things endured by this servant of God for the sake of the gospel. But he could write words such as these:

How *slow* we are to learn really to suffer, and to be *abased* with our dear Lord [Phil.2:3-10]. However, I think we are generally much more able to take up cheerfully any measure of bodily or mental trial than that which degrades us before the world. To see that *our abasement is our glory*, and *our weakness our strength*, requires extraordinary faith.

During his years of serving the Lord in India, his thoughts on missionary work matured. He expressed those in these words:

I think we all feel an increasing interest in that plan of missions which we are now pursuing: either laboring ourselves, or being associated with those who profess some "honest trade"...and also set an example to others that, by so doing they may support the weak. That dear young native, by name Aroolappen, has remained faithful to his purpose. [He] has declined any *form* of salary, because the people, he says, would not cease to tell him that he preached because he was hired.

Those who know the natives will, I am sure, feel with me, that this plan of missions, whereby the native himself is thrown *on God*, is calculated to develop *individuality of character*. The native naturally loves a provision and ease, and thereby he is kept in dependence on the creature; The European, on the other hand, loves to keep the native in subjection and himself in the place of rule.

But it must be obvious to all, if the native churches be not strengthened by learning to lean on the Lord instead of man, the political changes of an hour may sweep away the present form of things, so far as it depends on Europeans, and leave not a trace behind.

Some years before the schism promoted by J.N. Darby broke out and caused such heart rending division among the brethren throughout the world, Groves had recognized these tendencies in Darby and wrote him in this manner:

I wish you to feel assured that nothing has estranged my heart from you,...though I feel you have departed from those principles [you once held] and are in principle returning to the city [denominational thinking] from whence you departed...[when] your union [basis of fellowship] daily [is] becoming one of doctrine and opinion more than light and love, there will be little sympathy with such [who do not agree with your every opinion]. Your government [leadership] will become one wherein, overwhelmingly, is felt the authority of *men*; You will be known more by what you witness against than what you witness for, and practically this will prove that you witness against all but yourselves.

Our principles of communion [with the brethren are] the possession of the common life of the family of God...the fellowship of the common Spirit, in the worship of our common Head; and as Christ had received them, so would we to the glory of God the Father.

The transition your little bodies [groups following Darby] have undergone, in no longer [being] witnesses for the glorious and simple *truth*, [but being] witnesses against all that they judge error, have lowered them in my apprehension from heaven to earth. *I would infinitely rather bear with all their evils* [of the immature and untaught], *than separate from their good* [as you and your followers are doing].

Unfortunately, brother Darby did not heed this godly and loving admonition. He continued to turn aside from those sound biblical principles of dealing gently with the ignorant and misguided [Heb.5:2], receiving those who are weak in faith [Rom.14:1], and of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace [Eph.4:3].

Increasingly, he demanded of the brethren in all groups he was associated with to judge things according to his assessment and cut off fellowship with any who did not agree with his growing centralized control.

This mentality can only lead to increasing division and formation of multiplied sects, and it did. It is not only uncharitable, it is unreasonable to expect every person to understand and agree on every point of doctrine.

If for no other reason, it is unrealistic to require a child to possess the conviction of a man in order to associate in love. Christ, our Pattern, did not choose and draw His own disciples together on this basis. When we insist that it be so, we have departed from Christ.

Those who continued in the fellowship of love in the light of Christ, refused to cut themselves off from those real believers who as of yet did not see all that they had from the Word. The saintly Robert Chapman described Darby and his followers as: “brethren dearly beloved and longed for, whose consciences lead them to refuse my fellowship and to deprive me of theirs.” This is truly the graciousness of turning the other cheek.

This loving fellowship and wholehearted dependence upon the Scriptures alone were their great witness to the world. As Rationalism spread its poison into the pulpits and colleges throughout Europe and America [see chapter 10 *Laodicea*], the Lord used these brethren to maintain a strong and uncompromising testimony to the reliability and inspiration of God’s unchanging Word. This is perhaps their greatest and abiding legacy for the church in our generation.

J. Hudson Taylor 1832 - 1905 AD

From the age of five, Hudson Taylor had spoken freely about his desire to be a missionary in China. By the time of his death, over eight hundred missionaries served in association with him and that entire mighty country had a gospel testimony in strategic locations throughout the whole.

Though raised in a godly home, he was not converted until his seventeenth year. While his mother was away from the home for a few days, she sensed a great burden to pray for his conversion one particular day.

As she brought her son’s need before the Lord, she received a certainty that the Lord had heard and answered her plea. Upon return, Hudson met her with the news of his joyous conversion. She was not surprised.

While studying medicine at age eighteen, he purposefully disciplined himself by living a simple life of self-denial. He limited his diet to one loaf of bread and perhaps two apples daily. He chose to live in a comfortless one-room rental in a poverty stricken slum in order to prepare himself for the hardships of missionary life in China.

It was an experiment of living entirely by faith. When in need, he expressed that to no one, not to parents nor to his employer who was overdue in paying his wages from time to time.

His thinking was this, “When I get out to China I shall have no claim on anyone for anything; my only claim will be on God. How important, therefore, to learn before leaving England to move man, through God, by prayer alone.” This became the famous motto for which he became known in coming years.

That he had this experience before leaving was providential in the mercies of God. When he first went to China, it was under an association with the China Evangelization Society that proved to be a most mismanaged and incompetent organization.

Often they failed to forward expected and needed funds that they had promised. Finally, after three years of disappointment with them, Taylor severed his connections when he learned that they had been operating in debt for some time. It was the Lord’s doing for His man to be wholly cast upon the Lord for the large venture that could only be accomplished by a vigorous faith in God alone.

In Shanghai in 1854 as a young man of twenty-one, he met with a bewildering array of scenes and sounds. He knew nothing of the Chinese language and had never been out of his own country.

A large group of foreign missionaries lived together in an international compound in the city where Taylor found lodging. The young non-ordained newcomer from a less than reputable mission society was not well received.

Hudson found the missionaries self-indulgent and lazy. The American ones were particularly offensive with their critical, vulgar, and backbiting habits. He was all too glad to get away from them and reach the interiors where Christ had not been preached by the complacent Westerners in their comfortable compound.

It became evident to him that in order to effectively reach the Chinese, he must adopt their customs and dress to identify with the people he was trying to reach. Thus it was that he shaved his hair and plaited a long queue [pig-tail] to his own head and donned the typical black silk garments of the natives. When he returned from his evangelistic tour, he was received with hostility and ridicule by the other missionaries.

But the Lord had other purposes for him besides fitting into traditional missionary thinking. In 1858 he married Maria who had been brought up in China by missionary parents and together they served in Ningpo where he supervised in the local hospital. This experience convinced them that he needed further medical training and so they departed for England.

God had other reasons for sending them there. While obtaining further medical skills, he also devoted himself to a revision of the Ningpo NT, a laborious task that he often spent thirteen hours a day at. It was also while there that the idea of the China Inland Mission came into being.

Unique in its day, Taylor realized that if the more than 400 million inhabitants of China whose death rate of one million per month were to be reached, it could not be done alone. God would need to raise up a mighty army of devoted servants to join with him. The principles he established for the CIM were these:

[1] Appeal for laborers was to be among committed Christians of various backgrounds, and not from the highly educated and ordained among particular denominations.

[2] The operating headquarters of the mission would be in China and not in England in order to avoid incompetency and delays in communication hindering needful decisions on the field.

[3] Single women were welcome to come and do pioneering work among the Chinese women by themselves in the interior of the land.

[4] CIM missionaries were offered no set salary but rather were to depend entirely upon God for their needs without taking up offerings or making direct appeals for money.

And so it was that in 1865, Hudson and Maria along with their four children and fifteen new missionaries set sail for the several months' long journey to China. On board ship, many of the crew came to know the Lord and join in with their Bible studies. Other things developed on board as well.

Seeds of ill-feeling and division had been allowed to take root in the hearts of some. Jealousy and discontent sprang up because of money matters, earthly possessions, or attention shown to others.

Taylor was able to soothe the disturbed and correct the discontented with loving private discussions and prayer with each. In some, however, it trimmed off the bitter fruit but did not pull up the root. Upon landing, there was near disaster.

Complaints arose about the Chinese dress that they had all agreed upon to wear before leaving. This, combined with the ridicule of the missionaries from other societies and the overall strangeness of the new environment led to bitterness and even outright refusal to submit to Taylor's leadership. Lewis Nicol led the group of troublemakers to even meet separately for meals and would not join with them in devotions.

The Lord's ways are not our ways. It was a sore trial for Hudson, Maria, and those spiritually minded among them who longed for harmony, fellowship, and that the testimony might go forward. None could have imagined how God would heal the breach.

In 1867 little eight-year-old Gracie Taylor became ill and never recovered. "Who plucked that lovely flower?" inquired the gardener. "The Master did so and carried it to His home," replied his fellow-worker. And the gardener questioned no more.

In the grief and sorrow of that loss, bitterness and grievances were forgotten in the sympathy expressed to the Taylors. All were reconciled with the exception of Nicol and his wife who later had to be dismissed from the mission due to their continuing strife. And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; yes, strife and reproach will cease" -Prov.22:10.

Chinese had developed a long standing dislike for foreigners over generations. Believing that the "foreign devils" kidnaped and ate Chinese children, violence broke out against the CIM during 1868. Many of their number were badly wounded but the missionaries escaped with their lives, though barely.

News of this in England prompted the British to send in their navy gunboats in order to teach the Chinese a lesson. The CIM was blamed for the disturbance in the London *Times*. Criticism against the mission rose sharply while contributions and missionary candidates dropped off drastically.

Like Paul of old, Hudson was plagued by conflicts without and fears within [2 Cor.7:5]. He wrote to his parents in 1869:

I have often asked you to remember me in prayer. That need has never been greater than at the present time. Envied by some, despised by man, hated perhaps by others: often blamed for things I never heard of, or had nothing to do with: an innovator on what have become established rules of missionary practice: an opponent of mighty systems of heathen error and superstition: working without precedent in many respects, and with few experienced helpers: often sick in body, as well as perplexed in mind and embarrassed by circumstances.

Had not the Lord been especially gracious to me, had not my mind been sustained by the conviction that the work is His, and that He is with me in the "thick of the conflict," I must have fainted and broken down. But the battle *is* the Lord's, and He will conquer. We may fail, do fail continually; but He never fails. Still I need your prayers more than ever before.

The greatest of these difficulties, however, was the inner wrestling with his own powerlessness against sin. He cried out, "Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of failure and sin oppressed me."

This was not the cry of the convicted thief or that of the drunkard awakening the following morning. It was rather that grief of a bride who deeply regrets the least shadow of estrangement from her Beloved [S.of S. 3:1-4; 5:2-8]. Yet, blessed be God, in a letter from brother McCarthy, a fellow missionary in China, just at that very hour came this shaft of light, as it were, from heaven:

I do wish I could have a talk with you *now* about the way of Holiness. It [is] the subject of all others occupying my thoughts [due to] a consciousness of [my own] failure: a constant falling short of that which I felt should be aimed at: an unrest: a perpetual striving to find some way by which I might continuously enjoy that communion, that fellowship at times so real, but more often so visionary, so far off!

Do you know, dear brother, I now think that this striving, effort, longing, hoping for better days to come, is not the true way to happiness, holiness or usefulness: better, no doubt far better, than being satisfied with our poor attainments, but not the best way after all. I have been struck with a passage from a book of yours left here, entitled *Christ is All*. It says:

The Lord Jesus received is holiness begun; the Lord Jesus cherished is holiness advancing; the Lord Jesus *counted upon as never absent* would be holiness complete.

This [grace of faith] is the chain which binds the soul to Christ, and makes the Savior and the sinner one...A channel is now formed by which Christ's fullness plenteously [abundantly] flows down. The barren branch becomes a portion of the fruitful stem...One life reigns throughout the whole.

Believer, you mourn your shortcomings; you find the hated monster, sin, still striving for the mastery. Evil is present when you would do good. Help is laid up for you in Christ. Seek clearer interest in Him.

They who *most* deeply feel that they have died in Christ, and paid in Him sin's penalties, ascend to highest heights of godly life. He is most holy who has most of Christ within, and joys most fully in the finished work. It is defective faith which clogs the feet, and causes many a fall.

This last sentence I think I now fully endorse. To *let* my loving Savior work in me *His will*, my sanctification is what I would live for by His grace. Abiding, not striving nor struggling: looking off unto Him: trusting Him for present power: trusting Him to subdue all inward corruption: resting in the love of an Almighty Savior, in the conscious joy of a *complete* salvation, a salvation "from all sin" [this is *His Word*]: willing that His will should truly be supreme – this is not new, and yet it is *new to me*.

I feel as though the first dawning of a glorious day has risen upon me. I hail it with trembling, yet with trust. I seem to have got to the edge only, but of a sea which is boundless: to have sipped only [from] that which fully satisfies. Christ literally *all* seems to me now the power, the *only* power for service: the only ground for unchanging joy. May He lead us into the realization of His unfathomable fullness.

How then to have our faith increased? Only by thinking of all that Jesus *is*, and all He *is for us*: His life, His death, His work, He Himself as revealed to us in the Word, to be the subject of our constant thoughts. Not a striving to have faith, or to increase our faith, but a looking off to the Faithful One seems all we need: a resting in the Loved One entirely, for time and for eternity. It does not appear to me as anything new, only formerly misapprehended.

The Lord Jesus was pleased to use this as life and light to his soul. In his own words he exclaimed: "As I read, I saw it all. I looked to Jesus; and when I saw, oh how joy flowed!"

He went forth as a new man going out into a familiar world somehow strangely new. He wrote right away to his beloved sister in England, quoting from the letter he had received from McCarthy and commenting further with these words:

Here, I feel is the secret: not asking how I am to get sap *out* of the Vine into myself, but remembering that Jesus *is* the Vine – the root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit, all indeed. Yes, and far more too!

He is the soil and sunshine, air and rain – more than we can ask, think, or desire. Let us not then want to get anything out of Him, but rejoice in being *ourselves in Him* – one with Him, and, consequently, with *all* His fullness. Not seeking for faith to bring holiness, but rejoicing in the *fact* of perfect holiness in Christ, let us realize that – inseparably one with Him – this holiness *is* ours, and accepting the fact, find it so indeed.

His transformation was thorough and joyous. He explained further what had transpired in a lengthy letter to his dear sister who had been close to the Taylors for many years. It reaches the core of real spirituality and lays the groundwork for true conformity to the Pattern of Christ. It is worthwhile to recount it for our own reflection and embracing by faith as we seek to also be pleasing unto our God.

October 17, 1869: As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible, or so difficult; but the weight and strain are all *gone*. The last month or more has been perhaps, the happiest of my life; and I long to tell you a little of what the Lord has done for my soul. I do not know how far I may be able to make myself intelligible about it, for there is nothing new or strange or wonderful – and yet, all is new! In a word, "Whereas once I was blind, now I see."

My mind has been greatly exercised for six or eight months past, feeling the need personally, and for our Mission, of more holiness, life, power in our souls. But personal need stood first and was the greatest. I felt the ingratitude, the danger, the sin of not living nearer to God. I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for retirement and meditation – but all was without effect.

Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if I could only abide in Christ, all would be well, but I *could not*. I began the day with prayer, determined not to take my eye from Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, often caused me to forget Him.

Then one's nerves get so fretted [upset] in this climate that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts, and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not.

Then came the question: "Is there *no* rescue? Must it be thus to the end – constant conflict and, instead of victory, too often defeat?" How, too, could I preach with sincerity that to those who receive Jesus, "to them gave He power to become the sons of God" [i.e. God-like] when it was not so in my experience? Instead of growing stronger, I seemed to be getting weaker and to have less power against sin; and no wonder, for faith and even hope were getting very low.

I hated myself; I hated my sin; and yet I gained no strength against it. I felt I was a child of God; His Spirit in my heart would cry, in spite of all, "Abba, Father"; but to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless. I thought that holiness, practical holiness, was to be gradually attained by a diligent use of the means of grace. I felt that there was nothing I so much desire in this world, nothing I so much needed.

But so far from in any measure attaining it, the more I pursued and strove after it, the more it eluded my grasp; till hope itself almost died out, and I began to think that, perhaps to make heaven the sweeter, God would not give it down here. I do not think I was striving to attain it in my own strength. I knew I was powerless. I told the Lord so, and asked Him to give me help and strength; and sometimes I almost believed He would keep and uphold me. But on looking back in the evening, alas! There was but sin and failure to confess and mourn before God.

I would not give you the impression that this was the daily experience of all those long, weary months. It was a too frequent state of soul: that toward which I was tending, and which almost ended in despair. And yet never did Christ seem more precious – a Savior who *could* and *would* save such a sinner!...And sometimes there were seasons not only of peace but of joy in the Lord. But they were transitory, and at best there was a sad lack of power. Oh, how good the Lord was in bringing this conflict to an end!

All the time I felt assured that there was in Christ all I needed, but the practical question was how to get it *out*. He was rich, truly, but I was poor; He strong, but I weak. I knew full well that there was in the root, the stem, abundant fatness; but how to get it into my puny little branch was the question. As gradually the light was dawning on me, I saw that faith was the only prerequisite, was the hand to lay hold on His fullness but it would not come: tried to exercise it, but in vain.

