

*Christ and Antichrist
in Prophecy and History*

by
Edwin de Kock

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by *Edwin de Kock*
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This edition is dedicated to

Alberto R. Timm

together with others who have made
this publication possible

Preface

On 12 June 2013, an Internet query about *Christ* and *Antichrist* revealed the existence of some 15,000,000 pages that confidently offered to expound this topic and matters related to it. The word *prophecy* by itself elicited no fewer than 53,400,000 responses. What, in view of all those opinions—many expressed with not a little fervor and dogmatism—could justify yet another book in an already overcrowded field?

Chiefly this: it guides along a road less traveled but belonging to a noble tradition, both ancient and continuous, known as the Historical School of prophetic interpretation. While Luther, Calvin, Knox, and others like them were alive (and for another three centuries) almost every Protestant would have recognised the basic approach of the following chapters, however much he or she might have disagreed with particular details in them. The Reformers generally believed that the Bible's predictions parallel all human history up to the Second Coming and beyond. They also taught that the Antichrist foretold in the Scriptures is the papacy.

Those men all began their careers as Catholic priests who yearned after Christ and sought to purify their church to establish a better religion. Their great medieval mentor, who had closely studied the prophecies, was Joachim of Fiore or Floris (c. 1135-1202), one-time abbot of the Cistercian Abbey at Corazzo, Italy. Unlike them, he remained in the Roman Church until the day he died. According to LeRoy Edwin Froom, this scholarly man became immensely famous,¹ mingling with and witnessing to the aristocracy of Europe. "Both Richard the Lion-hearted and Philip Augustus of France, on their way through the Mediterranean to the Holy Land for the Third Crusade, in 1190, are said to have held conferences with Joachim at Messina [Sicily], wherein Richard was greatly impressed by the prophecies of the Apocalypse." Joachim also "had close contact with three popes—as well as with the imperial court under Henry VI."²

He it was who first discovered the symbolic nature of the three and a half years, forty-two months, or 1260 days, mentioned in the Bible seven times, in both Daniel and Revelation. Teaching that a prophetic day was equal to a calendar year,³ he unwittingly launched a revolution destined to shake the foundations of Christendom centuries after his death. Joachim lived three hundred years before Luther.

Nowadays, however, the majority of Protestant writers have abandoned the Historical School. Most commonly in the form of Dispensationalism, they have joined the Futurists, who hold that the Antichrist is a specific person that must still appear—and no longer identify him with the papacy. They do accept the year-day principle for interpreting the seventy weeks of Dan. 9 but inconsistently reject it when they deal with other time prophecies. According to them, the three and a half years, forty-two months, or 1260 days will be literal,

just three and a half years of ordinary calendar time.

Futurism originated in Catholic theology and came into special prominence during the Counter Reformation, to deflect the finger of incrimination away from the Roman pontiff.

In the twentieth century, Protestant Futurists wrote much about a one-world government, the Jewish state of Israel as a fulfilment of prophecies in Ezekiel, and the Soviet Union. They expected the armies of that godless, Communist federation to attack Jerusalem. Afterwards the Soviet armies would be annihilated.

Alas, that country no longer exists; Russia, its successor state, has given up atheism to a spectacular extent and reverted to Eastern Orthodox Christianity. In August 2000, its hierarchy even canonised the Tsar and his family, murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918!

The New World Order, that special hobbyhorse of Futurists, is no nearer today than it was a generation or even a century ago. Yet still we read about the dangers of the Illuminati, the Freemasons, the Rothschilds, Cecil John Rhodes, Colonel Edward House, an assortment of Rockefellers, and so forth. Many of the people accused of conspiring to subvert democracy, patriotism, or Christianity have now been dead for a long, long time—and their machinations have come to nothing.

Mighty America is certainly showing no signs of subordinating itself to a one-world government initiated by the puny United Nations, as Futurists have so confidently predicted. Nor will it do so, for the Anglo-Saxon peoples of the world are too proud and powerful to submit to foreign domination. And, together with other prophecies, Dan. 2:43 contradicts this idea.

The time has come, we believe, to thrust aside such fantasies and reassess the human condition from the perspective of the Historical School. That is a major purpose of this book.

I wish to stress, however, that I distinguish between churches and organizations unacceptable to God and the individuals who belong to them. Many of his children are still in systems that he abhors, including pagan religions and the church of Antichrist. Eventually, they will respond to his urging to “Come out of her, my people” (Rev. 18:4).

I do not believe in accusing people, except when their deeds are manifestly evil or a truthful narrative demands it—especially when they persecute their fellow human beings. Amongst others, I admire many noble men and women of the Catholic Church, however averse I am to its theology and methods. They, too, have often lived godly lives and fought the good fight.

Some, like Joachim, have made outstanding contributions to our understanding of prophecy and its fulfilment. Their insights and scholarship have also helped to enrich this book.

Its first printed edition was very well received by many readers, including deans of religion and the Texas Conference President. A number of their Reactions and Reviews can be viewed on website **propheticum.com**. This book was, moreover, prescribed at least three times at the Seminary of Andrews University in Berrien

Springs, MI, for Master of Divinity students.

Although the text is largely the same as before, I have revised and improved it. The chapter entitled “Tampering with God’s Law” has been updated and enlarged.

With 1,000 references or more, this book does not have a printed Index, which would have required too many additional pages. For researchers, I recommend that they also acquire the digital text, as described at the end of this work. Those who have bought and also personally possess it can, on request, obtain a download at a discount.

After *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History* (2001), I wrote four more books to complement it. Details about my other religious publications appear at the end of this volume. In its historical scope, the present work is more comprehensive than any of its successors. Each book, however, contains very much material not to be found in any of the others.

I hope and pray, dear reader, that this new edition of *Christ and Antichrist* will both please and bless you.

Acknowledgements

Many and varied have been the individuals who contributed to this book with their influence, feedback, or ideas: teachers of long ago, my friends on several continents, adversaries, and colleagues—including fellow missionaries in South Korea.

Eight people have given a great deal of time to it by reading all of it in detail or donating technical expertise. Others have made financial contributions to support me as a writer. A few of them belong to my family.

The non-relatives are colleagues of years gone by in the English Department at the University of Texas—Pan American, Douglas E. LaPrade, Ph.D., and David Bowles, Ed.D.; Jerry Stevens, former editor of *ADVENTISTS AFFIRM*, who scrutinized it all; my lifelong friend and fellow poet Arno Kucharzik, whom I met at Helderberg College, South Africa, during 1947; unselfish, artistic Frank Rodriguez of McAllen, Texas; and meticulously helpful Joyce K. Blaine, who lives in Nashville, Tennessee.

My elder son, André, made an important discovery with a computer search: a parallel between the daughter of Zion, depicted in Mic. 4:13 as an iron-horned heifer with bronze hooves, and the terrible beast of Dan. 7:7, 19. My other son, Carl, helped to prepare the book for its original digital publication. Both are gifted computer specialists and have contributed to this undertaking in many ways.

Nobody, however, has assisted me as much as Ria, my wife of almost fifty-nine years, who until recently was a writing professor at the University of Texas—Pan American. She, above all, has read and reread these chapters many times. Her input has been invaluable, her encouragement a power in my life, her support unflinching. Often, too, her long-suffering silence has eloquently urged me on. In many ways, this is her book as much as mine—though not its faults, for which I assume the sole responsibility.

I thank these dear people with all my heart, as well as our wonderful heavenly Father, who made each of them lend an unstintingly helpful hand. May their reward be great in this world and the world to come. The Most High also changed the curse of my 2001 congestive heart failure into a blessing, for without it I would not have given up ordinary employment to become a full-time writer on prophecy and finish three additional books.

Abbreviations

AA: Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles: In the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. 1911 (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press, 1958).

Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*: Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome, It.: The Pontifical Gregorian UP, 1977).

Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*: Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today*. Fwd. James P. Wesberry (Berrien Springs, MI: the Author, 1980. Offset repr. orig. ed. the Pontifical Gregorian UP, 1980).

Bacchiocchi, *Hal Lindsey's Prophetic Jigsaw Puzzle*: Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Hal Lindsey's Prophetic Jigsaw Puzzle: Five Predictions that Failed!* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1987).

Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*: Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath Under Crossfire: A Biblical Analysis of Recent Sabbath/Sunday Developments* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1998).

Bacchiocchi, *Endtime Issues* No. 63: Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Endtime Issues* No. 63: "The Sabbath Under Crossfire: A Look at Recent Developments," E-mail Circular, 14 February 2001.

Bacchiocchi, *Endtime Issues* No. 64: Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Endtime Issues* No. 64, "From Sabbath to Sunday: How Did It Come About?" E-mail Circular, 28 February 2001.

DA: Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Life of Christ*. 1898 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950).

EB 11: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, DVD Multimedia Disc (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2011).

EB 68: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Bicentennial ed. 23 vols. (Chicago: William Benton, 1968).

EB 98: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, CD 98, Multimedia Disc (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1998).

EB2: Macropaedia, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 30 vols. (Chicago: Helen Hemingway Benton, 1982).

EB2mi: Micropaedia, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 30 vols. (Chicago: Helen Hemingway Benton, 1982).

Ed.: Ellen G. White, *Education*. 1903 (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1952).

Ev.: Ellen G. White, *Evangelism, As Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White*. 1946 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970).

GC: Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation*. 1888 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950). And

other editions.

GW: Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for All Who Are "Laborers Together with God."* Compiled from the Author's Complete Published Writings and from Unpublished Manuscripts. 1915 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948).

LP: Ellen G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1883). Facsimile repr, with an Additional Preface (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1974).

LS: Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. 1915 (Portland, OR: Pacific Press, 1943).

NBD: J. D. Douglas, organizing ed., et al., *The New Bible Dictionary*. 1962 (Leicester, Eng.: Inter-Varsity, 1976).

PFF: LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*. 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946-54).

PK: Ellen G. White, *The Story of Prophets and Kings: As Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel*. 1917 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943).

SDABC: Francis D. Nichol et al., eds., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. 1953 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978).

SDABD: Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, revised (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1979).

SDAE: Don F. Neufeld, Julia Neuffer, et al., eds., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*. Revised ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976).

SDASB: Don F. Neufeld and Julia Neuffer, eds., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Students' Source Book* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962).

Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*: Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, Combined ed. Orig. 2 vols.: *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation*, 1867. *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Daniel*, 1873. (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1944).

ISM, 2SM: Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Two vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958).

1T, 2T, etc.: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*. Vols. 1-9. Different orig. dates (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948).

ST: Ellen G. White Pieces in *Signs of the Times*.

White, *Chosen Works*: Ellen G. White, *Chosen Works* (MLI Software, Version 4.1. 1994-95).

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Introduction

1 On the Threshold of the Third Millennium

I

More than a thousand years ago, all Europe was gripped by a heart-chilling fear. Soon, too soon, it would be midnight, 31 December 999. Then, when the new millennium began—as was generally supposed—on the first day of January 1000, the world would end; for Christ and his angels would flash into the sky, to trumpet the judgment day with all its dreadful events.

Well, afterwards people were most relieved to find it had all been a mistake, and so they settled back into their medieval rut. And now another ten centuries have passed, and the world has once again gone through a year like that. Many thought that perhaps, just perhaps, in the course of *anno Domini* 2000, it would happen this time. But, as we know, it did not.

What was the basis for expecting the Second Coming in 2000? It is an old idea according to which the present world will last for seven millennia, or seven thousand-year periods, from creation as described in the Bible. Human history will supposedly fill up six of these. Then Christ will come and set up his kingdom on earth for the final millennium. The whole period of seven thousand years is thought to be typologically related to the six days of creation, plus the seventh or Sabbath day, when the Creator rested from his work (Gen. 1; 2:1-3). The final millennium accordingly constitutes a thousand-year Sabbath for the planet.

In some ways, this is a beautiful conception, and we do not wish to dismiss it altogether. But it has slim support in the Scriptures, apart from 2 Pet. 3:8, according to which “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years.” Unfortunately it ignores the rest of that text, which goes on to say: “. . . and a thousand years as one day,” which refers to a similar thought in Ps. 90:4. Another problem is that Biblical prophecy normally equates a day not with a thousand years but with a year.

Setting dates for the Second Coming is most unwise, since Jesus made it clear that nobody should do so (Matt. 24:36). In any case, thinking of the year 2000 as a possible terminus for the world’s affairs was based on an arithmetical error.

When members of the early church began to interest themselves in the time of Jesus’ birth, a few centuries had already passed, and so they miscalculated the year. He had actually been born somewhat earlier than they thought, anything from 7 to 4 B.C. The most commonly accepted date is 4 B.C., the death year of Herod,¹ who sent soldiers to Bethlehem to have the little boy killed (Matt. 2:16).

Our Lord is already more than two thousand years old, and believers everywhere should have celebrated this momentous birthday in 1996. But there was no such party for him, which brings to mind the

night when he was born, neglected and unrecognized by almost everyone, except for a few simple shepherds and—a little later—travelers from afar.

But why, in any case, should human history end precisely twenty centuries after the Lord's *birth*? Would His crucifixion and ascension not provide a more logical point of departure for such reckoning? But the Bible also does not say that these events are important for calculating the date when the Lord will return, for every such attempt—no matter what its basis—will lead to disappointment.

II

A spectacular example of time setting from the early 1970s was Hal Lindsey's prediction of the world's end, which, however, failed to materialize at the specified date. In *The Late Great Planet Earth*, this Dispensationalist foretold that Christ would come within a generation, about forty years after the founding of the Israeli state on 14 May 1948.²

Well, this did not happen, nor did all the other interesting things he wrote, for instance about the former Soviet Union. In *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon*, Lindsey said that country would conquer the Middle East and Iran; but later China or even the USA, together with their allies, would destroy the Soviet army.³

That, of course, is now impossible. The Soviet Union has broken up and disappeared.

When those two books by Lindsey came off the press, millions of people devoured them avidly. *The Late Great Planet Earth* was an international best seller, with more than thirty million copies sold in thirty-one foreign languages.⁴ A striking movie was also based on it.

This success has now been repeated by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins in their *Left Behind* series, consisting of a dozen narratives or more about events surrounding the Rapture and the Tribulation. A dust-cover advertisement hailed them as "the fastest-selling fiction series ever." Much was expected of blockbuster movie versions, the first of which appeared on 2 February 2001.

The underlying ideas are similar to Lindsey's, which is evident from *Revelation Unveiled* by LaHaye, a non-fiction work. A noteworthy improvement is that it avoids the error of time setting.

LaHaye has, however, retained the idea that Russia will seek to conquer Israel. For this, he thinks it is due to suffer destruction at the hand of God.⁵ He also maintains that Antichrist's kingdom will be fundamentally atheist, with socialism as the "basic philosophy" of its government and economic system.⁶

In Lindsey's time this was still a plausible scenario, for the Soviet Union was both a Marxist and an atheist country. But these ideas are now outdated.

Russia has given up Communist socialism; it has also become a much more Christian country than Western Europe. As the *Observer* in Britain reports, it has to a remarkable extent returned to its old religion. About 55 percent of the Russians now belong to the Eastern

Orthodox Church. Fewer than 5 percent are atheists, who are treated with contempt. Instead of Communism, Orthodoxy is taught in the secondary schools as well as in the army, and it is exerting an increasing influence over the state. Russia's new national anthem even declares that it is a "holy country,"⁷ an expression harking back to the days of the czars.

Dispensationalism, as taught in the works of Lindsey, Charles C. Ryrie, LaHaye, and many others is highly popular among Protestants today. Few people realize, however, that events have already discredited it or that it is a variant of Futurism, a Catholic school of prophetic interpretation. Most effectively formulated by Francisco Ribera (1537-91), a Jesuit scholar of the Contra Reformation, it aimed at sabotaging the Historical School to which Luther, Calvin, Knox, and virtually all the original Protestants belonged—and to which we also adhere. Later chapters of this book will deal more fully with this issue.

III

Another example of misguided time setting, in the early 1990s, resulted from Larry Wilson's ingenious calculations, based on Jubilee cycles from the Old Testament. In his *Warning! Revelation is About to be Fulfilled*, he said the autumn of 1994 or perhaps early 1995 would dramatically unleash the last events, culminating in the Second Coming.

Wilson was originally a Seventh-day Adventist minister who had largely given up the year-day principle central to the Historical School of prophetic interpretation and adopted Futurist ideas. He foretold the granddaddy of all earthquakes, with a force beyond the measuring capacity of the Richter scale. This would, he said, be accompanied by signs in the heavens, with rumblings, peals of thunder, and lightning observable everywhere on the planet. Soon after this, a shower of burning meteors would start unquenchable fires all over the world, causing many people to perish.

Wilson dated this calamitous meteor shower as occurring in late 1994. He also predicted that it would shortly be followed by an even more horrific calamity: the earth's collision with two asteroids, one to impact on the sea and the other to strike a land mass.⁸

Well, 1994 passed and almost twenty more years since then. None of these dire events occurred, and so Larry Wilson like Hal Lindsey stands revealed as just another failed prophetic interpreter, who did not heed the warning of his Lord but misled some credulous people. It is, we repeat, unwise to give dates for the Second Coming—or even for the events that immediately precede it.

All the same, there has been an increase in lectures, articles, and even television programs about what may be lying ahead; for though Jesus warned against time-setting, the Bible does provide some clues to indicate that he will be returning soon.

The interest is not confined to Christianity. As Benjamin Creme pointed out at a New Age press conference in Los Angeles during

1982: “The Muslims await the Imam Mahdi. At the same time the Buddhists await the coming of another Buddha. The Hindus await the return of Krishna. And the Jews, as always, await the coming of the Messiah.” He himself was also expecting such a teacher to return on what he called the Day of Declaration.⁹

Some New Agers believed that “before the turn of the century the earth will tilt on its axis, causing major catastrophes, killing the majority of people on Earth and destroying civilization as we know it.” According to this view, there would, however, have been a Great Evacuation through alien spaceships, in an event rather similar to the Second Coming.¹⁰ Well, the century has turned, and nothing of the kind has happened.

A prophetic evergreen that seemingly never fails to excite a certain kind of reader is the *Centuries*, rhymed prophecies of the French-Jewish astrologer Michel de Notredame (1503-66), better known under his Latin name as Nostradamus.¹¹ He had dire predictions for the last few years just before the year 2000. Since those things have not happened, we can now safely also toss his book onto the trash heap of failed predictions.

False and sometimes eccentric interpretations of the prophecies about the Lord’s return can disgust a thoughtful person, who may be tempted to turn away from the entire topic as a waste of time, and yet we should be careful. Aesop in ancient Greece used to tell the fable of a man who repeatedly alarmed his neighbors by crying “Wolf, Wolf!” Soon they learned to ignore him, but one day the creature really jumped out of a bush and gobbled him up. As its fangs were ripping into him, he screamed and screamed, but no one came out to help him.

The Second Coming is likely to take place when almost everybody has ceased being worried about it, for in more than one place the New Testament warns us that it will be unexpected, sudden, and—on a planetary scale—an overwhelming surprise, like a thief in the night.

IV

We suggest that now we open the Bible for ourselves. After all, about 30 percent of it consists of prophetic material.¹² As we turn its pages, we come upon a strangely compelling chapter, Revelation 13. There we read of a fearsome animal, climbing up out of the sea. This is the Beast, with its mysterious signs: a mark that brings damnation to all whose bodies and minds are stained with it, and the riddle of 666, the number which is a name.

We know this is the Antichrist, who like a latter-day Pied Piper of Hamelin will entice the whole world into following it. Most of those who live on the planet will “wonder after it” and be lost forever. We think that for us this is not such a good idea. We would rather not go with this particular crowd, but do our own thing, by not following the Beast. But how? After all, we are not even able to identify the creature.

It looks like a leopard and has bear-like paws and the muzzle of a

lion. It also has seven heads and ten horns with crowns on them. Oh, what a puzzlement! We literally cannot make out head or tail of the thing. Perhaps we do know that at different times it has been identified with the pope, Napoleon Bonaparte, Wilhelm II, Adolf Hitler, Henry Kissinger, Mikhail Gorbachev, and even Bill Gates.

Various authors, like Pat Robertson¹³ and Dave Hunt,¹⁴ have interpreted its number, 666, as part of a wicked monitoring device and a computerized credit-card system, run by an international banking consortium. This would be owned by the new world order and controlled by the Antichrist himself. One writer, who has preferred to remain anonymous, is very explicit about how he believes the international banking system will be used to establish an evil empire over the entire planet: "The Antichrist will receive a Certificate of Fictitious 'Number' to legally do business as (DBA) 16-666, the world bank computer."¹⁵

But how can we be sure that this line of thinking is correct? Let us take a closer look at what the Bible says.

In the second part of Rev. 13, we read of another beast: at first it has two horns like a lamb, but soon it begins to roar out words like a speaking dragon! It also performs miracles, like making fire rain down from the sky. It supports the infamous Beast mentioned earlier on, applying economic sanctions against everybody who is not prepared to worship the Antichrist.

All this is mysterious and most disturbing.

Then we happen to page back to Rev. 12, where we discover a big red dragon, which greatly resembles the leopard-like Beast; for it also has seven heads and ten horns. At this point, we wonder whether there are any more animals like it in the book of Revelation.

We decide to read and search beyond chapter 13.

In chapters 14 and 16 we find a fearsome threat of hellfire for those who worship the Beast. We discover that its punishment will begin right here on earth in the time of the terrible last plagues. We also find it in the company of the "false prophet," presumably the two-horned creature that will assist it.

In chapter 17, we discover what seems to be yet *another* beast, scarlet in color. It, too, has seven heads and ten horns, an apocalyptic theme that we have now come across three times. An added element is a woman called Babylon, clothed lavishly in scarlet and bedecked with jewels.

Finally, in chapter 19, we read that Christ is to come and make war on every one of these creatures.

But what is it all about? It is so puzzling, yet tantalizing. We discuss the mysteries of Revelation with other people. Someone says: "Oh, the Apocalypse! You are not supposed to understand it; it is a sealed book." We are tempted to turn away in disgust.

But then another person, though perhaps not really able to explain these strange creatures, tells us God wants us to study the book of Revelation and that he has even promised a blessing for those who do so. Indeed, the writer, John, was told explicitly that the Apocalypse was *not* to be sealed up: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear

the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Rev. 1:3). “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand” (Rev. 22:10).

Startling in their implications for us are the repeated words “the time is at hand.” They are inscribed like a warning at the entrance to the book and we read them again at its exit. We decide to continue our search.

Our Bible happens to have a margin column. In it we notice references to other parts of Scripture. Linked to Rev. 13:1, where we first began to read about the leopard-like Beast, we see Dan. 7:1-6. So we search for the book of Daniel, which is in the second half of the Old Testament.

Its seventh chapter depicts no fewer than four unusual animals. They, too, are puzzling, but there is something a little familiar about them; for they also come up out of the sea, like the Beast of Rev. 13, and resemble it in several ways.

In Dan. 7, the first of the creatures is a lion. Why, the Apocalyptic Beast has the muzzle of a lion. The second is a bear, and the Beast has bear-like paws. The third is a four-headed leopard, and the Beast is spotted like one. The fourth is nightmarish and generally nondescript, but it, too, has ten horns, exactly like the Beast.

But what about the other features, especially the seven heads, referred to in Rev. 12, 13, and 17? This detail has puzzled many students of prophecy, who have interpreted it in different ways; yet an obvious solution is to add up the heads of the four creatures in Dan. 7. Well, let us see. The lion has one head, not surprisingly, and so does the bear. But the leopard has four heads. This gives us six, to which we add the single head of the fourth creature. And . . . we have a total of seven heads!

It appears, then, that the Beast of Rev. 13 is a perfect composite of the four animals described in Dan. 7. The two chapters must have similar topics.

This is progress, and we conclude that if we only knew the identity of the beasts of Dan. 7, it would help a great deal toward understanding the various creatures referred to in Revelation, especially the Beast. It could possibly also help us grasp the meaning of its mark and number.

V

A good beginning is the statement in Dan. 7:17 that the four beasts represent four kings or kingdoms destined to rule in the world. But which ones?

We are again on the point of giving up, when we have a hunch. Perhaps another piece in the Bible will help us understand Dan. 7, just as this chapter is itself a key to Rev. 13. But where?

Well, why not go back to the beginning of Daniel, and keep on reading? The first chapter is fine and even interesting, but it says nothing about beasts, or anything else that can help us in our quest.

Then we come to Dan. 2. From that point onward things begin to fall into place. Properly understood, this chapter is a master key to Bible prophecy. We shall therefore be looking at it carefully.

We read of a king's prophetic dream about a great statue, which also refers to four kingdoms, just like Dan. 7. Admittedly, there are differences. Dan. 2 predominantly uses the symbols of various metals: gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Bronze and iron? But the terrible fourth creature of Dan. 7 has claws of bronze and iron teeth!

Why, the Bible seems to explain itself, when we compare different Scriptures with one another! This will not be difficult at all, especially if we observe the close relationship between the two books of Daniel and Revelation. We shall therefore have a very good look at Dan. 2, 3, 7-9, and 12.

Each of these chapters is most interesting. At every step, our understanding will grow. We shall also be noting some other fascinating passages of the Old and New Testaments. Finally we will be prepared for a really meaningful study of the dragon and other monsters in Revelation, including the dreadful Beast, which it is death to follow.

VI

The books of Daniel and Revelation contain amazing material. One of the central themes is the Beast and its persecution of God's people, as well as its seductions. But we shall also meet its great and marvelous opponent, the Lamb, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Other parts of the Bible will greatly aid our understanding of these matters.

But not only understanding. Much more than Nostradamus or any other writings, the Bible will, as C. S. Lewis has put it, surprise us—you, too, reader—with joy.

When we have come to comprehend this wonderful Book, we will no longer need to fear the future. God's Word will not only enlighten our minds, but can bring comfort to our often troubled hearts.

2 How to Study Prophecy

I

In the previous chapter, the reader presumably used a Bible to check the references. This is obviously the right thing to do. In fact, it is essential for a proper understanding of prophecy. But what translation is suitable for such a purpose?

Amplified Bibles and the versions that result from dynamic equivalence are often fresh and exciting, but they are really paraphrases rather than translations and can be misleading. We are unable to recommend them. For theological study, we prefer translations that approximate the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the original Scriptures as closely as possible.

In English, the best example of this is the famous Authorized Version (AV), also known as the King James Version (KJV), originally published in 1611. But readers that have not cut their eyeteeth on it find it a little old-fashioned. On the other hand, it strives after formal equivalence, translating word for word, wherever the idiom of the language permits—with an overall precision that would be very difficult to improve on. Generally speaking, the AV is an excellent choice, not only theologically, but also as a monument of English literature. It is very beautiful, and most of our quotations are from it.

Some, however, find fault with the ancient manuscripts that underlie it, the *Textus Receptus* used by the Greeks of the Orthodox Church and therefore favored by Erasmus and the Protestants of the sixteenth century. This is a knotty problem we can refer to in another chapter but will not be addressing here.

Not infrequently we quote from the Revised Standard Version (RSV), which to a large extent is a modernized King James—though the Greek manuscripts on which it is based are sometimes different from those that the Reformers favored. The Ecumenical Edition of the RSV, sometimes used for this volume, has the capital merit of being acceptable to Catholic as well as Protestant readers.

Before we look more closely at Daniel, which is essential for understanding other Bible prophecies, we need to answer some important questions: Who wrote the book and when? How dependable is the method of comparing Scripture with Scripture? And what use should we make of history in unraveling the predictions of the Bible?

II

First: Who wrote the book of Daniel and when? Traditional believers have never doubted that its author was the prophet himself, who lived in the sixth century before Christ. But liberal scholars disagree. The question has important implications for our study and therefore needs to be answered.

One evening in 1995, I was conducting a Bible class in Inchon, on

the West Coast of South Korea, where I taught for a year as a volunteer missionary. Suddenly a theology student from a Protestant seminary objected to a time-honored explanation of Daniel 2. “This book,” he declared, “does not belong to the prophetic writings of the Old Testament; Daniel was not its author, for it originated less than two hundred years before Christ; and it was not, as you say, written while Babylonians and Persians were ruling the Middle East.”

Since the student was a Christian believer, these objections could, at least for him, be largely cleared up by a single Bible verse: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) . . .” (Matt. 24:15).

Here Jesus authenticates the book by saying Daniel *was* a prophet as well as the author of the Scriptures attributed to him. Therefore, he presumably wrote them within his lifetime, while in succession Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Cyrus sat on the throne at Babylon, between 605 and 530 B.C.

Our Lord not only believed in Daniel, but also formulated much of Christianity in apocalyptic terms. He saw himself as fulfilling the prophecies of that and other books, which foretold his first as well as his Second Advent. Ernst Käseman is thinking of this feature where he writes, “Apocalyptic . . . was the mother of all Christian theology.”¹

But, of course, there are readers—even theologians—who do not necessarily regard the words of Christ as sufficient authority for accepting the book of Daniel. For them there are also other answers.

It is true, as the Korean student pointed out, that in the original Hebrew Old Testament the book of Daniel is not published together with the prophets, but in the *Kethuvim* (“Writings”). To this we can add that Jewish tradition goes even further. Daniel 9:24-27 contains a prophecy to show exactly when the Messiah would live and die; it even foretells the destruction of Jerusalem that would follow. All of this found a perfect fulfillment in the life of Jesus Christ, but—according to a rabbi quoted by Alexander Bolotnikov—the Jewish Talmud lays a terrible curse “upon anyone who tries to calculate this 70-week time period.”²

Yet the quibble about the placing of the book in the Old Testament, like the Talmudic curse, is irrelevant. Of primary importance is the fact that Daniel obviously does contain predictions. Are they true or false? The answer to this question depends on whether these prophecies were fulfilled or not. To determine this, we must compare them with historical events, which is what we shall be doing.

III

Some writers have sought to date the book of Daniel in the second century before Christ, rather than four hundred years earlier. Let us mention two of their arguments:

1. *Predicting the future is impossible*, and therefore certain passages in Daniel must have been written after the events that they pretend to foretell.

This is an idea dictated by unbelief, but—surprisingly enough—it frequently rears its head in theological seminaries. Its proponents begin with a spirit of skepticism and then proceed to build their logic on it. We shall demonstrate, however, that for God it is eminently possible not only to unveil, but also to shape, the future. Indeed, he explicitly claims that this is one of his attributes:

I am God, and there is none else;
I am God, and there is none like me,
declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times
the things that are not yet done,
saying, "My counsel shall stand,
and I will do all my pleasure . . ."

(Isa. 46:9, 10)

Many events foretold in the book of Daniel took place a few hundred years beyond the most recent date when the critics said the book could have been written. For instance, much of what was later the Roman Empire did not yet exist in the second century before Christ, and its Western portion broke up almost half a millennium after his birth.

2. *There are historical problems involved in assigning Daniel to the seventh or the sixth century before Christ.* Some names that occur in it are not mentioned by other ancient writers, and must therefore be dismissed as inaccurate; and the author probably lived in the Maccabean period, less than two hundred years before Christ.

For some specialists in Biblical studies, this is now an antiquated idea, which scholars of the 1800s used to parade to their own, considerable satisfaction. But, in the century since then, archaeologists have unearthed records from the very times portrayed in the book of Daniel, discrediting older conclusions based on Classical writers. These newer, more scientific findings confirm the Biblical account.³

The tables have now been turned on those critics of the past. Some items in the book provide information that only a writer living in the Neo-Babylonian age could have possessed, since it had been lost by the time of the Hellenistic period, that is, when Daniel was supposedly fabricated.

Let us briefly illustrate this point by referring to King Belshazzar. Neither the Persian nor the Greek historians who lived after him mention his name. Because of this, the liberal theologians of earlier generations—preferring to put their faith in secular writers rather than in the Bible—were quick to assume that Belshazzar had never existed and the book attributed to Daniel was a fraud. But let us note Raymond Dougherty's conclusion in his *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*. After an exhaustive study of many Babylonian cuneiform tablets in comparison with the Bible record, he concludes that "*the fifth chapter of Daniel ranks next to cuneiform literature in accuracy so far as*

outstanding events are concerned. The Scriptural account may be interpreted as excelling because it employs the name Belshazzar, because it attributes royal power to Belshazzar, and because it recognizes that a dual rulership existed in the kingdom.”⁴

Especially interesting is the following example of how accurate Dan. 5 is. Verses 16 and 29 use the expression “third ruler in the kingdom” to describe the reward that Belshazzar was willing to grant the person who could decipher the mysterious handwriting that had suddenly appeared on the wall of his palace, where he and his guests were holding their impious banquet. For many centuries these words puzzled the readers of the Bible. What could they mean?

The answer came through the discovery of cuneiform texts, which established that Belshazzar was not the official king of Babylon, but coruler with his father Nabonidus. The latter did not relish the administration of the empire, preferring other activities, especially his hobby of amateur archaeology—so he set his son on the throne, and then went off to Arabia, where he remained for ten years. Belshazzar was the *second* ruler in the kingdom; therefore, the highest reward he could offer anybody else was to make him the *third* ruler in the kingdom!⁵

We can safely ignore the somewhat old-fashioned reasons trotted out by liberal theologians for rejecting the book of Daniel. Archaeology now upholds its antiquity and does not contradict its contents. As *The New Bible Dictionary* puts it, “The author gives evidence of having a more accurate knowledge of Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid Persian history than any known historian since the 6th century B.C.” and “it must be stated that the classic arguments for a 2nd-century B.C. date for the book are untenable.”⁶

Dear reader, the book of Daniel is as reliable as it is fascinating.

IV

Now let us consider our second question: How dependable is the method of comparing Scripture with Scripture?

This is an old and exciting approach, and also a valid one, provided it is applied sensibly and with a little finesse. But liberal scholars, especially of the historical-critical school, tend to fault it. For this purpose, they also venture into the field of literary criticism—a risky enterprise for theologians, who usually know little about literature.

Comparing Scripture with Scripture is an excellent method precisely because the Hebrew poets and other authors who created the Bible were masters of metaphor, symbolism, typology, and similar structures. Their writings are rich in quotations and allusions that bind the component books of the Old and New Testament together into one harmonious whole.

Many of those who regularly read the Bible and fully accept it as God’s Word may have little interest in this topic, which possibly reminds them too much of college English. Some, however, will find it absorbing. We think it is important for a deeper understanding of the Scriptures.

A somewhat more scholarly discussion, entitled “Literature and the Bible,” appears as an appendix at the end of this book.

V

Finally, let us ponder the third and last question for this chapter: How is history related to prophecy? Also, just how much do we need to delve into the past to help us understand the prophecies?

Christianity began as a prophetic movement and is intimately linked with apocalyptic eschatology. The Bible foretells the careers of the Messiah and his great rival, Lucifer or Satan, together with the devil’s favorite sidekick, the Antichrist, from the beginning of time to the end of world. As McGinn has explained it, “The revelation given to the apocalyptic seer involves a sense of the totality of world history.”⁷

But that is not all. History is not subsidiary to prophecy, just useful for demonstrating that the Bible’s predictions are true. It is also vitally important in helping us understand the dealings of God with nations and individuals.

For instance, the book of Daniel—like other Old Testament prophecies—reveals that the Lord decides who will rule, not only over individual countries, but over empires. It is God who “removes kings and sets up kings” (Dan. 2:21, RSV). But people are not automatons; they play a vital part in shaping their national as well as their individual destinies. To get the whole picture, we must therefore balance one Scripture against another.

On the one hand, government is in principle a divine institution. For this reason, the apostle Paul admonishes us: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Rom. 13:1, RSV). On the other hand, the Lord himself declares about the ancient state of Israel: “They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not” (Hos. 8:4). What is more, the Wicked One, whom Jesus called “the prince of this world” (John 12:31;14:30), actively seeks to shape the affairs of humanity. It is therefore unnecessary to think that Nero, Adolf Hitler, Idi Amin, and other human monsters were appointed by God himself.

The Bible teaches that “righteousness exalteth a nation” (Prov. 14:34), while wickedness brings decline and even national destruction. All this can be amply illustrated from the experience of nations mentioned in the Old Testament, including Israel and Judah. It is a law that has worked throughout the ages. According to Herbert Armstrong, Abraham Lincoln clearly understood this fact and applied it to the United States in his 30 April 1863 proclamation that announced a national day of fasting and prayer:

“It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God . . . and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations *only* are blessed whose God is the Lord. . . . We have been the recipients of the choicest blessings of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity.

We have grown in numbers, wealth and power *as no other nation ever has grown*; BUT WE HAVE FORGOTTEN GOD! We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.”⁸

A significant discovery of this book is that one particular type of evil, religious persecution, is especially hateful to God and often brings calamity—even national ruin—on nations and empires that practice it. Not all punishment is reserved for the hereafter. Shedding the blood of those who sincerely serve the Lord (though in ways that kings or priests may regard as heretical) often entails the most fearful retribution.

After the persecutors have killed the martyrs, they often have to bury their own: thousands, sometimes millions, of them. We will show that this pattern repeats itself again and again throughout history, no fewer than ten times between the time of Christ and the present. It will do so again before he returns.

Nationally sponsored persecution follows whenever a state supports a particular faith in opposition to other forms of religion. This has been a frequent and fateful temptation for the rulers of Europe. Yielding to it, first the Western and then the Eastern Roman Empire ruined themselves, as the Catholic and Orthodox churches sought to exterminate the so-called heresies of the Ostrogoths and the Paulicians. After Charles V tried to eradicate the Protestant religion, the Holy Roman Empire suffered a similar fate: under the Habsburgers, its power was shattered, and then it withered away. Philip II, who had learned nothing from his father’s miserable experience, embraced the same fanatic ideal and launched events that ultimately reduced unbeatable Spain to a military nonentity. When the primacy in Europe passed to Louis XIV, he insisted on making a similar mistake: not content with the idolatrous cult of being the Sun King or the enjoyment of beautiful Versailles, he just had to lacerate the Huguenots, his most productive subjects. Thereby he drew dire consequences upon himself, his descendants, and his country. Magnificent France in some ways became a second-rate nation, and the monarchy all but expired on the guillotine.

Such and more examples show that mixing statecraft with churchcraft, if vigorously pursued and persisted in, is an infallible recipe for national ruin.

Through his prophets, a merciful Heavenly Father warns the rulers of the world in advance, so that they can avert disaster from their people by turning from folly. He takes no pleasure in punishing wrongdoers but in their salvation. He would greatly prefer the welfare to the decline or destruction of nations; however, they need to avoid the mistakes of the past. Sad to say, America the beautiful, much of whose present greatness resulted from its religious and intellectual freedom, will soon be facing the same temptation as other superpowers that preceded it.

Prophecy should not be dealt with in abstraction. We can validate it only in relation to history and contemporary affairs, with which the writer on prophecy should be accurately and comprehensively acquainted. A theological background is not enough.

Not only specific predictions, but schools of interpretation prove true or false in relation to events. We believe that these have clearly vindicated the Historical School, which *inter alia* asserts that the pontiffs are Antichrist. This is a very ancient way of interpreting Bible prophecy. Its roots go back to early Christian times, though it became extremely prominent in the Protestant Reformation. An opposing view is Futurism, which insists that the Antichrist will be a specific person.

This is basically a Catholic school of thought, although today the majority of Protestants, especially Dispensationalists, also belong to it. It came into special prominence during the Counter Reformation as a deliberate attempt to discredit the Historical School.

The merits of neither approach can be established by simply arguing about Biblical passages. Both must be brought to the test of history, not simply with reference to a happening here and there, but through a somewhat detailed scrutiny of events and by setting them against the overall pattern that these reveal.

We understand the predictions of the Bible through a process of double comparison, namely of Scripture with Scripture, but also of Scripture with *events*: in history and contemporary affairs.

Owing to a considerable interest in prophecy during the past few decades, many have rushed into print to supply the need. Some of their books are valuable, but not a few can be shown to be deficient in their portrayal of history and world affairs. Often they have simply taken over the ideas of older writers.

For instance, some authors do not grasp the true relationship between the papacy and the secular rulers during the 1260 years from 538 to 1798. This is a highly significant period, directly mentioned by seven prophecies. During those years, Catholicism dominated much of Western religion. It is not, however, accurate to say that throughout that time the medieval church also ruled the European nations in a secular sense.

Such, for instance, was the emphatic view of the Presbyterian minister Samuel J. Cassels, more than 150 years ago.⁹ This notion is still being echoed by several present-day writers of the Historical School.

One should therefore not overstress pontifical power to the extent of implying that for 1260 years the secular rulers of Europe were nothing more than papal puppets. It is true that the popes have persistently yearned for such domination and even made a dogma of it: *Prima sententia est, summum Pontificem jure divino habere plenissimam postestatem in universum orbem terrarum, tam in rebus ecclesiasticis quam civilibus* ("The primary doctrine is, that the chief pontiff possesses by divine right, plenary power throughout the

whole world both in ecclesiastical and civil matters”).¹⁰

Secular rulers have been only too aware of this claim, and some—like Germany’s Bismarck and Britain’s imperial Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone—have candidly stated it. The latter wrote in 1874: “Individual servitude, however abject, will not satisfy the Latin church. The State must also be a slave.”¹¹

But just like individuals, organizations are often thwarted in their designs, and hardly any more so than the papacy. As several of our chapters will show, most of the time the popes were unable to dominate the secular rulers. Often it was the other way round: emperors and kings appointed, ill-treated, deposed, and occasionally even killed the pontiffs who displeased them; for the European monarchs also claimed to rule *jure divino* (“by divine right”). When their political objectives clashed with those of the pope, their armies not infrequently invaded and savaged the Papal State in Italy. At times, their forces sacked and burned the city of Rome itself.

Politically the men in the Vatican did achieve the mastery over the kings and queens of Western Europe for about 230 years in the high Middle Ages. At that time they maintained the “papal monarchy,” which extended from the pontificate of Gregory VII (1073-85) to that of Boniface VIII (1294-1303). This was a dramatic period. It began with a German emperor bitterly humiliated by a boastful pope and ended a little more than two centuries later with another, even more boastful pope manhandled into insanity and speedy death by agents from the king of France. In this way “the temporal might of the papacy was toppled almost melodramatically in the reign of Boniface VIII.”¹² The pontifical monarchy lasted only 18 percent of the 1260 years.

On the other hand, this book by no means underestimates the political clout of the papacy; indeed, it stresses the key role played through the ages by what Seymour M. Lipset has so aptly called “the alliance of throne and altar.”¹³ It was a symbiotic relationship, the popes sustained and their decrees enforced by mighty autocrats, while the church helped the rulers to stay in power. This eliminated much dissent and democratic tendencies on the part of their subjects.

One very useful device was the so-called divine right of kings, already touched on. America’s great writer and social critic, Mark Twain, noted that the medieval church not only bolstered this idea, but “preached (to the commoner,) humility, obedience to superiors, the beauty of self-sacrifice; she preached (to the commoner,) meekness under insult; preached (still to the commoner, always to the commoner,) patience, meanness of spirit, non-resistance under oppression; and she introduced heritable ranks and aristocracies, and taught all the Christian populations of the earth to bow down to them and worship them.”¹⁴

Catholicism did not, of course, invent the social subordination of one class to another; but, inheriting the idea from older societies, its clerics have often abetted and exploited it for their own purposes.

In his classic work on the Middle Ages, *The Holy Roman Republic*, the Italian scholar Giorgio Falco makes it clear that the church and empire were distinct, though also united by their faith and

government of people. This had the effect of making religion and politics interdependent,¹⁵ a cooperative design which for 1260 years enabled the papacy to subdue and destroy religious dissidents. Prophecy predicted the situation, and history confirms that it existed.

This is not hair-splitting but a significant point of prophetic interpretation. For example, it reveals how the guilt of the Little Horn depicted in Daniel 7 is shared by the other horns among whom it arose and who so long sustained it, supplying the “secular arm” without which it could not have carried out its designs.

The idea that for most of medieval history the pope was unable actually to dominate the kings and emperors is bound to come as a surprise to some prophetic interpreters of the Historical School, since it conflicts with long-cherished beliefs. Therefore, to prove this point, we must focus on the events of the past in somewhat greater detail than is usual for a work on prophecy.

VII

We are aware of the perils involved in such a preoccupation with history, especially criticism from academics. They tend to specialize and concentrate their attention on limited periods of time, so that they can easily fault the generalist on details. Furthermore, they often view attempts to construct a larger historical picture with a jaundiced eye. Three immensely popular writers of the past have suffered under their scrutiny.

In July 1918, as World War I was drawing to a close, the German writer Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) became famous for his book *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (“The Decline of the West”).¹⁶ Two years later (1920), the same thing happened to H. G. Wells (1866-1946) for his *Outline of History*. Both were concerned with Western decline.

Spengler was possessed of great dramatic power and dazzled his readers. Unfortunately he ignored the facts that did not support his thesis. Wells’s work had scope and style, which his readers found alluring, though his research was quite inadequate.¹⁷

Much more impressive was the third figure, Arnold J. Toynbee, whose ten-volume work, *A Study of History*, appeared from 1934 to 1954 and also proved spellbinding. Unlike the other two writers, he was wonderfully knowledgeable about history. He made a comparative analysis of twenty-one civilizations or societies to determine the common factors that may have caused their breakdown. Paradoxically, he combined the pessimism of Spengler with the optimism of Wells. Like the latter, he believed the ultimate solution for our planet would be a global civilization under a single government and with one religion, synthesized from the major faiths already in the world.¹⁸

But Toynbee also inevitably had his limitations. For one thing, despite his expert knowledge of the ancient Greek and to some extent the Islamic world, he necessarily had to rely a great deal on secondary sources.¹⁹ No human mind, however learned or brilliant, can by itself unerringly grasp the minutiae of millennia or accurately

know the entire story of our species. This certainly makes it easy for the specialist in a limited field to pounce on this or that little defect in whatever one writes. Yet even Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), the father of modern historiography, was not always without error. He “was so inaccurate in mere factual detail that he got his own birth date wrong.”²⁰ Toynbee has also been faulted in another way: “In a torrent of criticism, some of it devastating, critics refuted his laws and disparaged his providential view. Great as his book is, it seems unlikely that anyone will want to follow in Toynbee’s footsteps.”²¹

At times, the present work may remind the reader of the aforementioned writers. It also sees a general, underlying pattern in events and depicts a world eventually united, though not as either Wells or Toynbee expected it would be. But this book is only partly historical. Many other elements have entered into its design: not only prophecy and related theological concerns, but also contemporary affairs and a love of literature, to mention just a few.

In particular, it presents a view of history derived from the Bible itself. We believe—as Isaac T. Hinton, an influential Baptist clergyman and a non-Millerite, did in 1843—that “History [is] the key to Prophecy, but Prophecy is no less a key to the philosophy of history.”²²

Fortunately, as the mushrooming popularity of the History Channels on TV has demonstrated, bygone days can be most absorbing, if a little imagination is brought into play. This is especially the case if their relevance to the present and their possible importance for the future are also made clear. We trust that this work will arouse a fair amount of interest through its historical element, our “story line.”

VIII

The events foretold in the Bible come alive and excite us when we ponder them in the light of both the distant past and recent events. But more than that, “history and prophecy unite to confirm our faith.”²³ Studied together, they demonstrate convincingly that “we have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19).

Part 1

Nebuchadnezzar's Two Images

3 An Ancient King Dreams About the Future

I

The prophecies of Daniel begin in chapter 2, with an amazing story. Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.), the great king of the New Babylonian Empire,¹ lived in Mesopotamia, in the Middle East, between two famous rivers: the Euphrates and Tigris. Today the region is a country called Iraq. Nebuchadnezzar, having consolidated his power, was very concerned about the future.

The events described in Dan. 2 occurred in his second official year as king (vs. 1), i.e., 603-02 B.C.² He had actually assumed power in 605 B.C., after the death of his father Nabopolassar. But, in accordance with the custom of his city, his official installation took place on the next New Year's Day, 604 B.C., during a religious ceremony which all kings had to undergo, when they "took the hands of the Babylonian god Bel,"³ also known as Marduk.

II

One evening, Nebuchadnezzar was worried about the years ahead. How long would his achievements last? After all, his part of the world had seen many conquerors come and go. Their empires often crumbled into dust almost as fast as they did. Would this also be the fate of the great Babylon that he had rebuilt so gloriously?

While brooding on these matters, the king fell asleep and had a very vivid dream. But the next morning he had forgotten it, except that it kept nagging at his subconscious mind. What made it worse was that, like many ancient people, he believed such dreams could be significant signposts to the future. This lapse of memory led to dramatic events.

Nebuchadnezzar remembered all the clever people at his court who dabbled in the occult, "the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans." The last-mentioned were scholarly men whose studies included mathematics and astronomy, but also *astrology*.⁴ Hastily the king had them summoned to help him recall his dream, and to explain it (vs. 2).

But how could they help him? He had forgotten it. "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation" (vs. 4), they said.

This made him very angry. It was precisely the contents of the dream itself that he first wanted them to relate. In his frustration and fury, he gave orders to kill not only these categories of people, as useless charlatans, but "*all* the wise men of Babylon" (vs. 12, emphasis added). Just as the soldiers were coming to seize them, however, they were saved. What had happened?

Among the learned men, there was a young Jewish prisoner-of-war

called Daniel, who served the Hebrew God. With him were his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They had not been summoned to explain Nebuchadnezzar's dream, since they were not magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, Chaldeans, astrologers, or soothsayers—usually thought of as constituting the wise men.⁵ The king, who at other times could be so enlightened, now recklessly ordered the liquidation of all the clever persons at his court, real intellectuals as well as the psychics who claimed to read the future.

Fortunately Daniel, who had also been sentenced, succeeded in gaining an audience with Nebuchadnezzar and a temporary stay of execution for everybody (vv. 14-16). Together with his three condemned companions, he spent a night in prayer—on death row. The Lord answered, revealing the matter to him.

The next morning Arioch, captain of the execution squad, came for the four Hebrews. But when he heard of God's revelation, he quickly ushered Daniel into the king's presence. The youthful Hebrew told an astonished Nebuchadnezzar everything he had dreamed and forgotten. The young man also explained what it meant. As a result, the lives of not only Daniel and his three friends, but of all the wise men—including the charlatans—were spared.

III

This is what the king had seen:

Standing before him in his dream was a great statue (or *image*, as some Bible translations call it). It consisted of several materials, mostly metals. The head was made of gold, the arms and chest of silver, the stomach and thighs of bronze, the legs of iron, and the feet and toes of iron mixed with clay. As Nebuchadnezzar gazed at it, a stone came hurtling down onto its feet and smashed the entire statue, grinding it into a fine dust which the wind blew away. Then the stone grew and grew into a mountain that filled the earth. (Vv. 32-35)

What did it all mean? God explained the dream to Daniel, who told its interpretation to the king. The statue was a prophecy of human history from that time onward until the end of the world and beyond. It is therefore also relevant to our day.

IV

Daniel said the head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar and his New Babylonian Empire, of which he was the greatest king (vv. 37-38). In beautifying its sanctuaries, he made lavish use of this metal, greatly impressing both his contemporaries and subsequent generations.

Far away in Jerusalem, another prophet referred to Babylon as “a golden cup in the Lord's hand” (Jer. 51:7, emphasis added). About 150 years later, the famous Greek dramatist Aeschylus (?525-456 B.C.) wrote of Babylon “teeming with gold,” while Herodotus (d. c. 424) during a visit there was amazed at the quantity of gold in Marduk's temple.⁶

Reference to this metal or riches has become part of the very definition for Babylon, as in Hirsch's *First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, What our Children Need to Know*: "... a city in the ancient MIDDLE EAST that was known for its great wealth."⁷ Gold was indeed a fitting symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's opulence and majesty, as well as his moral worth in comparison with subsequent rulers.

V

The second world power (vs. 39), which defeated the Babylonians in 539 B.C., was the Medes and Persians. It began as the Median Empire. Then it was taken over and dominated by the Persians. From that time on, it became the Medo-Persian Empire. In the dream, these two related peoples were represented by the arms and chest of silver.

This empire had kings like Cyrus, Xerxes, and Darius. It occupied a vast area, stretching all the way from Egypt to India. Its court was also famous for its material wealth and luxurious way of life. Silver was its criterion of wealth and medium of exchange.⁸ But, from God's point of view, Medo-Persia could not quite compare with Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar.

VI

The third world power (vs. 39) was the empire established in 331 B.C. by Alexander the Great with his Macedonian and Greek armies. He defeated Darius, the last of the Persian kings. After the Conqueror's death, his generals divided his domain among themselves, establishing the Hellenistic kingdoms. The last ruler of these was beautiful and scheming Queen Cleopatra of Egypt.

In the prophetic dream, this historical stage is represented by the belly and thighs of bronze, which also happened to be the most important metal in the Greek armor. According to Ezekiel, Daniel's prophetic colleague and fellow exile in Babylon, Javan (the Greeks) were among those who bartered with "vessels of bronze" (Eze. 27:13, RSV).

This metal shows diminished value in comparison with the materials just mentioned. The ancient Greeks were not as wealthy as either the Babylonians or the Persians. But they proved to be immensely gifted and cultured. About the ancient Athenians, who flourished before Alexander's time, Barbara Habenstreit wrote that they "seemed far more intent on building great minds than great monuments."⁹ Edith Hamilton, a world-renowned classicist, seems to suggest that they practically invented Western civilization¹⁰—though their legacy was modified by the Judeo-Christian worldview.

But in God's eyes, the Greeks were morally inferior, despite their splendid attainments. One of the things he held against them was the homosexual lifestyle of many among them. In this, they also influenced others. (Rom. 1:19-32)

VII

The fourth world power (vs. 40) was Rome, whose ascendancy in the Mediterranean world has been variously dated from 168 to 31 B.C. That iron symbolized it most suitably was acknowledged by none other than Edward Gibbon, the famous eighteenth-century historian, who had given up Christianity: "The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the Ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome."¹¹

Some well-known Roman leaders were Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Hadrian. Their emperors included some fine rulers, but also bloodthirsty tyrants, of whom the best known is probably Nero, though he was far from being unique. We mention only one more: Valentinian I (321-75), whom Gibbon considered the last great Western emperor. Though generally an able ruler, this so-called Christian was choleric and given to copious brutality: "In the government of his household, or of his empire, slight, or even imaginary offences—a hasty word, a casual omission, an involuntary delay—were chastised by a sentence of immediate death. The expressions which issued the most readily from the mouth of the emperor of the West were, 'Strike off his head;'—'Burn him alive;'—'Let him be beaten with clubs till he expires . . .'"¹²

Classicism, which for many centuries dominated much of Western education, has accustomed us to the idea that the Romans were great civilizers. Many have justly admired their splendid literature and much in their legal system. They are also said to have had a genius for administration. For such reasons, enthusiastic moderns who never had to endure the Roman yoke have considered them enlightened overlords. Others, however, have been skeptical, recognizing in these views a remnant of ancient propaganda, handed down to us through both the Catholic Church and the Renaissance humanists.

Rebecca West was one of the doubting Thomases: "We have no real evidence that the peoples on which the Roman Empire imposed its civilization had not pretty good civilizations of their own, better adapted to local conditions." To support this view, she refers to the great French historian Camille Julian, who maintained that in Gaul the Romans "frustrated the development of a civilization of the first order," and Strzygowski, who thought they disorganized the Germanic peoples. Research shows, moreover, that the Romans' contemporaries sometimes had excellent law codes of their own. West even maintains that the empire perished precisely because its rulers were "unable to work out a satisfactory political and economic policy for Rome itself." She concluded: "It is possible that Rome destroyed far more human achievement than she ever fostered."¹³

Culturally and intellectually the Romans were not on a par with the Greeks who had preceded them, even though they later shared this people's special brand of immorality. Besides, they could be extremely

cruel. Some of their practices were horrible, especially the large-scale use of crucifixion, and a fiendish fondness for gladiatorial games.

So wicked was this pagan empire that Rev. 12:9 identifies it with the devil himself. In its heyday, Rome was the center of Satan's earthly power; for he worked through it mightily. Later he handed this city over to the Antichrist, who from him obtained "his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Rev. 13:2).

In ability, the ancient Romans were generally on a lower level than the Greeks, though as warriors they proved to be more outstanding—just as iron is a better military metal than bronze.

VIII

At this stage of the dream, a difference occurs. The Roman Empire was not to be followed by another unitary world power. Instead, it would fall apart. In the West, Teutonic peoples overwhelmed it. Here the empire broke up into territories that later became the modern countries of Western Europe: Britain, Belgium, France, and so on. These nations are represented by the feet and toes of iron mixed with clay.

Their period is usually dated from A.D. 476, when the Germanic leader Odoacer pensioned off the last Western emperor, Romulus Augustus. This boy grandly bore the names of Rome's founder as well as of its first emperor; but because he was a child—and no doubt as an ironic commentary on the situation—he was nicknamed Romulus Augustulus, which means "Romulus, the little emperor."

The setup resulting from the division of the empire would be partly strong and partly weak (vv. 41-43). But the admixture of the iron in the statue indicated that Roman elements would persist in the subsequent, European phase.

Above all, Daniel stated that Western Europe would never again be completely united. Iron does not mix with clay! Many rulers have tried to amalgamate these countries or sought to bring them closer together, often through arranged marriages. Read this amazing prophecy: "As you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, *but they will not hold together*" (vs. 43, emphasis added, RSV).

George H. Merritt notes the many blood relationships among the hostile monarchs of 1914: "Europe at war can almost be likened to a huge family quarrel. The royal houses, especially the countries which are most vitally concerned by the war, are practically all of the same Germanic stock, and almost of one blood. There have been so many intermarriages between these houses that German blood dominates every European throne with the exception of the two small kingdoms of Servia and Montenegro."¹⁴

These related rulers included the three most important belligerents. They were all first cousins: King George V of Britain; the Russian czar, Nicholas II; and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. Regarding the Teutonic ancestry of George and Wilhelm, we add that their grandfather, Prince Albert, was German and their grandmother,

Queen Victoria, three-quarters German.

Not surprisingly, this royal couple often conversed in the language of their continental ancestors. When the Prince lay dying, Victoria spoke to him endearingly and referred to herself as his *Weibchen* (“little wife”). What is more, her English was always imperfect.

During World War I, with its horrible death toll, the fact that their monarchy was so very German increasingly angered the British people. King George V belonged to the House of Wettin von Saxe-Coburg and Gotha,¹⁵ while Queen Mary, his consort, “was the eldest child of Francis (later duke) of Teck, of the royal house of Württemberg.”¹⁶ Therefore, on 17 July 1917, by royal proclamation, all Queen Victoria’s male descendants adopted the surname “of Windsor.”¹⁷

At the king’s request, the Prince of Battenberg, a kinsman and fleet admiral, also Englished his family, by translating this German title into Mountbatten¹⁸—which Louis, first Earl Mountbatten of Burma, went on to make illustrious. His nephew Prince Philip, with the same last name, was married to Queen Elizabeth II. On 8 February 1960, she decreed that henceforth all their descendants not styled *prince*, *princess*, or *royal highness* were to be surnamed Mountbatten-Windsor.¹⁹

In earlier ages, too, the monarchs of Europe had been blood relatives. But instead of binding them together, this factor fueled many wars, as cousins—and sometimes brothers and sisters—fought to deprive one another of provinces or entire countries.

The urge to reunite the West has in part resulted from its Roman heritage. When Charlemagne was crowned by the pope in A.D. 800 on Christmas day, he received the title of *Roman* Emperor—as did many rulers after him. The most prominent of these was the Hapsburger Charles V (1500-58), still inspired by the medieval ideal of an all-embracing empire and the last to be crowned by the Roman pontiff.²⁰

Napoleon Bonaparte, three hundred years later, resurrected this ancient dream, when in 1804 he crowned himself *emperor* of France. Though at first he pretended to be a man of the people, he had actually been born “into a family that held a title of nobility from the Republic of Genoa,” which goes far toward explaining his act. In Jean A. D. Ingres’s portrait celebrating Napoleon’s coronation, we see “stage props that echo the grandeur of imperial Rome.”²¹ He was “proud of his Italian descent” and “fascinated by the Roman Empire.”²² Furthermore, as Hendrik Van Loon points out, the example of Charlemagne “was constantly” before his eyes.²³

All these men, and others, exerted themselves to reunite the territories that had been ruled by Rome, but nobody could manage it—not even Adolf Hitler, who loved to speak of the “*Deutsches Reich*” (the German *Empire*) and then sent out his armies to conquer Europe. At one time, he came close to achieving his objective, and for a few years actually dominated the greatest part of that continent. If he had succeeded, he may well have exchanged the title *fürher* for that of emperor.

There is an interesting story that the Biblical scholar Gerhard F. Hasel loved to relate about his father, a German minister and colporteur whom the Wehrmacht had drafted and assigned to the Russian front: “From time to time when alone he drew courage from a fading picture of the Daniel 2 image, which he treasured in a pocket, reminding himself that Hitler must fail sooner or later.”²⁴

Today the European Union (EU) represents a similar ambition, aiming at a United States of Europe; but ultimately this will also not succeed. God has said so, in advance. The countries concerned are, after all, not made entirely of Roman iron; in them, there is also fragile clay, which crumbles easily.

This prophecy has an important wider implication. If the European countries which used to be the Western Roman Empire will not reunite, this also signifies that no world government can come into existence before the Lord returns—despite those Futurists who predict that the Antichrist will become the ruler of our planet.

IX

We have seen that the gold, silver, bronze, and iron symbolize the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks, and Romans. But what does the clay represent?

It may be supposed that it refers to the Germanic element, but this somehow does not sound right. Far from being weak like clay, the Germanic peoples have usually been associated with strength, especially military might. They have mostly been formidable fighters.

Even in her heyday, Rome could never really cope with them. When Augustus, the first emperor, was still expanding his territories, he planned to conquer all Germany. This he was unable to do. Just nine years into our era, Hermann, or—to use his Latin name—Arminius, ambushed P. Quinctilius Varus, with his three legions, annihilating them in the Teutoburg Forest, which put a sudden end to Roman power east of the Rhine.²⁵

And so Germany remained largely outside the empire. From this time on the Romans adopted a defensive posture, largely obeying the testament of Augustus Caesar, which advised them to avoid all further territorial expansion.²⁶ Instead, they set up permanent camps, maintaining garrisons against their formidable foes in the north. Eventually this, too, proved futile. As the power of Rome declined, the Germanic peoples came in and prevailed.

Nor have warlikeness and valor deserted their descendants. These qualities constituted one reason why the nations of Europe were able, in the past five centuries, to subdue most of the planet, establishing vast empires of their own.

Even today, the mightiest nation on earth, America, has numerous citizens descended from the ancient Germans. Its presidents have mostly borne British names like Washington and Lincoln, but also Dutch names like Van Buren and Roosevelt, and a German name like Eisenhower. Surprisingly, the largest ethnic component of its white population is not English but German,²⁷ if the other Britons are

excluded. Its predominant language, however, is derived from England, whose original thirteen colonies became the nucleus of the United States.

It is not feasible to identify the clay with the nations that took over the Western Roman Empire. So what could this symbolism mean?

Louis Gaussen (1790-1863), professor at the Theological Seminary in Geneva and evangelical preacher of the Second Coming, said it was “the union of statecraft and churchcraft.”²⁸ Ellen White greatly admired him. She read and mentioned the book in which he uses this expression;²⁹ she also echoes and expands his idea: “The mingling of churchcraft and statecraft is represented by the iron and the clay. This union is weakening all the power of the churches.”³⁰ Her husband, James White, identified the clay in Dan. 2 with the papacy.³¹ Its involvement in and interference with the affairs of Western Europe has often proven disastrous and is probably one reason why it could never reunite.

X

An important point is that the toes do not, from God’s perspective, represent a fifth stage; for Dan. 2 speaks of only four great world powers. However fragmented, and despite the addition of clay to the iron, Western Europe is in important ways a continuation of Rome. It is still called “the kingdom” (singular) and not “kingdoms” (vs. 42).

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream dealt with the empires and mightiest nations of the Middle East and Western Europe, which have also had a tremendous influence on the world as a whole. He even saw the time in which we are living now. We are right at the end of history, in the period symbolized by the toes.

XI

But the feet and toes do not represent the end of the dream. After the statue, the king saw a stone, which suddenly sprang from a mountain and struck the image on its feet. Then it crushed everything—the clay, iron, bronze, silver, and gold—and ground it into fine dust, which was blown away by the wind. After this, the stone grew into a very great mountain, which filled the earth. (Vv. 34-35)

How did Daniel explain the stone? It must be something stupendous, because it will destroy all the nations of Western Europe, as well as everything else the statue may signify. This is an event that will probably affect us personally, in the not too distant future.

The stone or rock (vs. 44) refers to nothing less than the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Yes, he is really returning to the earth, as he promised he would do (John 14:1-3). He is the king who is to rule over an eternal world empire.

In the Bible, Jesus is often compared to a stone, e.g. in 1 Pet. 2:4-8. He is, as the famous hymn-writer, A. M. Toplady, put it, the Rock of Ages—and the Saviour of all who accept and follow Him. But to those who persistently reject his mercy and choose to remain disobedient,

he will be the stone of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, returning to crush them, together with the rest of the statue.

It would be well to heed the words of the Lord: "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" (Matt. 21:42)

In verse 44 of the same chapter, Jesus mentioned the alternatives for every person and nation on earth: "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." We believe the last part of that sentence clearly refers to Dan. 2:34-35.

Not only the people of Nebuchadnezzar's time, but also most others since then, have rejected the One who became their Saviour and whom God has destined to be king over all the earth (Ps. 2:7, 8). Nevertheless, in his appointed hour, he will be enthroned as the ruler of an empire encompassing the entire planet.

Some forms of stone are most enduring, which is symbolically important. At the entrance to the Acropolis of Athens in 1985, I noticed ancient marble blocks which look as though they were cut and chiseled yesterday, though they have outlasted both the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. Of even greater antiquity are the massive pyramids of Egypt, which have lasted for more than four thousand years. And in nature there are great unhewn rocks and cliff faces almost as old as the world itself.

Ancient, too, is the Lord and Redeemer of our race. His goings forth have been from the days of eternity, and to his kingdom there will be no end.

XII

But now we must ask an important question: Why would Jesus want to obliterate the Western nations and their transplanetary offspring, including America? He is not naturally destructive, but reasonable, compassionate, and kind. The Creator and Redeemer would only destroy as a last resort, and for very good reasons.

To this question, people of different nationalities would give different answers.

For instance, the Africans and Asians—still smarting under the memories of the white man's empires—can point to the exploitation and wrongs inflicted on them over the past five centuries. Some of them also have more recent grievances, real or imaginary, like Iran, which routinely refers to the United States as "the great Satan."

But the Bible gives a totally different reason for the Lord's displeasure with the Western powers. It says they will support the Antichrist in a coalition that opposes and fights against the Lord Jesus.

Is this possible? Let us read about their astounding and tragic apostasy in Rev. 17, where the same countries are depicted, though under a different symbolism: "And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. These are of

one mind and give over their power and authority to the beast; they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called chosen and faithful.” (Vv. 12-14, RSV)

As we have already stated, there will be no one-world government, because “they will not hold together” (Dan. 2: 43, RSV); yet for a short while they will form an alliance to fight against the Lord and those who truly serve him.

The passage from Revelation helps us to understand why the stone first strikes the statue on its feet and toes: they decide to become Christ’s enemies and must be dealt with accordingly.

XIII

Another point is raised in the following verse: “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, *all together* were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried *them* away, so that not a trace of *them* could be found” (Dan. 2:35, RSV, emphases added).

At the end of time, Rome, Greece, Medo-Persia, and Babylon will all be divinely dealt with—in addition to Western Europe and its transplanetary offspring. But how? Surely those older empires have already gone out of existence.

Yes, but God does not forget, and has a view of time, history, and people different from ours. At the end of the world, all nations that have ever existed and each individual who has ever lived on this planet will endure his final scrutiny. There is to be both a judgment and a resurrection for all. The Scriptures say so, in various passages.

Besides, so many elements not only of Rome and Greece, but also of Medo-Persia and Babylon have persisted in our civilization until the present day. We mention only one small example: the towers that adorn so many Christian churches are, according to Ralph E. Woodrow, culturally descended from the gigantic ziggurat that used to point up piously toward the sun in Nebuchadnezzar’s capital:³² Etemenanki, the rebuilt tower of Babel itself—that foolish symbol of our human pride.

Nebuchadnezzar was shown, so to speak, an image of humankind, finally weighed in the balances and mostly found wanting, since only those who accept Jesus as their Saviour and Lord will be part of his everlasting kingdom.

The prophecy of Dan. 2 is a stirring piece of Scripture. It is also a necessary key for understanding other parts of the Bible, such as Revelation 13, in which we read about the Beast.

4 The Four Metals: Biblical and Other Parallels

I

It was natural for ancient kings to think in terms of statues. This method ensured that future generations would not forget them or their achievements. Modern statesmen are also commemorated this way, and every politician probably has a secret hankering after a statue or two. But in Nebuchadnezzar's time an image was also a religious object, and each of the metals he saw had a theological meaning.

People thought the dreams of kings were a way in which the gods revealed their will. Mesopotamian records mention many royal dreams. In one of them Gudea saw a huge man reaching from earth to heaven, with a kingly crown on his head.¹ This dream occurred about 1,500 years before Nebuchadnezzar. Gudea was the *ensi* or ruler of Lagash, a city southeast of Babylon. He probably lived in the period when the foreign Gutti dynasty was dominating the region, c. 2230-2130 B.C.²

As we have seen, Nebuchadnezzar was thinking about his own handiwork, the New Babylonian Empire, and of its future. God found it appropriate to communicate with him in terms of a statue or image, appearing to him in a dream. So much is clear. But what about the different metals? Is their symbolism purely arbitrary, or is there more to it?

It so happens that this question can be answered rather precisely by referring to various parallels, in both the Bible and other ancient literatures.

II

We have already noted that the arrangement of the metals in the dream is on a scale of descending worth. This is also how they are presented by other Old Testament writers.

In the time of Moses, when God commanded the Israelites to destroy their Moabite foes, part of the loot was *gold, silver, bronze, iron* . . . (Num. 31:22, RSV). In Joshua these same metals feature three times (Josh 6:19, 24; 22:8) as silver, gold, bronze, and iron. The latter book lists the silver before the gold, because at one time ancient people considered it the more valuable metal. But in the Bible bronze is almost always mentioned before iron. These last-mentioned two are also military metals.

The first book of Chronicles says, in four places, that King David—together with other prominent Israelites—donated *gold, silver, bronze, and iron* for God's temple, which would be erected by Solomon, his son and successor (1 Chr. 22:14, 16; 29:2, 7, RSV). Two passages of 2 Chronicles that deal with the actual building arrangements likewise list these materials in that sequence (2:7, 14).

This also seems to have been the order in which Mesopotamians mentioned them. Froom states that “the same series of gold, silver, bronze, and iron had long before been enumerated on the great triumphal inscription of Sargon II.”³

III

Ancient Greek literature contains an astonishing parallel to the symbolism of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. About two hundred years earlier, a poet named Hesiod (c. 800 B.C.) had written about these very metals in his *Works and Days*, lines 106-201. Here is an English translation by H. J. Rose:

There have been five ages of the world; first came the Golden Age, in which men lived without toil, never grew old, and died as if they were falling asleep. Kronos was king then. These men were turned by Zeus into good daimones, who walk the earth guarding mortal men and giving them wealth. Next came the Silver Age; the people of that time were much inferior. They took a hundred years to grow up, and did not live long after reaching maturity. Zeus destroyed them, because they were unjust to each other and neglected the worship of the gods; but they too became daimones, living underground. Next, in the Bronze Age, all was strife; they were a mighty race, who fought and in the end destroyed one another with bronze weapons, for they had no iron. Zeus then created the race of heroes, which was better and more righteous; they were demigods, and having died in the great wars at Thebes and Troy, they went to the Islands of the Blessed. Would I had died sooner or were not yet born! for now is the age of Iron, which is very vile and will grow steadily worse.⁴

There we have it: exactly the same four metals that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, and in the same order: gold, silver, bronze, and iron! What is more, Hesiod said they symbolized “ages of the world,” some two hundred years before the Lord sent the Babylonian king a dream on a related topic.

Hesiod was a Greek and not a Babylonian. Had Nebuchadnezzar read his poem? Probably not, but this is not the point. What is significant is that in the ancient world these metals had become symbols for stages of human history even before the neo-Babylonian king was born or his empire existed.

The Greeks did not live in isolation from other people of their time, who influenced them in many ways. Their alphabet, for instance, was adapted from a system of writing that reached them via the Phoenicians. Nowadays scholars recognize more and more that ancient Greek civilization was not only indebted to Crete, but had its beginnings in the East Mediterranean heritage, “largely made up of Mesopotamian material.”⁵

Leonard Woolley, the great archaeologist, has put this well: “We

have outgrown the phase when all the arts were traced to Greece, and Greece was thought to have sprung, like Pallas, full-grown from the brain of the Olympian Zeus; we have learnt how that flower of genius drew its sap from Lydians and Hittites, from Phoenicia and Crete, from Babylon and Egypt. But the roots go farther back; behind all these lies Sumer”⁶—more than a millennium before Nebuchadnezzar’s birth.

IV

But the influences also worked the other way round. The magnificent culture of Hellas had begun to affect the Near East a long time before Nebuchadnezzar appeared on the scene.⁷ The Greeks who lived on Cyprus acknowledged the supremacy of the Assyrian conqueror, Sargon II (722-705 B.C.). Some were guest laborers and mercenaries in Mesopotamia. In 694 B.C. Sennacherib attacked Elam from the Persian Gulf, after sailing down the Euphrates with a crew of Phoenician and Ionian Greek sailors.⁸ And according to cuneiform tablets created during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, some of Hesiod’s Ionian countrymen were among the many foreigners employed on royal building projects.⁹

Beginning with Hesiod, the idea of the four metals symbolizing stages of human life or history could have caught on through these compatriots of his and spread into Babylonia from Asia Minor, where he lived. But the other possibility is that it did not originate with him. He was not a great or very original poet and may have referred to a tradition already well known throughout the Middle East of his time.

That is exactly what he did in another of his poems, reworking material originating with the Hittites, an ancient people whose empire flourished between 1900 and 1200 B.C. Amongst other texts they had produced “Kingship in Heaven,” a mythical work describing how the supreme deities Alalu, Anu, Kumarbi, and Teshub supplanted one another. “Via Phoenicia this tradition reached Greece and emerged in the guise of Uranus, Cronus and Zeus in the *Theogonia* of Hesiod.”¹⁰

If he borrowed near-Eastern material in this case, it is very feasible that he may have done the same when describing the four-metal symbolism. Its association with various gods, as noted above, leads further credence to such a view.

After Hesiod’s passage about the different ages, the translator in a footnote adds the following comment: “‘Would I had died sooner or were not yet born!’: If this is to be pressed, Hesiod believes that a better time (a recommencement of the whole cycle?) is coming, a doctrine very familiar in later days.”¹¹

V

The notion that history recurs can throw additional light on Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. It shows that heaven recognized his kingdom as the beginning of a new historical cycle, but implies that this, too, would follow a pattern of devolution; for great states and

civilizations eventually all break down, as Arnold Toynbee and other writers have demonstrated.

The reader will have noticed the expression *New Babylonian Empire*, which we have now used a few times. It really began with Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, assisted by his illustrious son. But more than a thousand years earlier there had also been an *Old Babylonian Empire*, established by another famous king called Hammurabi, of the first (or "Amorite") dynasty. He published one of the earliest legal codes and lived in about the eighteenth century before Christ.¹²

But his dominion, too, had been preceded by more ancient agglomerates. One was the short-lived Old Assyrian Empire, extending from the Zagros Mountains to the Mediterranean. Its founder had been Shamshi-Adad, who reigned in about 1813-1780 B.C.¹³

And even this was not the first attempt to unite all the people of the region. The oldest Mesopotamian Empire was a small one, but of great importance. It encompassed virtually everybody on the planet and therefore had what amounted to a world government, the first and last one since the Great Flood. We read of it in Gen. 10 and 11. Its creator and ruler was a remarkable black man, a Cushite named Nimrod. He founded various great cities that became well known in later years, including Babel (Babylon), which was the center of his realm, extending over all Mesopotamia.

The Lord broke up this political entity by confusing the language spoken by everybody up to that time. Apart from other considerations, it seems that he did this to protect humanity by not staking everything on the performance of a single nation or people. Every human society eventually goes bad and suffers great calamities or even extinction. If a world state becomes corrupt, this can doom the entire race, as was evidently the case with the people who lived before the Flood.

Nebuchadnezzar was a great builder, a fact of which he boasted: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" (Dan. 4:30) He was also a great *rebuilder*. "With the aid of his wife Amytis, he undertook the rebuilding and embellishment of his capital Babylon. A religious man, he rebuilt the temples of Marduk and Nabu with many shrines in Babylon . . . He also restored temples in Sippar, Marad, and Borsippa."¹⁴ The reconstruction of Babylon was both lavish and monumental.¹⁵

And so the New Babylonian Empire constituted, as its name suggests, a new beginning, in some ways a rekindling of ancient glory. In communicating with the king, God recognized this fact, by using the ancient symbolism of the four metals.

Are we suggesting that things can happen more than once? In a literal sense they do not, but though history does not repeat itself, human nature does, as Voltaire once pointed out. Barbara Tuchman, who quotes him, concludes that the chronicles of bygone days are full of "phenomenal parallels."¹⁶

President Harry Truman, that marvelously self-educated man with his first-class brain—who began to read before he was five¹⁷—quite

consciously used history and biography to evaluate contemporary people, their character as well as their actions. He, too, had discovered that human nature never changed; in this sense, there really is nothing new under the sun. As he was fond of saying, "The only thing new in the world is the history you don't know."¹⁸

VI

The idea of historical recurrence used to be widely accepted and lasted for many centuries. Five hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar's time, it appeared in more than one passage of the great Roman poet Virgil (70-17 B.C.).

For instance, in his Fourth Eclogue, he wrote: "The grand line of the centuries is reborn . . . be propitious to the new-born son under whom the race of iron shall first come to an end and a golden race shall arise through all the world."¹⁹ Incidentally, this was not, as people in the Middle Ages commonly believed, a prophecy about Christ, but wishful thinking to hail the expected offspring of Mark Antony's ill-fated marriage to Octavia.

Later, years after Antony's affair with Cleopatra and his suicide, Virgil in his great epic, the *Aeneid*, expressed a similar sentiment to flatter Octavian:

Caesar Augustus, son of a god, destined to rule
Where Saturn ruled of old in Latium, and there
Bring back the age of gold . . .²⁰

The iron indicates the end of a cycle, to be followed by a new one, inaugurating another age of gold. Of course, Virgil was wrong; though the Augustan age in which he lived was a splendid time for Latin culture, with a first emperor whom the world would always remember, Rome—in its later imperial as in its earlier republican stage—was, in God's sight, iron through and through.