Seeing more and more the wondrous supply of grace laid up in Jesus, the fullness of our precious Savior – my helplessness and guilt seemed to increase. Sins committed appeared but as trifles compared with the sin of unbelief which was their cause, which

could not or would not take God at His Word, but rather made Him a liar! Unbelief was, I felt, *the* damning sin of the world – yet I indulged in it. I prayed for faith, but it came not. What was I to do?

When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed the truth of *our oneness* with *Jesus* as I had never known it before. McCarthy, who had been much exercised by the same sense of failure, but saw the light before I did, wrote [I quote from memory]: “But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One.”

As I read I saw it all! “If we believe *not*, He abideth faithful.” I looked to Jesus and saw [and when I saw, oh, how joy flowed!] that He had said: “I will never leave *you*.” “Ah, *there* is rest!” I thought.

“I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I’ll strive no more. For has *He* not promised to abide with me – never to leave me, never to fail me?” And, [dear sister], *He never will!*

But this was not all He showed me, nor one half. As I thought of the Vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured direct into my soul! How great seemed my mistake in having wished to get the sap, the fullness *out* of Him. I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, but that I was a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

The Vine now I see, is not the root merely, but all – root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit: and Jesus is not only that: He is soil and sunshine, air and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for, or needed. Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! I do pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ.

Oh, my dear sister, it is a wonderful thing to be really one with a risen and exalted Savior: to be a member of Christ! Think what it involves. Can Christ be rich and I poor? Can your right hand be rich and the left poor? Or your head be well fed while your body starves? Again, think of its bearing on prayer.

Could a bank clerk say to a customer: “It was only your hand that wrote that check, not you,” or, “I cannot pay this sum to your hand, but only to yourself”? No more can your prayers, or mine, be discredited *if offered in the Name of Jesus* [i.e. not in our own name, or for the sake of Jesus merely, but on the ground that we are His, His members] so long as we keep within the extent of Christ’s credit – a tolerably wide limit! If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us, and...we know we have the petitions that we desire of Him” -I Jn.5:14.

The sweetest part, if one may speak of one part being sweeter than another, is the *rest* which full identification with Christ brings. I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realize this; for He, I know, is able to carry our *His will*, and His will is mine.

It makes no matter where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest positions He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient. It little matters to my servant whether I send him to buy a few cash worth of things, or the most expensive articles. In either case he looks to me for the money, and brings me his purchases.

So, if God places me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance: in positions of great difficulty, much grace: in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? No fear that His resources will be unequal to the emergency! And His

resources are mine, for *He* is mine, and is with me and dwells in me. All this springs from the believer's oneness with Christ. And since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been! I wish I could tell you, instead of writing about it.

I am no better than before, but I am dead and buried with Christ – yes, and risen too and ascended; and now Christ lives in me, and “the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

I now *believe* I am dead to sin. God reckons me so, and tells me to reckon myself so. He knows best. All my past experience may have shown that it was not so; but I dare not say it is not now, when He says it is. I feel and know that old things have passed away.

I am as capable of sinning as ever, but Christ is realized as present as never before. He cannot sin; and He can keep me from sinning. I cannot say [I am sorry to have to confess it] that since I have seen this light I have not sinned; but I do feel there was no need to have done so. And further – walking more in the light, my conscience has been more tender; sin has been instantly seen, confessed, pardoned; and peace and joy [with humility] instantly restored: with one exception, when for several hours peace and joy did not return – from want, as I had to learn, of full confession, and from some attempt to justify self.

Faith, I now see, is “the *substance* of things hoped for,” and not mere shadow. It is not *less* than sight, but *more*. Sight only shows the outward forms of thing; faith gives the substance. You can *rest* on substance, *feed* on substance. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith is *power* indeed, is *life* indeed. And Christ and sin will not dwell together; nor can we have His presence with love of the world, or carefulness [worried distraction] about “many things” [Lk.10:41; Mt.13:22].

And now I must close. I have not said half I would, nor as I would had I more time. May God give you to lay hold on these blessed truths. Do not let us continue to say, in *effect*, “who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above;” In other words, do not let us consider Him as afar off, when God has made us *one with him*, members of His very body. Nor should we look upon this experience, these truths, as for the few. They are the birthright of every child of God, and no one can dispense with them without dishonor to our Lord. The only power for deliverance from sin or for true service is CHRIST.

10 Laodicea

The Modern Church

Laodicea means, “The people's rights.” This is the church that is self-sufficient, needing nothing in its own conceited estimation. It is a church that profited no one except itself, and that in no true sense of the word [Rev.3:14-22].

Neither hot nor cold: it is a sickening compromise between the two. As the traveler entered Laodicea, he met a natural cold spring to refresh him from his journey along his way. On the outskirts of the city, a healing hot spring soothed the afflicted.

This church was neither refreshing nor beneficial. Self-occupation rendered them useless to men and disgusting to Christ. They will be vomited out of His mouth as they could not possibly abide in Him in that condition.

Rights, riches, and reliance upon self were their characteristics though they were actually wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Laodicea aptly represents the church in the Modern period: religious, affluent, and focused upon self-interests of what they think is owed to them with no benefit to any.

Seven Churches

The messages to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are most instructive. At the outset of each message, Christ is revealed as the solution to every departure that will resolve the lack in the church.

The messages address not only the individual assemblies, but also all the churches collectively and each overcomer within them, as in Rev.2:7. Thus the significance of these seven messages is not exhausted by one particular application alone.

As Revelation is a book of spiritual symbols and prophesy, we can expect to see these elements in the messages to the seven churches as well. As we look at them symbolically and prophetically, we discover outlined therein, not only the immediate concerns about the particular congregations, but an overall history of the church throughout the ages.

Seven lampstands are seven churches, and they are a mystery [Rev.1:20]. Seven is the number of completeness, fullness, and perfection. A lampstand is the means whereby light is cast into the darkness: a testimony. The mystery of these seven churches, then, is that of the testimony of the whole church throughout the ages, revealed successively, stage by stage.

Ephesus Rev.2:1-7

Ephesus represents the church at the first, during apostolic times. It vigorously maintained the truth, labored untiringly, and upheld the name of Christ. But that best and most essential love, apart from which all else becomes nothing [I Cor.13:1-3], faded and failed.

The early tendency to this decline in love for Christ as having the central place among the brethren has been noted in Chapter 5 *Leaven in the Meal*. Testimonies become dim and are eventually extinguished altogether if this best and foremost love is not rekindled and vibrant.

It was so in Jerusalem, Antioch [in modern Syria], Carthage [in modern Tunisia, North Africa], and Ephesus [in modern Turkey]; all now are Islamic. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Smyrna Rev.2:8-11

Smyrna introduces the suffering church in the next two centuries. Smyrna means "myrrh," a fragrant resin/gum that sends forth its aroma when crushed. Jesus notes that they will have tribulation ten days: precisely what occurred under the ten "waves" of persecution instigated by imperial Rome beginning with Nero in 64 AD as noted in Chapter 4 *The Storm Breaks*.

Faithfulness unto death issues in a crown of life given from Him who died in our behalf and rose again on the third day. He who was tempted in what He has suffered is able to come to the aid of those facing the same ordeal [Heb.2:18]. There is no rebuke to the church of Smyrna.

Pergamum Rev.2:12-17

Pergamum shows, alas, the church joined to the world in an unholy alliance between church and state beginning with Constantine in 313 AD as noted in Chapter 6 *Until All Was Leavened*. Surely where the "head" of the church is also the head of State, there you will find Satan's throne.

Balaam becomes the “minister” to this Balak, who prophesies for mammon [2 Pet.2:15] and seduces the church to fornicate with the world. The doctrine of ruling over the common people [Nicolaitans: see **Appendix 1 NT Leadership**] is firmly established during this period. Yet the Lord will have His faithful witnesses in every period of the church: one or more like Antipas [Against All], like Athanasius who stood against all the bishops of Christendom as noted in Chapter 7 *Remnant*.

What is the remedy for such a church, such an age, or such an individual heart? The Word of Christ, that sharp two-edged sword, must divide, judge, and pierce to separate, convict, and humble. Repent; or He will come in wrath and war against any adulterously joined to the world [Jas.4:4]. He who has ears, let him hear.

Thyatira Rev.2:18-29

Thyatira begins that horrific reign of the seductive Mother of Harlots, Jezebel: the Roman Catholic Church, as described in Chapter 6 *Until All Was Leavened*.

Who cannot see the parallel between Jezebel’s immorality, idolatry, persecution of the faithful [I K.18:4], the covetous seizing of lands by murderous intrigue [I K.21], and the repeated practices of the Roman Catholic Church through the centuries? How often she was given chance to repent through the faithful testimony of truth presented by the remnant within her, yet she did not want to repent! Many tolerated her wickedness, many were her slain, and great is the impending wrath of Him who sees with eyes of purifying flame and walks with steps of burning judgment.

The doctrine of Jezebel, a wanton imposter bride, was nothing less than the deep things of Satan. Such was Rome’s system. Compromise cannot be tolerated unless one will also be hurled into great tribulation because of fornicating with her.

Hold fast what you have until Jesus comes and may your deeds at the last be more than the first. Those reigning with Jezebel presently will never reign with Christ unendingly.

Authority over the nations will be the future portion of the faithful with Christ then by the gift of grace, not due to Jezebel’s sword and craftiness at the moment. These are words that also must sink deeply into our ears.

Sardis Rev.3:1-6

Sardis brings before us the period of the Protestant Reformation of the 1500's as described in Chapter 8 *The Light Dawns*. Outwardly, all was reformed. Inwardly there was deadness. Only a remnant within remained which were about to die. Wake up!

The question of Paul to the Galatians is a fitting one for Protestantism: “You were running well, who hindered you from obeying the truth?” -Gal. 5:7. Deeds begun were not completed. The Reformation only went so far, and no further, stopping short of full restoration.

Significantly, the Lord reminds them to remember “how you have received and heard.” They had heard through the Word and received by grace through faith. It is to this they needed to hold fast to, repenting from turning aside to the codes, teachings, and systems of men.

Only Christ possesses the seven-fold fullness of the Spirit: the remedy for all deadness. Reformers or princes are human substitutes for Him who has the seven stars: the fullness of representative direction and rule. In the Sardis age, Reformation men subtly replaced Christ, and movements stifled and deadened the Spirit’s life.

Yes, there were a few who did not defile themselves. But garments of all walking with Him must be kept white in order to be worthily confessed by Christ before the Father in heaven. Let us hear also this.

Philadelphia Rev.3:7-13

Philadelphia significantly means, “Brotherly love.” No reproof is offered to this church that did not deny Christ’s name and kept His Word. It introduces the church of true Christian

testimony, zeal, and power following the Reformation period described in Chapter 9 *Wool and Linen*.

The love and service of the Moravians is a prime example of many fellowship groups of brotherly love who arose during this time and went forth through the opened door that no man could shut. Christ has the key and can open the same for any who have ears to hear.

Devilish Schemes

And now we turn to consider the Modern church of Laodicea in the Western world from the 1900's up to the present. The details, individuals, and movements would exceed the scope of this book. Rather, trends and emphases that have affected the church worldwide through Western influence will be surveyed.

The battle to keep the Bible from the people has been the occupation of the devil from the outset. In the first three centuries, he attempted to eliminate it by fury and burning.

Following Constantine, it was hijacked by Roman Catholics who forbid it to the multitudes. All through the Middle Ages, it lay buried under heaps of hatred, ignorance, superstition, and tradition.

During Reformation times, its living light burst forth in translations for the masses in their own tongues. Through the sacrificial labors of devoted brethren and the blessing of the printed page, the Word and its teaching was spread abroad in Europe and beyond.

With the Scriptures and its doctrine thus dispersed far and wide in recent times, the devil embarked upon a different scheme: Convince Modern Man that what they now held in their hand was irrelevant error.

Modern Thought in Europe and America

The Humanistic thinking of the Renaissance which led to the Rationalism of the Enlightenment finally eliminated any rational meaning to life for Modern Man. The following diagram will illustrate the shift in thinking that took place which led Western culture to where it is today.

Grace: Spiritual/God/Universals/Absolutes/Propositional-Revelation

Nature: Universe/Man/Particulars/Relativity/Experiential-Revelation

The things above the line are what give meaning to the things below. [Propositional: statements that are either true or false. Propositional-Revelation refers to the Bible]. The observations of man in the natural realm are focused and corrected by the things above. Man's thoughts about life, morals, society, relationships, and human personality can only be accurate if they align with the revelation of God in His written Word, the Bible.

When man began to reason about the individual things in Nature apart from the absolute reference point of eternal truth in the Scriptures, confusion, corruption, and despair resulted. As this was done following the Reformation period, conflicting opinions prevailed as the Word was increasingly set aside.

Eventually, men saw the futility of attempting to derive meaning from the particulars of Nature without any unchanging reference point whereby to evaluate opinions. Finally, all attempts to do that were abandoned, and Modern Man uncomfortably tried to adjust himself to the idea that he was part of a mechanistic universe of random chance.

Isaac Newton's [1642-1727 AD] discoveries about gravity through scientific reasoning, led to the common accepted belief that natural forces are rigid laws that govern the universe. As European explorers brought back news of distant cultures and religions, many Rationalists began to express that there might be a basic natural religion that all men had apart from the Bible or priests.

At the end of the 1700's, Rousseau maintained that whatever is natural is right. He said in the realm of philosophy what Darwin's evolutionary theory in biology would say some eighty years later. To him, man's morality must be sought for within the closed system of nature, not looked for outside of it in a god or religious code.

Nature is autonomous [a law unto itself] and therefore freedom is unrestrained since there is nothing outside Nature [nothing above the line: Grace] to govern it. Rousseau maintained that it is only institutions that have made men bad; by nature they are essentially good.

Therefore, when the sovereign natural will of the people [which is good] is violated, the people may overthrow institutions in order to return to natural law. This thinking fueled the French Revolution.

Deism resulted from the philosophic and scientific reasoning described. This was a religion without written revelation. Emphasis was placed upon God as the cause of creation who then left the universe to be governed by natural laws able to be discovered by reason.

Moral and spiritual behavior were natural principles to be understood by reason, not by God revealing Himself in history through miracles, inspiration of the Scriptures, or becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ.

Deism's ideals of reason, nature, happiness, progress, and liberty were the dream of the Enlightenment during the 1700's. Having driven out the Huguenots by the early 1700's, France exalted the goddess of Reason in the cathedral of *Notre Dame* [Our Lady, formerly a title of Virgin Mary] in Paris in the year 1792 that they renamed "Year One:" the very year the massacres began in their "ideal" society based on reason alone.

The bloodbath of the French Revolution followed where more than forty thousand were slaughtered by their own revolutionaries of natural reason. Napoleon Bonaparte put an end to the Rationalistic ideal when he arose as an authoritarian dictator in 1799.

By 1855, the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, expressed that Rationalism had failed to provide answers to the meaning of life. To him, since reference to Grace [the things above the line] had long since been abandoned by "reasonable" men, all that was left was an irrational leap by "faith" into an experience that it was hoped would provide justification for existence.

Non-reason held out an offer of optimism and hope. Reason led only to pessimism and despair. In other words, though all that you could understand gave no hope for meaning, just believe anyway.

For the theologians who followed in this flow, the events of the Gospels were seen as non-verifiable, non-historical, and in error. Therefore all that remained were words with connotation: having emotional influence, but with no rational or trustworthy content.

Faith was thus seen as subjective, existing only as a memory, feeling, or imagined force, but with no object or real substance to it. Therefore faith in faith was all that remained: a groundless irrational hope.

No longer was it a question of "I and It," but now it became "I and Thou." That is, it was no longer a faith based upon documents [Moses, Scriptures, the Gospels are the "It"], but one of a direct encounter with God [the "Thou"]. Nature's Experiential-Revelation had replaced Grace's Propositional-Revelation.

Whatever definitions or content Modern Man wished to put into "Thou" words, such as "Jesus," "God," "Faith," etc., didn't really matter to them any longer. None of those terms had any significance beyond arousing an emotional cultural memory.

The encounter itself was what was paramount and experience began to be viewed as the significant thing. Objective and historical content or meaning as declared in the Bible had become irrelevant.

Some thinkers described this faith without historical biblical content as a "feeling of dependence." Thus religious meaningless discussion about experiences using religious terms void of objective verifiable content was all that the "church" was left with. It is no wonder that this "Christian" nonsense was not taken to be a serious matter in the twentieth century.

Theologians began teaching that the Bible was no more to be thought of as an inspired, objective, historical, and Propositional-Revelation in itself. It was rather a record of revelation and a witness to religious experience: a means to an end, an empty pipe through which revelation

might flow at a given instance. In other words, “revelation” occurs at the moment of the experiential encounter, not in the communication of truth in the form of documents, information, and verifiable statements.

From Germany and Europe, these ideas were popularized and absorbed into many seminaries throughout America. With few exceptions, the Scriptures were spoken of as being “conceptually” or “dynamically” inspired.

That is, the words of the Bible itself may be in error, unhistorical, or contain myths, but they nevertheless can be used by God to “reveal” Himself to the heart through an “encounter.” In the realm of reason, the Bible was not trusted as the Word of God. In the arena of “faith’s” non-reason, it could become the Word through an experience with the divine.

Truth began to be defined in terms of the value that it had to the individual, rather than with reference to universal absolutes: “True to me, but not true to you.” A shift in thinking had occurred from “either/or” [right and wrong] to “both/and” [a relative subjective ethic].