Applying this idea of recurrence to Daniel's time, it would be feasible to say that the hideous might of the Assyrians, which preceded the New Babylonian Empire, had been an earlier iron age. The downfall of that empire filled the entire Middle East with jubilation. Nebuchadnezzar initiated a new golden age, which, alas, did not survive him long. After his reign of forty-four years, his successors were unimportant and quickly disappeared.²¹

VII

A late echo of the view that history recurs in cycles is found in the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). In a poem written about two hundred years ago, he also referred specifically to the first metal mentioned by Hesiod, which subsequently appeared in Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.²²

Even today people still sometimes speak of a Golden Age and occasionally an Iron Age. Examples can be found in Max Lerner's monumental analysis of the United States as a civilization. He says, "The quest for America was the quest at once for gold and the Golden Age," while in another context he refers to "an indication that the creative phase of American capitalism is past and the future will be that of an Iron Age."²³

A century earlier, Abraham Lincoln had also applied this imagery to business affairs. His penetrating gaze was fixed on the super-rich, who were corrupting the government whenever they could to protect their shameless exploitation of the poor: "Financial success is purely metallic. The man who gains it has four metallic attributes—gold in his palm, silver on his tongue, brass in his face, and iron in his heart."²⁴

VIII

The ancient Babylonian king was concerned about the future of his empire. Then he dreamt and saw a statue consisting of substances meaningful to him. What was different, however, was the combination of these with new material . . . and the sequel: the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

As a method of communicating with Nebuchadnezzar's mind, the dream was brilliantly appropriate. God spoke to him in terms that he could understand and accept as soon as Daniel offered the explanation. That is surely one reason why the king did not argue with the young man who, after all, was his prisoner-of-war. On the contrary, he praised the Most High and rewarded both Daniel and his friends with important positions in his government.

5 The Continuing Importance of Western Europe

I

Some readers may be puzzled by the exclusion from King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of any reference to countries outside the Middle East and Europe. What, for instance, about the mighty Mongol empire of Genghis Khan (*d.* 1227), modern China, or the United States? Bible prophecy does not overlook the extra-European nations, as we shall see more clearly when we study the Dragon, the Beast, and the two-horned creature of Revelation 13.

Daniel 2 is only one of several prophecies, which it introduces. It presents an outline. Other chapters fill in the details. We believe, moreover, that the feet and toes include some nations outside but descended from Europe.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream does not predict future events in general but only those concerned with salvation history. It is also interesting to note that the Holy Land was ruled by each power depicted, from Babylon right down to the Crusaders—who maintained their Kingdom of Jerusalem for almost a century, from 1099 to 1187.

The prophetic statue is demolished by the Second Coming, at a time when history will again find its focus in Western Europe. We therefore think that Japan and other Asian "Tigers", apart—perhaps—from China, will fail to realize their optimistic dreams of becoming superpowers early in the new millennium.

II

In November 1997, these countries suddenly began to experience a drastic and embarrassing downsizing of their outlook on the future. When the U.S. president conferred that month with seventeen heads of state from the Far East, the *New York Times* compared their attitude with what it had been at their first meeting in 1993 and for a few years after that: "China, Japan and other nations of the Pacific Rim have swaggered into their annual gatherings, almost arrogant in their confidence that the region would be the twenty-first century's economic engine and the new locus of world power." But now in the city of Vancouver, Canada, it was expected that the majority would "nearly all be limping, wounded by global economic forces beyond their control . . ."¹

American business was experiencing a remarkable expansion. But within six months of that 1997 meeting, both the economy and the government of Indonesia collapsed, Thailand and South Korea teetered on the brink, and the currencies of all these and other countries had taken a terrible beating. On 31 May 1998, the headline of a comprehensive article in *The New York Times Magazine*

announced “The World’s Biggest Going-Out-of-Business Sale.”

It unveiled the secrets of the now discredited Asian success story: corporations had not been based on capitalist principles but elites who shored up the political rulers and therefore had ready access to bank loans. Their bookkeeping was only partial, secretive, and sometimes nonexistent; goods worth billions of dollars were being marketed abroad without making any profit; despite their longer working hours, the productivity of workers was low; and horrendous debts, like a vast tsunami, were threatening the entire system. An instance of this was the Daewoo financial empire in South Korea. It controlled about 10 percent of that country’s economy, with debts that equaled five times its market value.

The Far-Eastern countries, with possibly two exceptions, are not about to become financial and political superpowers. On the contrary, the influence of most Oriental countries has shrunk, with dramatic abruptness, under the onslaughts of a victorious Western capitalism.

China, it is true, by 2005 astounded the world with its phenomenal growth. Its rulers still, however, have daunting obstacles to surmount in their bid to become a superpower on both the economic and political front. The most important of these problems is how to balance the aspirations of its *nouveaux riches* with the escalating and increasingly dangerous demands of the poor. Most ominously, it is consuming the planet’s raw material at an alarming rate. It does have plentiful cheap labor, yet Pan Yue, its environment minister, interviewed by the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, admitted: “To produce goods worth \$10,000, for example, we need seven times more resources than Japan, nearly six times more than the United States and, perhaps most embarrassing, nearly three times more than India.” Reporting on this, Somini Sengupta and Howard W. French go on to say: “Others worry about China’s seeming addiction to large investment, which leads to huge waste and steep cyclical downturns, a shaky financial system imperiled by a huge burden of nonperforming loans, and rampant official corruption.”² Such embarrassing facts are greatly underreported in the media. Too often these uncritically transmit slanted, propagandistic data, prepared and massaged by governmental, Communist sources. These with great subtlety paint a glowing picture to placate their own people and extract additional cash and know-how from the rest of the world—especially America and Western Europe.

Present-day China reminds us of the Japanese a generation ago: resourceful and astonishingly adept at doing business. In its quest for markets and raw materials, as well as international expertise, it seems to be scooping up the entire world into the net of its ever greater trade expansionism. For instance, it has signed a number of agreements with India, destined soon to be the most populous country on the planet. Amongst other things, these were aimed at solving a long-standing dispute about the largely unmarked border of 3550 km (2,200 miles) between the two states. In 1962, this had led to a terrible war between them. But what China wanted most was an even greater market for the astonishingly cheap goods with which it is flooding the

world, and to benefit from India's recent advances in science and technology, especially its impressive Information Technology. Visiting his counterpart, Premier Manmohan Singh, Chinese supremo Wen Jiabao on 10 April 2005 declared: "If India and China co-operate in the IT industry, we will be able to lead the world . . . and it will signify the coming of the Asian century of the IT industry."³

Although we do not underrate the achievements of these two Asian giants, each with more than a billion people, we are not entirely convinced; they are much too derivative and for their welfare dependent on other countries. Their newfound prosperity is largely fueled by investments and expertise from, as well as markets in, the United States and Europe. China is becoming the factory, and India the office, of Western capitalists—a perilous dependency. And we remember how the previous East Asian bubble burst. In the long run, we believe, the center of the planet's power will remain where it has been for the past few centuries: along the Atlantic Rim, and not the Pacific Rim or in Southern Asia.

The West has also reacquired tremendous influence over third-world countries. In Africa many, so lately independent, are again—for economic reasons—becoming vassal states of their former imperial masters.

Since 1989, several reluctant tyrants have agreed to multiparty elections, with unforeseeable consequences for themselves and their countries. Kenneth Kaunda, the dictator who had bankrupted Zambia, was one of those who consented to running the gauntlet of public opinion at the ballot box. His people, having suffered much at his hands, immediately kicked him out. In 1997, some of them physically assaulted him. In 1999, the government began proceedings to deprive him of his citizenship, since it had come to light that he was not a Zambian at all but had been born in Malawi!

But why should such countries knuckle under to their former masters in Europe or their American friends? The answer is principally financial, including covert blackmail: change to our system, and do as we say, or you will get no more money from us. But there is also the fact that the military balance of power now decisively favors the peoples who inhabit or live near the shores of the North Atlantic.

III

Each kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was bigger than its predecessor. Medo-Persia occupied more territory than Babylonia, from Egypt to India. After Alexander's conquest, the Greek world extended from Gibraltar to India. Rome at one time touched both the Tigris and the Scottish border, although it later had to give up Mesopotamia. And the Western countries?

Individually they were mere fragments of their parent empire, but then—from the fifteenth-century voyages of discovery onward—they grew and grew, but overseas through their colonial and imperial possessions. In each case, the parts became larger than the whole from

which they had sprung; the dominions of some extended over larger territories than the Roman Empire.

Such were the conquests of the Spaniards, an empire “on which the sun never set,” a boast that the British later took over to describe their own. Even little Portugal and tiny Belgium at one time had huge overseas possessions, much larger than they are.

Western Europe has also been, for good and ill, the mother civilization of many countries abroad that began as its colonies. When Portuguese Bartholomew Dias sailed around the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, laying open the sea route to the far East, and Italian Columbus four years later reached the New World, they were internationalizing the influence sphere of the feet and toes.

But, someone may object, these empires have now all been given up and disappeared. That is true, but only from a political point of view. The foreign flags of the old imperial powers have indeed been furled and put away in practically every country from the East Indies to North Africa. Culturally, however, Western Europe and its colonial offspring—including America—have made an almost total conquest of the earth, with results likely to be as enduring as those of ancient Rome. As any observant world traveler can testify, the Westernization of the planet is its single most striking fact today. “Modern civilization, wherever found, has been formed by ideas, institutions, and industries that originated in Europe.”⁴

Christopher Dawson has put this notion into an interesting historical context. Tracing the origin of the European nations, which are culturally a single community, he reaches back three thousand years to when the Hellenic world began and says, “In so far as a world society or a world civilization can be said to exist, it is the child of Europe.”⁵

Scattered around the globe are various direct extensions of that heritage, such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Latin America, Canada, and the United States. These have shaped distinctive societies with characteristics of their own, yet they also preserve a multitude of European elements.

IV

In the case of America, some writers have dwelt so much on its uniqueness as to de-emphasize its debt to Europe. The most celebrated of these was Frederick Jackson Turner. In 1893 he maintained “that the western frontier was a more significant place to look for American political institutions than the European Middle Ages and that American culture owed little to Europe but was an indigenous product of a unique American experience.”⁶ Up to World War II, his theory largely dominated the writing of history in the United States, yet many critical voices have contradicted it. One of these was Benjamin F. Wright, later professor of political science at Harvard, who in 1934 insisted that “the foundations, and more, of our democracy were brought in the *Susan Constant* and *Mayflower*. That democracy did not come out of the American forest unless it was first

carried there.”⁷

Indeed. The United States, no less than its sister nations Australia and Canada, has not merely added many features of its own, but also retained the Western culture handed down by its founding fathers, which various modern American writers have acknowledged.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., points out that “the language of the new nation, its laws, its institutions, its political ideas, its literature, its customs, its precepts, its prayers, primarily derived from Britain,”⁸ although its heritage has not been limited to that country. In *America as a Civilization*, Max Lerner states that the new republic’s founders “were also good Europeans, anxious to weave into the pattern of their new venture every strand of European striving.” He goes on to mention the part played in American thought by Greek and Roman culture, the Italian Renaissance, the Reformation, and even the French Revolution. The architecture, educational ideals, and theological controversies of the United States have their sources in the old continent.⁹ James Baldwin, an American black who went to live and write in Europe, discovered that it “was part of our identify and part of our inheritance,”¹⁰ while R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton go so far as to say that “America . . . is in large measure a projection from Europe.”¹¹

Henry Hobhouse refers to certain countries as *neo-Europes*, and calls the United States of America “the most successful neo-Europe,”¹² though President Nixon rather quaintly puts it the other way round. Europe, according to him, was “an older version of America.”¹³

Elsewhere we will show with reference to a prophecy in Revelation that the United States is destined to play a pivotal role in the final events of our planet’s history. The statue of Dan. 2 does not deal explicitly with the New World, because it is only the first of such predictions; and yet there is more to the symbol of the feet and ten toes than meets the eye.

Since 1898 and its war with Spain, America’s destiny became entangled with that of other countries, especially in Europe. The two World Wars as well as the Cold War bear ample witness to the fact, but so do a multitude of influences pouring into America with the continuous tide of new immigrants and because of greatly improved communication and global travel.

Over the past hundred years, especially the culture and civilization of Germany have exerted a tremendous influence on the United States. From that country, America acquired the automobile, the high-altitude rocket, and a portion of its nuclear know-how. But there have also been other, more problematic results of what Allan Bloom calls “the German connection.” These include the large-scale adoption since World War II of value relativism and related ideas originating with philosophers like Nietzsche (who said, “God is dead”) and Heidegger; social scientists like Freud and Max Weber; and even a Communist poet like Bertold Brecht. “Our intellectual skyline has been altered by German thinkers even more radically than has our physical skyline by German architects.” The effect has been to cast doubt on homegrown American values and reject beliefs in an ab-

solute distinction between right and wrong.¹⁴

Especially distressing to believers in the Bible has been another largely German product: liberal theology, exemplified by men like Rudolf Bultmann—whom we refer to in an appendix to this book.

While the West and its colonies have always been politically divided, they share a common culture, which greatly strengthens their impact on the rest of the world. As Dawson remarks so perceptively, there is one Europe but not a single Asia, which has at all times been sharply differentiated into four very different cultures: India with its Hinduism, the Confucian East, the Islamic countries, and the Mongol North.¹⁵ Of these, the last mentioned has been largely swallowed up by Russia, itself a European country derived from old Byzantium.

The homogeneity of the West has made it much easier for its lifestyle and especially its technology to transform so many countries, including some that never were its colonies, such as Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. Even China, despite its old dislike of “foreign devils” from the West, is beginning to yield to its siren song.

Related to the expanding influence sphere of the feet and toes is the spread of Christianity and the worldview it represents. The largest concentration of Roman Catholics is no longer found in Europe but in Latin America; by the year 2000, about half of them were due to be living there.¹⁶ The most important Protestant country is the United States, in North America. Virtually the whole of sub-Saharan Africa has adopted Christianity, e.g. in South Africa, where about 80 percent of the inhabitants claim to practice it. Australia and New Zealand, as well as many Pacific islands, also have predominantly Christian roots.

The same is true of some countries in and near Asia. The Philippines is largely Catholic, and so is East Timor, which for a long time struggled to be independent from Moslem Indonesia. Christianity has likewise become the dominant religion of South Korea, where both Buddhism and Shamanism are declining. The country is full of Protestant centers and places of worship, marked with crosses shining red at night. The Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, with 700,000 members, is perhaps the largest Christian congregation in the world.

Despite the oppression they often endure, believers in Communist China have in half a century since 1949 dramatically increased from fewer than one million to anything between fifteen and thirty-five million by 1998. Some maintain there are many more Christians in that vast country of 1.2 billion people.¹⁷ The exact number is unknown, because so many believers belong to secret, underground churches.

V

But over and above all this, Western Europe itself is regaining much of its former prominence. Two devastating World Wars, especially the second one, deprived it of its empires and reduced its political influence abroad. By the middle of the twentieth century, it seemed to have damaged itself beyond repair; for, as Bertrand Russell

puts it, Europe has “common tasks to fulfill” and “a war among European nations is in essence a civil war.”¹⁸

But that region has recovered remarkably. And something else, dramatic and revolutionary, happened on 9 November 1989. That evening, a crowd in East Berlin was surging excitedly up against the infamous Wall, which Communism had driven through the heart of Berlin and Germany. They had just heard on TV that their wavering Marxist government was suddenly permitting unrestricted travel to the West, and so they clamored to be let through.

At the Bornholmer Strasse crossing, the border guards and their superior, Lieutenant-Colonel Harald Jaeger, stood by—confused and undecided. They had received no orders, except to avoid the use of force. For about an hour, the officer hesitated, repeatedly snatching at his portable telephone for definite instructions. Receiving none, he finally threw open the gate. Jubilantly the crowd of East Berliners poured through. And then young people were suddenly hacking away at the hateful Wall! In feverish haste, they demolished it irreparably over very large distances.¹⁹ As their hammers thudded away, the border between the two Germanys collapsed. When the new day dawned, the history of the planet had changed its course. How was this possible?

The Soviet Union had faltered, due to military overspending, inherent weaknesses in its Marxist economy, and Western pressure. Its new leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, determined to salvage the Communist dream, took increasingly drastic steps: huge weapon cutbacks, scuttling his country’s uneconomic empire in Eastern Europe,²⁰ greater democracy, and *perestroika* (“restructuring”). However, he miscalculated when he also introduced a policy of *glasnost*, or unlimited free criticism.

To his dismay, this was almost immediately used not so much to promote the economic reforms he had hoped for, but by the Baltic republics and many of the one hundred language groups within the Soviet Union²¹ to demand independence. An uncontrollable chain reaction set in.

First, in 1989, country after country in Eastern Europe broke away from the Soviet Empire. This Gorbachev had not only foreseen but also allowed for, though the disappearance of the Wall was a nasty surprise. Like all the leaders in the Kremlin since Stalin, he had been “scared to death” by the prospect of German reunification,²² yet he ended up by virtually selling East Germany to Chancellor Helmut Kohl for “massive financial and technical aid.”²³

Also contrary to his design, the Republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia wriggled out of his grasp. Then, while he was still putting the finishing touches to a new Union treaty, an abortive coup by Communist hard-liners in August 1991 snapped his power. Boris Yeltsin stepped forward and got onto a tank in Moscow to confront the Soviet soldiers sent to crush him. They backed down, and after that—in his finest hour—he emerged as the new man of destiny. Yeltsin, a heavy drinker and a rather sickly man, would dominate the affairs of his country until his retirement on the last day of 1999.

Already the president of the Russian Federation, he shook off the shackles that Bolshevism had fastened on his people since 1917. Realizing that the Communist party was in sharp decline, he jettisoned it and adopted nationalism as his power base. This, however, entailed “the creation of a pure Slavic state,” which made it advisable to rid himself of the non-Russian republics.²⁴

Yeltsin’s people had for some time feared the simmering militancy and rapid population growth of their Moslem compatriots. They also regarded these and some other groups as an economic liability, for whom the ethnic Russians had to foot the bill. So Yeltsin suddenly conceded freedom to these republics, now insistent on leaving the Soviet Union. Almost overnight, a Commonwealth of ten new nations came into being through an agreement signed at Alma-Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, on 21 December 1991.²⁵ Four days later, on what for him must have been a bitter Christmas day, Mikhail Gorbachev sat down and formally signed out of existence both his presidency and his country. Suddenly the Soviet Union was no more.

These developments caught the world by surprise, confounding even the experts. One of these was Arkady N. Shevchenko, an Under Secretary General of the United Nations and a Russian who had defected to America. In 1985, as Gorbachev was launching his revolutionary book *Perestroika*, Shevshenko wrote: “The Soviet Union neither will begin to reshape itself into a free-enterprise society nor will it soon disintegrate.”²⁶ In 1988, ex-President Nixon was also of this opinion: “The Soviet Union is not going to collapse despite its enormous weaknesses and problems.”²⁷ A few months later, in the very year when the Berlin Wall came down, Roger E. Kanet, professor of political Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, repeated the idea: “The Soviet Union is not about to collapse despite the frailties of its external position and internal situation.”²⁸

And yet, as General Colin Powell puts it so beautifully, the Soviet Union disappeared unimaginably, “without a fight, without a war, without a revolution,” at the stroke of a pen.²⁹ Suddenly the vast fabric of a transcontinental country stretching from Europe to the Pacific unraveled; much of it simply fell apart. That hideous strength, which had oppressed or threatened billions of people, the planet’s second superpower and only counterpoise to America, was abruptly gone.

A few months before it happened, in June 1991, my wife Ria and I were visiting both West and East Berlin. Mementos and images still adorn our home and minds: a piece of the Wall and a cap from a Soviet airman, sold to us near Checkpoint Charlie; restoration work on the Reichstag; Lenin’s statue lying on its side in an embassy garden; and a contingent of Red Army soldiers in smart and tidy uniforms strolling across the sunlit Alexanderplatz on their way to church, each with a Bible in his hand!

These memories crowded back a day after Thanksgiving in 1999, when we bought “From Russia with Love.” This ironically named CD was a bouquet of Christmas music, sung marvelously by the Moscow Boys’ Choir, the Russian State Chorus, and the Red Army Chorus. Who could have imagined this a decade earlier?

VI

At first, just after the Soviet Union had self-destructed, the United States could glory in being the only global superpower on earth, from an economic, military, and ideological point of view. This, at least, has been the predominant American perspective, expressed with not a little pride and some complacency. For instance, in 1994 John Bresnan wrote: “And the only superpower in the new world order, the United States, is unparalleled in its power.”³⁰

This seemed like the ultimate fulfillment of Henry R. Luce’s dream. An influential super-patriot, who together with Briton Hadden had founded *Time* magazine, he spoke and wrote of “The American Century” as far back as 1941. Luce maintained his country should enter the Second World War, not simply to save Britain, but “to establish American dominance in the world.” This was to be pre-eminently a capitalist period, the “century of General Motors, Standard Oil, Pan-Am—and of Time-Life-Fortune—entrenched in Asia and Africa with the protection of American military power.”³¹

Nevertheless, as former president Nixon eventually pointed out in 1990, Western Europe not only recuperated from the Second World War, but itself quite “rapidly advanced toward becoming an economic superpower.”³²

From 1991 onward, it found its eastern adversary largely eliminated, when the Soviet Union was replaced by a much weaker successor state. Russia’s virtual impotence, despite the possession of nuclear weapons, would become particularly evident when the once mighty Red Army floundered in a pathetic struggle for months on end against the Moslem rebels of tiny Chechnya from 1994 to 1996, and then again from 1999 to 2009.

It also became clear that the Cold War had damaged the financial resources of Western Europe’s transatlantic friend. America had incurred a Federal deficit of astronomic proportions, which by 1996 amounted to almost five trillion dollars. Indeed, it had become “the largest debtor nation in history.”³³ Therefore, it could not by itself continue to sustain the burden of global supremacy. It was also no longer quite the economic heavyweight it used to be, having declined from generating 40 percent of the world’s Gross National Product during the fifties and sixties, to just over 20 percent thirty years later.³⁴

VII

Influence abroad demands not only huge expenditure on armaments, but generosity to the power elite of poorer countries. Here America has been dramatically outdistanced by the European Union (EU), which by 1996 was annually giving more than three times as much development aid to third-world countries, namely \$31 billion, in contrast with \$9 billion from the United States.³⁵

During the Cold War era, America used to lead the world in this

type of activity, but now it is being overshadowed by a resurgent Europe.

To a large extent, the military power of a nation or an empire depends on war-related technology, which is now stupendously expensive, and the money to afford it. In 1981, when America's national debt reached one trillion dollars, President Reagan "declared that sum 'incomprehensible' and likened it to a stack of \$1,000 bills 67 miles high."³⁶ As already mentioned, by 1996 this had ballooned to almost five trillion. The metaphorical stack would have reached up more than 330 miles into space. But by late October 2004, just two weeks before the presidential election gave George W. Bush a second term, this indebtedness had—as a result of the wars and other expenditure in Afghanistan and especially Iraq—ascended to its legally permissible borrowing ceiling of \$7.384 trillion. The stack of \$1,000 bills was "closing in on 500 miles."³⁷

A vital point not often understood by the general public is that the United States also requires manpower assistance to boost its military effectiveness. With both its air force and navy, America remains supreme, while it also has an overwhelming nuclear superiority. On the ground, however, it has a serious problem. As George Friedman and Meredith LeBard have pointed out, "The U.S. ended the Cold War with the ability to project overwhelming force to the shore's edge, but only limited and marginal power onto the shore." In conventional warfare, it would be unable to cope with the huge armies of Eurasia. Even to equal the ground resources of Iraq in the blitzkrieg of January 1991, "it had to commit all its land combat power. The U.S. cannot continually mobilize to this extent." This makes it operationally vulnerable.³⁸

With the second Gulf War, the manpower shortage grew even worse, when President George W. Bush attacked Iraq, against the advice and consequently without the support of major NATO allies like Germany and France. By June 2004, the Pentagon—having thrown in all its readily available soldiers—was scraping the bottom of the barrel for more. It was compelled to call up, on Individual Ready Reserve, the 5,600 former service men and women who thought they had finished their term two years earlier.³⁹ Other troops were to be reallocated from South Korea,⁴⁰ at a critical time of negotiating with a Communist North Korean adversary, whose heavily armed forces—more than a million of them—are still entrenched at the Demilitarized Zone and perpetually poised for an attack on Seoul, but also now possessing nuclear weapons. The effects of reducing the American presence, on that country as well as its neighbors (most notably Japan), are imponderable. Few people spoke about it, though many were haunted by the specter of a possible war on two fronts, with Los Angeles and San Francisco as potential targets for atomic bombs from across the Pacific.

The army's manpower shortage is now common knowledge. On 8 July 2004, a headline on the front page of *The Monitor*, the largest newspaper published in McAllen, southernmost Texas, screamed out at the reader: "Lawmakers: Troops spread too thin." It relayed a

dramatic report from Washington, DC: “In a bipartisan show of concern that the military is dangerously overworked, lawmakers said Wednesday [7 July] the Pentagon is stretching troops to their limit and perhaps undermining the nation’s future force.” What particularly worried them in this regard was that the year’s recruitment of new soldiers had already declined.⁴¹

VIII

The problem of insufficient ground forces for major conflicts overseas is nothing new, since in both World Wars the American soldiers were superadded to massive Allied armies from other nations. In Korea after 1950, a lack of manpower snatched victory out of MacArthur’s hands.

During the campaign against Japan, he had brilliantly maximized the limited land forces at his disposal, by skillfully avoiding unnecessary infantry battles. For instance, after his bombers had neutralized the enemy’s dangerous supply base at Rabaul on the island of New Britain, a hundred thousand Japanese infantrymen “began digging fresh trenches and donning their thousand-stitch belts, vowing that they would fight to the last man when the Americans came.” But they never did come, abstaining from such a costly confrontation! MacArthur followed this method wherever it was appropriate.⁴² Ultimately, too, his armies were spared the terrible crunch of fighting the lethal Japanese on their own islands (apart from Okinawa), when America’s two atomic bombs abruptly ended the war.

In Korea, however, not even MacArthur’s cleverness could ensure a final victory, despite his daring and successful stratagem of landing United Nations forces—mostly Americans—on the beaches of Inchon with their piles of mud and stupendous tides. Like many others, I have been inspired by this exploit. Often during our year in that country, my wife Ria and I often would gaze at MacArthur’s statue near Freedom Park on the hill above the harbor.

At first the great general’s triumph seemed complete. His soldiers swept through most of North Korea, victorious up to the Yalu River. But afterwards China’s huge military hordes began to swarm across the border and defeat MacArthur’s army. At that point, the United States under President Truman faced a very unpleasant choice: either to escalate the conflict into a nuclear war or to retreat. America settled for a stalemate on the thirty-eighth parallel. There its troops, reinforced by the ROK (Republic of Korea) soldiers, have been encamped for more than sixty years in an apparently never-ending confrontation with the North.

Friedman and LeBard believe that to solve the continuing dilemma of insufficient manpower, the United States has four strategic options: permanent alliance, an imperial system, hemispheric isolation, and oceanic hegemony.

Of these, the first would seem to be the most feasible, especially as America’s old partners across the Atlantic are still available. Kolodziej and Kanet point out that “the countervailing military and economic

power of the United States and its Western allies” was essential to blocking Soviet advance, and it continues to be a fact that no single country has the capacity to establish the dominance of a Western system in the developing world.⁴³

Europe can continue to supply additional land forces, indispensable for bolstering those of the United States—though their relationship is changing, owing to the economic power shift referred to, the diminished Russian threat, and NATO’s eastward expansion. The West Europeans are no longer content with playing second fiddle while America directs the course of world affairs; they desire equality.

President Jacques Chirac of France began to insist on this in early 1996, saying NATO needed revamping as “a system where Europe can take an equal part with the United States in world responsibilities.”⁴⁴ Three years later, the aftermath of the campaign against Serbia was making this a more persistent demand. In his News Analysis of 15 June 1999, Roger Cohen bluntly acknowledged that “The Kosovo war has brought radical changes to the European continent, thrusting Germany into a leading military role not seen since 1945, galvanizing attempts to forge a common European defense policy and altering Europe’s relationship with the United States.” After the air campaign, conducted largely with American weaponry, thirty-three thousand occupation troops began to pour into Kosovo; but only seven thousand were to be from the United States.⁴⁵

The EU, with 455 citizens by 2004, has now developed into a market rivaling the North American Free Trade Association. At its heart lie France and Germany. Since World War II, these two countries have forged a special relationship with each other. The former is a nuclear power; the latter more or less dominates Western Europe because of its economic muscle.

Ever since its reunification under Bismarck in 1870, after the Prussian-led forces inflicted a crushing defeat on France, containing Germany has preoccupied its opponents in Europe and abroad for more than a hundred years. To hedge in, crush, and reduce that country to its former fragmentary state strained to the utmost the power of the French, the British, and the Russian as well as the Soviet Empires—with American assistance—in two World Wars. But as the twenty-first century dawned, it became clear that all these endeavors had failed. Indeed, it is the opposing empires themselves that have disappeared from Europe, and now a mighty Germany stands without rival on that continent.

In 1991, Daniel Burstein maintained that it was even a superpower in its own right, and thought it “could go so far as to become the world’s leading power.”⁴⁶ Could it really outstrip America? That seems unlikely and must for the present remain a speculation. What is true, however, is that a Germany no longer opposed but supported by Britain, France, and the Benelux countries—in addition to its older ally, Italy—has already become more powerful than the Third Reich.

All those countries and others are acting in concert to create an even greater European Union, to include Scandinavia and other countries that used to stand aloof from it. Ultimately it may even forge

a closer relationship with Russia.

This would bring together a vast conglomerate of seven hundred million people. Such was the dream of the last Soviet leader, Gorbachev—probably influenced by General de Gaulle. When hardly anybody else was thinking that way, the visionary French president had “kept speaking of Europe ‘from Calais to the Urals’ as the real Europe that had once flourished beneath the aegis of the Catholic Church and that made everything in our fading civilization possible.”⁴⁷

In the recent past, this conception was also cherished by Pope John Paul II: “The jewel in the Pope’s international design is a Utopian vision of a unified—and re-Christianized—Europe stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains.

“Phase one would be an end to the divisions between Eastern and Western Europe. Phase two: reconciliation between Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Christians of the Soviet East.”⁴⁸

In such a setup, the role of Germany, which now has more Roman Catholic than Protestant citizens,⁴⁹ could well be analogous to the one it used to play for several centuries during the Middle Ages, when the two most powerful men of the West were the pope and the emperor. The former was usually, though not invariably, an Italian, the latter a German. An even more curious situation developed on 18 April 2005, when the Cardinals in conclave at the Vatican elected Joseph Ratzinger, a Bavarian, to become Pope Benedict XVI. Both he and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder were Germans!

The assimilation of East Germany has proven much more difficult and expensive than observers thought it would be, from which skeptics concluded that it could not succeed. And yet the economy of this region has undergone a quiet, remarkable transformation. As Paul Kennedy points out, “reconstruction provides a massive Keynesian-type ‘boost’ to utilities companies, road-construction firms, and manufacturing in general.” This means that even if it created a large budgetary deficit, this, too, would in the long run be economically beneficial, since it resulted from enhanced *capital* spending.⁵⁰ In other words, it was not just an expense, but an investment.

Already a mighty reunited Germany is reaping important benefits. It may become a good deal more assertive, over and above its present position as the dominant partner in the EU, not only financially, but also politically. It has in any case already scored two major triumphs.

First, it played a key role in persuading reluctant partners to enlarge the Union through the inclusion within a few years of several central European countries; for Germany has always had a *Drang nach Osten* (“eastward urge”). Most spectacular has been the incorporation into NATO of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, three Roman Catholic countries.

Second, in 1992 Germany also insisted successfully on the recognition by the EU of independence for Catholic Slovenia and Croatia, which initiated a plan to frustrate Orthodox Serbia by breaking up Yugoslavia as a country. Recognizing Slovenia, Croatia, and other new states in Yugoslavia was at first opposed by both Britain and the United States, as well as Russia, a traditional ally of

the Serbs. But in the end the German vision prevailed, though this exacted a heavy price of bloodshed, population displacements, and large-scale misery.

In October 1999, Yugoslavia largely fell under German control, when General Klaus Reinhardt, 58, took over from Britain's Sir Mike Jackson the supreme command of K-For, the peacekeeping force in Kosovo dominated by NATO. From November 1996 to June 1998, Reinhardt had also led the NATO forces in Bosnia. Furthermore, when he succeeded in Kosovo, he retained command of all Allied Land Forces for Central Europe (Landcent).⁵¹

On 2 December 2004, the EU superseded NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina, deploying 7,000 EUFOR troops from 30 countries (including some from non-member states like Turkey and Canada), under a new commander, British Major-General David Leakey. Some 80 percent of the soldiers were the same ones as those who had served there before. They simply changed their NATO badges for EUFOR badges.⁵²

America, pressed by its manpower shortage, had to withdraw the major part of its personnel—as it also did from Germany—for service elsewhere in the world, especially Iraq.

From a strategic point of view, enlarging NATO and extending its operations into Yugoslavia were interrelated activities. This not only harmonized with how Germany and its allies viewed Europe; it also bore an uncanny resemblance to papal plans, as explained by Malachi Martin, Catholic thinker and former Jesuit: "In John Paul's geopolitical analysis, Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals is a giant seesaw of power. Europe from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea is the center of that power. The Holy Father's battle was to control that power." Martin also calls Central Europe from the Adriatic to the Baltic seas "the hinge of power."⁵³

The southern part of that area, occupied by Serbian Yugoslavia, was also in ancient times the border between the Byzantine and Western Roman Empires, whose religious offspring are the Orthodox church and Latin Catholicism. Before the Bosnian and Kosovo episodes of the Balkan war, this also constituted a geographical gap that separated Greece and Turkey from the rest of the NATO and EU countries.

America had no intrinsic desire to get entangled in the devastating war that the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia unleashed, yet it found it could not refrain indefinitely from sending troops to Bosnia. Later it also led a NATO-USA air campaign against Serbia when it tried to put down Albanian insurrection in its province of Kosovo.

In both cases, American involvement was rationalized by a moral argument: preventing genocide by the Serbs, although the decision makers and most of the media ignored the ruthless ethnic cleansing carried out by their ally Franjo Tudjman, the Croatian dictator, against the Serbs. He was a human monster on a par with Milošević, but US television and most newspapers hardly ever mentioned him. The real objective of the EU in Yugoslavia was to nullify Serbian

aspirations and to occupy the hinge of power. This has brought the further eastward expansion of Western and Catholic influence, a goal that Germans, Austrians, and the Vatican have been pursuing for more than a century.

But why would the United States involve itself in what seemed to be an exclusively European concern? Part of the answer is that failure to do so would have jeopardized the survival of NATO, whose ground forces America needs for future conflicts elsewhere in the world.

These events have signaled a power shift that favors Germany as an arbiter of European affairs, with far-reaching implications for the future.

IX

There is, however, a grave objection to the scenario of a completely united Europe, including all its Western countries. It is contradicted by the prophecy to which we have already referred: "They will not hold together" (Dan. 2:43, RSV). According to this, the pope's geo-religious dream cannot be entirely fulfilled, for the seven hundred million people inhabiting the old continent, from the Atlantic to the Ural mountains, will never be one. Nor will Western Europe be unified. Not being prophets ourselves, we do not know exactly what will happen, though Western European power and influence are reviving to an amazing extent. Yet, on the basis of that divine prediction made 2,600 years ago, we confidently assert that the ancient Roman Empire will never be restored, though some prophetic interpreters insist on the opposite opinion.

Of these we mention Wim Malgo,⁵⁴ who thinks it needs to be resurrected as the kingdom of the Antichrist, and David Hunt, who has a similar view but stresses that this empire will come to include the entire world.⁵⁵

As the year 2000 was drawing to a close, there were already signs that the ideal of total unification for Europe might soon be thwarted.

A potent mix of ethnic nationalism and financial doubt has already caused the Danes through a referendum to preserve their traditional monetary system and to reject the euro, which was not faring well on international markets. Five years earlier, Helmut Kohl, the former German chancellor, regarded the adoption of this common currency as the instrument for integrating Western Europe irreversibly. This view is acknowledged throughout those countries, as it also became clear from a photograph in the *New York Times* on 30 September 2000. It showed a Danish protester in Copenhagen celebrating his country's refusal of the euro by trampling on the EU flag.⁵⁶

The example of Denmark may yet be followed by Sweden and the United Kingdom, which are still clinging to their krona and pound sterling. What Britain eventually decides is likely to be particularly influential. Over the past few centuries, that country has tried to limit its entanglement with the continent beyond the Channel, preferring its links with other English-speaking countries around

the world, especially America. The pan-European dream could be fatally torpedoed if the British also yield to euroskepticism.

Other problems center in the adoption of a constitution. By 2004, these have been aggravated through enlargements of the EU to include no fewer than twenty-five countries. This makes consensus difficult. One sticky point is a disagreement about adopting a stipulation, much favored by the Vatican, to emphasize the Christian character of Europe—which is largely Catholic. Potentially this would set up a barrier to the admission of Moslem Turkey, a NATO country. Another is the demand by some states that they be allowed to retain their veto rights in areas affecting their sovereignty.

On 18 June 2004, the BBC web News reported that the leaders of the EU countries had agreed to a “historic constitution”—embodied in a compromise treaty. British Prime Minister Tony Blair was particularly pleased. He said it “had satisfied the UK’s demands to keep vetoes on issues such as economic policy, defence and foreign affairs.” According to him, this “paved the way for a flexible Europe of *strong nation states* cooperating together” (emphasis added). This treaty would still have to be ratified democratically by the people of all twenty-five nations “in their national parliaments or through public referendums.”⁵⁷

The compromise Constitution agreed to falls very far short of creating a true United States of Europe. The Western part of that continent remains a tapestry of strong and sovereign but ununified nation states that cooperate, especially in the economic field. It largely continues to be, as it began, a Common Market.

Yet even this sustained a grievous, perhaps a fatal, blow on 29 May 2005 from one of its founding members. In a referendum, the people of France rejected the new Constitution, however moderate, with a majority of almost 55 percent. Due to an unemployment rate of more than 10 percent, their concern was largely economic; amongst other things they feared competition from Eastern European artisans, prepared to work for lower wages, as well as globalization. But there were also other reasons for saying “no”. One was a dislike of too many foreigners, especially Muslims. They opposed the planned admission of Turkey into the Union. Strong, too, was a fervent desire to preserve the sovereignty of France, which fears Anglo-Saxon domination, through free-trade capitalism as well as American military power. A day before the vote, a protester hoarsely shouted, “No to Bush, no to Nato, no to the treaty, yes to peace!”⁵⁸ He and others like him were evidently eager to avenge the many insults against all things French that emanated from beyond the Atlantic, when their country refused to endorse the American decision to attack Iraq for supposedly possessing weapons of mass destruction.

A few days later, on 1 June, the Dutch in their referendum also said “no”, even more resoundingly. This time, the negative majority was almost 62 percent. The reasons were not all the same, though in several ways they coincided with those of the French. Most people in the Netherlands vented their anger because their prosperity had

already been undermined by the euro, with a buying power inferior to that of their trusty guilder. They realized very well that the admission into the Community of ten poorer countries in Eastern Europe on 1 May 2004 could flood the West with people willing to work for rockbottom wages. If these and the Turkish Muslims could freely trek into the Netherlands, they could further drag down the high standard of living that the Dutch had enjoyed when the old and smaller Economic Unity was still in place. They did not want to have the role of their country diminished in such an enlarged conglomerate, with a loss of national sovereignty and cultural identity.⁵⁹

Here was another rejection by one of the six original countries that had established the European Coal and Steel Community in April 1951, which led on to the Treaty of Rome in March 1957, launching the European Economic Community. In addition to France and the Netherlands, the other four signatories were Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, and Italy.⁶⁰

Richard Bernstein maintains that the “no” votes in Europe reflect anger at the political elite—like that of Germany, France, and Italy—whose agenda clashes with what ordinary folk desire. These leaders all say “that painful, free-market economic reforms are the only path toward rejuvenation, more jobs, better futures.” But “the people, who have come to equate the idea of an expanded Europe with a challenge to cradle-to-grave social protections, are giving the same answer: We don’t believe you.”⁶¹ They also observe that the supranationals are often rich or wannabe wealthy individuals who stand to benefit handsomely by the new arrangements.

Bernstein thinks those nay-sayers are wrong. And yet their basic argument is, at least for them, compelling. If they can cast from their shoulders the economic burden of subsidizing poorer countries in the European Community, especially in the East, they can have more for themselves, especially if they add some protectionism against foreign competition from China and America. They can then continue to shield their working class and subsidize their farming community as they used to do in the past.

At a EU summit meeting that ended on 18 June 2005, its leaders decided to postpone all further attempts to ratify the Constitution, abandoning their original deadline of 2006. An added shock, however, was the failure to agree about the seven-year budget scheduled to take effect in 2007. The “talks broke down over a bitter row between the UK and France,” which the chairman, Jean Claude Juncker of Luxembourg, unhesitatingly called “a deep crisis.”⁶² Jacques Chirac “demanded that Britain give up part of the refund of billions of dollars a year that it has received from the European Union for more than two decades.” But Tony Blair refused to do this, “unless there was a corresponding cut in agricultural subsidies paid by the European Union. France receives about \$13 billion in annual farm subsidies, more than any other member.” Also involved in the bickering that ensued between these heads of government was the financial aid that had been earmarked for the ten new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe. Chirac had the backing of Germany’s Gerhard

Schröder. The latter referred to “‘the stubbornness’ of Britain and the Netherlands, and in particular he accused Britain of ‘not helping the new countries.’”⁶³

Whatever future efforts may be exerted, it is unlikely that the enlarged Community will prove viable. Its brand-new Constitution is, we think, already old hat, and so is the papal dream of a united Europe stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals. There will never be a United States in that part of the world. Once more it will be as the young Hebrew captive said to Nebuchadnezzar twenty-five centuries ago, “They will not hold together” (Dan. 2:43, RSV).

X

This subject has grave implications for the Futurist theory that the earth will be unified under a single government, in league with the Antichrist. There is, we believe, no Biblical support for this idea. The Scriptures say that Western Europe will not reunite. If so, how can a planetary government come into existence?

There are certainly prophecies showing that almost everyone will follow and even worship the beast (Rev. 13:3, 8), but this does not warrant the idea of a one-world government. On the contrary, the Bible tells us that just before and at the Second Coming there will still be three distinct though allied powers arrayed against the Lord: the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

To obtain international cooperation, demonic spirits representing each of these “go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” (Rev. 16:13, 14) Later, we see “the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war” on the coming Christ (19:19). They are allies in opposing the Lord, temporarily united for a common purpose, but they remain distinct. The words *kings* and *armies* show that there will be a plurality of sovereign nations to the end of the world.

Nevertheless, even with its present setup, Western Europe could conceivably, as Daniel Burstein thinks, again become “the world’s *greatest* power; the center of global wealth, prosperity, and learning; the influencer of events far and wide, from Asia to America—just as it was before 1914.”⁶⁴ It is, after all, the mother civilization of the entire Western world.

Only time will tell whether this reasoning is correct. Perhaps the relative economic and military might of America and Europe will not change; but ultimately the Antichrist, enthroned to the East of the Atlantic, will enjoy international support. Its allies will include not only the nations of old, traditional Europe, but also of the neo-Europes, especially the United States.

After the foregoing sections of this chapter were written, major economic and political developments have impacted on the world, beginning with the Great Recession of 2008. We have consequently taken a further look at the European Union, which we think is now in crisis, although it is unclear just what lies ahead.

During March 2011, anti-government demonstrations broke out in Syria, as part of the Arab Spring. The peaceful protests quickly escalated after government forces struck back violently. By July, army defectors had formed a Free Syrian Army, with many civilians joining them.⁶⁵ Soon the the situation deteriorated. By 2015, many other parties, including ISIL, Iranians, Americans, Russians, Kurds and Turks joined in, creating a dangerous international situation.⁶⁶ As conflict intensified, massive civilian casualties began to tear apart the fabric of the country.

Families fled from their homes. According to the United Nations, more than 6 million people became internally displaced, with another 5 million fleeing Syria altogether.⁶⁷ Much of the infrastructure, including hospitals, clinics, and health care centers, was badly smashed up. Refugees poured into Europe. Germany, which had been suffering negative population growth, accepted most of them, allegedly a million, although the real number was lower, perhaps 890,000 from both Syria and Iraq.⁶⁸ But many of its citizens were highly displeased, because these new arrivals were almost all Muslims. Other countries were even more hostile, and this crisis is threatening to break up the European Union.

From 2013 onward, ever-increasing illegal migration across the Mediterranean from Africa has added to the burden of European countries that do not want them. Many are from nearby places like Libya, but increasing numbers are from sub-Saharan states, driven by war and want. Africa is pouring more and more of its economic and social misery into Europe.⁶⁹

For a variety of reasons, including the refugees from Syria and Africa, the United Kingdom voted on 23 June 2016 to leave the European Union. It has obligated itself to do so by 29 March 2019, which has created much unhappiness among many of its own citizens as well as those who live across the English Channel. During the referendum, the Scots overwhelmingly voted against leaving the EU. Doing so may yet prompt them to make another attempt at seceding from Britain.

But whatever happens, it is again becoming clear that a United States of Europe, and consequently also a one-world government, will never become a reality. As Daniel pointed out in his inspired interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, previous to the Second Coming, those countries will like iron and clay "not hold together" (Daniel 2:43, RSV).

6 A Rebellious King

I

People often have second thoughts, and so did King Nebuchadnezzar. Overwhelmed by Daniel's uncanny ability to tell him exactly what he had dreamt, and by the prophetic explanation, he confessed: "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets" (Dan. 2:47). Then he made the young man his Prime Minister and also appointed Daniel's three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to administer the province of Babylon.

But in the aftermath Nebuchadnezzar was no longer so happy about that dream. It is true that it was wonderful to hear he was the head of gold, but the catch was that *after* him another kingdom would arise to supplant Babylon as a superpower. His handiwork would not last too long, which was very disappointing.

There were also other problems. Most serious was the potential of the dream for weakening his political position. Daniel had given the interpretation in public, so it could hardly be kept secret. Other people at the court and in Babylon were bound to have found it very disturbing to hear that after Nebuchadnezzar they might be subjected to foreign domination. It would certainly have dismayed his potential heirs. There were undoubtedly many speculations about the identity of the next kingdom; and a likely candidate was clearly available, namely the Medes, whose empire had risen to the East.

As C. W. Ceram explains, it was in an alliance with these people that the Babylonians defeated the last Assyrian king, Shin-shar-ishkun (627-12 B.C.).

His capital, Nineveh, went up in flames. Nebuchadnezzar's father, the Chaldean general Nabopolassar, had turned traitor against his Assyrian overlord.¹ For helping to overthrow him, he was rewarded with large parts of his master's realm, including lower Mesopotamia. This paved the way for his warrior son to create a huge empire reaching from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.

But the Medes, whose capital city was Ecbatana,² also held vast territories, and were indeed to be feared. Even some of their subject peoples, like the Persians, were formidable.

It is true that for the time being good relations continued between them and Babylon. Indeed, Nebuchadnezzar's queen, Amytis, was the daughter of Astyages, the Median king. To please her, Nebuchadnezzar built the splendid hanging gardens, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world,³ "supposedly to assuage her homesickness for the hills of Media."⁴

The New Babylonian king could not know that within a few years Astyages would be vanquished and deprived of his empire by his Persian grandson Cyrus, who also happened to be Nebuchadnezzar's nephew. Still, the Medes were potential rivals, and could only have been encouraged by rumors from Babylon about a divine revelation

indicating that perhaps they were destined to rule the region after Nebuchadnezzar's death. The idea could only be bad for morale and promote treason by opportunists inclined to dealings with foreign powers.

Such factors were certain to have brought considerable pressure to bear on the king.

There was also the problem of disloyalty to Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonian Empire. The people in the capital considered him the "lord of the gods of heaven and earth, king of all gods and kings and lord of all lords."⁵ But the dream contradicted this belief. What is more, Nebuchadnezzar had hailed the *Hebrew* deity in words that practically paraphrased this formula: "a God of gods and a Lord of kings" (Dan. 2:47).

From a purely human point of view, this must have been most awkward for Nebuchadnezzar's position. The Babylonian rulers supposedly received their kingship from Bel (that is, Marduk), and were crowned by his priests. These wielded great power and lived below the ziggurat Etemenanki, or Tower of Babel, which had been rebuilt by Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar himself.

The courtyard precincts lying about it was "a sort of Babylonian Vatican."⁶ Yearly ceremonies reaffirmed that the king was bound to the god who had given him his power. "Nebuchadnezzar had even turned the main street of Babylon into the most splendid thoroughfare of the ancient world, greater than any Roman way, greater perhaps than any avenue of modern times, if splendor is not gauged by length. The street's primary function was not to accommodate daily traffic, but to serve as a processional path dedicated to the great Lord Marduk, when he was worshipped by the entire population of the city, including Nebuchadnezzar, at the Tower of Babel."⁷

But now the king had accepted a statement by a Jewish prisoner-of-war that his sovereignty was the gift of an obscure Palestinian deity, Yahweh, "the God of heaven," and not Marduk!

This struck at the very root of priestly power and had great implications for the Babylonian worldview. What was more to the point is that his confession laid him open to the charge of heresy, which meant that he could perhaps be deposed. Or assassinated.

Great was the prestige of Marduk. Even non-Babylonian rulers believed that kingship was his gift. These had included the Assyrians, whose empire preceded that of Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon was a religious center, where even the kings in Nineveh considered it wise to undergo an inauguration ceremony. Ever since Sennacherib had been assassinated by his sons about seventy-five years before Nebuchadnezzar's enthronement, the priests used the fact to strengthen their position. They said it happened because the Assyrian emperor had not submitted to Marduk.⁸

Later history would also show just how dangerous it was to neglect Marduk in favor of some other divinity. Not many years after Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus (556-39 B.C.), the last Babylonian king, was in great disfavor for preferring the moon god Sin.⁹ In his time, Gobryas—a Babylonian governor—joined forces with Cyrus the Great.

It was this traitor who marched with his own troops and part of the Persian army into Babylon, unopposed.¹⁰

At that time, Cyrus made himself master of the city, which offered almost no resistance; he posed as the appointee of Marduk, whom he worshipped on a daily basis.¹¹

Nebuchadnezzar had good reasons to be anxious, realizing (two millennia before a character in the inimitable Shakespeare would say so) just how “uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”¹²

Nebuchadnezzar had also suffered serious setbacks.

In 601 B.C., the Egyptians under Pharaoh Necho defeated his army so badly that the next year he could not go on another campaign; he had to stay at home, rebuilding his forces. Meanwhile the little nations on the eastern rim of the Mediterranean, including Judah, had gleefully thrown off his yoke and joined the enemy.¹³

A few years later, Nebuchadnezzar regained control, capturing Jerusalem a second time on 16 March 597 B.C. His soldiers caught Jehoiachin, whom he deported to Babylon, together with many other people—including the military, religious, and technological elite. Then Nebuchadnezzar installed a puppet king, Zedekiah, to ensure the loyalty of the Jews. (2 Kings 25: 11-21)

But the legend of the emperor’s invincibility had been tarnished, and his next challenge was rebellion at home. According to a clay tablet, translated and published in 1956, a serious mutiny broke out in the Babylonian army during December 594 B.C.,¹⁴ which he crushed.

The situation was obviously dangerous, and he would have become aware of priestly mutterings in the background; so Nebuchadnezzar realized that something had to be done to stop the rot. He decided to set up a statue of his own, in opposition to the one he had seen in his dream, with a dramatic difference. Not only the head of his image would be made of gold; every part of it would consist of that noble metal.¹⁵

Nebuchadnezzar’s artists accordingly created a gleaming golden statue and erected it on the plain of Dura, somewhere in the province of Babylon. It towered sixty cubits (nearly 100 feet/30 m) above the earth (Dan. 4:1). This probably included the pedestal. Even so, that is still huge.

He ordered all the most important dignitaries of the empire to attend its inauguration. At a musical signal from the royal orchestra, they would have to fall down and worship the statue, reaffirming their loyalty to the king and Babylon. Any failure to do so would be considered treason and immediately incur death in the fiery furnace, close to where Nebuchadnezzar would be sitting.

The summons to come was not a local, merely Mesopotamian matter. It included “all the rulers of the provinces” (vs. 2), from as far as the Mediterranean west, more than a thousand miles from the capital. We know of a visit to Babylon by at least one of these: Zedekiah of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar’s recently appointed viceroy in that difficult country. Zedekiah made this journey in his fourth year (Jer. 51:59). The date was 594/93 B.C.¹⁶

This was apparently just after the mutiny already mentioned. It is

therefore not farfetched to see a connection between these two events, and to date the episode of the golden statue by them. This was about ten years after Nebuchadnezzar's supernatural dream.

What happened on the plain of Dura has often been told and fascinated generations of believers in God's protection. The whole dramatic story is recorded in the third chapter of Daniel, which we suggest you read for yourself.

The high officials included Daniel's closest friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Under the king, they governed the most important province in the empire, namely that of Babylon itself. They were among the notables who had to attend, and they were in trouble; for Nebuchadnezzar's order conflicted with their religion. The second of the Ten Commandments clearly forbids bowing down to and worshipping any image made by human hands.

Soon the musicians struck up their tune. The whole assembly of officials did as they had been told and promptly fell down, groveling in the dust. One of these men was probably the Judean king, Zedekiah. He also knew very well that the Law of God forbids idolatry, but he was a weakling, with too few principles.

All these important people worshipped the golden statue without delay—all of them, that is, except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were immediately spotted and reported to Nebuchadnezzar, no doubt with great satisfaction, by enemies resentful of these foreigners who had been promoted over them.

The king was furious. The three offenders were, however, important people and had proven to be excellent governors. They were not easily replaceable, so Nebuchadnezzar decided to give them another chance; but they still refused.

Their open insubordination made him even angrier. He ordered them to be bound and the furnace to be made seven times hotter. Once it was ready, they would be flung inside. They had to wait and watch, knowing quite well there was no guarantee their God would deliver them. Nebuchadnezzar's taunting challenge was still ringing in their ears: "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Dan. 3:15).

Then powerful hands grabbed and bound them, after which brawny soldiers carried them toward the furnace. So great was its heat that it slew these captors in the very act of thrusting the three Hebrews into the fire.

Moments later the king jumped up from his throne in amazement. "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" he asked, rhetorically. "True, O king," his counselors replied. But in amazement he replied: "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Vv. 24-25)

This was the divine Person who after his incarnation would come to be known as Jesus Christ. Of course, it was more than five hundred years before his birth in Bethlehem; but in his divinity he had always existed. Now he came to comfort God's afflicted children in the fire and to help them when everybody else seemed to be against them.

In amazement, Nebuchadnezzar hurried as close to the entrance of the furnace as the searing heat permitted. Soon he ordered the three Hebrews to come out.

This they did, although they must have been reluctant to leave their wonderful companion. A crowd of excited VIPs jostled around them, examining them closely. The king, like his officials, was astonished. They found that not a hair on these men had been singed. No part of their clothing had been burned. They did not even smell of fire!

In his reaction, Nebuchadnezzar issued a very strict decree to impose a cruel death sentence on anybody who dared to speak insultingly of the Hebrew God. This does not mean that he was at this time giving up the service of Marduk or the other Babylonian deities, but he did acknowledge that the One whom the Jews worshipped was somebody very special.

The faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was vindicated, and the inauguration of the statue turned out to be a fiasco.

II

Usually this story is told to show how the Almighty can intervene to save his persecuted children, and to present these three men as most admirable examples. This is, of course, a valid interpretation, but it does not go far enough.

The main point of the events described is what Nebuchadnezzar was trying to do with his golden image. He wanted to repudiate the other statue that he had seen in his dream by making a very clear statement: his empire was there to stay and nobody would supplant it. Golden Babylon would not be succeeded by silver Media, or anyone else. At the same time, the new statue rejected Yahweh, the foreign deity, in favor of the traditional gods—whose service was clearly involved in its worship.

This fact is mentioned thrice: first by the enemies of the three Jews (vs. 12), then by the king (vs. 14), and finally by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego themselves, when they said, “We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (vs. 18).

The Bible does not say what the statue portrayed. Some have supposed it was an image of Nebuchadnezzar himself, but this is most unlikely. There is no evidence that he considered himself divine or demanded worship for his person. He and everybody else knew that he was not immortal; for, as Lewis Mumford points out, “in Mesopotamia the king was not a god.”¹⁷

The all-gold statue symbolized something that was supposed to last forever, namely the empire itself. But Babylon was in itself a rather abstract entity for worship. The ancients preferred more concrete deities. That was the whole point of idolatry, for they found the idea of an invisible God (as worshipped by the Jews) a little difficult and not to their taste.

Probably the statue represented Babylon via one of its gods. For this purpose Marduk, the chief of its pantheon, comes to mind as the

obvious choice. After all, the king's dream as interpreted by Daniel was a repudiation of all that Nebuchadnezzar stood for, and heresy, as the Babylonians saw it.

If so, the worship of the statue would amount to the following statement: "It is indeed Marduk, the god of gods and god of kings, who has given the sovereignty to Nebuchadnezzar and made Babylon great, forever."

This is, of course, a deduction without proof from the Bible; and yet there is at least circumstantial support for it.

Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, visited Babylon about 150 years after these events, c. 458 B.C. Meanwhile a new world power, the Medo-Persian Empire, had arisen; but the splendidly rebuilt Tower of Babel was still standing, as in Nebuchadnezzar's time, to honor Marduk. Its lower story "housed the god in a likeness half animal, half human, made of pure gold, seated on a throne beside a large table of pure gold and with a footstool of the same precious stuff. According to the description found in Herodotus, the total weight of statue and accoutrements amounted to 800 talents—800 talents of pure gold . . . about 23,700 kilograms, or 26.07 tons. Of pure gold!"¹⁸

Something similar, but apparently on an even more ambitious scale, once stood on the plain of Dura that day beneath the pitiless sun, when Nebuchadnezzar and all his top officials assembled to defy the God of heaven and his predictions—and his three servants were thrust into the overheated furnace.

III

Then there is the question that has tantalized generations of Bible readers: Where was Daniel when these things were happening?

Possibly he, as Prime Minister, had to sit with the king and watch how the heaven-sent dream was being defied. Nebuchadnezzar may have looked forward with relish to the Hebrew's discomfiture.

The construction of the image could not have escaped the prophet's attention, nor would Nebuchadnezzar have remained unaware of his disapproval. Daniel may even have remonstrated with the king. The latter could have retorted: "You just wait and see. I will show you!"

If this is how it happened, Daniel would personally have witnessed the astounding events that we have referred to and which he subsequently recorded so graphically, but escaped the need to fall down before the statue because he was not on the plain but in front, with Nebuchadnezzar.

On the other hand, he may have been absent by royal arrangement, to spare the king possible embarrassment, because he feared that the prophet's presence could prompt reaction by the God of the Hebrews.

But the Lord intervened all the same. Not only were his faithful ones treated despicably, but the true God was also being publicly defied by the leading superpower on earth. This is how it had been at the Tower of Babel, so many generations before; and now (in the same general area) it was happening again. The challenger was the greatest king alive, the man who had rebuilt Etemenanki to honor an idol.

IV

Heaven is long-suffering and, in seeming silence, endures much arrogance and wickedness; but there are times when the challenge of human rulers is accepted, since it is directed against God as the creator and sovereign of the universe. This Nebuchadnezzar discovered when he made an image of the prophetic statue.

The Bible tells us it is going to happen again, when a modern superpower, defying another prophecy, will make an image of the Beast, compelling all the world to engage in the God-defying idolatry of worshipping it (Rev. 13:12-15).

Writing more than ninety years ago in his stirring book on Daniel, Steven N. Haskell stressed that the identical principles would be involved. In the same way as ancient Babylon mixed politics with religion, the latter-day world will mingle statecraft with churchcraft. "In Revelation there is brought to view an image to the beast,— governments on earth which will frame laws contrary to the requirements of God. Life and power will be given to this image, and it shall both speak and decree that as many as will not worship it shall be put to death."¹⁹

Another angle to the book of Daniel is that it shows how a headstrong, heathen monarch by stages became converted, finally accepting the true God. In this, too, he proved to be the head of gold; for no other emperor in those far-off, pre-Christian times was prepared to go that far. His life experience reached its climax where, echoing the words of King David, written four hundred years earlier (Ps. 145:13), the proud Babylonian humbled himself at last and in adoration praised the Most High:

Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion,
and his kingdom is from generation to generation.

(Dan. 4: 34)

This final story about Nebuchadnezzar does not form part of our study, but we think that many will find it inspiring to read for themselves. It is recorded in the fourth chapter of Daniel.

The New Babylonian Empire with all its glory has crumbled into Mesopotamian dust. Etemenanki is now only a faded memory and an archaeological site. The golden statue of Marduk has disappeared, like the one that stood on the plain of Dura. But the prophetic dream described in Dan. 2—the image of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and iron mixed with clay—has been vindicated by history. Everything has happened, exactly as foretold.

Only the stone, which represents Christ returning as earth's eternal king, must still appear.

Part 2

The Ferocious Beasts

7 Four Beasts Out of the Sea

I

Half a century had passed since Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It was nine years after his death. Daniel was now a senior citizen, about seventy years of age.¹ Yet he still "went about the king's business" (Dan. 8:27, RSV), though the greater part of his career as a high official lay behind him. He was left mostly with his memories.

But his shrewd, experienced eyes could see that Babylon was declining, after Nebuchadnezzar's long and prosperous reign of forty-four years.

Those who succeeded him were all a disappointment, and went down to early graves. In just six years there were three kings with mouth-filling names but little substance: Amel-Marduk (562-60 B.C.), Nergal-shar-usur (559-56 B.C.), and Labashi-Marduk (556 B.C.). The last mentioned, the legal heir but a minor, was assassinated.²

Now the empire even had an absentee king, Nabonidus (556-39 B.C.), a usurper. He had just appointed his son, Belshazzar, to be his co-ruler and to represent him in the capital.³ He himself then left for Arabia. After two years, he conquered the oasis of Tema, in the northwest of that country. There, although Daniel could not know it at the time, he was destined to remain for another ten years.

Nabonidus had little interest in politics, spending much time on temple reconstruction and the moon god Sin, of whom his mother was the high priestess in Harran.⁴ Henceforth the fate of Babylon depended on the army and Belshazzar, its commander-in-chief.⁵ The year was 553 B.C.⁶

To Daniel, it was probably already becoming plain that the acting king, although a descendant of the great Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5:18), was not equal to his important responsibilities; and so the prophet wondered how much longer the New Babylonian Empire could last. He was especially concerned about his people and fellow exiles, the Jews. Being the kind of man he was, he would have prayed often, asking God to give him clarity about these matters.

What happened next is described in the seventh chapter of Daniel.

One night, no doubt still thinking about the situation at Babylon and in the Middle East, the prophet fell asleep; then he "had a dream and visions of his head" (Dan. 7:1). His sleep was troubled, broken intermittently by additional images. He seemed to be standing on a distant shore "and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea." (v. 4). Guthrie favors the interpretation that this refers to the great deep, a symbol of humanity, as in Rev. 17:15: "The waters which thou sawest . . . are peoples and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."⁷

On the other hand, the Great Sea was a name for the Mediterranean, especially used by Old Testament writers to describe the borders of Canaan, and its allotment to the various tribes of Israel

as they were about to establish themselves in it. We see this in three other Old Testament books.

Two of them concern the situation just after the Exodus, namely Num. 34:6,7 and several passages in Joshua, e.g. 1:4; 15:12 and 23:4. The other book is Ezekiel, written in Babylonia by Daniel's contemporary. This deals with the reoccupation of the promised land by the chosen people in its tribal areas. (Eze. 47:15, 19, 20; 48:28)

In accordance with the principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture, we think "the great sea" in Dan. 7:2 refers to the Mediterranean—especially its eastern shore, where it bordered on the prophet's homeland, which he had not seen since his youth. At the time he had his vision, he was thinking of it and his people's return from exile.

Great, variable winds, which in prophecy symbolize war (Jer. 49:36, 37), seemed to be blowing from every quarter, stirring up the choppy waves. Then, as Daniel watched, four great carnivorous creatures stepped out of the water, one after the other. Each in its turn splashed through the breakers and took its place on the beach.

The first three were recognizable animals, though all had unusual features. The fourth one was nightmarish.

First, there came a lion, powerful and majestic—but with an extraordinary addition: two eagle wings. As Daniel watched, it underwent a sudden change. Unseen hands plucked off its wings and pulled it upright, to stand on its hind legs. A human mind or, as the Authorized Version puts it, "a man's heart," was given to it. It was no longer the king of the beasts. It had been transformed into a clumsy manlike creature, scheming but faint-hearted. (Vs. 4)

The second animal from the sea was a mighty bear, but it, too, was somewhat unusual, with its one side raised higher than the other. Between its jaws were three ribs. In the dream, a voice called out: "Arise, devour much flesh." (Vs. 5)

The third animal was really strange. It was a leopard, but with four heads as well as four birdlike wings on its back, "and dominion was given to it" (vs. 6).

At this point there was probably a break in the dream sequence, for Daniel wrote: "After this I saw in the night visions . . ." (vs. 7).

Lumbering out of the water came the fourth creature, which he said was "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces." Furthermore, it had claws of brass or, as the RSV puts it, of bronze. It also had ten horns. (Vv. 7, 19, 20)

While its predecessors were presented as settling into fairly static poses, this one was extremely active. One of the things it did upset the prophet tremendously: it "stamped the *residue* with his feet" (v. 19, emphasis added). *Residue* means "what remains." Elsewhere in the Scriptures, as in Rev. 12:17, this is called the *remnant*. It refers to God's children, persecuted by the Beast. This engaged most of the prophet's attention, filling him with anxiety and dread.

As he gazed on it, a movement drew his attention to the ten horns. In their midst, something stirred. It was another horn. At first it was

little, but soon it grew thicker and taller than all the others, uprooting three of them. Daniel looked and looked, for he was making out further details. The new horn had eyes blazing with intelligence, like those of a man, and a mouth that spoke and uttered “great things” (vs. 8). It was boastful, blaspheming God.

At this point, the scene abruptly shifted from the seashore. The prophet found himself in a vast, celestial space. Then

I watched till thrones were put in place,
And the Ancient of Days was seated;
His garment was white as snow,
And the hair of His head was like pure wool.
His throne was a fiery flame,
Its wheels a burning fire;
A fiery stream issued
And came forth from before Him.
A thousand thousand ministered to Him;
Ten thousand times ten thousand
Stood before Him.
The court was seated,
And the books were opened.

(Vv. 9-1, NKJ)

Here Daniel was carried down in vision to the time of the end and the judgment day. Thrones were specially brought and set up. The Ancient of Days, who is God the Father, transferred from his former place and took his seat in the cosmic courtroom. People’s records were scrutinized.

In the appropriate chapter, more will be said about the judgment, which has several phases; here we focus only on its outcome for the boastful, blasphemous horn and the terrible beast on which it grew. This was also where Daniel’s main attention lay, as we can see from his wording: “I looked then . . . and as I looked . . .” (vs. 11, RSV).

Because of the horn’s blasphemies and dreadful persecutions, the beast itself is to be burnt with fire. This is not, however, the fate of the first three animals. The unusual lion, bear, and leopard were to be deprived of their dominion but not of their existence; each would be allowed to survive for a time.

Next the prophet, still at the place of judgment, saw God’s final and beautiful plan for the world. A very special Person appeared, transported on the clouds of heaven. He is called “the Son of man,” that is, a human being, but no ordinary one.

Those acquainted with the life story of Jesus will immediately recognize this expression, for it was his favorite description of himself. In the Gospels, according to Mervyn Maxwell, the Redeemer said he was “the Son of man” no fewer than forty times.⁸ A reader has pointed out, however, that the expression actually occurs in the Gospels eighty-four times and eighty-eight times in the New Testament—according to Strong’s Concordance. But the

apparent discrepancy between these figures may be accounted for by the fact that the Gospels overlap and often quote one another.

Although, before his incarnation, our Lord existed forever as a divine Person, Christ is now also, and will forever remain, a human being: “Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

In Dan. 7, the Lord is shown as coming, not yet to the earth, but to his Father—during the judgment, in a phase preceding his second Advent—and receiving “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom” (vs. 14). After the brutish wickedness of the world has been rooted out and the earth renewed, Christ will be the final and immortal king. Accompanied by the Father, he will rule over his redeemed ones with justice, love, and wisdom, everlastingly.

The words “I saw in the night visions” (vs. 13) indicate another shift in the dream sequence. Daniel first witnessed how God would deal with the beasts, especially the fourth one, the grim part of the business—and then the happy ending, which is, in fact, no ending; since it is for the redeemed the beginning of eternal joy.

II

But what was the meaning of the beasts? Daniel, his eyes still fixed on the heavenly scene before him, approached one who was standing there and asked him about it. God’s messenger summarized the situation in the following words: “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.” (Vv. 17 and 18)

From the synonymous use of the word *kingdom* in vs. 23, we know that the expression “four kings” does not simply refer to individuals.

By this time, the identity of these creatures should have dawned on us, if we remember Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Earlier on, we found that Dan. 2 was the master key to Bible prophecy. This can now unlock the vision to our understanding.

Instead of simply using our own words, however, let us quote Hippolytus (c. 165-c. 235), an early Christian bishop who lived only two centuries after the birth of our Lord. He opposed the papacy of Urban I and Pontianus, though he accompanied the latter to Sardinia, dying a martyr’s death in 235, when Maximinus was emperor.⁹ Before that, Hippolytus seems to have been the bishop of Porto, the ancient Portus Romanus, a harbor town about fifteen miles from Rome, on the northern side of the Tiber estuary.¹⁰

A very learned scholar and ante-Nicene theologian, he wrote a number of works that dealt with prophetic interpretation. These include a substantial commentary on the book of Daniel,¹¹ a largely lost treatise on the Apocalypse, and his *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*.¹² The last mentioned contains an astounding passage:

“The golden head of the image and the lioness denoted the

Babylonians; the shoulders and arms of silver, and the bear, represented the Persians and Medes; the belly and thighs of brass, and the leopard, meant the Greeks, who held the sovereignty from Alexander's time; the legs of iron, and the beast dreadful and terrible, expressed the Romans, who hold the sovereignty at present; the toes of the feet which were part clay and part iron, and the ten horns, were emblems of the kingdoms that are to rise; the other little horn that grows up among them meant the Antichrist in their midst; the stone that smites the earth and brings judgment upon the world was Christ. . . ."¹³

The most remarkable point about this passage is its time of writing, more than 1750 years ago. Rome was still ruled by pagans; Constantine had not yet accepted Christianity; and the breakup of the Western empire lay more than two centuries in the future. Hippolytus did, however, live in a very unstable period, which historians call the Troubled Century. Numerous assassinations plagued the throne of the Caesars, while the barbarians invaded the empire repeatedly.

In passing, let us salute the courage of this learned man, for he knew that by expressing himself in such terms, he was exposing himself to martyrdom,¹⁴ which he ultimately could not escape. The capital was only fifteen miles away from his home, and it was treason to foretell the end of Roman domination, precisely because at that time this seemed quite plausible.

Simply on the basis of the Bible's prophecies, Hippolytus boldly predicted "the kingdoms that are to arise;" and, indeed, the book of Daniel does say that the beasts represent four kings or *kingdoms*. (Cf. vv. 17 and 23) They would be the European powers of his future. Hippolytus also stated that the Antichrist would appear "in their midst." He therefore knew these different states would survive to the end, when Christ would return. It is almost uncanny how closely events have borne out his interpretation.

Being well versed in the Scriptures, he would certainly have known that the last apostle had written: "As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). He would therefore have recognized that this word could be applied to more than one apostate system. The aged John's preoccupation had been Gnosticism, but Hippolytus—like most believers through the ages—knew that Bible prophecy focused specially on one particular Antichrist.

Before Hippolytus, Jewish rabbis had been making an identification similar to his. Following the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and his legions in A.D. 70, as well as the failure of Bar Kokhba's rebellion sixty years later, "Roman rule was regarded with little enthusiasm, the 'reign of Esau' or Daniel's Fourth Beast, and prayers for its ending were offered in the synagogues."¹⁵

In communicating with the New Babylonian king, the Lord had tactfully used symbols appropriate and meaningful to his pagan mind. To his prophet, however, he depicted the kingdoms of earth as beasts, carnivorous and cruel; yet after these have had their day, an

eternal planetary government would be established by “one like the Son of man” (Dan. 7:13, 14), compassionate and infinitely wise.

A student of political history cannot fail to see the justice of this animal imagery. In their dealings with one another, and especially their enemies, the nations of earth are not often moved by true intelligence or compassion, but wicked self-interest and all too often by a mindless ferocity.

In parts of Daniel and much of Revelation, communicated to another prophet more than half a millennium later, the Lord repeatedly presents kingdoms and certain institutions in these terms. When men act the way they often do, they are—to God—but brutes and beasts, and finally the unrepentant must be treated as such.

Let us, now, in further detail, consider the four creatures which climbed up onto that beach in Daniel’s dream.

III

The first was a winged lion. Its equivalent is the head of gold on the statue shown to Nebuchadnezzar. This represents the New Babylonian Empire, covering the period 606-539 B.C. As gold is the finest and most precious metal, the lion is traditionally regarded as the most splendid animal, king of the beasts.

At Babylon, it was a great favorite as a motif of decoration, for instance along the Sacred Way, which ran from the outer city walls to the Gate of Ishtar. As Ceram describes it, there was a “parade of 120 lions, each nearly seven feet long, adorning the walls in colored glazed reliefs, and seeming to stride toward the enemy. In splendor and pride they stalked the length of the frieze—maws gaping to bare their teeth—with white or yellow pelts, yellow or red manes, against a background of light or dark blue glazes.”¹⁶

The lion of the vision had eagle’s wings. This bird is another symbol of high sovereignty, speed, and endurance in flight. Nebuchadnezzar’s armies were capable of rapid movements, and he constructed a far-ranging empire, stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean. The winged lion is also found in Babylonian objects of art. Sometimes it is explicitly a lion with eagle’s wings.¹⁷

Apart from Daniel, other Bible writers of the time also applied these symbols to the Babylonians. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, contemporaries of Nebuchadnezzar, described him as a lion (Jer. 4:7; 50:44; Eze. 17:3, 12). Habakkuk, a little earlier, compared the Babylonians to an eagle (1:8).

All too soon, however, as the prophet watched, the lion suffered a startling change. Its wings were jerked off, and it was pulled into an ungainly stance on its hind legs. Its courageous lion’s heart was removed and replaced with that of a timid human being. What we now see is no longer a lion-hearted man, like the twelfth-century English King Richard, or—even more appropriately—King Nebuchadnezzar, but a “man-hearted lion.”¹⁸

Such was the later condition of formerly regal Babylon, after its

great king (the “head of gold”) had died. The vision was given to the prophet in Belshazzar’s first year (Dan. 7:1), when both he and his father, King Nabonidus, were fearful of the encroaching superpower from the Iranian mountains beyond the Tigris. For this reason, the Babylonians’ latter end was now added to the prophetic scenario.

Though visions may largely cover the same ground, they are almost never repeated exactly. Instead, later representations add further details and focus with greater precision on what the Lord is communicating. In this process, symbolism is expanded, sometimes even modified, to pinpoint aspects of the ever clarifying scenario and its fulfillment.

We call it the principle of prophetic augmentation, which is at work throughout the Bible and is particularly manifested in both Daniel and Revelation. It also interacts dynamically with historical events as human destiny unfolds. In the vision of the four beasts, prophetic augmentation manifests itself particularly by adding to the ten European powers an eleventh one, the Little Horn, as well as the judgment. Neither has a parallel in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. These are vastly important themes, developed further in other chapters of both Daniel and the Apocalypse. On a more lowly plane, we note in the present instance that the enfeebled Babylonian lion would obviously be no match for its successor, the more robust and powerful Medo-Persian bear.

Nebuchadnezzar’s realm outlasted him by only twenty-three years. In 539 B.C., it fell to the armed forces of Cyrus the Great, and the New Babylonian Empire was no more.

IV

The second creature that came up from the sea was a massive bear, with three ribs in its slaving mouth. Its equivalent in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was the chest and arms of silver, a symbol of the Medo-Persians (539-331 B.C.). The bear rose asymmetrically, from one side.

This indicates that to begin with the new empire was founded and ruled by the Medes. Then it was taken over by the Persians, with whom, as William Culican expresses it, they had a “close ethnic affinity.” The power shift was brought about by Cyrus II, the Great, a Persian—though Mandane, his mother, was the daughter of Astyages, the Median king. In 553 B.C., with the assistance of Nabonidus,¹⁹ the last Babylonian king, Cyrus arose against his suzerain and grandfather, overthrowing him in 550 B.C.²⁰

The new emperor was generous to the conquered Median capital Ecbatana, which kept on prospering. He even spared his wicked grandfather Astyages, although this man had tried very hard to have Cyrus murdered in his infancy.²¹

The Medes, experienced in government, proved most useful after the change of regime. “In the new empire they retained a prominent position; in honour and war they stood next to the Persians; the ceremonial of their court was adopted by the new sovereigns who in

the summer months resided in Ecbatana, and many noble Medes were employed as officials, satraps and generals.”²² They also, together with the Persians, provided the standing army.²³ Imperial legislation was called “the law of the Medes and Persians” (Dan. 6:12).

And so “to the outside world the Median Empire did not actually fall; it merely underwent a change of management.”²⁴ For the reasons mentioned, we prefer to speak of the Medo-Persian Empire, although most historians simply call it the Persian Empire.

Some students of prophecy have interpreted the three ribs in the bear’s mouth as the most important powers subdued by the Persians, namely Babylonia, Lydia, and Egypt.²⁵

Despite the extent of the new empire, “the Persians were in a small minority. They were, moreover, inferior in civilization to the ancient nations that lay to the west of Iran.”²⁶ One of these was Babylonia. Note the word *inferior*, used in the passage just quoted. This is precisely what Daniel had said to Nebuchadnezzar: “After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee” (Dan. 2:39). Silver is less valuable than gold, and the bear is supposedly less noble than the lion.

V

An amazing story concerns Cyrus, whom the Ruler of heaven had chosen to be a world leader. Not less than to his uncle Nebuchadnezzar, God had spoken to him through the prophetic word. Long before his birth, the Bible predicted that Cyrus would capture Babylon, and how. The walls were impregnable, and so his forces first had to divert the water of the Euphrates, which flowed through the city. Then they marched up the exposed riverbed.

Even that, however, could not normally have done much good, for in rebuilding Babylon wily Nebuchadnezzar had also thought of such a possibility. Impressive inner fortifications were added. But on the night when Belshazzar was holding his impious feast (Dan. 5), the internal bronze gates were inexplicably left open. Revelers could pass back and forth across the river. There the invaders also entered.