Stop and think: Describe what happens when the Scriptures no more are viewed as the sole basis of revelation about God and man. On what basis can we justify an experience as true and right?

Evolution

Evolution has made man simply part of a biological machine while philosophy has informed us that there is no unifying rationality to life. Following the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* in the late 1850's, evolution began to infiltrate all facets of thinking and society.

The presumption was that the simple precedes the complex and that everything is in an on-going process of upward development. The formula for this transformation is: Time plus chance equals reality, with the present being the key to the past: a uniformity of natural causes within a closed system.

That is, there is nothing outside the system [of the natural universe] to influence it: neither God, spirits, nor a soul in man. In terms of the previous diagram, Nature is all that there is, Grace has disappeared from consideration.

Man therefore is a product of mechanistic processes and is nothing more than an aspect of nature. Everything done by him is therefore natural, and nature is neither good nor evil, it simply is.

Man is reduced thereby to the level of another animal: a bio-chemical machine in a meaningless flow of time. Evolution removes all significance to man’s existence, since all develops by random chance apart from design. Life is a cosmic accident.

With no God as Creator, morals cannot have any relevance for two reasons. [1] Without God, there is no absolute reference point determining right and wrong. Moral choice therefore becomes an absurdity since there is no way to finally decide whether one action is better than another.

[2] Morality is not the concern of animals, and man is an animal according to evolution. Chickens have no laws against rape and goats do not punish theft.

All value judgments thus become arbitrary and pointless. Finally then, along with morality, love and freedom also disappear, being swallowed up by the mechanism of cause and effect within evolution’s closed system.

Advantage to self is all the individual is left with to motivate and determine his actions according to evolution. It is only natural, therefore, for man to be utterly self-occupied with no concern for others. In evolution, only the fittest, most aggressive, and cleverest survive.

Theistic Evolution

Theistic evolution is a compromising attempt by some in the church during the 1900's to cling to an appearance of biblical belief while not appearing foolish in the eyes of the world. Pride

and cowardice motivates the doctrine. It is imported into the text of the Scriptures but not derived from it.

The teaching of creation in the Word of God and the philosophy of evolution are mutually exclusive alternatives. Out of nothing [Heb.11:3], God created the first man, Adam [I Cor.15:45], whose flesh was not derived from that of animals [I Cor.15:39]. All was concluded in six days [Ex.20:9-11].

Theistic evolution imagines God using existing materials, existing flesh of beasts, and bringing into being more than one man by its process over millions of years. To hold to it, one must reject the plain message of the Bible.

It cannot answer the question when developing "man" became in the image of God, other than by the miraculous intervention of the God of heaven. But if that is the case, it is no more utilizing an evolutionary natural process; it is supernatural.

The theistic evolutionary system is an irrational leap of faith into the arena of non-reason since it cannot be shown to be true either scientifically or biblically. It is simply non-verifiable Modern philosophic thinking dressed up in religious clothes.

Revolutions

Tubal-Cain is the father of the abolition of Modern Man [Gen.4:22]. Bronze and iron tools in his hands forged economic and military advantage over weaker men lacking his technology.

Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution of the late 1700's signaled that man, as part of the evolutionary mechanism of nature, was destined to become irrelevant. What formerly required the presence of many now could be accomplished with few. Modern Man began to realize that the individual was losing significance in the overall arena of greater concerns and forces.

Individual men became disposable commodities having significance only in so much as they were vital to a greater enterprise. The value of a man was assessed in relationship to the machine.

The machine dictated whether he was of use or not. In the larger scheme of things, industrialization reinforced the philosophic and biological ideas that man is merely a component part of the all-encompassing mechanism of nature.

Education became secularized with emphasis upon technical intelligence and practical application of scientific inquiry. Aesthetic sense was dulled and the level of literature and art was lowered to the popular and mass-producible.

The small farm and nuclear family unit gave way to the factory, urbanization, diversity, and women's "emancipation" by entering the previously male-dominated workforce. Women and work both were now out of the home. The two World Wars fought in the 1900's greatly accelerated the flight of women from the home into cultural "liberation."

Technological Revolution

Critical reasoning is becoming obsolete in a world culture where machines increasingly do our thinking for us. Information is obtainable without reflection. What was scattered at Babel's tower is becoming reconfigured through computerized information technology such as the Internet. Rapid transforming of global consciousness and values are taking place through this means.

The evangelical church now thinks it knows the reality of Christianity because data counted to be truth is at their fingertips, even while estrangement of relationships degenerates

due to transacting with electronic information. Indifference has been one result, both interpersonally and respecting the effort demanded to become wise.

This revolution has resulted in the deception that technically correct information void of wisdom is a suitable substitute for insight. Technique has replaced principle, psychology is accounted as sufficient behavioral assessment, the immediate is deemed priority, diversion is sought as desirable, and toil is spurned as distasteful drudgery.

Accuracy of content minus devotion of character or grasping broad principles is what we are left with: a focus upon the immediate without regard to future consequences or past perspectives.

Another aspect of technology is that the iron weapons of Tubal-Cain mutated into means of global destruction through atomic weaponry. This shrinking sense of helplessness before unthinkable threats to existence has contributed to a desire for centralized world governance and “unity” as a means of self-preservation.

Stop and think: What is the relative value of information to wisdom and how is wisdom obtained? [I Cor.8:1; Prov.9:10; Heb.5:14].

Biological Revolution

Hybrids, genetic engineering, and cloning are modifying living plants and animals. The “fittest” hope to manipulate the very fabric of human life in order to consciously contribute to the “evolutionary” development of man. Here, the weak and undesirable will be eliminated by the strong and “superior” so that the developing super race might emerge.

This was Hitler’s dream for the Aryan [white German] race and a chief motivation for his genetic research and mass destruction of Jews during WWII. He quite clearly stated that Christianity and its notion of charity should be “replaced by the ethic of strength over weakness.”

Spiritual Revolution

In the West, there is a growing interest in Eastern mysticism and a return to Animistic roots. In a world in which the common man is weak, increasingly irrelevant, and where there is no basis for morals or rationality, there is a growing quest for power in order to control one’s life and environment. This is not a return to spirituality as a Christian would think of it: to seeking a god or values outside the closed system; it is not a return to Grace in terms of the previous diagram.

These are powers that true Christians know to be demonic beings. Modern Man, however, sees them as natural forces to be controlled and used for his own ends. Though concealed under modern terms like parapsychology, bio-feedback, Yoga, transcendental consciousness, etc., this is nothing more than raw Animism such as we know in Africa.

Through visualization, meditation, and positive confession [incantation], these Animistic practices are becoming absorbed into the church in the Western world. See **Appendix 5 Animism**. From there, they are passing into the churches in other parts of the world through modern Laodicean ministers and media.

Digital Revolution

Through television, video, and Internet, quiet prolonged reflection on written words was replaced by sensual impressions with no opportunity to ponder progressively unfolding scenes. Attention spans were reduced thereby to less than fifteen minutes. Distaste for non-sensory stimulants developed.

How one felt determined the message communicated: not analysis of objective content. Thus the same media experience was capable of conveying a wide range of meanings: all equally “valid” depending upon the subjective impression of the viewers.

Film and video became the media of conveyance for an era that had abandoned the truth value of propositional reasoning. It also became the tool of the dominant elite to manipulate and gain influence over the weak: a tool of propaganda to direct the course of generations.

“Digitality” presents an edited reality offered to the viewer under a pretense of objectivity and truth. It proffers an illusion of vicarious participation. Digital media brings the theatre, games, and immorality of ancient Rome into our parlors.

Motion pictures obscure the line between fantasy and reality, from what is staged to what is actual. Through the cinema’s special effects, the truly miraculous is made commonplace, humanly explainable, and despised as cheap manipulation. When Pharaoh’s magicians duplicated Moses’ miracles by their own performing arts, hearts were hardened to the genuine [Ex.7:22,23].

Musical Revolution

Modern Rock ‘n Roll music shouts its message that nothing in the traditional rational or moral arenas provides answers for the meaning of existence. Purpose is to be found in a passionate wild abandon to sensual possession by an experience, force, or event that transcends self.

Rock music is an outcome of the evolutionary premise; nothing but nature exists. Man is therefore an animal whose survival depends upon violent aggression to dominate the weaker and satisfy its own reproductive passions.

Thus Rock’s audio aggression and pulsing electronic erotic rhythm convey evolutionary formula in a popular tonic for the masses; meaning to existence is not to be found in rationality, morals, or transcendent values [Grace], but in an unrestrained, aggressive, and animal-like experience [Nature].

The meaning of Rock is not to be sought for in the lyrics; they may not even be intelligible. The medium of the powerfully possessing sensual experience itself is the message.

Rock ‘n Roll’s degenerate offspring, “Hip-hop/Rap,” carries evolution’s reduction of life to its logical conclusion; violence and sex are all that remain. In the later 1960's, Rock was welcomed into the Laodicean church, God became trivial, and the sacred was made profane [common].

Stop and think: What cautions should be exercised in using practices of the world by Christians?

Psychological Revolution

Psychology rightly interprets the evolutionary and philosophic trends of the age in affirming that there are no criminals, only victims of influences beyond their control. Psychology erases moral accountability, seeking only to quench the sense of a guilt which it claims does not actually exist but is only felt.

As self is the final reference point in evolution, so it is in psychology. The more than ten thousand conflicting psycho-therapies inform us that there is a “solution” to suit every individual to adjust to a behavior that he determines to be best for himself.

The basic fallacy of psychology is this; the heart of man is deceitful and wicked [Jer.17:9]. How then can a man with a deceitful and wicked heart tell us what is normative in human behavior? The very “tool” that he is using to discern what is correct, is itself incorrect: at best deceitful, and at worst wicked.

Apart from the revelation of the Word of God, there are no criteria to determine what is proper in the realms of morals and relationships. All is opinion, behavior is relative, and whatever is natural is normal. This is as far as psychology can take us.

Jesus is the “Wonderful Counselor” -Isa.9:6. “The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing. The counsel of the Lord stands forever” -Ps.33:10, 11. “Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors” -Ps.119:24. So much for psychological man-made therapies.

Charismatic Movement

Charismatics continued the emphasis upon the experiential in religion in contrast to obedience to objective revelation in the written Word of God. Episcopal priests, Roman Catholic worshipers of Mary, and a vast spectrum from nearly all denominations had the common “encounter” of “speaking in tongues” beginning in the middle 1960's. This became the essential ingredient in their Charismatic fellowship, but not what was biblically true or not.

The “faith in faith” of the humanistic existential philosophers, became the substance of things hoped for in modern Pentecostalism stemming from this period. “Faith’s” only content and object, as it was for the secular philosophers, was simply whatever was desired, felt, or thought in one’s own mind. These were visualized, believed, and confessed as constituting what it meant to place faith in one’s faith.

That introduced a purely subjective religion using “God-talk.” In principle, this “faith” was really no different than the Animism of traditional religions, now sanctioned by philosophy and sanctified by Charismatics. See **Appendix 5 Animism**. The typical Charismatic remained in his denomination, was ecumenical in outlook, and tolerant of differences in beliefs. Propositional-Revelation was only of minimal concern, if that.

While many true believers were found among Charismatics, the foundation was of sand. Doctrine was secondary and experience was foremost; and such experience can never support true biblical faith.

The doctrine of Prosperity and Positive Confession came out of this movement, though many Charismatics would not hold to either. These are recent doctrines in the history of the church, being put forth as “Christian” in the late 1960's. In an experience oriented church influenced by Americanism, it is quite easy to see why many were deluded by these errors.

Ecumenism

With the tearing down of confidence in the Scriptures as the basis of faith, came a growing interest in organizational uniformity among the various church denominations. Since doctrine no longer separated them, and with the decline of Christendom’s influence in the world, unity became desirable. Addressing various political and social issues occupied their attention as primary concerns.

The National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches are two major organizations with millions of members and numerous denominations in their ranks. Recently in America, prominent evangelical leaders have indicated their willingness to cooperate with Roman Catholics in the task of world “evangelization.” Their “gospels,” however, remain distinct: a yoking of donkey and ox [Deut.22:10].

Stop and think: How do Amos 3:3, Gal.1:6-10, and 2 Cor.6:14-18 compare to the Pattern of Christ and modern ecumenism?

Christian Publications

Early in the twentieth century, a strong emphasis was placed upon sound doctrine among Evangelicals and Fundamentalists. The books and Bible colleges coming out of this era had a bright and lasting witness to the truth.

Currently, testimonials, techniques, and therapies summarize the content of contemporary publications in Western Christendom. Solid biblical teachings from previous generations are rarely still available in print. Consideration for what will appeal to readers and make money motivates many religious publishers.

The Christian music and video entertainment industry is an annual multi-billion dollar enterprise. Amusement, pleasurable pastimes, and Christianity have become strange but compatible bed-fellows in the mind of the Modern church.

Americanism

Because the great influence America has had on the church worldwide in the 1900's due to its teaching, literature, and missionary activity, we must comment upon this orientation. Americanism, an offspring of Deism, is comprised of several orientations that are directly opposed to the Scriptures.

Rights

Rights of the individual under law underscores the basic assumption of Americanism. This is not a Christian principle at all. Rights are obligatory based upon law.

However, no blessings ever come from God to man on the principle of law. Mercy cannot be obligated. Demands cannot be pressed upon grace. Slaves/servants have no rights.

Rights and love are not synonymous. Love springs from the heart of the giver to neighbor and enemy alike regardless of their merits. Demands spring from the heart of recipients who insist on receiving their just and lawful due based on their own perceived merits.

Love is the basis of Christianity. Rights is that of Americanism which only can lead to a litigation conscious society who no longer forgive.

Democracy

Democracy places the will of the people at the center of its governing principle. Thus the will and Word of God were replaced by the will and word of the people.

Though resembling Christianity in being willing to be governed by a document [The Constitution and Bill of Rights], their agreed upon evolving social consensus [the will of the people] must necessarily be pluralistic, progressive, and relative. In other words, constitutional law must give way for precedent law; the standard of governance must become situational rather than absolute, and the document eventually discarded.

Individualism

Individualism was promoted as a virtue. To require submission, conformity, and obedience without the final sanction of individual agreement to its reasonableness became a "sin."

Self became the highest court of appeal and a jealously guarded sanctum where no intrusion was permitted. Self, by the teaching of Jesus, however, is to be hated and denied [Lk.14:26; Mt.16:24]. Submission to one another is a godly indicator of possessing the common life of humility and love [Eph.5:21].

Tolerance

Seemingly in conflict with this focus on individualism, tolerance emerged as a virtue. Individualism was sacred, therefore room must be allowed for the individual to pursue and express his own will, even if his is in conflict with my own. In the church of Americanism, a cultural pluralism and diversity were tolerated where they biblically ought not to have been [2 Thess.3:14].

Liberty

Liberty is closely allied with Individualism. Since the days of the American Revolution, rebellion was accounted to be liberty and unfettered self-will as freedom.

Liberty was thus seen as freedom from external restraint. Christianity's demand that believers submit as slaves to God is directly opposed to Americanism's Liberty.

Happiness

Happiness was promoted as a significant objective of life. An ever increasing affluence and enjoyment were conceived to be worthy pursuits in Americanism.

Prosperity, leisure, and enjoyment became indicators of success and enviable achievement. Actually, along with pride, these are the very elements that lead to sodomy and destruction [Ezek.16:49, 50] as has developed in America and those of this persuasion.

From this developed a society discontent with anything but the convenience of the instantaneous: possessing without ownership through credit purchasing, knowledge without character through electronic media, and discarding the unfashionably old for the readily new and replaceable.

Stop and think: How are these elements of Americanism observed in the Christianity that has come to West Africa?

Summary

In our historical survey, we have now come to the present, to you and to me. What will history record about us? What conformity to the Pattern of Christ will be read in our story?

Or what sad recounting of compromise and departure will be told? Rather, what will the record kept in eternal books reveal on that solemn day before the judgment seat of Christ?

Will it be, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord"; or might we shrink away from Him in shame at His appearing having to hear, "I know your works...but I have this against you"?

Are we like Christ?

"If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them" -Jn.13:17.

"To him who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin" -Jas.4:17.

Again we must be asked: Are we like Christ?

Appendices

Appendix 1 NT Leadership

Key Passages: Nature of the Church

Foundation

Mt.16:16-19

No blessing comes to any man who has a deficient view of Christ. Imaginary Christs can do nothing for anyone because they do not exist. Only what is revealed about Christ to the heart of a man by the Father in heaven will result in blessing.

Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed Priest and King. As Priest, there exists no other Mediator between God and man. No other sacrifice will avail to cleanse from sin. He alone is the Priest that can safely represent man before God without rejection.

As King, He rules and governs the heart of His servants according to the law of His kingdom. No other rulers, no codes or traditions can be accepted by His subjects. His Word exclusively must command His people.

Christ alone is the Rock upon which His church is built. The confession that there is no other King, no other Priest, is the unshakable Rock that all of hell's wisdom and might cannot overcome.

Hell cannot undo what has been supernaturally imparted to the heart of a man by the Father in heaven. There is no other means of entrance into this church that Jesus is building.

"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" -I Cor.3:11. "That Rock" [*PETRA*, *πετρα*] "was Christ" -I Cor.10:4.

Peter [*PETROS*, *πετρος*] is not that Rock [*PETRA*, *πετρα*] upon which the church is built. Peter is a stone [Jn.1:42], like all believers are "living stones" -I Pet.2:5, but he is not the foundational Bedrock upon which the church stands.