This victory had been ordained of the Lord, 160 years before it occurred. Here is the astounding passage from the prophet Isaiah that foretold it:

Thus saith the Lord to his anointed,
to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden,
to subdue nations before him;
and I will loose the loins of kings,
to open before him the two leaved gates;
and the gates shall not be shut;
I will go before thee,
and make the crooked places straight;
I will break in pieces the gates of brass,
and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

And I will give thee the treasures of darkness,
 and hidden riches of secret places,
 that thou mayest know that I, the LORD,
 which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.
 For Jacob my servant's sake,
 and Israel mine elect,
 I have even called thee by thy name:
 I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not
 known me;
 I am the LORD, and there is none else,
 there is no God beside me:
 I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:
 That they may know from the rising of the sun,
 and from the west, that there is none beside me.
 I am the LORD, and there is none else.
 I form the light, and create darkness:
 I make peace, and create evil:
 I the LORD do all these things.

(Isa. 45:1-7)

Imagine the bemusement of Cyrus, probably a short while after he had occupied Babylon, when someone—possibly Daniel—read these words to him from a well-worn scroll. Whoever brought it insisted that the prophecy was already more than 150 years old.

At first, the king would naturally have suspected political intrigue and a forgery; but soon it became clear that the claim was genuine. God had foreordained him to be the ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire and the conqueror of Babylon! Most astonishingly, even his *name* had been written there so long before his birth.

The passage was, moreover, specially adapted to his Persian way of thinking. It ends in a rather un-Hebrew way, with expressions from Cyrus's own religion, ancient Indo-Iranian dualism—in which light and darkness figured very prominently as symbols of good and evil. He also tended toward polytheism. This is how the Almighty addressed his mind: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the LORD do all these things" (vs. 7). Yet Cyrus is also told repeatedly and in no uncertain terms: "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me" (vs. 5).

The God of the Hebrews had a special work for him: to free the Jews and let them go back to their country, from which the conquering Babylonians had exiled them. In vs. 13, the prophecy goes on to say so:

I have raised him up in righteousness,
 and I will direct all his ways:
 he shall build my city,
 and he shall let go my captives,
 not for a price nor reward,
 saith the Lord of hosts.

Josephus states that when Cyrus noted these words, “an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written.”²⁷ History testifies that this is indeed what the emperor and his successors did. We read of it in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Unfortunately, however, Cyrus did not in his personal life turn out to be a man of the same caliber as Nebuchadnezzar, who was finally converted and served the true God. The Persian monarch was too much of a schemer and worldly wise. He seems to have understood exactly how to “win friends and influence people,” many centuries before anybody could write a book on this topic. He gained very much political advantage from his great gift for attracting people to him.²⁸ Even his opponents found his personality captivating.

Earlier, when he set out to fight the Median army, it hardly opposed him. Instead, its soldiers revolted against their king, Astyages; and “in fetters they delivered him to Cyrus.”²⁹ Later his charisma seemed to work again: Babylon fell with little opposition. It was one of its own governors, Gobryas, who treasonably led his army and some Persian forces into the city.

And so Cyrus made his great mistake. Rather than acknowledge throughout that it was really God who had made him so successful, he took too much of the credit to himself. He also abused his remarkable gift of influence. On capturing Babylon, he posed as an appointee of Marduk, that city’s alleged kingmaker. After all, its previous ruler, Nabonidus, had preferred the moon god Sin, instead of the city’s great deity, which offended many priests.

Cyrus’s attitude naturally appealed to the Babylonians.³⁰ When he entered their city, it was “to a generous welcome. ‘Green twigs were spread in front of him . . .’” What did he do after this? He worshipped Marduk, on a daily basis,³¹ in spite of the fact that Isaiah’s prophecy concerning him had been brought to his attention.

Cyrus did not give the honor to the one who had really granted him the victory and set him on the throne of a mighty empire. Instead, he told the Babylonians that Marduk had appointed him to rule over them.³²

In this, he repeated what had also, at first, been Nebuchadnezzar’s mistake, namely an obstinate unwillingness to acknowledge the God of heaven, but with a difference: Cyrus lacked a repentant heart. He did not last long beyond the conquest of Babylon. In 530 B.C., only nine years after he had taken that city, he died on an expedition to the East.³³

VI

After the bear, a leopard dashed from the spray onto the beach. It had multiple heads and wings, four of each, which was most peculiar. This animal represented the third kingdom: the dominion of the ancient Greeks (331-30 B.C.). Its parallel in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is the belly and thighs of bronze.

The Greeks burst onto the international scene with the whirlwind

conquests of Alexander the great, their Macedonian king. He abruptly broke the power of the Medo-Persian Empire in three great battles: at the river Granicus (334 B.C.) in Asia Minor; near Issus (333 B.C.), which is just north of Phoenicia; and on a Mesopotamian plain called Gaugamela (331 B.C.), between Nineveh and Arbela.

The last mentioned was the decisive engagement of the war. Mopping-up operations followed, until by 328 B.C. Alexander had conquered the whole Medo-Persian Empire.

In 327 B.C., he even stormed into India, where in the spring of the next year he fought his last great battle, by the Hydaspes River. But after this, his war-weary troops mutinied, refusing to continue in the tropical rain. Though still eager to press on, Alexander was compelled to turn around.³⁴

Four years had sufficed to shatter the powerful but ponderous, bearlike armies with which Darius, the last Persian monarch, tried to oppose him. Seven years were enough to subdue all opposition, including provinces that tried to use the collapse of the empire as an opportunity for achieving independence. Alexander had conquered a vast territory reaching from the eastern Mediterranean to the Indus River.

Various authors have commented on the agile rapidity with which he and his armies moved. J. B. Bury mentions "the amazingly swift and skillful maneuvering of the highly drilled Macedonian soldiers."³⁵ Botsford and Robinson also include this characteristic in their survey of the entire military operation as far as India and back to Babylon: "The Grand Army was destined to march under Alexander many thousands of miles, often at terrific speed."³⁶

How aptly this velocity was indicated in the vision by the leopard's four birdlike wings!

Alexander died in Babylon, on 13 June 323 B.C., worn out by his great exertions and suffering from an old wound,³⁷ after an illness of ten days. This followed prolonged banqueting and a drinking spree. He was only in his thirty-third year.³⁸

A great conqueror of other men, he was yet unable to master himself. He could be extremely charming and had other engaging qualities. But he was also grossly intemperate, swift in anger, ruthless, and self-willed. "He had increasing recourse to terror, showing no hesitation in eliminating men whom he had ceased to trust, either with or without the pretense of a fair trial."³⁹ His victories went to his head, so that he demanded worship as a god, in imitation of other Mid-Eastern monarchs, such as the ancient Egyptian pharaohs.

For such reasons, Alexander was not highly regarded of Heaven, proving inferior to Nebuchadnezzar or even Cyrus. Similarly the ancient Greeks, though intellectually admirable, were morally of lesser caliber than the Babylonians and the Medo-Persians, who had preceded them.

VII

Alexander was a Macedonian king. Is it then correct to describe the

third kingdom of Bible prophecy as a *Greek* empire?

Though a valid question, this really reflects an ancient prejudice. The Macedonians were heartily disliked by their southern neighbors, the highly cultivated Greek city-states that they had subjugated—especially the proud Athenians. All these people called persons of non-Hellenic stock “barbarians.”

Greatly prizing culture as well as their independence, the Greek cities also applied this word to the somewhat uncouth Macedonians. But though the development of the latter was indeed “retarded in comparison with Hellenic civilization,”⁴⁰ they were not really foreigners. Botsford and Robinson are quite blunt about it: “Macedonians were Greeks.”⁴¹ Conscious of their relative backwardness, they were yet in love with the superior culture of their southern kinsmen and yearned for acceptance by them.

Philip, Alexander’s father and predecessor, knew that Macedonia alone would not be able to defeat the Persians. Therefore, he did not reduce the conquered city-states of Greece to absolute vassalage. Instead, he transformed them into a union known as the League of Corinth. He was careful to make himself its president, not its dictator.⁴² Alexander continued this policy. On his way to Persia he crossed the Hellespont to Asia in 334 B.C. in a dual capacity, as Macedonian king and general of the Greek alliance.⁴³

The conquest by his Grand Army of the Medo-Persian Empire, “essentially the civilized world,”⁴⁴ had tremendous consequences for ages to come.

Up to that time, Hellenic influence had been largely limited to the areas around the Aegean, as well as Italy, Sicily, and Massilia—the ancient name of Marseilles.⁴⁵ But now, with the addition of the former Medo-Persian territories, which were immense, an even bigger area had suddenly opened to it. European power was for the first time reaching deep into Asia.

The short-lived political unity of the Greeks did not long survive Alexander’s death. His realm broke up into several Hellenistic kingdoms, as indicated by the leopard’s four wings and four heads. Two of these states were Syria and Egypt, which exerted a powerful influence on the Middle East. Alexandria on the Nile became the cultural and scientific capital of the Mediterranean world, a position it maintained for about six hundred years. In future chapters, including our analysis of Dan. 8, we shall have more to say about the Greeks and their abiding legacy.

The career of the Macedonian conqueror “created, if not politically, at least economically and culturally, a single world stretching from Gibraltar to the Punjab, open to trade and social intercourse and with a considerable overlay of common civilization and the Greek *koine* as a lingua franca. It is not untrue to say that the Roman Empire, the spread of Christianity as a world religion, and the long centuries of Byzantium were all in some degree the fruits of Alexander’s achievement.”⁴⁶

VIII

The first three beasts of Daniel's dream had been more or less identifiable as familiar animals: a lion, a bear, and a leopard—though with unusual features. But the fourth creature that came out of the sea was a real monster. Though presumably a being of flesh and blood, it had some metal parts: great iron teeth and bronze claws. It was a kind of prophetic cyborg. It also had horns—not two as most animals have, but ten, at first. Then another one came thrusting up among them. This horn was the strangest of all, for it had intelligent human eyes and a speaking, blasphemous mouth.

The beast was hideously strong, and even the Hellenistic successors of the four-headed leopard could not, however nimble, stand up to it. Eventually the whole world was destined to become its prey (vs. 23), including the saints of God, as all true believers are often called in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 2:2; Eph. 1:1). Another appalling feature was its amazing life span, which would extend to the end of history as we know it. No other earthly creature would be able to oppose it successfully, until its wicked career collapsed through divine intervention. Its ultimate destiny is to be death in the fire that God will kindle at the end of the world, when destruction pours down from the sky.

What prophetic power does this symbol represent? We can begin to answer this question by comparing the following passages from Daniel 2 and 7:

“The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things” (2:40). “Behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces . . .” (7:7). An additional feature is that it had claws of bronze (7:19, RSV).

We note the striking similarity of the wording in the verses from these two chapters: “strong . . . strong exceedingly; as iron breaketh in pieces . . . iron teeth: it . . . brake in pieces.” There can be no doubt that the same or a similar power is meant.

As for the horns of the beast, let us observe that in the Bible they are a symbol of the power to rule over others. This becomes clear from a beautiful passage that sings the praises of King David and his descendant, the future Messiah, where the psalmist quotes the Lord as saying:

My faithfulness and my mercy
shall be with him:
and in my name shall his horn be exalted . . .
Also I will make him my first-born,
higher than the kings of the earth.

(Ps. 89:24, 27)

IX

Coleridge, the English Romantic poet and critic, in the nineteenth century pointed out that “horns were the emblem of power and sovereignty among the Eastern nations, and are still retained as such in Abyssinia.”⁴⁷

Alexander Hislop stated that this symbolism exists “in many and far-severed countries.”⁴⁸ Accordingly to him, it originated with Nimrod, mighty hunter and creator of the first Mesopotamian state, a son of Cush (Gen. 10:8-10) and therefore a black man. To support his idea, Hislop refers to woodcuts and the ideas of Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817-94), the British archaeologist who excavated Nineveh and wrote *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (1853).⁴⁹ It would seem that Nimrod, whom the Septuagint calls a giant, not only hunted animals and made war against his enemies; he also bested a bull with his bare hands. Proud of this achievement, he set its horns on his head as “a trophy of victory and a symbol of power.” Hislop maintains that even the serrated edges of royal crowns developed from the horns that originally decorated the heads of ancient rulers.⁵⁰ The horn was in any case a well-known symbol of kingship in Daniel’s time.

Hippolytus, whom we quoted in the previous chapter, thought that the fourth stage of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the fourth beast both represented the Roman Empire.

A similar interpretation was held by the Protestant Reformers and also by Uriah Smith (1832-1903), a great authority on Bible prophecy more than a hundred years ago. But he also indicated that in some ways the fourth power of Dan. 7 must be more than just the Roman Empire, for it continues “until the beast is given to the burning flame.”⁵¹

Indeed, this shows that the fourth beast is not identical with the legs of iron on the statue shown to Nebuchadnezzar, but corresponds to the legs *plus* the feet and toes. The last mentioned are paralleled by the horns.

When we analyzed Dan. 2, we noted that the feet and toes did not, from God’s point of view, represent a fifth stage, since the Bible speaks of only four predominant world powers. However fragmented, Western Europe is in important ways a continuation of Rome. It is still spoken of in the singular as “the kingdom” (vs. 42) and not “kingdoms.”

Clifford Goldstein puts it this way: “Rome, symbolized by the iron, goes all the way through until the end. At first, the iron was pure; later it becomes mixed with clay. Nevertheless it is still iron” and “the power that comes up after Greece remains until the time of the end, though in a different form.” Though in its initial states the fourth kingdom is pagan Rome, the beast is also Papal Rome plus Europe.⁵²

To this we must, however, add a further point: one should avoid a tendency to confuse the Roman Empire with its Western provinces; it also included other countries around the Mediterranean, such as Palestine, Asia Minor, and portions of Eastern Europe. Prophetically this is of vital importance, when we consider the significance of emperors like Constantine and Justinian. Neither ruled from Rome.

Both were Byzantines, whose capital was Constantinople, a city on the Bosphorus, a narrow strip of sea dividing Europe from Asia.

These emperors and their successors were not pagan or papal, yet they played important roles in the history of the church.

From time to time, this book will feature the Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire, which for a long time included Asia Minor. This part of the beast had power until 1453. In the sixth century, Emperor Justinian I sent armies which opened the way to papal triumph in the West. Its representatives also kept on persecuting dissident Christians in Asia Minor and the Balkans. It lasted as a Roman entity almost a thousand years longer than the Western Empire—nor is its heritage extinct today, for its spiritual heirs are still with us, among them the Greeks, the Russians, and the Serbs.

These are of the Orthodox rather than the Catholic persuasion, yet they should be regarded as extensions of the fourth beast of Dan. 7. Eastern Orthodoxy often quarreled with and increasingly distanced itself from the Roman Church, which culminated in the schism of 1054. The metropolitan of all the Orthodox churches lives in Istanbul, which the Greeks continue to call Constantinople. After almost a thousand years, despite occasional cordiality, these two traditions are still divided, largely over their relationship with the pope. Catholics regard him as the head of the church, but at best the East Europeans recognize him only as a senior archbishop, and emphatically not as a ruler over them. Otherwise their theology is very similar. We think that Eastern Orthodoxy is likely to reach an accommodation with the pope not many years from now. If so, this would reinvigorate the entire beast of Dan. 7. We need to remember, however, that the East Europeans are not a part of the horns, though they may belong to the claws of bronze.

X

For the fourth beast of Daniel's vision to represent both the Roman and the later European stages may seem to some a little strange; but God's perspective is different from ours. Though well aware of Europe's later political disunity, he knows that in other ways it is a coherent whole. T. S. Eliot also realized this, pointing it out in his 1951 BBC broadcast about "Virgil and the Christian World." He said, "We are all, so far as we inherit the civilization of Europe, still citizens of the Roman Empire."⁵³

It is all one continuous power, one animal—though, admittedly, it is not easy to give it a name. We may call it Rome-Europe, or even European Civilization. Beyond the initial stage as pagan Rome, a reasonably apt name would be Christendom, although this word was apparently not used before the ninth century.⁵⁴

The career of the fourth beast, in its second and longer stage (since the conversion of Constantine), has now lasted for almost 1700 years. One of its chief characteristics has always been its ferocity and readiness to engage in conflict, to which Christ referred when He foretold the future: "Ye will hear of wars and rumours of wars. . . . For

nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matt. 24:6, 7). During that whole long period some part or other of Europe has usually resounded to clashing arms and cries, as people slashed the life out of one another or themselves expired in agony.

For instance, “major campaigns were mounted by the important powers in three out of every four years between the beginning of the Italian wars in 1494 and the end of the sixteenth century.” That century, which saw the emergence of Protestantism as a major force, was convulsed by almost continuous warfare. Only England, protected by the Channel, enjoyed a modicum of peace.⁵⁵

XI

The ten horns of the beast refer to the same European kingdoms as the feet and toes of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. But what could the eleventh or Little Horn represent? It rises to power soon after the Germanic peoples established their kingdoms amid the debris of the shattered Western Empire. We believe it symbolizes the papacy.

Prophecy gives special attention to this entity, noting that it appeared and acted among the kingdoms represented. This detail is more than a statement of physical locality; it also suggests cooperation.

The popes have constantly interacted with and demonstrated their dependence on the support of political powers. It is therefore a mistake to focus on the eleventh or Little Horn to the extent of overlooking the other ten powers. By itself, the papacy has suffered much because it rarely possessed an effective army of its own. Usually the genius of its success has been alliances with or a manipulation of secular rulers, even playing them off against one another. Emperors, kings, or presidents are virtually indispensable to its success.

Often the popes have been weak and dominated—bullied, deposed, even killed—by powerful secular rulers. On the other hand, these have usually been good Catholics. Up to the Reformation, even the monarchs of Europe who opposed and fought against the pontiffs for political reasons supported their church, in a symbiotic relationship.

The Little Horn can be identified by three of its most outstanding features: a persecuting spirit, a boastful, blasphemous mouth, and especially a tendency to “change the times and the law” (Dan. 7:25, RSV). The events of more than a millennium have clearly fulfilled these specifications. The papacy claims unprecedented, godlike authority and considers itself infallible. It has oppressed the holy ones of God for “a time, two times, and half a time” (RSV). That is, three and a half years of prophetic days or 1260 literal years. It has also changed the religious calendar of Christianity, by decreeing that Easter must always fall on a Sunday, altering the weekly day of rest commanded in the Ten Commandments, and substituting the Gregorian for the Julian calendar. Later chapters will analyze these issues in detail.

XII

After describing the career of and the judgment pronounced against the fourth beast, Dan. 7 states that heaven would grant a further lease of life to its predecessors. That is, the winged lion, the bear, and the four-headed leopard, symbolizing the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, and Greeks, would survive their eclipse as superpowers (vs. 12).

Subsequent to its conquest by the Medo-Persians in 539 B.C., the city of Babylon lasted for approximately another two hundred years. At first it continued its prosperity. In the new empire, it even became one of the government centers, but later it yielded pride of place to Susa, an ancient Elamite city, which Darius transformed into his chief administrative capital.⁵⁶

Alexander the Great captured Babylon in 330 B.C.. But the founding of new Hellenistic cities for the Macedonian soldiers, especially Seleucia on the Tigris, led to its desertion.⁵⁷ This new city was the eastern capital of the Hellenistic king, Seleucus I Nicator (312-280 B.C.). The building of Seleucia, "mainly of materials brought from Babylon," marked the definite end of the latter city.⁵⁸

In this way, history fulfilled another remarkable prophecy of the Bible: "Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein." (Jer. 50:39, 40)

In the last part of the twentieth century, the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein attempted to recreate Nebuchadnezzar's empire, but the Gulf Wars destroyed this dream and him. The Babylon he had begun to rebuild remains an empty shell. As the Lord said through his prophet: "it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation."

More fortunate was the subsequent history of Persia and Greece.

The former at various times experienced revivals of its power. This may well have been LORD's reward because the Persians allowed his ancient people to return to their country after the Babylonian captivity. For four hundred years, from 250 to 600 AD, the Parthians—a related people—were formidable opponents of the Rmaans and the Byzantine Empire.⁵⁹ Persia itself was regenerated and under the Moslems remained a center of civilization. It continues to this day, as the country of Iran.

Apart from their legacy to both the ancient and the modern world, the Greeks were also able to survive as a people in their own right. For almost four centuries, however, they were dominated by the Turks. Eventually, in March 1821, they rebelled.

They had some initial successes, but then the tide of fortune turned against them. An Egyptian army, requested by Turkey, landed in the Morea (Peloponnese). Unfortunately the Greeks had committed atrocities, unleashing the most horrible reprisals: their "men were put to the sword, and the women sold into slavery."⁶⁰ Athens was taken.

They would soon have been subdued and made to suffer further retribution.

The Greeks were under heavy pressure from the enemy. At first, it was against the policy of the major powers to intervene, but then there came a sudden turn of events. Lord Byron, the English Romantic poet and playboy—famous throughout Europe—had volunteered to help them in their struggle. Like many in Britain and elsewhere, he was inspired by Philhellenic and liberal ideas. But in 1824 he contracted fever and died at Missolonghi, the last of the Grecian strongholds.

Van Loon explains what happened next: “His lonely death caught the imagination of the people. In various countries, societies were formed to help the Greeks . . . Money and supplies poured in upon the starving men of Missolonghi.” This was a turning point. On 20 October 1827, a combined fleet of the British, the French, and the Russians destroyed the Turkish navy in the Bay of Navarino.⁶¹

Finally, in 1829 by the treaty of Adrianople, the Greeks achieved their independence.⁶² Subsequent to further struggles, their present borders were established. And so the Greeks, too, in fulfillment of a prophecy 2600 years ago, had their national existence “prolonged for a season and a time” (Dan. 7:12).

8 Iron Teeth and Bronze Claws

I

A highly significant feature of the fourth beast is that it had not only gigantic iron teeth, but also claws of bronze.

We have already referred to the former. Iron is the metal that composed the legs of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It is a specifically Roman feature. But what of the claws of bronze? Writers like Smith, Nichol, Maxwell, and Clifford Goldstein apparently have not dealt with this detail, nor—it would seem—has their distant precursor, Hippolytus. In fact, we are unaware of anybody else who has addressed it. The reason is probably because bronze means *Greek*, which other prophetic expositors may have found puzzling. It certainly does not fit into an exclusively West Roman identification of the fourth beast. And so the bronze claws require special explanation.

We believe this can be provided by a well-known concept, expressed in the word *Greco-Roman*. Neither the ancient empire itself nor the modern world is intelligible without it. The same is true for a better understanding of several prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, such as Dan. 8 and Rev. 13 as well as 17.

Readers acquainted with ancient literature or history know that the Romans owed a great deal to the Greeks. At the same time, they may be accustomed to a prophetic interpretation that puts these peoples into completely separate and watertight compartments. But this idea has no support in either history or the Scriptures.

II

The Romans derived the most vital part of their culture from the Greeks, with whom—from first to last—their destiny was closely intertwined. Bury states that “Italian history . . . really opens with the coming of the Greeks.”¹ Their influence on both the civilization and the language of the Romans was, according to L. R. Palmer, deep, continuous, and enduring.²

The Greeks had settled on the coast of Campania in Western Italy at a place called Cyme, before the middle of the eighth century B.C. Here the Latins, including the Romans, learned from them to use the alphabet and about the gods of Olympus, who greatly influenced their own religion. A little later the Greeks, expanding their Italian settlements, founded Neapolis, which in their language means “new city.”³ Today it still exists, under its Italian name of Napoli, or Naples.

Further south there was a really massive Hellenic presence, on the island of Sicily and also northeast of it on the mainland beyond the narrow strait of Messina. During our 1994 visit, my wife Ria and I could easily look across it and distinguish buildings on the coast of Calabria. The ancient Greeks of Sicily soon settled along the boot of

Italy and northward, so densely that southern Italy became known as Magna Graecia,⁴ a Latin expression meaning *Great Greece*.

First colonized from cities like Corinth, this entire area was, for the older cities of Hellas, the wonderful West: a kind of America, where their colonies, nurtured by fair Sicily and the Italian south, could expand and grow into a new-world greatness of their own. From Magna Graecia and Sicilian cities like Syracuse, tremendous Hellenization radiated northwards.

The Romans had already undergone this influence indirectly, through their former overlords, the Etruscans. M. I. Finley explains that when these people met the Greeks of southern Italy in about 700 B.C., "there began a cultural invasion on a scale, intensity and duration for which I cannot think of a parallel."⁵

After the Romans had expelled the last Etruscan king, the tyrant Tarquinius Superbus (534-510 B.C.), and established a republic of their own, the cultural assimilation simply continued. "The Italian and Sicilian Greeks were a mighty factor in the civilization of Italy, and, through Italy, of central and western Europe."⁶

As Norwich points out, the majority of the people in the South were Romanized without losing their language, a situation that survived the Western Empire. Even as late as the eleventh century, the vast majority of the people in southern Italy still spoke Greek.⁷ *The Romans were partly of Greek descent*. For the understanding of various prophecies in Daniel as well as Revelation this is a key concept.

At the climax of Hellenic culture, all Italy increasingly imitated Greek civilization,⁸ which is hardly to be marveled at; for "the revelation of the cultural treasures amassed by the world's most gifted people over a long and eventful history had an overwhelming effect."⁹

With the establishment of the Roman Empire, this did not diminish but rather increased. In his Introduction to *The Penguin Book of Greek Verse*, C. A. Trypanis states that "after the Roman conquest of Greece and of the Hellenistic East, the center of Greek culture swung to the West, to Rome."¹⁰ Therefore, by the time of the emperor Augustus, Greek taste "prevailed in all artistic and poetic creations of the Romans."¹¹ The famous Latin poet Horace (65-8 B.C.), who lived in this period, generously acknowledged the debt of his people to Hellas:

Greece, conquered Greece, her conqueror subdued.
And clownish Latium with its arts imbued.¹²

Hellenism became an enduring aspect of Latin literature. The greatest Roman writers admired, closely studied, and imitated Greek models. Throughout their pages, there is an abundance of allusions to characters and ideas in Homer, the Athenian dramatists, the poets from Sappho to Theocritus, the philosophers, and many others.

Latin itself was transformed. Palmer speaks of the Hellenic influence on the language and literature of the Romans as "overpowering."¹³ Cultivated people in the capital became "completely

bilingual.”¹⁴ They loved to speak not only their native Latin, but also Greek. Some even wrote in it. These included at least four emperors. Three turned their hands to verse: Trajan (53-117),¹⁵ Hadrian (76-138), whom Rose calls a minor poet,¹⁶ and Julian the Apostate (331-63), who was also a prose author, amongst others of some interesting letters.¹⁷ The fourth was the philosopher-emperor, Marcus Aurelius (121-80), who used Greek for his *Meditations*, still a famous book.¹⁸

Hellenization was not, however, confined to a well-educated elite. Froome points out that “Rome itself under the emperors was essentially a Greek city, with Greek as its second language” for “the mass of the poorer population, among whom Christianity took root, were predominantly Greek speaking.”¹⁹

That educated Romans could fall in love with the language of Hellas was one thing, but why were there so many ordinary people in the capital who spoke it? The reason is that, as the empire expanded, it “received an influx of people of the most varied origin, including eventually vast numbers from Asia and Africa.”²⁰ Most were from the older Hellenistic countries established by the successors of Alexander the Great.

Apart from language and literature, imperial Rome was also deeply affected in other ways. As Toynbee says, in its heyday its organization was, wherever this was feasible, largely based on the Greek concept of self-governing city states.²¹ In the East, these were simply taken over from the former Hellenistic kingdoms and linked together in the loose federation known as the Roman Empire. S. Katz even thinks that one of the things that later went wrong with it was the deviation from this pattern: “The emperors interfered more and more with municipal freedom and thus undermined a civilization which had been based upon an association of self-governing city-states.”²²

Toynbee views the Roman Empire as the culmination of Hellenic Society, “the Hellenic universal state.”²³ In this he was not alone, for C. H. King speaks of it as the “Greco-Roman state,”²⁴ while H. Trevor-Roper—dealing with the way of life in that society rather than its political aspect—characterizes it as a “cosmopolitan Greco-Roman culture.”²⁵ This was true throughout the Empire, affecting all the countries around the Mediterranean, even Semitic lands like Palestine. Here is a startling passage from Werner Keller’s much-translated work, *The Bible as History*, of which more than ten million copies have been sold:

Life in the Roman Empire took on more and more the stamp of Greece. Roman civilisation was to a large extent Greek civilisation: Greek was the world language which united all the subject peoples of the East.

Anyone wandering through Palestine at the turn of the eras might have imagined he was in Greece. Across the Jordan lay out and out Greek cities. The “Ten Cities” [Decapolis] of the gospels (Matt. 4²⁵; Mk. 5²⁰) took Athens as their model: they had temples which were sacred to Zeus and Artemis, they had their theatre, their pillared forum, their stadium, their gymnasium and their

baths. Greek in architecture as well as in the habits of their citizens were likewise Caesarea, the seat of Pilate's government, which lay on the Mediterranean south of Carmel, Sepphoris and Tiberias, which lay a few miles north of Nazareth on the Lake of Galilee, Caesarea Philippi, built at the foot of Hermon, and likewise Jericho. Only the many small towns and villages in Galilee, as in Judah, had retained their Jewish style of architecture. It was in these genuine Jewish communities that Jesus lived and worked, and nowhere do the Gospel writers speak of his ever having lived *in* one of the Greek cities but only in their neighbourhood (Mark 7³¹).

Nevertheless Greek dress and much of the Greek way of life had long before Jesus' day penetrated into the purely Jewish communities. Natives of Galilee and Judah wore the same sort of clothes as were worn in Alexandria, Rome or Athens. These consisted of tunic and cloak, shoes or sandals, with a hat or a cap as head covering. Furniture included a bed and the Greek habit of reclining at meals was generally adopted.²⁶

III

Here, however, we are not simply interested in Rome as such, but Christianity and the European kingdoms that rose at a later stage. The same influences appear in them.

Although the apostles' religion was essentially Semitic, "the character of Greco-Roman civilization determined in many respects the texture of the Christian Church. . . . The early Church was the heir of Rome."²⁷ Here King is referring to the Orthodox and Catholic traditions. Other branches of Christianity, such as the Syriac and Ethiopian churches, retained a greater portion of their Semitic heritage. A. H. M. Jones explains that after its beginnings among Aramaic-speaking Jews in Palestine, the new religion first "gradually spread among the middle and lower classes in the towns, mainly in the Greek-speaking east." Even in Rome, "the language of the church was Greek until the early fourth century."²⁸

This is the main reason why the New Testament was written in *Koine* Greek, or common variant of the language, a widely used lingua franca based on simplified Athenian speech and enriched with new words.²⁹ Significantly, Paul's epistle to the Romans was written in Greek, not Latin, as we would otherwise have expected.

As time went on and great religious controversies raged, the main ideas of the church were first formulated in Greek. "The Trinitarian and Christological theology of the fourth and fifth centuries . . . was entirely the product of the Greek east."³⁰ At that time the more backward West had only two original thinkers: Augustine and his theological opponent Pelagius.

Another great transformation took place in A.D. 330 when Constantine moved the capital. This is how Paul K. Conkin and N. Stromberg put it: "At a time when most of the people of western Europe were living in mud huts, the Roman Empire withdrew to the banks of the Bosphorus, became fully Greek (its intellectual side had

always been primarily Greek), and carried on the ancient classical traditions there at the great city of Constantinople for a number of centuries.”³¹

At first, its rulers spoke Latin; “but most of their ideas came from the East . . . a blend of Greek, Jewish, and Iranian influences.” Constantine wanted to make his capital a center of culture and learning for the whole empire. He had the cities of Greece and Asia ransacked for outstanding pieces of Grecian art. About four hundred statues were erected in front of the Church of the Holy Wisdom. Every way one looked there were reminders of their Greek origin. The emperor also built libraries, filled with manuscripts, to strengthen the influence of Classical Greek.³²

Poets like Agathias, Paulos, Macedonius, and others responded, sometimes magnificently. Highly educated and “conscious of the Greek heritage which gave the city its character,” they worked deliberately to revive the ancient literary language. Nor were their efforts in vain, for under Justinian I (483-565) Byzantium saw the final blossoming of the epigram, that subtle and often splendid form of Grecian poetry.³³

Trypanis concludes correctly that founding Constantinople “proved tantamount to the creation of a new Greek state.”³⁴ Down to the sixth century, its emperors used Latin, though decreasingly so, to insist on their Romanness. But the city itself underwent a rapid language shift. Finally Justinian threw in the towel.³⁵ He “gradually abandoned speaking and writing Latin.”³⁶ He was, in any case, not Italian, having been “born near the ruins of Sardica (the modern Sophia), of an obscure race of barbarians,” in what today is called Bulgaria.³⁷

The resultant state is often referred to as the Eastern Roman Empire, or the Byzantine Empire. The latter name is derived from Byzantium, the name of an older city that used to stand on the site where Constantinople was built. We note that when the emperor went east, it was the capital of the *whole* empire that moved. Politically and culturally the city of Rome had been largely superseded.

There was also, it is true, a Western emperor, ruling from Milan and later Ravenna for military reasons, since these cities were nearer the frontier; but he was subject to the one in Constantinople, and his disappearance in 476 did not immediately affect the international politics of the time.

The preponderance of Greek influence in the Roman world resulted, not simply from a superior culture, but the fact that “two-thirds of its population lived in the eastern provinces . . . They were also the commercial and industrial heart of the empire.”³⁸

It was from a thoroughly Hellenized Constantinople that Justinian’s armies in the sixth century set forth to reconquer North Africa and Italy. The people of that city still called themselves Romans, but they were really Greeks. It was a Byzantine emperor who played such an important part in strengthening the power of the papacy, more than half a century after 476, when Italy had succumbed to its new, Germanic rulers.

Even in Rome the influence of the Greeks lingered on, until the

early eighth century. It only faded to some extent when Islam conquered large parts of the Byzantine Empire, and the Lombards were pressing into the northern parts of the Italian peninsula. Southern Italy and Sicily, however, remained entirely Greek speaking.

And so were many pontiffs. Paul Johnson, the eminent Catholic historian, records that “between 654 and 752 only five out of seventeen popes were of Roman origin—three were Greeks, five Syrian, three from Greek-speaking Sicily, and one from somewhere in Italy.”³⁹ Indeed, the pope was not only the head of the Catholic Church but also “a Byzantine duke and the ruler of part of the imperial territories in Italy,” and he was expected to pay taxes to Constantinople.⁴⁰

The growing isolation from the Eastern Empire caused Rome to give a new emphasis to Latin, which up to then had been overshadowed by Greek and the superior culture expressed in it.

Curiously enough, the emergence of Latin as a church language owes much to Carthage in North Africa, beginning with Tertullian (c. 160-240), who was born there. In that area Greek had already disappeared.⁴¹ The greatest Latin Father, Augustine of Hippo, was another North African.

In the Dark Ages, Latin, which had always been stronger in the Western provinces, established itself as the language of the church and the ruling elite. But it is an anachronism to think that the Roman Empire, or even Catholicism, was always so very Latin. The great change came when Constantinople, overwhelmed by troubles of its own and increasingly impotent, had to abandon the West to its new Germanic rulers.

For several centuries, the Byzantine emperors kept on persecuting and killing the dissident Christians of their Asian provinces, until the coming of Islam brought the so-called heretics a much-appreciated reprieve.

On the Bosphorus, the Greek-speaking Romans, as they still called themselves, maintained their Hellenic heritage until 1453, when the Turks at last succeeded in capturing their city. But before this happened, it was a mighty focus for spreading both civilization and Christianity, of the Orthodox rather than the Roman Catholic variety, throughout the Balkan peninsula and Eastern Europe.

Of this, the most conspicuous badge is the Cyrillic alphabet, named after Cyril, the famous ninth-century missionary. Together with Methodius, he translated the Bible into Old Church Slavonic, inventing a new system of writing, based on the Greek.⁴² Most countries using the Cyrillic alphabet derive their civilization and ecclesiastical structure from Constantinople, rather than Rome. These include the Bulgarians, the Serbs, and the Russians. Westerners are prone to forget that these and other important nations are also Europeans and heirs of the ancient Roman Empire.

As Richard W. Southern correctly points out, the West has for centuries been curiously blind to the great historical contribution of the Byzantine Greeks and their empire.⁴³ And we think that writers on prophecy have been similarly blind to the role that the Orthodox

nations in Eastern Europe have played and are likely to play in the future, once their church has made its peace with Rome.

Though after Justinian's time, Constantinople in the West effectively ruled only Sicily and parts of Italy, it continued to exert a mighty influence on Europe. Its Hellenism was never extinguished in Italy, and even proved to be an important factor in the Renaissance of the fifteenth century. Further impetus was given to this after 1453, since many Greek scholars fled to the West with precious manuscripts of ancient Hellas.

IV

The descendants of the Germanic peoples that had taken over Italy and the Western provinces proved most receptive to all these civilizing influences.

Even in the beginning, their people had not, as King expresses it, come into the Empire to destroy but to enjoy.⁴⁴ They had themselves been captivated by the ideals of a superior Greco-Roman civilization, which they did their best to imitate. This is what had previously also happened to the Latin inhabitants of Italy, after they met Hellenism at Cyme, in Magna Graecia, and in Sicily.

When the Western Empire fell apart, the old values were not abandoned. "In the Christian Church that transcended the Roman state there was much that was still Roman."⁴⁵

Malachi Martin, a former Jesuit professor, puts this even more grandly. Speaking of Catholicism and meaning its Roman variety, he says: "The Church provides the sole continuing connection between the present and the ancient world of Greece and Rome and Judaism from which sprang the two bases—science and democracy—of the only true civilization we can find in 8,000 years of human history. The Church has been the repository of that civilization as well as the matrix from which was born all we claim as art and literature, as law and decency, as gracious living."⁴⁶

There is some truth to this statement, in spite of its excessive claims. But Catholicism sometimes also *opposed* science and especially democracy, and the bit about the "only true civilization" cannot fail to offend the Chinese and other Orientals.

After the early Middle Ages, emperors and literati painstakingly reestablished the ruined civilization of the West. In different stages, "the European relics of the deceased Roman Empire were re-animated to become the heart of the modern world."⁴⁷

At first, for many centuries, the Latin language remained its vehicle in the West. And then came the fifteenth century, when scholars also rediscovered Hellenism.

In the development of Europe, this was not, of course, the only important factor, as several writers, such as Frances and Joseph Gies, have made plain. Throughout medieval times there was a continuous development of technology by the Germanic people and their descendants, who have demonstrated a special gift for it. Europe is also heavily indebted to the Far East, especially China.⁴⁸ The Great

Silk Road, open for 4,000 years between the Orient and the West, brought with its caravans both luxury items and very useful inventions from that ancient country on the Pacific. Two that have changed the world were gunpowder and paper. The latter is indispensable for the printing press.

Nevertheless, civilization in Europe and even the rest of the world today was largely erected on ideas originally generated by the Greeks.⁴⁹ The chief middlemen that transmitted this heritage to the West were Syriac Christians, Arabs, and Jews. The last mentioned lived in both Catholic and Moslem lands, especially medieval Spain, whose culture flourished during its very long Islamic period. The West owes these largely Semitic peoples an incalculable debt, for without this revival of Hellenic thought, the age we live in could not have come into existence. Koestler also stresses the continuity between the ancient Roman Empire, including its Hellenic aspect, and modern times, "Europe did not become barbarised—it was the barbarians who became Europeanized. After the long, dark interlude, Europe was reborn by rediscovering its past—its temporarily lost Greek heritage."⁵⁰

V

Why was this so important? To answer this question, let us briefly cast an eye on the amazing achievements of the ancient Greeks. We begin with Athens, which by the end of the fifth century before our era reached dazzling heights in the fields of literature, arts, and philosophy. These accomplishments would never be surpassed and have only rarely been equaled; they have, moreover, influenced every nation in Europe, from Roman times to the present day.

English literature provides ample evidence. Up to the nineteenth century, writers in Britain and America could normally read the Latin authors, who had themselves been profoundly affected by their Grecian predecessors. An influential elite of intellectuals, such as John Milton, also read Greek. In an anthology covering more than ninety poets from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, Stuart Gillespie demonstrates the massive impact of this tradition. He concludes, "The materials provided by the classical poets have been second in importance to none, and their influence over English writers can be ignored only at the risk of serious distortion of the nature of the English literary achievement."⁵¹

But Greek influence has not been limited to literature, the visual arts, and philosophy; it has touched every sphere of Western intellect, life, and social organization.

Science, as we know it, began with the Greeks; for it was born in Ionia, between 600 and 400 B.C. Two outstanding men from that period were Democritus of Samos (c. 460–c. 370 B.C.), who first propounded the atomic theory,⁵² and Pythagoras of Abdera in Thrace (c. 580–c. 500 B.C.), still famous for a theorem that bears his name, with whom originated "the modern tradition of mathematical argument, essential to all science."⁵³

Apart from the experimental method, Western science would not have existed without the contributions from logic and especially mathematics, which both originated with the ancient Greeks. Scientific laws could not have been discovered without a radical habit of abstraction, requiring “the will to penetrate the confusing diversity of the visible world and to express its observed regularities in mathematical formulas. This became possible through the recovery of Greek mathematics in the sixteenth century.”⁵⁴

Athens invented democracy, but the Hellenistic kingdoms added federalism, which the Romans largely used to forge their empire. This was later realized more perfectly in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United States.⁵⁵

The fourth beast of Daniel 7 had great iron teeth to symbolize the Roman state, but claws of bronze to indicate the Grecian element; for in character it was and remains Greco-Roman. With its Roman teeth, it devoured the children of God, and crushed them with its bronze Byzantine paws. This creature represents Rome-Europe, together with its offspring, the planet-wide neo-Europes discussed in a previous chapter.

To realize that Western civilization clearly and prominently bears a Hellenic image can help to solve a number of prophetic riddles. One concerns a *Roman* little horn that seems to rise from part of the *Greek* nation, as depicted in Dan. 8:9-11. Another is why the Antichristian Beast of Rev. 13 looks so much like a *leopard*.

In further chapters, we shall be scrutinizing the beast of Dan. 7 and its horns more closely. But first we need to consider the other mighty being to whom the prophecies refer, the Messiah, who is also the Lamb of God, as well as the Christian church that he founded.

Part 3

The Lamb of God

9 The History That Never Was

I

There is another Old Testament prophecy that mentions an animal with bronze and iron parts. We find it in the book of Micah, who lived in about 742-687 B.C., when Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were still ruling over Judah. Micah, a younger contemporary of Isaiah,¹ wrote about a hundred years before Daniel.

In his book, we find several interrelated prophecies, which contrast with and yet seem to be echoed in those of Daniel 2 and 7. Briefly, this is what Micah said: because of wickedness in Judah under the leadership of its rulers, Jerusalem would “become a heap of ruins” (Mic. 3:12, RSV). Further, it is clearly implied that the city would be rebuilt. Well, all this happened. So far, at least, there is no discrepancy with anything Daniel wrote. But from this point onward, in his fourth chapter, Micah predicted a very different future.

The Lord would reign over his reassembled people in Mount Zion, forever. A period of universal peace would set in. Many nations would go up to Jerusalem and ask to be instructed in its religion. For them, too, the temple would become the center of worship. The Lord would be the judge over many nations, which would turn to the pursuit of peace,

and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks:
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more . . .

(Mic. 4:3)

A marvelous time would ensue, for God would have restored the “first dominion” of Zion; “the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem” (vs. 8). Their king would be the Messiah, born in Bethlehem, and his realm would extend “unto the ends of the earth” (Mic. 5:2-4). The Hebrews would have universal power over the entire planet, in league with other converted nations.

II

Isaiah specified two of them: “In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance” (Is. 19:24, 25).

These other ancient peoples no longer exist, but God—who yearned for their salvation—would have preserved and blessed them forever, as

his very own if they had not rejected his attempts to redeem them.

Some nations would refuse to accept the Messianic kingdom. They fight, but, coming to attack Jerusalem, they discover that the Lord has his own plans for them, having “gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor” (Mic. 4:12, RSV). Now let us note the following passage, which contains expressions reminiscent of the wording later used to describe Daniel’s vision:

Arise and thresh,
O daughter of Zion,
for I will make your horn *iron*
and your hoofs *bronze*;
you shall *beat in pieces* many peoples,
and shall devote their gain to the LORD,
their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.

(Mic. 4:13, RSV, emphasis added)

This is startling. The daughter of Zion has three of the same characteristics as the fourth beast of Dan. 7, namely the iron, the bronze, and the notion of beating other nations in pieces. But Micah depicts the people of God as a heifer, that is, as a clean animal, unlike the unclean carnivores that would later symbolize the Gentile empires.

III

As an exile in Babylon, Daniel naturally studied God’s promises of a glorious restoration for the Jews. He tells us of this in chapter 9:2, with reference to Jeremiah’s predictions. He would also, with his very keen mind and usual diligence, have pondered the other prophets. The words we quoted from Micah, written a century before Daniel’s time, would certainly have been familiar to him.

He would have been particularly puzzled as to why the predictions about the Messiah had not been fulfilled. The Promised One would have been born at Bethlehem in Assyrian times. That formidable people would have been defeated under his leadership, and their country laid waste (Micah 5:2). The Bible says so, explicitly (vv. 5, 6).

IV

Several beautiful prophecies about the Messiah by Isaiah were also aimed at that period. The virgin’s son to be known as Immanuel (Isa. 7:14) would have been born in the time of wicked King Ahaz, if he repented. During his reign, the northern kingdom of Israel, in coalition with Syria, was threatening Jerusalem . . . while the Assyrians looked on, about to pounce on them all (vv. 5, 6, 18-20). That was also the time frame for the birth of the child whose name would be “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6, 9-14), whom another prediction calls “a rod out of the stem of Jesse (Isa. 11:1) that would bring

deliverance from Judah's northern enemies (vv. 11-16).

V

But when Daniel had his visions, all those states had already vanished. Syria, as well as the northern state of Israel, had been wiped from the face of the earth by the Assyrians—and then these, too, disappeared when the Babylonians in league with the Medes attacked and destroyed their empire. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and in stages emptied it of its people, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem. Together with these events, the time for the Messiah's birth had apparently also passed.

The Son of God could indeed have been born in the time of King Ahaz, seven centuries before our era, according to Micah and Isaiah—if that monarch and others who succeeded him had not been so faithless. Of course, the Lord knew all along that his people would sadly turn away from his plans to heal them of their spiritual apostasy and save them from the nations which were threatening their national survival. The future just would not happen like that. Nevertheless, he had been ready and willing to fulfil those promises, if only . . .

But how this lack of fulfillment must have troubled Daniel! And small wonder that he “desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrible, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze; and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet” (Dan. 7:19, RSV).

Instead of the heifer Zion, with her iron horn and hooves of bronze, beating many nations into pieces, he saw a very different beast that would act a similar part. Even worse, it would stamp “the residue with its feet.” To Daniel's mind, this meant that his people was also to be its victim, for *residue* means “remnant,” a word that the Bible often applies to the Lord's people.

He was flabbergasted by this change in the prophetic scenario.

VI

And you, dear reader, may also be puzzled. Do the prophecies contradict one another? Can we depend on the Bible, which contains them?

We certainly can, but need to realize that the historical events to which the prophecies refer are shaped not only by God, but by people, who are self-willed and frequently disobey or resist his leading. There is a wonderful interaction of the divine with the human, which calls to mind the wheel spinning within a wheel that Ezekiel saw (1:16).

Ellen White explains this rather marvelously in the following passage, profound and sublime: “In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and

power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.”²

God is not a mere spectator of what happens in the world; he is the ultimate shaper of history, and yet people are not puppets. They can resist and sometimes delay his purposes, though these must eventually prevail. Occasionally human beings even speed them up, though they do this inadvertently. Since the Lord’s compassion passes understanding, he will on occasion even make some changes in his program.

Let us consider two additional stories in the Bible that clearly illustrate this point.

VII

The first one is found in the book of Jonah.

One day this prophet received an instruction from the Lord: “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me” (Jon. 1:2).

It was a most unwelcome commission, for Nineveh was the oldest and eventually the largest city of the gifted but cruel Assyrians, who had been terrorizing the Middle East for centuries. They also posed a threat to the northern kingdom of Israel, Jonah’s country. Eventually, in 721 B.C., they would destroy Samaria and with much bloodshed and terrible atrocities gobble up the ten tribes. The survivors would be deported and scattered among the nations, where most of them would disappear without a trace. Though Jonah lived before these events, he probably had a foreboding, and perhaps even light from the Lord, that this would eventually happen to his people.

And so, when God instructed him to visit Nineveh and preach in it, the prophet was dismayed. It is true, his message would be a fierce one, predicting destruction for that wicked city; but Jonah knew it was really an attempt by God to avert the disaster. What the Lord was planning was shock treatment to save the people of that atrocious city. But as a good, patriotic Israelite the prophet had been waiting (and no doubt praying) for Assyria’s destruction.

No, he was not going to deliver the inconvenient message! Instead of traveling east, he hurried to the Mediterranean at the port of Joppa, where he boarded a sailing vessel going in the opposite direction. He was bound—or so he thought—for Tarshish, also known as Tartessus, an ancient city that lay beyond Gibraltar on the west coast of Spain,³ as far away from Nineveh as one could normally get in those days.

Generations of Bible readers have been intrigued by the spectacular events that followed, especially Jonah’s unenjoyable deepsea trip in a giant marine animal, which the Lord arranged to get the disobedient prophet back on course. Unfortunately many have been so fascinated by this unusual fish that they miss the main point of the story, which is God’s compassion for and reluctance to execute his sentence against transgressors.

Just as Jonah had feared, the king and people of Nineveh repented

when they heard their city would be overthrown within forty days. “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not” (Jon. 3:10).

This greatly displeased the prophet, whose prediction would no longer be fulfilled—and whose Israelite nationalism was being frustrated. God, he felt, had made a fool of him, just as he had suspected would happen. Jonah even angrily reproached his Maker: “I pray thee, Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.” (4:2)

In a later generation, to Jeremiah, the Lord explicitly confirmed the conditionality of his threats, when uttered as prophecies:

“At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck it up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them” (Jer. 18:7, 8). For “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Eze. 33:11).

The conversion of the Assyrians did not last for very long. They failed to become the work of the Lord’s hands and fellow heirs with Egypt and Israel in the history that never was—as Isaiah had foretold and God intended. Soon they returned to their cruel wickedness, and eventually Jonah’s prediction was fulfilled; for in 612 B.C. Nineveh—which had in the meantime become the capital of Assyria—fell to the combined armies of the Medes and the Babylonians. They burned its palace with all the people inside, including Sin-shar-ishkun, the last king of Assyria.⁴

But by that time Jonah had been dead for a few generations. The Lord delayed the destruction of Nineveh for 150 years.

VIII

The second story showing how God will sometimes change his prophetic program concerns good King Hezekiah (c. 729–c. 686 B.C.), who had carried out religious reforms in Judah, getting rid of the heathen practices with which his people had ecumenically blended their religion.

Afterwards, when he became seriously ill, the prophet Isaiah came to tell him to set his affairs in order, since he was going to die. This caused the king much sorrow. Weeping bitterly, he pleaded with God. The Lord was moved and instructed Isaiah to go back and inform Hezekiah that fifteen more years would be added to his life. It is a wonderful story, recorded in 2 Kings 20.

But it would have been better if he had submitted to God’s decision, as we can see from chapter 21; for in those extra fifteen years his son Manasseh was born.

On the death of Hezekiah, this lad, just twelve years old, inherited the throne and for fifty-five years wrought havoc in Judah. Manasseh

turned out to be a particularly rotten king. Reintroducing heathen practices, he led his people into thoroughgoing apostasy. Those who opposed his wickedness were executed. According to an ancient tradition, one of his victims was the prophet Isaiah, who was sawn in half.⁵

The only redeeming and remarkable feature of Manasseh's career was that later in life he repented, but neither he nor his successors—including Josiah, a wonderfully pious king—could remove the corruption that now so deeply infected the country. God's only remedy was to deliver Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's power and have a remnant of his people deported to far-away Babylon.

We should not, however, deduce too much from this. Even if Manasseh had never been born, the people of Judah would probably have ended up as exiles. But through his birth the purposes of God seem to have been speeded up.

IX

We observe, then, that there is a conditional element in prophecy; for what human beings decide and do is important, though too often they hardly benefit by the leniency of the Lord.

Apart from lesser instances of conditional prophecy, careful study also reveals a very serious, major deviation from what the Lord had originally intended for his people.

The Old Testament contains an entire series of predictions quite different from those we find in Daniel. At least a dozen prophets, including Micah and Isaiah, depict an obedient Jewish nation, which would spectacularly grow into a global superpower, eventually incorporating all the planet's people. Its rulers would be the Messiah and God himself.

This is the history that never was, which the Lord would have greatly preferred to what actually happened. But it depended on the faithfulness of his people, which had so often—from the time of the Exodus onward—disappointed him.

After almost a thousand years, in a final effort to bring them to their senses, he had Jerusalem destroyed and its glorious temple, in which its inhabitants had trusted, consumed by the flames. Many lost their lives, but the survivors were taken to Babylon. God purposed that there, no longer exposed to the contamination of the Canaanites' corrupt and cruel but seductive religion, they would change.

Yet he knew that even after this period of exile, the Jews would not really carry out his plan for them. As he had also told Jeremiah, "at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jer. 18:9, 10).

In Babylon, at last, the Jews were weaned of idolatry before returning to their country, but they had developed other faults. One was materialism. Instead of giving priority to the restoration of the Lord's temple, they concentrated on making themselves comfortable

(Hag. 1:4). Even more seriously, they continued to overlook the purpose for their national existence, namely to bring a knowledge of God to the surrounding nations, as set out in various Old Testament Scriptures, especially Isaiah, whom Christians call the gospel prophet. Fearing further problems from associating with pagans, the Jews now went to the opposite extreme: avoiding contact with them as far as possible.

Therefore, unbeknown to them, the Lord had already decreed that the primacy and world dominion intended for Israel would pass successively to Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome until the Messiah assumed the kingship over the planet.⁶

All the same, to encourage the chosen people, one inspired messenger after the other still foretold the glorious results of obeying God in all things; but—sad to relate—these favorable predictions were all frustrated, as the Almighty knew they would be.

X

Round about the time the Lord was revealing the grim alternative to Daniel, he was giving Ezekiel visions about a splendid new Jerusalem and temple that would be erected once the Jews had returned to their land. Recording it all in chapters 40 to 48, this prophet went into marvelous detail.

Unfortunately little came of that temple, nor did a miraculous river proceed from it eastward into the Dead Sea, healing its waters (Eze. 47:1-12). A similar river will one day, at the end of history, flow through the New Jerusalem that will descend from God in heaven. But the sanctuary that Ezekiel described will never be built; for John, who wrote Revelation, states quite pointedly: "I saw no temple in the city" (Rev. 21:22, RSV).

The final chance of worldwide dominion before the Second Coming ended for the Jewish nation when they rejected Jesus, the Messiah who had come to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures.

Nevertheless, God will eventually bring about all the essentials of what he has purposed and predicted, though it is clear that human actions can affect the details. Ultimately the Most High is not limited by what people do; though in the short term he does at times allow them to affect his plans, on a tactical if not on a strategic level.

XI

Some students of prophecy, belonging to the Futurist school, insist that all the events foretold by Ezekiel, including chapters 38 and 39, will be fulfilled in the history of present-day Israel, so that the glory of God can be set among the nations (38:21), when he has restored the fortunes of his people (39:25-28).

An example can be found in one of Hal Lindsey's failed predictions, where he attempted to identify enemies like Gog, Togarmah, and Rosh. The last mentioned, he maintained, was Russia, who would lead an invasion of Israel. This should, according to his calculations, have

taken place by about 1988: “A generation in the Bible is something like forty years. If this is a correct deduction, then within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place. Many scholars who have studied Bible prophecy all their lives believe that this is so.”⁷

As we know, it did not happen like that. Just a little after 1988, the fearsome Soviet Union broke up and abruptly ceased to be a world power. Since then, as we have already seen, an even more startling development has taken place: atheism was repudiated in 1997 when Russia legally reinstated the Orthodox Church as its official religion.

We believe that Lindsey, LaHaye, and other Futurists were and are mistaken. The events depicted by Ezekiel should all have taken place millennia ago.

Or can any Christian, or any Jew, still seriously believe that animals will again be sacrificed in a temple at Jerusalem—from which that river of healing water will flow, with the tree of life on its banks? (Eze. 47:1:12)

Those who insist that everything foretold in the Old Testament must be fulfilled in the minutest detail are confronted with a number of problems, such as the glorious role predicted for pharaonic Egypt and ancient Assyria.

No, Ezekiel—like other prophets before and after him—portrayed a history that never was, and in its original, literal sense is never going to be.

XII

When we study Old Testament prophets like Micah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah, we need to recognize the conditional element in their predictions. God was eager to fulfill his part of the bargain with his people, but they kept on frustrating his purposes for them, from the time of the Exodus onward.

This was not to be an unheralded surprise, for the Lord had foretold it all. First we read about it in Lev. 26, which contains a marvelous list of blessings for Israel if they observed the covenant with him—especially by keeping his Sabbaths and refraining from idolatry—but also a startling catalog of misfortunes and national calamity if they did not. Then, a little time before the death of Moses, God informed him that unfortunately they would choose the path of disobedience. “Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them . . .” (Deut. 31:16, 17)

Moses diligently encouraged the people to be faithful to God, who promised them many blessings if they were. The great leader also foresaw that after settling in Canaan they would imitate the surrounding nations by appointing a king. To lessen the evils this would entail, he gave specific instructions that such a monarch should

not militarize or womanize. He had to refrain from multiplying horses, wives, or wealth (Deut. 17:14-17). Anybody familiar with Israel's later history must be struck by this accurate picture of Solomon's career, presented centuries before his birth.

In one marvelous but terrible chapter, Deut. 28, Moses reemphasized the themes of Lev. 26, dwelling on both the blessings that would result from obedience and the curses that would follow transgression. He predicted Israel's future royalty (vs. 36), the later horrors of siege by a foreign nation from very far away (vv. 49-57), and exile (vs. 63). He even foretold the continual, restless fear of a Diaspora all over the earth (vv. 63-67).

In two periods of their history, the Jews suffered a terrible national calamity. The first time was in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem together with its temple. The second time was 600 years later, in A.D. 70 and 135, when the Roman legions repeated the devastation.

The final tragedy was that, despite the Babylonian captivity and the lessons of submission to God this had been designed to teach, the Jewish people adopted a course that made them reject their Messiah when he finally came to them. Jesus, destined to sit on David's throne, would have raised his people to unprecedented greatness if they had accepted him on his own terms.

The history that never was would have been implemented, quite quickly. Then Zion, as a symbolic heifer, would indeed have had an iron horn and hoofs of bronze and beaten many recalcitrant peoples into pieces. The former dominion would have returned, for their king from Bethlehem would have been great "unto the ends of the earth," exactly as Micah had foretold.

But this is not how it happened. Instead, most of the Jews persisted in thwarting Heaven's designs, right up to the time when Jesus, the Messiah finally did come. Then, at last, the divine patience was worn out, after Israel's fifteen centuries of repeated and persistent disobedience to God's commandments. And so he fully implemented his alternative: the history of which we—who should never have existed—are a part.

XIII

It is interesting to ponder the significance of the bronze and iron in the history that never was. The best elements of the Grecian and Roman heritage, just like those of Egypt and Assyria, would no doubt have been preserved and incorporated in this alternative version of humanity.

As we have seen, the Lord was quite aware that his great plan for his people would suffer a major setback. Therefore, while other prophets were encouraging the Jews to fulfill their glorious destiny, he revealed to Daniel what would actually happen, as we have read in chapter seven and elsewhere in his book. But to spare the Old Testament people undue discouragement, God in wisdom and mercy sealed up some portions of this revelation for centuries to

come (Dan. 12:9).

At his first advent, the Messiah would not be accepted by his people, but be despised and slain. Instead of the rebuilt Jerusalem becoming the mistress of the world, she would in retribution be destroyed and the Jewish nation overthrown a second time.

And so God gave two sets of predictions, foretelling entirely different histories for the world: two time tracks, so to speak. Which one would become reality was to hinge on how his people reacted to their Messiah, with whom all prophecy is ultimately concerned.

We cannot doubt that the Lord would have preferred the first alternative, in which the Jews accepted Jesus wholeheartedly; but he knew that it was not to be. We therefore need to note an important distinction between the prophecies concerned with the history that never was, and the ones in Daniel and Revelation, foretelling history as it would actually happen.

XIV

As W. Richard Leshner and Frank B. Holbrook express it, the conditionality of the former derived from “the *known* promises and judgments (blessings/curses) that arose out of the covenant relationship with God.” But the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are different. They are not conditional; their basis was not a fallible human choice, but the absolute foreknowledge of God. Besides, they have already been largely fulfilled and validated by events.⁸

The destiny that the all-wise One has mapped out for this planet will be realized. His redeemed ones will inherit the earth: those saved from ancient Israel and Judah as well as all people whom he has reached through his later, alternative instrumentality, the Christian church. For the tradition of Zion is not to be forgotten, but will be merged with that of the apostles, as Rev. 21:12-14 shows. In this grand consummation, all the lines of prophecy converge, including the essential elements of the history that never was.

First, however, the dominion that ancient Israel and Judah had been destined to enjoy would pass to the beasts depicted in Dan. 7, especially the long-lived fourth and terrible one with iron teeth and claws of bronze.

10 A Prophetic Biography of the Messiah

I

Nothing is more fascinating than a comparison of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah with New Testament scriptures that record the life of Jesus Christ. The texts are so abundant and detailed that from them alone we can construct a brief but surprisingly complete biography.

To casual eyes, the following paragraphs may look like a dry collection of references. When they are looked up and read, however, they reveal an enthralling story—with a power to amaze the mind and convert the heart. They show that Jesus was more than just a remarkable human being, more than a marvelous teacher. He stands revealed as the incomparable friend of the human race, the Saviour of the world. Tracing the mysterious way in which the man from Nazareth fulfills so many predictions can also have another effect: the skeptic comes to realize that the Bible is true and contains an incredible offer of eternal life for everyone who reads it.

But did such a meshing of Old with New Testament passages, of so many prophecies with their fulfillment, not all result from sheer chance or coincidence? Mathematically the odds are totally against it. Also, sometimes scholars engaged in Biblical studies refer to tension between the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures, as though the Good Book taught the existence of two deities: a severe and rather terrible Old Testament God with a loving, merciful Lord in the New Testament. For true believers who carefully study and ponder the Word no such tension exists. The same lovingkindness blended with law is to be found throughout its holy pages.

In the list below, the first half always presents an Old-Testament prophecy that foretells an event and the second half a New-Testament passage or passages that record its fulfillment.

II

The Messiah was to be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15/Gal. 4:4), the seed of Abraham (Gen. 17:7/Gal. 3:16) and a royal descendant of Jacob's son Judah (Gen. 49:10/Matt. 1:1-3). He would be a prince in the line of King David (Jer. 23:5, 6/Acts 13:22, 23). His mother, still a virgin and untouched by any man, would conceive him before getting married (Isa. 7:14/Matt. 1:18). Though human, he would also be divine and bear the most awesome titles: "Emmanuel," that is, God with us (Isa. 7:14/Matt. 1:21-23), "The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6/John 20: 28); for the person sent to become the Messiah has existed forever. The Almighty even refers to him as "the man that is my fellow" (Micah

5:2, Zech. 13:7/John 8:56-58).

He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2/Matt. 2:1) at a calculable date (Dan. 9:24-27/Gal. 4:4). Important people would bear gifts and come to adore him (Ps. 72:10/Matt. 2:1-11), but many little children in that area would be killed (Jer. 31:15/Matt. 2:16-18). Like Israel before him, the Messiah would be called out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1/Matt. 2:15).

To prepare the people for his coming, a forerunner would appear (Mal. 3:1/Matt. 3:1-3), a mighty preacher like Elijah (Mal. 4:5/Matt. 11:7-14). The Messiah's own ministry would begin in Galilee (Isa. 9:1, 2/Matt. 4:12-16). Anointed with the Holy Spirit (Isa. 61:1/Acts 10:38), he would be a mighty prophet, like Moses, through whom the Lord would speak as he did at Sinai (Deut. 18:15-18/Acts 3:20-22; Matt. 5:1-7:29). In his manner of working, the Messiah would be meek (Isa. 42:2, 3/Matt. 11:29), tender, and compassionate (Isa. 40:11; 42:3/Matt. 12:15, 20), yet full of zeal for the house of the Lord (Ps. 69:9/John 2:17). He would teach through parables (Ps. 78:2/Matt. 13:34, 35) and work great miracles (Isa. 35:5, 6/Matt. 11:4-6).

Bearing reproach (Ps. 69:7, 9, 20/Rom. 15:3), he would suffer rejection by his brothers (Ps. 69:8/John 7:3-5) as well as by those that headed his nation (Ps. 118:22/Mark 12:10-12). Many of his own people would hate him (Ps. 69:4/John 7:3-5) and its leaders conspire against him together with Gentile rulers (Ps. 2:1, 2/Acts 4:27). A trusted friend, one who had broken bread with him, would betray him (Ps. 41:9/John 13:18, 21) and sell him for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12/Matt. 26:15). This blood money would later be used to buy the potter's field (Zech. 11:13/Acts 1:18, 19). When his enemies came to do violence to the Messiah, his followers would run away (Zech. 13:7/Matt. 26:31, 56).

He would remain silent under abuse (Isa. 53:7/Matt. 26:63; 27:12-14); the judge of Israel would be smitten on his cheek and head (Micah 5:1/Matt. 26:67; 27:30), spat upon, and scourged (Isa. 50:6/Mark 14:65). His enemies would pierce him (Zech. 12:10/John 19:34, 37), especially his hands and feet (Ps. 22:16/John 19:18; 20:25). He would endure tremendous agony and die (Ps. 22:14, 15/Luke 22:42, 44), while the spectators mock him (Ps. 22:7, 8/Matt. 27:39-44). Laughing him to scorn and involuntarily quoting the very words of prophecy, his enemies would exclaim: "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him!" (Ps. 22:7,8/Matt. 27:43). He would feel so abandoned that a cry of bitter anguish would escape his lips: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1/Matt. 27:46). Some would give him gall and vinegar to drink (Ps. 69:21/Matt. 27:34) and lots would be cast for his garments (Ps. 22:18/Matt. 27:35). He would be numbered with criminals (Isa. 53:12/Matt. 27:38), pouring out his soul unto death (Isa. 53:12/Matt. 27:50); but not a single bone in his body was to be broken (Ps. 34:20/John 19: 33, 36). In his burial, he would be with the rich (Isa. 53:9/Matt. 27:57-60).

Yet the Lord would not allow the flesh of his Holy One to see

corruption but would prolong his days (Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:10/Acts 2:31, 32); for the Messiah was destined to rise again (Ps. 16:10/Luke 24:6, 31, 34) and ascend on high with human trophies of his triumph (Ps. 68:18/Matt. 27:52-53; Eph. 4:8).

With a little rearrangement and a few additions, we have derived this prophetic biography from fifty items in Alonzo J. Wearn's *Fundamentals of Bible Doctrine*.¹ His list, which may have been compiled in about 1930, the year before his book appeared, has enthralled its readers for more than eighty years. The New Testament shows, moreover, that this method of presenting the gospel is much more ancient.

III

After the Resurrection, when the apostles began their preaching, they used exactly such comparisons of Old Testament prophecies with events in Jesus' life to bring first Jews and later Gentiles to Christ. An outstanding example of this is Paul's address to his compatriots at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:26-38).

The Messiah's prophetic biography, traced out and used as an evangelistic tool, was not, however, even the invention of the apostles and other early Christians. It came to them from someone much greater than themselves, on an afternoon and evening following the Resurrection, when the risen Lord appeared to his followers. Twice in those hours he linked his life and death experiences with the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures.

First, he joined himself to two extremely sad disciples walking slowly from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus, seven miles away. He approached them as a stranger, for they were prevented from recognizing him. He enquired why they were so sorrowful, and they told him about their terrible disappointment: Jesus, whom they had expected to be the Redeemer, had died on a Roman cross the previous Friday afternoon. All their hopes were crushed. To this he replied: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:25-27).

Soon they reached their home and invited him to spend the night there, since evening was drawing on. At the table over their meal, he said grace; then, as he broke the bread in his characteristic way, they suddenly saw who he was. At that moment, he vanished.

Immediately, no longer weary but filled with indescribable joy, they jumped up from the table, rushed back to Jerusalem, and excitedly told the eleven apostles and others gathered with them that they had met the Resurrected One (vv. 28-33).

But these already knew that Jesus had risen, because in the meantime he had appeared not only to Mary Magdalene and other women, but also to Peter. While the new arrivals and the group with the apostles were sharing their excitement, Jesus suddenly stood

among them.

After demonstrating that he was not an apparition but a very physical human being with a body of flesh and bones, he again explained the messianic prophecies and their fulfillment in his life, death, and resurrection. He made it clear that this was the very essence of the gospel that they had to preach to the entire world. Even before his crucifixion, he had tried to explain what would happen, but then they were not yet ready or willing to understand him—their minds too cluttered up with their own affairs and petty ambitions.

“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:44-48)

IV

The prophetic biography is the most wonderful story ever told.

11 In the Fullness of Time

I

Clifford Goldstein, a converted Jew, is fascinated by Dan. 9:24-27, because it contains “an almost unbelievable prediction . . . more than 500 years before Jesus Christ was even born, the prophet Daniel gave the exact year when the Savior would begin His earthly ministry.”¹

There is no more important prophecy than this one, for it pinpoints the date of the Messiah’s first Advent and deals with many other vital matters.

That this passage does indeed refer to him can hardly be disputed, for the Hebrew word *Meshiach* (“Messiah”) as applied to the Deliverer occurs only in Dan. 9:25, 26.² Elsewhere it refers to human rulers. It means “the Anointed One.” The Greek translation of *Meshiach*, meaning exactly the thing, is Χριστος (“Christos”), which appears throughout the New Testament. English has abbreviated it to *Christ*. To speak of Jesus Christ is another way of saying *Jesus the Messiah*. In fact, whenever a believer utters these words, they are a profession of faith.

Many modern Jews, if they have considered it at all, appear to be less than enthusiastic about the prophecy of Dan. 9. According to some Christians, it proves conclusively that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah; but if these are right, his ancient people made a terrible mistake and largely sidelined themselves almost two thousand years ago, when they rejected him. Probably for this reason, the Talmud strongly curses “anyone who tries to calculate this 70-week time period.”³

By studying the Dead Sea Scrolls, some scholars now believe that in the period between the Old and the New Testaments many Jews were expecting the Messiah to come. As Hershel Shanks points out, at that time “eschatology, apocalypticism, and messianism were very much a part of mainstream Judaism.” Unfortunately, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, influential Jewish writers have tended to downplay this element in the history of their religion, to the detriment of truth.⁴

II

When Jesus was born, at least a few of his countrymen were ardently looking for their Lord to come: if not the leading theologians, at least those that were wide-awake and serving God devoutly. They had obviously studied the prophecies about the promised one, including Dan. 9. Two of them, Simeon and the prophetess Anna, attended the Christ child’s dedication in the temple and recognized him for what he was (Luke 2:25-38).

Later a powerful prophet, John the Baptist, appeared and dramatically announced that he had been sent to prepare the way

for the Lord, who would soon be appearing (Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:2-17). His mighty voice, arising in the desolate places of Judea and along the Jordan River, was, so to speak, the midnight cry of the first Advent movement. In response to his preaching, a multitude awaited the Redeemer, expectantly or full of fear. In arresting tones, the Baptist called out: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

As Jesus embarked on his ministry, he made these words his own but prefaced them with an even more dramatic announcement, "*The time is fulfilled*, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14, emphasis added). Later Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, would dwell on the same point: "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son . . ." (Gal. 4:4). Both he and his Lord stressed not only what would happen, but also when.

How could they and others have known this? Because Dan. 9:24-27, which they (like many in their nation) must have studied, is a time prophecy. God through his prophet had told the chosen people exactly when the Messiah would come—and reinforced his message through John, the forerunner, as well as Jesus himself. Christianity began with those who believed this prophetic message about the First Advent and persevered in their faith.

III

When Daniel had his important vision, he was entering his sunset years. Both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were dead; and Cyrus the Great, a Persian emperor, had recently conquered Babylon. To represent him, he had just placed on its throne Darius, possibly a Median kinsman.

Far away in Canaan, God's temple and Jerusalem still lay in ruins, but the change of regime had brought hope to the exiled Jews throughout Mesopotamia. By now, they probably all knew that in capturing Babylon Cyrus had fulfilled an amazing prophecy written a few generations before by Isaiah, who also said: "He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives" (Isa. 45:13).

Daniel remembered that through Jeremiah, the Lord had predicted the same thing: his people would return to their country after seventy years, when the Babylonians themselves had been overthrown (Dan. 9:2; Jer. 25:8-12; 29:10).

He knew that the Jewish nation had brought this doom on themselves through their disobedience to his covenant. God had seen these events in advance, a long time before Jeremiah became his prophet. He first discussed them with Moses, shortly after the Exodus, before the Israelites even entered Canaan. He threatened devastation for their cities and holy places as well as exile if they persisted in breaking his commandments and covenant (Lev. 26:31-33). But Daniel was encouraged to know that the Lord had not only ordained captivity as the ultimate punishment; he also promised to let them go back to their country, if only they would repent:

If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember, and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity . . . And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD. (Lev. 26:40-45)

The Eternal One does not forget his promises to his faithful servants, or their prayers—not even centuries after their death. In searching the Hebrew Scriptures, Daniel also must have found that when Solomon dedicated the temple four hundred years before, he remembered what God had said to Moses. Therefore the king included a special petition in his prayer of dedication:

“If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, *We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly*; If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.” (2 Chron. 6:36–39, emphasis added)

Soon afterwards, God appeared to Solomon and undertook to do so; however, he also warned the king against apostasy, which would ultimately bring ruin on the temple and his people’s expulsion from their land (2 Chron. 7:12-22).

Pondering these Scriptures, Daniel turned to God to claim the promises mentioned in them. He fasted and, clad in sackcloth and ashes, poured out his heart in utter repentance. As the Lord had

instructed through Moses, the prophet prayed not only for himself, but also on behalf of his ancestors, acknowledging the sins that had over centuries led his people to national ruin. Then he asked for both the sanctuary and the holy city to be restored: “for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies” (Dan. 9:18). In his intercession, he carefully included the words that Solomon had said the exiles should use: “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly” (vs. 5).

Immediately the Lord commissioned Gabriel, his mightiest angel, to go and assure his servant of heaven’s love for him and to instruct him about the future (vv. 22, 23). This is what the heavenly messenger told him:

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (Dan. 9:24-27)

The passage quoted above from the Authorized or King James Version is on the whole a good if not a perfect translation. With the occasional use of a dictionary, the modern reader should be able to understand it easily. We note in passing that *score* is an old English word for “twenty,” so that *threescore* means “sixty,” as many twentieth-century versions translate it.

But there is a problem with “seventy *weeks*.” This period was due to begin with the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem and its beautiful temple, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar’s army in 586 B.C. What does this expression and others like it mean?

IV

It is intrinsically improbable that the Lord was referring to

seventy literal weeks, for these make up just a little more than a year; and Daniel wrote this prophecy more than five hundred years before the Christian era. Could Jerusalem be rebuilt, the Messiah come, and the city be destroyed again in such a very short period of time?

Many commentators and Bible translators therefore agree that this is not a literal but a symbolic period. The seventy weeks or 490 days must represent 490 literal years. Therefore, the RSV has “seventy weeks of years,” although in the rest of the passage only “weeks” is used. The *Good News Bible* consistently speaks of “seven times seventy years, . . . seven times seven years, . . . seven times sixty-two years, . . . seven years.”

This equivalence of prophetic and literal time can be arrived at in two ways, which complement each other. The first is according to a biblical principle that in prophecy a day represents a year, which we discuss in a further chapter. The other is suggested by the Hebrew word *shabua'* in the original text. It can be rendered as either *weeks* or *sevens*. William H. Shea prefers the former translation, since it can also mean “sabbatical years,”⁵ and Guthrie et al. the latter.⁶ Let us first consider the second idea, which gives us the expression “seventy sevens.”

A particularly fine version of Daniel 9:24-27 is by Dr. Ludovic L. Zamenhof, who created Esperanto, the international language, and later translated the Old Testament into it. He was a very gifted, polyglot Jew with a splendid knowledge of Hebrew. In his version, “seventy sevens” becomes *sepdek jarsepoj*.⁷ This means “seventy year-sevens.” Now *jarsepoj* is a nifty compound, but is there an English equivalent for it? We have a similar word, the somewhat learned *septennate* (from the Latin *septem* = “seven” + *annus* = “a year”). A septennate is “a period of seven years.”

In the Authorized Version, the quoted passage becomes a good deal clearer if we substitute this word wherever *weeks* occurs: “Seventy septennates are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city . . .” (vs. 24). That is, after returning from their captivity in Babylon, the Jews would inhabit a rebuilt Jerusalem for an additional 490 years. At the end of this period, they would face another national crisis, involving the Messiah himself.

Shea, however, believes that *shabua'* should be translated as “weeks” instead of “sevens” and interprets these according to the principle that a prophetic day is equal to a literal year. This line of thinking leads to the same result, on the basis of the following calculation: 70 weeks = 490 days = 490 years. But Shea goes further; he maintains, from the convergence of several different lines of evidence, that *shabua'* refers to sabbatical years. He points out that 457 B.C., A.D. 27, and A.D. 34, so vital to an understanding of Dan. 9:24-27, were all, as extra-biblical sources show, sabbatical years.⁸

To what does this refer? As is generally known, the Jews were obliged to keep Saturday, the seventh day of every week, as a Sabbath, because it has been the Creator’s holy day since the world

began (Gen. 2:2, 3). Everybody in Israel, including Gentile foreigners and slaves, had to rest from secular work. Even the animals were to cease from their labors. (Ex. 20:8-11) But in addition to the seven-day week, the Almighty instituted a cycle of seven years, and the last of these was also called a Sabbath. It, too, was to be observed as a rest, not only by agricultural people, but also by the land itself. We read about it in Lev. 25:

The LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit therefore; But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of the vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land. And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee . . . And if ye shall say, 'What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase.' Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. (Lev. 25:1-6, 20, 21).

In the Sabbath year, no sowing, planting, or formal harvesting was allowed. The land had to recuperate by lying fallow, and anybody—especially orphans, widows, and strangers—had a right to eat whatever grew of itself. This was also the time for general debt forgiveness and the freeing of Hebrews enslaved by their creditors. After the seventh Sabbath year, in the jubilee of the fiftieth year, all rural property reverted to its original owners or their heirs, without compensation.

This formed part of God's remarkable economic system for Israel, which was obviously neither Capitalist nor Socialist; for its basis was not the state but the extended family. It also had a heavy rural emphasis, with an eye to agricultural people rather than an urban proletariat; for the Lord wanted as many as possible to live on the land, to prevent the evils of excessive urbanization. An additional benefit of the system was to ensure financial stability, by forestalling inflation and depressions. If adopted worldwide, it would have eliminated the gross economic imbalance between the haves and the have-nots that has plagued the human race throughout its history down to the present.

In "God's Care for the Poor," a marvelous chapter of *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White surveys this economic system and concludes:

"The principles which God has enjoined would prevent the terrible evils that in all ages have resulted from the oppression of the

rich toward the poor and the suspicion and hatred of the poor toward the rich. While they might hinder the amassing of great wealth and the indulgence of unbounded luxury, they would prevent the consequent ignorance and degradation of tens of thousands whose ill-paid servitude is required to build up these colossal fortunes. They would bring a peaceful solution of those problems that now threaten to fill the world with anarchy and bloodshed.”⁹

This last sentence is ominous, since the book that contains it was published in 1890, just a few years before the twentieth century. In 1903, at a time of general optimism, when it seemed that education and technology would produce a century of peace and plenty for all, she uttered an even clearer warning:

“The centralizing of wealth and power; the vast combinations for the enriching of the few at the expense of the many; the combinations of the poorer classes for the defense of their interests and claims; the spirit of unrest, of riot and bloodshed; the worldwide dissemination of the same teachings that led to the French Revolution—all are tending to involve the whole world in a struggle similar to that which convulsed France.”¹⁰

This is exactly what happened. Marxism, explicitly claiming to continue the struggle that began with the French Revolution, was about to explode on a startled planet. First in their aborted attempt of 1905 and then their breakthrough of 1917, the workers rose in Russia. This enabled Lenin to launch the Communist dream, aimed at destroying the Capitalist rich and conquering the earth. After World War II, for almost fifty years, this struggle became the centerpiece of human history. And so, indeed, the twentieth-century world was filled “with anarchy and bloodshed.”

V

Before their Babylonian exile, the chosen people were very prone to Sabbath breaking. They conducted business and did other secular work on the seventh day. Jeremiah warned them that if they persisted in this habit, the Lord would destroy Jerusalem by fire. (Jer. 17:21-27)

They also neglected the provisions of the Sabbath year, especially its debt forgiveness, which amongst other things required the freeing of Hebrew slaves that had been sold by their creditors.

The Babylonians were already at the gates of the city when King Zedekiah prevailed upon his people to release these debtor slaves. Their owners even renewed their covenant with the Lord through solemn sacrifices, but soon they subjugated their Hebrew slaves again, which God said polluted his name. (Jer. 34: 11-16) This caused him to pronounce the terrible fate of the rebellious nation:

“Therefore thus saith the Lord; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth” (vs. 17).

Idolatry and desecrating the Sabbath day as well as the Sabbath year were major reasons for exile in Babylon. God would not only punish their wrongdoing, but exact compensation for it. Therefore, the Jews would remain on foreign soil away from Canaan “until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years” (2 Chron. 36: 21).

VI

So far we have established that the seventy weeks or seventy sevens of prophetic time in Dan. 9 represent 490 literal years. Now we need a starting date for this period. The seven septennates were due to begin with “the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem . . .” When was that?

The Persian emperors issued three major decrees to ensure the Jews’ return to Canaan/Palestine. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah relate how difficult it was to reestablish the chosen people in their land; they endured tremendous opposition from non-Jewish locals who had in the meantime occupied the area. Complete restoration took about eighty years, with repeated setbacks and interruptions.

Writing about the temple, Ezra said the exiles returning from Babylon “finished their building by commandment of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus [c. 537 B.C.] and Darius [after 520 B.C.] and Artaxerxes [458/57] king of Persia” (Ezra 6:14, RSV). The work on the rebuilt temple was largely completed under Darius I, the second of these kings (vs. 15), but its finishing touches came under Artaxerxes, who issued an order “to beautify the house of the LORD” (Ezra 7:21-27).¹¹

With which of these three decrees do the 490 years begin? It must be the last one, for the prophecy does not simply call for the rebuilding of the temple, but for “the going forth of the commandment to restore *and* to build Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:25, emphasis added).

How can we be sure that Artaxerxes issued it in 457 B.C.? For clarity on this point, we are inter alia indebted to Sir Isaac Newton, perhaps the greatest scientist who ever lived. “His discoveries span all aspects of the physical world with special emphasis on experimental and theoretical physics and chemistry and on applied mathematics and most of the science of optics. During his work, he invented such mathematics as he needed or as interested him including the discipline known as calculus.”¹²

Newton also read the Scriptures every day, and from the age of twelve until his death at 85 he pondered the prophecies. “He was a formidable Biblical scholar, was fluent in the ancient languages, and had extensive knowledge of ancient history.” His resultant notes amount to more than a million words. The main fruitage of this study was his *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (1733).¹³

Incidentally, the 1991 facsimile reprint from which we shall be quoting was based on a copy that contains the initials of Thomas

Jefferson, its original owner.¹⁴ Here we have the convergence of two of the most powerful intellects that this planet has produced. It also throws a startling sidelight on Jefferson, who had no love for clergymen, and is therefore often regarded as virtually an infidel. Yet, like Lincoln, who at one time also regarded himself as a deist¹⁵ and avoided church membership, he studied the Bible and therefore could not avoid its influence on his life. Such is the caliber of some that have bent their minds to searching the Scriptures in their efforts to understand the prophecies.

Sir Isaac Newton's calculations about the 490 days would be difficult to dispute:

"Now the dispersed *Jews* became a people and city when they first returned into a polity or body politick; and this was in the seventh year of *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, when *Ezra* returned with a body of *Jews* from captivity, and revived the *Jewish* worship; and by the King's commission created Magistrates in all the land, to judge and govern the people according to the laws of God and the King, *Ezra vii. 25*. There were but two returns from captivity, *Zerubbabel's* and *Ezra's*; in *Zerubbabels* [sic] they had only commission to build the Temple, in *Ezra's* they first became a polity or city by a government of their own. Now the years of this *Artaxerxes* began about two or three months after the summer solstice, and his seventh year fell in with the third year of the eightieth *Olympiad*; and the latter part thereof, wherein *Ezra* went up to *Jerusalem*, was in the year of the *Julian Period* 4257."¹⁶

The year 4257 of the Julian Period was 457 B.C. LeRoy Edwin Froom observes that "in determining when Artaxerxes' regnal years began, Newton did not follow the common practice of reckoning them from December, according to the canon (Egyptian) years, for he knew that Ptolemy had adjusted them to the Egyptian calendar; neither did he reckon them as Persian lunar years . . . Newton assumed Artaxerxes' accession to have been delayed seven months after his father's death. . . ." ¹⁷ "His 7th year therefore began after midsummer *An. J.P.* 4256 [458 B.C.]; and the Journey of *Ezra* to *Jerusalem* in the spring following fell on the beginning of *An.* 4257 [457 B.C.]" ¹⁸

The starting point for the 490 years is the fall of 457 B.C. From this date, 70 septennates bring us down to the autumn of A.D. 34. Now let us look at the prophetic passage in greater detail.

VII

Dan. 9:24-27 consists of two parts. Verse 24 presents an overview of what would happen in the 490 years; verses 25-27 give further details. Apart from the time element, three events stand out.

First, the 490 years would "finish the transgression." What transgression and whose? The text is concerned with "thy people" and "thy holy city;" that is, Daniel's nation and Jerusalem. Therefore, the transgression of the Jews is meant. Through the centuries, many of Abraham's descendants often disappointed the

Lord. He had called them to represent him in the world as a light for the nations; instead, they kept on apostatizing, which set a very bad example. He gave them many, many chances; but by the end of the 490 years their time as his special agency for converting the world would be up. At that time their leaders would commit a far greater sin than desecrating the Sabbath: they would reject the Messiah and pressurize a Roman governor into executing him.

Second, the 490 years were “to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness . . .” This was fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus as the world’s Redeemer. On Calvary’s cross, he became the great sacrifice to atone for the entire human race. His death makes possible the forgiveness of sin and restores our relationship with the Creator, lost through the transgression of our first parents in paradise. Iniquity is dealt with effectively, so that all who truly believe receive both pardon for and victory over sin.

Third, the 490 years would “seal up the vision and prophecy.” This must have a special meaning beyond just saying that the prediction had to be validated through its fulfillment, which is true of all prophecy. No, something more is meant. Verse 24 refers to another vision, mentioned in the previous chapter, Daniel 8. There we read about the deeds of a Little Horn grown huge, and another time prophecy: “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (vs. 14).

In that chapter, Gabriel had got as far as telling how this Little Horn would “destroy . . . the mighty and holy people . . . he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (Dan. 8:24, 25). The angel also said, “The vision of the evenings and the mornings which has been told is true; but seal up the vision, for it pertains to many days hence” (v. 26, RSV). However, he had not gone into details about the 2300 days, for he stopped when he saw how badly Daniel was affected by the terrible news about his people’s destruction. Suddenly the prophet fainted and was sick for a number of days (vs. 27).

We believe that through the principle of prophetic augmentation, Dan. 9 expands on a vital issue raised in chapter. 8; the seventy weeks or 490 years would seal up the “vision and prophecy” by validating the first part of the 2300 days.

Fourth, the 490 additional years allotted to the Jews were “to anoint the most Holy.” Many have interpreted this to apply to the Messiah. Other commentators, however, have pointed out that elsewhere in the Old Testament the Hebrew words *qodesh* *qodeshim*, which are used in this passage, never describe a person; they refer exclusively to objects connected with the tabernacle or the temple, especially the “Holy of Holies.”¹⁹ We shall be discussing the Messiah’s relationship to the sanctuary service when we deal with the 2300 days.

Images of a sanctuary devastated and restored pervade the whole of Dan. 9. Its background was the final destructive attack of Nebuchadnezzar’s army on Jerusalem when it kept on rebelling against him. Would these events be repeated? History answers

emphatically that they certainly were, by the terrible Romans, in A.D. 70 and then again in A.D. 135.

Verse 25 elaborates on the first and longest part of the 490 years: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” Two periods are brought to view.

During the first and shorter one, the temple and Jerusalem would be restored and rebuilt. This would take seven septennates, or 49 years, a tenth of the 490 years. The Jews returning from Babylon would finish the street and the city “in troublous times.” The books of Ezra and Nehemiah detail many problems that they had to face, especially with the Samaritans and others, who did everything in their power to hamper them. Neh. 4:16-23 recounts how the builders completing the wall had to carry swords as well as trowels, with armed guards also standing by. How exactly the prophecy foretold this dramatic detail!

The re-establishment would be followed by a much longer period of sixty-two septennates, or 434 years, before the coming of Messiah the Prince. We must add this time to the 49 years, which gives us 483 years. From 457 B.C. the sixty-nine septennates reach to A.D. 26. The exiles did not, however, return at the beginning but in the autumn of 457 B.C. Accordingly, we need to add another three-quarters of a year to A.D. 26, which brings us to the fall of A.D. 27. What happened then?

That was the year when Jesus of Nazareth became the Messiah through the anointing of the Holy Spirit at his baptism (Acts 10:38) and told his audiences: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:14).

Jesus began his public work when he was approximately thirty years old (Luke 3:23). But how then could his baptism have taken place at so early a date as A.D. 27? As mentioned in the first chapter of this book, the early church miscalculated our era. The Lord was born a little sooner than they had thought, in about 4 B.C.

Verse 26 predicts what would happen *after* the additional 62 septennates, in the period following A.D. 27. “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

The two main events referred to here are the death of the Messiah and another destruction of Jerusalem together with its sanctuary.

When Jesus died on the cross, it was indeed not for his own benefit, “not for himself,” but to save the world—and you, dear reader. As he hung there, writhing in agony, the “chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said: ‘He saved others; himself he cannot save’” (Matt. 27:41). How right they were!

Jerusalem and its second temple, which the Saviour visited

repeatedly, were to be *destroyed* by “the people of the prince that shall come” (Dan. 9:26). Titus and his Roman legions fulfilled this prophecy in A.D. 70, at the end of a dreadful war that had begun in A.D. 66. In A.D. 135, the horrors of siege and slaughter were repeated, and thousands more were sold into slavery, after the Jews had rebelled again, inspired and led by a “fighter known as Bar Kokba, or Son of the Star, and hailed by many as the long-awaited Messiah.”²⁰

In the last week of his earthly life, our Lord repeated Daniel’s prophecy, for he also foretold these events, in the following passages:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, ‘Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.’” (Matt. 23:37-39)

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, ‘See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’” (Matt. 24:1,2)

He also warned them: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.” (Luke 21:20-22)

Matthew’s Gospel contains an important additional idea: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) . . . pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day” (Matt. 24:15-20). Which passages of that book did he have in mind? Daniel 8:11, 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11. They all refer to the same event.

History attests that it all happened exactly as Daniel and Jesus had foretold.

VIII

The Romans twice surrounded Jerusalem during the Jewish War of A.D. 70, a little less than forty years after the crucifixion.

At its beginning in A.D. 66, their commander Cestius advanced on Jerusalem with his legions. The Christians watched as the soldiers deployed around the city and planted their hateful, desecrating standards in holy ground, which extended a little distance beyond the wall. This was what Jesus had predicted. It was their sign to get out fast and flee! But how could they escape? Between them and freedom lay an impenetrable barrier of struggling, ferocious

warriors, Jewish as well as Roman.

Almost certain death awaited any Christian trying to leave the city, not only at the hand of the legionaries, but of their fanatical countrymen. In their hatred of strangers, the Jews had already butchered large numbers of Syrian Greeks and other Gentiles throughout Palestine; they also had no love for anybody who followed Jesus. For several days, as the fighting grew fiercer at the wall, the helpless Christians could only watch and pray.

Then a strange thing happened. The besieged were already despairing of success and would soon have surrendered, but suddenly Cestius hesitated. He began to overestimate the strength of Jewish resistance, which frightened him. Thereupon, as Josephus puts it, "without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, without any reason in the world." His retreat became a rout, with the triumphant Jews in hot pursuit. Soon the two armies disappeared over the horizon in the direction of Antipatris. In all, the Romans lost 5,300 footmen and 380 of their cavalry, but most of them got away. A day after leaving Jerusalem, the Jewish warriors came back running and singing jubilantly, with booty and the news of their victory.²¹

In the meantime, all the Christians had got out safely, through their window of brief opportunity. The countryside lay open, devoid of soldiers and also of unsympathetic Jews, who could have hindered them. Most of these, having gone to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, were still cooped up inside, wondering about their future. The Christians had only that single day to escape. Leaving everything behind, as Christ had told them, they quickly fled to the East and hurried across the Jordan River, right out of Judea. Before the next day dawned, they had found refuge in the city of Pella, Perea.²²

Ellen White strikingly recounts the details of what finally happened at Jerusalem.²³ The following paragraphs are largely based on her account.

Toward the end of the war, the Romans again besieged the city, under Titus, a very brave and determined general. But this time there would be no escape for anyone. Inside, the followers of various Jewish faction leaders fought and murdered one another. Because it was Passover time, as when Jesus died, a few million people were crowded into Jerusalem. Soon starvation set in. There were many horrible incidents. The leaders tortured hungry people to give up their hidden food. As in all long sieges, at least a few resorted to cannibalism. Many tried to flee from the city but were captured and promptly crucified by the Romans, just outside the walls. Often from the parapets, terrified onlookers could see a tiny figure struggling with brawny soldiers holding it down. Then they would hear the screams as a hammer thudded and nail after nail bit into quivering flesh and splintered sensitive bones.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat and the area around Golgotha, where Jesus had died, were so thick with crosses and stinking corpses that one could hardly walk among them.

Meanwhile, Titus and his forces advanced systematically and captured the city piece by piece. The legionaries, enraged by the fierce resistance of the Jews, gave vent to their blood lust. They massacred freedom fighters and civilians alike. When they reached the beautiful temple which Christ and his apostles had visited so often, the angry Romans fed it to the flames, ignoring their general, who vainly pleaded with them to save it.

More than a million Jews were put to death. Some of the captured were dragged to Rome to grace the General's triumph and afterwards slaughtered ceremoniously to honor the pagan gods. These captives can still be seen on Titus's triumphal arch among the ruins of the Forum. Many ended in the amphitheaters to entertain a hateful crowd, who watched and laughed as savage beasts were turned loose on them. Huge numbers glutted the slave markets of the Roman world, their prices below the customary thirty pieces of silver. Yet others wandered homeless and forlorn as refugees throughout the earth. A terrible new Diaspora of almost two millennia had begun.

Jesus had foretold it all, at the beginning of his Passion Week, from the Mount of Olives—on the very spot where Titus and his armies would later be encamped. That Friday, too, while struggling in exhaustion under his own cross along the Via Dolorosa, his mind went out to these events as he responded dolefully to a few sympathetic women: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28).

But not a single Christian died in the siege of Jerusalem.

Ellen White points out that those events should not be viewed as simply a piece of ancient history. For "the Saviour's prophecy concerning the visitation of judgments upon Jerusalem is to have another fulfillment, of which that terrible desolation was but a faint shadow. In the fate of the chosen city we may behold the doom of a world that has rejected God's mercy and trampled upon His law. . . . Terrible have been the results of rejecting the authority of Heaven. But a scene yet darker is presented in the revelations of the future."²⁴ At the end of the world, now approaching rapidly, a fateful moment will come when the Lord no longer pleads with a wicked generation. Time will run out for disobedient Christians and entire churches as it once did for disobedient Jews.

"The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. God's longsuffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old."²⁵

That last sentence contains a terrible prediction. It is not simply a

picture of what God will actively do to punish the wicked through the seven last plagues (Rev. 16). It shows the devil unleashing human strife and warfare on an unimaginable scale, possibly in another world war, conducted with weapons of mass destruction, which many nations keep on manufacturing. Yet the One who saved the early Christians will once again stretch out his hand to protect and rescue his faithful remnant of the final generation. At that time, the Lord will honor an ancient promise:

A thousand shall fall at thy side,
and ten thousand at thy right hand;
but it shall not come nigh thee.
Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold
and see the reward of the wicked.

(Psalm 91:7, 8)

IX

Verse 27 of Dan. 9 elaborates on the last prophetic week or seventh septennate, the period between A.D. 27 and A.D. 34: “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

In A.D. 31, halfway through the final septennate, Jesus was crucified. At that time, the entire system of animal sacrifices came to an end. These had all prefigured him, so when he died, there was no further need for them. Verse 27 casts further light on the statement in vs. 24, that one purpose of the 490 years was “to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity.” The Hebrew word translated here as *sins* can also mean *sin offerings*,²⁶ which for this context is significant.

When Jesus died just outside the Damascus gate, a dramatic event took place in the city: “And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom” (Matt. 27:51), by a supernatural, heavenly hand! This followed immediately on the Messiah’s dying exclamation: “It is finished!” (John 19:30).

The original Greek is very powerful, a single, tremendous word, τετελεσται (“tetelestai”). This is in the perfect tense, which in that language—unlike English—always has a *present* meaning, since it expresses the abiding result of an action in the past. *Tetelestai* can also mean “it is [and remains] *fulfilled*” or “it is *complete*.” It refers to the Lord’s fulfillment of all the prophecies that pointed to him, including the one in Daniel 9. “Jesus had completed the work His Father had given him to do (ch. 4:34). Every step in the plan of redemption, laid before the foundation of the world, had been completed to schedule.”²⁷

But that word of triumph also has a further implication. The New

Testament teaches that “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God . . .” (Rom. 6:9-10). In contrast with Old Testament practices, “he has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:27. RSV). *Tetelestai!* Vainly, then, do priests who believe in transubstantiation attempt to kill him over and over again in what they call the *sacrifice* of the mass.

But what is the *covenant* that the Messiah would confirm “with many for one week,” and how could he do this after dying in the middle of the final septennate, in A.D. 31?

In the night before his crucifixion, when Jesus was instituting the communion service, he proffered the cup to his apostles and said: “This is the new διαθηκη [“*diathēkē*”] in my blood” (Luke 22:20). “*Diathēkē*” means either *testament* or *covenant*. His death for the sins of the world forms the basis for God’s undertaking both to forgive and to regenerate us by his grace. That is what Jeremiah had predicted: “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people . . . for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:33).

Most of the Jewish leaders had condemned and handed Jesus over to the Romans to be crucified, yet it is wrong to suppose that the nation as a whole was guilty of rejecting and murdering their Messiah. For instance, the Jews of the Diaspora (the millions living outside Palestine) had not been involved. One of these groups was a massive settlement in Mesopotamia, descended from Jews who had not returned to Palestine at the end of the Babylonian captivity. They were still faithfully practicing the religion of their ancestors.

Therefore, all Jews needed to be informed more fully, in the light of the prophecies in the Old Testament as well as the Messiah’s life and death. They needed additional time to accept or reject him. Therefore, after his resurrection, through his disciples, the Lord continued working for his ancient people. For three and a half years, he had personally presented the gospel, which culminated in his sacrificial death. Now, for another three and a half years, his followers were to urge the new covenant on their Hebrew kinsmen. But in A.D. 34 the final septennate was over.

Was there any event to signal this fact? Indeed there was. It was the martyrdom of Stephen. “At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1).

X

From this point onward, the Christians increasingly concentrated on evangelizing the Gentiles. They still worked for Jews, wherever these would listen to them, though most resisted the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-awaited Messiah. In Palestine, the turning point began with the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, to whose household the Lord had sent Peter through a special revelation. There, to the apostle's amazement, the Holy Spirit fell on these Gentiles. He exclaimed, "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (Acts 10:47, RSV).

Yet even after A.D. 34, the apostles kept on working for their fellow Jews. Increasingly, however, it was Gentiles who accepted Jesus. This greatly offended many Diaspora Jews. Eventually Paul and Barnabus told them: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

Finally, in A.D. 70, it was all over, when the second temple—like the first—was razed to the ground, never to be rebuilt. In the Authorized Version, the last part of Dan. 9:27 is somewhat obscure for readers who may not recognize "that determined" and "the desolate" as nouns. Here the traditional Spanish translation of the United Bible Societies is considerably clearer; it speaks of "el desolador" (*the desolator*), on whom "lo que está determinado" (*that which is determined*) will be poured out.²⁸ The RSV also puts it fairly well: "and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." This passage predicts the final fate of the Roman power.

XI

The interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 given in this chapter generally harmonizes with that of most theological writers through the centuries who recognized that Christ was crucified "in the midst or at the end of the 70th week. The standard Historicist interpretation since the Reformation has been that the 70th week follows immediately the 69th week, with no time gap, and that the events prophesied to take place in the 70th week find their fulfillment in connection with the life of Christ."²⁹

This straightforward explanation is, however, contradicted by Preterism and Futurism, two alternative, essentially Jesuit schools of interpretation—discussed more fully in our chapter about the Little Horn.

As Preterism would have it, the enemy referred to in vs. 27 who would "cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" is not Christ, but Antiochus IV, "Epiphanes" (c. 215-164 B.C.), a Greco-Macedonian king of Syria. In 168-65 B.C., this man desecrated the temple and suspended its services, including the sacrifices.³⁰ According to

Josephus, he also robbed the sanctuary, as well as Jerusalem, of all the treasures he could lay his hands on and destroyed the finest buildings, together with the city wall.³¹

But under the Maccabees the Jews rebelled successfully and drove the tyrant from their city.

That Antiochus Epiphanes does not fully meet the specifications of Daniel's prophecies is plain from the following facts: First, his actions against the temple and Jerusalem lasted about three years and not three and a half. Second, verse 26 speaks of "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." Although Antiochus and his army pillaged, desecrated, and damaged, they did not destroy the city or its sanctuary. Third, Jesus, who lived 160 years later, applied this and similar prophecies to future events.

The other, opposing view is Futurism, an ancient Catholic school of prophetic interpretation, predating the Counter Reformation but revitalized at that time by a Spanish Jesuit scholar, Francisco Ribera (1537-91). This was a response by the Roman Church to the inconvenient idea, widely shared and proclaimed by the Reformers of the sixteenth century, that the papacy is the Antichrist.

Amazingly, however, since the early 1800s, Protestants have increasingly abandoned the Historical School in favor of Futurism. This was accelerated by the Catholicizing tendencies of the Oxford Group and the resultant ecumenical movement.

Especially prominent Futurists are the Dispensationalists. These may agree with our interpretation about the 69 septennates or 483 years, even if their dates are a little different. But they detach the last septennate or 7 years and push it some 2,000 years into the future, for the purpose of fitting it into their end-time theology. This includes the Secret Rapture and a personal rather than a papal Antichrist.

A notable feature of Dispensationalism is the gap theory, which defies all known laws of arithmetic and common sense, as well as what the Scripture teaches.

Sakae Kubo quotes the following analogies from a writer of this school: "As a result of the rejection of Christ and His crucifixion, Israel's clock stopped and the Mystery of Grace, the church, was introduced. Israel, like a train, was taken off the main line and shunted into a sidetrack where she has remained for 1900 years. Her steam is up again; her bell is ringing; she is poised, ready to complete her run. Since the period of the church is signless and timeless, these past 1900 years are a 'time-out' period as in football and basketball."³²

That is certainly picturesque and, for a certain type of mind, beguiling. But there are a few things wrong with this description.

First, the period of the church is not "signless and timeless." The Bible mentions a good number of specific signs, as in Luke 2:12, Matt. 24:30, and Luke 21:25. It also deals with many time periods of varying length, especially the 1260, 1290, 1335, and 2300 years.

Second, the quoted passage relies too heavily on analogies and

too little on facts and common sense. The Lord's great time prophecies are not really a train or a football game. And there is nothing in any of them, and especially not in Dan. 9:24-27, to suggest a gap. God thinks and expresses himself clearly, coherently, without theological double talk.

Suppose a friend invites our family to visit him for a week. We go to his house, but then at the breakfast table on the sixth day we announce that the seventh day of our visit will occur a year into the future. For this reason, we shall in the meantime just linger around in his home and on his property. In everyday life, we are hardly likely to get away with such peculiar ideas, yet this is how Dispensationalist interpreters reason. No, when the Lord's messenger said to Daniel, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" (Dan. 9:24), he was trying to explain, not obscure, the prophecy. He obviously meant seven consecutive septennates, exactly 490 years, not 2490 years or more.

If he had wanted to put the Jewish nation on hold for two millennia, he would have said so quite clearly, for "the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7, RSV). The fact is that after A.D. 34, he would no longer work through the chosen people as in ages past, but through the Christian Church consisting of converted Jews as well as Gentiles.

XII

The seventy septennates were more than a period of prophetic time. They also represent the patience and lovingkindness of a God who forgives again and again—until even he must draw a line in the sand.

We see this from an answer that Jesus gave when Peter one day asked him: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus saith unto him, 'I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.'" (Matt. 18:21, 22) Steve Wohlberg points out that "Jesus always chose His words carefully. His response to Peter contains an important lesson. 'Seventy times seven' equals 490, which is a perfect reference to the 70-week prophecy of Daniel chapter 9!"³³

If we consider Israel's entire history from the time of Moses, we actually discover not one but three 490-year periods. The first consisted of 40 years' wandering up and down and across the Sinai Peninsula, plus about 450 years in Canaan, when the tribes were ruled by judges, down to the time of Samuel (Acts 13:17-20). In the second 490 years, the nation had kings. This period ended with the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. The final 490 were the subject of Daniel's prophecy.

These would be the last opportunity for the Jews as a nation to fulfill their national destiny in the present world, so that—as the Lord had promised Abraham—"in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Their many failures up to the Babylonian

captivity had led to the destruction of their city and temple. Through Daniel, the Almighty announced their final chance; though he sadly knew that they would botch this one, too. It would end with another destruction of both their city and temple. After that, their national probation would end, for they were “to finish the transgression.” Never had the Lord been so patient and longsuffering toward an erring and often rebellious people.

In spite of all these considerations, Dispensationalists are inclined to the view that the Jews in Israel will reconstruct the temple. For instance, Wesley G. Pippert maintains that “Many Jews and Christians believe the temple must be rebuilt as a precursor to the coming of the Messiah (for the Jews, the first time, and for Christians, the second!). They base this on Daniel 9:25-27, which speaks of restoring Jerusalem before the coming of ‘the anointed one.’ This was why some ultra-Orthodox Jews have plotted to blow up the Dome of the Rock and thus ‘cleanse’ the Temple Mount.

XIII

Some Christian fundamentalists in the United States have raised money to support a project to rebuild the temple. This is the central purpose of a group called ‘The Jerusalem Temple Foundation,’ which is incorporated in the United States. Its theme is ‘Build Thy Temple Speedily.’”³⁴

But, as we have shown, the rebuilding described in Dan. 9:25-27 took place very long ago, when a remnant of the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity. This passage also predicts the Messiah’s first coming and death for us. It goes on to foretell the destruction of that second temple and Jerusalem itself. The passage does not deal with a *third* temple as well.

As a Jewish Christian, Wohlberg finds this idea offensive:

“Now think for a moment. Would the providence of God ever lead the Jewish people to rebuild a third temple? Would the Father ever initiate the restarting of sacrifices that ended with the death of His Son? When Jesus cried out, ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30), He abolished all sacrifices. He was the final Sacrifice! Therefore, would not the restarting of sacrifices be an open denial that Jesus Christ is the Messiah? If Israel ever did build a third temple and begin to offer sacrifices, would not this be another official, national rejection of the Saviour? What happened 2,000 years ago when the leaders of Israel officially rejected their Messiah? The result was disaster! More than a million Jews perished.”³⁵

We warmly recommend the whole of Wohlberg’s book, *Exploding the Israel Deception*.

But the gap theory introduces an even greater and more startling error than a third temple complete with animal sacrifices. Dispensationalists think the words “he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” refer to the deeds of the Lawless one described in 2 Thess. 2:2,3, instead of the Lord’s great sacrifice for us. They confuse Christ with Antichrist!

For instance, LaHaye maintains that the seventieth week of Dan. 9 refers to the great Tribulation after the Rapture, shortly before the Second Coming. He states that in the middle of that seven-year period the Antichrist will die, but Satan will resurrect and dwell in him, performing great miracles.³⁶ What an idea! The devil, himself a mortal being eventually doomed to destruction (Eze. 28:17-18), cannot raise the dead. This is the prerogative of God and of his Christ (John 5:25-26), who declared, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25).

Dan. 9:24-27 cannot accommodate these and other elements of what Dispensationalists teach about the end time, such as an attack on a revitalized Israel by Gog, which they interpret as Russia. All this is referred to in Ezekiel, and we have dealt with some of them in our chapter on "The History that Never Was." But all this is extraneous to the prophecy of the 70 septennates, which the Historical School interprets in a manner that is both truthful and logical.

XIV

Is this not a sorry note on which to end the present chapter? Can it really be true that God has permanently rejected the Jewish nation? That is not, however, what we have been saying. Our conclusion is rather that for the rest of history, until the Lord sets up his government on the earth made new, they are no longer his corporate instrumentality for evangelizing the world. And yet, as we shall see, beyond the end of history, a glorious future also awaits the redeemed from among the literal descendants of Abraham.

12 The Remnant of Israel

I

After their national rejection of the Messiah, the Jews could still be saved as individuals, though henceforth Heaven's appointed agency for blessing and evangelizing the planet would be the Christian church. As Paul announced dramatically, the name *Israel* would now apply to all believers: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:28, 29)

Let us carefully note what the apostle meant. He still referred to Israel. So did Peter in addressing his first epistle "to the exiles of the Dispersion" (vs. 1, RSV), who were Christians. He told them that they, as followers of Jesus the Messiah, were now "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9). Here he virtually quotes the Lord's proclamation to the Israelites at Sinai: "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). But how could Gentiles become Israelites? Surely this, like the expressions "spiritual Israel" or "new Israel," is just a metaphor!

It is not. The apostles meant that the Christian church originated and therefore continued as a remnant of Israel. Those first believers were what we today may call Messianic Jews. In a very significant passage, Paul explains: "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, 'Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.' But what saith the answer of God unto him? 'I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.' Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." (Rom. 11:1-5)

Despite the disappointing and defective response of the majority, Israel as a whole had not failed. Through the ages, with all its ups and downs, the chosen people—or, rather, a faithful minority within it—had preserved the oracles of God and eventually brought forth the Messiah. Though prevented for a while from establishing his kingdom on earth, the Saviour accepted the remnant as quintessential Israel and fashioned it into Heaven's alternative instrument for achieving its purposes with the human race.

Who were this remnant? Originally it consisted entirely of believing Jews. Jesus, the Messiah, is (not was) a Jew. In his only theological argument with a Gentile, the woman at the well of Samaria, he even said: "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4: 22). Every

single one of the apostles was a Jew. The New Testament is a Jewish book, written by Hebrews—with the possible exception of Luke. Christianity began in Palestine with the remnant of Israel and not as a Gentile institution.

Believers who read the first chapters of Acts are thrilled by the rapid progress of those first Messianic Jews who founded the Christian church. But only few today have any idea how many of Abraham's literal descendants accepted the Lord Jesus; nor do they grasp the profound implications of this factor.

When Paul paid his final visit to Jerusalem, probably in about A.D. 58,¹ "many thousands" of Palestinian Jews had become Christians (Acts 21:20). Eight years later, at the outbreak of the Roman-Jewish war, perhaps as many as "seventy to ninety thousand Christian Jews" fled across the Jordan to Pella.²

Here they multiplied, and in Decapolis created "large and learned Christian communities" of Jews, augmented by many converts from paganism. This community also exerted an influence on other churches to the north.³

DeLacey O'Leary provides important and fascinating data: "The majority of the new believers, however, in the northern Syrian region were from among the sons of Israel. This latter community beckoned to the dwellers in Decapolis. Consequently, descendants of those who originally fled from Jerusalem left Pella and its regions to enrich and multiply Christian centers to the north as far as the Euphrates River."⁴

F. J. Foakes-Jackson mentions another source of Jewish converts: "Jerusalem's fall produced its greatest effect upon the millions of Jews who did not reside in Palestine. Stunned by this event, they listened to the gospel, and untold numbers turned to Christ. These did a great work in establishing the church in all parts of the world."⁵ It would seem that in those days, the Jews were more receptive of the gospel than, for instance, modern Europeans, who have largely turned their back on religion.

The mother of Christianity was not Rome but Jerusalem, not the Catholic Church but the Church of the East. About the latter, Wilkinson states that "those first six and a half centuries of Syrian Christianity were marvelous in establishing the New Testament church, not only in the East, but also in the West. The mingling of the large Gentile and Jewish gospel communities in this region, coupled with the splendid spiritual background of training which the Jews under the Old Testament had in things divine, richly endowed this fruitful soil for the spread of Christianity."⁶ The influence of that church continued for many, many more centuries. From time to time, its purer gospel reached into the West to counteract the work of the Antichrist, long after its specific Jewish component had disappeared by blending with other believers.

When Paul and Peter described Christianity as the Israel of God, they were not using a metaphor, nor would it have occurred to them to downplay the role of converted Jews. No, the church was itself the wonderful remnant, which had inherited all the prerogatives of

God's ancient people. It was not simply a "spiritual" Israel in some vague symbolic sense and certainly not a "new" one. It was, in all that was really important to Heaven, Israel itself.

Subsequently, of course, the Gentile converts did become the dominant factor in Christianity. After Jerusalem was destroyed a final time in A.D. 135, additional Jews were less and less inclined to join the church. For this, there were several reasons. The following were two of the most important ones: many Christians, especially those at Rome, were apostatizing from the religion of the Bible by corrupting it with pagan ideas and rituals; and Christians became anti-Semites, who often persecuted the Jews.

II

Can modern followers of Jesus still consider themselves as Israel? Provided they adhere to what the Bible teaches and turn away from unscriptural doctrines and traditions, the New Testament answer to this question is a resounding "yes!" Paul explains the status of Gentile Christians by referring to an ancient and suggestive symbol in the Hebrew Scriptures: the olive tree.

Like the vine and the fig tree, it is very characteristic of the Holy Land. It can live for centuries, even millennia. In the summer of 1985, I visited Gethsemane and gazed on marvelously ancient olive trees that may have survived from the time of Christ. Older than America, older than Western Europe as we know it today, they mutely yet eloquently testified to the everlasting gospel.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the olive tree symbolizes royal majesty (Judges 9:8) and holiness associated with the sanctuary (Ps. 52:8). Olive wood was used for the Holy of Holies, including the covering cherubs on both sides of the ark (1 Kings 6:23, 31-33). Because it supplied the oil for anointing kings as well as priests, the olive tree as a symbol has messianic overtones. It also represents the prophetic word of God (Zech. 4:2-6).

Paul relates the Gentile Christians to Israel in terms of such an ancient and marvelous tree. Rom. 11:16-18 especially reflects Jer. 11:16-19, with an obvious reference to verse 16: "The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken" (vs. 16).

Jeremiah was warning the chosen people about the Babylonian distress, which would soon afflict it for its wickedness. The unbelieving Jews of his time, attacked and mostly destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's armies, were rejected branches suddenly torn from Israel. This was both an individual and a corporate breaking off, though a remnant survived and was eventually reestablished in their country.

Paul applied the same idea to his own compatriots, just before the Romans were due to repeat the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. He knew, however, that this time there would be no return

for the Jewish people after just a few generations. Instead, the Lord had already decided to fulfill his purposes through another agency, the Christian church. Therefore, the apostle added to Jeremiah's symbol by saying that the Gentiles who accepted the Messiah were grafted into Israel.

But he also warned these newcomers: "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." (Rom. 11:17-21)

Endowed with the gift of prophecy, Paul knew this breaking off that had twice afflicted the Jews could and would also be the fate of many Christians who apostatize. In this case, too, rejection would affect not just individual Gentile converts who provoke the Lord into tearing them off his tree; it would also be a corporate thing. That is, the rejection of the Jewish "church" and its destructive aftermath in A.D. 70 could and would be repeated in Christendom.

And yet there would always be a remnant faithful to God. It is these whom Jesus had in mind when he said of his church that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" it (Matt. 16:18). In this passage, the word for *hell* is the familiar Greek word Hades. It refers to the realm of the dead and therefore to death itself. Our Lord knew how many of his loved ones would be slaughtered through the ages. But though especially the coming Antichrist would kill or otherwise eliminate so many of them, a remnant would be preserved and endure forever—provided they are truly "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20).

Israel through the ages is one. Salvation comes through Jesus the Messiah, the seed of Abraham; and Gentile believers are adopted into the family of that ancient patriarch—for "if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). All those, however, that apostatize from their Lord and knowingly depart from the Bible, the Old as well as the New Testament, need to note the warning about being broken off. Outside the original covenant with Abraham, fulfilled and confirmed in the Messiah, there is no salvation. It is dangerous for non-Jewish believers to despise and turn away from this Hebrew heritage.

III

This is precisely what the Antichrist has done through theological anti-Semitism and by inventing an alternative gospel, with many pagan elements that God rejects.

An early example was the demand by Pope Victor I (189-99) that all should celebrate Easter on Sunday. He went further: he

excommunicated the Christians in the Roman province of Asia, who continued observing it on Nisan 14, the date of the Jewish Passover.⁷ They insisted on following a calendar that God himself had instituted more than fifteen hundred years before (Ex. 12:2). Indeed, they were stressing the crucifixion rather than the resurrection. For this reason, they were derisively labeled Quartodecimans (“Fourteenters”), after the Latin word for *fourteenth*.

The papal invention of Easter Sunday was tinged with paganism. Nevertheless, at the council of Nicaea, the emperor Constantine supported it and imposed it in all his territories. His reasoning was also blatantly anti-Semitic. He wrote, “Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way.”⁸

This, however, was a falsehood. Jesus, the Messiah and a Jew, instituted the communion service on the day of the Passover, but no Easter in any shape or form. Instead, he looked forward to observing the Passover in the hereafter, in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:14-18). The Passover, not Easter.

The theologians at Nicaea also applied another anti-Semitic rule: “In order to prevent the festival from coinciding either with the Jewish Passover or with the celebrations of the Quartodecimans, special provision was made, should the full moon actually occur on a Sunday, to defer the celebration of Easter until the next Sunday.”⁹

This happened in 2001 as I was completing this volume. Full moon fell on Sunday, 8 April, which coincided with the Jewish Passover. Easter was therefore delayed for a week and celebrated on Sunday, 15 April.

In this and other matters, including a blatant tampering with the Lord’s commandments, Catholicism and its theological kindred boasted against the olive tree of Israel. Quite deliberately, they detached themselves from it; and God has honored their decision. Corporately they are therefore no longer part of his people. Individual Catholics can still be saved but must also hasten to leave an ecclesiastical system doomed to destruction (Rev. 18:4).

The theologians who at Nicaea and in other eras repudiated the Jewish roots of Christianity do not seem to have understood Paul’s warning against being “highminded.” Indeed, they had ceased to care. Yet the Lord requires it of all believers to remain a humble part of the genuine olive tree of Israel and not to concoct their own religion.

IV

Futurists today, like the papacy of the second century and the imperial church established by Constantine, have also gone astray in this respect. The idea of two completely different dispensations for Israel and the Church, is simplistic, unscriptural, and has given rise to many errors.

Ever since Eve and Adam fell by succumbing to Satan’s deceptions, there has been only one plan of salvation, for all their

descendants. Its essence was and remains the same at all times: their status as sinners who have broken the Law of God and redemption through sacrifice, centered in Jesus' death on the cross. This was the covenant of atonement and restoration for all who believed and accepted the Lord's provisions for them.

Before the Saviour was born and could fulfill his destiny together with the prophecies concerning him, the plan of salvation unfolded through different historical periods. First there were simple sacrifices for every nation on earth, performed by heads of families and patriarchs, from the time of Adam down to Noah and his first posterity. After the rest of humanity had apostatized, the Lord called Abraham—through whose Seed the entire earth would be blessed—to continue this system. Finally, at Sinai, the Lord introduced a large variety of sacrifices and the elaborate Levitical priesthood. This has been called the Mosaic Dispensation, which remained in force until the crucifixion.

All these arrangements in the pre-Christian period can properly be described as prefiguration. Every sacrifice, if properly performed, was a prophetic symbol pointing forward to the Redeemer, the Desire of ages, who would one day come and give substance to the promise that the Lord had made to our first parents before he expelled them from paradise (Gen. 3:15). When Jesus finally came, prefiguration ended, for he brought the reality of salvation. Paul, referring to the Old Testament system and its temple sacrifices, said it was "a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:17).

Only in this sense, can the word *dispensation* be meaningful. Prefiguration is obviously not the same thing as actuality, fulfillment as prophecy. The fundamental difference is that before the sacrifice on Calvary believers were looking forward but ever since then they have been looking back to that awe-inspiring event.

Some, however, have perverted the idea of dispensations to make it represent a fundamental break between biblical Judaism and Christianity. More often than not, the underlying motive has been to justify false doctrines, such as departures from and disobedience to the Ten Commandments. We like Ellen White's formulation:

"There is no such contrast as is often claimed to exist between the Old and the New Testament, the law of God and the gospel of Christ, the requirements of the Jewish and those of the Christian dispensation. Every soul saved in the former dispensation was saved by Christ as verily as we are saved by him today. Patriarchs and prophets were Christians. The gospel promise was given to the first pair in Eden, when they had by transgression separated themselves from God. The gospel was preached to Abraham. The Hebrews all drank of that spiritual Rock, which was Christ."¹⁰

V

Down to the early nineteenth century, most Protestants shared such views, but they clash with modern Dispensationalism. This

really began with Catholic Futurism as formulated by Francisco Ribera (1537–91) during the Counter Reformation four hundred years ago. Even in a Protestant guise, it basically remains Roman Catholic eschatology. To work it out, that Spanish Jesuit scholar ransacked the past for ideas from the men who had fathered the great Mediterranean apostasy, including Augustine of Hippo, and a few earlier writers. In 1826, the Englishman Samuel R. Maitland (1792–1866) and his Irish disciple James H. Todd (1805–86) breached the barrier separating Protestant from Catholic views about the end time.

They also rejected the Reformers' crucial teaching that the pope is the Antichrist. This prepared the way for Dispensationalism, which developed in the ambience of Dublin's Trinity College, initiated amongst others by another Irishman, John Nelson Darby (1800–82), who went on to become a Plymouth Brethren minister. Another part of Maitland's heritage was to encourage the Catholicizing Oxford Movement during the nineteenth as well as Ecumenicism during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹¹

Dispensationalism might have remained an Anglo-Irish sect with limited appeal, confined to the British Isles, if it had not jumped across the Atlantic to the United States and into the mind of Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843–1921).

From its earliest colonial period, America has had a strong obsession with Israel. At first, it took the form of national typology, which equates one's own country with the Lord's latter-day chosen people—an unbiblical myth passed down from the Catholic Middle Ages. By the nineteenth century, these ideas had mutated to designate some or all Americans as literal descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. The Mormons equated them with the native Americans. Others, however, believed these ancient Israelites were the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxon nations. An amazing variety of groups arose to propagate such thinking. We discuss this phenomenon in "History and Prophecy as Christian Mythology," a chapter of *The Use and Abuse of Prophecy*.¹²

Scofield, a former lawyer, politician, and failed United States district attorney for Kansas turned clergyman, was undoubtedly familiar with everything of this nature. Though without formal theological training, he became a prolific and influential religious author. Reading widely, as all successful writers commonly do, he was—like Shakespeare's character Autolycus, "a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles"¹³—and made amazingly much of them. It was Scofield who sowed the seeds of Darby's Dispensationalism far and wide in the fertile soil of the American imagination, as well as everywhere throughout the British Empire. The chief instrument for doing so was his richly annotated and enormously popular Reference Bible, printed by the Oxford University Press in 1909, with its 1917 and 1967 revisions. By the last-mentioned year, no fewer than three million copies in English and another two million in other languages were available all over the planet.¹⁴

Scofield's ideas were elaborated further by his protégé and

successor, Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871–1952), who founded the Dallas Theological Seminary and wrote up their ideas in his eight-volume *Systematic Theology*.¹⁵

For these men, there were seven dispensations, of which only the last three need to concern us here: (5) Man under law: from Sinai until Calvary; (6) Man under grace: from the crucifixion until the Rapture; (7) and Man under the personal reign of Christ: from his return and throughout the millennium, when Israel is to be restored.¹⁶

Especially problematic is the Dispensationalist contrast between (5) and (6), when we read that law in the Old Testament is supposedly based on the concept of “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” while New Testament grace brings in forgiveness together with the injunction to “love your enemies.” This is muddled theology. For ancient Israel—as for us—the Law was always linked with forgiveness and grace; above the lid of the ark containing the Ten Commandments was the mercy seat (Ex. 25:17-21).

Then, too, the teaching that we must love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves, the two great principles on which the Decalogue is based, was not introduced by Christ but through Moses (Deut. 6:4, 5; Lev. 19:18). The former makes up part of the *Shema* (“Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”) To this day, it constitutes the basic creed, the very essence of Judaism—and Jesus was reaffirming it. In fact, at least on one occasion he quoted the full *Shema* (Mark. 12:29, 30).

Dispensationalist theology has not been static, nor is it now a completely unified tradition. Nevertheless, it always insists that the church is totally distinct from Israel. Revised or Modified Dispensationalism (ca. 1950–85) still taught that this difference “will continue throughout eternity.” Progressive Dispensationalism (1986—to the present) concedes a greater continuity between Israel and the church. Nevertheless, its proponents “do not equate the church as Israel in this age and they still see a future distinct identity and function for ethnic Israel in the coming millennial kingdom.”¹⁷ The ideas set forth in Scofield’s notes are “influential among fundamentalist Christians in the U.S.A.” Their effect has by means been limited to religious theory but spills over into practical politics, for Dispensationalism is “one of the intellectual foundations of Christian Zionism, a belief that Christians are obliged to support the Jewish state of modern Israel (as the people of God).”¹⁸

Needless to say, our ideas as set forth in this chapter represent a very different point of view.

Particularly dangerous is the Dispensationalist error that splits the Second Coming into two events: the Rapture, followed seven years later by our Lord’s return in glory. Millions will be lost while waiting for the Rapture, thinking, “When my Christian friends disappear, I will have a second chance of seven more years to prepare before he comes!”

But, alas, there will be no Rapture, only a single Second Advent,

to burst upon a startled world like a thunderclap, like lightning that illuminates the sky (Matt. 24:27). Jesus and countless radiant angels will descend with a shout and trumpet blasts to announce the day of salvation and doom, invading the atmosphere with unimaginable splendor (Matt. 16:27; Luke 21:27; 1 Thess. 4:16-18). Every eye will see him, and the nations of the lost will wail because of him (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7); for it is now too late to accept him as a Saviour. They call to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them and hide them from his face (Rev. 6:14-17).

The Rapture is not a New Testament doctrine; it is necessitated by Dispensationalist theology. For those who are troubled by it, we also recommend the previous chapter, "The History that Never Was," and my separate study "Two Thousand Years of Prophetic Interpretation."¹⁹ Some of the issues involved are, moreover, discussed in chapter 23 on the Sevenfold Prophecy, which shows that the 1260 days/42 months/3½ years cannot possibly be the same as the 70th septennate or last prophetic week of Dan. 9. Identifying these periods with each other involves a calculation error.

When Jesus, the Messiah, establishes his everlasting kingdom on planet Earth, it will be, as the final two chapters of Revelation clearly show, a very Israelite setup. The capital city will again be called Jerusalem. On its throne will sit the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, king of the Jews, "the offspring of David" (Rev. 22:16). Inscribed on the gates of the city will be "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" and on its foundations "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:12-13). To these, he made a special promise while he was still with them: "You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30, RSV). They, the companions of his carefraught ministry and friends forever, will be made his fellow rulers as princes of his people.

There, too, will be the ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the great lawgiver, Moses; the best of kings, David and Josiah; the faithful prophets, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel. A multitude of Israelites and Jews who served the Lord for almost two thousand years before the Messiah came. But with them, too, will be the remnant of Israel, consisting of not only Gentile, but also Jewish Christians, who witnessed for him faithfully—often as martyrs done to death by heathens or the Antichrist—for almost another two thousand years.

VI

And yet we are sad about the present Jewish nation and its continuing Diaspora. Have this people no further part in preparing the world for its coming king?

The prophecy of Dan. 9:24-27 is clear. As a nation, they have not

been assigned such a role, nor will the Israeli state accept the Redeemer; yet we confidently expect that before the Second Advent there will be another great ingathering of Jews. This was also the conviction of that profound Christian writer Ellen White, whom some believe to have been inspired. She urged all who serve the Lord to do a special work for the Jews and stated repeatedly that many, very many of them would accept their Messiah and also play a prominent part in preparing a people for the Second Coming. Let us note a few of her remarkable predictions:

“There is a mighty work to be done in our world. The Lord has declared that the Gentiles shall be gathered in, and not the Gentiles only, but the Jews. There are among the Jews many who will be converted, and through whom we shall see the salvation of God go forth as a lamp that burneth. There are Jews everywhere, and to them the light of present truth is to be brought. There are among them many who will come to the light, and who will proclaim the immutability of the law of God with wonderful power. The Lord God will work. He will do wonderful things in righteousness.”²⁰

“Among the Jews are some who, like Saul of Tarsus, are mighty in the Scriptures, and these will proclaim with wonderful power the immutability of the law of God.”²¹

“There will be many converted from among the Jews, and these converts will aid in preparing the way of the Lord, and making straight in the desert a highway for our God. Converted Jews are to have an important part to act in the great preparations to be made in the future to receive Christ, our Prince. A nation shall be born in a day. How? By men whom God has appointed being converted to the truth.”²²

A sizable proportion of Abraham’s children will therefore join the end-time remnant Church, miraculously grafted back into their own olive tree. In this way, the Lord will fulfill his word through Saul of Tarsus, that firebrand converted from Jewish Orthodoxy two millennia ago, who never stopped loving his kinsmen, however much they hated or persecuted him: “As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all” (Rom. 11:28-32, RSV). What an amazing paradox!

No, we do not believe the Almighty has cast away his ancient people, despite the rejection of the Messiah two millennia ago. As a nation, they are no longer his agency for evangelizing the world, yet at the end as at the beginning of its history, the true Church will again have a noteworthy, perhaps a massive, Jewish component. Together with other Christians, these will joyously welcome back their Messiah, and so they will see their most cherished dreams come true; for the king of the Jews, who is also the head of the

Church, will fulfill his promises to his faithful remnant.

For as the new heavens and the new earth
which I will make
shall remain before me, saith the LORD,
so shall your seed and your name remain.
And it shall come to pass
that from new moon to another,
and from one sabbath to another,
shall all flesh come to worship before me,
saith the LORD.

(Isa. 66:22)

All who have accepted the Messiah, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will share the inheritance of God's true Israel. The Lord has never forgotten his ancient friend, whom he called from Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan; therefore, he will not fail to fulfil his promise: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:2, 3).

Enthroned in the New Jerusalem, that bright and shining city, will be the Lamb of God, who is also the Lion of Judah, together with the eternal Father. "And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it" (Rev. 21:24).

13 The First Protestant

I

When the second Person of the Godhead became a human being and took up residence on the planet Earth as Jesus the Nazarene, he had a dual mission.

First, he wanted to be the Saviour of the world. In more than one way, he sacrificed himself for the human race. Not only did he die for us all on the bitter cross; he also accepted the limitations of a material body existing in space and time. Nor did God lend him to us; he gave him to our species as an everlasting possession: “For to us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . .” (Isa. 9:6). In this part of his mission, Jesus was eminently successful.

But additionally he came to convert the leaders of his nation, the Jews, and bring about a complete reformation in Israel. After that, he intended setting up his kingdom at once, if they accepted him as their Messiah and Redeemer.

This part of his mission did not succeed, not due to any lack in him, but because the Scribes and the Pharisees hardened their hearts and influenced the majority to reject him. No words in Scripture are sadder than these: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11).

The four Gospels tell a splendid story of Jesus going about to do good as no one before him had ever done and uttering words that none of his predecessors had ever spoken, while living a life of incomparable purity. But the account of his life is also filled with images of conflict, illustrating his statement that he had not come to send peace into the world but the sword—because he knew what terrible divisions would arise between those who accepted him truly and those who did not (Matt. 10:34).

Opposition to the Lord of life did not originate with people who were considered the dregs of society: the drunkards, the prostitutes, or the tax-gatherers—who exploited their fellow Jews, collaborating with the hated Roman overlords. Nor were these prepared to act against him, until the Pharisees blackmailed the governor, Pontius Pilate, with threats to denounce him to the emperor. The real slayers of Christ were the “churchmen,” the professionally good people of his time.

Why? Our Lord offended them greatly for several reasons, especially because he did not conform to their theological preconceptions about the Messiah.

II

The first great confrontation came on a Sabbath morning in the synagogue of his hometown, Nazareth. His old neighbors had heard of his preaching and miracles elsewhere in Galilee and were curious to hear him speak, so he was asked to read from the Old Testament and say a few words to the congregation.

He unscrolled the Scriptures to a chapter in Isaiah predicting many details of the Messiah's ministry. Jesus read the following passage from the sixty-first chapter:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he hath anointed me
to preach the gospel to the poor;
he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted,
to preach deliverance to the captives,
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty them that are bruised.
To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

(Luke 4:18, 19)

This was most exciting. Jesus, the local boy, was claiming to be the Messiah! The reports reaching the religious leaders and people of this congregation stated that he had indeed been doing those very things he was reading about. Yes, in the neighboring towns he had preached good news about God's lovingkindness to the poor, freed the devil's captives by expelling the demons who possessed them, and announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

What many in the synagogue congregation were really waiting to hear, however, were the next words in Isaiah's text: ". . . and the day of vengeance of our God" (61:2), which to their minds meant liberation from the hated Roman overlords. This, especially, is what they were expecting of the Messiah.

But Jesus disappointed them. Suddenly he closed the scroll and handed it back to the attendant. He sat down; there was a long silence; all eyes were fixed on him. Then he spoke: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). This was wonderful, though not enough. Nevertheless, for a little while it seemed as though everyone was satisfied.

Soon, however, a discordant note crept in. Some began to mutter about his humble and even questionable origin as "Joseph's son." Jesus took up the challenge and greatly upset his fellow Nazarenes by referring to incidents in the Old Testament that show how God at times had bypassed his own people to favor more righteous Gentiles. To Jews of that era, this was a hateful thought. Spurred on by their leaders, the entire congregation turned against him "and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong" (vs. 29).

During my 1985 visit to Israel, I walked through lower Nazareth and found that three denominations—including Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy—had, as though in rivalry, erected churches to commemorate the Annunciation. Each marks a separate spot where the angel Gabriel supposedly visited the Virgin to tell her she was going to bear a son that would become the Redeemer. I also saw Mary's Well and found a shrine with a most peculiar name: "the church of the synagogue." It stands over the ruins of a building in which the Saviour is

said to have worshiped and where this confrontation presumably took place. The identification is certainly incorrect, like so many other allegedly holy places in Israel. The synagogue mentioned in Luke 4 and the town itself (as well as the home of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus) were in what today is upper Nazareth, on top of the hill with its precipice. The cliff is still there; in the late afternoon, I could see it from the bus on my journey back to Haifa.

The theologians of Jesus' time as well as the majority of ordinary Jews had focused too exclusively on the idea that the Messiah would deliver them from political bondage. In God's plan, however, this was not to receive priority. Above all, he wanted to free his people from the bondage of sin and to show forth the love of the Lord, which most had lost sight of. For many, especially the professional religionists, this different emphasis made the man from Nazareth unacceptable. Especially infuriating was the way in which he simply ignored and sometimes even contradicted their teachings. Let us look at two ways in which he did this.

First, he made a point of converting precisely the so-called hardened sinners: prostitutes, tax-gatherers, and other unsavory characters whom the priests, the Scribes, and the Pharisees considered beyond redemption. Jesus dealt gently with and brought forgiveness to every truly penitent soul, yet his actions implied a criticism of the official clergy and their theology, which placed these people beyond the pale. He also had a habit of openly condemning hypocrisy, which often characterized the Scribes and the Pharisees.

At such times, he could be very blunt. In a final confrontation with them, he unmasked these honored religious leaders as "fools and blind" (Matt. 23:17), "blind guides" (vs. 24), "full of extortion and rapacity" (vs. 25, RSV). They were not at all what they seemed to be. The Lord compared them to "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness," that is, underneath their apparent goodness, they were extremely wicked (vv. 27-28). They were poisonous "serpents," a "generation of vipers" (vv. 32, 33) on their way to hell, for they were murderers, just like their ancestors who had slain the prophets and truly righteous men of the past (vv. 29-36). Indeed, for soon enough the leading Scribes and Pharisees met in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, to plan how "to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him" (Matt. 26:4, RSV).

Two of the sinners who these religious leaders imagined were so bad that God could no longer pardon them were Mary Magdalene and Zacchaeus.

Mary seems to have gone a long way down the road of prostitution and even fell prey to demons, but the Saviour drove seven devils out of her and brought her back to purity and to God. After he rose from the grave, she was the first person he spoke to and the first missionary to announce his resurrection (Mark 16:9, 10).

Zacchaeus was not only a tax gatherer collaborating with the hated Roman overlords; he actually headed the Inland Revenue Service at Jericho. Such individuals were obnoxious to the Jews as well as other

conquered peoples for more than nationalistic reasons. Geoffrey E. M. de Ste. Croix paints a grim picture of tax collectors at work for the Romans. Supported by soldiers and local levies, they often treated defaulters in abominable ways. These would be beaten up and imprisoned or see their houses burned to the ground; if they fled, the agents of the taxman could torture their relatives or neighbors to reveal their whereabouts.¹

To belong to such a profession and be promoted to a senior position in it, Zacchaeus must have been a calloused and at times a brutal man; yet even this blackguard was not beyond the reach of redemption. The Spirit of God, who strives to woo us back to the Heavenly Father, was softening and working on his heart. Zacchaeus heard of a compassionate teacher called Jesus, who treated his kind as human beings. It was even rumored that one of his disciples used to be a tax gatherer! He greatly longed to meet this very different kind of rabbi. Then, one day, someone told him that the Nazarene was approaching Jericho. Because he was physically small, Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree to see the Lord pass by, but almost fell out of it again in amazement when Jesus stopped beneath the branches, looked up, and said, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” (Luke 19:1-5, RSV)

In the eyes of the Scribes and the Pharisees, both Mary Magdalene and Zacchaeus were irredeemably bad: the worst kind of man and the worst kind of woman; yet both repented and turned from their sins. God forgave them, and for almost two thousand years their names have adorned the New Testament and been honored by countless Christians, while the memory of their pious foes (who went on to murder the Lord) is branded with everlasting infamy.

The second way in which Jesus offended the clergy was by rejecting tradition as a source of doctrine and religious authority. He recognized only the Old Testament, the Bible of his time, and his heavenly Father. As we could put it today, he was a Protestant in relation to his Jewish heritage, which he wanted to reform.

Those who guided Judaism maintained that in addition to the Scriptures there were many unwritten rules to obey. For instance, some ancient rabbi puzzled over Ex. 23:19: “You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk” (RSV), and came up with the explanation that meat food and milk food should not be ingested by means of the same utensils. To this, another theologian added that for Passover one’s ordinary crockery and cutlery were unsuitable and therefore had to be replaced with two other sets. This meant that the ordinary Jewish household needed *four* lots of knives, flatware, pots, and pans! Fortunately some other rabbi, in mercy to the poor, decided that for Passover the family could bury, dig up, and then reuse its utensils. To this day, Orthodox Jews adhere to this bit of unusual theology.

By the time of Jesus, ritual purity had become a fetish, giving rise to taboos unmentioned in the Old Testament. For instance, the Scribes and the Pharisees believed that eating with unwashed hands was a sin and therefore criticized some of the Lord’s disciples for failing to observe this regulation (Mark 7:1-5).

But Jesus ignored and sometimes scorned this type of thing, which

was entirely a human invention. On the other hand, he adhered very strictly to every precept of the Old Testament. That is, he sharply distinguished what God had commanded from what the religious leaders required.

III

Fundamental to his teachings was the principle that men like Luther would one day call *Sola Scriptura*—the Bible and the Bible alone. But did our Lord not also bring additional truth? He certainly did, but it never contradicted the Old Testament. Rather, it was built on and a fulfillment of those ancient Scriptures.

Many of his contemporaries saw Jesus as a theological innovator; actually, he was a radical conservative. Reaching back to the prophets and Moses, he cherished everything in his Jewish Bible, while brushing aside all traditions and practices that could not be clearly justified from it. He repudiated all merely rabbinical commentaries and opinions, especially of the hair-splitting variety, which added to or detracted from the Word of God. He believed the job of religious leaders was to teach what the Bible required, but they had no right to manufacture their own theology. This attitude infuriated the clerics of his time.

Like his Hebrew ancestors and the scholars around him, Jesus treated the words of the Bible with the utmost respect. Before the printing press was invented, the scribes were extremely careful whenever they had to copy the Scriptures. To avoid complications, they did not even rectify the slightest mistake that one of their predecessors had made. If they discovered such an error, they recopied it carefully, but also put a correction note *in the margin*.

These God-fearing scholars always remembered what the Lord had instructed through Moses: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2).

This principle of not tampering with the Word of God but to obey it faithfully also guided Jesus.

Let us observe our Lord in an encounter with clerics who criticized his followers for ignoring the extra-Biblical customs of Judaism. We return to the episode of the disciples’ unwashed hands: “Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”

In his answer, Jesus quickly came to the point: “Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honoureth me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me.
Howbeit in vain do they worship me,
teaching for doctrines
the commandments of men.”

(Mark 7:5-8)

The Scribes and the Pharisees were the legitimate religious leaders of the true “church” in Jesus’ time. Was he, our example, not spurning their authority? Not in an absolute sense, but he rejected the idea that theologians and church leaders could fabricate their own religion.

The four Gospels clearly show that Jesus was utterly opposed to tradition as a substitute for God’s Word. In the continuation of the passage just quoted, Jesus added: “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother . . . but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered; and many such like things do ye.” (Mark 7:9-13)

Jesus rejected all tampering with God’s Word by religious leaders. In this, he was a true Protestant, intolerant of any human device invented to modify religion as revealed by God. He also made the following prediction: “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13).

IV

Christian upholders of tradition may argue that here he was only talking about the Jewish leaders of his time, and not the Fathers of the church, great theologians like Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), Church Councils such as the one that met intermittently at Trent (1545-63), or individual popes. All these fostered and strengthened ecclesiastical tradition at the expense of Scripture—supposedly as the Holy Spirit guided them.

The most serious objection to clerical tradition as a basis for faith and doctrine is that it often contradicts the Bible, which does not change, because its Author, God, is always the same. It is especially far-fetched to suppose that Jesus would have given Christians, Catholic or Protestant, the right to change the Ten Commandments, after rejecting Jewish traditions that undermined them. This was something he obviously loathed.

Indeed, he looked into the future and—like Daniel—saw those who would “think to change the times and the law” (Dan. 7: 25, RSV), a topic we shall be addressing closely in its proper place.

Christ was rocking the boat of the Establishment by contradicting the man-made dogmas and condemning the evil actions of its religious leaders. This is why they plotted his death and had him executed by the Romans who ruled their country. This reaction need not puzzle us, for such has often been the fate of idealistic people who dared to speak the truth and resisted wickedness, which frequently defends entrenched and ancient errors. History provides us with many examples, which are not limited to the history of Christianity or religion.

We have already mentioned Socrates, whom the Athenians sentenced to death for allegedly corrupting the youth. His actual crime was teaching them to think.

It has been no different in later times and at every level of life. For instance, in 1930, newsman Harrison E. Salisbury, who was working for United Press, reported too accurately on the extent of the great depression in Minneapolis, which lacked both welfare agencies and unemployment insurance. This embarrassed business interests as well as the city fathers, who influenced the *Minneapolis Journal* to demand that he be fired. He narrowly escaped the destruction of his career in its opening stages. Years later, he wrote in his autobiography: “The truth, I was ultimately to learn, is the most dangerous thing. There are no ends to which men of power will not go to put out its eyes,”² for “the truth is dangerous; it upsets applecarts.”³

Christians believe that through his death the Lord Jesus brought salvation to all who accept it. But for the Scribes and Pharisees, who watched and mocked his final agony, he was more than a would-be reformer; he was a heretic, suffering the fate of heretics. Like many after him, he died a martyr’s death.

But is this not an extreme way of putting it? Not at all, for the New Testament clearly says that the hierarchy of Judaism soon came to use the word *heresy* to describe what Jesus and his followers believed. This becomes plain from an examination of the original Greek. It uses the word αἵρεσις (“haireisis”), from which the English word *heresy* is derived.

For instance, we read that after Paul’s arrest, the high priest Annas and other leading religionists came from Jerusalem to the Roman headquarters in Caesarea and accused him of heresy before Felix, the governor. They had their hired advocate say that the apostle was “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Act 24:5). This word *sect* is an English translation for *haireisis* (“heresy”) in its genitive form. Paul did not deny the charge but said, “This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy αἵρεσιν [*haireisin*], so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (vs. 14). When the apostle finally reached Rome, he invited the local Jewish leaders to come and see him. He found that they knew little about Christianity, except some rumors, “for as concerning this sect [*heresy*], we know that every where it is spoken against” (Act 28:22).

Originally the word *heresy* simply meant a “choosing” or “choice,” which in ecclesiastical terms became a “school” or a “religious” sect.⁴ The adjective αἵρετικος (*hairetikos*, “heretical”) meant “able to choose.”⁵ In other words, heretics or sectarians were people who deviated from the established religion of their community by daring to think for themselves—and suffering persecution for doing so.

This started with the original Protestant or arch-heretic, Jesus Christ. To him the Jewish leaders attached even uglier labels. They taunted him with his “illegitimate birth,” by suggesting that he had been born as a result of fornication (John 8:41). They called him a Samaritan, that is, a member of a race they utterly despised, because he loved these people, too. He even slept in their houses. These leaders also said he was devil-possessed. (Vs. 48)

There were also other factors that made him unacceptable to the Scribes and the Pharisees. For instance, because he belonged to the tribe of Judah and was not a Levite, Jesus could not, according to the Jewish system, be a priest. For his contemporaries, the only other possibility was that he might be a prophet or a rabbi.

The hierarchy, however, questioned his right to teach, since he had not taken a theological course at one of their seminaries and therefore lacked the necessary credentials required for a preacher. According to their system, he was a layman, though they marveled at his knowledge and insight (“How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” John 7:15, RSV), and so the leaders confronted him and demanded to know by what authority he dared to teach (Mat 21:23; Mark 11:28).

But the problem went deeper than that. For them, one’s position in life was determined, as it is for so many today, by learning, wealth, or political power. This upstart from Nazareth also delighted the common crowd with socially unsettling talk. He said that God had prevented clever and learned people from understanding his words but had granted insight to lowly minds (Matt. 11:25); the poor would enter the kingdom of heaven more easily than the rich, for whom this would be almost impossible (Matt. 19: 23, 24); and not the proud but the meek would inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). To cap it all, he predicted a topsy-turvy world in which the first would be last and the last be first (Mark 19:30; 20:16). This was just the opposite of what the Jewish elite was expecting or wanted.

What is more, the Nazarene’s revolutionary talk included the really preposterous idea that one day he, a carpenter and construction worker, would be king and his apostles, plain fisher folk, would sit on twelve thrones to judge the chosen people! (Matt. 19:28)

To Christians, the Lord Jesus is the true Messiah, the Son of God, and the light of the world, the One we all need for our personal salvation and eternal life. But when he appeared, the majority of his own people repudiated him. During his life on earth, Judaism—however perverted by human traditions—was still the only true religion, established by God himself. But the Lord can and sometimes does discard even originally true religions when they deviate too far from the truth, while those who practice them refuse to repent and stubbornly disobey him.

Though many rejoiced in the further revelation that Jesus brought, the official leaders of “the Church” rejected and handed him over to the secular rulers, the Romans, to be executed as a heretic. That is how Christianity started, as a sect, a form of heretical Judaism.

All the same, the three and a half years of his ministry became the hinge of history on which the future would swing. The murder of the Messiah, together with the persecution of his infant church, prevented God from implementing without delay his plans for Israel. Jerusalem could not, in the foreseeable future, become the capital of the world, nor would the Jewish people become a global superpower. Their wonderful destiny as a nation, foretold in so many Old Testament prophecies, would not find its fulfillment in the way that the Lord preferred; it would be reduced to the history that never was.

Instead, our Heavenly Father implemented his alternative plan to achieve his purpose with the world. The church, the Remnant of Israel, would replace the Jews, who would lose their position as God's most favored people.

VII

Soon, as already described, a terrible turn of events took place. About forty years after the crucifixion, the Jews rebelled against their Roman rulers and oppressors. In A.D. 70, Titus and his legions descended on Jerusalem, reducing much of it to rubble together with its beautiful temple. Sixty years later, the Jewish nationalists tried again, under Bar Kochba, a false Messiah. Again they lost, and in 135 Jerusalem suffered a second, even more thorough destruction, when the Emperor Hadrian annihilated the Jewish state. For almost 1900 years the descendants of Abraham were scattered among the nations without a country of their own.

Christianity, however, survived. But soon it split into two main groups: those who closely adhered to the Scriptures, as Jesus and the apostles had done, and those who mixed their religion with elements that neither the Old nor the New Testament sanctioned. Much like the scribes and the Pharisees in the time of our Lord, the latter departed from the *Sola Scriptura* principle, adding many human traditions, some taken over from Paganism.

These believers were the majority and became the dominant strain of Christianity, inclined to persecute those who would not follow them into apostasy. Again the word *heresy* came into vogue.

The phase of persecution by Jews having ended together with their state, those who followed Jesus had two much greater tribulations to endure. First, the pagan Romans tried to exterminate them, and then—most marvelous to relate—Orthodox and Catholic emperors or kings continued to oppress and murder them for another fifteen hundred years.

It was a curious replay of the situation that the Lord and his apostles had to face. Only it was much, much worse, because the persecution of Christians by Christians lasted far longer and took on more horrific proportions.

The judicial murder of Jesus Christ because he deviated from the established religion set the pattern for untold millions who would become his disciples in the centuries to come. Over and over again, individuals and sometimes entire groups would testify to their faith in

him through both their life and death of agony.

They were repeatedly attacked by the ferocious, terrible fourth beast that Daniel had seen in his vision; for when the Jewish nation lost its primacy in fulfilling God's design with the human race, this nasty creature was unleashed.

For about two hundred years, the pagan rulers of the Roman Empire, who hated Christianity, did their best to stamp it out. The persecution, though hard to endure, did not come as a surprise, since Christ had warned his followers of it beforehand. In fact, he briefly indicated everything that would happen to the church between his ascension and his return to the earth.

VIII

On one sunny day at Jerusalem, just before his crucifixion, his enthusiastic disciples asked him about the time of the Second Coming. In his answer he said, with unmistakable clarity: "The end is not yet" (Matt. 24:6). Then he explained that many events would intervene. The details are given in Matt. 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13.

There would be numerous wars, famines, and earthquakes, as well as many false religious teachers (Matt. 24:6-13). Soon Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies and desolated, resulting in great slaughter and exile for the Jewish nation (Luke 21:20-24).

Jesus went on to say that afterwards there would be a time of "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). Its keynote would be persecution for his true disciples: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (vs. 9). He clearly indicated that this would be a period of very long duration. If it were not shortened, nobody would be saved. (Mark 13:20)

The words "ye shall be hated of all nations" show that much more would be involved than martyrdom by the pagan Romans. It is also a forward-looking reference to medieval times and a clear hint that Jesus would not be siding with the dominant church and its Inquisition but with his fellow heretics.

The fundamental problem is that the Bible, the only authentic record of what Christianity should be but frequently is not, has remained a heretical book. Over the ages, it has been the source of protest against and deviations from Catholicism, as well as other churches that departed from what the Founder and his apostles had taught. Often people have been burned for reading or just possessing it. The Old and New Testament contain the very doctrines later preached by people like Wycliffe, Huss, and Luther, which caused rebellion against the papacy and launched the Reformation.

Although today the Roman Church has relaxed its taboo against Bible-reading by the common people, the Scriptures are often still treated with suspicion. For instance, Roman Mazierski, a Polish priest who converted to Protestantism during the twentieth century, tells how the higher clergy in his country spread the idea that "to read the

Bible was a dangerous thing, as it contained the seeds of various heresies, only the Church being able to discern and choose from it what was sound enough to be read from the pulpits during the Sunday services.”⁶

IX

There is an unmistakable link between Daniel’s book and the preview of history that the Lord presented to his disciples in Matt. 24:1-25:46; Mark 13:1-37, and Luke 21:5-38. These Scriptures record what scholarly Bible students call the Olivet discourse, the Little Apocalypse,⁷ or the Synoptic Apocalypse.⁸

In a chapter entitled “Christ’s Understanding of Daniel,” La Rondelle convincingly demonstrates how the whole of the Olivet discourse closely relates to that prophet’s visions. This becomes abundantly clear when we compare the structure, the chronology, and the fundamental ideas that both express; for “Jesus borrowed some key apocalyptic phrases from Daniel and applied them to Himself as Messiah, and other phrases he applied to Jerusalem and his followers.”⁹

Christ’s words, moreover, are obviously a bridge between Daniel and the Revelation. According to McGinn, they also provide the background for Paul’s predictions of the last days in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.¹⁰ Edwin Thiele points out that our Lord was particularly interested in Dan. 7:13, 14, and 12:1-2, passages that deal with the judgment and the end of the world. No fewer than seven of our Lord’s utterances echo these verses: Matt. 13:43; 16:27, 28; 24:21, 30, 64; 25:31; and John 5:28, 29.¹¹ Included are his favorite title for Himself, “the Son of man,” and the expression “with the clouds of heaven.” Both are from Dan. 7:13.

The great tribulation for true believers that Jesus predicted in the Olivet discourse is clearly the same experience as the treading underfoot of the remnant and the wearing out of God’s beloved saints foretold in Dan. 7:19, 25.

It is not true, as many writers have suggested, that for the most part the early Christians believed the end of the world was just around the corner. Some individuals did teach this, but Jesus had said quite clearly: “The end is not yet” (Matt. 24:6). To this we add the testimony of the apostle Paul, who emphatically rejected any suggestion that the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him” (2 Thess. 2:1, RSV) was near, because—he insisted—“that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” (2 Thess. 2:3, 4, RSV) This, everybody understood, referred to the coming Antichrist.

The word used here for *rebellion* is ἀποστασία (“apostasia”). It means a *defection*, a *revolt*, a *departure* from the faith: apostasy. It would not be confined to the Antichrist, though he was destined to lead it. And this is exactly what happened, as history clearly attests. An

apostate form of Christianity arose, headed by the papacy. Many have been its deviations from biblical truth. But most offensive to God are its modifications of his holy law, manifesting the “mystery of lawlessness.” This spurious but powerful church has continued century after century, destroying multitudes that dared to stand up to it. It will persist until the Second Advent, when, as Paul foretold, there will be a final confrontation between Christ and Antichrist, “whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thess. 2:8).

So the early believers knew that there was plenty of trouble ahead: a time of waiting for their Master, wars, and many calamities, but especially persecution. This, they knew, would originate not only from a hostile, pagan environment, but within the church itself.

Naturally they hoped the Second Coming was not too far off. It was something they could pray for and hasten: Jesus had said the gospel of the kingdom was to be preached throughout the world, as a witness to all nations, and *then* the end would come (Matt. 24:14, emphasis added). In the meantime, his followers had the assurance of eternal life, a wonderful thought, which sustained them through every ordeal.

Part 4

The Roman Factor

14 The Pagan Beast and the Early Christians

I

Imagine being a believer in Jesus when the apostle Paul was still alive and that maniac Nero sat on the throne of the empire. Having enraged his people by burning most of Rome to the ground, he accused the Christians of the crime. They were promptly rounded up.

Tacitus, the famous Roman historian, graphically depicts the atrocities that followed: "In the first place, then, some were arrested and confessed. On their testimony a vast magnitude was convicted, not so much of responsibility for the fire as for hatred of the human race. They were put to death with mockery and insult. They were dressed in the skins of wild animals to be torn to death by dogs; they were fixed to crosses or condemned to the flames; and when the daylight failed they were burned to give light by night. Nero had granted the use of his gardens for that display, and gave a circus performance, mixing with the common people in the dress of a charioteer seated in his chariot¹

Or think of living in any of the next two hundred and fifty years, for this emperor was only the first of many pagan persecutors. Christianity was illegal, and every believer was considered a permanent criminal. Christians in the Soviet Union had some idea of what it must have been like. Communist persecution in that country lasted for about seventy years, but the oppression of the church by pagan Rome continued, with varying intensity, for two and a half centuries. The fourth and terrible beast "devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet" (Dan. 7:7, RSV).

It is true there were periods when the authorities did not actively seek out the Christians, and some emperors were inclined to leniency, as they saw it. An early example was Nerva (AD 96-98), who freed the apostle John from Patmos, and Trajan (AD 98-117).

The latter corresponded with Pliny the Younger, who had gone to some trouble to investigate the Christians. He found that they did not commit any secret crimes, as their malicious enemies liked to assert. Yet he did not quite know how to deal with this illegal sect. The emperor's advice was to ignore anonymous informers. There was to be no general inquisition to find out who were Christians. But accusations from responsible folk had to be investigated. If Christians made the required sacrifices, they had to be left alone.