Christ alone can support the church that He is building. It belongs to Him. He says it is "My church" -Mt.16:18. We dare not shift to another foundation, another priesthood, another Christ, another gospel, or another code of law.

This is the foundation of the church that is Jesus' possession and is the first mention of the church in all of Scripture. Study it well, the key lies at the door to all that is contained therein. There is no other church membership that will take you to heaven.

Father & Children

2 Cor.6:18

The life of the Father is the common portion of all His children. He is exalted over all to whom all in the family owe everything. In this family, all are brothers [Mt.23:8]. None have any place of superiority over others. Love and consideration characterize all.

Master & Slaves

Rom.6:15-23

Slaves are purchased possessions [I Cor.6:19,20]. They have no rights, and their independent opinions and desires are not the concern of the Master. Their one concern is to know and obey the command of their Master.

No man can serve two masters. There exists no place for men to lord it over fellow slaves in the church of Christ. Jesus alone is Lord.

Shepherd & Sheep

Jn.10:1-28

There exists but one flock with one Shepherd [Jn.10:16]. Men are no substitutes for Christ. His voice alone is heard and followed by His flock. The voices of strangers will not be listened to or followed; rather, the sheep will flee from any not speaking the Word of the Shepherd.

This identifies what true shepherd care is: speaking with the voice of Christ, leading in His paths of righteousness to feed upon His Word. This is what a shepherd is according to the heart of God [Jer.3:15]. Any who would draw men after themselves, speaking man's wisdom and tradition, are thieves and robbers [Ezek.34:1-16; Acts 20:30].

Foundation & Temple

I Cor.3:10,11,16; Eph.2:19-22

In God's temple, everything says, "Glory" -Ps.29:9. The outshining of His character is seen, the excellence of His moral perfections shine forth. Truth is dispensed, sacrifices rise, and the Lord dwells in the midst with holiness overshadowing all.

Christ as the Cornerstone is the reference point for all that is built upon Him [Isa.28:16]. He is the foundation that the Apostles and prophets have laid.

Everything rests upon Him and He determines the dimensions and scope of the building. Man's substitutes and carnal contributions are rejected as worthless and not according to the Pattern of Christ.

This is the church that Jesus builds. It is not built with wood and cement. Living stones grow into a holy temple in the Lord [I Pet.2:5]. The church of the Lord Jesus is the pillar and support of the truth [I Tim.3:15], upholding and proclaiming the everlasting Word of God of Him who dwells within His spiritual house.

High Priest & Priests

Heb.4:14-16; I Pet.2:5,9

A throne of grace is open to all who draw near to God through Jesus, the only High Priest who always lives to intercede for His own [Heb.7:24,25]. Each believer has equal privilege and access to the God of heaven, for all are spiritual priests.

From every believer without distinction, offerings are brought; Bodies are presented as living sacrifices [Rom.12:1,2], praise rises from grateful and fruitful lips [Heb.13:15], and good deeds of sharing abound [Heb.13:16].

No such thing as clergy and laity exist in the NT church patterned after Christ. No separate class of men officiate and rule over the spiritual life and ministry of the believers. All are priests.

Vine & Branches

Jn.15:1-17

"Apart from Me, you can do nothing" -Jn.15:5: nothing to glorify the Father, nothing to truly benefit man. The life of the True Vine courses through each and every branch to produce the fruit of that Life: fruit of "goodness, righteousness, and truth" -Eph.5:9.

Fruit cannot be imitated as spiritual gifts may. Death has its own odor that cannot be masked. The fruitful fragrance of Christ is what is evidenced in all who are in living union with Him [2 Cor.2:14]. Life produces fruit that no ceremonies, regulations, associations, or traditions could ever do.

Head & Body

Col.1:18

One Head governs the one body of Christ. There are not multiple heads in His church. No one's body could live and function with two heads.

The members of the body receive their direction directly from the Head, not from fellow members. The hand does not dictate to the foot. If one suffers, that member sends a message of distress to the Head. The Head then orders the response of the other members to relieve the suffering member.

All is orderly and coordinated because the Head governs all. No imposed structure from without directs the church. Christ is truly the living Head, not an organizational head, and certainly not a figurehead - a head in name only.

Captain & Soldiers

2 Tim.2:3,4

Soldiers do not entangle themselves in the affairs of this life. Conflict for the sake of the kingdom is their concern. Commands from their Captain are all that they listen to.

Hardship, self-denial, and discipline are what their lives consist of. Pleasing the Commander and gaining victory over the foe fills their waking moments.

The church fights the good fight of faith, not with carnal weapons and fleshly might, but with the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Error, evil, and hate are fought with truth, righteousness, and love. Only then is victory sure.

Bridegroom & Bride

2 Cor.11:2,3; Rev.19:7-9; Eph.5:25-32

Affectionate devotion and determined purity are what characterize the bride. She has an eye for none other. Her love is reserved for One alone.

She despises that friendship with the world which would defile her into harlotry [Jas.4:4]. She makes herself ready for the glorious day in which she shall appear spotless and radiant, with no stain or blemish.

Righteous deeds weave the whitened fabric of her beautiful dress while she gladly submits to His good pleasure. And so it is that the true church of Christ can say: "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is for me" -S.of S. 7:10.

Key Passages: Leadership

[In the discussion of the following passages, various NT Greek words will be referred to. They will be identified by writing them in *ITALIC CAPITAL* letters. Their meanings along with the references for each will be found under the heading: NT Greek Words for Authority/Rule following this section]

Luke 22:24-27

Mt.20:25-28; Mk.10:42-45

Ruling and lording it over the people of God are never to be found in the church of Jesus Christ. He forbids it to be so. Dominating and exercising authority over inferiors is what the heathen do. It is worldliness and completely unlike the Pattern of Christ.

He humbled Himself as the lowliest of servants. This is what constitutes leadership in His kingdom, in His church: serving as a slave.

Leadership is by performing loving deeds of service, not by exercising authority over others. True leadership, according to Christ, is by an example of humbly serving others, not by having others perform my will. The youngest is the greatest.

In Lk.22:26, the word "chief" [KJV], "he who governs" [NKJV], "the one who rules" [NIV], and "leader" [NASB, NET, NLT], are all translations of the word *HEGEOMAI*.

Jesus here says that the *HEGEOMAI* is a servant. This is the sense in which we must understand the meaning of this term in the church.

Without controversy, servants are not rulers, they are ruled. Therefore, the ideas of chief, ruler, or governor cannot possibly be the proper sense of a *HEGEOMAI* in the NT church.

The meanings, "leader, guide," are correct, as they alone are consistent with being a servant. A servant can lead and guide by an example of devoted care and truthful words. But no servant is a ruler, governor, or chief; that is a contradiction in terms.

Acts 20:28-32

Elders who are equipped by the Holy Spirit to oversee, are capable of shepherding the flock of God. It is the work of God to make a man in this capacity. Man's appointment and ordination cannot make a man into someone and something that the Holy Spirit has not already done.

Elders [Acts 20:17,18] and Overseers [Acts 20:28] are terms describing the same individuals. An Elder [*PRESBUTEROS*] is an older man of proven spiritual maturity.

The term Overseer [*EPISKOPOS*] describes the work that an Elder performs. That work is watching over and tending to the needs of the flock as a Shepherd would do [*POIMAINO*].

The work of a Shepherd is essentially two-fold: to lead the flock to good pasture and to watch over them so that the wolf does not attack and destroy. The means provided by the Lord to accomplish both of these services are one and the same.

The Word of God is what the believers are led to feed upon by mature godly teachers. That same Word, skillfully used in the hands of Overseeing Shepherds, is their means of protection against error and evil.

I Peter 5:1-6

Once again, the Elders [*PRESBUTEROS*] are performing the work of overseeing. Overseer is not a position or office of higher rank than that of an elder. The two words are simply describing the same individual, considered from different aspects of his qualifications to serve the saints.

Leaders, here called Elders, are among the brethren, not over them. Peter himself does not assume a ruling position over the brethren or other elders. He simply calls himself, "your fellow elder."

Here it is clearly seen that an Overseer who watches over [*EPISKOPEO*], must not Lord It Over [*KATAKURIEUO*]. Overseeing is therefore never legitimately ruling and exercising authority over the brethren.

Rather, Elders/Overseers are to be examples, both in loving and humble service as well as in purity of life and of doctrine. They do not dominate, they demonstrate.

Hebrews 13:7,17

NT church Leaders [*HEGEOMAI*] are not rulers. This has already been seen by our Lord Jesus' use of this word in Lk.22:26. They are guides: servants who lead by loving godly care while speaking the truth.

Believers are to carefully reflect upon both the godly lives of their Leaders and the Word that they have taught. It is then that they are persuaded to imitate their faith and submit to their guidance and example.

They obey because the Leaders' doctrine and lives are persuasive to the spiritual hearts of the godly. The church does not obey because Leaders rule over them with authority as lords. Christ's Leaders follow His Pattern by guiding according to example, combined with the persuasive power of truth.

The most frequent word in the NT for Obey is [*HUPAKOUO* υπακουω: not shown below]. It means TO OBEY, in the sense of submitting to authority: such as a believer to the Lord [Heb.5:9], a child to his parent [Eph.6:1], or a slave to his master [Col.3:22].

However, in Heb.13:17, a different word for Obey is used. That word, [*PEITHO* πειθω: not shown below], means TO CONVINCe, PERSUADE, OBEY. The obedience called for in Heb.13:17 is based upon godly spiritual persuasion, not upon submission to one in authority over others.

Thus, the meaning of the command in Heb.13:17 can better be expressed in this way: "Be persuaded by your Leaders and submit." Their submission is to the truth of their teaching from the Word that is also evident in the convincing example of their godly lives. Spiritual reasonableness persuades them, not subjection to authoritative rule.

I Timothy 3:1-7

Oversight [*EPISKOPE*] is a good and desirable work. It is truly a work of service, not of occupying a position or assuming an office. The Overseer [*EPISKOPOS*] must possess essentially two qualifications: [1] He must be blameless in character and [2] He must be able to teach.

Thus the Overseer must demonstrate a consistently spiritual example and be able to teach the Word: the same qualifications as were seen in Acts, I Peter, and Hebrews.

He must be one who Manages [*PROISTEMI*] his own household well. If he is not a good example, leader, and caring helper there, how could he possibly be qualified to help the church?

Titus 1:5-9

Elders [*PRESBUTEROS*] and Overseers [*EPISKOPOS*] are addressed as being the same individuals. Contrary to Ignatius' man-made teaching noted previously in Chapter 5, there exists no hierarchy of one over the other or over the brethren.

Any true Overseer must be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. Such is the work of a Shepherd: to feed with the Word and to defend with the same.

I Timothy 5:17-22

Those Elders [*PRESBUTEROS*] who Care For [*PROISTEMI*] the brethren well are worthy of double honor. They should be worthy, not only of honor, but even of financial support since they are working hard at preaching the gospel and teaching the believers.

I Thessalonians 5:12,13

Leaders are noted for their diligent work of Caring For [*PROISTEMI*] and admonishing the brethren according to the Word of God. These are the ones that we should draw close to in order to observe, know, and highly esteem their worthy examples and sound doctrine. Because of their good work, we love them dearly.

NT Greek Words for Authority/Rule

[Listings for each word show all NT references unless noted otherwise. Verses particularly relevant to the study of NT Leadership are in **bold type**].

EXOUSIA [εξουσία]

AUTHORITY, ABILITY, FREEDOM OF CHOICE, RIGHT, POWER, GOVERNING OFFICIALS. [Mt.7:29; 8:9; 9:6,8; 10:1; 21:23,24,27; **28:18**; Mk.1:22,27; 2:10; 3:15; 6:7; 11:28,29,33; **13:34**; Lk.4:6,32,36; 5:24; 7:8; 9:1; 10:19; 12:5,11; 19:17; 20:2,8,20; 22:53; 23:7; Jn.1:12; 5:27; 10:18; 17:2; 19:10,11; Acts 1:7; 5:4; 8:19; 9:14; 26:10,12,18; Rom.9:21; 13:1,2,3; I Cor.7:37; 8:9; 9:4,5,6,12,18; 11:10; 15:24; 2 Cor.**10:8**; **13:10**; Eph.1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Col.1:13,16; 2:10,15; 2 Thess.3:9; Tit.3:1; Heb.13:10; I Pet.3:22; Jude 25; Rev.2:26; 6:8; 9:3,10,19; 11:6,6; 12:10; 13:2,4,5,7,12; 14:18; 16:9; 17:12,13; 18:1; 20:6; 22:14].

This word occurs ninety-four times in the NT and is never once used of one believer as having Authority over another. The Lord Jesus is the One who has all Authority in heaven and earth [Mt.28:18].

The only Authority that believers have with relationship to one another is to perform the work that the Lord has commanded each of them to do [Mk.13:34]. The work that Jesus gives to His servants is never that of ruling over others, but is rather simply Authority from Christ to build up the brethren [2 Cor.10:8; 13:10].

Each believer has Authority to speak the truth in love to the building up of the body of Christ [Eph.4:15,16].

EXOUSIAZO [εξουσιαζω]

TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER. [Lk. 22:25; I Cor.6:12; 7:4,4]. Jesus forbids His leaders from exercising authority over His people. Only heathen men of the world do that.

KATEXOUSIAZO [κατεξουσιαζω]

TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER/UPON. [Mt.20:25; Mk.10:42]. It is worldliness for a leader in the church to act like the oppressive rulers of the unbelievers.

KATAKURIEUO [κατακυριευω]

LORD IT OVER, BE MASTER, SUBDUE. [Mt.20:25; Mk.10:42; Acts 19:16; I Pet.5:3]. Both Jesus and Peter forbid NT leaders to dominate and rule His people.

ARCHE [αρχη]

[A frequent meaning of this word is “beginning.” These references have not been listed since they do not relate to our study here. The following definitions are seen in the passages listed].

A RULE, AUTHORITY. [Lk.12:11; 20:20; Rom.8:38; I Cor.15:24; Eph.1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col.1:16; 2:10,15; Tit.3:1].

This word is never used with reference to a believer. It refers only to human political rule and authority or to angelic rulers and authorities.

ARCHO [αρχω]

[Apart from two exceptions in the NT, this word means “to begin.” The two times it means “to rule” are shown].

TO RULE. [Mk.10:42; Rom.15:12]. Rule over subjects is a heathen practice among men, but is forbidden in the church.

ARCHON [αρχων]

RULER, LORD, PRINCE, AN AUTHORITY. [Can be either human or demonic]. [Mt.9:18,23,34; 12:24; **20:25**; Mk.3:22; Lk.8:41; 11:15; 12:58; 14:1; 18:18; 23:13,35; 24:20; Jn.3:1; 7:26,48; 12:31,42; 14:30; 16:11; Acts 3:17; 4:5,8,26; 7:27,35; 13:27; 14:5; 16:19; 23:5; Rom.13:3; I Cor.2:6,8; Eph.2:2; Rev.1:5]. Never is any Christian said to be a Ruler, Lord, Prince, or an Authority. This term has reference only to the civil magistrates, governors, and Rulers of earth, the religious Rulers of the Jews, and demonic powers and Authorities.

HEGEMON [ηγεμων]

PRINCE, GOVERNOR, RULER. [Mt.2:6; 10:18; 27:2,11,14,15,21,27; 28:14; Mk.13:9; Lk.20:20; 21:12; Acts 23:24,26,33; 24:1,10; 26:30; I Pet.2:14]. No Christian is ever referred to as a Ruler. This term describes only the civil Governing authorities of man’s governments or the religious Rulers of the Jews.

HEGEOMAI [ηγεομαι]

[This word is translated many times as “to think/consider.” The passages shown are all references to the definitions noted].

TO LEAD, GUIDE, GOVERN, RULE. [Mt.2:6; Lk.22:26; Acts 7:10; **14:12**; **15:22**; Heb.13:7,17,24]. Jesus’ definition of this term determines the sense it has in His church. He says that the *HEGEOMAI* is a servant, not a ruler [Lk.22:26].

No servants are Rulers. Therefore, Leader or Guide are the only meanings that make sense in the Christian context.

Paul was the Leading speaker, not the Ruler over Barnabas [Acts 14:12]. Judas and Silas were Leading men among the brethren, not Rulers over the Apostles and the church [Acts 15:22].

Rulers in Heb.13:7,17 [KJV] must be understood to mean Leaders or Guides because of Jesus' own use of the word in Lk.22:26. To do otherwise is to reject Jesus' word for the sake of establishing and maintaining man-made tradition and governing systems in the church.

PROISTEMI [προιστημι]

Literally, TO STAND BEFORE, and is translated as LEAD, ATTEND TO [with diligent care], MANAGE, MAINTAIN, CONDUCT, BE CONCERNED ABOUT, CARE FOR, GIVE AID, DIRECT, RULE. [Rom. 12:8; I Thess.5:12; I Tim.3:4,5,12; 5:17; Tit.3:8,14]. This wide-range term describes someone who is standing before others as an example of devoted service, help, care, and direction to them. The ideas of Leading with diligent care, concern, and direction are the idea in Rom.12:8.

In I Thess.5:12 it is those who are Attending to, Caring for, Giving aid, and Directing the brethren by their laboring in teaching and admonition that the saints are to lovingly esteem. They are not "over you" as ruling authorities, but are Standing Before the church as teachers and examples.