Some more or less fair-minded people, like Trajan, tried to look the other way, not wanting an organized witch-hunt against the Christians. Nevertheless, "undisavowed Christianity remained a capital offence."² On first reflection, we may find this puzzling, for the Romans with their many gods were generally tolerant of other people's religion, including Judaism. But, according to Gibbon, Christianity differed from all of these in one important way. To the

ancients, a religion was linked with a particular ethnic group or culture and one's ancestral traditions. For a long time, this even applied to the Jews. Christianity, however, cut shockingly across all distinctions of race, nationality, class, and tradition. The Romans thought that this threatened the normal order of things. Besides, the Christians disobeyed the laws forbidding public meetings of groups not sanctioned by the state.³

Nonconformity has ever been the badge of the persecuted, while their oppressors frequently belong to a religion or ideology supported by the state.

The hardship that the Christians experienced often did not originate with the emperor, but with their neighbors, who stirred up trouble. To these, the followers of Christ were atheists, since they would not worship the Roman gods or venerate images. According to Robin Fox, the pagans believed that this was very bad; for their gods were supposed to be extremely jealous of their rights. If anybody dishonored them, they could turn very nasty and punish the whole community with famine, plague, or drought. "No rain because of the Christians" became a common saying.⁴

Furthermore, "the Eucharist was insulted as cannibalism; their secret meetings were said to practice incest and child murder and to resort to group sex when the lights were turned down in church." Though educated pagans did not believe these slanders, many ordinary people did.⁵

Then there was the special matter of Roman patriotism.

Today a citizen's loyalty is often expressed by saluting the flag of his or her country, or by singing the national anthem. But for people of the empire it was a little different: one had to worship Rome as the goddess Roma or the emperor himself.

It was immaterial whether he was a good or a bad man; his office made him divine. For instance, Domitian, who ruled from 81 to 96, was cruel, vain, and prone to self-exaltation—much like Nero.⁶

Even Romans resented this vile man's "insistence on being addressed as *dominus et deus* [lord and god],"⁷ but not complying was perilous, and sycophants were never lacking. "The poets of Domitian's court vied with one another in their exaggerated expressions of adulation. 'May I gaze upon thee, Hope of mankind and Favourite of the gods,' said one. Another wrote:

See there is God,
there he is established with supreme power
By the Father in heaven,
to rule the fortunate earth."

Conscientious Christians could not worship any human being, good or bad. As for Domitian, in a later generation some believers "used his characteristics of bald head, heavy paunch, and thin legs as the model for Antichrist."⁸

Roman judges, who did not like the well-publicized martyrdom of Christians, often tried to make it easy for them. Just imagine, dear

reader, that you had to make a small gesture to show you acknowledged the gods, or that a pinch of incense on a brazier to honor the emperor would save your life. You would even perhaps be allowed to retain your religion, with just a dash of paganism added.

A tiny bit of incense for one's life does not sound like a bad bargain. But true believers in Christ would not yield, knowing that such a transaction was forbidden by the first of the Ten Commandments. They certainly did not want damnation in the world to come.

Accepting Jesus as Lord and being baptized was a very risky business indeed. If the Romans were in one of their anti-Christian frenzies and you ended up in the dragnet, you had to choose: either offer a heathen sacrifice, or pay with your life in some very unpleasant way.

According to W. Warde Fowler, the Romans were horribly cruel and calloused toward their vanquished and subject peoples,⁹ as well as anybody who even just seemed to rebel against Rome. Citizens, like the apostle Paul, were more or less fortunate; for they could be beheaded. But for the rest, a more common fate was crucifixion, or being burned alive. Often Christians were brought to the arena for public entertainment. Here they were torn to bits and devoured by wild animals, cheered on by the enthusiastic spectators.

And yet, incredible as it may seem to many people today, early Christians usually preferred such a fate to giving up their relationship with the one whom they had accepted as their Lord. Therefore, they were ripped apart by the iron teeth and shredded by the bronze claws of the terrible Beast.

This is how many Christians witnessed to their faith. The impact on unbelievers was tremendous, and many were converted. Why?

Instead of reviling their persecutors, the martyrs turned the other cheek as Jesus had said they should, and prayed for their tormentors. This was something the Romans had never seen and could not understand. Besides, nobody could doubt the superiority of the Christians' ethics or human relations. With amazement, the pagans observed their affection for one another, practically expressed in welfare assistance toward the less fortunate among them.

In this, too, the believers were following the example and teaching of their Lord, fulfilling his prayer for them. He had petitioned his heavenly Father that "they may be one, even as we are. . . . that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:11, 26) Tertullian (c. 200) mentions the astonishment of pagans who exclaimed, "How these Christians love one another!"¹⁰

But not all heathen Romans responded favorably. Many deeply resented both the teachings and the example of the Christians, who were a standing rebuke to their own nasty and immoral lives. The believers' steadfastness stirred them to hatred and a consuming desire to obliterate these people.

Nevertheless, until the first part of the second century, persecution was largely sporadic. But a time of greater distress lay ahead.

II

In 161, Marcus Aurelius (121-80) assumed the purple. He was a scholar, an ethical philosopher (last of the significant Roman Stoics), and a man of a sweet disposition—whose conduct was marvelously free from any discernible blemishes. The British poet Matthew Arnold called him “perhaps the most beautiful figure in history.”

This emperor’s views of life were also singularly enlightened. For instance, he referred to “The idea of a polity in which there is the same law for all, a polity administered with regard to equal rights and equal freedom of speech, and the idea of a kingly government which respects most of all the freedom of the governed.”¹¹ Here he seems to be anticipating some of the principles which more than 1600 years later came to adorn the American Bill of Rights and are justly admired all over the world.

We would have expected this emperor to be more tolerant than the rest of the Romans. But he was not, for “it appears that Christian blood flowed more profusely in the principate of Marcus Aurelius the philosopher than it had before.”¹²

That he, of all the ancient Romans, could also be a relentless persecutor has perplexed his admirers in after times. Some have vainly tried to deny the fact itself. Others (like Matthew Arnold), who could not do so, have referred to the conventional prejudices that shaped Aurelius, as well as the faults of those whom he persecuted: “Who can doubt that among the professing Christians of the second century, as among the professing Christians of the nineteenth, there was plenty of folly, plenty of rabid nonsense, plenty of gross fanaticism?”¹³

That is all very well, but such victim bashing is hardly an excuse. In neither nineteenth-century England nor in twentieth-century America did religious excesses normally result in judicial murders.

No, there can be no extenuation of what Marcus Aurelius did. As head of state and philosopher, he knew who and what the Christians were, more than any other Roman. He could study their lofty ethics and contemplate the excellent lives of the finest ones among them. No doubt he did, and then decided to have them murdered for reasons of state.

We must simply accept that however much the ideas, and even the life, of Marcus Aurelius resembled those of the Christians, he regarded them as enemies threatening the stability of Rome. Therefore, he reasoned, they had to be eliminated. Perhaps his intolerance also stemmed from a personal confrontation with Christ and a refusal of his claims. For the rest, we can only ponder the tragic fact that persecutors, doomed to perdition, are often highly respectable and apparently virtuous people.

Up to the first year of Marcus Aurelius, life in the empire had been secure and pleasant, at least for the upper one-seventh of society. The world was at peace, and pleasure seemed to reign supreme. But toward the end of the next year, “rumblings were heard in the East. The Parthians were attacking the empire.”¹⁴

The army was duly sent out, but nobody was really alarmed. After all, "throughout her history Rome was almost continuously at war somewhere along her lengthening or shrinking frontiers."¹⁵ It seemed like just another military expedition.

The soldiers came back victorious, as expected, but with them they brought a sickness that caused many deaths.

Then, just five years later, in 167 the Germans and Slavs, who lived beyond the Danube, also attacked and invaded the empire.¹⁶ They, too, were repulsed, but for the next few generations Roman society did not experience anything like peace again. Marcus Aurelius had to spend the greatest part of his reign in "fighting frontier wars and combating the effects of plague and demoralization."¹⁷

He had imprudently associated his son Commodus (161-92) with himself as a co-ruler. When Marcus Aurelius died in 180, this man succeeded to the throne, but proved to be "weak and vicious."¹⁸ He was quite the opposite of his father, proudly displaying his physical strength in gladiatorial games, and dressing himself as Hercules. His twelve-year reign ended when his mistress and her friends had him strangled.¹⁹

III

With Commodus began a hundred terrible years, known to historians as the Troubled Century. There were invasions by Goths, Franks, Alamanni, Saxons, Berbers, and Persians. There were rebellions in Gaul and Palmyra.

On the home front, a time of great instability set in. In the century between 180 and 284, there were twenty-nine emperors, who came and went at short intervals. Most of them were assassinated.²⁰ Twenty-six ruled during the last forty-nine years of this period. "Only one managed to escape a violent death."²¹

These were not all vicious men. A few, especially near the end of the Troubled Century, proved to be very able generals, such as Claudius, Aurelian, and Probus, who achieved resounding victories for Rome. Yet, according to Gibbon, "such was the unhappy condition of the Roman emperors, that, whatever might be their conduct, their fate was commonly the same. A life of pleasure or virtue, of severity or mildness, of indolence or glory, alike led to an untimely grave; and almost every reign is closed by the same disgusting repetition of treason and murder."²²

The plague brought home by the first expedition that Marcus Aurelius had sent to Mesopotamia grew into a terrible scourge, which ran its destructive besom through the empire. Halfway through the third century it returned. These two visitations destroyed about a third of the population, decimated the army needed to fight the barbarians, and on a large scale wiped out the slaves. The labor of these wretched people was vital to the economy and especially agriculture, which produced the food that fed the towns. At the same time, the birth rate declined.²³

The economy was in a shambles. “Between the 250s and the 280s, the Roman Imperial coinage was debased in a spectacular phase of inflation.”²⁴

It was a very bad time for all. This coincided with an increase in the number of Christians, who—by the middle of the third century—could no longer keep a low profile. They were “far more numerous, better organized, and more homogeneous in their views and practices” than before.²⁵ Increasingly Romans in the upper level of society adopted this religion. A major confrontation became unavoidable.

People felt that the empire was being badly threatened, and the Christians were one of the factors undermining it. For one thing, their attitude toward the celebration of Rome’s millennium in 248 was greatly resented. Even worse was that, from a pagan point of view, their lack of piety toward the traditional gods invited disaster for everybody.

In 249, the emperor Decius launched a lethal attack against them, especially on the bishops.

Roman life, in the years that followed, kept on deteriorating. It seemed that the end of this great state was at hand.

IV

Were the awful years that began with Marcus Aurelius a fortuitous crisis, or had the Romans worn out the divine forbearance, through their persistent ill-treatment and killing of Christians, under a so-called enlightened emperor?

The Bible teaches that the Lord is the ultimate authority who not only rewards the kindness, but also punishes the evil of rulers and countries. In the Old Testament, we find that various pagan states had to suffer for their cruelty against others, especially those whom God regarded as his elect. Clear examples are set out in the first two chapters of Amos, which refer to Damascus, the Philistine cities, Tyre, the Ammonites, and the Moabites.

The same applied even to the theocratic state of ancient Israel when David, a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), was ruling it. Once his country suffered, inexplicably he thought, a famine for three years. When he inquired of the Lord, he was told, “There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death” (2 Sam. 21:1, RSV).

These were a Canaanite people that had survived at the time of the Conquest under Joshua, because they tricked the Israelites into swearing a solemn oath to spare them (Josh. 9). King Saul had violated this national covenant, made in the name of God, who was now acting to avenge the wrong. The entire country was suffering because the crime against an innocent people by David’s predecessor had never been expiated. The upshot was that, in accordance with an ancient judiciary custom, seven sons of Saul were handed over to the Gibeonites for death by hanging (2 Sam. 21:2-9).

Perhaps the most famous Bible reader who believed that God is apt

to inflict calamities on a nation as a punishment for murder and cruelty in its midst was Abraham Lincoln. As the horrible Civil War wore on, "he grew deeply religious, believing that slavery always had been a sin for which the country was being punished."²⁶ We find evidence of this in his second inaugural address on 4 March 1865, in which he said: "Fondly do we hope—ferverently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"²⁷

The Almighty cared about and avenged the Gibeonites, whom the Israelites looked down on. He also intervened for the downtrodden and exploited blacks of the United States, including those who were not necessarily serving him. If this is so, what will he do when his elect and specially loved ones of any color are exterminated—those whom the world despises but the Scriptures hail as the saints of the Most High, against whom the terrible Beast of Daniel 7 has so often vented its fury? To many people of our time, especially those who are opposed to the death penalty, the doctrine of bloodguiltiness is both repugnant and incomprehensible. Some even consider it an unchristian idea, but it is clearly taught in the Scriptures.

The Lord told Noah, our common ancestor: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). Ancient Israel was instructed: "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death" (Num. 35:31). An inadvertent homicide could run to a city of refuge, but a murderer was not to be sheltered even in a temple or a church; "thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die" (Ex. 21:14). If not, the country could suffer, "for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it" (Num. 35:33).

But the death penalty was not to be imposed without witnesses; and of these there had to be two or more (vs. 30). Furthermore, to guard against perjury, Israel had another law that was utterly just as well as wonderfully wise: "If the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother" (Deut. 19:18, 19).

An older America was well acquainted with these ideas. Following President Lincoln's assassination, on 20 April 1865, Edwin M. Stanton, the Secretary of War, offered a reward of \$100,000 for THE MURDERER, with smaller amounts for two of his accomplices. The placard echoed the Old Testament: "Let the stain of innocent blood be removed from the land by the arrest and punishment of the murderers."²⁸ Soon afterwards, John Wilkes Booth was shot. Four of his accomplices were hanged just two months after Lincoln's funeral at Springfield.

The death of the ancient Gibeonites was well as Lincoln's

assassination had to be avenged. As for those that murder the children of God for serving him, an ancient psalm informs us that

Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.

(Ps. 116:15)

This is not only an Old Testament teaching. Jesus asked and answered a question similar to ours: “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him . . . ? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily” (Luke 18:7, 8). Rev. 13 is even more specific. The Antichristian Beast, successor to and imitator of pagan Rome, would be allowed “to make war with the saints and to overcome them” (vs. 7), but would also suffer the appropriate punishment for doing so:

He that leadeth into captivity
shall go into captivity:
he that killeth with the sword,
must be killed with the sword.

(Vs. 10)

As this book will show in a good number of places, religious persecution is often, if not regularly, followed by great calamities for any nation that persists in it. At times, the consequence is national ruin. We think it is a law of history.

Retribution often takes the form of pestilence, famine, financial ruin, and invasion. As our story proceeds into later centuries, we shall find that this is a recurring pattern. For instance, most of these disasters during and after the reign of Marcus Aurelius—including the plague—recur in the sixth century under Justinian and then again in the fourteenth. In these cases, such calamities followed periods of intense persecution.

V

The Troubled Century did not demolish the tottering Roman Empire; it was allowed to continue for almost another two hundred years. A new chapter of history was about to open, introduced by Diocletian (284-355), a soldier from Illyricum (the later Yugoslavia) whom the army elevated to the purple.²⁹ He ruled for twenty years.

He found the economy in a horrendous condition. As the new emperor put it, the hyperinflation generated unbelievable “increases in prices, not only year by year but month by month, day by day, almost hour by hour and minute by minute.”³⁰ But through many drastic economic, administrative, and political reforms, he saved the Roman world from collapse and also put an end to the rapid succession of assassinated emperors.

Diocletian virtually created a second Roman Empire (the “Lower Empire”), distinct from the “Principate,” which Augustus had founded

just before the time of Christ.³¹ The new setup was a truly totalitarian system, which A. Piganiol has described as “state socialism.”³² Eventually it would fail, like the Soviet Union in the twentieth century, but—buttressed by draconian measures—it provided a temporary solution as well as the context for the state church soon to be created under Constantine.

Diocletian divided the Roman Empire into an Eastern and a Western sector, with two *Augusti* or senior emperors, assisted by two lesser dignitaries called *Caesars*. There were also four capitals. The two most important ones were Nicomedia in Asia Minor, not far from the later Constantinople, and Milan, in northern Italy. The latter enabled its emperor to be nearer the Germanic tribes, against whom the frontier had to be defended. Milan “remained throughout the 4th century the preferred residence of the Western emperors.”³³ The city of Rome became a backwater, at least politically speaking.

In the last part of his reign, Diocletian also persecuted the Christians, probably influenced by his colleague, the Caesar Galerius. Apart from the usual reasons for harassing them, there was an additional motive: the emperor favored the worship of the sun god Mithras, a soldiers’ religion that originated in Persia. To Diocletian, it seemed that in the new order he was creating this would be a good substitute for the older paganism, which was losing its grip. But, like Marcus Aurelius and Decius before him, he would not tolerate Christianity.

For a period of ten years, in 303-13, the followers of the Nazarene were intensively hunted and afflicted. The anguished cry of martyrs rose from one end of the empire to the other. Their blood flowed copiously, and the pagans rejoiced.

VI

According to Dowley, the scale and length of early persecutions against the Christians “seem to have become exaggerated.”³⁴ This idea may well have been derived from Gibbon, who estimates that toward the middle of the third century not more than fifty thousand of them lived in Rome.³⁵ Fox, who analyzes the matter in some detail, thinks there were even fewer.³⁶

Maxwell refers to calculations made by W. H. C. Frend of Cambridge University, who concluded that “the grand total of martyrdoms under pagan Rome did not exceed 5000—a figure far smaller than the millions that some people have imagined.”³⁷ That gives an average of about twenty martyrs per annum, or fewer than two per month during the approximately two hundred fifty years from Nero to Diocletian. Since some emperors persecuted less than others, there would (according to this view) have been no martyrs at all for years on end. These figures are intrinsically improbable, given the frantic Christian accounts and the efficiency with which Romans normally acted against their enemies, easily slaughtering thousands of people at a time. Dan. 7:19 describes the beast as “exceeding dreadful;” for it “devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue

with his feet.”

We think it more reasonable to agree with older writers like Ellen White and Uriah Smith. She refers to “great numbers” sealing their testimony with their blood,³⁸ while he writes: “It is estimated that *three million* Christians perished in the first three centuries of the Christian Era.”³⁹

Twentieth-century researchers also do not all agree with Gibbon’s conservative estimates of the Christians in the Roman Empire. For instance, Cheetham maintains that by the middle of the third century, they “exceeded in number the adherents of any other religion but the old official paganism.”⁴⁰ Giorgio Falco, a leading Italian historian, to some extent corroborates this idea: “Between the middle of the third century and the beginning of the fourth, the Christians formed something between a twentieth and a fifteenth part of the total population of the empire; this amounted to several millions and in some cities in the east the Christians were the majority, or even the sole inhabitants.”⁴¹ Rapid evangelization and outbursts of formidable persecution would harmonize better with the ancient testimony of Tacitus, already quoted. He stated that “a vast magnitude” were burnt by Nero (37-68),⁴² an early enemy of the Christians, who ruled the empire more than two hundred years before Diocletian. Admittedly Tacitus was prone to dramatization, but “his facts are generally accurate.”⁴³

The discrepancy between the two sets of figures to which we have referred may be more apparent than real; for Christians were spread unequally throughout the Mediterranean world. This is made abundantly clear by Guy Fleming’s map entitled “The Empire in Diocletian’s Day.”⁴⁴

It shows that large portions of the West contained a small minority of Christians. In some areas there were practically none, as on the Atlantic side of Iberia (present-day Portugal), about half of Gaul, and northwestern Italy. The exception was regions along the northern and southern Mediterranean coasts, where Christians were more numerous, though still a minority. The only part of the West where they probably made up a majority of the inhabitants was Carthage, North Africa, and the surrounding area.

But Fleming’s enlightening map shows far more of them in the Eastern Empire. A sizable proportion of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia was Christian. For the most part, the same was true of southern Greece and eastern Macedonia. In Armenia and much of Western Anatolia, Christians were probably a majority.

There is also another, ugly explanation for the relatively small number of Christians alive at various times, such as when the long-drawn-out Diocletian persecution ended. A considerable percentage of them would have been successfully liquidated. Some emperors were very determined, and the Roman police could be extremely efficient. Besides, a great many Christians gave up their religion to save their lives, and were for a time too ashamed to rejoin their old congregations. Statistics concerned with the early church are suspect. We cannot assume a steady and continuous growth of its member-

ship, based on evangelization. Perhaps, at times, the Christians were being killed off about as fast as they were converted. In some periods, their number may actually have shrunk.

Shortly after initiating the final persecution, Diocletian in 304 contracted a severe and lingering illness, which Christians no doubt saw as a punishment from God. The following year his condition compelled him to abdicate and retire to his magnificent palace near present-day Split⁴⁵ on the Adriatic coast, not far from modern Sarajevo. There he potted in his garden.

While he was bragging about the large cabbages that had become his pride and joy, Diocletian's multiple successors jockeyed for position. The Augusti and Caesars were enthusiastically slaughtering one another, just like the emperors of the Troubled Century. And the suffering of the Christians continued.

Then, in 313, they heard astonishing news: Constantine, the new emperor in the West, had suddenly been converted . . . and had also persuaded Licinius, his pagan co-emperor in the East, to join his brand new policy of tolerating all cults, including Christianity.⁴⁶ This was contained in the so-called Edict of Milan of 313, which was actually issued in Nicomedia, western Asia Minor.

After this, a power struggle developed between Constantine and Licinius, culminating in a civil war. By 324, the latter had been eliminated, and Constantine survived as the only emperor. It seemed that the career of the terrible beast had ended. The problem of persecution for Christians was now a thing of the past.

Or so one would have expected. But events turned out quite differently. To understand what happened next, we must first go back in our story and study the origins and early development of the church in Rome.

15 How the Papacy Began

I

A major religious event in the year 2000 was a special jubilee to celebrate what the Roman Church so grandly called two thousand years of Catholicism. This suggests that it is synonymous with Christianity and dates from the time of Jesus himself.

The idea is contradicted by great discrepancies between Catholic dogma and the doctrines of the Bible. But why, when, and by whom were the first of these changes introduced? To answer this question, we must scrutinize the early years of Christianity, especially the first part of the second century, just after the last apostle died.

Five factors interacted in the development of the papacy: bishops turned into ecclesiastical monarchs; the Roman Church developed in the imperial capital; Christianity became a largely Gentile rather than a Jewish religion; the pagan Romans changed their weekly calendar; and a specific crisis caused the pope to detach his religion from its Judaic roots.

II

First, the papacy could not have developed without autocratic bishops. The New Testament mentions their office (the Greek word ἐπίσκοπος, *episkopos*, means “overseer” or “supervisor”), but none of their later, awesome powers. The metamorphosis began a short time after the last apostle, John, was laid to rest—in about A.D. 100. He lived into the reign of the emperor Trajan (98-117).¹

Christ had warned his apostles: “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:25-28) He also gave the apostles a memorable example of humility by washing their feet (John 13:3-17).

Peter cautioned the leaders in the church about the same thing. They were to superintend their congregations “not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” (1 Pet. 5:1-3) If, as some maintain, the man who wrote these words was also the first pontiff and remains the head of all the popes, it would be well for the Roman Church to heed his instruction.

Peter’s great colleague, Paul, had a grave foreboding about the tendency to elevate one Christian over the other; for he knew that this was precisely what the Antichrist would do, exalting himself above everybody else—until he took “his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” As he looked around in the infant

churches he himself had founded, Paul could see how this apostasy was beginning to rear its head, and so he warned: "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work" (2 Thess. 2:3-7, RSV).

But the exhortations to humility were soon ignored, for the early Christians existed in a world that favored the concentration of power, ecclesiastically as well as politically. They had seen this in the Jewish Sanhedrin. It was also the dominant spirit of Rome.

III

In all lands and all ages, one of the greatest perils for true religion has been a plausible but harmful inclination to compromise with the prevailing culture; for every human society has attitudes and practices that conflict with the religion of our Lord.

Paul pleaded with the believers in Rome: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ." (Rom. 12:2). No doubt he was remembering the words of his Master, who in his final prayer for the church declared: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). But the apostle was probably also thinking of the great apostasy just ahead, realizing with a sinking heart that its chief center would be Rome, where the readers of his letter lived!

Nevertheless, the church was soon recontextualizing itself in Greco-Roman and therefore pagan terms. One of its departures from New Testament Christianity was autocratic leaders, although these were by no means confined to Rome.

In about A.D. 110 Ignatius, the influential bishop of Antioch, sent letters to the major congregations of Asia. One of his topics was how the church should be governed. He exalted the bishop's authority to an extent that must have dismayed a generation of whom at least some would personally have known the meek and gentle John, the last apostle, who had become so much like his Master. According to Ignatius, "the bishop is God's representative on earth, an earthly counterpart corresponding to the heavenly Monarch, so that 'we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord himself.'"² This was a startling departure from New Testament teaching.

Once consecrated, bishops possessed their office for life. As the decades passed, their stature grew, in direct proportion to their alleged powers to forgive people's sins and to determine what they should believe. According to Robin Fox, their eventual dictatorship over the church was partly promoted by disruptive persecutions and dangerous heresies.³

In the second century, one of these was Gnosticism. Willis Lindquist thinks that the early church did not yet have a finalized canon of the New Testament to combat such a deviation. Irenaeus wanted the Christians to present a united front, with better organization and doctrinal uniformity. Therefore, he maintained, they would not easily go astray "if more importance were placed on tradition." A major task of the bishop would be to guard the traditional teachings, and therefore all church members should be

guided by him.⁴ This, however, is exactly the opposite of what Jesus had taught. As shown in a previous chapter, the Redeemer emphasized the Bible and the Bible only—*sola scriptura*, as the Protestants would one day call it. The cure that Irenaeus was proposing would eventually prove more dangerous than the disease; for the result was to muzzle both the laity and the lower clergy.

“We can see how these tyrants developed. More than any Emperor, bishops combined accessibility with the exercise of an awesome power. They ‘ruled in the place of God.’ They could suspend a cleric or an ordinary Christian, ban him from church and damn him to eternal punishment. It was hard for a man to be open and humble when slander against his person was said to be a slander against God.”⁵

The bishop’s power was bound up with his being considered a higher priestly order; the laity and even ordinary churchmen had to obey him implicitly. As a prince of the church, the archbishop came to hold a still loftier position. Such continues to be the situation in several denominations today.

Episcopal elevation laid the indispensable groundwork for the development of the papacy.

IV

The second factor favoring it was the fact that the pope began his career as the bishop at Rome, the imperial capital.

The origin of the church in that city is obscure, beyond the fact that its charter members were probably “visitors from Rome,” who had heard the apostles preach in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10, RSV). It is clear, though, that neither Paul nor Peter, whose names are often associated with it, could have founded it.

Paul’s epistle to the Romans was written during the Third Missionary Journey, at Corinth,⁶ toward the end of his career. He had not yet visited the believers in Rome, though from previous contacts elsewhere he knew a number of them, as the last chapter of his letter shows. Much of it consists of greetings, which mention many names. But there is no reference to Peter, which indicates that at this time he also was not yet at Rome.

Chapter 16 of the epistle contains intriguing data about the church in that city. Immediately after recommending Phoebe, probably the bearer of his letter, Paul refers to two old friends: “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.” (vv. 3-5)

This was a house church, as in present-day Communist China—possibly the only one in Rome at that time. Its most important functionary was Priscilla, since the apostle mentions her before her husband. In previous passages referring to her earlier career (Acts 18:2, 18, and 26; 1 Cor. 16:19), it is always the other way round: Aquila’s name comes first. At Rome, however, she may by now have become the dominant partner in their marriage—a role that women

often assume when older husbands grow decrepit. She also seems to have become the leader of that fledgling Christian church in their home.

No evidence exists that in Priscilla's time, or for the next eighty years, there even was a bishop at Rome. In Paul Johnson's list of pontiffs, we read that Peter's alleged successor, Linus (67-76), was "Probably an historical person, but still not technically a bishop." Only number ten, Pius I (140-55), is designated as such; for of him the accompanying note says: "The first leader of the Roman church reasonably identifiable as a bishop."⁷

For those who nevertheless insist that the Eternal City must have had a pontiff from the very beginning of the Christian religion, we suggest that her name was Pope Priscilla.

Tradition has it that Peter was crucified there in about A.D. 67, which suggests that both he and Paul were martyred at more or less the same time.⁸ This had a major impact on the church of Rome.

But it also gathered prestige and authority to itself for quite another reason than who its bishop was or even the presence and death of the two apostles. After all, one far greater than Peter suffered and died and was resurrected in Jerusalem. He ascended from the Mount of Olives, which overlooks it, and his empty tomb is still in that city. To this day, it remains the most important center of Christian pilgrimage on our planet. This is also where the original mother church was located. Why, then, did Jerusalem not become the focal point for the papacy?

The answer is that the primacy of the Roman bishop in the Western Empire evolved from his geopolitical situation. He and his flock could ask, as Merle D'Aubigné puts it, "If Rome is the queen of cities, why should not her pastor be the king of bishops?"⁹

But Malachi Martin believes that more was involved: "It was true that, as a point of sacred physical origin, the mother church of all Christianity was in Jerusalem. But it was also true that, under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, Christianity had long ago renounced all freehold lease on those places made holy by Christ's earthly presence as a mortal man. In the primary Christian optic, it was on one of Rome's seven hills—on *mons vaticanus*, Vatican Hill—that God had staked a perpetual claim to 110 acres for the precise geographical and spiritual center of his visible Church as sole source of blessing and salvation."¹⁰

V

Some, however, will find this a troubling idea; for they remember reading in the Apocalypse about a woman called Babylon, whom the Bible accuses of gross immorality and of murdering the Lord's children (Rev. 17:5, 6). She sits exactly where Martin locates the center of Christianity: "the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth" (vs. 9), including *mons vaticanus*—remaining there until the time of final judgment when the Lord returns (Rev. 14:8-10; 16:19-21). She is explicitly identified as "that great city, which reigneth

over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17: 18), meaning Rome, in both its pagan and papal phases.

This image did not originate in the Apocalypse; it preexisted the prophet’s vision by several years. Froom recounts that in the British Museum “there is a remarkable coin of Vespasian, issued about A.D. 79, which pictures Rome as a woman sitting or leaning back upon her seven hills.”¹¹ A photograph in the first volume of Froom’s *Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* shows the word *Roma* explicitly appearing below her. It had been struck just a few years before and was still current when John had his vision. He probably even handled such a coin.

Seventeen centuries later, in 1825, Pope Leo XII issued a similar medal to celebrate a Catholic jubilee. On one side it bears his image and on the reverse a woman sitting upon the globe. In her left hand she holds a cross but in her right hand a cup; around her head is a sevenpointed halo or diadem. Around her is an inscription, *sedet super universum* (“she sits above the world”).¹² The cup, the number seven, and these Latin words are, for the attentive reader, all reminders of Rev. 17:3-5, 9, 18.

By Constantine’s time, Rome had lost its political supremacy. The center of the empire shifted to a renamed and embellished Byzantium, on the Bosporus. As could have been expected, soon the newly established see of Constantinople rivaled the Vatican. In addition, there were also still the other ancient centers: Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, each jealous of its own prerogatives.

But at the time with which we are dealing, namely the second century A.D., Rome was still the hub of the empire. Simply by being where it was, this congregation enjoyed considerable prestige, and its bishop acquired great influence in the Mediterranean world.

VI

The third factor that promoted the rise of the papacy was an ever-increasing distance between Judaism and Christianity.

From the beginning, the relationship had been an uneasy one. The Saviour and his apostles, though Jews, rejected the unscriptural elements in the Judaism of their time. Furthermore, the Christians believed that the Messiah had come as Jesus of Nazareth, who was also the Son of God. This entailed the end of the entire sacrificial system centered in the Temple at Jerusalem, which he had fulfilled by offering himself on the cross.

We have already noted that by A.D. 70 thousands of Jews became Christians, perhaps as many as seventy or ninety thousand just in Judea.¹³ Nevertheless, most of the Scribes and the Pharisees and the general population in Judea rejected these new ideas. Then the apostles went further and taught that the Lord could no longer work through the Jewish nation, because it had refused to accept the Saviour. They had an even more revolutionary idea: the largescale admission of Gentiles as equal partners in the gospel—and these no longer needed circumcision or other special observances that marked a person as a Hebrew.

If the majority of Abraham's literal descendants had accepted Christianity, the Jewish nation would have remained intact. The sacrificial system would naturally have disappeared, after being fulfilled in Christ, though other elements could have been preserved.

A general conversion of the Jewish nation would have brought to pass the history that never was. The mystery of lawlessness could not have caused so many Christians to apostatize from the Bible and its religion. Instead, the Messiah would have sat on his throne in Jerusalem, and his faithful people would eventually have brought the whole world under his dominion. This, however, is not what happened. In the alternative scheme of events, not Jerusalem but Rome became the primary center for Western Christianity.

Unfortunately it was also the center of imperial paganism. As Antolín Diestre Gil points out in his monumental *El Sentido de la Historia y la Palabra Profética* ("The Sense of History and the Prophetic Word"), this perverted religion originally derived from Babylon, Egypt, and Persia. It entailed the worship of a sun god named Mithra.¹⁴

In Italy, the Christians soon became a predominantly Gentile church, more prone to pagan influences and Roman nationalism than the believers of the East. Noting how Jesus and the apostles had given up a number of Judaic observances not required by the Old Testament, some Romans boldly imagined that even more could be discarded. How far would one be able to go? Perhaps, in principle, nothing in the Bible was sacrosanct. If necessary, its most important teachings could be modified or even abandoned.

VII

As Jews, the apostles never compromised with the paganism of the Greeks and Romans, or even their culture when it had idolatrous associations. A striking example was Paul. When he visited the market place and the Acropolis of Athens, these were still intact with marvelous temples and statues. For modern tourists, this is still an enchanted place. The apostle, however, did not drool or dawdle over these images of the gods, despite his own immense erudition and culture. Instead, "his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols" (Acts 17:16, RSV). He knew what emptiness and evil lurked beneath the marble beauty of a brilliant people.

But by the second century, the church—at least in the West—was made up largely of converted Gentiles, brought up to admire their Greco-Roman heritage. Therefore, educated people who accepted the gospel were often unable to turn their backs on the prevalent culture and tried to preserve as much of it as possible. They also recognized that some of their heathen forebears had been good and pious people.

As Justin Martyr (100-65) pointed out, "even the pagans had some knowledge of the truth: 'All those who have written have been able, thanks to the seed of reason naturally inborn in them, to perceive obscurely that which is. Those who have lived with the Word are Christians, even though they have been considered atheists; Socrates

and Heraclitus, for example, among the Greeks, and those who were like to them.”¹⁵

This is close to the truth but an exaggeration, and soon the Gentile Christians became too eager to find common ground between themselves and their unbelieving neighbors, beguiled by both indigenous Roman and Near Eastern cults. Theological liberalism and an ecumenical spirit caused them to take the final, fatal step of syncretism: mixing Bible religion with heathen elements.

Pagan art, philosophy, and literature can still enthrall their modern students. For cultivated Gentile Christians of ancient times, their beauty and brilliance became a snare. Often the classics they had always loved as pagans beguiled them into retaining heathen doctrines like reincarnation and purgatory. These are both depicted in Virgil's *Aeneid*, the Romans' national epic. The greatest book originally written in the Latin language, it was also their most important source of religious ideas, together with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, on which it was partly based.

Purgatory is a nasty dogma with which the Roman Church has over the centuries tormented millions of faithful Catholics, minting their terror and concern for loved ones into constant revenue for its coffers. They have to pay the church for an early release from that dreadful state by applying so-called surplus merit, supposedly earned by the saints.

As a doctrine, purgatory is completely absent from God's Word. It teaches that the righteousness of the best among us is as “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6); salvation comes only through the blood and merits of Jesus Christ. But the sixth book of the *Aeneid* states that before the spirits in Hades can be reincarnated, they must be cleansed of all the wrongs committed in their previous lives.¹⁶

The dead are disciplined in purgatory, and pay
The penalty of old evil . . .¹⁷

as C. Day Lewis expresses it in his very readable translation. Purgatory does not occur in the original text as a word, but as a concept it is unmistakably present.

Justin Martyr and others like him found a good deal of common ground between Christianity and Mithraism, the cult of *Sol Invictus* (“the unconquerable sun”). Imported from Persia, it had begun to strike root in the Roman world by the first century AD; by the second it was flourishing. Originally a soldier's religion, it now pervaded the capital, where the great Emperor (“General”) lived.

“Rome itself, and its seaport Ostia, always remained a great center of the cult, which reached to Numidia in the south and as far north as the Roman wall in Britain.”¹⁸ During World War II, a temple dedicated to Mithras was uncovered in London.¹⁹ This discovery shows how widely his worship had spread.

Its popularity in Rome was practically as old as Christianity itself, for Nero began to espouse it.²⁰ Two centuries before Constantine, Hadrian (117-38) also identified himself with the sun, as is attested by

his coins.²¹

According to classicists M. Cary and T. J. Haarhoff, a Briton and a South African, "Of all pagan cults, that of Mithras was the most formidable rival of Christianity, on which it exerted a noticeable influence."²² To emphasize this point, the writers quote the celebrated British scholar Gilbert Murray, who had illuminating things to say about this pagan religion as well as the syncretism of the period:

"Many of our current practices come from Mithraism. The 25th of December was the birthday of Mithras; the first day of the week, dedicated to the Sun, was his holy day, as opposed to the Jewish Sabbath. The Mithraics also practised baptism (with the blood of a bull) and confirmation, and expected salvation from a eucharistic Last Supper. The Mithraic ethics, like the Christian, were ascetic and pure."²³

Kenneth A. Strand points out that the change to Easter may also have had Jewish roots. According to the Judaic religious calendar, the day that followed Passover began the harvest festival, also known as the feast of unleavened bread, when a sheaf was waved before the Lord (Lev. 23: 6, 11). Christians could therefore relate the first fruit of the harvest to the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). This would have entailed a celebration on the fifteenth of Nisan.²⁴

The majority of Jews and early Christians followed the theology of the Pharisees, calculating this date according to the Hebrews' lunar calendar, based, that is, on the movements of the moon. Therefore, from year to year, both Nisan 14 and Nisan 15 fell on a different day of the week. Some Jews, however, favored the position of the Essenes and the Sadducean Boethusians, who interpreted "the morrow after the sabbath" as *the day after a weekly Sabbath—always a Sunday*. Their day of Pentecost also always fell on a Sunday—"the morrow after the seventh sabbath" from the day of the offering of the firstfruits (see Leviticus 23:15, 16).²⁵

According to this view, Christians who supported the minority view of the Essenes and the Sadducean Boethusians would, quite naturally, have celebrated Easter and possibly even Pentecost on the first day of the week.

Like the one in Alexandria, the church in Rome may have belonged to this tradition. In any case, it took the step of shifting the emphasis from the crucifixion to the resurrection, which would always be celebrated on a Sunday. According to Frank H. Yost, this change originated with Sixtus I (115-25), the bishop or pope of the capital city. "But this was not at first a weekly observance, coming once each week after the Sabbath, as it was later, and as it is today. It was annual. It came once a year, at the time of the awakening of spring."²⁶

Weekly Sundaykeeping would grow out of this practice. Anthony J. Wilhelm, a modern Catholic writer, puts it in a nutshell: "Each Sunday is a 'little Easter.'"²⁷

Celebrating a single first day in the year is one thing. After all, even some Jews did this. But making it a weekly celebration and substituting it for the Sabbath is quite another matter. How and why

did this take place?

VIII

To answer this question, let us consider the fourth factor that promoted the development of the papacy: in the second century the pagan Romans changed their weekly calendar of seven days. Up to that time, their traditional solar deity, Apollo, had not been the chief of the gods—Jupiter was; consequently the second day of the week had been dedicated to the sun. The first day was Saturn-day. But now, because of Mithraism, the sun god had grown much more important. Thereupon, in a bit of drastic calendar reform, the Romans pushed the sun's day back into the first position, calling it *dies solis* ("day of the sun"). This is how Sunday came into existence with a name that it has retained to the present.

Samuele Bacchiocchi's thesis for his doctoratus, based on five years of research, cites the most convincing, concrete evidence for this intriguing change. Among the most striking are mural pictures in Pompeii and Herculaneum (buried and preserved by lava and volcanic ash from Vesuvius in A.D. 79), which clearly show the day of the sun as the *second* on the calendar. Then, from a slightly later period, there are "several *Mithraea* or sanctuaries of the pagan Sungod Mithra" which depict it as the *first* day.²⁸ This change in the weekly calendar of the Romans could be used to bring Christians and pagans together, for both religions held celebrations on the first day: the Mithraics observed each Sunday; Roman Christians celebrated Easter on it once a year. Soon events would cause them to make an even more drastic adjustment.

IX

The fifth factor in the evolution of the Roman Church was anti-Semitism, which began with the problems of the early church. From the beginning, it was opposed and sometimes persecuted by the Jews, a majority of whom still clung to their traditional beliefs and rejected the idea that Jesus was the Messiah.

Because of the similarity between Christianity and Judaism, pagans often confused the two religions. At first this was largely a minor irritation, though not entirely so. In his essay "Concerning the Jews," Mark Twain discusses the reasons for anti-Jewish sentiment from the times of the pharaohs ruling Egypt just prior to and during the Exodus. Then he says: "I wish to come down eighteen hundred years later and refer to a remark made by one of the Latin historians. I read it in a translation many years ago, and it comes back to me now with force. It was alluding to a time when people were still living who could have seen the Saviour in the flesh. Christianity was so new that the people of Rome had hardly heard of it, and had but confused notions of what it was. The substance of the remark was this: Some Christians were persecuted in Rome through error, they being '*mistaken for Jews*.'"²⁹

An additional reason would have been that so many of the earlier Christians themselves were Jewish. The New Testament informs us that in Corinth the apostle Paul found “a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) . . .” (Acts 18:2). Later, as we have seen from the epistle to the Romans, they are back in that city as leading Christians.

The Jewish war of A.D. 66-70 aroused tremendous anti-Semitism in Rome. It was not confined to pagans. The same thing happened with the Second Jewish Revolt in A.D. 132-35, ignited by the Emperor Hadrian himself; he was planning to build a heathen city on the ruins of Jerusalem.³⁰

In A.D. 135, toward the conclusion of that war, in which many Romans perished, a furious Emperor Hadrian “outlawed the practice of the Jewish religion, particularly the observance of the Sabbath”³¹ which unleashed “a tremendous crisis for Christians, who felt compelled to divorce themselves completely from their Hebrew heritage.”³²

Two factors facilitated their decision. One was that Bar-Kokhba, leader of the Jewish revolt in Palestine, had launched a persecution against the Christians and executed a number of them.³³ The other was a policy somewhat favorable to them expressed in Hadrian’s letter of A.D. 125 to Fundanus, a governor of Asia:

“If our subjects of the provinces are able to sustain by evidence this their petition against the Christians, so as to accuse them before a Court of Justice, I have no objection to their taking this course. But I do not allow them to use mere clamorous demands and outcries for this purpose. . . . You will on the other hand, by Hercules, take particular care that if any one demand a writ of accusation against any of these Christians, merely for the sake of libelling them, you proceed against that man with heavier penalties in accordance with his heinous guilt.”³⁴ In the light of this edict, the Roman congregation was not inclined to blot its copybook with the emperor.

Hadrian’s anti-Sabbath law was the first that the church had to face. At that time, believers generally were still observing the seventh day in accordance with one of the Ten Commandments. Instead of enduring the test, however, the pope—supported, perhaps, by a majority in the Roman congregations—took a radical step: he changed their day of worship to Sunday, by extending the Easter celebrations into a weekly observance.

This involved more than an alternative day on which believers had to keep the Sabbath: by disregarding the law of God, the pontiff was cutting the umbilical cord between Catholicism and the Bible. To do this, he relied on his power as a bishop and the claim that the Lord had given the pontiffs all the necessary authority when he handed Peter the keys of the kingdom.

Precedent and rationalization undoubtedly played a powerful role: the state had already demonstrated its ability to change the weekly calendar. If pagan Romans could shift the sun’s day from the second to the first position, then surely Christian Romans could

move the Lord's day from the seventh to the first!

This would admittedly destroy the synchronization with the Sabbath observed by the Jews, but who still cared for these rebellious people? Besides, the Christians' compliance with the new imperial law would save them from additional persecution.

In this way, the will of the pope—rather than the Scriptures—became the primary basis for determining what the faithful should believe. And so, a mere century after the crucifixion, the pontiffs apostatized, abandoning the idea that the Bible was the sole authority for faith and doctrine. Fourteen hundred years later, Luther would powerfully raise it up again to haunt them.

Naturally some believers in Rome could not accept such a drastic change just because the ecclesiastical leadership wanted it. Therefore, “to develop a theological justification for worshipping on the Day of the Sun, Christians appealed to God's creation of light on the first day and to the Resurrection of Christ as the Sun of Justice, since both events coincided with the Day of the Sun. The latter was connected to the first day of the creation-week, because the creation of light on the first day provided what appeared to many a providential justification for observing the Day of the Sun.”³⁵

The fateful decision to bring in regular Sunday-keeping was made in the time when Telesphorus (125-36) headed the church in Rome. He died within a year of Hadrian's edict. His successor was Hyginus (136-40). The new day of worship was firmly entrenched by the time of Pius I (140-55).³⁶

Since changing the Sabbath directly contravenes the Law of God, Sunday is in a special way a mark of papal authority, in contrast with the seventh day, which the Bible designates as the seal of God (Eze. 20:12, 20). It is also a piece of theological anti-Semitism built into the very foundations of Christianity. Startlingly this development fulfills the prophecy that the Little Horn, would “think to change the times and the law” (Dan. 7:25, RSV).

In his *Apology*, Justin Martyr, a contemporary of Pius I, provided the first Christian rationale for Sunday observance: “Sunday (*dies solis*) is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.”³⁷

The *Apology* was “addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius (about A.D. 150).”³⁸ Justin's word choice is significant: the Mithraic *dies solis* (“day of the sun”), instead of the New Testament, Semitic “seventh day of the week.” This was intended to ingratiate him and other Christians with his important Roman reader. We do not know this emperor's response, if any; but Justin was wasting his time, for he later died a martyr's death under Marcus Aurelius, who ascended the throne in 161.³⁹

A Roman nationalist with syncretic tendencies, Justin shared the anti-Semitism of his compatriots. According to Bacchiocchi, he “argues in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, that the observance of the Sabbath was a temporary Mosaic ordinance which God imposed

exclusively on the Jews 'as a mark to single them out for punishment they so well deserve for their infidelities.'"⁴⁰ What an ignorant man!

This was typical of an entire theology, lasting for centuries, a so-called Christian "separation from and contempt toward the Jews. Characteristic Jewish customs such as circumcision and Sabbath-keeping were proclaimed to be signs of Jewish depravity."⁴¹

Nevertheless, a number of Christians in Rome refused to compromise with paganism and abandon the Sabbath. Therefore, it survived together with Sunday, but was gradually suppressed.

A major step was to make it unpleasant: a fast day, which also had an overtly anti-Semitic intention: "As emphatically stated in the papal decretal of Pope Sylvester (A.D. 314-35), the Sabbath fasting was designed to show 'contempt for the Jews' (*execratione Judaeorum*) and for their Sabbath 'feasting' (*destructione ciborum*). The sadness and hunger resulting from the fast would enable Christians to avoid 'appearing to observe the Sabbath with the Jews' and would encourage them to enter more eagerly and joyfully into the observance of Sunday."⁴²

At the Council of Laodicea, sometime between 343 and 381, Catholicism sought to eliminate the observance of the seventh day completely. This, incidentally, is part of the proof that even in those years some Christians persisted in observing the seventh day.⁴³

X

Celebrating two thousand years of Catholicism in the year 2000 was chronologically premature. But the papacy did begin quite early in our era, arising from tendencies already at work in the apostles' time, and came to fruition early in the second century. In A.D. 135, the pope deliberately separated his church, not only from the Jews, but also from the olive tree of Israel. In this way, the pontificate became the Antichrist. It and the system it headed forfeited the covenant rights of Yahweh's Israel, announced to Abraham—the fountainhead of blessings for "all families of the earth" (Gen. 12:3)—and fulfilled in the Messiah, who is also the Creator and Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).

16 The Beast Converted

I

Few periods have proven as momentous for Christianity and the world as the one that began with the Edict of Milan in 313 and ended in 476, when the last Roman emperor in the West was deposed and supplanted by a Germanic king. These 163 years stamped their pattern on European history for many ages to come.

The church, so suddenly embraced by its former persecutor, the Roman state, was—within a matter of months—found pregnant with tendencies that would ruin both.

The realm would eventually fall apart into two de facto empires, one in the East and the other in the West. In fewer than two hundred years, the latter would disintegrate. Its collapse had many causes. The chief of these was probably the liaison between the government and the church, which prepared the way for what Gibbon called “the triumph of barbarism and religion.”¹

Even worse than this imperial breakup was Constantine’s alluring but fateful example, for whenever there is a union between church and state, ill-treatment for dissenting minorities follows almost inevitably. So do the ultimate backwardness and ruination it brings in country after country, as history has shown.

The emperor’s original design had been toleration for all religions, but soon he replaced it with measures to impose not simply Christianity but a particular brand of it. Statecraft mingled with churchcraft, which did not end persecution, except for those who toed the line. The imperial Beast had seemingly been converted, to be fawned on by ecclesiastics, but its nature had not really changed.

Previously a major reason for Rome’s intolerance had been an older mixture of statecraft with heathen religion. This situation persisted, the only novelty being that the rulers now substituted Christianity for paganism. Though they discarded the most objectionable aspects of emperor worship, “the deeper idolatry, of fashioning God in the Egyptian, Persian, and Roman Imperial rulers, was retained.”²

There would be peace for those who accepted the new religion of the Roman state. But dissident believers would still be trodden on and stamped to pieces, for now the government and the church could cooperate in the persecution of Christians . . . by Christians. That, of course, is not what the perpetrators would call it. Persecution itself had been baptized. At this time, and for ages to come, it would always have a fairer name, like combating heresy or defending the faith.

From generation to generation, members of both the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic churches would continue this activity. Sometimes Protestants would also engage in it.

II

Many have wondered whether Constantine's conversion was genuine or just a clever ploy to use Christianity as an instrument of government. Some, however, have rejected this idea as unlikely, on the grounds that members of the church "were a small and unimportant minority."³ Christians were a minority, especially in the West, but by no means unimportant; for, owing to their lifestyle and martyrdom, they had a tremendous impact. In about A.D. 112, when Pliny the Younger wrote to the emperor Trajan (98-117) from Bithynia, in the eastern part of the empire, Christianity was spreading from the towns to the rural areas. He said the temples were empty and it was becoming difficult to sell the meat from sacrificial animals.⁴

By the middle of the third century, fifty years before Constantine, the believers had multiplied. Their organization was superb. Also, according to Johnson, "the class and education barriers came down and Christianity penetrated deep into circles which shaped secular policy and imperial culture. The age of Origen, of a Christianity which had achieved intellectual maturity in terms of the ancient world, made a direct and final confrontation with the State inevitable. It was now a universalist alternative to the civil religion and a far more dynamic (and better organized) one; it had either to be exterminated or accepted."⁵

We have seen how previous emperors reacted, and even the formidable Diocletian could not eradicate the Christians. It was therefore logical, perhaps inevitable, that Constantine should attempt his own, much bolder alternative.

In spite of his conversion, he was "almost certainly a Mithraic." His triumphal arch, built for him after his conversion, "testifies to the Sungod, or 'unconquered sun.'" He never ceased to honor it, keeping its image on his coins. He also "set up a statue of the sun-god, bearing his features, in the Forum; and another of the mother-Goddess Cybele, though she was presented in a posture of Christian prayer."⁶

This happened in New Rome, or Constantinople, whose inauguration as an imperial capital took place on 11 May 330. Allegedly "it was from the start a Christian city, unsullied by pagan sacrifice and amply endowed with magnificent churches."⁷

Its creation furthered the amoebic fission of the empire that had begun under Diocletian, ruling from Nicomedia in Asia Minor while another emperor had his capital in Milan. It is not literally correct to say that by building his city on the Bosphorus, Constantine was moving the capital away from Rome, as some writers assert, *inter alia* Maxwell⁸ and Hardinge;⁹ for by this time the Eternal City had already lost much of its political significance.

And yet, in a sense, the idea is valid; for the founding of Constantinople brought a definitive power shift away from Italy. This meant a lessening of the pagan influence that Rome with its senatorial class could still exert on the emperors. On the other hand, it physically separated the popes from the emperors, which would increasingly

ensure the papacy's independence, especially as the Western Empire disintegrated and ceased to exist.

Johnson considers Constantine a "weird megalomaniac" and suspects a conscious bargain between him and the clerics. Calling the arrangement an "unseemly marriage," he wonders, "did the empire surrender to Christianity, or did Christianity prostitute itself to the empire?"¹⁰ Hunt quotes Durant as saying that "while Christianity converted the world, the world converted Christianity."¹¹

We think the union corrupted state and church alike, the more so since it also involved a considerable amount of syncretism.

By 274, Mithraism, which both Nero and Hadrian had favored, became extremely popular, so that the emperor Aurelian proclaimed it the official state religion. In the early 300s it "seriously jeopardized Christianity."¹² In 307, under Diocletian, a dedication to Sol Invictus Mithra acclaimed this deity as "a protector of the empire."¹³ This, as we have seen, coincided with—and it was certainly related to—the emperor's campaign to eliminate the Christians as a rival influence.

Like Gilbert Murray, quoted in the previous chapter, Johnson refers to the startling syncretism that resulted from the contact between these two religions: "Many Christians did not make a clear distinction between this sun-cult and their own. They referred to Christ 'driving his chariot across the sky'; they held their services on Sunday, knelt towards the East and had their nativity-feast on 25 December, the birthday of the sun at the winter solstice"¹⁴

In a caption to one of his illustrations, Trevor-Roper states: "In the late Roman Empire the rival religions were often fused together. This mosaic from the ancient mausoleum beneath St Peter's, Rome, shows Christ with the attributes of the pagan sun-god."¹⁵ Roland H. Bainton puts it in a nutshell: "Mithras had become Christian."¹⁶

III

Assimilated with the Mithraic cult were others involving the sun god, such as a Greco-Egyptian deity, Serapis-Horus.¹⁷ This included the veneration of his mother, the goddess Isis, as the Madonna nursing her child.¹⁸ In *The Myth of Mary*, César Vidal shows that the adoration of Christ's mother by Catholics contains elements taken over not only from the Isis-Horus cult, but also other female deities, like the Grecian Demeter and the Phrygian Cybele, whom the people at Rome referred to as *Magna Mater* ("great mother")¹⁹ or by her full title: *Magna Mater Deorum* ("great mother of the gods").²⁰ The last mentioned had an interesting relative, the ancient Mesopotamian Ishtar, whom her worshippers often called "the Holy Virgin" and "the Virgin Mother," because her "amours were free from all taint of wedlock."²¹

Applying the title *Mater Dei* ("Mother of God") to Mary sounds suspiciously like calling her *Mater Deorum* ("Mother of the Gods"), as though she were Cybele. In the fifth century, this expression and the word *Theotokos* ("God-bearer") led to a split between Catholicism and the Church of the East, after Nestorius, Patriarch at

Constantinople, had attacked such terminology.

IV

Under paganism, Rome became “the Heliopolis of the West . . . the city of the sun and seat of the deified emperors (*divi*).”²² The solar cult and the gods associated with it remained extremely powerful in Rome. We can see this from the interesting fact that when the first Christian emperor eventually died, “the senate declared him *divus*,” that is, they proclaimed him a god!²³

It became possible to join the church and even advance to a high position in it while covertly remaining an unbeliever or a heathen. An example of this was the bishop of Troy. During the brief revival of paganism which followed Constantine’s reign, this man told the emperor Julian that he had always prayed secretly to the sun!²⁴

Those who see a discrepancy between the tale of Constantine’s conversion and his persistent Mithraic traits, deducing from this that he must have been a hypocrite or a cynic, miss the point. By his time, the mainline church had itself already assimilated elements from Roman religion, including Mithraism.

A number of Catholic writers, like Cardinals Nicholas Wiseman and Newman, have freely acknowledged that many Christian practices originated in paganism.²⁵

Constantine continued a tendency already in existence. He just took it a little further. He had what some psychologists have called an *aha* experience. Whereas his imperial predecessors had vainly persecuted Christianity, he would adopt it; but instead of substituting it for its rival Mithraism, he would cleverly blend the two religions.

When in 321 the emperor made the first law to enforce the observance of Sunday, it was not yet called *dies Domini* (“day of the Lord”) but *dies solis* (“day of the sun”), i.e., the sun god. This was to gain the support of his heathen subjects. But what about the churchmen? They accepted this exclusively Mithraic wording without a murmur, and fully supported Constantine’s approach; for he was practicing a subterfuge: the law was outwardly a purely pagan one, but Christians could reinterpret it for their purposes.

Ellen White indicates that the church leaders were playing an even deeper game. “The day of the sun was revered by his pagan subjects and was honored by Christians; it was the emperor’s policy to unite the conflicting interests of heathenism and Christianity. He was urged to do this by the bishops of the church, who, inspired by ambition and thirst for power, perceived that if the same day was observed by both Christians and heathen, it would promote the nominal acceptance of Christianity by pagans and thus advance the power and glory of the church.”²⁶

But the result of syncretism was rather different from what the clerics had intended: “Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ.”²⁷

For one thing, the observance of the first day in the week is still called *Sunday-keeping*, an expression that to this day retains its original meaning: “keeping the day of the sun,” i.e., honoring an ancient solar deity.

Is it too much to say that the Constantinian merger between the religion of the Bible and paganism also brought the heathens’ traditional hatred for old-fashioned, apostolic Christianity right into the church?

In some ways the bishops in the days of Constantine were an ecumenical bunch, just like the pagan Roman priests before them. They proved to be surprisingly tolerant, except toward other believers whose interpretation of the Bible differed from their own.

V

We may also legitimately inquire about the character of Constantine. He “hardly deserved the title of ‘the Great,’” and still less that of saint, which the Orthodox Church considers him to have been.²⁸ On the contrary, as Michael Grant explains, he was an utterly ruthless man. To protect his position or advance his own ends, he executed many advisers, friends, and relatives—including his eldest son, Crispus, as well as his second wife, Fausta.²⁹ He could also be treacherous, as when he promised to spare Licinius, his defeated rival and fellow emperor (as well as his brother-in-law), and then had him killed.³⁰ He committed all these murders after his conversion.³¹

Grant says that despite his becoming a Christian, Constantine remained “an absolute autocrat” and “believed that he could kill anyone.”³² Hendrik van Loon quite bluntly calls the emperor “a terrible ruffian.”³³

He was also “susceptible to flattery, and capricious . . . and lacked firmness and steadiness of purpose.”³⁴ Besides, he proved to be highly emotional and superstitious.³⁵ In skillful hands, such a man could be manipulated. One of his friends and flatterers was Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 340).³⁶ He also deferred a great deal to Ossius (Hosius), bishop of Corduba, his ecclesiastical adviser.³⁷

Soon Constantine, after his linkup with the bishops, took additional steps. One was to offer all kinds of inducements for people to become Christians. Some had to be bribed in a very material way. The emperor was cynically frank about it: “In all ways unbelievers must be saved. It is not every one who will be converted by learning and reasoning. Some join us from desire of maintenance, some for preferment, some for presents; nothing is so rare as a real lover of truth. We must be like physicians, and accommodate our medicines to the disease, our teaching to the different minds of all.”³⁸

The results were spectacular; multitudes flocked in to fill up the congregations. Indeed, as A. T. Jones pungently puts it, the methods followed by Constantine with the bishops’ concurrence drew into the church “every hypocrite in the Roman Empire.”³⁹

Having decided to promote Christianity as the official religion, Constantine also wanted to standardize it; for he “was convinced,

doubtless by Ossius, that dissension in his church was deeply displeasing to God.”⁴⁰ Also, a church divided into different sects seemed “bad for the empire’s success and prosperity.”⁴¹

On 10 November 316—within three years after the Edict of Toleration—the newly converted emperor began to persecute the Donatists,⁴² who were mostly active in North Africa.

What had been their crime? These Christians were far too scrupulous about the behavior of believers, especially the clergy. If, in the preceding time of persecution, a priest or a bishop denied his Lord or compromised his faith (instead of submitting to martyrdom), he had, according to the Donatists, disqualified himself from administering baptism and ordinations.

To many clerics, Donatists represented both a religious affront and a personal threat. Some who by compromising had saved their flesh from the biting steel or the devouring flame were now important people. One of these was the church historian Bishop Eusebius.⁴³ In this fairer time under a Christian emperor, leading ecclesiastics were most reluctant to give up their promising careers and the allurements of increasing wealth, which the alliance with the Roman state had brought. This was understandable but perhaps not so spiritual of them.

And therefore, under Constantine and for decades to come, the puritan Donatists were persecuted, until their enemies eradicated them.

The date on which the state, inspired by the church, began to suppress these people, 316, is of some importance for prophetic interpretation. Smith, in his comments on Rev. 17:8, maintains that “when the empire was nominally converted to Christianity, . . . During a brief period, . . . it could be said of the beast that it was not. As time passed, it developed into the papacy and again assumed its bloodthirsty and oppressive character.”⁴⁴

If so, that period of non-persecution was so brief as to be practically non-existent, lasting for about three years. It is true that it took a considerable time for the papacy to acquire a dominant position throughout the West, but—as we have already shown—the beast of Dan. 7 is more than the Roman Church. It includes the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

Although the churchmen in Constantine’s day had so recently suffered hardships at the hand of persecuting pagans, they themselves were now engaged in shameful, relentless campaigns against dissenting Christians.

Protestants are not alone in calling attention to this point. In his *Jews, God and History*, Max Dimont, a Jewish writer, is clearly amazed at such a turn of events. He also refers to an estimate by Gibbon that “the Christians killed more of their own number in the first hundred years after coming to power than did the Romans during the three previous centuries.”⁴⁵

After the Donatists, other dissenting groups were also targeted. Such, according to Eusebius’s *Life of Constantine*, were the Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians, Cataphrygians, and “all who

devised and supported heresies by means of private assemblies.”⁴⁶

Through an edict issued just after he had destroyed his rival and brother-in-law Licinius in 323, the emperor commanded these groups to give up all their religious services. To this end, he ordered “that you be positively deprived of every gathering point for your superstitious meetings; I mean all the houses of prayer (if such be worthy of the name) which belong to heretics, and that these be made over without delay to the Catholic Church; that any other places be confiscated to the public service, and no facility whatever be left for any future gathering . . .”⁴⁷

We can imagine the dismay of these poor Christians, and the jubilation of the bishops, who thought they could get rid of them by stealing their churches.

In 333, the emperor also lent his power to eliminating the stubborn Arians, who would not accept the Trinitarian doctrine, believing that the second person of the Godhead (Jesus) had not existed forever but was a created being, and therefore inferior to the Father.

A crucial reason for the famous Council of Nicaea, which met between 20 May and 19 June 325, was to combat heresy, especially Arianism. Seated on a low chair made of wrought gold, Constantine presided personally, “like some heavenly Angel of God, clothed in a garment which glittered as though radiant with light, reflecting the glow of a purple robe and adorned with the brilliant splendour of gold and precious stones.”⁴⁸ Despite his deficient Greek, the emperor himself proposed “the crucial formula expressing the relationship of Christ to God in the creed that was issued,” probably prompted by Ossius.⁴⁹

Immediately after the Council, Constantine issued the following edict: “I decree that if any one shall be detected in concealing a book compiled by Arius, and shall not instantly bring it forward and burn it, the penalty for this offense shall be death; for immediately after the conviction the criminal shall suffer capital punishment.”⁵⁰

Constantine’s motive was largely political. Above all, he remained a Roman emperor, and therefore he wanted a united church to buttress the state. Not being very good at Greek, he probably did not even understand the subtle distinctions involved in the bishops’ learned debate. Intrinsicly he may not have cared whether Christ was *homoousios* (“of one substance”) with the Father, on which the Trinitarians insisted, or *homoiousios* (“of like substance”), which the Arians found acceptable. But for him as emperor it was expedient to propose and insist on the former. The majority went along with him because “hardly anyone would have had the nerve to contradict him.”⁵¹

In this way, the dominant Christian church adopted much of its basic creed under the leadership of a half-heathen emperor, who—though unbaptized till just before his death—became and remained its indubitable head. It is significant that, from first to last, he “completely controlled the bishops . . . and it was he himself who chose every bishop when a vacancy arose.”⁵²

How intense were the campaigns against the Christian dissidents

who refused to accept the Nicene Creed in every particular?

Julian (331-63), the pagan emperor who followed Constantius II, the son of Constantine, wrote a revealing letter that expresses his horror over what had happened: "Many whole communities of so-called heretics . . . were actually butchered, as at Samosata, and Cyzicus in Paphlagonia, Bithynia and Galatia, and among many other tribes villages were sacked and destroyed; whereas in my time exile has been ended and property restored."⁵³

In his childhood, Julian had been reared as a Christian, but he did not find this brand of religion attractive, so he returned to his ancestral paganism. For ages to come, he would be called the Apostate—and be badly misrepresented. "Actually he was a moral and intellectual man and a brilliant writer."⁵⁴ He also proved to be more humane and enlightened than his much-praised uncle, Constantine; for he tolerated all forms of Christianity. Julian was, however, a passing phenomenon, reigning for only nineteen and a half months.

Under the succeeding emperors, all "good Christians," the persecutions continued unabated. To the physical oppression was added ecclesiastical censorship, which in 380 became law. An imperial statute explicitly forbade religious debates and activities outside official channels.⁵⁵

VI

From his heathen predecessors, Constantine inherited the title *Pontifex Maximus* ("high priest"), to which he added *Bishop of Bishops* and *Vicarius Christi* ("the Vicar of Christ").⁵⁶ During his final years, he was also known as *Isapostolos* ("Equal of the Apostles"), and he had himself buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles amid a dozen sarcophagi.⁵⁷

While still pagan, the Roman emperors thought of themselves as gods, an idea that originated earlier in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Hellenistic Middle East. The purpose of this cult, which was usually connected with sun worship, was political: divine endorsement that ensured unquestioning obedience to a supposedly infallible sovereign.⁵⁸ When the Caesars became Christians, they had to modify this idea to some extent, though only partly so; they were determined to retain as much as possible of their so-called sanctity, because of its political payoff. Therefore, "the Byzantine emperors presided over all the synods of the church and were considered 'God on earth.'"

The same would be true of the Russian czars, who after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 laid claim to all their prerogatives. In the nineteenth century, "when Napoleon met Aleksandr I in East Prussia, Napoleon said, 'I see that you are an emperor and a pope at the same time. How useful.'"⁵⁹

VII

In cooperating with the bishops of the state church to enforce Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, the emperors were primarily

politicians. Though they insisted on doctrinal uniformity and made available the power of Rome to eliminate heresy, they could not be depended on to refrain from it themselves. When Constantine was eventually baptized near the end of his life, the officiating bishop was Eusebius of Nicomedia,⁶⁰ an Arian!

Constantius II (317-61), the son and heir of Constantine, may have been influenced by this fact and the trend it represented. He was in any case an Arianizer. More than that: he vigorously turned the tables on the clerics who had manipulated his father. He rejected the decisions reached at the Council of Nicaea. "Numerous synods and councils were held during his reign, and many bishops were exiled, including Liberius, bishop of Rome."⁶¹

Another of his victims was Bishop Ossius (Hosius), Constantine's ecclesiastical adviser. "It was he who first stirred up Constantine against the Donatists, many of whom were sent into exile, and some even sentenced to death; nay, and led to the place of execution."⁶² Urged by his favorites, Constantius made every effort to secure his support, though at first he had been inclined to leave the old man alone, allowing him to return to Corduba in southern Spain. "He first sent him flattering and persuasive letters; and when these failed, he proceeded to threats. But all were unavailing, and Hosius was banished to Sirmium [on the Danube, far from home]. His relations were stripped of all their estates and reduced to beggary, but all without avail. Next he was closely imprisoned—still he refused. Then he was cruelly beaten, and finally put to the rack and most inhumanly tortured. Under these fearful torments, the aged bishop yielded, A.D. 356, and signed."⁶³

This is how Christian monarchs used religion. As politicians, they were intolerant of heretics, who dared to think for themselves and undermined the theological consensus that buttressed the state. At the same time, royal houses were far from predictable. Over the centuries, ecclesiastical leaders sometimes had to pay a terrible price for the secular aid they used against their opponents.

Such was the fate not only of Catholic bishops, but sometimes also of leading Protestants. Two examples of these were Anglican Bishop Hugh Latimer (?1485-1555) and Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), Archbishop of Canterbury. They flourished and died when the Tudor offspring of much-married Henry VIII were ruling over England.

Latimer and Cranmer are justly famous for steadfastness to their convictions and dying at the stake in the time of Queen Mary Tudor, who belonged to the Roman Church. Unfortunately, however, during the reign of her brother, the Protestant boy-king Edward VI (1537-53), both men had martyred Roman Catholics for refusing to give up their religion. "Cranmer himself had, to Edward's dismay, insisted on the burning of Joan Bocher, and Latimer had been pitiless at the death of Father Forrest when he harangued the aged chaplain of Catherine of Aragon to recant as the agonized victim was slowly roasted to death in a cage suspended over flames."⁶⁴

We wonder about the final thoughts of Ossius in the fourth century. As he suffered those excruciating pangs and then went down

to darkness and disgrace, did he repent of his cruelty toward the Donatists? And as the flames were licking deep into the flesh of Latimer and Cranmer twelve hundred years later, did they in pity remember poor Joan Bocher and Father Forrest?

Perhaps these and other people like them ruefully also pondered the ancient wisdom of the psalmist who wrote: "Put not your trust in princes" (Ps. 146:3), and the Lord's own warning: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (Jer. 17:5).

VIII

The Christian emperors of the Roman Empire, like many monarchs ever since, imagined they were a special breed, immensely elevated above ordinary people; therefore, they failed to recognize that for underlings, too, there should be such a thing as freedom of conscience. No, they would do all the important thinking and deciding for their subjects!

In Constantinople, the Byzantine rulers were able to continue this highhanded tradition till 1453, when they were eliminated by the Turks. But in the West, the Roman emperors disappeared much earlier, in 476. However, the imperial prerogatives and religious titles—such as *Pontifex Maximus*, *Vicarius Christi*, and *God on earth*—were inherited by the popes.

The rich and regal vestments, the royal and sometimes arrogant attitude, the intolerance toward dissidents, and the institutional holiness of the pontiffs all derive from Roman precedents. These attributes owe nothing to the often-quoted conversation between Jesus and one of his humble apostles (Matt. 16:15-19). The so-called throne of St. Peter is really the throne of the Caesars, to which that humble fisherman never aspired.

To counter a common misunderstanding, and for the sake of a better perspective on Bible prophecy, we emphasize that the structure created by Constantine and the bishops was not the Roman Catholic Church. It was the *imperial* church. Of course this included Rome, but also the archbishoprics of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and—after its founding—Constantinople.

The non-Roman archbishoprics belonged and some of them still belong, not to the Catholic, but to the closely related Orthodox branch of Christianity. Since Constantine's day, this has thrived and become the dominant religion of Eastern Europe. Making up about one-sixth of the Christians in the world, the Orthodox consist of thirteen national churches, including the Russian Orthodox Church. All of these are autocephalous; that is, in church affairs they are self-ruling and not subject to a foreign cleric, such as the pope, however much they may respect him.

This is really a family of federated churches. Their head is still the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, which the Turks call Istanbul. He is, however, only their *primus inter pares* ("first among equals"). In the United States, the Orthodox Church is one of the four major religious bodies.⁶⁵

Theologically the Eastern Orthodox churches differ from Roman Catholicism in that they baptize by immersion, have always given the laity access to both the bread and the wine of the Eucharist, and allow the majority of their priests to marry. Further, they insist that the Holy Spirit proceeded only from the Father, and not from the Son as well. Above all, they refuse to recognize the pope as the head of Christianity, though they acknowledge him as a senior Archbishop.

Yet these are relatively minor differences, in comparison with the beliefs that they and Catholics share. As Anthony Wilhelm points out, “The Orthodox Churches have the same basic doctrines, moral code, Mass, sacraments, devotion to Mary and the saints, etc., as the Roman Catholic Church.”⁶⁶

This popular writer on Catholicism errs, however, when he states that “the Eastern Orthodox Churches came about when certain ancient Churches, mostly of the Middle East, separated themselves in the 11th century from the authority of the pope.”⁶⁷ On the contrary, some of them—like the one in Antioch—are at least as ancient as the church in Rome. The one at Jerusalem is older. And they did not, as is implied by the quotation, “separate” themselves from the pope’s authority, as though they had previously acknowledged it; for they had never accepted him as more than the first among peers.

Up to the eleventh century, Orthodox Christians had been in normal, full communion with the Roman Church; but when an arrogant pontiff insisted on their full subjugation, anathematizing them for their independent spirit, a schism took place. This means that from 1054 to the present, they simply continued on their own way, but with greater, fiercer independence and an increased determination to resist all papal attempts to treat them as underlings.

The Constantinian church can be described as both Orthodox and Catholic, since each of these branches descended from it; but simply to call it *Roman Catholic* is incorrect, though doctrinally the imperial church began as one religion. Its head, however, was—as we have seen—the emperor, not the pope; and his priorities were not necessarily the same as those of the pontiffs in the West.

But let us now turn our attention in that direction.

IX

We find it painful to record that the celebrated and fascinating Augustine (354-430), “intellectual head of North Africa and the Western church,”⁶⁸ became not only a major architect of much theology for both Catholics and many Protestants, but of cruel intolerance.

He who wrote unforgettably about the Lord and prayed: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee,”⁶⁹ also condoned appalling methods against his separated brothers and sisters, including torture. Rebecca West asserts that he was no saint, only a genius with an appetite for nastiness, in love with love but incapable of it. The God he served was good but not essentially kind, extremely angry with sinners, whom he delighted in

punishing. Augustine “hated all the milder aspects of virtue, he despised the spirit that lets all things flower according to their being.”⁷⁰

We also think he closed his mind to what the so-called heretics had to say, despite his liberal-sounding statement that “truth, wherever it may be found, *must* be avidly accepted.”⁷¹ His famous *Confessions* reveal an awareness of human depravity, yet it seems he realized insufficiently that “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). Without the help of the Holy Spirit, we are incapable of understanding ourselves.

It is a pity that Augustine overlooked his Lord’s rebuke to James and John for urging the destruction of a Samaritan village that had rejected him: “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:56). And why did he not ponder his personal danger? The Saviour had clearly stated: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40). He ought especially to have remembered what Jesus said when he suddenly appeared on the Damascus road to a fanatical Jewish rabbi, whose orthodoxy had made him harass the infant Christian Church (Acts 22:7). Did he not hear the same voice address him in the secret recesses of his mind: “Augustine, Augustine, why persecutest thou me?”

In vain did he profess his compassion for a Donatist bishop whom he was persecuting, when he said, “If you could see the sorrow of my heart and my concern for your salvation, you would perhaps take pity on your own soul.”⁷² We wonder whether the unfortunate man responded with a muttered “Tu quoque” (the same to you)! Augustine should rather have obeyed the Commandment “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13) than to trust his conscience, which was obviously impaired.

By becoming the greatest theorist of persecution, Augustine thought up arguments for the Inquisition of centuries later,⁷³ deserving Johnson’s description of him as “the dark genius of imperial Christianity.”⁷⁴ Froom, in his older book, uses curiously similar language when he says that by acting in this way Augustine “flung a dark shadow over the church.”⁷⁵

He became, inter alia, the mentor of the great medieval churchman Thomas Aquinas, who lived more than eight hundred years later and in his *Summa Theologiae* stated: “Heresy is a sin which merits not only excommunication but also death.”⁷⁶ This is a dogma that Catholicism has never repudiated.

But intolerance was not confined to that religion. Even the earlier Protestant Reformers sometimes blotted their reputations by persecuting Christians whose doctrines differed from theirs, like the Anabaptists. Eventually, however, many gave up this part of their medieval heritage. Some, like Roger Williams, could not imagine a greater sin. Condemning the Puritans’ persecution of dissenters in America, he said the “ravishing and forcing” of another person’s conscience was worse than any form of immorality, whether adultery,

incest, sodomy, or bestiality—as well as being blasphemously heretical.⁷⁷

In *The Grand Inquisitor*, “Dostoevsky laments the craving for a community of worship . . . and for a universal unity,” ascribing to it “the misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time,” since it has been “the source of all religious wars and the root of all attempts at a universal state.”⁷⁸

We think there is much to be said for this view, although the great Russian writer does not go as far as the Bible in explaining why persecution actually became a *doctrine* and “an integral part of medieval Christianity.”⁷⁹ The apostle Paul presents us with a key to understanding when he warns about a coming apostasy characterized by “doctrines of demons” (1. Tim. 4:1). The root of this problem lies much deeper than human psychology.

Augustine continued the persecution of the Donatists, which had already lasted for eighty years. Before he had become bishop of Hippo (395), their church was “huge, flourishing, wealthy and deeply rooted,” but its back was broken by force,⁸⁰ although in the succeeding Vandal period the tables were for a century to be turned on the Catholic persecutors.

Before disappearing from history, the Donatists left a theological monument. One of their writers, Tichonius, was the first to apply Rev. 13 and 17 to their persecutors, the Roman Church, which he identified as respectively the Beast and Babylon.⁸¹ In centuries to come, this interpretation would be taken up by other groups of people harassed by the official church.

It became the classic answer to men like Augustine, who maintained that “The Donatists were heretics, because the bishop of Rome had said so.”⁸² But the pope, they would have retorted, is the Beast, who derives his position not—as he claimed—from the Lamb but from the old serpent and Dragon, the devil himself (Rev. 13:2, 9).

Let us note that though the Donatists were exterminated, their way of thinking was not; reformers of subsequent ages who taught that digraceful behavior disqualifies a bishop, a pontiff, or even a church have spiritually been one of them. One of these was John Wycliffe (c. 1330-84), who said, “If the pope is not a good man . . . then he is not actually pope.”⁸³ Another was the Czech reformer, Jan Hus (c. 1370-1415), who followed in his footsteps, maintaining that “if the pope lived sinfully, he was no true pope at all.”⁸⁴

Among the arguments these and other reformers have used was that God has always insisted on personal holiness for his priests. For instance, he instructed Moses to tell Aaron the high priest that “if any of all your descendants throughout your generations approaches the holy things, which the people of Israel dedicate to the Lord, while he has an uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from my presence” (Lev. 22:3, RSV).

Previously fire from the Lord had incinerated Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron’s sons, for disobediently making an unacceptable sacrifice. On that occasion He said, “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me” (Lev. 10:3). A few generations later, Eli—high priest as

well as judge over Israel—perished, together with Hophni and Phinehas, his wicked sons, for not restraining their impious and immoral conduct (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22-34; 4:1-11, 17, 18). Eventually, King Solomon took the high priesthood away from Eli's descendant Abiathar, for treason and appointed Zadok in his place (1 Kings 2:26, 35).

In sharp contrast with this, the Church of Rome has always maintained—as Monsignor Perras explained to Charles Chiniquy—that her “infallibility and perpetuity . . . does not rest on the personal holiness of her priests; but it rests on the promises of Jesus Christ,” which cannot be invalidated by even gross immorality on their part.⁸⁵ That is, in accordance with the fourth-century stance of the Catholic Church, a priest is a priest and a pope a pope, ordained for life; and nothing they do as individuals can invalidate them in the execution of their office.

This implies a change in the attitude of the Most High since the time of ancient Israel.

And yet the New Testament teaches the same as the Old. Jesus himself rejected religious teachers whose wicked lives discredited them: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their *fruits*. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” (Matt. 7:15-18, emphasis added)

God eventually, after almost two thousand years, turned away from the Jews, the chosen people, for rejecting the Messiah. Much of this sin concerned their clergy, whose high priest Caiaphas condemned him to death (John 18:13-24; Matt. 27:63-65). And so it is plain that an entire church can apostatize and be replaced by another.

X

Augustine also hunted the British-born Pelagius and his followers, whose cells in his mother country, as well as in Spain, Sicily, Rhodes, and Palestine, were identified and broken up.⁸⁶

At this distance in time, it is not always clear what this group believed. Only limited fragments of Pelagius’s ideas have survived. These are quoted in hostile documents, written to refute them.⁸⁷ His followers rejected the doctrine of predestination, so dear to Augustine (and his great disciple Calvin). They also refused to believe in original sin as something ineradicable, maintaining that by the Lord’s enabling power the believer could overcome the bent toward sinning.

We believe Pelagius has been vilified. Even such a usually temperate writer as Bede referred to “his noxious and abominable teaching that man had no need of God’s grace,” and with approval quoted religious doggerel from one Prosper:

Against the great Augustine see him crawl,
This wretched scribbler with his pen of gall!
In what black caverns was this serpent bred
That from the dirt presumes to rear its head?⁸⁸

But this is grossly unfair, for “Pelagius never crudely affirmed that man could be good without God.” After his excommunication, he stated that divine grace “was necessary, not only for every hour or moment but for each individual action of our lives,” though this confession was not accepted.⁸⁹

In dealing with the Pelagians, Catholicism in Africa could be swayed by neither compassion nor scruple. Johnson recounts that “They brought pressure successfully, first on the Bishop of Rome, then on the emperor. Finally, they resorted to direct bribery: eighty fine Numidian stallions, bred on Episcopal estates in Africa, were shipped to Italy and distributed among the various imperial cavalry commanders whose squadrons, in the last resort, imposed Augustine’s theory of grace.” In their fervor to destroy these dissidents, the clerics also excited sociopolitical prejudice against them by slandering them as “disturbers of the public peace, dangerous innovators, men anxious to dispossess the rich and redistribute property.”⁹⁰

Accusing one’s religious opponents of disorderliness, socialism, or undesirable democratic tendencies is an argument that would recur for many centuries to come. It certainly proved effective in helping to eliminate the Pelagians.

XI

As often happens to persecutors, nemesis followed, this time in the form of other, less gentle heretics: the Germanic Vandals, who now invaded the Western Empire. North Africa, apparently so safe behind its Mediterranean moat, was one of the worst affected areas. In 429, the Vandals smashed through all the defenses that the Romans had erected against them. As though guided by an invisible hand, they made their way into Augustine’s diocese, sweeping away his churches and bringing unspeakable woe to the towns and farms of that area. Then they hurried on to Hippo, where his home was.

In 430, as he lay on his deathbed, he could hear the thudding of battering rams against the walls and the tumult of the siege. His last thoughts were beclouded by the loss of his country and this defeat of his beloved Catholicism. Soon afterwards, the Vandals overwhelmed the city. Nobody knows whether he was prepared to meet the Judge.

17 Papal Growth and Western Decline

I

When Constantine accepted Christianity, he showed some esteem for the Roman bishop, Miltiades (reigned 311-14), but regarded the next one, Sylvester I (reigned 314-35), as a nonentity. And yet the Roman Church would one day greatly honor this man as a very special pontiff.

He also issued a decretal to turn the Sabbath into a fast, intending contempt for the Jews to become part of Christian theology.

One of his successors canonized him, and others have adorned his memory with many legends. There is, for example, a picturesque tale of St. Sylvester delivering Rome from a poison-puffing dragon. Allegedly he played a major part in converting and baptizing Constantine. He also cured him of insanity.¹ According to another version, he cured him of leprosy.²

These are all myths. Sylvester died in 335, so he could not possibly have baptized Constantine. This ceremony took place in 337, two years later, and not in Rome, but in an Asian village near Nicomedia. The officiating bishop was Eusebius of that diocese³—who, as already noted, was an Arian.

We would not have brought up these pious fictions about Pope Sylvester and the emperor if they had not been of a piece with the Donation of Constantine. This document was a dangerous forgery of the eighth century, according to which the first Christian emperor had elevated Sylvester and his successors over all the archbishops, also giving them “temporal dominion over Rome, Italy and the entire western world.”⁴ The following paragraph details these and other sweeping claims:

“We [Constantine] ascribe to the Sea of St. Peter, all dignity—all power—all imperial power. Besides, we give to Sylvester and his successors our palace of Lateran—we give him our crown, our mitre, our diadem, and all our imperial vestments—we remit to him the imperial dignity. We give, as a pure gift, to the holy pontiff, the city of Rome, and all the western cities of Italy, as well as the western cities of other countries. In order to give place to him, we yield our dominion over all these provinces, by removing the seat of our empire to Byzantium, considering that it is not right that a terrestrial emperor should presume the least power, where God has established the head of religion.”⁵

For seven hundred years, the Donation would be used to bolster the position of the pope. From time to time, intelligent people expressed their doubts about it—though this could be extremely dangerous. For instance, “in 1478, Christians were burnt at Strasburg for having dared to doubt its authenticity!”⁶ Nevertheless, in that same century, Renaissance scholars courageously exposed it as a tissue of

falsehoods. But this could not retrospectively detract from its historical effect in furthering the aims and strengthening the position of the papacy. In another chapter, we shall have more to say about this document.

The imperial church of Constantine and his successors actually tried to limit the power of the papacy, not to increase it. Therefore, to achieve autonomy and greater stature, the Vatican needed a change in the political situation of Italy and the adjacent territories.

This began in about Sylvester's time, and therefore his reign is important, because it inaugurated a different phase of the Little Horn's development; but there really was no Donation. With the emperor's removal to the new capital on the Bosphorus, for reasons that had nothing to do with the papacy, his power dwindled in the West, leaving a political vacuum which the popes could fill. This, however, did not happen overnight; it required a few centuries.

II

The increasingly puny emperors of the West, representing the one in Constantinople, could no longer cope with the encroaching Germans. In 476, Romulus Augustulus was formally deposed. From now on, the Eastern emperors were unable to intervene in Italian affairs, except sporadically.

All this was most advantageous to the bishop at Rome. He could control Catholicism without effective interference from the Byzantine Christian emperor, who himself insisted on being the head of the church and was therefore able to dominate the Eastern bishops whenever he chose to do so. In Italy, however, the pope could successfully aspire to the purple and become a secular king with a territory of his own, in addition to being the spiritual head of the Roman Church.

But the growth of papal power did not simply come about as a response to outside events. It was persistently and energetically pursued by ambitious bishops and pontiffs, especially Damasus and Leo I, who lived in the final century of the Western Empire.

III

Damasus (366-84) became Bishop of Rome by triumphing over Ursinus, another would-be pope, after three days of bloody fighting between their rival factions.⁷ Fortunately for Damasus, he had the emperor's backing, and his eighteen-year pontificate proved most influential for later years.

The imperial church had just gone through a shattering, though temporary, reversal of fortunes, marked by the rule of the emperor Julian (331-63), who had given up Christianity and returned to paganism.

To strengthen his position, Damasus tried energetically to show that Christianity was already very old; he maintained it had been associated with not only Rome, but even the triumphs of the empire

for more than three hundred years.⁸

This is a peculiar idea, since in earlier times the only significant association of the empire with Christians was its attempts to exterminate them. But in a sense the pope was right. Christianity at Rome had made so many concessions to pagan culture that it was blending with it. Heathen deities became saints, their shrines converted into places of Christian worship. “A Roman temple to Apollo is supplanted by a church of Saint Apollinaris. The temple of Bona Dea, the Good Goddess, is now dedicated to the Madonna.”⁹

During my visit to Monte Cassino and its neighboring towns in 1985, Amerigo Iannacone—a poet of Ceppagna near Venafrò—informed me that his village church had been reared on the remains of Apollo’s temple. To this he added an astonishing and possibly exaggerated statement: “I suppose you know that *all* the Catholic churches in Italy were built on the ruins of pagan temples.”

The custom spread to other countries. During 1994, in the ancient city of Syracuse, Sicily, I photographed a temple of the Greek goddess Minerva. It is now a Catholic church, but much of the original structure is still clearly visible. This mingling of Christianity with the classical tradition was not limited to externals; it went much deeper and has endured through the ages. According to a footnote in Seznec, as late as 1296 “the chapter of Noyon surrounded a Minerva with the inscription: ‘Ave Maria gratia plena’” [Hail Mary, full of grace].¹⁰

At the time when Augustine of Canterbury (d. c. 607) and his successors strove to maneuver Britain into the Roman Church, a papal instruction approved the custom of christianizing heathen deities and temples. This has often been the practice of Catholic missionaries.

Paul Johnson relates that Damasus made much of the early presence in Rome of the apostles Peter and Paul. On this basis, he sought to promote the importance of his church. These saints, he insisted, gave Rome the preeminence over the East, and were also its title for requiring the submission of Western bishops. The pope demanded this at a synod of c. 378 in what was, for the first time, called the “sublime and holy Apostolic See.”¹¹

The argument about the role of Peter and Paul is still of pivotal importance to modern Catholicism, as are the shrines and relics commemorating them in Rome and the Vatican. This may be gauged by the sharp reaction to one particular conclusion of the French historian Goguel, in *The Primitive Church*.

According to M. I. Finley, this man expended his entire, lengthy scholarship on just the first century and a half of our era: up to A.D. 150. Critically surveying the sources, Goguel concluded by expressing extreme skepticism, not only of the Vatican excavations claiming to have uncovered Peter’s tomb, but of the very idea that the apostle had visited Rome at any time: “And so it may be that Peter never came to Rome, or, if he came, he only played an obscure part there. He certainly did not found the Church; neither did he influence its development or determine its orientation.”¹²

Finley adds that nothing else Goguel wrote “is likely to be more abhorrent to many than this particular judgment.”¹³

Indeed, for ultimately the presence of Peter's tomb was much more than a theological argument about his having lived and worked in Rome. According to Southern, "the body within the tomb, which would one day clothe the doorkeeper of heaven, was the link between the presence in heaven and the church on earth;" it was thought that the apostle still worked potently from his grave, although his *persona* was entrusted to the pope.¹⁴

This was deemed important because, among other things, Catholicism is a religion of the dead, even—as Diestre Gil has argued—a kind of spiritualism, with its cult of the saints, the angels, and the Virgin;¹⁵ the faithful not only honor deceased human beings, but through invocations communicate with them. Their relics are supposedly a mystic bridge between the seen and the unseen, the material and the spiritual.

IV

Clerics also strengthened the claim to ecclesiastical seniority on the part of Rome by resorting to forgeries, among them an alleged correspondence between the apostle Paul and the pagan philosopher Seneca.¹⁶ The reader will recall how such misplaced inventiveness, which tampered with historical facts, operated from the time of Irenaeus in the second century until Eusebius in the fourth. The future, too, would frequently show—as in the case of the Donation already referred to—that so-called servants of the Lord are sometimes more ingenious than truth loving. This tendency has falsified much of history, reaching down into modern times. Not only Protestants, but also conscientious Catholics, have noted the fact.

"Among the leading English laity, the liberal historian Lord Acton, who had extensive academic and political contacts on the Continent, went on a tour of European state archives in the years 1864-8, which awoke him to what he termed 'the vast tradition of conventional mendacity,' including the willingness of a triumphalist papacy to employ lying and violence to further essentially secular policies."¹⁷

Lord Acton was himself a member of the Roman Church to his dying day, like Paul Johnson, who in the foregoing paragraph refers to him. Within Catholicism there are also excellent and honest scholars, including these men. As pointed out before, we make a clear distinction between individuals and the system they support.

V

Taking up his duties half a century after Damasus, Leo I was pope for twenty-one eventful years, from 440 to 461. As a thinker and writer, he strengthened his office, further enhancing the prestige of the Western Church. In negotiating with the enemies of Rome, he displayed considerable ability as a diplomat and showed that politically the pontiff was a dependable man.

Seeking to dignify his office, Leo also appealed to the role of the apostle Peter.

There were, of course, some difficulties with invoking the great fisherman as a source of authority. He had been a Palestinian Jew and not a Roman; yet, following in the intellectual footsteps of Damasus, Leo maintained that the visit of Peter and Paul to Rome and their death in it gave special importance to the congregation there. Further, the powers that Christ had supposedly conferred on Peter were assumed to have been passed on to his alleged successors, the bishops of Rome.

The Bible says nothing of ecclesiastical authority being life long, transmitted from one person to another, or centered in the imperial capital; so the clerics produced yet another forgery, “an utterly spurious letter from the first century Pope Clement informing James, the brother of Jesus, at Jerusalem, that St Peter had passed on his powers to Clement and his successors in the presence of the Christian community at Rome.”¹⁸

The reference to James, however, is rather awkward; for deferring to him reveals that the early church considered *him* as its highest human authority. About this the Bible and early church history agree, as becomes clear from both Acts 15 and Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea. Writing his church history in the age of Constantine, he informs his readers that “This James, whom the early Christians surnamed the Righteous because of his outstanding virtue, was the first, as the records tell us, to be elected to the episcopal throne of the Jerusalem church. Clement, in *Outlines* Book VI, put it thus: ‘Peter, James, and John, after the Ascension of the Saviour, did not claim pre-eminence because the Saviour had specially honoured them, but chose James the Righteous as Bishop of Jerusalem.’”¹⁹

Still quoting from Clement, Eusebius also mentions Peter’s married state, to discredit those who were advocating celibacy.²⁰ The New Testament makes it plain that he and other apostles, as well as the brothers of Christ, persisted in their matrimony. What is more, when they went on ministerial trips, their wives accompanied them. (1 Cor. 9:5) All this undermines the view that the great apostle was the first and most important pontiff, and so does the church historian’s account of the relationship between Pope Victor I (c. 186/89-96/99) and other bishops.

As already stated, the papacy was inclined to excommunicate the Asian dioceses for refusing to celebrate Easter on Sundays, since their festival still coincided with the Jewish Passover. Victor’s colleagues had also advocated the change, but they were upset by his inflexibility, and horrified by the idea of cutting off all those churches, whereupon they “very sternly rebuked” him for being so unloving.²¹ This was hardly the attitude of subordinates.

By Leo’s time, however, that episode lay 250 years in the past and could be conveniently overlooked, like the reference to James’s episcopal priority over Peter and the apostle’s matrimony. Furthermore, the pontiff ignored the Eastern bishops, who refused to recognize the supremacy of the Roman Church.

Leo also dealt with the problem of unworthy popes. It had already become clear that pontiffs were not always saintly men. Some led

shocking lives. Did such people not disqualify themselves? After all, in Titus 1:5-10 the apostle Paul had set a very high standard to which ecclesiastical leaders were supposed to conform: "For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quicktempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of goodness, master of himself, upright, holy, and self-controlled" (vv. 7, 8, RSV).

He also had to meet the interesting qualification of being married to one wife and having well-behaved children (v. 6).

Did these requirements not also apply to the bishop of Rome?

Well, it was not quite like that, according to Leo and his intellectual heirs, who frequently found it convenient to ignore what the apostles had taught. The bishop of Rome supposedly derived his powers from his office, not his character as an individual. "Any Pope, whatever his personal failings, was as legitimately entitled to perform his functions and govern the Church as the most morally and intellectually perfect individual."²² Whether a saint or a blackguard, he was—when exercising his office—deemed infallible, and nobody had the right to judge him.²³ A thousand years later, Gregory VII, in his *Dictatus papae*, would reiterate this idea and add to it: the pontiff "once ordained according to canonical law, becomes indubitably holy by the merit of St Peter."²⁴

This convenient doctrine of defensive theology had its origin before Leo I in an earlier generation, which persecuted the Donatists precisely for maintaining that a cleric's wickedness or apostasy disqualified him from sacred office. The Catholic bishops did not agree with such an old-fashioned Biblical idea, and by Leo's time the popes had reached a fateful finality on the issue; nor did a concept such as "the merit of St Peter," rather than that of the Saviour, strike them as peculiar.

Henceforth no criticism of individual pontiffs would be given any theological weight, except by those who voiced it. These at times included great emperors, who were perfectly good Catholics and sometimes better Christians than the popes they were dealing with. But whenever feasible, such critics would simply be treated as heretics and silenced forever, or so the churchmen hoped.

Leo, following in the footsteps of Augustine and others before him, again set the seal on this gruesome procedure. About eighty years before his pontificate began, in 384, the Council of Bordeaux had condemned Priscillian and his followers as heretics. He "himself, two presbyters, two deacons, Latronian, a poet, and Euchrocia, the widow of an orator of Bordeaux,—seven in all,—were beheaded, while others were banished." In 447, Leo "justified the execution of Priscillian and his associated heretics, and declared the righteousness of the penalty of death for heresy."²⁵

The pontiff's claim to infallibility also created a convenient precedent for the future. It became an official Catholic doctrine in 1870.

VI

Few were the popes that would willingly relinquish this idea. But Merle D'Aubigné refers to one such man: the Dutch-born Pope Adrian VI (1459-1523) from Utrecht. "Just, active, learned, pious, sincere, and of irreproachable morals, he permitted himself to be blinded neither by favour nor passion." In a book reprinted at Rome, he declared, "It is certain that the pope may err in matters of faith, in defending heresy by his opinions or decretals."²⁶

Merle D'Aubigné adds an interesting argument: "If the ultramontanists reply that Adrian was mistaken on this point, by this very circumstance they affirm what they deny, viz. the fallibility of the popes."²⁷

But one swallow doth not a summer make, and soon—after just a year on St. Peter's throne—the Dutchman was gone. The popes who succeeded him waxed even more enthusiastic about the doctrine on which Leo had insisted so long before. The Italians, moreover, determined to safeguard their church against the overly conscientious clerics from northern Europe, saw to it that for another four hundred years (until John Paul II) no foreigner would be elected to the papal office.

Leo I entertained no doubts about who should be supreme. Vigorously and completely, he subordinated to himself the churches of North Africa and the West, though the archbishops of the eastern Mediterranean refused to acknowledge him as their superior; for they "never allowed another see to achieve singular success."²⁸

VII

During the fifth century, the Western Empire was rapidly falling apart. As Barbara Habenstein puts it in her book on cities, "Urban society all but vanished as people scattered to the countryside. From the fifth to the ninth centuries, cities shrank into towns and towns into villages as the people retreated into an agricultural way of life."²⁹ Increasingly, Rome had to face its enemies without effective imperial assistance. In these circumstances, the papacy took over many functions normally associated with the secular state. For this task it was well equipped.

At first, the church membership in Rome had consisted largely of Greek-speaking slaves and immigrants. As time went on, however, Christianity penetrated into Latin-speaking circles, including the upper classes. After Constantine's conversion, the leadership of the church became identified with the aristocracy, especially the senatorial class. These people were incredibly wealthy, cultured, and very Roman. They also possessed administrative expertise.

Johnson tells how "this social stratum, with its traditions of authority and decision-making, provided bishops not only for Rome itself but for many other Italian sees," for "just as the Roman upper class had once been associated with state paganism, so now it was tied to Christianity." In many cases, the aristocrats also transferred their

immense estates to the church, though their descendants still controlled them.³⁰ A great deal of the landed property in Italy was eventually run by ecclesiastics. In Leo's time the church was "becoming the greatest property owner in the peninsula."³¹

This pattern persisted in the centuries that followed. The decline of imperial authority in the West enabled the papacy to take over huge stretches of Roman territory together with its administrative apparatus. In this way, the Little Horn was eventually able to establish a rump state of the empire—especially since it came to own so much of Italy. The philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) expressed this rather picturesquely three hundred years ago: "The Papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof."³²

That, however, concerns only the temporal aspect, which can hardly explain the total power of the popes. After all, the Papal State in Italy ended in 1870, and yet the pontiff today is potentially the most powerful man on earth.

One key for understanding the abiding strength of Catholicism through the ages is that in ecclesiastical matters the pope is a king, an absolute monarch. This means that for well over a thousand years most of Western Christianity was, in matters of conscience, subject to the most enduring dictatorship that our planet has ever known. The basic reason is that the supreme pontiff supposedly has, as each sincere Catholic is required to believe, an awesome ability to open or shut the gates of the hereafter.

This ensures compliance, even by those who intensely dislike the papal system. Who, after all, wants to be plunged into an everlasting hell?

The idea that churchmen can control one's future destiny began with the perversion of the bishop's office and culminated in papal domination. The dictatorship of the popes has at various times produced an immense amount of bloodshed and other excesses, which such a form of government necessarily entails. A glaring example has been the operations of the Inquisition. Lord Acton put his finger on the basic problem when he uttered his famous words: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

This goes beyond the well-known fact that a good number of popes have been wicked men, committing horrendous crimes. After all, many pontiffs have been sincere and extremely hard working, possessed of admirable personal qualities. But that is really not the point. Dictators are not all evil, but dictatorship is and invariably leads to inhuman abuses. The principal defect of Catholicism is the institution of the papacy itself.

VIII

The Little Horn benefited immensely by the conversion of Constantine and the political vacuum left in Italy when he established his capital on the Bosphorus. Without much imperial interference, the papacy could grow into a system that would dangerously amalgamate religious and secular power.

18 Words Against the Most High

I

Nothing astounded Daniel more than the boastful words which issued from the Little Horn, for he refers to them repeatedly—no fewer than four times in chapter seven. Each time they are closely linked to the destructiveness of that power, in uprooting three other horns or in warfare against “the saints,” i.e., *the holy ones*. This last phrase is used with considerable emphasis, occurring six times.

We also read that “in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things” (vs. 8, RSV). It would also “think to change the times and the law” (vs. 25, RSV).

After staring horror-struck at the terrible beast and its arrogant horn, Daniel saw the heavenly court in session. He wondered about the creature’s final fate “because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking” (vs. 11, RSV) and heard the Lord’s judgment pronounced in favor of his saints. Then the beast was killed and its body consumed in a blazing fire.

Some of the details about the scenes passing before him puzzled the prophet, so in his vision he approached a bystander that was also witnessing the judgment. He asked for an explanation of the fourth beast and its horns, especially the last one “that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things” (vs. 20). He was told that its utterances constituted “words against the most High” (vs. 25), that is, blasphemy.

Religious persecution, presumptuous utterances, and a tendency to tamper with the commandments of God were all to characterize this power. Continuing our identification of the Little Horn as the papacy and the system built around it, let us in this chapter inquire whether it has overstepped the mark by indulging in offensive speech.

We maintain that it has done so.

Down from the time of Irenaeus in the late second century, the bishops—especially those at Rome—made far-reaching claims. They insisted they had the right to dictate what Christians should believe, the ability to forgive sins, and the power to consign offending laymen or clerics to everlasting punishment. In short, these mighty overseers of the church allegedly “ruled in the place of God,” and to speak ill of them was to slander God himself!¹

Through the ages, this extraordinary idea has been productive of startling statements. Here are two from an eighteenth-century Catholic encyclopedia: “The Pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were God, and the vicar of God,” and “the Pope is crowned with a triple crown, as king of heaven and of earth and of the lower regions.”²

The first of these claims echoes a sentence uttered by the Venetian prelate Christopher Marcellus (1512-17) at a church Council just before the Protestant Reformation. Addressing that warlike pontiff

Julius II (1503-13), who often wore armor and even rode a horse on the battlefield, Marcellus exclaimed enthusiastically, “Thou art our shepherd, thou art our physician, thou art our ruler, thou art our husbandman, thou, finally, art another *God on earth*” (emphasis added).³ As shown in a previous chapter, “The Beast Converted,” the pontiffs inherited this title—like *Pontifex Maximus* (“high priest”) and *Vicarius Christi* (“the Vicar of Christ”)—not from the lowly Peter or Jesus, but from the Roman emperors, especially Constantine.

On 18 March 1871, a few months after Catholicism had decreed the infallibility of the pope, *La Civiltà Cattolica* lauded him by saying: “He is the vicegerent of Christ, and is not only a priest forever, but also King of kings and Lords of lords.”⁴ This last expression is an awesome title to be borne by Jesus when he returns to save his saints and to destroy his enemies (Rev. 19:16).

On 20 June 1894, Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) in an Encyclical Letter repeated the idea that the pontiff was virtually divine: “We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.”⁵

But the apostle Peter, from whom the pontiffs allegedly derive their position, refused to be treated as a god or a demigod. We see this in his encounter with Cornelius, the Roman officer to whose household he brought the message of salvation. As the apostle came to his home in Caesarea, the centurion fell down at his feet and tried to worship him. “But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:26). Not “another God on earth.” Just a human being.

Is this papal tall talk, which began in the distant past and persisted down to modern times, not a fulfillment of the prophecy that the Little Horn would have “a mouth speaking great things” (Dan. 7:8)?

It was already doing so when Pope Leo I (440-61) appeared on the scene, some fifteen hundred years ago. According to Cheetham, this pontiff stressed the opinion that the popes had succeeded to the authority of Peter, whom Christ allegedly appointed to head the church.⁶ He also reemphasized another idea, initially developed to counter Donatist attacks on unworthy bishops, namely that these derived their powers from their *office*; therefore, however deficient their personal characters might be, they were for this reason immune to criticism. Nobody had the right to judge them. Building on this tradition, Leo asserted that nobody had the right to judge the popes because they were *infallible*!⁷

II

In our time, these ideas still lie at the heart of Catholic theology. For instance, Malachi Martin maintains that the pontiff “is the sole living representative of God among men; is endowed with absolute authority to teach God’s salvation as revealed through his son, Jesus Christ, who was and is God himself made man . . . Catholic teaching holds that any Roman Catholic, any non-Catholic Christian, or any non-Christian of whatever other religion who receives God’s salvation receives it through the spiritual office of that one man in Rome and the merits of his Church of believers.”⁸

On 5 September 2000, the Vatican restated this doctrine under the title *Dominus Jesus*. Though the document seeks to be generous to believers outside the Roman Church and even non-Christians, it maintains that “the Church of Christ . . . continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church.”⁹ Other communities that also believe in apostolic succession and practice “a valid Eucharist” are acknowledged as “true particular Churches,” but “ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery . . . are not Churches in the proper sense.”¹⁰

This last sentence does not mention Protestants by name, yet it obviously refers to them. They, as well as Jews and Moslems, have been shocked by these ideas. Probably most offended are the Anglican bishops, angry because the Roman clergy will not serve communion to members of their church. Catholics are also not allowed to receive it at the hand of Anglican priests.¹¹ Neither the very great doctrinal similarity between the two denominations nor a century of ecumenical overtures can avail to bridge the gap. The basic problem is the demand that Anglicans, like all Protestants, must renounce the Reformation by submitting to and acknowledging the supremacy of the pope.

Non-Catholics should not be upset or even surprised by the pronouncements of *Dominus Jesus*, for this is what the Vatican has always taught. They do, however, need to reconsider the ecumenical movement. For Catholicism, it is mostly a dating game: smiles and flowers and candlelight; seductive music and incense; the allurements of sometimes worshipping together—to woo them back into the bosom of the Roman Church.

III

Christians who fully believe the Bible reject the papacy’s arrogant claims. Some of these, they think, are blasphemous, for instance the idea that any mere human being can pardon each and every sin, or should be treated as though he were akin to God.

The Jewish theologians criticized Jesus on this very point. On one occasion they asked, “Who can forgive sins but God only?” (Mark 2:7). On another they said, “For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (John 10:33).

The Most High considers his divinity so important that the first three commandments of the Decalogue are designed to build a hedge around it. Believers are not allowed to worship anybody or anything else apart from him or to adore an image. Even his name must be handled very carefully. This concept is also summarized in the *Shema*, the creedal core of Judaism: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:4, 5). Jesus also quoted and endorsed these words as the “first of all the commandments” (Mark 12:29, 30). To call an ordinary human being God is a breach of this very holy law.

Acts 12:20-23 records the fate of King Herod (Agrippa I), the tyrant who had murdered the apostle James and was threatening Peter's life. One day he appeared in resplendent royal garments and seated himself on his throne before a crowd of flatterers, who listened to his speech and then exclaimed: "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!" Pagans honored their kings and especially the Roman emperor with such talk, but Herod knew the law of God and should have refused their adulation. Unfortunately for him, he indulged his vanity and kept quiet, basking in their praise. A terrible fate overtook him: "Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

He filled up the cup of his transgressions and died when he ignored the Decalogue. Its first commandment states: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3), and the second that Yahweh is "a jealous God," who will not tolerate idolatry of any kind (vs. 5). No mere human being can be called or treated as "another God on earth," without incurring the ire of heaven—whether that person is a king, a pope, or anybody else.

C. S. Lewis has provided us with penetrating comments on Jesus' claim to divinity. This deeply disturbed his Jewish contemporaries, for "God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world Who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips."¹² For this, our Lord was condemned and crucified.

The ability to pardon or not to pardon sins is a divine prerogative. We can all forgive a fellow human being that has wronged us personally. But nobody can do so otherwise, in relation to others whose attitudes and actions have not impacted on him personally. "Unless the speaker is God, this is really so preposterous as to be comic."¹³

The Little Horn has derived much power from this "preposterous" idea, and therefore Heaven does not think it a laughing matter.

Our Lord had good answers to meet contemporary critics who accused him of blasphemy. Above all, he had been sent from heaven and was God. But Jesus would not tolerate the elevation of his apostles to such or a similar status, with lofty titles that often constitute a claim to lordship. He told them outright that in the church no human being was to dominate; for theological dictatorship usurps the prerogatives of God. Therefore, he said, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you" (Mark 10:42, 43).

He also warned them not even to use titles like *rabbi* ("my teacher"), for "one is your Master, even Christ," and especially not *father*, "for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt. 23:8, 9). And yet the word "father" or "padre," its Latin equivalent, is often applied to priests, while the pope is called the "Holy Father"!

As for Peter, with whom according to Catholicism the papacy began, our Lord specifically commanded him not to meddle in the

affairs of the other apostles. We read this in the final chapter of the fourth Gospel, which recounts how Jesus reinstated the man that had denied him during his trial before the high priest. Afterwards Peter turned around and saw “the disciple whom Jesus loved”—that is, the apostle John—and asked inquisitively, “Lord, what about this man?” (John 21:20-21, RSV)

Let us carefully note the Saviour’s answer. He did not say, “Peter, since you will be heading my church, let me tell you that . . .” No, he said, “If I will that he tarry till I come, *what is that to thee?* follow thou me” (vs. 22, emphasis added). In other words: Your fellow apostles fall outside your jurisdiction, so you need not even know what I have in mind for John.

IV

But did Jesus not say that he would build his church on Peter, according to Matt. 16:18? Protestants have often answered this question with a blunt denial, as though this could not in any sense be true. And yet, as the wise old Greeks—much given to moderation—used to say, μηδεν ἄγαν (mēden agan, “nothing too much”), let us not take this to excess. The Lord did bless the apostle for his great confession. About this there can be no doubt.

We note, however, that there is more than meets the eye to the statement “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). In the original, the words “Peter” and “rock” are deliberately contrasted. The former, πέτρος (petros) means “a stone” and the latter, πέτρα (petra), “a fixed rock.”¹⁴ Though these forms are similar—the English derivative “petrified” may be derived from either of them—there is a difference, which is the basis for a significant pun. *Petros* is Jesus’ nickname for the apostle, who was officially Simon Bar-Jona. But to anyone who knows Greek, the sentence clearly states: “I also say to you, that you are a stone, and upon this rock I will build my church.” This statement includes a cautionary element, to warn the apostle against his frequent over-confidence and presumption.

Let us look more closely at the context. The same chapter demonstrates that the gates of hell almost immediately afterwards did prevail against Peter—which caused the Lord, at least for the time being, to repudiate him in a startlingly brutal way. Soon after the apostle’s great confession, according to the same chapter, Jesus had gone on to tell his disciples “how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matt. 16:21). At this point, Peter presumptuously rejected the word of his Lord and even reprimanded him. Immediately the Saviour said: “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matt. 16:23).

When inspired by the heavenly Father, Peter the unstable stone could be associated with Jesus, the true and immovable rock. But when he yielded to the devil’s influence, he became the mouthpiece of Satan. The same is true of all Christians, including the pope in Rome.

The church was built not just on Peter, but also equally on the other apostles. One of them, Nathaniel, had even recognized and hailed the Nazarene as the divine Messiah much earlier. That was at his very first meeting with Jesus. Let us note these two apostles' very similar confessions of faith. Nathaniel exclaimed: "Thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). It was some time after him that Peter declared: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Matt. 16:16). The latter was speaking on behalf of all the apostles, and the Lord, as noted, never said he would build his church on the *petros*, only on the *petra*. But did Jesus not also make him a personal promise, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19)? Yes, he did. Yet in this case, too, he spoke to Peter as a spokesman for all the apostles and even disciples acting in concert. How can we know this? Just two chapters later, we find a closely parallel text, where plural pronouns are used: "Verily I say unto you [all], Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18).

The Christian Church as a divine institution was, moreover, erected not only on the apostles' confession, but also on the Old Testament Scriptures, written by Isaiah, Daniel, and the other prophets. Is this some strange new doctrine? Not at all. Paul says so explicitly where he informs his Christian converts that they are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20).

The last part of this statement is based on a passage in Isaiah, who wrote, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Is. 28:16), which Peter also quotes (1 Pet. 2:6).

V

Just before his crucifixion, Jesus announced that after his return to heaven the church would have a new head to represent him on earth: not an apostle or a pope, but the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-25; 16:7-14). There was to be no human Vicar, for the third Person of the godhead himself would teach the truth, convert the sinner, and link the believer with heaven.

For the first few centuries, when Western Catholicism constituted only one branch of the imperial church, there was no general belief that everything hinged on that one apostle. "Leo I was the first Roman pontiff to claim (about A.D. 445) that his authority came from Christ through Peter."¹⁵ We have already dealt with this presumptuous pope, above and in an earlier chapter, "Papal Growth and Western Decline." We shall therefore now confine ourselves to only a few additional remarks—about apostolic succession and its underpinning: the ordination of clergymen.

The Roman and even many Protestant churches make much of this

ceremony. Without it, nobody can become a Catholic priest, a bishop, or a pope. Christian ordination is said to have begun when Jesus chose the original apostles, and their office could be passed on only through a similar rite. The reader may therefore be surprised, or even at first incredulous, to learn that in referring to the Twelve the Greek New Testament never uses the word “ordination” or says that the Lord laid his hands on any of them. In all four Gospels, we read that he made or appointed them as apostles, not that he “ordained” them. The same applies to Matthias, whom the believers elected to take the place of Judas Iscariot (Acts. 1:26).

We do not deny that the twelve apostles were ordained through the laying on of hands. But the failure of all the Gospels to mention any such detail is startling, if the physical act were really so important. We think the Holy Spirit did not want this information to be included in the Bible, because he foreknew that the great Mediterranean apostasy—and others, too—would abuse the rite of ordination. Between the apostles and the pontiffs there is an awkward hiatus, the more so because the New Testament is totally silent about apostolic succession, which is a myth. The apostle Peter was uniquely Peter, and all the popes were likewise only themselves.

VI

But what about the idea that nobody has the right to judge the pontiff? Interestingly enough, the Bible in a certain sense also deals with this issue, where it mentions how Paul reprimanded Peter, the “first pope,” in public:

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” (Gal. 2:11-14)

For this passage, some Bibles (like the RSV) uses the name *Cephas*, which is a transliteration of Peter’s original Aramaic name.¹⁶ According to Catholic tradition, he was the first and greatest of the pontiffs. Therefore, he should have been infallible, and could also not be judged by anybody.

But here we find Paul, another apostle—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—pointing out that Peter committed not only a personal sin, but also a theological error. Furthermore, the great apostle reproached him in public. Surely that was judging “the pope,” who in this case proved to be far from infallible!

Paul’s ecclesiastical status was unusual. His baptism, ordination, and ministerial status were all—from a later point of view—irregular.

First, he was not baptized by a priest or pastor but apparently by an ordinary member, “a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias,” divinely sent to him (Acts 9:10-18, RSV). Second, none of the apostles and nobody from the Jerusalem headquarters was involved in his ordination; the “prophets and teachers” at a local congregation in Antioch laid their hands on him and sent him on his way as a missionary (Acts 13:1-3). Yet even this, as he is careful to point out, did not endow him with his apostleship. He states this boldly and distinctly, in Gal. 1:1, where he calls himself “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead . . .)” Third, he received no regular salary from the Church but was a self-supporting worker: a layman, so to speak. Nevertheless, he insisted his office was as important as that of the original Twelve: “For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (2 Cor. 11: 5), which, of course, included Peter.

In Catholic parlance, Paul was outside and disconnected from apostolic succession. This, however, has not prevented the Roman Church from appropriating this exceedingly important man as one of its own. A whole batch of pontiffs have—right down to our time—named themselves after him. But some unintended symbolism is perhaps conveyed by the fact that Paul’s traditional tomb is not located anywhere in the Vatican or Rome but considerably outside them. The church where his remains, whether real or mythical, quietly lie and await the resurrection is called the Outside the Walls basilica, which I visited in 1985.

This unusual apostle occupied a unique position in the early church. He founded so much of it, he was its chief theologian, and he wrote 100 chapters of the New Testament, with 2,325 verses. Peter produced only 8, with 166 verses. This is rather strange if the latter was the “first pope.” If so, why did he have so little to say to the church?¹⁷ Incidentally, just three men wrote most of the New Testament: Paul, Luke, and John.

Not only modern Protestants recognize Paul’s preeminence. The church Fathers also thought he was a very special person, the Apostle par excellence. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) wrote: “So when ‘apostle’ is said, if it be not expressed what apostle, none is understood save Paul.”¹⁸ His contemporary, Chrysostom (c. 347-407), patriarch of Constantinople, expressed the same opinion: “When you say apostle, at once all think of Paul, just as when you say Baptist they think of John.”¹⁹

Yet he did not flaunt his authority to boost his own importance. He rather used it to defend the purity of the gospel, and to reject the idea that anybody’s ecclesiastical position could justify deviant doctrines. Paul was especially displeased when anybody tried to bring false doctrines into the church.

According to him, no rank or position could excuse this activity; it would damn whoever engaged in it, including any apostle or even a celestial being—for to the Galatians he wrote: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which

we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). His paramount interest was not position in the church but the centrality of truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

In Acts 20, we read of Paul’s final voyage to Jerusalem, where he would be arrested and later shipped to Rome. He was deeply concerned about the future of the congregations he had established. Unfortunately he had no time to spend in Asia Minor, yet he especially wanted to say goodbye to the church leaders of Ephesus, where he had labored for three years. So he sent a message for them to meet him at the harbor town of Miletus, thirty miles away, where he spoke with them at length. Apart from referring to the afflictions that probably awaited him, he had an important final message for them, since “they should see his face no more” (vs. 38).

Luke, the author of Acts, refers to these men as “elders,” but Paul said the Holy Spirit had made them “overseers” of God’s church (vs. 28). Speaking Greek, he used the plural of ἐπίσκοπος (*episkopos*), the original word for *bishop*. Let us also note that “In the 1st century A.D. ‘elder’ (cf. v. 17) and ‘bishop’ are practically interchangeable terms.”²⁰

One of the important things the apostle told his friends from Ephesus was that some church leaders would turn away from the truth. Even “from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert . . .” (vv. 30, 31, RSV). Indeed, it was the bishops in particular who brought about the great apostasy from New Testament Christianity. One bishopric was destined to harbor the Antichrist.

In Paul’s time, many people thought the Second Coming of Christ was near. But he rejected the idea, because—as he warned his first-century readers—“that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thess. 2:3, 4, RSV).

VII

The Antichrist would not be an outsider but arise from within the church, where he would elevate himself. By calling him “the son of perdition,” Paul compares him to the false apostle who betrayed his Lord and sold him for thirty pieces of silver, for only one other person used this expression: Jesus, when addressing his heavenly Father in his last prayer before the Passion (John 17:12). The son of perdition was Judas Iscariot, who loved money more than God.

Paul had something similar in mind when, toward the end of his ministry, he said his final goodbye to the elders of Ephesus: “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:29, 30) The Lawless one would be even more than another Judas. His career would in a sense repeat the history of Lucifer, the angel that

fell for inventing “a gospel” contrary to the truth, for which he will one day suffer the ultimate penalty. Note how 2 Thess. 2:3, 4 in its wording parallels the following lines from Isa. 14:

For thou hast said in thine heart,
I will ascend into heaven;
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:
I will sit also upon the mount of congregation,
in the sides of the north:
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will be like the most High.

(vv. 13, 14)

Paul said the Antichrist would come through the activity of Satan. He would also claim to be “like the most High” and sit in a lofty religious place, deceiving many people. Finally, however, he is to be slain by the Lord Jesus when He comes (2 Thess. 2:8-12).

Some may question the appropriateness of applying the word “antichrist” to the papacy, since it is surely not *against* our Lord. Such an objection is partly based on a misunderstanding of the prefix *anti-*. In English it usually has the sense of “against,” but in Greek—the New Testament language—it also means “instead, in the place of.”²¹ And both these senses may apply simultaneously; the Redeemer’s great adversary could be “one who, assuming the guise of Christ, opposes Christ.”²²

While we have been focusing on the pope, we need to realize that the entire system of which he is the apex is based on this notion that the clergy can substitute for the Lord. Let us note how McGuire’s Catechism puts it: “Bishops and priests of the Church are called ‘other Christs.’ They alone have the power to represent or to take the place of Christ, in preaching His Gospel and in offering His sacrifice for the glory of God and the salvation of men.”²³ Through his ordination, a priest is supposed to receive “special supernatural powers,” particularly “to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and to forgive sins in the sacrament of Penance.”²⁴ Here we have two astounding claims: that every Catholic priest is another Christ and that, like God, he is able to pardon sin.

In strict theological terms, our sins can be forgiven only if we speak directly to our heavenly father, pleading with him in Jesus’ name. Though others pray for us and can help us to pray, this personal approach is indispensable.

We dare not, in a matter as important as our eternal salvation, trust in any mortal human being, dead or alive: not Mary, the Saviour’s mother, and no priest or minister. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). This redemption also cannot come through the Eucharist but only by the single, unrepeatable sacrifice of the One that hung from the nails on a Roman cross as he

poured out his life for us.

It is terrible that millions have trusted, throughout their lives and up to the bitter moment of death, in a merely human priest and taken him at his word when he said, "I absolve you!" As Protestants, we believe that God does not recognize such words by a priest, who is blasphemously usurping divine authority. So are all those millions lost, including our Catholic ancestors for many, many centuries?

I hope and think not, though many will not agree with me. The Lord who loves us is not limited by theology. Those that go down to the grave relying on the say-so of a priest are in a position similar to pagans that perish without Christ—and yet the Saviour died for all of them. I therefore believe he will on his own initiative, though also on his own terms, take up the case of all who finished their lives in honest ignorance but truly repented, yearning for salvation. But there is no hope for anyone who knowingly turns from the fountain of life to the dry and broken cisterns of a human priesthood.

Much sweeter is the outlook of all who rely on the Scriptures, like Augustus M. Toplady, who wrote in 1776, America's special year:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power. . . .

In writing of the Antichrist, Paul did not suggest the lawless one would create an atheistic system, such as Communism, which denies religion altogether. On the contrary, he would arise within the church itself. This power would oppose the Lord by supplanting him, because it establishes itself *in the place of* the Most High.

There are papal titles or descriptions that incorporate this idea, for instance *vicarius filli Dei* "the vicar of the Son of God" and "the vicar of God." The word "vicar," the English form of the Latin *vicarius* (originally an adjective), means "deputed, put in place of."²⁵

John Cornwell, a modern Catholic author, has noted a startling phrase by Giovanni Montini, the later Pope Paul VI (1963-78), who even wrote of the pontiffs as the "successors of Christ!"²⁶

Papal presumption seems to have no limits, as John Henry Newman, Britain's most famous convert to the Roman Church, was able to observe in his time. Soon after he became a Catholic in 1845, the longest pontificate in history began: the 32-year reign of Pius IX (1846-78), who is often referred to by his Italian name as Pio Nono.

In 1870, this man had himself (and all popes) declared infallible by the first Vatican Council; that is, he could not err whenever he officially expressed opinions about faith and morals. From the earliest period, the pontiffs had liked to believe this of themselves, but over the centuries many kings and bishops—long since moldered into dust—had contradicted them or snorted derisively into their tankards at the very idea.

But now, at last, the popes achieved their heart's desire. Pius IX also sought to centralize all power in himself, especially by acquiring a new and most important monopoly: the appointment of bishops everywhere. Previously this had often been the prerogative of the Catholic hierarchy and others in the various countries where they lived and worked.

All this raised the papal office to an even higher position than it had enjoyed in the Middle Ages.

Noting Pio Nono's career, poor Newman—ever the thinker, ever the liberal heart—took up his pen and in anguish wrote: "It is not good for a Pope to live twenty years. It is an anomaly and bears no good fruit; he becomes a god, has no one to contradict him, does not know facts, and does cruel things without meaning it."²⁷ In former centuries, a redeeming feature had been the shorter life expectancy of the pontiffs, who usually began as elderly men and often died within a very few years. Modern medicine has to a large extent abolished this benefit.

History reveals that in the Roman Church, ecclesiastical power became a usurpation of the Lord's own prerogatives by human beings who thought they could even change the Law of God.

We have already noted the enthusiasm of Lucius Ferraris who said that the pope was "not a mere man, but as it were God" and the "king of heaven and of earth and of the lower regions." It would be interesting to know the reaction of the angels, not to mention Christ and the divine Father, to this claim. Do they acknowledge the right of the Roman pontiffs to lord it even over them? This is hard to imagine.

The word "lawlessness," in Paul's prophecy, requires some explanation. It is also used by another apostle, who wrote, "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4, RSV). Transgression is always a refusal to submit to the will of God as declared in his Word. It opposes the Law he has given to govern all intelligent beings. Every wrong action constitutes a small-scale repetition of Lucifer's fall. As Roy Adams puts it, "the temptation to autonomy and independence from God is the essence of sin, and it lies at the root of the entire tragedy of evil."²⁸

In the next chapter, we will discuss how the Antichrist not only broke the law of God, but also tried to change it.

VIII

Let us finally ask about the views of the apostle Peter, who supposedly empowered his "successors" to do anything they like. After all, many deviations from the Bible have been taught in this apostle's name. What was his general attitude to the Scriptures? In his first letter, he points out, "You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23, RSV). He goes on to stress this idea by quoting freely from Isa. 40:6-8:

All flesh is as grass,
and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.

The grass withereth,
and the flower therefore falleth away:
But the word of the Lord
endureth forever.

(Vs. 24)

Nowhere did Peter suggest that he had any right or inclination to change or tamper with the Scriptures, an idea that would have horrified him. Instead, when he wrote his second letter, he (like Paul) predicted a coming apostasy in the church: “There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies” (2 Pet. 2:1). He went on to give a terrible picture of the corruptions that would result. Finally he warned about God’s judgments against such people.

He emphasized that the Lord would punish all who rebelled against him. Like Paul, he stated that not even angels—belonging to a higher order than us—could be spared when they rose up against God; they were cast out, to await the judgment of the damned (vs. 4). This includes Lucifer, the loftiest of all created beings, the covering cherub, who used to stand in the very presence of God.

Peter said the false teachers would “turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (vs. 21), which is what the Little Horn has done, as we will show. For this, it merits its bitter portion in the judgment day.

Yet we also wish to repeat what we also said in another chapter: nothing stated here or elsewhere is intended as an attack on individual Catholics. It is the system that is wrong. Its members are often honestly ignorant of their real situation, or of God’s extreme displeasure with the great apostasy that the Little Horn represents. Many who belong to its church are sincere, though deluded, children of God—and he loves them deeply.

So it is necessary to address them in the words that Paul first spoke to the wise men of Athens: “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31, RSV)

19 Tampering With God's Law

I

The Ten Commandments are the only part of the Bible written by God himself. The Scriptures consist of sixty-six books, containing hundreds of chapters. To communicate with the world directly, the Lord used prophets and other inspired authors—except for his Law, which takes up only seventeen verses of Exodus 20.

Not even Moses was allowed the privilege of writing it down, so that nobody could say the Ten Commandments were the invention of that great man. No, in this case God decided on a completely different and extraordinary procedure.

First, as becomes clear from Ex. 19 and 20, he descended personally, majestically, on Mount Sinai to address an entire nation in audible words. That was perhaps the most remarkable event in our planet's history, apart from the Incarnation, when God became a man. Next, the Almighty wrote his law with his own finger (Ex. 31:18). For this, he used not papyrus, parchment, or metal, but stone—the most durable material available in ancient times.

We also read, however, that Moses smashed the first set of tables on his way down from Sinai, when he saw the Israelites prancing in worship before a golden calf (Ex. 32:19). He intended this breakage to symbolize the cancellation of their covenant with God, by which they had agreed to serve him only (19:5-8).

Afterwards we might have expected the Lord to say, "Well, Moses, since you broke those tables on which I had expended my valuable time, you will just have to rewrite them yourself!" But that is not how it happened. Instead, he commanded, "Cut two tables of stone like the first; and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which you broke" (34:1, RSV).

God was not prepared to commit the writing of his basic law for the human race to even such an exalted man as Moses, because he knew that in ages to come theologians would tamper with the Ten Commandments, often in a most unlikely place: the Jewish synagogue and its continuation, the Christian church. The latter would produce the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:4). That the Lord himself rewrote his law would leave these presumptuous religionists, including the Lawless One, without an excuse in the final day of reckoning.

Moses also had to warn the Israelites: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). Modifying religion by introducing extra ideas and observances not taught in the Bible is often the first step toward more grievous changes. Therefore, the Scriptures contain a

further admonition: “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:5, 6).

II

Heaven gave yet another warning, when Jesus the Messiah came and on the mount of blessings announced: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. [Or as Luke 16:17 expresses it: “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.”] Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:17-19)

The Saviour rebuked the religious leaders of his time for officially emphasizing the law of God while really undermining it through their traditions. “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, ‘Honour thy father and thy mother’ . . . but ye say, ‘If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban,’ that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered; and many such like things do ye.” (Mark 7:9-13)

These theologians also sabotaged the Sabbath by attaching to it a multitude of taboos, so that the Jews found it almost impossible to keep and intelligent Gentiles could ridicule it. But Jesus said that deeds of a humanitarian nature, like healing the sick, were permissible on God’s holy day. He also taught that the Creator had instituted it to be a joy and a blessing to the human race. “The sabbath,” he insisted, “was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

In the 1960s, I still played chess, and often with a Jewish merchant from whom I first learned how he and his people were still groaning under a self-imposed burden, which Jesus desired to remove from them. This man had an intriguing slant on the many rules and regulations with which the rabbis had encumbered the fourth commandment. He said to me, “It is impossible to keep the Sabbath; but fortunately we do not need to keep it, if we give financial support to someone else who does!” Therefore, his store remained open on the seventh as on any other day.

While this sort of reasoning is probably not an official part of Judaism, it is a fact that very many Jews do not really observe the Sabbath and are glad to find some alibi to excuse themselves—even though it is an everlasting and obligatory sign of Israel’s covenant relationship with the Lord (Ex. 31:16, 17).

That, unfortunately, was not my first experience with Hebraic

attitudes toward the Sabbath.

In the middle 1950s, the directors of a Jewish publishing firm invited me to work for them. Their business was open six days a week, but by mutual prearrangement they allowed me to stay away on and observe the Sabbath. After thirteen months, however, they reorganized their schedules for proofreaders, who had to work in pairs. They praised my work (“We thought only women could endure the painstaking drudgery of proofreading telephone directories!”), yet they informed me that after December 1956 I could no longer absent myself from work on the seventh day. Because I never compromised on this issue, I was gracefully fired—by Jews, for observing the Sabbath day.

This happened in South Africa, which lacked constitutional protection for religious minorities, so I had no legal remedy; often in the workplace I endured discrimination, mockery, and abuse for my convictions. How I love America, my new country, and its Bill of Rights, for legally protecting people like me!

The religionists in Jesus’ day were tampering with the Ten Commandments and sometimes made them of no effect, through tradition and rabbinical wisdom. When they eventually got a Roman procurator to murder the Messiah for them, one of the reasons was that he had deeply irritated them by being so literal-minded about the law which the Almighty had delivered to their ancestors at Sinai, while he ignored mere clerical tradition.

But in Dan. 7: 25, we read of a later, more direct assault on the Decalogue, for the Little Horn would “think to change the times and the law” (RSV). This would be an audacious attack on the Decalogue and authority of God by the Roman Church. Some of its effects would even persist in Protestantism.

Let us look at this more closely.

III

In the Bible, the word *times* is sometimes used to mean “years,” as in Dan. 7:25 and Rev. 12:14. This suggests that the Little Horn would change the calendar.

Before the Christian era, the pagan Romans had already been preoccupied with such activities. Under Julius Caesar, the lunar year was abandoned and a solar calendar set up. Amongst other things, he altered the position of the months. Previously, the Roman year had begun with March, but this was now moved into third place. Incidentally, we can still recognize the former positions of several months from their original names, derived from Latin numerals: September (*septem* = “seven”), October (*octo* = “eight”), November (*novem* = “nine”), and December (*decem* = “ten”).

In the early second century, the Romans made another, even more drastic change: they tampered with the weekly cycle. As Bacchiocchi established, and we have noted in the chapter entitled “How the Papacy Began,” the sun god used to be commemorated on the second day. But to honor Mithras, the emperor’s new solar deity,

dies solis (“Sunday”) was moved into the first place.

The boldness with which the Romans altered the position of the months and even of the days in the week undoubtedly set a precedent for the papacy, when it later introduced additional changes of its own. Like Julius Caesar, the popes abandoned the lunar calendar, which Christianity had inherited from the Jews. Through a syncretic adjustment, they also began to substitute Sunday for the Saturday Sabbath of the Ten Commandments.

This started with the introduction of Easter on a single Sunday in the year. Eventually the first day was observed on a weekly basis.

Theologically the papal preoccupation with Easter is remarkable, for nowhere does the New Testament in the original Greek refer to it. Its celebration is actually superfluous, because the Redeemer instituted two other ordinances to commemorate his passion, burial, and resurrection.

To remember the death of Jesus, all believers must take Holy Communion, in both kinds. The Word of God requires everyone to eat the bread that represents his broken body and drink the wine that signifies salvation through the new covenant in his blood (1 Cor. 11:23-26). The Lord said, “Drink of it, *all* of you” (Matt. 26: 27, RSV, emphasis added). Yet, for many centuries, the papal system disobeyed the Lord’s explicit command and allowed only members of the priesthood to drink the wine, the laity being limited to the bread.¹ It is sad to think that, in this way, millions of ordinary Catholics were symbolically excluded from the grace of God through a partial Eucharist. They could only watch the priest as he drank from the cup. For the past few decades, however, ordinary members have also been permitted the use of both the bread and wine.

To identify personally with the Lord’s crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, we also need to undergo believer’s baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). First, though, we must be converted, which presupposes a willingness to turn away from sin and bear the fruits of repentance (Matt. 3:7-10). Sadly, the change from adult baptism to infant sprinkling made this symbol of no effect.

These two Biblical sacraments, Holy Communion and believer’s baptism, make Easter superfluous, except for those who have set aside what God requires.

IV

Many churches, especially in Asia Minor, refused to accept the Roman practice of always observing Easter on Sunday. They remained Quartodecimans (“fourteenthers”). They continued their celebration of the Saviour’s sacrifice on Nisan 14, the first month of the ancient Hebrew calendar, introduced by God himself—together with the Passover—as a memorial to the Exodus (Ex. 12:1, 2).

Pope Victor I (189-99) felt so strongly about this matter that he excommunicated all the churches in Asia that ignored his instructions.² At the Council of Nicaea in 325, the imperial church established by Constantine decided to follow the Roman example. It

“ordained that Easter day should thenceforth be celebrated on the Sunday immediately following either that full moon which occurs on the day of the vernal equinox or, if there is no full moon on that day, then on the Sunday following that full moon which occurs on the day which occurs next after the day of the vernal equinox.” Quatrodecimans were declared heretics.³

Easter has pre-Christian, heathen roots; it is part of that syncretism between the gospel and solar paganism to which we have already referred. Not only people in the Mediterranean world, but also the ancient Germans, observed the day. The word *Eostur*, *Eastur*, *Ostara*, *Ostar* was used by them “to designate the Feast of New Life in the spring. The same root is found in the name for the place where the sun rises (East, *Ost*).”⁴

From Nicaea onward, Catholicism struggled with a knotty, self-created problem: how to coordinate the year, the months, and the week. To do this, the movements of the moon had to be harmonized on the calendar with those of the sun, and Easter Sunday was to be the pivotal point.

At last the Roman Church solved its problem through an intricate system known as the Gregorian calendar, named after Pope Gregory XIII, who decreed its introduction in March 1582. The astronomers that advised him included “the German Jesuit and mathematician Christopher Clavius (1537-1612), who verified all the calculations and developed the rules.”⁵ The Gregorian calendar, which today is practically universal, is a remarkable achievement, but few people are still aware of its religious, syncretic roots.

V

So the Little Horn did undertake to “change the times,” and succeeded amazingly. But did it in the process also change the Law?

It certainly did. To do so, it followed the Roman example by tampering with the weekly cycle that God had introduced at creation. For many, Sunday even became the seventh day, an idea that has persisted to this day. First-time travelers to Europe are sometimes startled by the calendar widely used on that continent. Unlike the one which is printed in largely Protestant countries such as the United States, it gives a different order for the days of the week. This has been changed to begin with Monday and end with Sunday. Recently I received a desk calendar with this same arrangement of the week from South Africa, which used to be so strongly rooted in Protestantism. To show Sunday as the seventh day is an obvious attempt to portray it as the Sabbath. This is the calendar of Antichrist.

Introducing an alternative to the day of rest which God had instituted fulfills the prophecy that the Little Horn would “think to change” not only times, but *the Law* as well.

The replacement of the Sabbath with Sunday is well known to educated Catholics. Some are rather proud of it, as a proof of their church’s authority, which they believe is in this matter

acknowledged by every Protestant who rests on that day.

This book has already described how Telesphorus (125-36), bishop of Rome, transferred the day of worship from Saturday to the newly invented *dies solis* (Sunday), in response to several pressures: Mithraic influence, anti-Semitism, and Emperor Hadrian's edict that prohibited Sabbathkeeping.

Many more details about this subject appear in Samuele Bacchiocchi's excellent and scholarly work *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*.

After declaring Sunday-keeping a Christian observance, the great Mediterranean apostasy deemed it necessary to eradicate the Saturday-Sabbath. Though soon embarked on, this was not the work of one or two generations but of centuries, for there was much resistance to the Roman innovation.

In 321, the emperor Constantine ordered all his subjects to keep Sunday. Twenty years later, the Council of Laodicea (between 343 and 381) went further and outlawed the Biblical Sabbath, in the following words: "Can. 49. Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honour, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out [Greek *anathema*] from Christ . . ."⁶

This prohibition proves that many Christians in the Mediterranean world were still observing the original Sabbath of the Bible more than two hundred years after the last apostle died. Irrefutable evidence for this fact is to be found in the languages of the region, which indicates an even longer period of Sabbathkeeping outside Rome.

VI

In modern Greek, the word for Saturday is το σαββατον or σαββατο (*savaton/savato*), in Italian *sabato*, and in Spanish as well as Portuguese *sabado*. All these words mean "Sabbath." Since none of the countries involved had a predominantly Jewish population, we can only conclude that it was Christians who introduced these names, which they would not have done if they had not at one time observed the seventh-day Sabbath.

Greeks to this day write or speak of το σαββατον or το σαβατο, *to savaton/savato* (the Sabbath), as in the New Testament, which is, however, now followed by η Κυριακη, *i kiriaki* ("the Lord's [day]"). This indicates a transitional stage from a later time, reflecting the coexistence of Sunday observance with Sabbathkeeping. Monday is η Δευτερα, *i dheftera* ("the second [day]"), Tuesday η Τριτη, *i triti* ("the third [day]"), Wednesday η Τεταρτη, *i tetarti* ("the fourth [day]"), and Thursday η Πευτη, *i pempti* ("the fifth [day]"). But Friday has a special name: παρασκευη, *i paraskevi*, with the stress on the last syllable.⁷

During 1990, I asked Petros, a Greek friend and member of the

Eastern Orthodox Church, in my native South Africa, to explain the words *savato/savaton* and *paraskevi*. With the first one he had no problem. “Oh,” he said unhesitatingly, “*savato* means ‘Sabbath.’” But he did not know, as his ancient forebears certainly did, what *paraskevi* referred to. He looked confused. “*Paraskevi, paraskevi?* Well, it means ‘Friday!’”

This, too, is defined by the New Testament in relation to Passion Weekend. Luke 23:54 informs us that the crucifixion took place on the *paraskevi*, which our Bible translates as “the day of Preparation,” since the *savaton*, “the sabbath” was beginning. The apostle John says that these events took place on “the Jewish day of Preparation (19:42),” which Mark explains as “the day before the sabbath” (15:42).

Modern Greeks, who have mostly given up the Biblical Sabbath, still preserve its name—and even a memorial to those who regarded the sixth day (Friday) as a day to prepare for it. In their alphabet, *paraskevi* is spelled exactly as in the Bible. The same is true of *savaton*, with *savato* as a minor variation. After nearly two thousand years, these names have remained intact, though their pronunciation has probably changed.

Apart from the post-Biblical interpretation of *i kiriaki* as Sunday, they are all based on the Bible. Those for Monday through Thursday, quoted above appear in the first two chapters of the Bible, according to the Septuagint: the Old Testament translation into Greek that the apostles and early Gentile Christians used throughout the Western world. By their meaning, these names bear a strong resemblance to those that are used in modern Hebrew, which still adheres to the original names in Gen. 1 and 2 as well as Ex 20:10, i.e. *Day One, Second Day, Third Day, Fourth Day, Fifth Day, Sixth Day, Sabbath*. For the first of these, none of the four Gospels uses ἡ Κυριακή, *i kiriaki*. All of them call it μία των σαββατων (*mia tōn sabbatōn*), “one (day) of (or from) the sabbaths.” *Mia* does not mean “first” but “one.” This seems like a peculiar variant, until we go back to Gen. 1:5, in the creation story.

Like most translations, the King James for this gives “the first day”; but that is not how the Hebrew original puts it. It says, *yom echad* (day one). And so does the Septuagint: ἡμερα μια, *hēmera mia*, and also the Gospel writers, who quote from it. In the fourth commandment the Septuagint uses the word *Sabbath* in the plural (Ex. 20:10). This also came to mean “week.” That is why the four Gospels in speaking of what we call Sunday, name it *mia tōn sabbatōn*, day one from the Sabbaths/week.

John in Revelation does refer to ἡ Κυριακή, *i kiriaki*, but the idea that there it means “Sunday” is anachronistic and contradicted by his own usage in his Gospel. This he also wrote toward the end of his life, and it was therefore more or less contemporaneous with the Apocalypse. In his account of Jesus’ life and death, like the other New Testament writers, he scrupulously adheres to the original names for Sunday and Saturday derived from the Old Testament.

For John, the Lord's day could therefore only have been the one that the Creator had blessed and sanctified (Gen. 2:2, 3) and commanded his people to observe (Ex. 20:10, 11).

In the Orthodox tradition, the seventh-day Sabbath survived longer than in the West. Evidence for this exists in the Eastern and Central European languages.

The Russians adopted Constantinople's version of Christianity only in 988-89 under Vladimir (d. 1015), "grand prince of Kiev and of all Russia."⁸ They speak of *subbóta*, which J. L. I. Fennell explains as "Saturday (the Sabbath)."⁹ With variations, this word also found its way into other East and Central European languages, e.g. *súbuta* in Serbo-Croatian, *sobota* in both Polish and Czech, and *szombat* in Hungarian.¹⁰

This phenomenon cannot be explained otherwise than through the fact that the Eastern Orthodox church still to some extent acknowledged the Sabbath of the Ten Commandments until about a thousand years after the crucifixion. But the West experienced a much swifter and more aggressive transition to Sundaykeeping.

Some readers may, however, wonder whether it is correct to attribute the change of the Sabbath to the papacy. Have we not established that the imperial church to which Constantine belonged included not only the Western, but also other branches of Christianity, and that the emperor was therefore not specifically a Roman Catholic?

The point is well taken, and Sundaykeeping was by no means confined to the West. Nevertheless, as a Christianized institution it originated in the church at Rome, where it was introduced after 135, as an outgrowth of the new Easter-Sunday celebrations.¹¹ At that time, the old city was still the undisputed capital of the empire, and therefore its see exerted considerable influence. It even enjoyed a certain primacy,¹² though this was never total or unchallenged. Its great rival, the archbishopric on the Bosporus, had not yet come into existence; for Constantinople was only inaugurated on 11 May 330.

But do Catholics not find it awkward that paganism was also involved in the process? Not really. The fact may disturb individuals, but it does not deter the Roman Church as a whole. Elsewhere we mentioned Montañó's reference to several Catholic writers who admit that many Christian practices originated in paganism.¹³

Let us also quote the following frank admission from John Henry Newman (1801-90), originally a leader of the Oxford group and a famous convert to the Roman Church:

"We are told in various ways by Eusebius, that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own. It is not necessary to go into a subject which the diligence of Protestant writers has made familiar to most of us. The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; *holydays and seasons, use of calendars, processions,*

blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chants, and the Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.”¹⁴ (Emphasis added.)

Newman wrote the essay in which this paragraph appears a short time before he resigned from the Anglican Church to become a Catholic,¹⁵ on 9 October 1845. Soon ordained a priest and eventually granted a cardinal’s hat, he was a man of considerable intellect and manifold talents. He also wrote novels and poems, including the famous hymn “Lead, Kindly Light,” which records his experience as he was veering toward the Roman Church. (We find it ironic that it has made its way into many Protestant hymnals!)

The attitude of Catholicism is simply, Yes, we did take over these things from paganism, but we had a good reason for doing so. As Hobert Seymour explains, “In England Romanists are usually indignant when it is said that their ceremonies were originally heathen. In Italy, on the other hand, that origin is regarded as proof of the wisdom of the church which has converted a heathen people and their heathen customs into a Christian people and Christian ceremonies.”¹⁶

The Little Horn is not really embarrassed by publicity for its elimination of the Sabbath, since this even gives it an advantage in dealing with opponents—or, at least, the majority of them. How can that be?

In the time of the Counter Reformation, the Sabbath-Sunday issue became a pivotal argument against the Reformers’ insistence on *sola scriptura* (the Bible alone).

Dr. Martin Luther of Wittenberg University thought it self-evident that God’s Word was the bedrock of theology. Merle D’Aubigné recounts how this idea brought the reformer into conflict with the brilliant rector of Ingolstadt University, Prof. Johann Meyer, commonly known as Dr. Eck, since he had been born in Eck, a Swabian village. He and Luther were the two most learned theologians in Germany. A short time before this, their association had been ripening into friendship, but now—as a spokesman for the pope—Dr. Eck became the reformer’s implacable enemy.¹⁷

In some ways, the rector eventually got the better of the argument with Luther. After their marathon debating session of eighteen days,¹⁸ Eck kept on insisting that the church was superior to the Scriptures. As evidence he cited the Sabbath commandment.

In his *Enchiridion Locorum Communium . . . Adversus Lutheranos* (“Handbook of Common Places Against the Lutherans”), published later, Eck reasons as follows: “Christ said to his disciples in the mount, ‘I have not come to dissolve the law but to fulfill it’; and yet the church of the Apostles in the first council has boldly spoken out concerning the cessation of legal things . . . The Sabbath is commanded many times by God; neither in the Gospels nor in Paul is it declared that the Sabbath has ceased; nevertheless the Church has instituted the Lord’s day through the tradition of the

Apostles without Scripture . . .”¹⁹

It was not, however, the apostles but their so-called successors, the popes, that tampered with the Ten Commandments.

Catholicism had really been put on the spot by the Protestants’ insistence on *sola scriptura*. This came out very clearly at the Council of Trent, whose meetings were intended to provide an answer to this theological approach. Here the pope’s most loyal supporters were at one stage faced with an awkward problem.

“There was a strong party even of the Catholics within the council who were in favor of abandoning tradition and adopting *the Scriptures only*, as the standard of authority. This view was so decidedly held in the debates in the council that the pope’s legates actually wrote to him that there was ‘a strong tendency to set aside tradition altogether and to make Scripture the sole standard of appeal.’ But to do this would manifestly be to go a long way toward justifying the claims of the Protestants. By this crisis there was devolved upon the ultra-Catholic portion of the council the task of convincing the others that ‘Scripture *and tradition*’ were the only sure ground to stand upon.”²⁰

At this point, Gaspar de Fosso, Archbishop of Reggio, got up and turned the tide with an interesting approach. First he referred to the fact that the Catholic Church *had* in the past changed what the Bible commanded and got away with it. He concluded that this in itself was evidence that it possessed the right to do so. “The authority of the church could therefore not be bound to the authority of the Scriptures, because the church had changed circumcision into baptism, Sabbath into Sunday, not by the command of Christ, but by its own authority.”²¹

In itself, this is a feeble, circular argument, depending entirely on precedent rather than logic. More than that, in the eyes of Heaven it was really an admission of guilt by the Little Horn. Yet the churchmen at Trent considered it a powerful idea, and so it was (in relation to the problem they were seeking to solve), since their Protestant adversaries had not given up Sunday as *sola scriptura* would require, but were holding onto it for non-Biblical reasons.

“There was no getting around this point, for the Protestants’ own statement of faith—the Augsburg Confession, 1530—had clearly admitted that ‘the observation of the Lord’s day’ had been appointed by ‘the Church’ only.

“The argument was hailed in the council as of Inspiration only; the party for ‘Scripture alone,’ surrendered; and the council at once unanimously condemned Protestantism and the whole Reformation as only an unwarranted revolt from the communion and authority of the Catholic Church.”²²

This vote took place on 16 March 1562, during the seventeenth session of the Tridentine Council. On that day, the Roman Church realized with jubilation that the majority of Protestants did not fully believe in *sola scriptura*, since they also based important doctrines on tradition—Catholic tradition.

Although the hero of the hour was the archbishop of Reggio,

much of the groundwork had been laid by Luther's old opponent, Dr. Eck. His *Enchiridion*, from which we quoted above, had been published in Venice twenty-nine years before, in 1533, just three years after the Augsburg Confession.

What the Council of Trent decided on that fateful day in 1562 has become a standard argument for Catholics, who have often vexed their opponents with it. A good example comes from a nineteenth-century tract of 1869 entitled "Why Don't You Keep Holy the Sabbath-Day?"

Its anonymous author first demolishes most arguments that Protestants put forward to validate Sunday-keeping from the Bible. No Seventh-day Adventist, intent on defending the biblical Sabbath, could argue more eloquently. This Catholic theologian shows in a masterly way that the Scriptures contain no evidence and give no sanction whatsoever for resting on the first day of the week. But then he goes on to say:

Now, mind, in all this you would greatly misunderstand me if you supposed I was quarrelling with you for acting in this matter on a true and right principle, in other words, a Catholic principle, viz., the acceptance, without hesitation, of that which has been handed down to you by an unbroken tradition. I would not tear from you a single one of those shreds and fragments of Divine truth which you have retained. God forbid! They are the most precious things you possess, and by God's blessing may serve as clues to bring you out of that labyrinth of error in which you find yourselves involved, far more by the fault of your forefathers three centuries ago than by your own. What I do quarrel with you for is not your inconsistency in occasionally acting on a true principle, but your adoption, as a general rule, of a false one. You keep the Sunday, and not the Saturday; and you do so rightly, for this was the practice of all Christians when Protestantism began; but you have abandoned other Catholic observances which were equally universal at that day, preferring the novelties introduced by the men who invented Protestantism, to the unvarying tradition of above 1500 years. We blame you not for making Sunday your weekly holyday instead of Saturday, but for rejecting tradition, which is the only safe and clear rule by which this observance can be justified. In outward act we do the same as yourselves in this matter; we too no longer observe the Jewish Sabbath, but Sunday in its stead; but then there is this important difference between us, that we do not pretend, as you do, to derive our authority for so doing from a *book*, but we derive it from a *living teacher*, and that teacher is the Church.²³

Here we need to note that in many churches the ideas of Protestant Sundaykeepers differ from those of Catholicism.

As we have seen, in the period following the death of the apostles, Sunday observance was introduced for three main reasons: fear of the emperor, anti-Semitism, and compromise with the Mithraics, for

whom the *dies solis* (“day of the sun”) was important.

But even after Constantine’s Sunday law, the first day of the week was not really a Sabbath; it was rather an *anti*-Sabbath. Although the Roman Church considered it important for religious services, it was never observed in the same manner as the day that God refers to in the Ten Commandments.

Owen Chadwick paints an interesting picture of the situation just before the Reformation: “Though Sunday had been a day of worship, it had also been a day of feasts, and wakes, cock-fighting, hawking, hunting, dice, bowls, bear-baiting, and church ales—which were the contemporary mode of raising money for church repairs, barrels of strong beer sold in the churchyard to the public, profits to church funds.”²⁴ It was like a Christian pub.

To be shocked by such carryings-on because one thinks medieval Catholics were desecrating a holy day is anachronistic. Their church insisted on Sunday only as a day of worship and not of total rest from secular activities, despite the Bible requirements for the Sabbath as demanded by Ex. 20:8-11. That is to say, before the final decade of the twentieth century, Catholicism never made the mistake of confusing Sunday with the biblical Sabbath.

But it was incompatible with *sola scriptura* for Protestants to accept this Catholic slant on the subject. They have therefore striven valiantly, though vainly, to link their Sundaykeeping with the Ten Commandments. This theological approach is a Protestant invention of the past few hundred years, which makes it a fairly recent idea. We see it at its clearest in “sabbatarianism (which became a badge of the puritan party in England after 1585).”²⁵

As the British theologian Bryan W. Ball points out, this had been formulated twenty years before as a doctrine of the Elizabethan Church. A 1563 book of sermons puts it as follows:

“God hath given express charge to all men, that upon the Sabbath day, which is now on Sunday, they should cease from all weekly and workday labour, to the intent that like as God himself wrought six days, and rested the seventh, and blessed and sanctified it, and consecrated it to quietness and rest from labour, even so God’s obedient people should use the Sunday holily, and rest from their common and daily business, and also give themselves wholly to heavenly exercises of God’s true religion and service.”²⁶

Is it a coincidence that the work in which this Anglican argument appears was published just a year beyond the bishops’ fateful vote at Trent, or does it—as seems likely—betray their influence?

At any rate, in both the Old World and the New, it became a common practice to substitute the word *Sabbath* for Sunday. For instance, the American Samuel Sewell used it for headings of his *Diary* (1674-1729), as in the following entry, written during his yearlong visit to England: “Sabbath, May 5, 1689.”²⁷ By the middle of the twentieth century, this usage had been largely abandoned, though it still occurred occasionally, as in William Manchester’s description of the final deliberations that brought dismissal for Douglas MacArthur as America’s supreme commander in Korea and

Japan. Referring to a lengthy Sunday meeting, he says, “The big struggle that Sabbath was in the Pentagon.”²⁸

Seeking authority for Sundaykeeping in the Ten Commandments is a typically Protestant, not originally a Catholic, approach. A law commanding the observance of the *seventh* day, because it commemorates the Creator’s rest at the end of creation week, cannot legitimately be applied to the *first* day as a memorial of Christ’s resurrection.

This was a mistake that the papacy used to avoid; however, as we shall note in a further chapter, the pope has now also adopted the Protestant position, especially to bolster church attendance—which in Catholic countries is often lower than 10 percent and sometimes even 5 percent.²⁹

VII

The ultimate evidence that the Little Horn has tried to change the law of God is based on more than history. We can observe it directly by comparing the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, as recorded in Ex. 20:1-17, with catechisms of the Roman Church. In contrast with its Bible translation, these all do peculiar things to the text of God’s Law. Much of it is deleted. In a few cases, words are put in that do not occur in the original Decalogue. And some explanations directly contradict it.

We see this in different Catholic catechisms from the nineteenth century to the present, culminating in the latest *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), promulgated by Pope John Paul II, with the imprimatur of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, representing the Interdicasterial Commission. On 19 April 2005, the latter became Pope Benedict XVI. In this exhaustive and highly authoritative book, the Ten Commandments first appear in three columns: the whole of Ex. 20:2-17 reproduced from a Catholic Bible translation; Deut. 5:6-21 with much of its wording left out; and “A Traditional Catechetical Formula,” which is a very abbreviated version of column one.³⁰

Following this are separate articles with headings like “The First Commandment,” “The Second Commandment,” “the Third Commandment,” etc. Under these, the portions from Ex. 20:2-17 are in several instances not quoted in full, although the wording is sometimes slightly different from the Traditional Catechetical Formula. But as the explanations in the articles make plain, there is no discrepancy between the longer Catechism and the Traditional Catechetical Formula of column 3. Indeed, the latter admirably summarizes and exemplifies Catholic dogma about the Law of God.

It is evident that the papacy has altered more than half of the Decalogue, especially the four commandments that seek to regulate our relationship with God. It has also tampered with the last one.

God's Law (Ex. 20:1-17)

Catechism of the Catholic Church with Papal Amendments (1994)

I

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.

I

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.

II

You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; ~~for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.~~

III

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; ~~for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.~~

II

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

IV

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall but labor, and do all your work; the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, ~~you or~~

III

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work.

~~your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.~~

X

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

IX

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

X

You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor's . . . You shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Especially notable are the following features of this latest Catholic catechism. First, it has omitted portions of the second, third, and fourth commandments as they appear in the Bible. Second, it joins together the first with the second—after cutting out a part of it, which leads to a renumbering of the Decalogue. This, however, leaves us with not ten but nine commandments. Third, to avoid this embarrassing consequence, the tenth commandment is quoted twice but the second time without any reference to the neighbor's wife.

All this is exceedingly strange. The explanatory articles of the Catholic catechism are, in part, an apology for these modifications. Sometimes it flatly contradicts the Bible, as with the statement: "According to the Christian tradition, the Law is holy, spiritual, and good, yet still *imperfect*."³¹ This suggests that our creator God did a poor legislative job, which is presumably why theologians could improve on it by tampering with its text. But the Scripture says: "The law of the LORD is *perfect*" (Ps. 19:7) (Emphasis added in both cases.)