The sense in which Overseers are to "rule" [I Tim.3:4,5 KJV] their household well is explained by the use of the term "take care of" in I Tim.3:5. The word "take care of" [EPIMELEOMAI επιμελομαι], is used in only three verses in the NT: Lk.10:34,35 and I Tim.3:5.

In the Luke passage, the good Samaritan did not rule, lord it over, or exercise authority over the man who had been robbed and beaten. Rather, he Attended to, was Concerned about, Cared for, Gave aid, and Directed for the care of the man in need. Provision was made at his own expense for the well-being and blessing of the wounded traveler.

This type of care is what is needed in the church and in the home. If one cannot Attend to, be Concerned about, Care for, Give aid, and Direct the members of one's own family, how could a man ever be of benefit to the church, the family of God? Ruling and exercising authority as a lord does not fit or qualify a man to either lead in his home or in the church.

Elders worthy of double honor are not worthy because they are Rulers, but because they Attend to, are Concerned about, Care for, and Give aid to the people of God [I Tim.5:17,18].

EPISKOPOS [επισκοπος]

OVERSEER, SUPERINTENDENT, GUARDIAN, BISHOP. [Acts 20:28; Phil.1:1; I Tim.3:2; Tit.1:7; I Pet.2:25]. Overseer emphasizes watching over the brethren for their spiritual protection, comfort, and blessing. It is not a title of superiority above that of Elder.

Elder and Overseer are merely descriptions of the same individual viewed from two different sides. Jesus is the only Overseer who has the right to rule over the brethren [I Pet.2:25].

EPISKOPEO [επισκοπεω]

TO OVERSEE, CARE FOR, LOOK AT. [Heb.12:15; I Pet.5:2]. In I Pet.5:2,3, Peter makes it absolutely certain that to Watch over has nothing to do with Lording it over. Spiritual maturity, insight, and alertness are required to Oversee. A man can lord it over others with none of those qualities.

EPISKOPE [επισκοπη]

OVERSEERSHIP, POSITION AS OVERSEER, VISITATION. [Lk.19:44; Acts 1:20; I Tim.3:1; I Pet.2:12]. In neither Acts 1:20 nor in I Tim.3:1 is contained the idea of an "Office" [KJV] of rulership. It is not a place of superiority over those who are subject to the one in authority.

The desire for Overseership is a good desire for a good work. And that good work is not a work of ruling, but of setting an example for the saints along with teaching sound doctrine and helping the brethren in their life of faith.

PRESBUTEROS [πρεσβυτερος]

OLDER, ELDER. [Often used to describe the Jewish Elders in the Gospels and Acts such as in Mt.21:23. In Revelation, the twenty-four Elders are mentioned such as in Rev.4:4. The following passages relate to Elders in reference to our topic of NT Leadership]. [Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4; 20:17,18; I Tim.5:17,19; Tit.1:5; Jas.5:14; I Pet.5:1,5; 2 Jn.1; 3 Jn.1].

Elders are older spiritually mature men who have a testimony of proven character and wisdom. They are thus qualified to Oversee the brethren.

Physical age in years or recognition and influence in the community do not qualify a man to be an Elder in the church. It is possible for a man to be an elder in the community and be absolutely unfit to be an Elder in the church.

Apart from Paul appointing Elders in the newly founded Gentile churches [Acts 14:23], traditional elders would have filled that role and disaster would have resulted. He appointed Elders in order to show these former idolatrous converts that traditional elders are not qualified to serve as Elders in the church unless they have the needed spiritual qualifications.

Thus, it is even possible that traditional elders may not be recognized as being spiritual Elders, and that they will be required to submit to even younger men who are spiritually qualified.

PRESBUTERION [πρεσβυτεριον]

ASSEMBLY/COUNCIL OF ELDERS. [Lk.22:66; Acts 22:5; I Tim.4:14]. The Elders, as a group of spiritually mature men who Oversee the brethren, observed in Timothy both the gift of God and his proven character. They therefore were willing to commend him to the work of the Lord by the laying on of their hands. This indicated their blessing for him to represent Christ's church in behalf of the assembly.

POIMEN [ποιμην]

SHEPHERD, SHEEP-HERDER. [Used literally in some passages such as Lk.2:8. The passages listed relate to NT Leadership]. [Mt.9:36; 25:32; 26:31; Mk.6:34; 14:27; Jn.10:2,11,12,14,16; Eph.4:11; Heb.13:20; I Pet.2:25].

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of His church [Jn.10:2,11,12,14,16; Heb.13:20; I Pet.2:25]. Men can only properly be called Shepherds [pastors] if they are leading the flock along the path to the pastures of the Good Shepherd by speaking to them with His voice. Otherwise, they are false shepherds and the sheep will flee from them.

Eph.4:11 is the only verse in the NT that refers to a man as a pastor. A pastor is simply doing the work of a Shepherd. He leads the brethren to the good pasture of the Word of God and watches over them so that the wolf does not ruin and destroy.

POIMAINO [ποιμαινω]

TO SHEPHERD, RULE. [Mt.2:6; Lk.17:7; Jn.21:16; Acts 20:28; I Cor.9:7; I Pet. 5:2; Jude 12; Rev.2:27; 7:17; 12:5; 19:15].

Feeding of the flock is the primary task of the Elders and Overseers who Shepherd the people of God. Since the Lord Jesus is the One Shepherd of the church [Jn.10:16], the true Overseer of our souls [I Pet.2:25], and the Ruling Shepherd [I Pet.5:4], no man ought to dare to influence the church to follow himself rather than Christ. Humility and speaking with the voice of Christ will prevent that.

Every man who does the work of a Shepherd is, himself, also a sheep in the flock. He must therefore also follow the Good Shepherd, but he cannot rule. Only Jesus alone has the right to rule His sheep.

ARCHIPOIMEN [αρχιποιμην]

CHIEF/RULING SHEPHERD. [I Pet. 5:4]. This description is used of the Lord Jesus only. No one else is the Ruling Shepherd.

Leadership: Plural or Singular?

Throughout the NT, leadership in the local assemblies was plural, and not singular. In other words, there was not one man who was the leader of a church or group of churches. There is to be more than one Elder/Overseer/Pastor in a local church gathering.

There is no one “priest,” bishop, reverend, pastor, primate, general overseer, or “man of God” who determines policy or who directs the actions of the believers and affairs of the church.

The modern “pastor” as we have conceived him to be from the time of the Reformation, is not found in the pages of the NT. [Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3,13; 14:23; 15:2,4,6, 7,12,13,22,32,35; 20:17,28; Phil. 1:1; I Thess. 5:12,13; I Tim. 1:3,6,7; 3:1,8; 4:14; 5:17-20; 2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:5; Philemon 1-3; Heb. 13:7,17; Jas. 5:14; I Pet. 5:1-5].

Leadership: Male or Female?

There is no reference in the NT of a woman being a pastor, elder, overseer, or teacher in the church. The command to Christian women is clear; a woman is not allowed to teach or exercise authority over a man [I Tim.2:11,12]. And this is not a command limited to a particular situation or culture, but is the directive of God for all believers in every place at all times [I Cor.1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 14:37].

By creation, she is a follower, not the leader: a helper, not the initiator: the responder, not the director [Gen.2:18; I Cor.11:9; I Tim.2:13]. She is indeed a fellow heir of the grace of life [I Pet.3:7], but not a fellow minister in the church as men are.

Though one in Christ where there is neither male nor female with respect to salvation and its blessings [Gal.3:28], she is not given the same sphere of ministry by God as are men.

Her God-given realm is in the home: loving her husband and children [Tit.2:3-5], raising her children [I Tim.2:15; 5:14], and working at home [I Tim.5:14; Tit.2:5] so that the Word of God will not be dishonored [Tit.2:5]. Her sphere of teaching is in practical instruction in godliness to other sisters and children [Tit.2:3-5].

Doing good by helpful works of service [Lk.8:2,3], giving to the poor [Acts 9:36,39], and kindly hospitality [Acts 16:15,40; I Tim.5:10] are some of her great and needful contributions to the work of the gospel. They fellow workers, not competitors.

Believers: Inferiors or Equals?

Christians are addressed as spiritual equals in the NT. There are no classes or ranks among the brethren. None are inferior to some who supposedly are ruling over others. [Acts 17:11; Rom.15:14; I Cor.5:12,13; 10:15; 12:7,18-27; 14:26, 29-35; 2 Cor.1:24; I Pet.5:1; Rev.1:9].

Churches: Assemblies or Rulers?

The Epistles in the NT that are addressed to assemblies, are not addressed to the “rulers” in those churches. They are addressed to the entire fellowship of the brethren, not to an imagined hierarchy within it. [Rom.1:7; I Cor.1:2; 2 Cor.1:1; Gal.1:2; Eph.1:1; Phil.1:1; Col.1:2; I Thess.1:1; 2 Thess.1:1; I Pet.1:1].

Christ the Pattern

Paul wrote so that believers would know how they ought to conduct themselves “in the house of God, which is the church of the living God” -I Tim.3:15.

Throughout the Scriptures, there has always been a pattern for the house of God. The Tabernacle had to be built according to the pattern shown on the mount [Heb.8:5]. Solomon’s Temple had a divinely revealed plan [I Chron.28:12,19].

The re-built Temple in the days of Ezra was built according to the absolute standard of the plumb line that measured all from above [Zech.4:9,10]. And Ezekiel's Temple of the future has a carefully revealed and measured pattern [Ezek.40:4; 43:10-12].

There exists a Pattern for the church as well which has Christ Himself as the standard [I Cor.3:9-17; 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:3, 37, 38; 2 Thess.2:15; I Tim.3:15; 2 Tim.1:13,14].

In the NT church, everything revolves around and is measured by Jesus Christ the Lord. He truly has "first place in everything" -Col.1:18.

All life [Col.3:4], direction [I Cor.2:16], enabling [I Cor.1:24], and gift [Eph.4:7,8] come directly from the Lord Jesus Christ, the HEAD of the Body, His church.

As HIGH PRIEST, He is the one Mediator between God and man [I Tim.2:5] that all believers as Priests have equal access to.

Christ alone is qualified to command and rule His Servants as their KING and LORD. "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" -I Cor.7:23.

No traditions of men, rules, codes, ceremonies, or formulas can save or improve our condition. Christ is the TRUE VINE and source of all fruitfulness for every believer abiding in Him [Jn.15:5].

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is built upon nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else than Himself as its FOUNDATION [I Cor.3:11]. With Himself as the CORNERSTONE, the perfect reference point for the church, the whole Building "is growing into a holy Temple in the Lord" -Eph.2:20,21. The church is not a literal building made of cement and wood, and does not depend upon any man, ministry, or denomination for its existence, guidance, or progress.

Sheep in His flock listen to and follow the voice of their one SHEPHERD, Christ Jesus. All other voices and messages are those of thieves and robbers and will be fled from by Christ's sheep [Jn.10:4,5].

Purity from the defilement of the world is evident in His Bride whose devotion and affection is reserved for Christ alone, the BRIDEGROOM of His church [2 Cor.11:2].

In the NT Church

No man governs and rules. It is the right of the Lord Jesus to have such place among His people.

Christ Jesus dwells in the midst as the focus of every obedient, worshipful, and loving heart [Rev.2:1].

Our Lord leads, commands, directs, and draws out a response of love from those belonging to Him [Rev.19:7, 8].

He is truly honored as Lord as there are no competing "lords" among His people [2 Cor.1:24; I Pet.5:1-3].

Leaders are among the flock, not over them.

Overseers watch over as servants, but do not lord over as rulers.

All is done "decently and in order" -I Cor.14:40 because He is not a God "of confusion but of peace" -I Cor.14:33. Yet no pre-arranged program is needed to direct the worship of the church.

The Spirit of God, whose work it is to glorify Christ [Jn.16:13,14], will lead the people of God [Rom.8:14] "to worship the Father in Spirit and truth" -Jn.4:23.

Unity exists, not by outward conformity and association, but because the Spirit of God joins all to glorify Jesus as Lord [Eph.4:3,4] in a common life of godliness [Jn.17:21-23].

Each one contributes for the edification of all [I Cor.14:26] and all judge what is spoken by any [I Cor.14:29].

Everyone submits to each other in the fear of Christ, whether believer or leader, young or old alike [Eph.5:21].

The Breaking of Bread [Lord's Supper/Communion meeting] is the commanded meeting of the church. "Do this in remembrance of Me" -Lk.22:19. Other gatherings are secondary or even optional.

Disobedient brethren are lovingly restored back into the way or regretfully removed from the fellowship by the church, and not by its leaders alone [Gal.6:1,2; Mt.18:15-18; I Cor.5:1-13].

Leaders Who Became Lords

Jesus Christ the Lord, who has the central place among the lampstands [Rev.2:1], hates “the deeds of the Nicolaitans” -Rev.2:6. He hates this because they attempt to take over His rightful place as Lord which effectually makes the brethren servants of men.

Nicolaitan is a compound word in Greek. It comes from joining the words *NIKAO* [νικαω] TO OVERCOME and *LAOS* [λαος] THE PEOPLE.

Jesus hates the deeds of those who “Overcome the People.” Great men ruling the common people [Laity in English comes from this word] and exercising authority over them is what the rulers of the Gentiles do.

It is what the rulers of the churches do. And it is hated by Christ.

There is a man in the NT who ruled in the church. He was a wicked man. He did not accept the Word of God. He oppressed the brethren who wished to follow the Scriptures.

Those who loved the brethren were forbidden by him to do so. And those who would not obey his rule were thrown out of the church [3 Jn.9,10].

The root cause of his evil exercise of authority was that he “loved to be first among them” -3 Jn.9. He is chief of all church rulers who follow in his steps, who love positions of power and authority.

The Scriptures state that Christ is to “have first place in everything” -Col.1:18. But Diotrophes loved to have that first place.

Yet two cannot possibly both have the honor of being first. One must of necessity occupy second rank.

There cannot be two heads in one body. Two kings have never sat together on one throne. If Diotrophes and the church rulers walking his crooked path would have first place, Christ must be pushed aside to make room for them.

This is the heart of the matter.

Appendix 2 Resurrection

Historical Facts and Evidence For

The spiritual meaning of the resurrection of Christ has been considered in Chapter 2 *The Life was Manifested* as it relates to Him being our Pattern. This Appendix will focus upon the historical facts of the resurrection that demonstrate the great foundation of our faith and acceptance with God. “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” -I Cor.15:17.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus demonstrates that His claims about Himself and the salvation He accomplished are true. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” -Rom.1:4. If He were a deceiver or His sacrifice rejected by the Father, He would not have been raised up in glory.

As it is, His revelation about Himself has been vindicated. He is Lord [Mt.22:42-45] and equal with the Father [Jn.10:30]. He is both the source of life [Jn.5:21] and the final Judge of all

men [Jn.5:22, 27-29]. Christ Jesus is the absolute Truth [Jn.14:6] and possesses all authority in heaven and earth [Mt.28:18].

The facts of His death, burial, and resurrection are these. Jesus was crucified, and actually died, for the sins of the whole world [Jn.19:18,30-37]. His death was not imaginary as some have claimed.

He had been beaten with fists [Mt.26:67] and whipped on His back until raw [Mt.27:26]. After being beaten on the head [Mt.27:30], He had His hands and feet nailed to a cross [Jn.19:18; 20:25]. Finally, His side was pierced with a spear [Jn.19:34].

Because He was obviously dead [Jn.19:31-35], His body was taken down from the cross. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea wrapped Jesus' body in linen along with about one hundred pounds [50 kg] of spices according to Jewish burial custom [Jn.19:38-40].

They laid Him in a tomb cut out of the rock [Lk.23:53] and a large stone was rolled against the entrance [Mt.27:60]. Pilate placed a guard of Roman soldiers at the tomb to prevent theft of the body [Mt.27:62-66].

Early on the morning of the third day, His followers found the tomb empty [Lk.24:1-3]. An angel informed them that Jesus was risen from the dead, just as He said [Mt.28:5,6].

After His bodily resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to many witnesses, proving that He was alive. He was seen by Mary Magdalene [Jn.19:16-18], the two Marys [Mt.28:1,9], and two men on the road to Emmaus [Lk.24:13-35].

He appeared to Peter [Lk.24:34], ten disciples [Jn.20:19,20] and others [Lk.24:33-36]. Jesus showed Himself alive to Thomas, a doubter [Jn.20:26-29], seven of His followers at the Sea of Galilee [Jn.21:1-3], and to over five hundred brethren at once who were still alive as witnesses some twenty-two years afterwards [I Cor.15:6].

Men have invented many foolish explanations to deny that Jesus actually rose from the dead according to the Scriptures. Some of these explanations were purposeful lies.

[1] The Jewish leaders bribed the Roman soldiers to spread the lie that the Apostles stole the body [Mt.28:12-15].

The foolishness of this falsehood is obvious to all. How could disciples proclaim the resurrection of Christ that they knew was a lie, since they themselves teach that liars will not inherit the kingdom of God? Secondly, why would they choose to die horrible deaths for a lie that they themselves invented [I Cor.15:12-19, 30-32]? No, this is a fabricated lie of folly.

[2] More foolish yet is the idea that the disciples came to the wrong tomb and, in their joy at finding it empty, began to preach a false message of Jesus' resurrection. If that were so, why then did the Jewish and Roman authorities not simply show His dead body at the correct tomb and put an end to the "deception" of Christianity? They could not because He was not there.