Another stunning contradiction denies the validity of the second commandment as given by the Legislator on Sinai. The reader is told that while in ancient times it was wrong to make an image of the "absolutely transcendent God who revealed himself to Israel,"

Christ's becoming a human being legitimized idols. "Basing itself on the mystery of the incarnate Word, the seventh ecumenical council at Nicaea (787) justified against the iconoclasts the veneration of icons—of Christ, but also of the Mother of God, the angels, and all the saints. By becoming incarnate, the Son of God introduced a new 'economy' of images."³²

Like the change of the Sabbath, which was also derived from paganism, this is an ancient, syncretistic error of the great Mediterranean apostasy. According to Bob Bush, a former priest and Jesuit who converted to Protestantism in 1970, "virtually all" Catholic catechisms for ordinary people simply "drop the second commandment of the Bible."³³ But even those which like the latest, comprehensive catechism do quote it, also seek to nullify it. Part of the procedure is to push the inconvenient prohibition into the background by assimilating it to the first commandment, thereby rendering it a little more obscure.

But in his Law and throughout the Old Testament, the Lord forbids the making of any image that causes the worshiper to honor the creature rather than the Creator. The prohibition is by no means limited to depicting God. No objects or beings in nature are to be represented for purposes of devotion. Then, too, it is a sin, not only to serve them (however theologians wish to interpret this word), but even just to bow down to them.

The 1994 Catechism points out that God "ordained or permitted" images like "the bronze serpent, the ark of the covenant, and the cherubim."³⁴ What it fails to say is that when the Israelites began to venerate that image of the snake, King Hezekiah had it destroyed; for he "brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it" (2 Kings 18:4). That righteous monarch became an iconoclast, if ever there was one, his action being mentioned in the Bible with tacit approval.

It is for reasons like these that in Ex. 20 there is a separate, very explicit and detailed commandment against idolatry, which is not a mere extension of the first one. About this issue, the Lord feels very strongly, as the Old Testament makes abundantly clear.

Eliminating or decreasing the scope of the law against images creates an embarrassing problem: there is no Decalogue left, for this word refers to the "*ten* words" of God, not simply nine. To fill up the hole in the Ten Commandments, all Catholic catechisms split the last one into two.

The new Catechism does this in a particularly awkward way. First it quotes the original tenth as a ninth Commandment, yet in the explanation ignores the greatest part of it, focusing only on what it says about the "neighbor's wife." And it does not even deal properly with what the Law prohibits in this respect, by limiting its remarks to *lusting* after any woman (or man?), married or unmarried. As the summary puts it, "The ninth commandment warns against lust or carnal concupiscence." But the Decalogue of Ex. 20 is concerned not merely with lusting but coveting, a rather different concept. We shall

be returning to this point.

To make up a tenth commandment, the catechism quotes Ex. 20:17 again, but greatly abbreviates it by omitting most of the verse, especially the piece about the neighbor's wife. Deut. 5:21 is added, but again all reference to the neighbor's wife is left out.

VIII

All this tampering with the Decalogue is thrown into even sharper relief if we contrast the third column of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on pages 496-97 with Ex. 20:2-17:

God's Law as Originally Given *with papal deletions*

I

I am the LORD your God, ~~who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.~~ You shall have no other gods before me.

II

~~You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.~~

III

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain;

IV

Remember the ~~sabbath~~ day, to keep it holy. ~~Six days you shall labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you~~

The Traditional Catechetical Formula

I

I am the Lord your God.
You shall not have strange gods before Me.

II

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

III

Remember to keep holy the LORD's day [sic].

shall not do any work, you,
or your son, or your daughter,
your manservant, or your
maidservant, or your cattle, or
the sojourner who is within your
gates; for in six days the LORD
made heaven and earth, the sea,
and all that is in them, and rested
the seventh day; therefore the
LORD blessed the sabbath day
and hallowed it.

V

Honor your father and your
mother: ~~that your days may be
long upon the land which the
LORD your God gives you.~~

VI

You shall not kill.

VII

You shall not commit adultery.

VIII

You shall not steal.

IX

You shall not bear false witness
against your neighbor.

X

You shall not covet your neighbor's
house, you shall not covet your
neighbor's wife, ~~or his manservant,
or his maidservant, or his ox, or
his ass, or anything that is
your neighbor's.~~

IV

Honor your father and your
mother.

V

You shall not kill.

VI

You shall not commit
adultery.

VII

You shall not steal.

VIII

You shall not bear false
witness against your
neighbor.

IX

You shall not covet your
neighbor's wife.

X

You shall not covet your
neighbor's goods [sic].³⁵

What is meant by the expression “a Traditional Catechetical Formula”? Let us see. *Catechetical* is, as Webster explains it, an adjective referring to *catechesis*, that is the oral instruction of a *catechumen*. Such a person is either “a convert to Christianity receiving training in doctrine and discipline before baptism” or one “receiving instruction in the basic doctrines of Christianity before admission to communicant membership in a church.”³⁶

Catechumens of the Roman Church, who are often very poor, could not normally be expected to possess or be quizzed on the full 1994 catechism, a long and expensive book with more than nine hundred pages. In most cases, he or she would be instructed by means of “a Traditional Catechetical Formula.” Therefore, until the Roman Church explicitly repudiates it, we may validly view this as another official, though abbreviated, version. For most people, it is an alternative to the longer book, with which in any case it harmonizes perfectly.

Uriah Smith, whose great work on Daniel and the Revelation first appeared more than a century ago, links the Antichrist’ changes to the Law—predicted in Dan. 7:25—with the abbreviated Decalogue in the formulaic catechisms that the Roman Church was using in his day. He refers inter alia to those by Keenan and Geiermann “and many more like them.”³⁷ *A Doctrinal Catechism* by Stephan Keenan was already extant in 1851.³⁸ The similar Geiermann catechism has had a long shelf life, and was published again in 1930 under the title of *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*. Its 1946 reprint contains the 1945 imprimatur of Archbishop Joannes J. Glennon, S.T.D.³⁹

In a previous edition of this book, we reproduced the Ten Commandments according to Keenan and Geiermann, “with Papal Deletions.” A book reviewer objected to this as an “archaic” catechism. He said, in fact, that it was “obsolete” and thought it was no longer valid. Keenan and Geiermann did use an older Bible translation with several *thee’s* and *thou’s*, which is the sum total of their so-called archaism. Their text, however, is identical with that of the Traditional Catechetical Formula quoted in the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, except for Ex. 20:8. Keenan and Geiermann still had the grace to say: “Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day,” although they also obliterated the rest of the commandment.⁴⁰ For this, the “Traditional Catechetical Formula” has substituted the more daring alteration “Remember to keep holy the LORD’S day.”

When was this done? This seems, at least in the English-speaking world, to have happened about sixty years ago, half way through the twentieth century, for the substitution appears in Father McGuire’s *New Baltimore Catechism and Mass* of 1949. This bears, amongst others, the imprimatur of Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York (who headed the Roman Church in America), and gives the Ten Commandments with the same wording as Keenan and Geiermann, except for the one that refers to the Sabbath.

McGuire’s version, then, is “Remember thou keep holy the Lord’s day.”⁴¹ To children and others for whom this Catechism is intended, this is explained by means of the following questions and answers:

234. What is the third commandment of God? The third commandment of God is: Remember thou keep holy the Lord’s day.

235. Why does the Church command us to keep Sunday as the Lord’s day? The Church commands us to keep Sunday as the Lord’s day, because on Sunday Christ rose from the dead, and on Sunday

the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles.

236. What are we commanded by the third commandment? By the third commandment we are commanded to worship God in a special manner on Sunday, the Lord's day.

237. How does the Church command us to worship God on Sunday? The Church commands us to worship God on Sunday by assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.⁴²

IX

We note that in its article entitled "the Third Commandment" the 1994 Catechism has basically returned to the wording of Keenan and Geiermann, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." It does now speak of six working days and resting on the seventh day, but it still obscures the issue by deleting the reference to creation week. Furthermore, it blandly states that the Sabbath "has been replaced by Sunday."⁴³ By saying this and quoting the Traditional Catechetical Formula, it reemphasizes its ancient stance on this change in the Law.

All this is in total contradiction of Ex. 20:8-11. God's irrevocable Law makes it plain that the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, commemorates creation. Its observance is an everlasting sign between the Lord and his covenant people and invokes his sanctifying power in their lives (Ex. 31:15-18; Eze. 20:12-20).

The Decalogue says nothing about "Sunday, the Lord's day," the resurrection, going to mass, or anything like that.

Let us also note how McGuire's *New Baltimore Catechism and Mass* repeatedly uses the words "commandments" and "the Church commands us."

But Jesus has rejected all such thinking beforehand: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines *the commandments of men*" (Mark 7:7, emphasis added). Indeed, religious legislation that contradicts the Bible is lawlessness. This is part of Paul's language in his prediction about the Antichrist, whose career he depicted as imminent: "For the mystery of *lawlessness* is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then *the lawless one* will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by the appearing and his coming" (2 Thess. 2:7, 8, RSV.) (All emphases added.)

X

Let us now compare the Traditional Catechetical Formula with Ex. 20:1-17 in greater, sequential detail:

Even a cursory look reveals that this is very different from the Law delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai. Most striking are the many omissions (more than 75% of the total text). The second commandment against idolatry disappears completely. The rest has been renumbered. Only four of the Lord's commandments remain

unaltered. The other six have all been modified, with more than 50 percent deleted in each case.

The abbreviated Ten Commandments of the Roman Church introduce—directly or by implication—no fewer than fifteen changes. First, the shorter Catholic versions omit the identification of the legislator as the God of the Exodus. The truncated Decalogue could just as well be the law of Moloch, Baal, or the Lord Mithras.

Second, the abbreviation leaves out the vital fact that God does not arbitrarily impose the Ten Commandments; he announces them, not only as the Creator, but also as the Saviour God of Israel. That is, he first redeems and only afterwards legislates to his people. This teaches what theologians call *prevenient grace* and the *lovingkindness of God*, which is also a New Testament doctrine.

Third, omitting the second commandment legitimizes idolatry. God's Law says people are not even allowed to make graven images for religious purposes, and they are not to kneel to them or "serve them" in any way. This also applies to the adoration of saints—who are really spirits of the dead—and Mary, the mother of Jesus. God has always taken strong exception to idolatry of any kind. In ancient times, it caused him to destroy the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 12:28-32; 17:7-12).

Fourth, the omitted second commandment speaks not only of the Lord's severity toward idolaters and the offspring that follow in their footsteps; it also mentions his mercy for thousands of generations that love and obey him. Jesus was virtually quoting from this passage when he said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). This is left out.

Fifth, Catholicism omits the threat that those who take the name of God in vain will be punished.

Sixth, the commandment about the Sabbath has been extensively mutilated to conceal its identity as the seventh day in the week as defined by the creation of the world. In Keenan and Geiermann, only eight (8.5 percent) of its original ninety-four words were retained. The more recent Traditional Catechetical Formula is even worse. Of Ex. 20:9-11, the longest commandment in the Decalogue, it has kept only five words: "remember to keep holy the . . ."—and obliterated everything else about the Biblical Sabbath. Substituting "Remember to keep holy the LORD's day" is a total alteration. All the same, the Lord who made heaven and earth insists that we must rest on the seventh day of the week. The reason he gives for instituting the Sabbath is that then he rested, rejoicing over his workmanship, and wants us all to commemorate some very important facts. These are that he is the creator, the owner, and therefore the rightful legislator for this planet. But what happens if it is abbreviated as in all these catechisms, culminating in the Traditional Catechetical Formula? Clerics can mislead catechumens into believing that the Decalogue which the Almighty gave on Sinai refers to Sunday, the first day of the week.

According to the prophecy of Dan. 7: 25, the Little Horn would think to change times as well as the Law. Both elements are involved

in tampering with the fourth commandment. The Traditional Catechetical Formula, including its older versions—such as Keenan and Geiermann—constitute hard documentary evidence that it has, for a long time, done exactly this.

Seventh, by concealing the identity of the lawgiver, the Catholic revision of the fourth commandment can, like that of the first, become an injunction from any deity, such as Moloch, Baal, or the Lord Mithras. Historically, the *dies solis* (day of the sun), which Constantine instituted in 321 with enthusiastic support from the bishops of his time, changed the Sabbath of the creator God and his Messiah into a memorial to the sun god. And that is why, to this day, the Roman Church abbreviates the fourth commandment.

Eighth, the loving-kindness of God is again not mentioned; he has compassion on servants—even slaves—and animals, for he ordains that they must also be allowed to rest.

Ninth, this drastic surgery on the fourth commandment cuts away important links between Israel and Gentile believers. Ex. 20:10-11 shows that all people should keep the Sabbath. The One who had made the world pronounced it holy, instituting it at the end of creation and the first week of time (Gen. 22-3), before there was a single Israelite or Jew in the world. The only ones to rest on it when the world was new were Adam and Eve, the ancestors of the entire human race. Accordingly, God on Sinai decreed that the fourth commandment applied not only to everybody of Hebrew descent, but also to “the stranger within thy gates.” Elsewhere the Bible pronounces a special blessing on Gentiles that observe the Sabbath, for they take “hold of my covenant” (Isa. 56:2, 6).

The latter Scripture ties them in with the Lord’s promises to Abraham, through whom “all families of the earth” were to be blessed (Gen. 12:3), because the Redeemer is his descendant. The apostle Paul even wrote, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). But with the relevant wording omitted from the Sabbath commandment, the Decalogue—like both the Old and the New covenants formulated in relation to it—is only for literal Israelites and Jews, other nationalities being excluded from the kingdom of God. Their only hope would be to convert to Judaism. This is exactly what many Jews have sometimes believed, including Judaizing Christians, who dismayed the Gentiles that Paul and Barnabas had converted on their first missionary journey: “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). A modern relic of this idea is the Sabbath Gentile, whom Orthodox Jews employ to fulfil some functions, necessitated by daily life on the seventh day but which they believe the Law will not allow them to perform. These, incidentally, also turn a blind eye to the words “nor . . . thy manservant, nor thy maidservant.”

Tenth, the work ethic is set aside. The Sabbath commandment not only orders each human being to rest on the seventh day, but also to do “all thy work” for the rest of the week—everyone according to his or her talents, ability, state of health, and circumstances.

Idleness is forbidden, as is the parasitic exploitation of other people's labor. The apostle Paul exhorts his readers "to do your own business, and to work with your own hands" (1 Thess. 4:11). Such ideas, which have made individuals, families, and entire nations prosperous, are backed by the fourth commandment.

Eleventh, in its Traditional Catechetical Formula the Little Horn has expunged the promise of longevity for sons and daughters that truly honor their father and mother, together with the implication that failing to do so could shorten their lives. In the case of those who take monastic vows, such an omission enables the church to deprive their parents of the physical and financial support to which they are entitled. Jesus himself condemned a similar abuse by the Scribes and Pharisees of his time (Mark 7:9-13). Once more, the lovingkindness of God has been simply left out.

Twelfth, the last commandment of the Decalogue has been split into two. This seeks to cover up the fact that cutting out the prohibition against idolatry has eliminated a tenth of God's law—which means, incidentally, that the Roman Church has only nine instead of ten commandments.

Thirteenth, the order of the prohibitions against covetousness is inverted, for Ex. 20:17 mentions the neighbor's house *before* the neighbor's wife.

Fourteenth, omitting the words "manservant or maidservant" narrows the focus of the commandment in its direct application to human beings.

Fifteenth, leaving out "or anything that is your neighbour's" and using the word "goods" confines the prohibition to material things, although much more is meant.

These many changes have seriously corrupted the law of God as it has often, for many generations, been taught to unsuspecting children and adults.

XI

Let us look a little further at the curious treatment of the last commandment, which the Roman Church has divided into two. We find a peculiarly narrow focus on "thy neighbour's wife" in the *Pocket Catholic Catechism* (1989) by John A. Hardon, S.J. (1914-2000). According to Dave Armstrong's tribute to this man's memory, Hardon was a learned Jesuit priest, university teacher, and prolific writer much concerned with orthodoxy in his church—as well as "a close associate and advisor" of both Pope Paul VI and John Paul II. "He was one of the leading catechists in the world (who highly influenced the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*) . . ."44

Hardon limits the prohibition of covetousness as it relates to the neighbor's wife to *lustful desire*: "In the Catholic version of the Decalogue, the Sixth and Ninth Commandments are coupled together. They both prescribe the practice of chastity."⁴⁵ He rather dwells on this concept, saying, *inter alia*, that "Jesus repeated the Sixth and Ninth Commandments but he elevated them in a way that

has been the single most demanding precept of the New Law.”⁴⁶ Seen from the viewpoint of Catholic priests, monks, and nuns, who often struggle hard to retain their celibacy, this is certainly true. Nevertheless, when the Redeemer spoke against lusting after a woman, he was not referring to two commandments, but to only one, namely “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Matt. 5:27).

The fact remains that the last commandment says one must not *covet* one’s neighbor’s wife, which is a much wider concept than lusting after her. A man is more than a sexual animal. His interest in a woman often goes beyond mere physical desire. He can appreciate her grace, her friendship, her intelligence, her kindness, her spirit of self-sacrifice . . . and covet all these things in one whom he admires, yet who is already married to someone else—that is, he can want her for more than her body. God’s law forbids all this, and not only lust. Coveting the wife of another for more than sexual purposes can prompt a man to take her away from her husband and marry her himself, perhaps by first committing a murder, something that has often happened. The commandment is by no means limited to prescribing chastity.

What is more, the desire for another person’s worldly possessions, included in the same prohibition, can and does loom larger in many minds than eroticism. That is why the Ten Commandments, as their author originally wrote them, mention the neighbor’s house before his wife. Note how the great apostle warned that “the love of money is the root of all evils” (1 Tim. 6:10, RSV).

The commandment against covetousness is not, as the Traditional Catechetical Formula would have it, confined to the neighbor’s wife or *goods*. This inserted word cannot, for instance, substitute for the “manservant” or the “maidservant,” which may include a valuable employee. Can envious interest in such a person be wrong? The Bible says it is possible. For example, it is sinful to covet and then unethically lure away a topnotch executive from another company—perhaps with the intention of also stealing its trade secrets, known to such a “manservant” or “maidservant.”

Furthermore, the phrase “or anything that is your neighbour’s” goes well beyond the rather concrete meaning of *goods*, as normally understood. *Inter alia*, these words cover another person’s intellectual property, whether or not it is protected by patents or copyright. It also forbids a government to covet a territory belonging to another country, for cherishing such a thought can lead to a war of conquest, which is armed robbery, theft in the highest degree.

Shortening and splitting up the final commandment has greatly diminished its scope.

XII

A theologian of the Roman Church may retort that the Traditional Catechetical Formula was just a summary of the Ten Commandments, the full text of which appears in Catholic Bible translations. But that is not the point. As we have noted, summaries

like this one have received official endorsement in the form of a bishop's imprimatur and have been extensively "used for teaching the laity."⁴⁷ And now, by also being quoted in the fuller, latest Catechism, it still enjoys the sanction of its church.

Printing any abbreviation of God's law in a book for instructing believers is an error that misleads the unwary. When accuracy is critical to a discussion, statutes should always be quoted verbatim, and in full; for their specific wording is immensely important, as court cases often demonstrate. Adding to, deleting from, or even overstressing a few words can completely change or frustrate any piece of legislation.

For example, Marchetti and Marks point out how the CIA changed profoundly from an agency for coordinating and analyzing intelligence at the disposal of governmental departments to an instrument of covert action, assuming "the right to intervene secretly in the affairs of other nations."⁴⁸ This alteration resulted from adding to the Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1947 just nineteen "innocuous words," namely "such other functions and duties related to intelligence as the National Security Council may from time to time direct."⁴⁹ This made the organization deviate sharply from its original purpose. The conclusion of these authors is that "The CIA's primary task is not to coordinate the efforts of U.S. intelligence or even to produce finished national intelligence for the policy-makers. Its job is, for better or worse, to conduct the government's covert foreign policy."⁵⁰

President Truman, who later came to regret that he had created the agency, put this even more strongly: "Those fellows in the CIA don't just report on wars and the like, they go out and make their own." He even thought it had "become a government all of its own and all secret," which was very dangerous to a democratic society.⁵¹

The results have been dramatic, as shown in "The CIA: America's Secret Warriors," a television documentary on the Discovery Channel of 2 April 1997.⁵² To advance the interests of the United States, these operators even trained counter-terrorists abroad and set up tyrants in several countries. Often this unleashed the law of unintended consequences, or *blowback* as the CIA calls it—for instance, creating in the Persian Gulf two major enemies for America: Iran and Iraq. All this was the consequence of altering a law by adding just nineteen extra words. Even more serious have been the results of churchly tampering with God's foundational law for the human race. The Little Horn's abbreviated catechism quoted above has cut out more than 240 words (¾ of the Law), rearranged the text, and substituted individual words. Imagine anybody trying to do that to the Constitution of the United States!

XIII

Criticisms against all these changes to the law of God have not gone unnoticed by the Roman Church. We find an interesting attempt at rebuttal in Hardon's catechism, which we have already

quoted. He says:

“There is some difference in the numbering of the Ten Commandments. In the Greek, Anglican, and Protestant churches—excluding the Lutheran—the prohibition of false worship becomes two commandments; there is a separate commandment about ‘graven images.’ Then in order to keep the number ten, the precept against covetousness is combined with the prohibition of lustful desires.”⁵³

Superficially this is a rather clever argument. It says, “No, the rest of you are wrong. It is *you* who have changed the Law, by placing undue emphasis on the bit about graven images, and it is *you* who have combined the last two commandments.”

But that is blatantly untrue. The commandments as they emerged from the writing finger of God remain unaltered in the Hebrew Scriptures, carefully guarded by the Israelites and the Jewish people from long before the appearance of the Little Horn. The traditional Protestant versions, including the King James, faithfully reflect the original. Even many a Bible translation of the Catholic Church has done so, but—as we have seen—its catechisms are not based on these. The reader need not doubt it: the Roman Church and the papacy *have* split the last commandment and also inverted the order of “your neighbour’s house” and “your neighbour’s wife.”

Of course, there are also differences in the Bible between the Decalogue of Ex. 20 and Deut. 5:6-21, where Moses quoted the Law rather freely. But it is important to note that here he was not legislating; he would not have presumed to transgress on God’s preserve. He was, rather, preaching a sermon and applying the Decalogue to Israel’s specific situation. In any case, should we give priority to Moses or to God, the author of the Ten Commandments?

XIV

Nevertheless, theologians of the Roman Church will insist that the Lord Jesus and his Apostles gave their so-called successors, the pontiffs, the power to abolish the commandment against images, to change the Sabbath, and to alter the Decalogue in any way they choose. For instance, Lucius Ferraris, a Catholic writer of the eighteenth century, claimed that “The Pope is of so great authority and power that he can modify, explain, or interpret even divine laws.”⁵⁴

This type of thinking is, however, flatly contradicted by God’s own veto, given in advance through Moses, to safeguard his Decalogue against the Little Horn and other blasphemers. Let us quote it again: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2).

Even an ordinary, human writer dislikes being wrongly represented through misquotation. This can even be grounds for

legal action. How does the author of the Ten Commandments—who as the maker and owner of the universe is its supreme legislator—view such tampering with his Law?

Some, including Protestants, presume to argue that Jesus made changes in the Ten Commandments, when he was on earth. Others even teach that he abolished them altogether by dying on the cross. But in the unforgettable Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made it very, very clear that he was not undermining the Old Testament Scriptures in any way. He explicitly upheld the Law, which will remain unalterable until the end of time: “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” (Matt. 5:17, RSV)

When he took on himself our nature, the Redeemer had to honor and obey the Ten Commandments like every child of humanity. To do otherwise would have disqualified him from being our Saviour. He was “made under the law” (Gal. 4:4), so tampering with it would have made him fall into sin and turned him into a rebel against his heavenly Father. Just like Lucifer.

When the Saviour died on the cross, he was doing more than providing forgiveness for repentant sinners. He was also upholding the sacredness of an unalterable Law. Of the reason for the Messiah’s incarnation, we read: “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness” (Heb. 1:9, RSV). To maintain simultaneously the lovingkindness and the justice of the holy Trinity, Jesus had to die. If there were another way, the Most High would surely have chosen it, to spare his Son and himself such dreadful agony. But there was no alternative. The crucifixion is the clinching argument against all who so lightly wish to set aside their obligation, through God’s enabling grace, to keep the Ten Commandments, with all that they entail. This Law is as unchangeable as the Almighty himself. Long ago he said, “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6), and the New Testament tells us that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8, RSV). It is very unwise to overlook this crucial fact when we ponder the status of the fourth commandment, for “the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath” (Luke 6:5, RSV).

It is also incorrect to speak, as Catholic and other law-changers do, of the Old Law and the New Law. In this context, the Almighty recognizes only his original Ten Commandments with exactly the wording that he engraved into the two tablets more than three millennia ago. They were and still are perfect. He is not an erring man that needs to chop and change.

Tradition is an unacceptable basis for faith and doctrine, because it often contradicts the Bible. It is also farfetched to suppose that Jesus would have given Christians the right to change the Law, after emphatically rejecting Jewish traditions which undermined it.

What is more, as he looked into the future, he saw—like Daniel—a power that would “think to change the times and the law” (Dan. 7:

25, RSV). Churchmen would proudly dare to tamper with the only part of the Bible written by God himself. It was this foreknowledge, we believe, that prompted Jesus to say, "Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:19). He did not mean that unrepentant transgressors of the Law would be in the kingdom, but simply stated how God, the holy angels, and the beings of other worlds would regard them in contrast with the Lord's obedient followers. The Lawless One and all who follow in his footsteps will be despised forever and ever. This idea is also to be found in Dan. 12:2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

XV

Nowadays shortened forms of the Decalogue are no longer confined to Catholics. They are also used by Protestants. Let us here briefly note just two examples.

A few years ago at a shop, I saw among its religious ornaments what seemed to be a replica of the Law. It was inscribed on two little tables of stone, and read as follows:

I

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

II

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image:-

III

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.

IV

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

V

Honour thy father and thy mother.

VI

Thou shalt not kill.

VII

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII

Thou shalt not steal.

IX

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

X

Thou shalt not covet.

The origin of the text on which this ornament was based is obscure. It is, however, so similar to the Traditional Catechetical Formula of the Roman Church, especially as represented by Keenan and Geiermann, that its indebtedness to the papal tradition can hardly be doubted. Nevertheless, its numbering as well as the way it divides the Decalogue into Ten Commandments is purely Protestant. It can therefore be called an ecumenical version. Through its many omissions, more than 75% of the Decalogue, it manifests almost all of the blemishes detailed above.

This is very close to the text that adorned the granite monument weighing 5,280 pounds which Roy Moore, the chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, set up in his Montgomery courthouse during August 2001. Though “paid for by an evangelical group,” it quickly came to be known as Roy’s Rock, because nobody and nothing could prevail on him to take it out again. On 18 November 2002, Federal Judge Myron H. Thompson ordered him to remove it, because it violated the United States Constitution, which in its First Amendment prohibits the establishment of religion by the state. Moore decided to appeal against that ruling,⁵⁵ but all his attempts in this direction failed. In August 2003 the monument was taken out definitively, for in November of the same year the U.S. Supreme Court refused to reconsider the case.

What neither justice, Moore or Thompson, seems to have noted in his argumentation is that this was not really the Law of God as proclaimed and written on Sinai. Not as a lawyer should have seen it and certainly not according to any careful Jew like, say, King David or his descendant Jesus of Nazareth, who closely adhered to the Old Testament, scrupulous about every jot and tittle. What the Lord had engraved on the tables of stone and handed to Moses was not limited to the words that would appear in Catholic catechisms or someone would one day chisel into Roy’s Rock. And this makes a very great difference, as a single example will illustrate.

For the busloads of Southern evangelicals that came to admire the monument and in some cases even knelt before it in prayer,⁵⁶ the

abbreviated precept “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” must surely have meant to rest on Sunday. But, in his fuller, biblical text of Ex. 20:8-11, the Lawgiver made it abundantly clear that he had something else in mind: the sanctifying of the *seventh* day, or Saturday, which most of Protestant as well as Catholic America would not care for.

Nevertheless, our Saviour will stand by the Law, as spoken on Sinai and later reaffirmed in the Sermon on the Mount. Whoever adds to, detracts from, or in any way seeks to nullify God’s commandments cannot do so with impunity.

XVI

The Little Horn has presumed to alter the Decalogue, just as the prophecy of Dan. 7:25 has said he would. In a final time of trouble, he and many ecumenical, Protestant allies will also join with the efforts of Satan, once again determined to persecute the true church and “make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17). These are, in the last days, the Lord’s “saints . . . that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). Going forth for the final conflict, they are encased in “the whole armour of God,” and mightily equipped with “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:11-17). He has made his everlasting covenant with them. Having taken away their sins, he has written his laws within their minds and hearts (Heb. 8:10-12); and like Sir Galahad, that medieval type of Christ, they will be able to say, “My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure!”

As the last great tribulation closes around them with its suffering, they will remember the words that the Saviour uttered just before he turned his steps toward Gethsemane: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Furthermore, they know that however much the Beast with the iron teeth and claws of bronze may slash at them, this time it will not be allowed to prevail as in ages past. Babylon has fallen definitively and is soon to perish. The Second Coming is at hand, and the mighty Helper is on the way to deliver them.

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Ps. 119:165).

Part 5

Eleven Horns

20 The Ten Horns

I

A peculiar feature of the fourth beast in Daniel's vision was its ten horns, later reduced to seven. Let us now look more closely at these.

The parallel between the ten horns and the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image is obvious. Both symbols represent the Germanic peoples (often called *Germans*) who took over the Western Roman Empire and later became European nations that still exist.

Their history begins in about 1800 B.C., on the eastern North Sea coast, when megalithic people blended with immigrants from what later became middle Germany.¹ First they expanded into southern Scandinavia and the rest of Germany. Afterwards they moved into neighboring areas. But for a long time the way to the warmer South was blocked by powerful states, especially the Roman Empire.

The ancient Germans, then, migrated from northwestern Europe, speaking at first a single language. By Christ's day, they could still more or less understand one another's dialects. From these, modern German—but also the Scandinavian languages, as well as English, Dutch, Afrikaans, and so on—later developed.

In times of peace, no central authority bound together the various clans of the tribe. They managed their own affairs through local councils and elected leaders. When conflict necessitated the choice of a war chief, he also had to be elected.² This primitive but genuine democracy was gradually undermined as kingship emerged, yet much of it endured until the monarchy came under Catholic influence.

These Germans were essentially what we today would call a third-world people. In several ways, their lifestyle resembled that of many Africans. Naidis says, "The society of the Germanic people was based on the extended family, in which several families made up a clan, and several clans a tribe."³ Originally not crops but cattle, privately owned, was their main source of food.⁴ They practiced a primitive, communalistic agriculture. Land did not belong to individuals but to the tribe; the Germanic chiefs reallocated portions of it to families every year.⁵ This is reminiscent of Xhosa and Zulu traditions in South Africa. As elsewhere in the world, it was a somewhat unproductive system, with the people living at a subsistence level, that is, barely surviving. This, together with worsening climatic conditions and an ever-growing population, exerted the pressure that generated a migratory movement. For a long time, however, they were stalled at the Rhine and the Danube, where Roman garrisons were guarding the frontier. According to an older version of history usually taught at school, the empire fell in the year 476 because the barbarians had invaded it. But that statement is very misleading; it contains four inaccuracies, namely the idea of an empire overthrown, the date, labeling all the Germans as barbarians, and the invasion theory. Let us briefly deal with these points.

II

First, the empire did not suddenly *fall*; it broke into pieces, which mostly tried to remain as Roman as possible. This process began in the fourth century of our era, when Diocletian divided the realm into Eastern and Western sectors. Then, in the fifth century, the West fragmented into separate kingdoms.

Second, 476 is not as significant a date as people of an earlier generation used to think. It is true that in that year Italy underwent a change of management, when the now quite useless Western emperor was deposed, so that Odoacer—a Herul—could become king. But the latter still acknowledged as his overlord the senior, *real* emperor, who ruled from Constantinople. Odoacer even sent him the imperial insignia of the West.⁶

The Byzantines, though sometimes powerless, still played an important role in Italian affairs for centuries after 476. A striking example was the emperor Zeno. Using his position and the immense prestige of being Roman, he was able to engineer the downfall of Odoacer by directing against him the energies of Theodoric the Ostrogoth.

In 476, the last great Roman emperor, Justinian I (483-565), had not yet been born. Ruling from Constantinople, he would eventually reconquer Italy. Afterwards Byzantine power suffered serious setbacks, though under Heraclius (c. 575-41) it revived to such an extent that by the early eighth century most of the popes were Greek speaking,⁷ and Rome was being re-Hellenized.⁸

With two exceptions, which will be dealt with, Germanic attempts to dominate Italy were aborted. Therefore, strange as it may sound, the peninsula largely remained a part of the *Eastern* Roman Empire, until the time when the pope, oppressed by the Lombards and exasperated by the inability of the Byzantines to help him, turned for support to a new superpower in the West: the Franks. When the pontiff crowned Charlemagne as emperor in 800, Constantinople finally ceased to play a significant role in Italy.

Third, a vast number of Germans, having lived in the empire for generations, were not really barbarians. That is only what prejudiced Romans called them.

Originally the word *barbarian* simply meant anybody whose mother tongue was not Greek and was therefore unintelligible to those who grew up with this language.⁹ Allegedly such a person spoke by saying “bar-bar” all the time. But soon *barbarian* acquired most of its present meanings: one who is uncivilized, uncultured, uncouth.

At first, the Greeks also applied the word to the Romans, perhaps not unjustly; for sheer cruelty these always surpassed any merely backward people of Europe. Besides, their crass materialism was repellent. Basil Davenport is quite snooty about them: “The King of Brobdingnag, looking at Rome with the superiority that comes of being sixty feet high, might have said that, from the Punic Wars on, her internal history is that of a successful gang of cutthroats quarreling over the division of the swag.”¹⁰

But after these Westerners had conquered even the Greeks, it was no longer a safe idea to call them barbarians. Instead, the Romans, increasingly Hellenized, assumed *their* natural superiority and got into the habit of using the word to describe other peoples whom they looked down on.

Sometimes these really were backward, but the Romans also developed a widespread stereotype of “uncouth, beer-swilling, promiscuous, destructive natives.”¹¹ They simply refused to believe that Germans could ever become genuinely civilized. In the end, the word *barbarian* was just an ethnic slur.

In Italy such name-calling survived for centuries. Two examples of it can be very enlightening.

When the descendants of the Germans eventually developed an architecture of their own and built their marvelous cathedrals, the Italians sneeringly referred to them as *Gothic* buildings. This word did not then, as now, have a favorable connotation, calling up visions of singular beauty—as in two incomparable churches that are both named *Nôtre Dame*: the one in Paris and the other one in Chartres. On the contrary, *Gothic* meant “uncouth,” “barbaric,” a backward effort, such as one may associate with an “uncivilised Goth.”¹²

These lovely cathedrals, which so delighted my eyes in 1985 and 1991, owed almost nothing to the classical tradition, yet the Romans never built anything to equal them. Even the more gifted Athenians could not do better. The *Nôtre Dame de Paris* is architecturally as perfect as the Parthenon on the Acropolis, but still intact and not a ruin. And then there was the battle cry *fuori i barbari* (“out with the barbarians”) of Julius II (1503-13), the cultivated warrior pope who personally campaigned on horseback against his enemies. Who, we may ask, were the barbarians he was so eager to expel from Italy? The French,¹³ under the future Francis I—a prince “whom a particularly careful education had polished,”¹⁴ later becoming “pre-eminently the king of the French Renaissance.”¹⁵

When he applied the word *barbarians* to the very nation that had already built the most beautiful cathedrals in the world, the pope was only echoing the prejudices of the Romans, who were not always more cultivated than those they despised.

The fourth reason for rejecting the traditional view about why the empire ended is that only some of the Germans were invaders. On closer examination very many of them prove to have been immigrants, generally peaceful people. They were allowed and sometimes even brought in by the Romans themselves.

Genuine barbarian invasions characterized the troubled century that began in the time of Marcus Aurelius, but soon a rather different relationship developed.

The Germans kept on drifting into the empire for purely economic reasons, “skilled tribal tradesmen—carpenters, gardeners, smiths and so forth . . . in search of money-wages, or higher wages. And they had joined the Roman army, as individuals and as units.”¹⁶ By 476, they had been in the empire for three hundred years, for “as early as the reign of Marcus Aurelius (121-80) groups of Germans were allowed to

settle on the land and to join the Roman army themselves.”¹⁷

The reason for this is that as far back as Augustus the empire had been suffering from a seriously declining birthrate, which emptied the rural areas, eroded the economy, and increased the burden of taxation. Worst affected were the upper classes, which produced the majority of intellectuals and educated people. This insidiously undermined administrative efficiency and increased the tendency to civil war. Pressing, however, was the shortage of soldiers.

Eileen Power provides a graphic summary of the situation: “To cure this sickness of population the Roman rulers knew no other way than to dose it with barbarian vigour. Just a small injection to begin with and then more and more till in the end the blood that flowed in its veins was not Roman but barbarian. In came the Germans to settle the frontier, to till the fields, to enlist first in the auxiliaries and then in the legions, to fill the great offices of state. . . .”¹⁸

By the fourth century, the process was already well advanced. Grant states that Constantine imported very large numbers of Vandals, Goths, Tufaldi, and Sarmatians into the empire. Of the last mentioned there may have been as many as 300,000, including women and children.¹⁹ The original Roman element was diluted, especially in the army.²⁰ The emperor’s closest military associates were Teutonic commanders, already Romanized. Entire regiments consisted of Germans. Even Constantine’s army that defeated Maxentius in the crucial and celebrated battle near the Milvian Bridge was largely made up of them.²¹ This trend continued. “German troops and commanders came to dominate the Roman armies by the end of the 4th century.”²² Eventually several million of these people must have established themselves in the empire. Large numbers were assimilated. Many “Romans” had “barbarian” ancestors. According to Johnson, “Gothic and Vandal tribesmen were unable and probably unwilling to resist the drift toward Romanization; Latin or romance languages became the mother-tongue for second and succeeding generations.”²³

That is really startling, and not what we read in the older history books. The immigrants soon gave up their original culture and spoke one or the other variety of Latin. What is more, although their kinsmen beyond the frontier remained a threat, “it was only with German help that the empire was able to survive so long.”²⁴

We do not contest the idea of Teutonic peoples exerting a continuous pressure on the Roman frontier, or even of actual invasions. For the empire this was, throughout a great part of its history, a simple fact of life. In the end the Germans did, of course, dismantle and take over an already tottering structure, but they did not cause its downfall. To this day, the inhabitants of Europe, including its northerners, have a largely positive attitude toward the Romans, which they inherited from their Germanic ancestors. Trevor-Roper makes it plain that these never saw themselves as destroyers of the empire but thought they were continuing it. Even more, “the barbarian Christian kings who rule over Italy, France, Spain in the fifth and sixth centuries still regard themselves as Roman.”²⁵

And yet there was something puzzling about the Germanic immigrants. Earlier and later they had asked for and acquired permanent residence. In 212, the emperor Caracalla granted Roman citizenship to every freeborn inhabitant of the empire,²⁶ including many people whose forebears had been “barbarians.” Even some emperors, such as Constantine, belonged to this category. Being Roman no longer necessarily meant Italian ancestry.

All these Germans could have lost their original identity, as numerous immigrants to America have done in the past four centuries—though the situation of present-day Hispanics indicates that a large group with relatives across the border is not always easy to assimilate.

Nor were the Germanic tribesmen who came in afterwards so numerous. Chester Starr remarks that “the best estimate of the numbers of invaders puts them at 5 percent of the imperial population” and points out that throughout the empire their language disappeared, except in Britain.²⁷

Nevertheless, beyond a certain point, the Germans were not assimilated or accepted. Why not?

III

The later empire, reorganized by Diocletian and carried on by Constantine, eliminated the equality that Caracalla had established. The motivation was partly economic. “The coercive measures by which alone the state could maintain itself divided the population anew into hereditary classes according to their work; and the barbarians, mainly Germanic, who were admitted into the empire in greater numbers, remained in their own tribal associations either as subjects or as allies.”²⁸

In this way, they retained their identity and even a legal system of their own. The Roman melting pot was no longer melting, and ethnicity became an increasingly important factor.

But the most crucial reason preventing assimilation of Teutonic people was religious intolerance. Most of these immigrants believed in a brand of Christianity that was repugnant to the mainline church. “The two peoples were everywhere divided by religion, the Romans being Catholics and the Germans remaining Arians everywhere.”²⁹

Their separateness was further ensured by an apartheid law to forbid biological assimilation, made by Valentinian I (364-75), who was every bit as cruel as Nero. It “forbade on pain of death the intermarriage of Romans and barbarians.”³⁰ More than a hundred and fifty years later this was still in force, even when Theodoric the Ostrogoth (454-526) was king of Italy³¹ Occasional exceptions did not detract from its general consequence: the two peoples no longer blended.

The Roman Empire resembled America as a target for large numbers of immigrants. At first it welcomed and readily absorbed them. Eventually, however, older inhabitants—uncomfortable with the newcomers’ way of life and religion—made discriminatory laws

against them, which eventually produced the breakup of that society.

A different policy would have ensured a much more thorough assimilation of the Germans, who could all have become good Romans. But that is not what happened, and it proved to be a fateful mistake. In the end, this separate ethnic element already inside the empire would be joined and strengthened by many new people from beyond the frontier.

IV

Different lists have been drawn up to show who the ten Germanic peoples were. The following is representative: Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Alamanni, Saxons, Heruli, Lombards, Burgundians, and Suebi, also called Suevi, or Swabians.³²

Some authors refer to them as *tribes*, but this is incorrect; for these peoples often formed great conglomerates. Each of them usually consisted of several tribes, as the following examples show.

The Alamanni were always “a loosely knit confederation of tribes (*pagi*)—the Juthungi, the Lentienses, the Bucinobantes and others.”³³ Even their name, *All-mann* (“all people”), betrays this fact. The Suebi were “a group of Germanic peoples . . . Several Suebic tribes have their own separate history.”³⁴ The Saxons reached the Rhine in the fourth century, “absorbing many ancient tribes on the way.”³⁵

Daniel’s prophecy does not mention tribes, but speaks of the ten horns as *kingdoms*. This is an important point, with its own problems. Through the centuries, the borders of Europe have shifted and changed repeatedly. Even its countries have not always remained the same. To which peoples and kingdoms did the vision refer?

The key concept is the division of the Western Roman Empire, which pinpoints the Germans in time and space. We should therefore concentrate on the fifth and sixth centuries, when the breakup occurred. At the same time, we need to confine ourselves to areas that formed part of the empire. Denmark, for instance, must be excluded.

Let us see, then, how the Western Empire was carved up among the Teutonic peoples.

V

Even before the time of Constantine in the early fourth century, the most influential Germans were the Goths, to whom we have already referred. Originally they came from Scandinavia, in the third century. There is still a province in southern Sweden called Gothland.

Off and on, they fought the Romans for about a hundred years, with armies and fleets attacking Thrace, Dacia, and cities along the Aegean coast of Asia Minor. In 267-68 they took and plundered Athens and even threatened Italy. Together with other tribes, under King Ermanaric (fl. 350-76), they eventually created a united kingdom stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea; but in about 370 the Goths split up into two groups.³⁶

The eastern division, the Ostrogoths, now ruled a sizable empire of

their own between the Don and the Dneister, and from the Black Sea into the Ukraine. Their western kinsmen, the Visigoths, had settled as farmers north of the Danube in Dacia, the area that later became Rumania. By this time, there was basically peaceful coexistence with the Romans.

This situation continued until the coming of the Huns, those terrible horsemen galloping out of Asia, whose accurate arrows—aimed from horseback—struck down all who opposed them. Behind the invaders, a trail of stinking corpses littered the steppes and valleys. Ahead of them, their name sowed panic and despair.

The Huns were an Oriental people who “invaded southeastern Europe c. 370, [and] built up an enormous empire there and in central Europe in the following years.”³⁷ For a long time, the peoples of the West were unable to cope with their novel and effective military techniques. Eventually, however, the Huns under Attila, their great leader, were defeated in Gaul in 451 by a Roman army combined with Visigoths,³⁸ and finally routed in Pannonia four years later by a Germanic alliance.³⁹

But before that, the Huns had smashed into the empire of the Ostrogoths and quickly overthrown it. In about 376, they broke through to the territory of the Visigoths, whom they also defeated, and then headed towards the Danube, the Roman frontier.

Fleeing before them were the shattered hosts of Visigoths and their families, soon to be joined by remnants of the Ostrogoths and other refugees. These people pleaded urgently with the Romans to allow them into the empire and settle as allies. For reasons of policy as well as humanity, their request was granted. The multitude, numbering almost a million,⁴⁰ that crossed the Danube were Christians,⁴¹ allegedly of the Arian variety.

These, too, were clearly not invaders, but peaceful refugees, a fact unaltered by subsequent events—or Roman propaganda, which we are not obliged to believe.

Due to the displacement caused by the invading Huns, the Goths and other peoples of the fifth century needed food as well as land to resettle their people. This was available. In some areas, including Italy and North Africa, at that time still a much more fertile region than today, agricultural land was being abandoned.⁴² Owing to its falling birthrate, the Roman Empire had plenty of space for these people, especially since “the new settlers amounted to no more than a small percentage of the population as a whole.”⁴³

Johnson makes it plain that for the greater part the Germans, even of a later period, were surprisingly law-abiding and seldom violent. Mostly they were after food and land, which they sometimes even purchased and had the deeds transferred to them legally.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, they paid only “in some cases,” and naturally the confiscated real estate already had owners, especially senators. During the fifth century, there were about two thousand of these aristocrats in the Western Empire; they derived their wealth from landed estates. Some of these men were almost unbelievably rich. “An early 5th-century historian cites some western senators as having an annual

income of 1,000 or 1,500 or even 4,000 lb. of gold, together with an income in kind of one-third of these amounts.”⁴⁵

These property owners, who also as a class produced the majority of the popes, were understandably not enthusiastic about giving up any land. This undoubtedly added to their great dislike of the Germans.

VI

The dramatic events that began on the banks of the Danube in 376 introduced a new era. Previously Germans had trickled in or settled as groups of orderly immigrants. But now these were joined by a flood of disorderly refugees.

At first, allowing the Visigoths to cross the Danube seemed like just another arrangement with the Germans. As noted, many Goths had already been partly Romanized by the time of Constantine, half a century before.⁴⁶ Besides, the settlement of newcomers seemed to make sense from a military point of view. They could be incorporated into a bulwark against the advancing Huns, whose coming spelled trouble for everyone.

But the Romans were arrogant and insensitive, as often before in their history. Foolishly Lupicinus and Maximus, in charge of the Thracian military government, were bent on self-enrichment at the expense of the Goths, whom they shamelessly exploited.

This is how Gibbon depicts the appalling situation: “Instead of obeying the orders of their sovereign, and satisfying, with decent liberality, the demands of the Goths, they levied an ungenerous and oppressive tax on the wants of the hungry barbarians. The vilest food was sold at an extravagant price, and, in the room of wholesome and substantial provisions, the markets were filled with the flesh of dogs and of unclean animals who had died of disease. To obtain the valuable acquisition of a pound of bread, the Goths resigned the possession of an expensive though serviceable slave, and a small quantity of meat was greedily purchased with ten pounds of a precious but useless metal. When their property was exhausted, they continued this necessary traffic by the sale of their sons and daughters; and notwithstanding the love of freedom which animated every Gothic breast, they submitted to the humiliating maxim that it was better for their children to be maintained in a servile condition than to perish in a state of wretched and helpless independence.”⁴⁷

They had suffered so much at the hands of the Huns, and now their rescuers were also oppressing them! When they could stand it no longer, the Visigoths—united under Fritigern—rebelled. In the meantime, their numbers had swollen, with the addition of Ostrogoths as well as “Goths in the imperial service, German slaves, settlers, miners, and finally even swarms of Alans and Huns who had come from over the Danube.”⁴⁸

The army was called out, but the Visigoths defeated it disastrously at Adrianople on 9 August 378. Two-thirds of the Roman forces were slain, including Valens, the Eastern emperor, whose corpse was never

found.⁴⁹ Unlike earlier defeats in Roman history, this was not just another reverse; on that day began the process of dismantling the empire. The culmination would come a century after the arrival of the Visigoths, in 476, when the Western emperor was deposed and a German crowned king over Italy.

Now the Visigoths were no longer regarded as refugees, which of course they had been, but as invaders⁵⁰—though even after Adrianople they accepted, for a while, the offer of the new Eastern emperor, Theodosius I, the Great (347-95), to settle down peacefully and to be incorporated into the Roman army.⁵¹ They became federates, that is, “allies under a treaty, *foedus*, to defend the frontiers.”⁵²

Their new home was in Moesia, the province lying south of the Danube; however, they now possessed the fatal knowledge that they could defeat a Roman army. Eventually the Visigoths were no longer satisfied with their situation, and so they cast desirous eyes on other parts of the empire, for a better place to settle.

After the death of Theodosius, they repudiated their allegiance, enthroning Alaric I (c. 370-c. 410). His motivation was “not to overthrow the Empire, but to establish a permanent home for his people within it.”⁵³ But neither the Western emperor nor the Roman senate was interested in this fact.

Alaric began his career by marauding into Greece and sacking a number of cities, though for a while he met his match in Flavius Stilicho (c. 359-408), who headed the Roman army and twice defeated his forces⁵⁴

All the same, this had necessitated the retrenchment of legions from the northern frontier, which laid it open for other Germans like the Vandals, Alans, Suevi, and Burgundians, who streamed into Gaul.⁵⁵ These, however, were held at bay. For the time being, it seemed like stalemate.

But then the Romans foolishly created an opportunity for the Visigoth king. Stilicho was “an exceptionally able commander” and the father-in-law of the emperor Honorius, but the Romans treated him with suspicion, since he was half Vandal.⁵⁶ They thought he was cherishing imperial ambitions for his son, Eucherius; so at last Honorius had both imprisoned and beheaded in 408.⁵⁷

Since the Romans could find no effective successor for Stilicho as a general, this act was tantamount to lopping off the head of the army itself. Olympius, the emperor’s flatterer, also secured the massacre of Stilicho’s friends and eminent officers. Furthermore, Honorius decided to “exclude all persons who were adverse to the Catholic Church, from holding any office in the State, obstinately rejected the service of all those who dissented from his religion, and rashly disqualified many of his bravest and most skilful officers who adhered to the pagan worship or who had imbibed the opinions of Arianism.”⁵⁸

As if such stupidity were not enough, the Romans extended the operations against their own Germanic soldiers, who were established immigrants, by robbing them and killing their families. Thirty thousand of these men promptly transferred their allegiance to Alaric.

Now the emperor made a mistake that he could not afford.

According to Starr, the Visigoths, in search of a better home, demanded the province of Noricum, an old name for southern Austria; but despite his military impotence, Honorius refused. Thereupon, Alaric and his army marched on Rome.⁵⁹ The emperor could have delivered its inhabitants by paying a ransom, but this he also refused to do. Instead, he skulked behind the marshes and fortifications of Ravenna.⁶⁰

In 410, the Visigoths seized and thoroughly sacked the capital of all its valuables. They also freed, at Alaric's insistence, every barbarian enslaved in Rome.⁶¹ But he commanded them to spare the Catholic churches.⁶² He was, after all, a Christian, though he rejected the pope's theology.

We should not, however, exaggerate the Visigoths' clemency. The city was not only pillaged, but suffered many casualties; for Alaric's forces included thousands of Huns and other pagans who did not restrain themselves.⁶³ Among the cruelest killers were the forty thousand slaves that suddenly found themselves free to avenge themselves on former masters and mistresses.⁶⁴

The ancient seat of power had been secure against foreign assaults for eight hundred years; therefore, its capture sent shock waves of terror rippling throughout the empire. A few, like the poet Rutilius Claudius Namantianus, maintained it was one of those temporary setbacks that the city sometimes suffered and wrote his famous eulogy to Rome:

You have lived a millennium
plus sixteen decades and now nine more years.
You need not fear the furies; the years that remain
have no limit but the earth's firmness and
the strength of Heaven supporting the stars.⁶⁵

But most people knew better. The sack of 410 was no ordinary event, and it prompted many ingenious attempts to explain the calamity.

The pagans asserted that this, and the Germanic invasions generally, had resulted from giving up the ancient gods. The Catholics provided other reasons. Ambrose thought that God was punishing them because of his anger with the Arians, while Augustine—who on this occasion wrote his famous book, *The City of God*—supposed it was retribution against the Roman Empire for robbing other peoples of their land.⁶⁶

Even Alaric had an explanation. He said "he felt a secret and praternatural impulse, which directed, and even compelled, his march to the gates of Rome."⁶⁷ We do not know the background to this interesting statement but can be reasonably sure that he and his Goths had a low opinion of Catholicism as a force for good in society. After all, its bishops—entering into a cozy association with Constantine and his successors—had done little to redress the wrongs of the empire or to prevent the atrocious treatment of the Visigoths before the battle of Adrianople. All this and other acts, including the treacherous murder

of Stilicho, had been perpetrated by so-called *Christians*.

According to the Bible, the gospel brings not only divine forgiveness, but also a power to transform the lives of all that truly accept it. Despite the goodness of some individuals who belonged to it, the imperial church had little more than a form of religion, while denying its power (1 Tim. 3:5). The evils of the empire persisted, while generals aspiring to the purple kept on slaughtering one another as they had done in pagan times.

Some Goths may well have argued that the Lord allowed the capture of Rome to show his displeasure with his alleged servants for persecuting religious dissidents. Now he was even rewarding these by giving them victory over their enemies!

For members and especially leaders of the imperial church, and its Western, Catholic branch in particular, this was a most distressing time. They were not only experiencing the breakup of Roman society, but had come face to face with victorious heretics.

VII

The Visigoths crossing the Danube practiced an older form of Christianity than the one officially recognized in Constantine's day. The reader will remember that the emperor encouraged the amalgamation of Mithraism with the religion of the Bible as a deliberate governmental policy—abetted by the time-serving bishops of his day. But the Goths could not agree to such an arrangement.

Usually their form of Christianity is described as Arianism, but this can hardly be true, since their conversion antedated that import from Cappadocia in eastern Asia Minor, an area that the Visigoths had invaded in about A.D. 250, capturing a number of Christians whom they took home with them.⁶⁸

Among the Cappadocians, Christianity had been kindled by the Holy Spirit himself, just after the Resurrection, when Jews from their province witnessed the outpouring at Pentecost in Jerusalem and heard the apostle Peter preach (Acts 1:5-8). Some of these converts would have returned to proclaim the glad tidings to their relatives and friends. At a later stage, Peter also seems to have done evangelistic work in Cappadocia, since his first epistle is addressed to this and neighboring provinces (1 Pet. 1:1). Another influence probably radiated out from Paul's first missionary journey, since he evangelized Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 14), only about a hundred miles to the west.

The church of Cappadocia was older than that of Rome, *inter alia* because it was much closer to Palestine, where Christianity began. Its most illustrious mentors were Peter and Paul.

When captured by the Visigoths, the Cappadocian Christians shared their faith; from their enslavement grew the Germanic Church in Europe. The spiritual descendants of these people also sent out missionaries to the Ostrogoths in the Ukraine and the Gepidae in the mountains north of Transylvania.⁶⁹

In this work, they may have been preceded by Christians from

Galatia—next to Cappadocia—who labored for their fellow Celts in Eastern Europe before the Germans came and absorbed them. In a further volume, we shall have more to say of the Galatian missionaries. After the introduction of Cappadocian Christianity among the Goths, fifty years elapsed before Arius (d. 335) became active in the second decade of the fourth century, when he began to proclaim the deviant doctrine that our Lord had been *created* by God the Father before his incarnation. By that time, however, Christianity had already established itself among the Germans. “As early as 325 a bishop of Gothia (*i.e.*, the Crimea) certainly attended the Council of Nicaea,⁷⁰ which had been convened to deal with this theological deviation. It was chronologically impossible for Visigoth Christianity to have begun as a form of Arianism, as is commonly asserted.

The missionary Ulfilas or Wulfila (c. 311-82), justly famous because he created an alphabet for the Gothic language and translated the Scriptures into it, was apparently influenced by a mild variety of Arianism—though this is not reflected anywhere in his Bible. He had not, however, founded Germanic Christianity, which took root among the Visigoths sixty years before his birth. Indeed, he was “descended on one side of his family from Cappadocian prisoners who had been carried off from the village of Sadagolthina.”⁷¹

Furthermore, his time as an active bishop was limited to about six years. Ulfilas was consecrated in 341 by Eusebius of Nicomedia (the same man that had baptized Constantine) and worked among the Goths; but a persecuting judge expelled him from the country in 347.⁷²

Even well-meaning Protestant writers have unintentionally reflected the traditional Catholic propaganda that depicts the Goths—like other Germanic peoples—as Arians. One of these was George Storrs,⁷³ a Methodist minister turned Millerite, though never a Seventh-day Adventist. His 1843 interpretation was adopted by Uriah Smith,⁷⁴ who himself had Arian tendencies and might have found it congenial. He in turn bequeathed the idea to many Trinitarians, amongst others Roy Allan Anderson⁷⁵ and Leslie Hardinge. The latter calls them Arian Sabbath-keepers and contrasts them with the Sundaykeeping Trinitarians of the Roman Church.⁷⁶

That the Goths in all likelihood observed the Sabbath on Saturday is suggested by Sidonius Apollinaris,⁷⁷ but the charge of Arianism is Catholic misinformation; for “none of the articles of the old heresy, made explicit by the Anomoeans, was professed by them. They were rather Semi-Arians, who refused to call the Son a creature, were prepared to acknowledge a Trinity, and would even accept a certain ‘unity’ of substance, although they understood this to mean ‘similarity’ of substance and affirmed a gradation of beings within the Trinity.”⁷⁸

Let us specifically note that the Goths “refused to call the Son a creature,” so they did believe in an uncreated and eternal second Person of the godhead.

But who were the *semi-Arians* referred to in the passage above? They “consisted mostly of conservative eastern bishops, who basically agreed with the Nicene Creed but were hesitant about the unscriptural term *homoousios* (consubstantial) used in the creed.”⁷⁹

This word could be objected to on several grounds. One is that it was tinged with syncretism, for “it had been introduced to Christian theology by Gnostics.”⁸⁰ Even more problematic is its underlying root, the Greek word οὐσία (ousia), which means *being*. This is related to οὐσα (ousa), the feminine participle of εἶμι (eimí), “I am.”⁸¹

“The New Testament writers had never said anything about the *ousia* [essence] of either the Father or the Son,”⁸² which we think is very fortunate.

Ousia and its Latin translation *substantia* (“substance”) are metaphysical concepts that have been puzzling the cleverest philosophers from the time of the ancient Greeks to the present.

The trouble is that *ousia* is based on the verb *to be*. But what does it mean?

For speakers and writers of ancient Greek, as of modern German or Spanish, it has convenient synonyms: το εἶναι (to eínai), *das Sein*, *el ser*. But all these nifty expressions beg the question; they just mean “the to be.” English lacks this type of construction—and can do perfectly well without it.

Medieval scholastics speculated endlessly on this topic, debating the differences between “substance” and “accident.” But from the eighteenth century onward philosophers have been increasingly skeptical about *ousia/substantia*. David Hume (1711-76) denied its existence altogether. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) concluded that substance and accident did not refer “to anything in the world, but rather to man’s way of ordering his experience.” That is, they are just categories of the human mind.⁸³

Often the verb *to be*, on which *ousia* is based, is just a verbal hyphen. Without the words before and after it, it means nothing. Some languages omit it altogether. Russians, for instance, do not say, “he is a tourist,” but, “he tourist.” This also happens in Hebrew, in which most of the Old Testament was written.

What did the men of Nicaea know, and—for that matter what do we know—about the ultimate nature of things and especially of God? Long ago, Moses warned the Israelites: “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

Such were the hair-splitting topics that preoccupied the theologians in the time of Constantine and for centuries to come. They did well to reject the Arian idea that the second Person of the godhead was a created being. But persecuting fellow Christians for such and even minor differences of opinion was despicable. The men of Nicaea should rather have concentrated on what Jesus called “the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (Matt. 23:23). They could also have fruitfully positioned themselves against the growing apostasy from Biblical truth that characterized the mainline church of their time.

It may be true that the Goths did not accept every jot and tittle of the Creed established at Nicaea, a Catholic and an Orthodox

document. All the same, Germanic theology seems to have conformed more closely to the New Testament than that of the people who first opposed and later liquidated them. But the descendants of their exterminators have found it convenient to keep on tarring their memory with the brush of Arianism.

Modern readers should bear in mind that the controversies of the early church were also closely bound up with politics. Theodosius the Great not only made a treaty with the Visigoths; on 29 February 380, he also established Catholicism as the exclusive religion of the empire and “ordered all the peoples of his realm to subscribe to the dogmas of Nicaea.”⁸⁴

Apart from the pagan Saxons and Franks, the Teutonic peoples followed the Gothic example, unwilling to accept the papacy. “In all these cases it seems likely that the conversion was carried through by German-speaking and not Roman missionaries, and Visigoth priests are likely to have played a major part in the process.”⁸⁵

Even while the Visigoths were marauding in Italy, the empire—suddenly impotent—was experiencing further problems. Other Germanic peoples had also been dislodged by the Huns.

VIII

The Suebi originally lived round the Elbe River, but some had already migrated further to the south. In 406 a group of them, accompanied by two hordes of Vandals and the Alans, crossed the Rhine near Mainz. Three years later, they swept into Spain, where the Roman forces could not cope with them.

The Visigoths were still seeking a good area to settle in, and Alaric had died within months of the great sack. The Romans, astute manipulators, managed to persuade these people to resume their status as imperial federates, in exchange for land. Starr says they were also blackmailed “by threats to their food supply.”⁸⁶

The designated area would be outside Italy but in the attractive province of Gaul. There was, however, a price tag: defeating the Germans who had invaded Spain. To this the Visigoths agreed, and carried out their side of the bargain scrupulously.

They left Italy and in 418 crushed the Alans, driving the Vandals with the Suebi into the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. Then they reestablished Roman authority in Spain, after which the emperor Constantius III recalled them to live in Aquitania Secunda.⁸⁷ This was on the Western seaboard of Gaul, which now is France, between the mouths of the Garonne and the Loire.⁸⁸

Here the Visigoths settled down and remained for almost a hundred years. In 451, Visigoth soldiers combined with the Roman army and other Germans to defeat Atilla and his Huns,⁸⁹ on the Catalaunian plains of Gaul—which ensured that Europe would not be permanently dominated by an Asiatic people.

Although in this battle the Visigoths lost their king, Theodoric I,⁹⁰ they must have found the victory intensely satisfying. Seventy-five years earlier, the Huns had defeated their ancestors and sent them

fleeing helter-skelter over the Danube into the Roman Empire. Now, "it was the Visigoths who bore the main brunt of the fighting,"⁹¹ and their prowess proved superior.

During the reign of Alaric II (484-507), the Visigoths migrated to Spain in very large numbers,⁹² having come under pressure from the more powerful Franks, who finally overthrew their Gallic kingdom in 507.⁹³ But south of the Pyrenees the power of Rome had crumbled, the Vandals with the remnants of the Alans had migrated to Africa, and the Suebi were unable to resist them.

The history of Spain as an independent country begins with the Visigoths.

IX

The Burgundians founded a powerful kingdom that by 406 already reached as far as the Rhine. But then they clashed with both the Huns and the Romans, who destroyed their kingdom between 435 and 437. A few years later, by 443, the Roman general Aetius brought the remnants of the Burgundians into the empire and settled them as federates in Savoy.

The word *invader* is also inappropriate when applied to these people. Only after imperial power declined, the Burgundians gradually assumed control over the areas north and west of Savoy. In 456, they extended their power over most of the Rhône Valley.⁹⁴

They established a kingdom known as Burgundy in southeastern Gaul. Becoming a Duchy, it was eventually absorbed by France. But later it extended northwards to include the Netherlands, in whose creation the Burgundian connection played a crucial role.

X

The Alamanni had for a long time been living in the Black Forest and adjoining areas of southwestern Germany. Since the third century, they had proven troublesome to the Romans in eastern Gaul. With the weakening of imperial authority in the fifth century, they expanded their territory into Alsace and northern Switzerland.

In Gaul, they were eventually conquered by the Franks,⁹⁵ who later also subjugated them in Germany. To this day, the French refer to a man from that country as an *allemand*, while the Spanish call him an *alemán*, from the ancient name of the Alamanni. This, however, is a bit of a misnomer, for they provided only one strand—and not necessarily the most important one—in the eventual makeup of Germany.

There is, however, one modern country in which their descendants still predominate: Switzerland. The language often referred to as Swiss German is really not German but Alamannic. Since the bankers of Zürich speak it, much of the world's business is conducted in it.

In his list of the ten Germanic peoples, Smith originally preferred the Huns to the Alamanni,⁹⁶ an idea he had uncritically inherited from the Millerites⁹⁷ but with which we—like A. T. Jones—cannot agree;

since those Oriental invaders failed to maintain themselves as a separate nation. As we have seen, they were defeated first by the Germanic Visigoths in league with the Romans, and finally by the Germans alone.

The reader should, moreover, be aware of two misnomers that can becloud this issue.

The first is the name *Hungary*. Though it seems to commemorate the Huns, that country was founded and is to this day inhabited, not by Atilla's nation but quite another people: the Magyars, later arrivals that had nothing to do with the fragmentation of the Western Roman Empire. They invaded present-day Hungary at the end of the ninth century and defeated an opposing German army in 907.⁹⁸

The other misnomer became prominent by World War I and even more so during World War II, when the British delighted in referring to the Germans as *Huns*. That was certainly picturesque but historically quite inaccurate.

XI

The Visigoths, the Burgundians, and the Alamanni had all desired portions of Gaul, one of the fairest and most civilized provinces of the Roman world. But here it was the Franks that eventually prevailed.

Originally they lived near the Rhine and consisted of the Salians, the Hessians, and the Ripuarians, who all at different times migrated into Gaul. These were separate though related tribes, who usually ruled themselves, except in time of war. Eventually the Salian Franks became dominant.

These at first resided in the Netherlands, north of the lower Rhine between the Waal and Lek Rivers, in an area still called Salland, in the Dutch province of Overijssel.⁹⁹ They were Hollanders, so to speak. The Nederlandic group of languages, spoken to this day by the Dutch, the Flemish, and the Afrikaners in South Africa, "is descended primarily from the speech of the Franks."¹⁰⁰

Now these were indeed invaders of the Roman Empire, and not just immigrants as many of the Goths had been. In the fourth century, the emperor Julian had been unable to dislodge them, and so they were allowed to retain Taxandria, between the Meuse and the Scheldt, where they lived as Roman federates—though with a tendency to rebel.

As the rule of Rome declined, the Franks extended their territories southward. In 481 or 482, Clovis became king over a tribe of Salian Franks. A powerful ruler, he conquered the greater part of Gaul.¹⁰¹ He trounced the Visigoths at Vouillé, near Poitiers, in 507,¹⁰² after which most of them migrated into Spain.

A new name, France (from the Latin word *Francia*), eventually stamped itself on the land of Gaul, to indicate who owned it now. The new country was destined to play a most important part in the history of Europe. Its origin is clearly indicated by its Dutch, Afrikaans, and German names: *Frankrijk*, *Frankryk*, and *Frankreich*, which all mean the "empire of the Franks."

XII

The weakening of Roman power in Italy and the adjacent provinces had a devastating effect on Britain, increasingly abandoned to its own fate. In 410, the imperial garrisons were withdrawn for service against Alaric's Visigoths, and the Saxons moved in.

At the beginning of the fifth century, these people had already spread from Schleswig and the Baltic coast, their original home, to the North Sea. Here their piracy was so vigorous that in Latin the area of Gaul and Britain next to the Channel were named the *litora Saxonica* ("the Saxon coasts").

The Saxons were the first to cross over and begin the conquest of what later would be called England, but they also spread into North Germany and the coastal stretch from the Elbe to the Scheldt. Here they mingled with the Frisians, whom they influenced greatly.

Entering Britain about A.D. 450, the Saxons were joined by two closely related tribes. The name of one, the Jutes, has all but disappeared, but the Angles are still spectacularly commemorated in the name *England*. These three tribes all spoke related Low German dialects, which blended and became what is known as Old English.¹⁰³

This brings us to a minor problem of prophetic interpretation.

In its list of the Germanic peoples who took over the Western Roman Empire, one Bible Commentary refers to the *Anglo-Saxons* rather than the Saxons.¹⁰⁴ This word, however, can be misleading. It overemphasizes the importance of the British and the so-called Anglos in America, while it ignores the Dutch, the Flemish, the Afrikaners, and the Germans, who are also partly of Saxon descent.

Our most important authority on the England of that era is Bede, who lived in the eighth century. He "is not always careful to distinguish Angles and Saxons."¹⁰⁵ At times he even speaks of the Angles as Saxons: "Anglorum sive Saxonum gens" (the nation of the Angles or Saxons). The Celtic writers of England "use *Saxones* of all the Germanic invaders."¹⁰⁶

We therefore prefer the simple word *Saxons*, though prophetically speaking this is a minor point.

XIII

The last Germanic people to establish a kingdom in the Western Roman Empire were the Lombards.

In the first century, they were probably still living in northwest Germany on the left bank of the lower Elbe, as one of the tribes that constituted the Suebi. Eventually they also migrated southward. Soon after 536, Justinian mobilized them against the Gepidae, north of the Danube.

What they really wanted was land in Italy, but while that emperor was alive, they would have been no match for his powerful Byzantine armies. But Justinian's generals, Belisarius and Narses, smashed the power of the Ostrogoths, leaving a vacuum that the Lombards could

eventually fill.

In 568, the time was propitious. Two years earlier Justinian had died, with his empire exhausted; and so the Lombards invaded Italy, where they encountered little opposition. By September 569, they had taken the whole area north of the Po and all the important cities, except Pavia.¹⁰⁷ In 751, they completed their conquest of northern Italy by capturing Ravenna, after which they put Rome itself under considerable pressure, especially since they had created two duchies in Spoleto and Benevento, east and south of that city.¹⁰⁸

Lombardy, in northern Italy, still bears the name of this Germanic people. Here they found remnants of the Ostrogoths with their non-Catholic Christianity, which they also preferred and perpetuated.

Eventually the Lombards were checked in their expansion by the armies of Pepin the Short, who defeated them in two campaigns (754 or 755, and 756); later Charlemagne vanquished and subjected them in 773¹⁰⁹—though even this was not the end of their power or influence.

For one thing, the Duchy of Spoleto had successfully survived the Frankish conquest and “regarded themselves as maintaining the ancient traditions of the Lombard people.”¹¹⁰ For another, they never disappeared; with the passage of the ages, they simply became the northern Italians and played an important part in establishing the city-states that characterized their region.

Unlike many other parts of the peninsula, the Lombard territories mostly preserved their independence from the medieval Papal State. The descendants of this people made important contributions to both the Renaissance and the unification of Italy in 1870. Under the house of Savoy, the latter-day Lombards founded the kingdom of Piedmont, which together with its capital Turin included Milan and Genoa. Later they added Sardinia and, with the inspired assistance of Garibaldi, went on to conquer the rest of Italy, obliterating the Papal State. Thereupon, Victor Emmanuel II, the Piedmontese king, ascended the throne of the entire country.¹¹¹

To this day, the Lombards retain a number of traits derived from their Teutonic forebears. Referring to the fifteenth-century Milanese, E. R. Chamberlin describes them as “a hardworking, rather dour, rather unimaginative people, physically somewhat taller and fairer than the average Italian”¹¹² and speaks of them as “an eminently practical race.”¹¹³

In updating this description, we would demur about their allegedly deficient imagination. After all, people with Lombard ancestors played a notable part in the Renaissance, which flowered in Northern Italy from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. Economically the area where they live is today the most prosperous part of Italy.

Apart from the ten Germanic peoples mentioned above, there were other groupings that blended with them, failing to preserve a separate identity. One of these was the Alans, “an Asian conglomeration of tribes of Sarmatian extraction.”¹¹⁴ Eventually most of them crossed into Africa with the Vandals, who assimilated them, though the ruler was officially still called “king of the Vandals and Alans.”¹¹⁵

We note particularly that the prophecy of the horns is confined to the Roman West. Writers like Hunt deny this, pointing out that the empire also had an eastern division.¹¹⁶ So it did, but this was not partitioned fifteen hundred years ago, nor did the other horn which Daniel saw in his vision grow up in that area. It was not the territories of Constantinople, but of the Western Empire, which *divided* into separate countries.

The history and final fate of the Eastern or Byzantine Empire was quite different. It survived for another millennium, with Constantinople as its capital. As Grant says, “during the greater part of that period (as most of us were not taught at school) it was by far the most important city in Europe.”¹¹⁷

The Eastern Empire did not divide, but was gradually gobbled up by its Moslem enemies. The capital city, a final dainty morsel, was swallowed by the Turks in 1453—historically a somewhat recent date.

For a thousand years beyond the end of the Western Roman Empire, the church and civilization of Constantinople had a tremendous impact on several states that arose in Eastern Europe, such as Bulgaria and Russia; but these were not divisions of the Byzantine Empire. They were new countries that developed alongside it. Four and a half centuries before Constantinople fell, Bulgaria had already reached and passed its zenith under Simeon (893-927), the most powerful monarch in Eastern Europe.¹¹⁸

Russia was originally founded by the Rus, a Varangian tribe related to the Swedes, Angles, and Northmen. Its first *koning*, or prince, was Rurik, who arrived at Novgorod in 862. At that time, Constantinople still retained its independence, as it would for another six hundred years.

Modern Russia arose under Ivan III, the Great. By 1505, he had not only prepared the ground for future enlargement, but had married Sophia, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor. Ivan therefore regarded himself as the heir of second or New Rome, the original name of Constantinople.¹¹⁹

The word *czar* means “Caesar,” and ever since Ivan’s time Moscow has often thought of itself as third Rome;¹²⁰ for it became the most powerful center of the Orthodox Church. For this reason, Russia—as well as Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and other countries in Eastern Europe—can perhaps be considered part of the beast depicted in Dan. 7. They may yet play an important part in the future history of the church, especially if Roman Catholicism should reunite with Orthodox Christianity, from which it has been separated for over a thousand years.

Nevertheless, the Eastern European countries cannot be numbered with the ten horns of the beast. It is a historical fact that the Germans established their kingdoms in what used to be the *Western* Roman Empire.

We believe that they meet the specifications of the prophecy in an

admirable way.

“But,” the observant reader may protest, “you have dealt with only *seven* Germanic tribes. There were ten horns! What about the other three?” These were Germanic kingdoms that once existed but did not survive, being uprooted by the last, or eleventh, horn—whose development they hindered.

This other power became their mortal enemy. Let us now consider it and them.

21 Another Horn

I

Throughout the West in the fifth and sixth centuries, the same scenario unfolded: Germanic kingdoms supplanted the imperial structures set up by Rome. This happened everywhere, except in Italy and the Mediterranean rim of North Africa.

There the Germans had only temporary success, because the region was destined to become the special stamping ground of another power, which began as a remnant of the old empire itself. In Daniel's prophecy, this is represented by an eleventh horn that came up among the original ten, uprooting three. At first it was small, but later it grew to be more robust than any of its companions.

To identify the eleventh horn, we need not look for another Germanic kingdom, since it would be "different from the former ones" (Dan. 7: 24, RSV). It would, however, appear *among* them, that is, evolve in the same area and time as they—but come to power only *after* them (vv. 8, 24, RSV, emphasis added).

As already noted, the early Christian commentator Hippolytus, who died a martyr's death in 235,¹ maintained this "other little horn . . . meant the Antichrist in the midst of the ten kingdoms to come."² His North African contemporary, Tertullian (c.160-240), made an identical interpretation: "The Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten, shall introduce Antichrist."³ This was also the idea of Lactantius (c. 250-c. 330), a generation later.⁴

Among pre-Constantinian Christians, this had become a widely held expectation of what the future would bring.

Whether in relation to the Beast or its additional horn, some medieval Christians continued the tradition of identifying the Antichrist with the Roman Church. These interpreters included the Albigenes of southern France⁵ and the Waldenses.⁶

Over the centuries, from an early period, powerful voices also went up within Catholicism itself to equate the Antichrist with wicked pontiffs.

A striking example was Arnulf, bishop of Orleans. During a council meeting arranged by the French king in 991, he attacked the degenerate popes who were then disgracing the Vatican. Arnulf said the reigning pontiff, "clad in purple and gold, was 'Antichrist, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself as God,'"⁷ Two hundred and fifty years later, another prominent Catholic that made this identification was Eberhardt II, Archbishop of Salzburg. In support of his emperor, the famous Frederick II, this cleric distanced himself from the Roman pontiff and at the Council of Regensburg in 1240 roundly declared that the papacy was the Little Horn.⁸

This was not an isolated case, nor was the topic confined to theological writings. In the high Middle Ages, several Catholic poets—including some of the most famous who have ever lived—portrayed

specific popes as Antichrist. Among them were Jean de Meun (c. 1275), the Frenchman that finished the *Romance of the Rose*, a vastly popular work in those days, and two great Italian writers, Jacopone da Todi (c. 1230-1306) and Dante Alighieri (1265-1321).⁹

In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante rages against the simoniac popes Nicholas III, Boniface VIII, and Clement V, whom he consigns to hell, “inverted in narrow holes with their feet tortured by flames, images of the false Simon Magus falling from heaven—himself a figure of the Antichrist who will bring down fire upon his followers in a parody of Pentecost (XIX.22-30).”¹⁰ In *Inferno* XIX, Dante also refers to “the Whore of Babylon of Apocalypse 17 as a symbol of the corrupt present church (XIX.103-17)”¹¹:

... colei che siede sopra l'acque
puttanegiar coi regi . . .

(. . . she who sits on the waters
to fornicate with the kings . . .)

This line of interpretation was continued by the Reformers, who mostly—let us not forget—began their careers as clergymen of the Roman Church. In identifying the Antichrist not simply with particular popes, but with the papacy itself, they were building on foundations laid by the earliest Christian expositors and medieval Catholic writers, as well as dissident groups like the Albigenses and Waldenses.