[3] Some unbelievers [even in the "church"] say that Jesus never was an actual man who lived upon earth. They claim that His whole life story is a religious myth that never really happened.

This is nonsense. If that were true, how could Peter on the day of Pentecost accuse the Jews of crucifying Jesus, their Messiah, a Man who never even existed [Acts 2:22-24]? Even more amazing, is that 3,000 of these enemies of Christ repented and asked forgiveness from a Christ whom they knew never lived and did not exist! [Acts 2:36-41].

[4] There is one further wicked denial of the truth of our Lord's resurrection. It is stated that, though something may have happened, no one really knows for sure what that was.

The people to whom the Apostles spoke knew. They were some of the very ones who had eaten of the multiplied loaves, who had been healed [Mk.3:7-10], and who had heard Him teach daily in the synagogues and the Temple [Jn.18:20,21].

They certainly knew what had happened. And if the Apostles had misrepresented the facts, they would have immediately been contradicted by thousands. No one would have listened to them again.

However, these multitudes knew by firsthand experience the truth of the message and were not fooled. Neither were they fools.

They believed the obvious. There is no other explanation for Jesus' empty tomb except that He is risen and He is Lord!

The fool has said in his heart,
“There is no God”
Ps.14:1

Appendix 3 Islam and Christianity

[References to the *Quran* are indicated with an “S” followed by the numbers. “S” is an abbreviation for *Surat*, similar to our chapter. Quotes from the *Quran* are shown in *italics*]

History of Islam

Islam was raised up and used by the God of heaven as a scourge to the idolatrous Christendom of the sixth century. The Church was devoted to superstitions, images, and the worship of Mary. This waywardness was confronted by the fierce monotheistic [belief in one God only] religion of Mohammad.

Born in 570 AD in Mecca, he began receiving his “revelations” of Allah at age forty from the angel Gabriel [as he claimed]. When he was rejected as the specially appointed prophet of Allah by his own Koreish tribe, he fled to Medina in 622 AD. This *Hijra* or *Hegira* [flight] dates the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

There he was received and rapidly gained both a religious and political following. In 630 AD he led his 10,000 troops against his native Mecca in his first successful *Jihad* [holy war]. The *Ka’ba* [the sacred shrine that housed the Black Stone and 360 idols] was “cleansed” and the worship of Allah was established by slaughter and conversion at the point of the sword.

Mecca and its *Ka’ba* thereafter has been the sacred and undisputed center of Islam and of their pilgrimage. War was declared against all forms of “unbelief:” pagan, Jewish and Christian, and has since spread throughout the world. Today there are about one billion Muslims worldwide.

Who Is Allah?

Islam and Christianity are not serving the same God. Allah and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ are not the same. They are two different deities with two different religions.

“Father” is not one of Allah’s ninety-nine names and he *begets no son* [S.17:111]. He cannot possibly be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians are to pray, “Our Father who is in heaven” -Mt.6:9. No Muslim would ever pray to Allah in this way.

Allah of the *Quran* does not love sinners; the God and Father of the Bible does. *Allah does not love transgressors* [S.2:190]. *He loveth not any ungrateful sinner* [S.2:276].

Allah loveth not those that do wrong [S.3:140]. *Allah loveth not those who trespass beyond bounds* [S.7:55].

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” -Rom.5:8.

Who then does Allah love, if he does not love sinners and he is supposedly, *oft-forgiving, most merciful* [S.4:25]? The *Quran* gives the answer: *Truly Allah loves those who fight in his cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure* [S.61:4].

Allah loves those who kill in his cause, who terrorize *kafara* [unbelievers] into submission to Islam. Allah preaches a message of submission or slaughter. *Kafara* are to be converted or eliminated.

Therefore, when ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; But (He lets you fight) in order to test you...But those who are slain in the way of Allah, he will never let their deeds be lost.

Soon will he guide them and improve their condition, and admit them to the Garden [Paradise, the Islamic "heaven"] which he has made known to them [S.47:4-6].

Those engaging in jihad, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah. They are the people who will achieve salvation [S.9:20].

Fight in the cause of Allah...and slay them wherever ye catch them...and fight them on until there is no more persecution and the religion becomes Allah's [S.2:190-193]. I [Allah] will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers: smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them [S.8:12].

Fight and slay the Pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, and beleaguer them [surround with an army] and lie in wait for them in every stratagem [scheme] of war [S.9:5].

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you -Mt.6:44.

"But they did not receive Him...When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?'

"But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them'" -Lk.9:53-56.

Christianity says: "Believe and live!" Islam says: "Believe or die!" Two religions and their gods could not be more contrary to each other, much less imagined that they are one and the same. Islam's view of Christ Jesus makes this even more evident.

Who Is Jesus?

According to the Quran

[1] To call Him Son of God is a monstrous blasphemy [S.19:88,89] and an unforgivable sin [S.4:48, 116].

[2] Christ is a direct creation of God [S.19:35], like Adam, from the dust [S.3:59].

[3] He is no more than a messenger [S.5:75] and a servant [S.43:59].

[4] Saying there is a Trinity is blasphemy and unforgivable [S.5:73].

[5] Christ is not Allah [S.5:17].

[6] Jesus was not crucified [S.4:157] and could not bear anyone's burden of sin [S.53:38].

[7] He did not know what was in Allah's heart [S.5:116].

According to the Word of God

[1] The Son of God.

He is called the Son of God by: [a] God Himself [Mt.3:17] [b] Jesus Himself [Jn.5:19-23] [c] John the Baptist [Jn.1:34] [d] Jesus' disciples [Mt.16:16] [e] The angel Gabriel [Lk.1:26,32,35]. Even in the *Quran* the *Malika Jubril* [angel Gabriel] calls Jesus the Son of God. Speaking to *Maryam* [Mary] *He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord to announce to thee the gift of a pure son"* [S.19:19].

Islam is correct in this however; it is blasphemy to imagine that God could ever beget a son as a man begets a son. This could never be.

God is incapable of such a physical act and we must never think of God in this way. No Christian would ever think such an unworthy thing of the true and living God.

When we speak about a son we say that he is the very image of his father. He has the authority and right to represent his father and speak on his behalf. His word is the same as hearing that of his father. To see the son is to see the father.

When you go to the village, you first must go and greet the chief. Many times you will be escorted by a younger man to the dwelling of the chief. As you speak, it is often the young man who replies. You soon realize that this is the son of the chief.

To see him is to see the chief. To hear his answer is to hear the reply of the chief. He has full authority to speak in his behalf. He is the heir of the kingdom.

He is to be honored as one would honor the chief. This son stands in a unique relationship to this father which no one else shares.

This is what Christians mean when we say that Jesus is the Son of God. He is unique. No one else is like Him in relationship to God or men. He is greater than any prophet or angel [Heb.1:1-6].

[2] The Creator

“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him” -Jn.1:3,10.

“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him” -Col.1:16.

[3] Higher than any and all Messengers

The word angel *ANGELOS* [αγγελος] has as its root meaning MESSENGER and then also ANGEL. All the Messengers/Angels of God worship Jesus, the Son [Heb.1:6]. The Messengers/Angels are ministering spirits [Heb.1:14]: Jesus, the Son, is God [Heb.1:8].

[4] Trinity

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-eternal as three distinct personalities in one essence [Jn.1:1; Heb.9:14].

One reason for Islam’s hatred of the Trinity is that it was thought that Allah, Jesus, and Mary were the three gods of the Christians. This is expressed in the *Quran* in this way: *And behold! Allah will say: “O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, ‘Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah?’”... [S.5:116].*

Sabellius [c.260 AD] put forth yet another error regarding the Trinity which is widespread in many branches of Pentecostalism up to today. He conceived of an unscriptural view of a successive trinity of revelation, rather than the biblical truth of a simultaneous Trinity of essence.

His view is referred to as Modalism [a Trinity of form rather than of essence]. He taught that the one unity of God manifested itself first as Father in the giving of the OT law.

Secondly, the revelation of Father was withdrawn to make way for the coming of the revelation of God as the Son at the time of Jesus. Lastly, when Jesus ascended to heaven, God next was revealed as the Holy Spirit in inspiration, regeneration, and sanctification.

In other words, there is no such thing as three distinct, co-eternal personalities in the being of God, only three different ways to show Himself to man. While in the mode as Father, the Son and Holy Spirit did not exist.

When revealed as the Son, there was no such thing as Father or Spirit. Finally, both Father and Son are no more and all that remains is the Holy Spirit.

Such an imaginary view does violence to the plain teaching of the Scriptures. Worse yet, it places confidence in a god who does not exist.

After His baptism, Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and the Father in heaven said: “This is My beloved Son” -Mt.3:16,17. This is not Modalism.

Jesus, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish to God [Heb.9:14]. This is not Modalism; this is one eternal God with three distinct personalities within the one essence, all existing at once.

Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven [Mt. 26:39]. He told Mary after His resurrection: “I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God” -Jn.20:17.

This is not deceptive language; Modalism is. Jesus was not praying to no one; He was not praying to Himself. There was truly the Father in heaven while He was here on the earth.

“God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’” -Gen.1:26. “Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me” -Isa.48:16.

How can we explain such mysteries? God’s ways are unsearchable and past finding out [Rom.11:33], yet we can know truth that He has revealed to us. Some things are beyond our full grasp simply because God is infinite and we are small weak creatures.

Even the nature of man himself is a mystery we cannot fully explain: how much more that of the eternal and infinite being of God? Consider this.

You, your word, and your spirit are one. You are not three, but one, though there are three distinct elements in your being.

Your word communicates yourself, your very spirit. It reveals all that you are. Your spirit cannot be expressed apart from your word. Your word cannot be expressed apart from your bodily members of tongue and lips.

The same life breathes in your word, spirit, and body. You are one in essence, though distinct as three.

Are your words really different than you? Is the Spirit dwelling in your body something besides your own self? Is your body separate from who you are? No, you are one and not three.

This, in a very limited way, is what is meant by Trinity. God, His Word, and His Spirit are what Christians call the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit: one God with three eternal distinctions in the one essence.

[5] Christ is God

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father” -Jn.1:1,14.

“All should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” -Jn.5:23.

“I and My Father are one” -Jn.10:30.

“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also...He who has seen Me has seen the Father...I am in the Father and the Father in Me” -Jn.14:7,9,11.

“For in Him [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” -Col.2:9.

[6] Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures

I Cor.15:3

“Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? All things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled...Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be preached in His name among all nations...you are eyewitnesses of these things” -Lk.24:26, 44, 46-48. See **Appendix 3 Resurrection** for evidence of Christ’s death and resurrection.

Islam believes it is impossible for anyone to bear the sins of another based upon passages in the *Quran* such as: *No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another* [S.53:38]. This is quite true and agrees with Scripture: “No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him” -Ps.49:7.

However, Jesus is not a mere man or like any other prophet. He is God manifest in the flesh. Secondly, Jesus alone of all men was sinless and thus had no burden of His own to bear [Mt.3:17; Jn.8:29,46]. He therefore is qualified on these two accounts to bear the sins of man in His own body on the cross [I Pet.2:24].

From the beginning, the shedding of blood to cover the guilt of sin has been required of God for acceptance. Adam sinned and tried to cover the shame of his guilt with his own remedy. God rejected this, slew an animal, and clothed Adam’s guilt with God’s own solution to the shame resulting from his sin [Gen.3:7,21].

Cain, who brought a sacrifice of suitable food over which God's name was invoked [this is the Islamic concept of what sacrifice is], was rejected. Only Abel who worshiped God on the basis of the shed blood of the lamb was accepted by the Lord [Gen.4:3-7; Heb.11:4].

Abraham offered up the ram in the place of his condemned son. The lamb was a substitute in the place of his son. The shed blood of the lamb rescued the son from death and judgment.

Never again would he face judgment because God had provided a sacrifice in his place [Gen.22:4-14]. Even the *Quran* refers to this event and states: *We [Allah] ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice* [S.37:107].

Moses was directed by the Lord to have every Israelite slay a lamb and apply the blood to where they lived. It was only then that they would be saved from the judgment coming upon the whole land. The blood of the lamb was their protection from the wrath of God coming upon the unbelievers [Ex.12:3,6,7,13].

All these were preparing the way for the coming of the Lord's final sacrifice, the one that forgives sins once and for all. Isaiah spoke in great detail about this coming sacrifice many hundreds of years before He came [Isa.52:13-15; 53:1-12].

It was the purpose of God to make His Servant a sacrifice for sin. This Servant was pierced for our iniquities. He was like a lamb sacrificed to bear the sins of others.

Who was this Servant? How could a Servant of God become a sacrifice to forgive sins?

John, the prophet of God tells us. "He saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" -Jn.1:29.

No one took Jesus' life from Him. He rather gave Himself freely to die in the place of sinful men [Jn.10:17,18]. It was the will of God that Jesus should offer Himself as a sinless substitute for the sins of man in order that they might be forgiven.

[7] Jesus alone fully knows the Father

"I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me" -Jn.7:29.

"No one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" -Mt.11:27.

Appendix 4 Slavery

History of African Slavery

In less than four hundred years, between thirty and forty million souls were lost to Africa during the transatlantic enslavement to Europe and the Americas. The leading merchants in this wicked trade were the Portuguese and British, followed by the French, Spanish, Dutch, and North Americans.

This wretched traffic in human souls became one of the largest ocean-going and commercial ventures in the entire history of the world. Men made in the image of God were captured and sold for pieces of cloth, scraps of iron, alcohol, cowries, and beads.

Slavery was initially an African phenomenon. Long before Europe and the Americas were involved, fellow African Muslim Mullahs were seizing black Africans and selling them body and soul.

As far back as 1390, the king of Bornu [now Nigeria] bitterly complained to the Sultan of Egypt that Arabs were always seizing his people like merchandise. Yet historically, the Oyo kingdom had always supplied slaves to their Northern Muslim neighbors and later to the European traders.

It was in the early 1400's that the Portuguese began to stain their hands with the blood of the innocent by purchasing these captives from the shores of North Africa. Being a Roman Catholic country, they sought to justify their crimes by claiming that it was actually to the advantage of the blacks to be taken in slavery. "For," they said, "it is better to be a 'Christian' though a slave, than an African in his native land."

By the middle of the 1500's Spain had entered into the devilish enterprise while some masters in Portugal had begun to encourage female slaves to breed, like animals, for sale. Britain followed in 1562 when Captain Hawkins captured three hundred blacks at the river Sierra Leone, sold them for spices, goods, and money and returned to England with "a good profit."

Only a few voices of protest were being raised in the 16th century. They were answered by the prevailing opinion among both Roman Catholics and Muslims that the blacks were under the curse of Ham.

A Dominican Friar, Fray Francisco de la Cruz, told the Inquisition in Lima, Peru, in about 1575 that: "the blacks are justly captives by reason of the sins of their forefathers, and that because of that sin, God gave them that color." This was, and is, nothing but a wicked perversion of Scripture to vainly try and justify an inexcusable guilt.

Nevertheless, Roman Catholic objections continued to be raised into the early 1600's. These may have even led to abolishing the trade had the Northern European Protestants not entered in heavily to the miserable enterprise at this time.

Ironically, and to the shame of the "Christians," the Muslims in North Africa freed black slaves who professed faith in Islam and were, in that respect, more "Christian" than the church! But the blame for this despicable business did not rest on the shoulders of Europe alone.

Blacks deceiving or kidnaping blacks to be sold on the slaving market, even selling their own children, was widespread. Tribal wars increased in order to profit by the illicit trade.

By the 1700's every major river that reached the Atlantic became a slaving port. From Saint-Louis in Senegal to Luanda in Angola, millions of blacks were herded onto ships of bondage for the terrible two to three months' crossing of the sea.

In West Africa, Wolof, Serber, and Mandinga people were shipped down the waters of the Senegal and Gambia and imprisoned on the Isle of Goree. From there they departed either to their death or to the sugar cane plantations of South America and Caribbean islands.

At the mouth of the Cuanza River in Angola during the 1600's, the Lundas, led by their king who daily anointed himself with a pomade of boiled human fat, supplied the Portuguese with bodies from raids upon other tribal villages. Even the king's own children from his nearly thirty wives were gladly sold into horrible servitude to Brazilian plantation owners.

Nigeria figured heavily in the slave traffic. Even up to today, there remain more than two million Yoruba speaking people on the coast of Brazil, still serving Sango and Ogun, whose ancestors arrived as slaves.

Lagos, Warri, and Calabar were early centers of this unholy trade. On an island near Igala, just below the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, a major slave market was established where blacks sold no less than eleven thousands of their fellows on a yearly basis.

Human cargoes floated along the banks of the Volta River dividing the Ashanti and Dahomey kingdoms. The peoples of Guinea and the Temne and Mende contributed their quota carried afloat on the river Sierra Leone.

34% were taken in tribal wars, 30% kidnaped by Africans, 11% were sold for crimes [mainly adultery], 7% sent due to debt, 7% traded by relatives and friends, and the remaining were enslaved for a variety of other heartless causes.

When captured, the unfortunate victims were chained and collared or tied together in groups of four with choking ropes about the neck. Those who resisted were beaten mercilessly. Often the captives marched in human caravans of 1,000 at a time for several months before they reached the slaving ports along the Atlantic.

Deception and cheating were practiced by seller and buyer alike. Brass shavings were mixed in with gold dust by the Africans when selling metal to Europeans. The whites mixed water with their brandy or rum when paying for slaves.

All slaves were branded with hot irons as a mark of ownership. During the early 1600's each slave was baptized as a "Christian" before leaving Africa. This was done by giving them Christian names and sprinkling salt on their tongues followed by "holy" water.

Finally the priest would proclaim: "Consider that you are now children of Christ. You are going to set off for Portuguese territory, where you will learn matters of the Faith. Never think any more of your place of origin. Do not eat dogs, nor rats, nor horses. Be content."

The horrors of this entire business were compounded by the widespread belief among the Africans that the white people were followers of the "Lord of the dead" and had seized slaves to eat them. The red wine that the slave traders regularly merrily became drunk on was thought to be the blood of the blacks.

On the ships of bondage for the crossing of the sea, the prisoners were packed, naked and crowded, like fish in a tin. Forced to sleep atop one another due to lack of space, they relieved themselves where they were in unbearable heat and stench amid the groans and shrieks of the sick and dying.

Whips were used for the slow in obeying and others had arms cut off as a warning to any thinking to try and return to the land of their birth.

Rape of the chained women was the regular practice of captain and crew. Rebels were tortured and then thrown overboard for sharks to eat or hung on the masts for some days as a lesson to the rest.

Water rations were minimal and many died from dehydration. Dysentery accounted for one third of the pitiful passengers' deaths. Blindness afflicted many like a plague. In the 1600's the death rate in transport was anywhere from twenty to fifty percent; the 1700's fared slightly better, "only" up to thirty-two percent.

Storms claimed many lives. In 1738, a Dutch crew abandoned the ship and escaped while leaving its cargo of 702 slaves to drown in the raging sea. A Danish ship in 1702 was lost at sea with 820 slaves on board.

Rio de Janeiro was the main Brazilian port receiving Portuguese slaves, mainly from Angola. Buenos Aires in Argentina was Spain's chief port and Charleston was first in North America. There they were displayed and sold like any other merchandise.

By 1780, the cost of a slave had risen to ten times what it had been one hundred years earlier. Nevertheless, tremendous profits were made in the early 17th and 18th centuries though the financial rewards sharply dropped off in the later 1700's.

About two-thirds of the African slaves were sent to produce sugar in the plantations of the Americas to satisfy European's taste for sweets. So much so, that in the 1700's, Liverpool in England became the world's largest trader in slaves.

There is no record of any sermon against slavery in the pulpits of the world during the entire 1600's. A sole voice, that of the English Puritan, Richard Baxter, said on one occasion in the late 1600's, "It is better to call those who owned slaves demons rather than Christians."

Opposition to the atrocities of slavery was slow in coming. A novel appeared in 1688 written by a woman, Aphra Behn, which vividly brought before French and British audiences for over one hundred years the plight of African slaves. The Quakers, in the mid 1700's, both in America and in England, began to openly oppose slavery.

They published statements like: "No Quaker could keep a slave without risking damnation," while condemning all who invested in the trade or supplied cargoes for it. Others also began to question the trade.

Montesquieu, a Frenchman in the later 1700's, mockingly said: "One cannot put oneself into the frame of mind in which God, who is a very wise being, took it upon Himself to put a soul, and a very good soul at that, into such an entirely black body. [So] it is impossible for us to suppose these creatures are men because, if one were to allow them to be so, a suspicion would follow that we are not ourselves Christian."

George Wallace of Scotland in 1761 protested: "An institution so unnatural and so inhuman as that of slavery ought to be abolished." Sir William Blackstone took up the pen in

England, declaring in 1769 that the law of England: “abhors and will not endure the state of slavery within this nation.”

Even apart from such humanitarian [concern for the good of people] appeals, there also began to be a growing worry that the slaves, much more numerous than their owners, might rise up in rebellion. This added caution and concern over increasing the slave population.

A Quaker in America, Benezet by name, began in the late 1760's to persuade others outside of his denomination about the moral outrage of slavery. He wrote Edmund Burke, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and John Wesley, among others, which established an intercontinental link for the growing opposition.

During the middle 1700's in England, Granville Sharp prosecuted the institution on legal grounds. John Wesley wrote moving pamphlets against it on moral and humanitarian grounds, predicting that the time for England to repent was fast approaching, “whose worst crime was its indulgence in the slave trade.”

Adam Smith pointed out the economic disadvantages and risky investment both in terms of human lives and financial returns. Meanwhile, the rebellious Americans were challenging the rights of the British parliament to make laws binding upon the colonists.

In an open letter to King George III printed in the *Boston Gazette* in 1771, it was claimed that being subject to laws made by other people is the essence of slavery with its “endless and numberless curses,” a condition “worse than death.”

At the time, this was little more than a curious emotional hypocrisy, as the American colonists still practiced and profited by the black slave trade. It at least showed the effect that the golden rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” produced in their minds, however inconsistent their application of that was.

A timely “Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade” was established in 1787. This London society joined together many diverse international opponents of the slave trade together. Action began to be taken in British parliament led by William Wilberforce with the support of his friend William Pitt, the Prime Minister.

John Newton, former slave captain who wrote the hymn *Amazing Grace* after his conversion, greatly assisted in the process. Moral and spiritual conviction was what prompted this move to end this centuries' old wretched traffic.

At the same time, there was proposed that a new colony be established in Africa for freed slaves. Thus began the “Sierra Leone Plan.” The first attempts were utter failures.

Malaria, drunkenness, laziness, war with local tribes, and rains killed off half of the original settlers. Many departed from the settlement and went to work for nearby slave dealers.

Slave traders hated the new colony and influenced “King Jemmy” to drive the settlers away and burn down the town. It would be several years yet in the future before Freetown would be established as the hoped for “cradle of African civilization.”

Opposition to abolition in England was very strong. Sixty percent of Bristol's ocean going business depended upon it.

Merchants throughout England had been manufacturing their goods to be exchanged for slaves. Simply put, the love of money was the root of all this evil and the cause of delaying its end. Finally though, through the tireless efforts of William Wilberforce, England passed the law abolishing the slave trade, effective May 1, 1807.

The announcement led to riots of protest on the Gold Coast among Africans whose main source of income had become capturing and selling their fellow Africans. The king of Bonny on the Niger delta informed captain Crow of England: “Our oracle and priests say this trade must go on...your country can never stop a trade ordained by God Himself.”

In 1820, the king of Ashanti asked the British official, Dupuis: “Why do the Christians not want to buy slaves anymore? Is your God not the same as that of the Muslims, who continue to buy, kidnap, and sell slaves just as they have always done?” Indeed, there continued to be more slaves in Africa than in America.

The Hausa slave trade continued inland unabated. It is estimated that fully twenty five percent of the population under the Sokoto Caliphate may have been slaves by the end of the 1800's.

Among the Ashantis, the laboring people were still mostly slaves in 1840. More than 1,000 were sacrificed at the death of the king of Ashanti in 1824.

Slavery continued to prevail throughout West Africa. From Lagos, blacks uninterruptedly sold blacks by the tens of thousands across the Sahara to the north. In Bornu near Lake Chad, merchants would hardly accept payment for goods in anything other than slaves in the 1820's.

Half of Brazil's population of four million in 1817 was slaves. In Virginia of the USA, by 1800 there existed farms for breeding slaves.

The invention of the cotton gin [a machine that separated seeds from the cotton] greatly increased the demand for slaves, especially women, so that their numbers tripled between the years of 1790 and 1825.

Other nations were slow to follow the British lead to end the despicable business. The British navy began patrolling the West African coast to insure obeying the new abolition law while arresting and fining "pirates" who had no legal right to carry slaves.

Soon ships of other European and South American countries were intercepted and their human cargoes were taken to Freetown and set free in the colony that had been reestablished there.

Up unto 1840, 425 slave ships were forced by the Royal Navy to deliver up their captives at Freetown where they were maintained by the British for one year and then left to fend for themselves. Rapidly the liberated slaves from 117 tribes of western and central Africa outnumbered the indigenous population.

There they attempted to reorient their lives with no country of their own, no common language, and from diverse cultures. Many were confused and often harmed by the horrible experiences endured during their capture and transport aboard ship.

Missionaries to Freetown first came in 1804, sent by the Church Missionary Society of the Anglicans. Their early focus was upon schools, clinics, housing, and roads.

By the mid 1800's, Sierra Leone was literate, progressive, and Christian, with a literacy rate as good as many European countries. Fourah Bay College was established in 1827 to train teachers and preachers, and by 1840, they were sending African missionaries to other parts of Africa.

One of these freed slaves, a Yoruba named Adjai, took the name Samuel Crowther and led the first missionary team into Abeokuta, Nigeria about the year 1844. He later became the first African bishop in 1864.

It was these African brethren that first influenced and convinced the Anglicans to produce self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating churches on the African continent.

Other nations eventually joined with the British in abolishing this evil enterprise. The Vienna Treaty was signed by the European nations in 1815. In it they pledged to end the slave trade as soon as possible.

UK officially abolished slavery as an institution throughout the British Empire in 1833 and paid slave owners twelve million pounds in compensation for freeing their "property." America outlawed slavery by its thirteenth amendment to the constitution in 1865. Brazil was the last nation to agree, doing so in 1888.

Scramble for Africa

Following the enslavement of Africans came the colonization of the entire continent during the Scramble for Africa. For this to succeed, demanded a revolution in African society. Greed for the wealth of natural resources and profit from trade drove the frenzy to annex a continent as the colonial property of European kingdoms.

Exploration led to enterprise and that to exploitation and eventual economic and military enslavement. Unfortunately, and sometimes unavoidably, evangelism was too often attached to that sequence: guns going ahead of the gospel or cannons chasing after the inroads of the cross.

In some twenty years, every nation in Africa except Ethiopia was brought under a new type of slavery: one on its own soil. Almost the entire ten million square miles of the continent was claimed and captured, while 110 million bewildered blacks watched as their lands were snatched right from under their feet.

Livingstone's discovery of quinine to treat malaria, the exploration of the Nile, Niger, and Congo rivers along with the steam engine's revolution of industry and travel both by land and sea, greatly advanced Mammon's maddened rush for Africa.

The evils of the phenomenon of slavery were staggering, both on the part of Africans themselves as well as the whites. Blacks willingly pillaged, murdered, and enslaved fellow blacks for the sake of sordid gain and then institutionalized the practice over long centuries.

Even after it had been abolished by the British, at least on paper and to some extent on the West Coast, slavery was still thriving like a cancer. In Central and Eastern Africa under the whips, machetes, and guns of Arab and Swahili slave raiders along with tribal chiefs' willing cooperation, the "open sore of the world" flourished.

It was under the banner of eliminating this evil that imperialist Europe marched into Africa. Few were sincere about the humanitarian aspect of occupation. Most were consumed by passion for profit and political power.

The missionaries were the most consistent exception to this exploitation and "legal" enslavement. Even notable explorers like David Livingstone's companion, Henry Stanley, were little more than agents of colonial conquerors themselves.

Livingstone truly had opened up the continent for the "3 C's" of Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization. Though he traveled widely and preached to the Africans, this was not his main objective.

He stated that he was not so much interested in preaching Christ to Africa as in preaching Africa to Europe. His great burden was to heal the open sore of slavery that ravaged the heart of the continent, and to accomplish that required for it to be brought before the conscience of Europe.

Livingstone himself lived in humility and selfless meekness and kindness. Stanley did not walk in the footsteps of his master.

He said about himself: "My methods, however, will not be Livingstone's. Each man has his own way. [He] has been almost Christ-like for goodness, patience, and self-sacrifice. The selfish and wooden-headed world requires mastering, as well as a loving charity."

He lived his creed. When refused food and threatened by the Bumbireh people, he decided to "make an example" of them. He and his men shot and killed more than 40 villagers and wounded more than 100.

This was the first of such brutalities to open the way for the mixed blessings of the "3 C's." Such atrocities earned him the title *Bula Matari*, the Breaker of Rocks: a magical worker who smashes all obstacles.

Yet whether that of Abel or of Africa, blood still cries out to the God of heaven from the ground. Stanley's initial group of more than 250 [once up to 700] had been reduced to 108 by the time he reached the Atlantic coast. Cannibals, disease, starvation, desertion, and the river Congo itself took their toll during the 999 day journey of 7,088 miles.

South Africa and Rhodesia

1867 brought the deadly discovery of diamonds in South Africa to the attention of the British. At the Cape House of Assembly the Colonial Secretary said: "Gentlemen, on this rock [diamonds] the future success of South Africa will be built." Soon the Kimberly mine became the largest man-made hole in the world as the greedy diggers lusted after the glittering filthy lucre obtained by the blood of Africans.

Wages paid to Africans were spent on European guns and the whites, in turn, slaughtered tribes in order to prevent an "uprising" against colonial power. Mammon knows no mercy.

Cecil Rhodes exploited the situation and the Africans in order to amass a personal fortune. Through deceit and treachery he obtained all metal and mineral rights to the domain of King Lobengula.

He promised that there “would never be more than ten of his representatives on the king’s land at a time.” The entire region and beyond eventually became Rhodesia, and the king lost everything, being sacrificed to Rhode’s dream of uninterrupted British colonies from Cape to Coast: South Africa to Cairo.

In 1893 when his Rhodesia was virtually bankrupt, he sold some of his personal shares in his Chartered Company and hired a small army to massacre the king and his subjects. They murdered 1,000s, burnt villages, seized 10,000 square miles of farm land, and 100's of thousands of cattle.

King Lobengula escaped Rhode’s white army, but when he learned that his last chief had surrendered, he poisoned himself that he might die with the dignity of a king rather than being hunted down as a dog.

Rhodes was well pleased with the outcome. 50 white lives and 50,000 British pounds was a small price to pay to double the size of Rhodesia and save his business venture from financial ruin. Newspapers were bribed in order to report his official version of the conflict back in London.

With no land, no cattle, and no army, the surviving Ndebele became little more than slave labor for the whites. A tax was imposed, 10 shillings, on every hut throughout the realm which forced them to work to pay the tax; and the whip was employed on both accounts.

Hostility brewed like a tropical thunder head. The spark that lit the fuse of this human keg of gunpowder was two years of drought, massive swarms of locust, and the terrifying deadly pestilence of a malignant cattle disease.

Swiftly, more than 2.5 million cattle perished. The Africans attributed all these disasters to the white man’s presence.

By March of 1896, the first African revolt against European Colonialists broke out being urged by their oracle priests. White men, women, and children were brutally hacked to death in the attempt to purge the land of all Europeans. It was met and squashed by Rhode’s police militia and British troops as mercilessly as the attacks had been upon the whites.

From 1899 to 1902, Britain turned against their fellow whites in the Transvaal and Orange Free States [Rhodesia]. With methods of barbarism, over 111,000 whites and no less than 43,000 blacks were herded, men, women, and children, like beasts into concentration camps.

Typhoid, dysentery, and measles raged, claiming tens of thousands of lives. In these filthy confines, the death rate rapidly rose to 34%.

What was the motive for these atrocities and wanton slaughter? The lust of the eye for coveting their gold, the pride of life in an imagined British superiority, and the lust of the flesh in just plain malice for personal reasons. Each called upon the same God and proceeded to massacre one another on the killing fields of Africa.

Following the war, finding the Africans to be too costly a labor force, these British despots of gold and diamonds imported Chinese laborers and used them as virtual slaves. There they were separated from their families for three years, herded into the wretched concentration compounds, and severely punished should they try to escape. Sodomy resulted, yet the miners of mammon forcibly kept them from their wives for the sake of their filthy lucre.

Leopold’s Congo

By 1878 Stanley had formally committed himself to King Leopold II of Belgium for a period of five years as his official representative. Under the guise of the “3 C’s” humanitarian concerns, Leopold was actually secretly masterminding the exclusive control of the entire Congo basin in order to amass a personal fortune.

By the summer of 1884, the most feverish phase of the Scramble had begun between the French, British, and the Germans: all lusting after control of the Niger palm-oil industry. Just five days before England had anticipated claiming all, Bismarck of Germany took possession of Cameroon as a colony.

By November, The Berlin Conference had convened with delegates of fourteen nations to map out how the “3 C’s” could be achieved. They established three broad goals: [1] Free trade for

the Congo, [2] Free navigation on the Niger, and [3] Agreement on rules of future colonization but without defining boundaries of carving up the continent.

The Belgian king did not even attend, yet all the while, Leopold, like a cunning leopard, maneuvered circumstances behind the scenes: playing French against English and German against both while undermining Portugal and pretending neutrality towards all. In the end, his International Association of the Congo, The Free State, was granted universal recognition and sealed with appropriate treaties.

It was, in fact, his own private kingdom of Leopoldland, with full access to the Atlantic along with excellent ports. Over 1 million square miles in the heart of Africa were his under the false front of his humanitarian association.

Before anyone knew what was happening, he was aggressively exploiting the one “C,” Commerce, at the expense of all others by employing the 4th, 5th, and 6th “C’s:” Conquest, Coveting, and Corruption.

It was only at the turn of the century that an obscure clerk of a shipping company in Liverpool, Edmond Morel, discovered the treachery of Leopold.

Through comparing the reports of the imports and exports of goods and rubber from the Congo, the fraud and staggering wealth and wickedness of the king was exposed. In short, Leopold’s humanitarianism was shown to be nothing more than “legalized robbery enforced by violence: a secret society of murderers with a king for [its head].”

Leopold had created a monopoly with a system of forced labor compelled by torture and murder in order to provide free export rubber to fatten his own purse. News spread to the British press and investigations were called for. Books were written by Morel and his associates exposing the horrific practices.

But the king, cunning as a serpent, launched his own counter-attack. Quickly one author was sued to court for criminal libel while Leopold’s men bribed all witnesses to keep them from testifying. Morel himself was approached by a Belgian official to inquire how much he would agree to in order to keep silent. Morel refused.

The Baptists and Catholics, however, were more obliging. For some years Leopold had “reduced” their taxes in the Congo in exchange for their missionaries’ silent cooperation in not reporting what they had witnessed.

Finally, however, William Morrison of the American Presbyterian Mission returned from the Congo with a full and truthful exposure of the evils that existed. Europe, in 1903, was stunned.

African towns of 40,000 had been reduced to 1,000 by being forced to abandon their farms to collect Leopold’s “rubber tax:” Bring rubber or die! Weeks in the jungles took their toll on countless thousands who died of starvation, attacks by wild beasts, and disease.

Wages were not paid; there were none. Low quotas resulted in beatings, ears being cut off, roping of necks to be sold as slaves, or simply being shot.

Hundreds of families were butchered and their villages looted and burnt. Baskets of severed hands were carried to Leopold’s agents to prove that they had not wasted valuable ammunition in killing the tribesmen, but had “wisely” used more economical means.

At the direction of the now alerted English government, Roger Casement, the British Consul in the Congo, was ordered to verify the reports. That he did, and the half could not be told. Even the guilty missionaries came forward and confirmed the ghastly tales.

The Belgian monarch multiplied his deceit, intrigues, and bribery over the next few years while continuing his unspeakable atrocities. But Justice must triumph at last. In 1909, Leopold lay dying.

Who now will own your fortune? What now will atone for your blood-stained hands dyed red from those severed from Congolese?

Not even the Roman Catholic priest would pronounce for him Extreme Unction [final prayers with anointing oil], for at his deathbed was his immoral mistress that the king had taken when she was eighteen and he, sixty-five.

German Colonies

Genocide best expresses Germany's response to African revolt in their South Western [Namibia] and Eastern [Tanzania] territories. In the Southwest, colonialism conquered by theft, rape, and brutality.

A Herero herdsman complained to a German settler, saying: "The missionary says that we are the children of God like our white brothers...but just look at us. Dogs, slaves, worse than baboons on the rocks...that is how you treat us."

When they could endure no more, they revolted. Mercilessly the Herero people were systematically forced by German troops into the desert, wells were stopped up, and the people surrounded and left to starve and die of thirst.

East Africa was worse. Those killed by a German induced famine perished miserably. Fields, crops, storehouses, and villages went up in smoke among thousands of acres. A minimum of 250,000 souls were forced into starvation, some tribes losing 75% of their people.

When the famine was ended, survivors returned to an unrecognizable landscape. What had been fields of maize now was taken over by forest which became home to rhinoceros, buffalo, and elephant.

The land that once swarmed with people was transformed into the largest wild game reserve in the world. Truly, men made in the image of God were worse off than baboons on the rocks.

In West Africa, German rulers of Cameroon and Togo abused their powers in grossly horrendous ways. Flogging men to death, buying young black girls for concubines, mutilation, and murder were all too common.

On one occasion, all the men and women of a village were shot and the fifty-four surviving children were put in baskets and drowned like cats in the river. Togo was the domain of a notorious German harem of whipped African prisoners of immorality, some as young as thirteen.

Nigeria

The same crushing military conquest prevailed in Nigeria. Slaughter of tribes along the Niger and Benue secured the advance of British interests in palm oil and hardwood exports. Kano, Ilorin, and Sokoto succumbed to the persuasion of cannons and machine guns. New emirs were appointed who would cooperate with colonial rule.

In 1906, a minor uprising by Mallam Isa in the Sokoto caliphate was met with utter annihilation. Villagers armed with hoes and hatchets were cut down by blazing British firepower, leaving not one man, woman, or child alive among the 2,000 inhabitants.

Prisoners were executed, heads severed and placed on poles, and the entire village leveled to the ground. The Sultan of Sokoto pronounced a curse on anyone who would try and rebuild Satiru or cultivate its fields.

Scramble Out of Africa

As sudden and incomprehensible as the scramble into Africa had been, so was the rush out. Between the years 1957 and 1968, the European powers virtually fled from their colonial roles. Boundaries remained essentially unchanged and names of many countries were changed.

Independence was hailed by pan-African nationalists, but the governance that emerged too often was woefully inadequate. Likely the wretched example of Europe's colonialism set the precedent for military coups, civil wars, genocide, corruption, and exploitation of impoverished tribal peoples by rich rulers.

So it appeared that the African disciple became like his colonial master, and neither like the Prince of Peace.

Reflections Upon Slavery and Colonialism

Greed at the expense of other's misery will ever dictate the rule of such and never allow just or compassionate self-governance. Islam will always remain oppressive as will any African people who would willingly engage in an atrocity such as slavery.

Combined with an underlying animistic culture, slavery has molded the consciousness of black Africa. Initiative, individuality, and inventiveness are not part of that cultural legacy. Passively assuming one's role determined by masters, whether black or white, has characterized entire peoples because of the combined effects of animism and slavery.

Concern for and self-denial for others can never become the culture of any populace when brutality and utter disregard for fellow humans is tolerated because of the root of all evil, the love of money. True Christianity with Christ as its Pattern is the only hope of African and Western societies.

Appendix 5 Animism

Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things Like silver or gold from your
empty way of life
Received by tradition from your forefathers;
But with the precious blood of Christ
I Pet.1:18,19

Basic Elements of Animism

Religious methods can be broadly described as being manipulating or supplicating, controlling or submitting, directing or asking, and commanding or dependent. Animism, also known as African Traditional Religion [ATR], attempts to manipulate, control, direct, and command spiritual powers and influences according to the will of the man using them.

Animists view bodily posture, certain words, objects, and rituals as possessing effective power of their own which can be employed to obtain one's wishes. His key to a successful life is the ability to manipulate forces according to correct formula.

The culture of the animist is determined by ancestral tradition and conformity to that by being in harmony with the powers that have brought it about. He therefore is ultimately concerned about the "who" and "why" of life rather than the questions of "what" and "how" that Westerners focus upon.

To discover who is in power and why this power acts as it does is a constant pursuit. Meaning to life is always to be understood in a spiritual way rather than in a physical or material manner.

Therefore the causes behind disasters, sickness, deaths, and other details of life will be sought for in terms of who made these things happen and why they did so. Power is needed, both to discern the events of life, to obtain protection from forces, and to direct their course.

This makes the correct performance of prescribed ritual of utmost importance. An animist's relationship with power has little to do with morality, but has everything to do with the expertise needed to get results by proper technique.

It is not the will of the god that is his concern, but the compelling, asking, or manipulating that god to perform the person's own will. Thus by rites, rituals, incantations, or use of sacred

objects, he seeks to use spiritual powers to produce success, happiness, or whatever else he may want, whether good or evil. Simply stated, man is the focus of all of life and the forces are viewed as existing solely for his benefit.

He believes that life can be transformed by techniques applied to mind, body, and spirit. There is no "sin" other than to not correctly perform the proper rituals in the approved manner. For the animist, there exists no absolute standard external to himself that judges his actions or to which he is accountable.

Essentially, good and evil are judged by whether the action promotes the well-being or harm of the group, not in terms of moral truth according to a written standard. Because he sees himself as an extension of the corporate community, tribe, and its spirit world, he does not view himself as blameworthy of misdeeds. Any failure must be attributed to some means used against him and the cause must be sought, not in himself, but in divining its spiritual source.

Feeling, experiencing, and participation are what make his life meaningful, not ideas or knowledge derived from written sources.

World religions, by way of contrast, are institutionalized rather than experiential and pragmatic [whatever works being considered right or true]. They point back to a founder, have sacred writings, and appointed places of worship.

Sin is judged by an established written code and membership is determined more on moral grounds and agreement with documents than in ritual participation.

Animists practice oral traditions passed down through ritual to insure the continued involvement of the ancestral spirits among the living. As such, a broken relationship between people of the same group is a serious breach in animist theology and is the closest thing to being considered "sin."

The ancestors are thought to be the guardians of the living who determine which spirit will come to inhabit the unborn. Thus, to disrupt the harmony between the spirits of the ancestors and the group as a whole becomes a horrifying prospect.

This is not to say that an animist cannot have his own thoughts and distinct behavior. He may, but he must not violate ritual practices or this will provoke the anger of the spirit world and the wrath of the community to which he belongs.

Great pressure is therefore upon him to conform to the accepted practices with respect to his assigned role within it. It is why individuality, diversity, and inventiveness are discouraged and rarely seen.

A man without relatives or children of his own is like someone without citizenship, identity, friends, or help in this life or the next. To be cut off from the tribe is therefore the most terrible punishment that can be inflicted upon anyone.

Yet his participation in the community is essentially self-seeking. His desire is to gain power both within the group and over his own destiny. Prayer, sacrifice, and rituals are not performed out of devotion, but in order gain what he wants by "using" the spirit world.

Power can be gained in a variety of ways: through sacrifices, offerings, incantations, liturgies, taboos, charms, fetishes, ceremonies, witchcraft, sorcery, or by contact with powerful persons or objects, through the laying on of hands, or articles of clothing, anointing, etc.

Because of the universal belief that the spoken word carries power to effect reality, speaking in tongues is widely practiced among animists and is thought to have more power than understandable prayer.

Dreams, visions, and ghosts play a significant role as they are viewed as bringing contact with the ancestral spiritual world. Also, totems [certain animals, objects, or plants that are thought to have a special brotherly relationship with the family or tribe] are not to be treated as common, but as sacred. Trees, groves, rocks, streams, or mountains and high places are examples of these.

To an animist, the supreme God is at best distant and unconcerned with the practical affairs of men. He may be respected, but He is not personal, certainly not a Father, though He may be considered to be Creator or even Judge.

The existence of an impersonal power often referred to as the life-force is a common belief among animists. This force has no moral nature but can be tapped into and used for either good or evil.

This belief is evident even in various forms of Pentecostalism where it is common to hear groans, shouts, or short gasping sounds to inhale or obtain the “power” of the Spirit of God.

Ritual is the foundation of animism and ATR. Through the correct formula, access is gained and help obtained from the spirit world. The basic belief is that if a man will perform so and so, a sure result must necessarily follow.

The ritual act is sacred and effective merely by being performed according to correct formula. Many Muslims, for example, believe that by someone repeating the *Shahada* [the creed], he automatically becomes a Muslim.

There is a reciprocal relationship between the devoted man and his god. The god cannot influence the world apart from the ritual of the man and the man has no power to change his situation apart from the god. They are, in that sense, mutually dependent and one together in the stream of life as they influence their world.

That using the proper words correctly will always produce the desired results is fundamental to all animist belief and practice. There are certain power words that must be used with great caution. “Positive” and “negative” declarations are believed to bring either prosperity or a curse.

Animistic healing takes place using this technique. Through power ritual language, sickness is commanded to leave the distressed and enter the body of a sacrificial animal.

Symbols also play a vital role in sustaining the animist’s contact with the spirit world all around him. Horns, swords, crosses, crescent moons, and bodily gestures all convey spiritual power.

Ceremonial meals are common expressions of the community’s ritual practice along with dances, music, and parades. Weddings, births, and burials are all highly important events for the continuance with blessing of the ancestral spirits.

Burial rites are especially significant to the animist. Without the proper ceremonies, the departed spirit will not be admitted to the blessed state but be doomed to wander as a haunting evil spirit who will trouble the living. This is why one-year anniversaries to honor the deceased are common practices among animistic peoples.

“Beware that you are not ensnared to follow them...and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?’ You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods” -Deut.12:30,31.

We must repent of the concept of incantation: manipulating spiritual powers through words. We must rather submit to the Word of the one true Sovereign God. We must abandon the practice of serving gods based on oral tradition where the priest speaks for the deity and is the mediator of power and contact with the supernatural [Isa.8:19,20].

It must not be thought that submission and obedience to the hierarchy of elders is to be absolute and unquestioning [I Thess.5:21; I Cor.10:15; Job 32:4-12; Tit.1:10, 11]. It is error to imagine that the true God can be influenced or controlled by ritual activity for selfish ends as the spirits are.

The true and living God [I Cor.8:6] is in an unrivaled category by Himself and shares no arrangements with other deities. All others must therefore be cast away and He alone worshiped and served.

Tribalism therefore has no basis to be continued since the ancestral spirits and gods of the tribe are wicked delusions and cannot continue to be served and honored alongside the true and living God. Christians are a single culture as citizens of one kingdom and tradition [Phil.3:20] who serve the one true Eternal Spirit, God the Father.

Jesus Christ is not a deity to be added to those already being served: the one who can forgive and carry to heaven while the others take care of the “practical” issues of daily living.

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

“And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?”

“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’

“Therefore, ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.

“‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.’

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” -2 Cor.6:14 - 7:1.

Animism and the Christian Home

Because the animist views all of life as means to his own ends by manipulating, controlling, or even deceiving the forces he encounters, this has direct bearing on his home, especially his women. The basic animistic orientation towards women is a result of his whole outlook on life.

To him, women are disposable possessions: a means to achieving the man’s end for pleasure, profit, power, and progeny [children].

The following passages must transform our thinking from this animist perspective to that of a genuine Christian home.

The Christian Woman/Wife is:

[1] to be honored, understood, and not mistreated since she is weaker [I Pet.3:7].

[2] to be loved as one’s own body, not treated as property [Eph.5:25,28,31].

[3] a helper, not an animal used as a sexual object for pleasure and to simply provide children [Gen.2:18-20].

[4] not a slave whose labor profits the man. The man is to provide for her [I Tim.5:8]. Man is not king [Gen.3:16].

[5] not to be divorced [Mal.2:16] and barrenness is no cause to do so [Lk.1:7; Gen.11:30; 18:10,11; I Sam.1:5-8].

[6] not under the authority of the extended family or clan. They have no rights over the wife of their male relation [Gen.2:23,24].

[7] not the one held responsible for the training of the children; the man is [Eph.6:4; Gen.18:19; Deut.11:18-21; Prov.4:1-4; Ps.78:3-8].

[8] not to be isolated and separate from the man and all that concerns him: no secrets covered up. All is freely shared [Gen.2:25].

[9] a fellow heir of the grace of life, not of lesser privilege [I Pet.3:7; Gal.3:28].

[10] not to be shared among other wives. Polygamy does not have God’s approval [Gen.2:18-25; Mt.19:4-6; Deut.17:17].

If repentance from the animistic view about the wife and home is not actual, it renders our Christianity an empty masquerade, because our prayers will be ineffective and hindered [I Pet.3:7].

Animism and West African Christianity

There is evidence that the roots of basic animistic thinking and practice have not been abandoned in the Christianity of West Africa. When the Orthodox church came with its liturgy, rites, priests, ceremonies, cassocks, religious objects, and sacred places, essentially they were received within the animistic framework.

These things were believed to be vehicles of power that were effective in and of themselves, rather than merely representative and symbolic. The Bible, as a sacred object, often

is used as a talisman, pictures of Jesus as a means of grace, and water and crosses as charms for protection or blessing. Extreme forms of these characteristics are seen in the so-called White Garment churches.

Modern Pentecostalism in West Africa stemming from the 1970's is ever as much flagrantly animistic. Here the "Man of God" has taken the place of the *Ifa*, the oracle priest who speaks for the god. Thus it is thought that the "pastor" has contact with the "Spirit" in a way that the uninitiated do not, and must never, therefore, be questioned.

Because of the animistic outlook, it is imagined that power is transferred by his touch through the laying on of his hands. Objects such as water, oil, and handkerchiefs that he has "blessed" are believed to transfer the "anointing."

The "Positive Confession" doctrine is nothing more than the foundational assumption of all ATR: The spoken word has power to effect reality if the correct method is used. Shouting, "Back to sender," is a popular formula [incantation] used by "deliverance" ministers to transfer spirits, curses, or problems to a sacrificial victim, in this case, to the person who is the "source" of the spiritual affliction.

All of these things are animistic to the core and must be repented of if our religion will be Christian indeed and be conformed to the Pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations.

"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

"For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you.

"You shall be blameless before the Lord your God.

"For these nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so" -Deut.18:9-14.

Perhaps the most critical issue facing the church of West Africa is that of the influence of ATR upon its beliefs and practices. Specifically, two major concerns must be responded to biblically, both in teaching and in practice. The issues are these:

[1] What is a Christian home?

[2] What is Christian burial?

Because these have not been thoroughly addressed by the West African church itself, there has been no distinctive Christian culture emerge in the more than one hundred and fifty years that the gospel has come to this part of the world.

In these two areas in particular, little difference can be seen between the Muslim, Animist, and Christian in their basic assumptions about and daily treatment of wife and children, or with respect to the dead and the burial ceremonies attending that event.

These are questions that must be answered by the African, not by the Western missionary.

From the Word of God and led by the Holy Spirit, determination must be made of what is truly Christian and what is simply ATR masquerading in a new religious dress.

Persecution surely will come, but that truth, once discerned, will set us free.

For further treatment of African Traditional Religion
And its effect upon the church
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