John Wycliffe (1330-84), the morning star of the Reformation, adhered to the Historical School or the continuistic view, and so did that noble martyr Jan Hus (1372/73-1415).¹² More than a century later, Martin Luther (1483-1546) also equated the Little Horn with the pontiffs. Indeed, as Froom points out, in all lands, the Reformers were “unanimous in applying most of the prophecies of the Antichrist to the Papacy.”¹³ It is interesting that “the first sermon ever preached by John Knox, in 1547, was on the four world powers of Daniel 7—with the ten divisions of the Roman fourth and the Little Horn as the Papacy.”¹⁴

Surveying a period of 600 years from the later Middle Ages to the second half of the twentieth century, De Semlyen provides an impressive list:

“Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Cranmer; in the seventeenth century, Bunyan, the translators of the King James Bible and the men who published the Westminster and Baptist Confessions of Faith; Sir Isaac Newton, Wesley, Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards; and more recently, Spurgeon, Bishop J. C. Ryle and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones; these men among countless others, all saw the office of the Papacy as the Antichrist, that is substituting for Christ, the new face of the old paganism that is *Mystery Babylon* in the Bible.”¹⁵

In the light of both the Scriptures and history, we, too, find it difficult to avoid a similar conclusion; for we stand in the same prophetic tradition as Hippolytus, the Waldenses, and the sixteenth-

century Reformers. We wish, however, to make two additional points.

First, the Bible itself predicts not only a particular Antichrist, but also applies the word more widely. In 1 John, the apostle declares that “as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists” (2:18) and also speaks of “the spirit of antichrist” (4:3). Protestants need to note this. Some of their churches have also at times denied their Lord by acting like the Antichrist, especially by persecuting other Christians whose theology did not agree with theirs.

Second, the Scriptures foretell that eventually three major powers will oppose the coming King, namely the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—that is, Satan, Antichrist, and the two-horned beast. These are described in Rev. 12 and 13. In a sense the devil is himself the ultimate Antichrist, and all who choose to be God’s enemies automatically become his subjects. It is not, however, the evil one whom the Lord will destroy at his Second Coming (2 Thess 2:8) but another, human power.

II

We agree with the Reformers and others before them that the papacy most perfectly—indeed, uniquely—fits the biblical scenario for the number one Antichrist that has trampled on so much of our history, especially in Europe. Vance H. Ferrell correctly observes that “only Papal Rome answers to the description of Daniel Seven.”¹⁶

This was already clearly brought out in “the classic *Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion*” between Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), founder of the Disciples Church, or Christians, with Archbishop J. B. Purcell on 13-21 January 1837. Reporters took it down verbatim in shorthand. A climactic point was Campbell’s brilliant ten-point summary, which shows that only the Roman Church fulfills not some but all the prophetic specifications for the Antichrist. He said:

1. It is a beast, or empire, or power, that grew out of the Roman beast.
2. It rose after the empire was divided into *ten* kingdoms.
3. It was a *new* and *different* power, sagacious and politic—with human eyes—an eloquent, persuasive, and denunciatory power.
4. It supplanted and displaced *three* of the original states of the Roman empire or of the ten kingdoms into which it was at first divided.
5. It assumed more than any other empire. It uttered great things and its look was more stout (daring) than its fellows.
6. It made war not against sinners, like other empires—it made war *against saints*.
7. It prevailed for a long time against them. It “*wore out the saints*.”
8. It presumed to change *times and laws*. How many fasts, and feasts, and saints, and new laws, and institutions has this power set up!
9. It had power to hold in subjection all saints, and to lord it over them for a long time.

10. It was to be *consumed*, gradually wasted as the Protestant Reformation has been wasting its power and substance for three centuries—and is yet finally, suddenly and completely to be destroyed. Can my learned opponent find all these characteristics and circumstances in any other power or empire in the history of all time!¹⁷

We read that the archbishop's response was "weak and evasive."¹⁸

Events in the 160 years since that debate necessitate a reevaluation of Campbell's tenth point. Far from continuing its decline, Catholicism—headed by the papacy—has made a tremendous comeback. In 1837, the great debater failed to grasp the import of Rev. 13:3: "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast."

But Campbell's inability to comprehend this verse was understandable; the revival of papal power still lay in his future. At that time, Protestantism was still robust and assertive. The present-day reversal of the situation would surely have staggered his imagination.

He pointed out that the papacy "was an embryo in Paul's time. (The mystery of iniquity doth already inwardly work.)"¹⁹

This is a vital argument. The great apostle warned his contemporaries that in their time the Antichrist was already beginning to stir in the womb of the church. It was therefore destined to continue its career for many, many hundreds of years—right up to the Second Coming (2 Thess 2:7,8). None of the other candidates proposed throughout the centuries meet this specification, for they are either long dead or must still supposedly appear.

What body is almost as old as Christianity itself, with a career of departing from what the Bible teaches, and has survived from early in our era down to the present? It is the Roman Church, peacock-proud of its antiquity, which recently preened itself by celebrating an alleged 2,000 years of Catholicism. How it rejoices because it has continued for so long! This, too, however, is a fulfillment of prophecy; for the Antichrist was born just a little after the last apostle died.

In spite of such considerations, many present-day Protestants have given up the idea that the Little Horn is the papacy, substituting for it two alternative explanations. We have already referred to them but must now consider them in further detail. The first is known as Preterism, which teaches that all the Bible's predictions were completely fulfilled before our era or within a short time of the Lord's resurrection. The other is Futurism, which holds that the Antichrist is still to come. Together, these two schools have the effect of letting the papacy off the hook, which is exactly what they were designed to do.

III

Preterism was largely introduced into Christianity by Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613), a Spanish Jesuit scholar of the Counter Reformation. He tried amongst other things to prove that the Little

Horn cannot refer to the papacy, by applying Daniel's prophecy to Antiochus IV (c. 215-164 B.C.), nicknamed Epiphanes ("the illustrious one"). This was a rather insignificant Greco-Macedonian king of Syria, who lived 160 years before Christ and became notorious for persecuting the Jews, whereupon—under the Maccabees—they drove him from Jerusalem. Alcazar apparently derived this line of interpretation from a medieval Jewish rabbi, Hayyim Galipapa (c. 1310-80).²⁰ It represents a Judaic view going back to pre-Christian sources. Josephus refers to it more than a thousand years before Galipapa in his *Antiquities* (A.D. 93 or 94), where he comments on Daniel's vision.²¹

We concede that the Syrian persecutor had some, though not all, characteristics specified in the prophecy, yet this hardly prevents Dan. 7 from applying—with much greater force—to the papacy. Besides, to the understanding of the Little Horn as Antiochus Epiphanes there are several objections.

The most serious one is that in his Olivet discourse (Matt. 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13) Jesus linked the Little Horn with a power that would flourish during the Christian era, beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand) . . ." (Matt. 24:15). The identification with Antiochus Epiphanes totally conflicts with these words of Christ.

It also fails to meet the specification that the career of the Antichrist would, as Dan. 7:25 puts it, span "a time, two times, and half a time" (RSV), i.e., three and a half years. Instead, the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes lasted for three years and ten days, from Chislev 15, 168 B.C., to Chislev 25, 165. The latter date on the Jewish calendar became Hanukkah, which is still celebrated today to commemorate the dedication of the new altar.²²

To this should be added that the book of Revelation, echoing Daniel, applies that time prophecy to the Christian era: "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished *for a time, and times, and half a time*, from the face of the serpent" (Rev. 12:14, emphasis added). These words, written in about A.D. 100, are about the future and not the past. Although the human author was John, it is the Redeemer himself who says so; for the Apocalypse is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1). Once more, as from the perspective of Olivet (and stated with unmistakable clarity by Matt. 24:15), the gaze of our Lord is fixed on coming events that will yet affect his people, rather than an episode in bygone Jewish history.

Besides, the Preterist interpretation concerned with Antiochus Epiphanes does not fit into the proper time frame; the ancient Syrian king belongs to an earlier, pre-Christian, period, as part of the four-headed leopard, symbolizing Greek domination. The Little Horn of Dan. 7 grows on another creature, the dreadful beast that follows it. It

is rooted in pagan Rome but only turns into a political-religious power in the company of ten other horns. This means it comes to the fore somewhat later than the Germanic kingdoms but then continues as their contemporary to the end of time.

Preterism does not deal exclusively with the Little Horn; it also seeks to show that other prophecies, e.g. Rev. 13, cannot apply to the papacy. It limits fulfillment to the first few centuries of our era and designates Nero as the Antichrist.²³

Alcazar's Preterism has influenced many rationalist and Protestant writers.

IV

The other approach designed to exonerate the papacy is Futurism, an ancient Roman Catholic school of prophetic interpretation. In its genesis, it is about as old as the Great Apostasy, though not as old as the Historical School of the earliest Christians.

Its rudiments appear in early Catholic writers like Irenaeus and Jerome—according to Cardinal Henry E. Manning (1807-92), an Anglican priest who supported the nineteenth-century Oxford Movement and later headed the Roman Church in England. Futurism was elaborated further by Pope Gregory I, Bede, and others. Lecturing on this topic to the prestigious Metaphysical Society of London in 1861, Manning stated that "Ribera repeats the same opinion."²⁴

During the Counter Reformation, it gained new prominence, spearheaded by Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621);²⁵ however, it reached its fullest elaboration with Francisco Ribera (1537-1591). Like Alcazar, the champion of Preterism, Ribera was a Spanish Jesuit.

Published in 1590, with several subsequent revisions, his 500-page commentary on Revelation rejected the Protestant interpretation that the Antichrist was the Catholic Church.²⁶

This was a highly successful maneuver. In the graphic words of Ronald C. Thompson, Ribera was one of the men who "deflected the incriminating finger of prophecy pointed by Daniel, Paul and John at the Roman papacy."²⁷ The following is Thompson's synopsis of his ideas:

"Ribera laid aside the collective Antichrist institution taught by Protestants, for a *single individual* who would rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, abolish the Christian religion, deny Christ, be received by the *literal Jews*, pretend to be God and conquer the world . . . And on top of it, all would be accomplished in 1,260 literal days, a literal three and a half year period (1260 divided by 360 = 3½). He paralleled the sun-clothed woman in the wilderness with the persecution of the Antichrist during the 3½ year period (Cf. Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5; 12:6, 24)."²⁸

As already indicated elsewhere, a vulnerable element of Futurism is the Gap theory. Ribera applied a number of chapters at the beginning of Revelation to ancient Rome, but crammed chapters 11 through 14 into a very short future of only three and a half literal years.²⁹ In other words, he cuts out more than a thousand years of

medieval, Catholic history, on which prophecy is not supposed to have commented.

In an earlier reference to Dispensationalism, the Protestant offspring of Catholic Futurism, we pointed out that the Gap theory is highly illogical. Together with Futurism as a whole, it is also intrinsically improbable.

It would have us believe that for the greatest part of our era, prophecy has had little to say to the Christian church, being chiefly concerned with a very brief period of seven years in the distant future, largely ignoring the ongoing history of the church for almost twenty centuries. This, however, is contrary to both the Old and the New Testament teaching about the theological function of prophecy.

It does not simply predict events; it unravels the meaning of human destiny and comforts the Lord's beloved—even if the revelations are not always comfortable. Often, as difficulties beset them, they exclaim, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" And "the watchman says: 'Morning comes, and also the night. If you will inquire, inquire.'" (Isa. 21:11, 12, RSV)

According to an ancient promise, made about 760 years before Christ, "the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). This is also true of the Christian era. To the readers of his own and later times, the apostle Peter writes: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19).

This is what the Historical School maintains. Throughout the ages, our compassionate Saviour has lighted the path for his people—so often perplexed and oppressed—with the cheering lamp of divine revelation, making the future ever clearer as they advance toward the Second Coming and their heavenly home.

The Gap theory, however, contradicts this idea. It implies a dark communication gap between our Lord and his church, a gap of prophetic silence lasting for many, many centuries. This, we think, requires explanation. In particular, why do the characteristics and career of the papacy happen to correspond so exactly to the Bible's predictions—in accordance with the Historical School of prophetic interpretation, as amongst others Alexander Campbell explained so ably almost two hundred years ago?

V

Futurism first made a significant entry into Protestant theology through an Anglican cleric, Samuel R. Maitland (1792-1866), who in 1826 published a pamphlet of seventy-two pages entitled *An Enquiry into the Grounds on Which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John, Has Been Supposed to Consist of 1260 Years*. Its intention was to oppose Irving and others who believed in the year-day principle; that is to say, Maitland raised his voice against the proclamation that culminated in the Great Advent movement.³⁰

Furthermore, "he had contempt for much of the general concept of

the ‘Reformation as a religious movement’” and stated that the pope did not meet the terms of the prophecy. Maintaining that the 1260 prophetic days were natural days, i.e., three and a half literal years, Maitland believed the predictions in Daniel and Revelation would all be fulfilled in the future.³¹

He attacked the orthodoxy of the Waldenses and Albigenses,³² to whom the Historical School allegedly owed its origin.

We think it significant that Protestant Futurism came to the fore with an Anglican priest, for doctrinally the Church of England—for much of its existence—has been semi-Catholic and a potential halfway house to Rome. Its present-day position toward the Vatican still needs to be finalized. It should either become a truly Protestant church or return to the bosom of the Papacy, which it originally left for non-theological reasons.

A disciple of Maitland was another Anglican, James H. Todd (1805-69), “Irish scholar and professor of Hebrew in the University of Dublin. As Donnellan lecturer at Trinity College in 1838 and 1839 he dealt with the prophecies relating to Antichrist. Openly proclaiming himself Maitland’s follower, he boldly attacked the Reformers’ Historical School view—still commonly held by the Protestant clergy in Ireland—that the Pope was Antichrist.” He maintained that the Antichrist was an individual, due to arise just before the Second Coming “and connected with the Jewish rather than the Gentile church.”³³ For Todd, Catholicism was not an apostasy from Bible religion. Despite its errors, he thought “the Church of Rome [was] a true Christian Church.”³⁴

Futurism as formulated by Maitland and Todd was, amongst others, taken up by John Henry Newman (1801-90). In “The Protestant Idea of Antichrist,” written five years before he joined the Church of Rome, he begins by praising Todd and then presents the following two propositions:

“The question really lies, be it observed, between those two alternatives, *either* the Church of Rome is the house of God *or* the house of Satan; there is no middle ground between them.

“The question is, whether, as he [Todd] maintains, its fulfillment is yet to come, or whether it has taken place in the person of the Bishop of Rome, as Protestants have very commonly supposed.”³⁵

These ideas are difficult to dispute. But Newman, like Maitland before him, erred in attributing the origin of the Historical School to the medieval Albigenses, Waldenses, the Spiritual Franciscans, and other so-called heretics.³⁶ At least germinally, it has existed from the earliest period, its adherents including Hippolytus and Tertullian, who lived before the fourth century, when the bishops and Constantine cooperated to forge the imperial church.

VI

The very great influence of Futurism on twentieth-century Protestants owes much to the Oxford Movement, which also gave birth to the Ecumenical idea that beckons people back to Rome.

The best-known offshoot of Ribera's and Maitland's futurist ideas is Dispensationalism. Despite some other antecedents, it was chiefly formulated at nineteenth-century British conferences on prophecy, such as the ones at Powerscourt Castle in Ireland, from 1830 onward. Some of the leading personalities that attended those meetings, especially John Nelson Darby, founded the Plymouth Brethren with whom this school became particularly associated.³⁷

But nowadays Dispensationalists exist in many Protestant churches. They believe that in different historical periods God applied not one but several plans to further his purposes with humanity. In this view, he has worked mightily through the church from the beginning of Christianity until very recent times, but his latter-day favorites are again his ancient, Old Testament people. A new Dispensation supposedly began in 1948, when the Zionists proclaimed the state of Israel in Palestine.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem do not recognize it, however, because its founders were Socialists and used secular, violent methods to create it. As these rabbis understand the prophecies, the restoration of their people cannot occur before the Messiah comes. Though we would put this differently and in terms of the Second Coming, we basically agree with their position.

In previous chapters, we referred to Hal Lindsey's books, especially *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1971), a Futurist work that became a spectacular best-seller in many languages. Another influential Dispensationalist, roughly contemporary with Lindsey, was Charles C. Ryrie. His book, *The Bible and Tomorrow's News*, is also (like all Futurism) much indebted to Ribera. Appearing in 1969, it became quite popular, since by 1973 it had gone through five printings.

Like Lindsey, Ryrie was fascinated with modern Israel and contemporary affairs, which prompted his own prediction that during the Tribulation, God would obliterate the northern armies of Russia, which he believed would have invaded Palestine.³⁸ In the context of the time when he wrote those words, Ryrie probably meant the Soviet Union, which has already lurched to its end—but in quite a different way.

VII

Since the Second World War, Communism and specifically the atheist Soviet Union have been targeted by many Protestants as a fulfillment of prophecies involving the Antichrist. But its breakup at the beginning of the 1990s and Russia's subsequent woes has put that line of thinking into the same outmoded category as older interpretations that applied the Antichrist prophecies to Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Hitler.

If Russia does play a role in fulfilling prophecy, this will not be as a champion of atheism but rather of Eastern Orthodoxy, which under a law that Yeltsin signed became its state religion. This now oppresses churches that were not registered in that country before a certain date. The Orthodox Church, like Catholicism, has a very long history of

persecuting dissidents.

Unfortunately the evil influence of the new religious legislation in Russia has spread into central Asia, for instance Turkmenistan, just north of Iran and east of the Caspian Sea. There, in Ašchabad (Ashkhabad) on 9 November 1999, the city Council voted resolution no. 1450 to demolish the Seventh-day Adventist church on the pretext of needing to make a road through the property. Yet no other buildings were broken down, nor has the road been constructed!

The real motivation was to establish Islam and the Orthodox Church as the only religions of that country, as subsequent events made plain. Adventists became an underground congregation, meeting secretly in private quarters. But one day, the security police burst through the door and broke up their service in Maryam K. Ismakayeva's home; the city government confiscated not only all religious books and audiovisual materials, but also her apartment. On 21 December, 2001, in the very heart of winter, Maryam left Turkmenistan for shelter with a relative in Siberia. Afterwards she wandered on to Moscow, a homeless martyr, suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ.³⁹

Other denominations have also endured persecutions, especially when they are newcomers to those countries and lack the required registration.

We believe that eventually the Orthodox Church, including its Russian branch, will cooperate and possibly even merge with its sister religion, Roman Catholicism, which is theologically very similar. Apart from their attitude toward the pontiff, the differences dividing them are relatively small. Often it is only a matter of externals. These can, however, be accommodated, as has already been done in the case of the Uniate branches, such as the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Its rules and liturgy closely resemble those of the Orthodox Church—it even permits its priests to marry—yet its head is the Roman pope.

However that may be, the present religious trends in the former Soviet Union confirm the Historical School of prophetic interpretation by not following a Futurist scenario.

VIII

In the United States, Futurism (especially in its Dispensationalist form) has often focused on the idea of a New World Order that will require Americans to give up their sovereignty and subordinate themselves to a global government, headed or inspired by the Antichrist. This has even been an ingredient in right-wing militia activism, with people seeking to defend their families against the Federal government, which they think is conspiring to join with evil forces that are intent on taking over the country.

One example was the career of the Silent Brotherhood during the middle 1980s. It grew out of Richard Butler's anti-Semitic and racist Christian Identity. In violent confrontations with the police its leader, Robert Mathews, and others lost their lives.⁴⁰

An influential book that motivated Mathews was *The Turner*

Diaries (1978) by William Pierce, leader of the National Alliance—a ultraracist and anti-Semitic organization. This fictional work describes the successful struggle of white supremacists against the Federal government. More than two hundred thousand copies have been bought by or distributed among Militiamen. Some of them have used it “as a guide for robbery, arson, assassination, and mass murder.”⁴¹

A decade later, in 1996, the Freemen, agreeing with Christian Identity, holed up in Montana for eighty-one days. Chip Berlet of Political Research Associates maintains that they were part of “an apocalyptic, end-times religious movement.”⁴²

Morris Dees, chief trial counsel for the Southern Poverty Law Center and its Militia Task Force, has closely studied this phenomenon. In 1996 he wrote that it had been building up for the previous fifteen years and constituted a “Gathering Storm,” which is also the title of his book. According to him, “between 1994 and 1996, there were at least 441 militia units across the country. Every state had at least one within its borders.” Apart from these, “368 allied Patriot groups promoted the formation of militias, provided information and materials to them, or espoused ideas, including Identity doctrines, that are common in militia circles.”⁴³

Some of these are White supremacists and even anti-Semites, though others are not. Their common denominator is fear and sometimes hatred of the Federal Government, which can be partly traced to the Vietnam War and its humiliating aftermath. “Brave men fought, many felt, with one hand tied behind their backs by liberal politicians who supposedly refused to let our troops win. The enemy was on the banks of the Potomac River as well as in the Mekong Delta.”⁴⁴

Militia members believe the Federal Government wants to disarm the American people, so that a one-world government can be established, perhaps by the United Nations. This idea has also been promoted by the John Birch Society “and the conspiratorial segment of televangelist Pat Robertson’s audience,”⁴⁵ although these do not advocate violent methods.

Militia members also accuse the Federal law-enforcers of many brutalities, culminating at Waco, Texas, on 19 April 1993, when eighty-one besieged Davidians and four ATF agents died.

On the second anniversary of that event, Timothy McVeigh, assisted by Terry Nichols, took revenge through the Oklahoma City bombing. This was, up to that time, the worst case of terrorism in American history. It wantonly murdered 169 Federal employees and members of the general public. Hundreds of people suffered injuries.

But normally McVeigh, a decorated veteran of the Gulf War, was not a cruel man. Just three years before the bombing, he wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper in his hometown to protest against “the cruel slaughter of cattle for food.”⁴⁶ What, then, could have motivated this man to suppress his natural repugnance toward the infliction of suffering and murder human beings on such a scale?

Prosecutors mention his desire to avenge the Waco deaths, and also “hatred of the U.S. government”⁴⁷ A potent influence was

certainly *The Turner Diaries*, referred to above. This book, which also inspired and destroyed Robert Mathews, describes the blowing up of a federal building with a truck bomb in October 1990, unleashing a liberation war for North America, so that the “dream of a White world became a certainty.”⁴⁸

Morris Dees and James Corcoran maintain that McVeigh’s hatred also stemmed from “his anguish at seeing American soldiers serving under United Nations command in Somalia; his fears that our country’s values will be lost to a godless one-world government; his outrage that FBI agents would murder innocent women and children; his anger at corrupt, overpaid politicians.”⁴⁹

Futurists who preach and write about the New World Order are often godly people, who would be horrified to think that their understanding of Scripture could have contributed to what Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols did on that dreadful day in Oklahoma City. But prophetic interpreters, like everybody else, bear some responsibility for the fruitage of their ideas in other people’s lives.

A number of militiamen have already sacrificed themselves and ruined their families, while committing serious crimes against society. Would it not be terrible if, as we firmly maintain, the prophecies of the Bible do not foretell a one-world government? If so, all those deaths and all that suffering will have been in vain.

IX

Some writers, both Catholic and Protestant, have blended Historical and Futurist ideas in interesting ways.

An early example was Père Bernard Lambert (d. 1813), a Dominican monk of Provence, Southern France, whose two-volume work on prophecy appeared in Paris in 1806. While he did not consider the papacy as the Antichrist *per se*, he maintained the endtime apostasy of all Christendom would be “headed by a personal and papal Antichrist.”⁵⁰ This may seem a startling view for a Catholic of his time, but it really derived from the medieval tradition of criticism within the Roman Church already referred to.

A modern Protestant who joins Historical and Futurist ideas is Dave Hunt. He frankly acknowledges that he has abandoned a key idea of traditional Protestantism: “The Reformers and their creeds were unanimous in identifying each pope as the Antichrist. Scripture, however, does not support that claim. The Antichrist is a *unique* individual without predecessors or successors. He will be the new “Constantine,” the ruler of the revived worldwide Roman Empire.”⁵¹

Yet Hunt has retained an element of the Historical School, by scrutinizing Catholicism over the centuries, especially in *A Woman Rides the Beast*, an important and thought-provoking book. He believes the Roman Church will cooperate closely with the Antichrist.

Another such writer is LaHaye, co-author of the *Left Behind* series. In his *Revelation Unveiled*, he takes a stand against Catholicism, which he sees as the leader of ecumenical religion. He refers to the history of the Roman Church as a syncretist apostasy, which in the

past has persecuted the Lord's children. These things make that body an important part of prophetic Babylon. In his view, Catholicism will swallow up liberal Protestant groups and head a world religion, to which heathen systems will contribute.⁵²

We agree with many of these ideas. Writers like Hunt and LaHaye have made valuable contributions to warning the world against the machinations of the Vatican—even though they do not see the pontiff as the Antichrist, but as a lesser figure that will support him.

Regarding the Antichrist as an individual is not completely incompatible with the Historical School, for “the man of lawlessness” is both an organization and a person. The pontificate is not an abstraction, but always concrete: a series of men, for every pope is considered the *Vicarius Christi* (Vicar of Christ) or the *Vicarius Filii Dei* (“Vicar of the Son of God”). This doctrine of the Roman Church is known as apostolic succession. Biologically the pontiffs die and others take their place, but at his coronation each is saluted with the identical words, *Tu es Petrus* (“you are Peter”). That is, whenever a new pope is elected, the apostle virtually reincarnates himself, somewhat like the Dalai Lama.

We acknowledge that pontiffs are not necessarily wicked men in their personal lives. All, however, have been guilty of teaching doctrines and sustaining a system that heaven condemns. They have also allowed themselves to be called or treated like “another god on earth.”

It is for such reasons, and not simply for individual shortcomings, that the Lord regards them as evildoers.

X

Leaders who continue a false religion created by their predecessors inherit their guilt, as well as the Lord's condemnation.

We can illustrate this from the history of an ancient country called Israel, with Samaria as its capital, which existed for about three centuries after King Solomon died. Its founder, Jeroboam, wanted to discourage his people from going to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, fearing this would tempt them to reunite with the southern kingdom of Judah. Therefore, he introduced an alternative religion, centered in the cult of two golden calves in Dan and Bethel, at the northern and southern extremities of his territory. These idols, he suggested, were just another representation of Yahweh, who at the Exodus had led the Israelites out of Egypt. (1 Kings 12:26-33)

Jeroboam got this idea from Aaron, Israel's first high priest, who had at Sinai briefly led the chosen people into apostasy and brought disaster on very many of them (Ex. 32).

The God of the Bible hates idolatry. The second of the Ten Commandments describes him as “a jealous God,” who will even extend his displeasure to the descendants of those who bow down to images (Ex. 20:5).

According to the books of Kings, he considered not only Jeroboam an evil man, but also every single ruler that succeeded him in northern

Israel; for none of them was willing to give up the cult of the calves. Again and again we read, as about Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom" (2 Kings 13:2).

As time went on, their cult amalgamated with elements from other pagan religions, such as the worship of Baal. Eventually, in 722 B.C., the Assyrians destroyed Samaria and carried the ten tribes into a captivity from which, as a nation, they never returned.

Some of the kings in northern Israel, like Jeroboam II, were able and gifted monarchs, who brought prosperity to Israel and at times increased its power—but to the Lord all this was irrelevant. He wanted them to repent and give up their idolatry. Through his prophets, he tried repeatedly to make them change their ways. Because they did not, he became "very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only." (2 Kings 17:7-18)

Of course, the Antichrist who must face the returning King at the Second Advent, and be consumed by the brightness of his Coming, will not simply be an institution but a particular pope, as Père Bernard Lambert put it almost two hundred years ago.

The reason for the Lord's terrible retribution will not just be doctrinal departure from the Scriptures, but because the Little Horn will one day conduct a last great persecution against the "saints of the Most High." When the papacy, in cooperation with other religious bodies and political powers, begins to repeat the cruelties of the past on a worldwide scale, it and its final pontiff will be destroyed by Christ himself, who suddenly returns.

While on earth, Jesus restated the principle of divine judgment that we have seen applied to Jeroboam's Israel: if we identify with and imitate the wrongdoing of our predecessors, we must share in their punishment. To the Scribes and Pharisees, the church leaders of his time, he said:

"I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar." (Matt. 23:34-35, RSV)

In the same way, the final pope will also suffer as a representative of all the evil pontiffs before him. One of these was Innocent III, who in the thirteenth century unleashed the horrible machinery of the Inquisition against the Albigenses. Another was Gregory XIII, who in August 1572 ordered the church bells rung throughout Rome to celebrate St. Bartholomew's night, after he joyously heard how the Huguenots in Paris had been dragged from their beds and butchered. Down the centuries, many popes have smudged their hands and reputations with the blood of Christians whose only crime was to deviate from the Roman Church. God does not compromise with evil, nor will the mere antiquity of error cause him to condone departures

from his Word. And the passage of many years piled high with history cannot make him forget his loved ones, ill-treated or murdered for their faith in centuries past. We with our fleeting lives are easily confused by any accumulation of events and the mirage of time. But such things cannot overload the awesome mind of the Eternal One or blur his memory, for of him we read: "a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:4).

XI

A great achievement of Catholicism is that, through the ecumenical movement and other means, it has come within striking distance of the objective it set for itself four hundred years ago: to undo the religious revolution that Luther unleashed with his ninety-five theses, that is, to liquidate the Reformation. A vital step in this direction is to make Protestants give up the idea that the popes of the past, the present, and the future constitute the Antichrist.

Another stratagem is to heap ridicule on those who still adhere to the Historical School. For instance, William F. Jasper has classified together a number of "certifiably 'wacko' conspiratorialists." These, according to him, include not only people who are preoccupied with extraterrestrial invasions, UFO kidnappings, CIA assassinations, and Hitler clones, but also those who believe in "papal plots for world domination."⁵³

So some of us are "wackos" for thinking that the Vatican is cherishing grandiose and dangerous ambitions! It is cheering to think, however, that this leaves us in good company with other "wackos" like Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Sir Isaac Newton, "one of the greatest names in the history of human thought."⁵⁴

Catholic theologians can be congratulated on the spectacular success with which their Futurist ideas were insinuated into Protestantism. These having now become the mainstay of its prophetic interpretation, the Historical School has been largely abandoned, except by a few groups like the Seventh-day Adventists.

Nevertheless, we maintain that the papacy is indeed the principal Antichrist foretold in the Bible, as so many others have said before us. We state this with regret. At the same time, we emphasize that whatever we say here or elsewhere in this book should not be construed as an attack on individual Roman Catholics. It is rather the system with which they are linked that we find problematic.

Incidentally, a vast majority of them are preserving only a nominal allegiance to it. As Bacchiocchi points out, "In most Catholic countries less than 10% of Catholics go to church on Sunday. In Italy, where I come from, it is estimated that only 5% of Catholics go to church on Sunday. The remaining 95% go to church three times in their lives: when they are hatched, matched, and dispatched. The Pope believes that if this trend continues, it can threaten the future of the Catholic Church."⁵⁵

These statistics form a startling contrast with the oft-repeated

claims that it has a billion members in the world.

Perhaps only one hundred million Catholics are devout or regularly go to church—even fewer than Protestants. Nevertheless, many of them are truly children of God, and we salute their piety. At the same time, we pity the millions of Catholics who century after century have been terribly poor and downtrodden because their religious system fostered ignorance among the masses, while it often supported or cooperated with tyrants.

We agree with Pope John XXIII, who distinguished between *error* and the *person in error*. He said “error was always wrong, but the person in error always had to be respected.”⁵⁶

This we also believe with all our heart. Indeed, we go further than traditional Catholicism and many Protestant bodies have been disposed to do; for to them a person with a totally unacceptable theology cannot be saved. We are convinced that many of God’s children are in churches and sometimes even pagan systems that he condemns, yet he loves all those who worship him sincerely though in a faulty way—provided they do not knowingly reject the truth, or persecute their fellow human beings.

This is a doctrine of both the Old and the New Testament. In a marvelous psalm we read:

I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon
to them that know me:
behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia;
“This *man* was born there.”
And of Zion it shall be said,
“This and that man was born in her”;
and the highest himself shall establish her.
The Lord shall count, when he writeth up
the people, *that* this *man* was born there.

(Ps. 87:4-6)

A Messianic chapter, Zechariah 13, looks forward to the hereafter when a righteous pagan, saved and resurrected—perhaps to his surprise—will ask the Redeemer: “What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (vs. 6). Rejoicing in this idea, Li Wei San, a Chinese believer and artist, has depicted an ancient sage (perhaps Confucius) holding the nail-scarred hand of Jesus and gazing up at him in wonder. Jesus looks him straight in the eyes and smiles. This illustration adorns the cover of an interesting, thought-provoking book, *God and the Ancient Chinese*.⁵⁷

The New Testament also contains this generous theology. Peter, speaking to Cornelius, a Roman centurion, exclaimed in amazement, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34, 35). And the apostle Paul points out, “When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they

are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts . . .” (Rom. 2:14, 15, RSV).

When he judges the world, the all-compassionate One will carefully note the background of every human being—and nobody will be excluded from his kingdom for simply being born into a pagan people or a wrong theological establishment. Nor will he turn his back on those whom so-called Christians have wickedly driven away from him.

We think, for instance, of Juan Régulo Pérez, a marvelous Spaniard whom General Franco’s regime (supported by the Vatican) ill-treated through most of his life. The Fascists imprisoned Juan as a young man and stripped him of his diploma as an elementary schoolteacher. Later they exiled him from mainland Spain to obscurity in the Canary Islands.

For a long time, he lived precariously, first as a printer and then as a part-time professor, since the state refused to employ him on a regular basis. Nevertheless, he gradually rebuilt his life, acquiring new degrees up to the doctorate, and became an outstanding academic. When he turned 70, the University of La Laguna, Tenerife, greatly honored him, inter alia with an impressive multilingual *Serta gratulatoria in Honorem Juan Régulo*, three large volumes. Together with many international writers and academics, I had the great honor—as an original Esperanto poet—of also contributing an article to that work. Moreover, La Laguna adopted him as an honorary son and accorded him the freedom of the city, naming a large square after him. Very many esteemed and loved him, both as a scholar and as a man.

But his ill-treatment by so-called servants of God had made him an atheist or, possibly, an agnostic. On the other hand, like the Roman poet Virgil, he was an *anima naturaliter Christiana* (“a soul Christian by nature”).⁵⁸ Must such a man be lost and damned, because his church made religion repellent by misrepresenting the Master?

XII

This is not to say that the gospel need not be preached to those who are ignorant of it, for the Lord has instructed his disciples to do so. Christianity, as explained in the Bible, is God’s supreme revelation to this world. All the redeemed will have eternal life through Jesus and him alone, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Explicitly confessing his name is important, yet we are also convinced his wisdom and compassion reach beyond theology into every nook and cranny of human misery. Ultimately it is not our profession of faith that saves us, but God himself. When the Lord sets up his kingdom on this planet, the redeemed are certain to be amazed at whom he has included in it—as well as by the exclusion of many supposedly pious people.

In Rev. 17, the Antichristian system is portrayed as a beautiful but

immoral woman, whom the Almighty condemns and plans to destroy for unfaithfulness to him and for murdering his holy ones. He calls her “Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (vs. 5). But millions firmly believe the Red Lady of the Mediterranean is Christ’s most precious and holy bride.

The latter need to ponder a thought-provoking idea from Manuel de Lacunza (1731-1801). He was a Jesuit priest and scholar from Chile, who in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries harvested fame—as well as hatred from the Spanish Inquisition—throughout the Latin countries and even Britain for his eminent book, *La Venida del Mesías en Gloria y Magestad* (“The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty”). As he pointed out, old Jerusalem in Christ’s time had also been the spouse of the Lord, yet she apostatized and fell, without remedy.⁵⁹

Other Christians, belonging to a host of Protestant churches and groups, are convinced that their religion is generally in tune with the Bible, though perplexed by corruptions like homosexual marriages, Spiritualist tendencies, or ecumenical traits in their midst. Yet they may be wondering, “Has my denomination become a daughter of Babylon?” Then, too, there are sincere and decent Moslems, ashamed of the murders committed by so-called Fundamentalists and cruelties perpetrated against Christians by Islamic rulers, who ignore their Prophet’s commandment not to ill-treat the other People of the Book.

Even in the non-Christian branches of Babylon, outright pagan religions like Hinduism, many—like Gandhi—have truly served the deity, and even admired (though they do not fully know) the Jesus of the New Testament.

Does the Lord repudiate these many sincere if sometimes ignorant ones, who walk in the light they have amid great darkness around them? By no means; he acknowledges many of them as his very own but also urgently appeals to them:

Come out of her, my people,
that ye be not partakers of her sins,
and that ye receive not of her plagues.

(Rev. 18:4)

The Lord does not say, “Come out of her *and become part of my people.*” No, many of them—Catholics, Protestants, Moslems, and others—are already his people, even while worshipping within a system that God abhors. He does, however, urge these loved ones to flee from Babylon and escape her coming doom.

22 Uprooting Three

I

In and near Italy during the fifth century, three dangerous challenges raised their banner against the papacy. Each was met with military force, provided by an emperor in Constantinople. This fulfilled the prediction of Dan. 7:8: "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots . . ."

The first challenge arose with Odoacer [Odovacar] (433-93), whose ethnic origins are obscure. He came into Italy in the company of the Sciri (Heruli); we can therefore consider him one of them, though he was also associated with other Germans displaced by the Huns.¹

As a mercenary, Odoacer had entered the service and taken part in the intrigues of a few successive emperors. Eventually he became the chieftain of a Herul contingent in the armies of the Roman patrician and *magister militum* ("master of soldiers") Orestes. In 475, Odoacer helped him oust and replace Emperor Julius Nepos.

But then the Germanic soldiers wanted to settle permanently in Italy, demanding a third of its lands for themselves,² which Orestes would not allow. This enraged them and caused them to mutiny. They made Odoacer their king, with his capital at Ravenna,³ near the coast of northeastern Italy. Orestes was murdered and his son, the boy-emperor Romulus Augustus, pensioned off in 476—a remarkable act, for the usual practice of Roman generals taking over the regime was to kill the heir, together with his relatives and friends.

This is how the Western Empire petered out, ending not with a bang but with a whimper.

Heading a "military federation of Heruli, Sciri, Rugians and Turcilingi,"⁴ Odoacer in theory still acknowledged the authority of Constantinople, although he usually did exactly as he pleased.⁵ The senators in Rome had supported him, and he accorded high honors and offices to members of the aristocracy. He also dealt benignly with the established church. Indeed "he revered the monastic and episcopal characters; and the silence of the catholics attest the toleration which they enjoyed."⁶

Objectively the elevation of a temperate and reasonably polished German king, whose modesty or wisdom caused him to refrain from displaying the crown or the purple, was an excellent exchange for the emperors. These military dictators had for generations been the bane of the empire. As Gibbon puts it, "the Italians alternately lamented the presence or the absence of the sovereigns whom they detested or despised; and the succession of five centuries inflicted the various evils of military license, capricious despotism, and elaborate oppression."⁷ But the budding papacy did not like Odoacer because of what the Catholics called his Arianism, though his rule had little effect on the Roman Church.⁸ But he made a bad mistake when he sent his prefect Basilius to intervene in a papal election, for "the peace of the city."

The previous pontiff, Simplicius, had died in 483, and so the clergy and people met to appoint his successor. “Suddenly Basilius . . . appeared in the assembly, expressed his surprise that any such work as appointing a successor to the deceased pope should be undertaken without him, in the name of the king declared all that had been done null and void, and ordered the election to be begun anew.”⁹ This move was subsequently condemned by Pope Symmachus.¹⁰

For such reasons and because Odoacer meddled in the politics of the Illyrian provinces, the Eastern Emperor Zeno—“a friend of the pope”¹¹—decided to get rid of him by inciting other German leaders against him. He was applying a recognized Byzantine technique: the use of treachery to weaken one’s enemies “by playing them off against one another.”¹²

But it was not so easy to remove Odoacer, for he defeated both the Rugi and the Visigoths, who had reacted favorably to Zeno’s manipulation.¹³ Yet the emperor eventually destroyed Odoacer through his troublesome and over-ambitious master of soldiers, Theodoric, an Ostrogoth.

Like Visigoth Alaric before him, Theodoric yearned for a suitable place where his people could settle.¹⁴ Therefore, when the emperor Zeno promised him land in Italy, he advanced on Odoacer, whom he defeated. In 493, he had him treacherously murdered at a banquet, together with his entire family and closest followers.¹⁵

This was how the first Germanic kingdom in the Roman Empire was uprooted with imperial assistance and fell before the papal horn. It had lasted for less than twenty years. The rest of the Heruli, who had not entered Italy as a whole but from whose nation Odoacer had apparently sprung, continued for not even two more decades. In 508, the Lombards, led by King Tato, defeated and practically wiped them out.¹⁶ Small groups of them survived for a generation or two, but then they effectively disappeared from history.

II

Eliminating Odoacer’s state did not, however, remove the threat of heretic control in Italy; for another challenge immediately reared its head. Theodoric (454-526), the Ostrogoth general who had come to Italy to guard the emperor’s interests, established his own kingdom, which was most impressive and endured for half a century.

By this time, many Germans—especially the Goths—had been in the empire for upward of three hundred years. Their numbers greatly increased with the coming of the Visigoths, whose neighboring empire had been continuously exposed to Roman influence. Soon these were followed by the Ostrogoths.

Many of these people were assimilated to Greco-Roman civilization. Theodoric himself was not a barbarian, but a man of refinement, educated as a peace hostage at Constantinople in “his formative years, from eight to eighteen.”¹⁷ The kingdom which he established proved to be culturally remarkable. Furthermore, he decided to restore all Italy, partly ruined by marauding Germans in

the previous century. This is evident from several of his surviving letters, in which he orders the repair of monuments and cities.¹⁸

Theodoric's brilliant court attracted scholars like Boethius and Cassiodorus. According to Naidis, the king "encouraged education, tolerated orthodox Christians, although he himself was an Arian, and settled his soldiers on the royal domain instead of confiscating peasant land." One law code applied to both Goths and Romans. The latter held many public and military offices.¹⁹

Some of the Ostrogoth buildings were very beautiful, demonstrating how well these people had assimilated the artistic traditions of the empire. Outstanding examples, still surviving after fifteen centuries, are Theodoric's mausoleum and the magnificent basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, both converted into Catholic churches,²⁰ which I visited during the summer of 1985.

This city became a center of what can appropriately be called the Germanic Church. But like that of the Donatists, it was doomed to extinction—and for the same reason: it would not submit to Catholicism.

Rome accused the Ostrogoths of Arianism, because of their religious beliefs, which differed from the dogmas of Rome. One of these concerned the Trinity. To many living today, the finer arguments about the nature of God may look like theological hairsplitting, but that is not how either the Catholics or the Germans saw the matter.

Nowadays the word *Arianism* conjures up a vision of Jehovah's Witnesses, who maintain that before his incarnation Christ was a created being. Yet, as we have noted, that is not what the Germanic Christians believed; the Goths affirmed the Son had always existed and was therefore eternal, though they may have maintained the Father was greater than he—a possible reason why some have called them semi-Arians.²¹ But even this epithet is likely to be incorrect, and we will probably never know the truth; for the opponents who eliminated them and vilified their memory did not allow their writings to survive for the scrutiny of future generations.

Above all, the Ostrogoths would not concede the right of Catholic clerics to tell them what to think and do. Like Odoacer before them, they "set bounds to the power of the bishop of Rome in Italy, permitted none to be raised to the pontificate without their approbation and reserved to themselves the right of judging concerning the legality of every election."²²

Peaceful coexistence proved impossible, for since the time of Constantine the policy had been to exterminate heretics, not to tolerate them. The papacy was, moreover, structurally incapable of accommodating religious dissidents, being monarchic, strongly centralized, and theologically totalitarian.

Besides, the Ostrogoth kingdom was occupying a territory that the Roman aristocrats who ran the church desired for themselves. The new wave of heretics would therefore not be spared by the fact that the "German kings, with the exception of the Vandal kings of Africa, were extraordinarily tolerant both of Catholics and Jews."²³

Yet for more than forty years there was nothing that Rome or

Constantinople could do about the matter. Under Theodoric, the Ostrogoths proved too powerful and flourished.

If this state of affairs could have endured, there would have been no collapse of Western civilization or Dark Ages. But the enemies of the Ostrogoths were watching and waiting. Eventually Theodoric's people would be overthrown and successfully misrepresented to posterity as uncouth barbarians, as well as Arian heretics.

Apart from the Gothic Bible, their religious literature was soon to be destroyed.²⁴ We are therefore unable to read for ourselves and judge exactly what the Germanic Christians believed; for like the Donatists and Pelagians before them, we know of them largely through the writings of their enemies. If, as we have already noted, ancient Catholics sometimes used forgeries to bolster the pretensions of their church, would they have scrupled about falsifying the record concerning those whom they detested and eliminated?

III

One feature of Germanic Christianity is that it would not have complied with the Roman insistence on Sundaykeeping. As previously noted, this dissident church originated in about A.D. 250 among the Visigoths, as a transplant from behind the mountains of Cappadocia, Asia Minor. At that time, and for a considerable period afterwards, the Church of the East was still observing the Biblical Sabbath on Saturday. For this we have, inter alia, the testimony of Sidonius Apollinaris, who was a bishop in France when the Goths were migrating into the empire: "It is a fact that formerly those who dwelt in the east were accustomed as a church to sanctify the Sabbath in the same manner as the Lord's day, and to hold sacred assemblies . . . It is, therefore, possible for the Goths to have thought, as pupils of the discipline of the Greeks, that they should sanctify the Sabbath after the manner of the Greeks."²⁵

Rome, on the other hand, had been in the vanguard of transferring this solemnity to the first day of the week.

IV

While these north Italian neighbors were the papacy's immediate concern, there was also another, older enemy lurking in North Africa, just beyond Sicily and what Alden Hatch has so aptly called "the narrow waist of the Mediterranean."²⁶ The people of Rome, including the pope, could hardly fail to think of the Vandals from time to time. How could they forget that in 455, under Genseric, these marauding Germans had suddenly raided, robbed, and damaged their city?

Besides, the Vandals were in a position to cut off the food supplies of Italy. The coastal strip of North Africa, more fertile in ancient than in modern times, had for almost three centuries been the "grain basket of the Roman Empire."²⁷

Let us briefly retrace our steps to survey the history of the Vandals.

At the beginning of the fifth century, they (together with other

Germanic peoples) had fled from the oriental Huns, who were pushing into central Europe.

First these refugees migrated into Gaul and then, during 409, into Spain. In 417, the Romans unleashed the Visigoths against them, which made the Iberian Peninsula uncongenial. Then, quite suddenly, a great new opportunity opened up to them.

Boniface, the Roman supreme commander and count of Africa, was involved in one of those power struggles and intrigues with which the Roman leaders often destroyed themselves or maimed the empire. He was vying with the emperor in Ravenna for power over the West and with the Goths for supremacy in Africa. Despairing of ever solving his problems alone, Boniface invited the Vandal king, Gonderic, to come and help him. The monarch's reward would be permanent settlement for his people.

The Vandal court was delighted, but soon Gonderic died. His successor was Genseric, a bastard brother and a far abler, more energetic man. With his people, and the remnants of the Alans, he crossed over from Spain in 429, using ships provided by the Spaniards as well as Boniface²⁸. . . and proceeded to help himself to North Africa.

The startled Roman general realized his mistake, but neither his forces nor reinforcements from Europe could stop the conquering Vandals.

Genseric set up a kingdom centered in Carthage and resolutely sought to strip his country of its Roman character, establishing Germanic Christianity as the state religion. The Vandals were contemptuous of and persecuted members of the papal church, especially the clergy.

The reason for this was not an innate intolerance; it was the nemesis that overtook the Catholics. Just seventeen years before the coming of Genseric, the emperor Honorius had unleashed a violent persecution against the Donatists. With Augustine's warm approval, thousands of their clergy—their property confiscated—were banished, while church members lost their rights as citizens. Consequently, "the distracted country was filled with tumult and bloodshed."²⁹

The Donatists saw Genseric as "a powerful deliverer" and made a very convenient deal with him. And so, as Gibbon remarks, "The conquest of Africa was facilitated by the active zeal or the secret favour of a domestic faction; the wanton outrages against the churches and the clergy, of which the Vandals are accused, may be fairly imputed to the fanaticism of their allies; and the intolerant spirit which disgraced the triumph of Christianity contributed to the loss of the most important province of the West."³⁰

Not only had the North African Catholics oppressed those whose religion differed from theirs; they often also led dissolute lives, which further contributed to the Vandals' contempt. Thomas Hodgkin mentions Augustine's own picture of Carthage as a very immoral city, including "the darker vices, the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, practiced, avowed, gloried in."³¹

"Into this city of sin marched the Vandal army, one might almost say, when one reads the history of their doings, the army of the

Puritans. With all their cruelty and all their greed they kept themselves unspotted by the licentiousness of the splendid city. They banished the men who were earning their living by ministering to the vilest lusts. They rooted out prostitution with a wise yet not a cruel hand. In short, Carthage, under the rule of the Vandals, was a city transformed, barbarous but moral.”³²

Apart from belonging to the wrong church, so far as the papacy was concerned, the Vandals also interfered in the politics of the West. As we have seen, they had even pounced on Rome itself.

All this was too much for Constantinople. The Byzantines made strenuous attempts to recapture North Africa but failed. For instance, in 468 Emperor Leo I (401-74) organized a great campaign against Genseric, including a fleet assembled under the incompetent Basiliscus. But the Vandals defeated the Byzantines every time, which left Constantinople practically bankrupt.³³

For a long time, impotent emperors and pontiffs still shuddered whenever they thought of the Vandals, hoping that those people in Carthage would mind their own business, while in Italy the Byzantines struggled to deal with first the Heruli and then the Ostrogoths.

V

In the early part of Theodoric’s reign, the political and religious environment, east, west, and south of Italy, suited his tolerant nature. The emperor in Constantinople, to whom he owed nominal allegiance, was weak and a Monophysite—whose lack of theological orthodoxy prevented effective collusion with the papacy. The Franks in Gaul were pagans, ruled by Chlodovech, more commonly known as Clovis (c. 466-511), Theodoric’s brother-in-law,³⁴ while both the Visigoths in Spain and the Vandals in North Africa belonged to the same Germanic Church as he did.

This was one reason why the Ostrogoth king had not, at first, interfered with the Catholics, whose churches his people were not allowed to confiscate, so that they had to build their own. But this favorable international setup did not last.

VI

Clovis, warlord of the Frankish kingdom originally centered in Tournai (present-day Doornik, Flanders), became a great conqueror. By subjecting various other peoples, he reunited Gaul and thereby forged a new entity: Francia or France, which completely altered the political and religious map of the West.

At first his rule had been limited to the Salian Franks, who came from Salland in the present Dutch Province of Overijssel.³⁵ Now, however, the Ripuarian Franks, who had crossed the Rhine from the general area of Cologne, also accepted Clovis as their overlord. With this combination of forces, he set out to enlarge his kingdom.

Wallace-Hadrill recounts how at Tolbiac (modern Zülpech) he smashed the Alamanni in 496. They were a confederation of Germanic

tribes who had been encroaching on the Ripuarians. Clovis's victory destroyed the northern part of the Alamanni. In panic, their southern remnant surrendered to Theodoric, whom they accepted as their protector and sovereign.³⁶

Alarmed by the advance of the Franks, he warned them to go no further.

Clovis, however, "boldly deciding to challenge the whole Gothic empire, took the logical step of throwing in his lot with the enemies of Gothic Arianism—namely, the Catholic hierarchy of Gaul and, more remotely, the Emperor himself in Constantinople. In this way the Franks entered upon the scene of Mediterranean politics."³⁷

The decisive battle took place at Vouillé, near Poitiers, in 507. Here Clovis crushed the Visigoths under Alaric II (484-507), who was also killed. This victory was made easier because the expected Ostrogoth reinforcements from Italy could not reach their western kin and fellow religionists in time.³⁸

Clovis pursued the shattered remnants of the Visigoths to their southern positions, eliminating their power and religion in all of Gaul, except for the Mediterranean coastal strip from Genoa to the Pyrenees—a corridor that Theodoric succeeded in keeping open between the Ostrogoths in Italy and the Visigoths of Spain. This became possible because the Ostrogoth forces arrived at last and won a battle against Clovis in 508, but then the two sides made peace, with the result that the Frankish king and Catholicism retained control of all the territories he had conquered.³⁹

With Burgundian assistance, the Ostrogoths could easily defend the Mediterranean coastline between Genoa and Barcelona, which Clovis knew well enough to deter him from extending his campaign.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Theodoric realized that a limited victory against the Franks could not avail to reestablish the defeated Visigoths in Aquitaine, the part of Gaul where the Romans had originally settled them.

The new international situation was a severe blow to Theodoric's peace of mind. What concerned him most was that Clovis, formerly a pagan, had become a Catholic—converted by his queen Clotilda, the daughter of Chilperic (the Burgundian king), whom he had married in 493. She was an ardent member of the Roman Church.

The date of this conversion is in dispute. Traditionally it took place in 496, supposedly because Clovis—like a second Constantine—was able to defeat the Alamanni only by invoking the God of his wife. But some modern researchers think it happened some years later, in 498 or 499. Johnson maintains it was actually in about 503. He also declares that Bishop Gregory of Tours, author of *Historia Francorum* ("History of the Franks"), predated the event "to show that his conquests were the result of Christianization."⁴¹

Fifteen hundred years later, in 1996, some French historians stirred up controversy by debunking Clovis's saintly reputation. According to a Reuters report from Rheims, they said "he was an opportunist who ditched paganism to secure allies for bloody conquests against tribes like the Visigoths."⁴²

But the more repellent side of the king's character has long been known, for he established his power "by means of war, intrigue and murder," even liquidating several of his close kinsmen.⁴³ Wallace-Hadrill maintains that Clovis was essentially "a man of blood and a seeker after gold."⁴⁴

Once involved in a cause, however, he could be relied on to act with brutal efficiency. After his conversion, he saw to it that both his nobility and other subjects would promptly follow his example. Three thousand soldiers were baptized with him en masse.⁴⁵ The clergy ably and enthusiastically guided the process.

What about the pagan Franks that resisted, and dissenting Christians in Gaul? They did not survive.

Clovis was the first Germanic king whom the Little Horn induced to apply a method that, in coming ages, would ensure its ecclesiastical triumph in country after country. In the words of Lot, "The Church becomes accustomed to employing the secular arm for conversions Once the ruler has been won over, he is used for imposing the faith on his subjects by gentle or violent pressure."⁴⁶

The connection of Clovis with the Catholic hierarchy enabled the clergy to exploit his recent victory over the Visigoths, for they pointed him in the direction they wished him to go. This is how R. H. C. Davis puts it: "The Franks, with the enthusiastic support of the Gallo-Roman Catholics, had defeated the Visigoths at Vouillé and annexed Aquitaine. One bishop wrote to Clovis, King of the Franks, urging him to 'spread the light' of his new faith to the nations about him. 'Where you fight', he wrote, 'we conquer.'⁴⁷

For the apparently all-victorious Clovis, this was a heady wine: political expansionism in the guise of a holy war. He knew he had obtained the backing of the large Catholic population throughout the West. "Moreover, he gained the support of the Church fathers in Gaul."⁴⁸

After finishing off the Visigoths, Clovis on his way to Paris arrived at Tours in 508. Here, according to Edward James, he met a legate from Anastasius, the emperor in Constantinople, with letters to appoint Clovis as a consul. The Byzantine motivation was transparent. Anastasius had gone to war in Italy with Theodoric, the Ostrogoth king, and desired a Western alliance.⁴⁹

Clovis now enjoyed the blessing of the Roman Empire, governed from the Bosphorus. He had, at least in theory, even become a functionary that represented its interests.⁵⁰

When Theodoric heard this news, he realized that Catholics everywhere could now be induced to enter an "anti-Arian" alliance, together with the papacy in Rome and the government at Constantinople. His western kinsmen, the defeated Visigoths, could no longer help him. From this point onward, he became very suspicious and increasingly intolerant toward Catholicism.

VII

Danie du Plessis, an Afrikaner biblical scholar, points out that 508

is a date of extraordinary importance in the history of Western Europe.⁵¹ It is also a vital prophetic signpost, the start of both the 1290 and the 1335 year-days mentioned in Dan. 12:11, 12.

The 1290 years begin 30 years before but end at the same time as the 1260 years. Throughout this period, the Little Horn would largely triumph over the truth and seek to exterminate those who believe and cherish it, whom the Bible calls “the saints of the most High” (Dan. 7:25; 12:4-7).

Uriah Smith relates the 1290 and the 1335 years to the Investigative Judgment as well as the heavenly sanctuary. These are important dates and topics, which we deal with more fully in *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* (2011).

Several authorities quoted by Smith emphatically state that eliminating the so-called Arian nations opened the way for Catholicism to subjugate Western Europe.⁵² By smashing the Visigoths as a bulwark against the Roman Church and forging an alliance with the emperor in Constantinople, Clovis struck a fateful blow against the Germanic Church. Thirty years after 508, in 538, the Ostrogoths—its last hope—would also receive a mortal wound.

Syncretist Catholicism, with its Sundaykeeping, sacrifice of the mass, and human priesthood, was beginning to conquer Western Europe. As often also happened in subsequent centuries, this success was achieved with the help of powerful rulers and military force, and not simply through missionary endeavor, which the Redeemer had prescribed (Matt. 28:19, 20). It was a two-pronged strategy that joined the Frankish kingdom in the West with the Byzantine Empire in the East.

VIII

Germanic Christianity, with its more Biblical religion derived from the Church of the East, including the seventh-day Sabbath, and a belief in Christ as the only mediator between God and man, would all but disappear.

Prophecy describes the triumph of the Roman Church as the setting up of “the abomination that maketh desolate” (Dan. 12:11).

If Clovis had not crushed the Visigoths, with whom Germanic Christianity began, they could have helped their kinsfolk to defend the Ostrogoth kingdom in Italy, thereby frustrating Justinian’s Reconquest thirty years later. If so, it is probable that their religion would have maintained its dominance among the Germans and utterly changed the history of the world. The year 507 and its aftermath in 508 to a large extent determined the shape of things to come.

IX

Ten years after Clovis’s triumph, Justin I (450/452-527) ascended the throne at Constantinople in 518. He renounced the Monophysite idea that Christ had only one nature and reestablished good relations with the Roman Church. In Ravenna, King Theodoric was very

unhappy about this new cordiality between the emperor on the Bosphorus and the pontiff on the Tiber.

Even worse, Justin was increasingly assisted by his nephew, a well-educated and able man who immediately became the power behind the throne and would succeed him as the mightiest of all the Byzantine emperors: Justinian I (483-565).⁵³ He was a Latin-speaking Illyrian, with a burning ambition for reviving the ancient empire. In 525, the emperor appointed him Caesar,⁵⁴ which ensured him first place for the succession.

In 525-26, the last two years of Theodoric's life, a much too cozy relationship developed between the papacy and the emperor Justin.

Theodoric had sent Pope John I to Constantinople to demand toleration for Arians, whom the Byzantines were persecuting in the East. On his arrival, the pontiff was accorded tremendous honor "and amid scenes of great enthusiasm officiated in person at the coronation of the emperor."

The king had the pope arrested on his return to Italy, although he was a sickly man.⁵⁵ After all, Pope John had "made no attempt to conceal his hostility to the Arians." He died in prison and came to be honored as a Catholic martyr.⁵⁶

After the Visigoth defeat at Vouillé and the establishment of a new relationship between Clovis and the Byzantine emperor, Theodoric tried desperately to forge an alliance against the Catholic-Orthodox pincer movement that he sensed was developing against his kingdom. He wanted to link up the Burgundians, Vandals, and Visigoths with his own people. One of his methods was to negotiate dynastic marriages.⁵⁷ But his efforts proved ineffectual.

In the end, Theodoric gave up his policy of peaceful coexistence with the papacy. On 30 August 526, he decreed that "all the Catholic churches of Italy should be handed over to the Arians."⁵⁸ So far as the pope was concerned, this was a declaration of war.

In that same year, Theodoric died. So, within a few months, did Justin, who was succeeded by his ambitious nephew in 527.

X

Like all Byzantine emperors since Constantine, Justinian officially bore the titles Equal of the Apostles and God's Vicegerent on Earth.⁵⁹ He was also personally pious and had a passion for theology, pursuing the "ideal of an Empire which should be populated only by orthodox Christians."⁶⁰ He built magnificent churches, especially Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom), which can still be seen in Istanbul today.

Unfortunately, however, the emperor's piety also made him a great persecutor, unleashing vigorous action against pagans, Samaritans, and dissident Christians. He harassed the Monophysite churches of the East and Egypt. Manichaeans, who believed that matter was evil, were often burned.⁶¹

In 532, Justinian granted all heretics only three months to change their religion or go into exile, which Gibbon calls an "insufficient term."⁶²

In his *History of the Popes* (1844-47), Archibald Bower graphically portrays the consequences: "The imperial edict was executed with the utmost vigor. Great numbers were driven from their habitations with their wives and children, stripped and naked. Others betook themselves to flight, carrying with them what they could conceal, for their support and maintenance; but they were plundered of the little they had, and many of them inhumanly massacred by the Catholic peasants, or the soldiery, who guarded the passes."⁶³

Justinian also oppressed and persecuted the Jews, as is evident from his famous *Corpus Juris Civilis* ("Civil Code"), which consolidates and augments the entire legal system of ancient Rome.⁶⁴ It institutionalized and stimulated anti-Semitism in the West for more than a thousand years. In A.D. 212, Caracalla's Edict had made Jews, like other free inhabitants of the empire, first-class citizens, but they lost that privilege after Constantine's conversion.⁶⁵ One of the many deplorable provisions in the Code was a death sentence for anybody attempting to convert a Christian to Judaism.⁶⁶

Surveying the religious cruelties perpetrated by so-called Christians under the aegis of this emperor, Gibbon in one place loses his customary composure and refers to both him and his co-religionists as poisonous "theological insects."⁶⁷

Justinian's ambitions to reunite the Roman Empire were matched by a desire to create complete ecclesiastical unity, for he "regarded his project somewhat as a crusade to rescue the Catholics from Arian rule."⁶⁸ To reach this objective, he took a step quite contrary to the normal tendency of Constantinople: instead of according special honor to the local archbishop, he decided to elevate the Roman pontiff over the entire church.

According to Froom, the emperor stated this in a letter to Pope John in 533, saying he had taken pains to unite all the priests of the Eastern church, subjecting them to the pope, "because you are the Head of all the holy churches (*quia caput est omnium sanctarum ecclesiarum*)." His decision was incorporated in the Civil Code.⁶⁹

In various parts of it, the same idea is repeated—as in the 131st Novella, which states: "Hence, in accordance with the provisions of these Councils, we order that the Most Holy Pope of ancient Rome shall hold the first rank of all the Pontiffs, but the Most Blessed Archbishop of Constantinople, or New Rome, shall occupy the second place after the Holy Apostolic See of ancient Rome, which shall take precedence over all other sees."⁷⁰

This must have been most gratifying to the papacy, which had long but vainly insisted on such recognition, for instance in the time of Damasus, 150 years earlier. By inscribing it in the greatest work of Roman law, Justinian ensured that the idea would survive him for more than a millennium, persisting in the minds of many nations at that time still unborn.

As Browning points out, a host of these took the Code "as the starting-point from which to develop their own legal systems. No work of legislation except the Ten Commandments has had such lasting effect."⁷¹ It remained the chief basis of European legislation for almost

1260 years, from 534 until 1793.

Justinian's decision to recognize the pope as the head of all the churches was naturally subject to the unspoken but clear proviso that the emperor occupied a still higher place.

XI

We also need to remark that this religious legislation, so important to the West, had only a temporary effect on the Eastern Orthodox Church. Despite Justinian's designs, it never did submit to the pope, for it has consistently refused to regard him as the head of Christendom. Timothy Ware, a scholarly Western convert to Eastern Orthodoxy, makes it plain that the furthest the Greeks have ever gone in their concessions to the Latins is to recognize the Roman pontiff as the *first among equals*, enjoying a *primacy of honor* and even the right "to hear appeals from all parts of Christendom."⁷²

Apart from Justinian's theological interest, there was a compelling political reason for establishing papal supremacy over the entire church: he was planning at some convenient time to intervene in Italy, where there were two great powers to reckon with. One was, of course, the Ostrogoth kingdom; the other, the senatorial class, which had under both the Roman republic and the subsequent empire administered Italy and still wielded great influence. These people also possessed immense estates.

As already observed, they had long since allied themselves with the papacy. Often the pontiffs were themselves patricians, Roman aristocrats. Indeed, the senators "looked on the Pope as one of themselves."⁷³ For this reason, as well as their ecclesiastical stature, they were a force that could on no account be ignored. It was impossible for the emperor to secure the support of the senatorial class without involving the pope.

XII

In 533, the same year in which he accorded special recognition to the papacy, Justinian sent Belisarius against the Vandals of North Africa. Clerics seem to have played a direct role in promoting this campaign. According to Procopius, Justinian was influenced by a bishop "who declared that God had revealed to him in a dream that the emperor should 'rescue the Christians in Libya from tyrants' and that He himself would aid him."⁷⁴

The Vandals were now divided by internal dissension. In 530, Gelimer had deposed and imprisoned his cousin Hilderic—whose mother was the daughter of the emperor Valentinian III—for being too tolerant toward his Catholic subjects. Belisarius therefore had a good excuse for invading North Africa. He claimed he was coming to restore the Vandals' rightful king.

Gelimer, a rather incompetent ruler, would normally have had the assistance of his more able brother, but he was out of the country with an expeditionary force to subdue Sardinia. So when Belisarius

disembarked with his small but well disciplined Roman army, Gelimer had to face them alone.

Within a few months, by March 534, Belisarius—a military genius of Germanic extraction—conquered the entire Vandal kingdom. Since Gelimer had Hilderic executed as soon as the Byzantines landed, it was not even necessary to set up a puppet king. Belisarius simply reannexed North Africa to the Roman Empire⁷⁵ and returned to Constantinople in triumph.

The campaign had been relatively bloodless, but its aftermath proved to be calamitous for the people of the captured territory. Justinian's "religious resettlement exceeded the wildest hopes of the African Church, which not only received back its stolen properties but was given (and took) the chance to persecute the Arian hierarchy."⁷⁶

The tables had once again been turned. Augustine's fierce compatriots and co-religionists now made vigorous and enthusiastic use of their renewed advantage. Soon not only the Donatists, but also the Germanic Church were suppressed.

As could have been expected, however, a reaction set in. According to Gibbon, the Vandals "deplored the ruin of their church, triumphant above a century in Africa; and they were justly provoked by the laws of the conqueror which interdicted the baptism of their children and the exercise of all religious worship."⁷⁷

Therefore, the conquered North Africans fomented rebellion, aided by treason on the part of elements within the Roman forces. It began with the mutiny of a thousand soldiers, mostly Heruli, who were converted or reconverted to Germanic Christianity. Eventually two-thirds of the army became involved in a rebellion against Constantinople. The ensuing battles and chaos during the next ten years desolated North Africa.

In the end, Justinian triumphed, but large parts of what had been a prosperous and peaceful kingdom were completely depopulated. As a nation, the Vandals disappeared. With them perished an even greater multitude of their Moorish subjects. These were Berbers, many of whom had been Donatists that welcomed the Vandals as "deliverers from Roman oppression."⁷⁸ Procopius states that "five millions of Africans were consumed by the wars and government of the emperor Justinian."⁷⁹

With the Vandals, Germanic Christianity in North Africa became extinct. As a bonus to the pope, so did the lingering influence of Berber Donatism. The second of the three horns that had threatened the papacy for so long was suddenly gone. In the short run, this was a triumph for both the Roman Church and the seemingly revitalized Roman Empire.

But for this victory, Catholic Europe would ultimately pay a very stiff penalty. A century and a half later, Moslem warriors swept in. From Alexandria to Gibraltar, they conquered all of Roman Africa, 4,000 miles of cultivable land along the Mediterranean seaboard. The largest and fairest portion of that wonderful coastal strip was the Tunisian plains, which overlooked the Sicilian Narrows.⁸⁰

Belisarius had snatched this vital area from the Vandals. In 698,

however, the Moslems drove out the Byzantines. They also began to cast yearning eyes across the straits, their scimitars poised to slash at the underbelly of Europe. From Tunis they would eventually thrust at Rome itself.

Gathering the Berbers to themselves, the Arab followers of Mohammed would muster a seemingly irresistible army with which to cross into Europe at Gibraltar in 711. After defeating the Visigoths, they would dominate most of Spain and Portugal for almost eight hundred years, until their final expulsion in 1492.

The Moors, with whom this period is associated, were mostly Berbers and no doubt included remnants of the Vandals. Like the Monophysite and other Christian dissidents in Egypt and Asia, many North Africans welcomed the Moslems as liberators from the Catholicism that had been forced on them and even joined the Moslems to fight their European enemy.

Such was the scourge that the religious meddling of Rome and Constantinople would be bringing upon themselves.

XIII

Now let us follow Belisarius and his victorious army into Sicily and Italy. Here a period of instability had set in, characterized by anti-Byzantine demonstrations, after Theodoric had died without a male heir.

Amalasantha, his daughter, was a remarkable woman. A widow at thirty and very beautiful, she was “also an intellectual, fluent in Latin and Greek, enjoying a breadth of culture rare in the sixth century and unique among the Goths.”⁸¹ She possessed a great drive for power but suffered the handicap of a conservative people, who did not want a woman to rule them. The Ostrogoths also resented the fact that she was continuing and even extending her father’s policy of Romanization. She therefore appealed for help to Constantinople, but Theodahad, her treacherous kinsman—whom she had recently married to become queen—had her imprisoned within a castle on Lake Bolsena in 535.

Justinian had written to her with a promise of protection, but the empress Theodora feared a possible rival, whom her ambitious husband might (for more than one reason) find convenient to marry. For all her beauty and powerful personality, the Emperor’s consort could never forget that originally she had been a prostitute,⁸² having been born into a lowly family of circus entertainers, whose girls could hardly avoid their traditional lot.

Her shameful recollections can be deduced from the way she tended to avoid the public eye as far as possible, spending much time in pleasant palaces along the seacoast of the Propontis and the Bosphorus. Here she surrounded herself with favorites, accumulated vast treasures, and exerted great pressure on generals and ministers of state. Yet she did not feel entirely secure, for she maintained an efficient network of many spies to report on “every action, or word, or look, injurious to their royal mistress.”⁸³

So Theodora, well aware of the queen in Ravenna and her charms—physical as well as political—sent another message to the Byzantine ambassador, ordering him “to assure the Goths privately that the emperor would do nothing, and that Theodahad need not fear to get rid of Amalasantha.”⁸⁴ Soon she was strangled in her bath, no doubt on his instructions.

This murder filled Justinian with indignation. But his hands were tied, since he was much indebted to Theodora. On his accession, he had her crowned “as an equal and independent colleague in the sovereignty of the empire.”⁸⁵ Afterwards she saved his throne and his life, when he was about to flee from the rabble of Constantinople, who had almost succeeded in replacing him. Refusing to abandon her post as Augusta, she shamed him into fighting back and crushing the rebellion. From that time on, Theodora’s power came to rival his own.

Besides, Amalasantha’s assassination provided an excellent pretext for invading Italy.

XIV

In 535, the Byzantines began their advance against the Ostrogoths with a pincer movement. One army went overland via Dalmatia. Another, under the command of Belisarius, was seaborne and first attacked Sicily.⁸⁶ Having captured that island, this brilliant general crossed over to the mainland, where he promptly took Naples and Rome.⁸⁷

The fall of Naples demoralized the Goths, who blamed Theodahad, Amalasantha’s murderer, whom they deposed and executed. In his place, they elevated General Vitiges to the throne.⁸⁸

Belisarius captured Rome on 10 December 536, after which he proceeded to conquer the adjacent countryside; but when Gothic reinforcements were mobilized in Ravenna and advanced toward him, he withdrew his army into the city.⁸⁹ The resultant siege continued for a year and nine days.⁹⁰

During that time, on 11 March 537, Belisarius deposed the pope, Silverius, who had been accused of pro-Gothic sentiments.⁹¹ Then, “At the emperor’s command, the clergy of Rome proceeded to the choice of a new bishop, and, after a solemn invocation of the Holy Ghost, elected the deacon Vigilius—who had purchased the papal throne with a bribe of two hundred pounds of gold.”⁹²

This election took place on 29 March 537. The ex-pontiff survived until 2 December of that year, when he expired, probably from the ill-treatment he had received.⁹³ Since then, however, the Catholic Church has canonized the deposed Silverius, though it also acknowledges Vigilius as one of its 263 popes.

Protestants, invited to recognize the popes as the Lord’s representatives in an unbroken line since Peter the apostle, find it puzzling why the Deity would endorse such irregularities. A supposedly saintly pontiff is pushed from St. Peter’s throne but survives into the reign of his successor, who is really a usurper. The latter owes his election to simony—that is, purchasing a churchly

office. What is more, Vigilius is not simply chosen by the clergy and laity of Rome but imposed by the emperor's representative.

Even more troubling is the fact that jockeying for personal advantage in some shape or form has often, if not always, characterized the conclave. In a chapter about the Protestant Reformation, we mention three more examples from the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century—which shows that nine hundred years after Justinian the evil of buying the papacy had not yet disappeared.

The soldiers with Belisarius numbered only 5,000, for on his march from the south he had left garrisons in Sicily and various parts of conquered Italy. This greatly depleted his forces. His adversaries outside the walls of Rome numbered no fewer than 150,000. In all, there were sixty-nine engagements.⁹⁴ Belisarius was hard pressed and hastily dispatched a letter to his sovereign in Constantinople, asking for reinforcements.

According to Procopius, the general wrote: "Think of this, my Lord: if the barbarians defeat us now, we shall be driven out of your Italy and lose the army as well, and in addition shall bear the great shame of our failure."⁹⁵

If the city fell, that would have been the end of Justinian's attempt to reconquer Italy. It may also have ensured the destruction of the papacy, to which the Ostrogoths had in the meantime become extremely antagonistic. This, however, did not happen. The emperor was shocked by his general's appeal. "He realized that it was not a question of temporary setbacks in a distant theatre of war, but that his whole project for reconquest of the west and restoration of the empire was in danger"⁹⁶ Therefore, he promptly sent the requested reinforcements. But victory did not come only as a result of these. As Gibbon explains, "the whole nation of the Ostrogoths had been assembled for the attack, and was almost consumed in the siege of Rome."⁹⁷ They had cut the aqueducts to deprive it of water. This created marshy conditions, giving rise to diseases—especially malaria—that devastated the attackers.

The siege went on and on, from March 537 to March 538, when Vitiges, the Gothic general and king, abandoned it, retreating northwards. His immediate reason for leaving Rome was a flanking movement executed by General John (history does not give the rest of his name), who occupied Rimini, only thirty-three miles from Ravenna, the Ostrogoth capital.⁹⁸

After 538, the Goths were a defeated nation. The next year, Ravenna surrendered. King Vitiges agreed to become a Catholic, thereby turning his back on his ancestral faith. For this he gained various honors and "a rich inheritance of lands in Asia."⁹⁹ Germanic Christianity was suppressed and all its churches handed over to the Catholics.¹⁰⁰

At that point, the conflict with the Goths was virtually over; but then the envious court at Constantinople recalled Belisarius, whom it suspected of treason, since the Goths had offered to make him king. His yielding to such a temptation was not implausible; after all, he was himself of Germanic stock, a blond and handsome man from the

Danube.¹⁰¹ The Byzantines were also distracted from completing their Italian campaign when Bulgars invaded their territory from the north and King Chosroes of the Persians captured Antioch in June 540. Justinian promptly dispatched Belisarius to the eastern front.

In Italy, the Ostrogoths rallied under Totila in 541¹⁰² and began what was virtually a second war. They enjoyed a number of short-lived successes, even capturing Rome on more than one occasion. But their power had really been broken. For this statement we have evidence of the most concrete and curious kind.

In 546, Totila had Rome at his mercy and announced his decision to destroy it utterly. Henceforth the place where it stood would become a pasture for cattle. Such an act would have had immense symbolic significance, as well as practical consequences. It could have changed the history of the world. But then Belisarius intervened, and “Totila was persuaded, by the advice of an enemy, to preserve Rome as the ornament of his kingdom, or the fairest pledge of peace and reconciliation.” He gave up his plan.¹⁰³

Accepting an enemy’s advice, however plausible it may be, is contrary to human nature and utterly at variance with the conduct of war—except where the adversary’s superior power has already been demonstrated and further defeat seems likely.

The Ostrogoths knew that the Byzantines’ inability to beat them again was only temporary. They noticed the threat implied by the message from Belisarius and decided not to antagonize him unnecessarily. Totila had already delegated the deacon Pelagius and Theodorus, a Roman teacher of Rhetoric, to Constantinople to negotiate a peaceful settlement. They carried his letter offering to make a nominal submission to the emperor. For Italy and the Goths, this would have reestablished the status quo as it had been before the war began.¹⁰⁴

But none of this could save Totila. In Constantinople, the emperor told the emissaries to go back to Italy and negotiate with Belisarius, who was the plenipotentiary for that country.¹⁰⁵ Events, however, forestalled all further talks; for in April 547 the great general recaptured Rome.¹⁰⁶

Their protracted and desperate efforts to maintain themselves, even involving Frankish and Alamannic forces, only ensured that the ruin of Italy would be the more complete—and that their nation would not survive. The final victory was obtained by the eunuch Narses, another brilliant general from Constantinople, who defeated Totila in 552 and within a few more years mopped up every vestige of resistance throughout Italy.¹⁰⁷

In all, the conflict between the empire and the Ostrogoths continued for twenty years. According to the estimates of Procopius, it annihilated fifteen or sixteen million people.¹⁰⁸

Together with the five million who died in North Africa, twenty million human beings—the entire Vandal and Gothic nations—were obliterated by Justinian’s imperial and religious expansionism. Apart from a remnant near and in the Alps, the Germanic Church became virtually extinct throughout Italy and Africa. History reveals the fact

but is silent about the woeful details, which can, however, be readily imagined from what we know of religious murders and genocide in other eras.

XV

The desperation of the Ostrogothic resurgence under Totila should not blind us to the fact that the crucial year was 538, which shattered the power of the Goths.

Great conflicts do not always end abruptly, yet their outcome is often determined by a crucial battle. Such was the defeat of the Spanish Armada sent in 1588 by Philip II to conquer England. The great significance of its loss was not immediately apparent, yet it was “epochmaking. It probably saved the Reformation and it certainly saved England and it taught England that the sea would be the instrument of its future greatness.”¹⁰⁹

Incidentally, there was also a second Spanish Armada, which few people know about, when King Philip decided on another invasion attempt. And this time, the ships would in the normal course of events have got through and landed their formidable troops without opposition from the Royal Navy, because of a blunder by Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, and Walter Raleigh. They had been sent in 1597 to head off this fleet but were unable to sight it. Then they allowed themselves to be sidetracked, waiting off the Azores to prey on treasure ships returning from America.

None turned up, but meanwhile “the Armada put out into the Bay of Biscay with the seas clear of defending ships to the north. Once again the winds saved the Island. The badly manned galleons tottered into a northern gale scattered and sinking. The disorganised fleet crept back into its ports. King Philip was kneeling in his chapel in the Escorial praying for his ships. Before the news of their return could reach him he was seized with a paralytic stroke, and the tale of their failure was brought to him on his deathbed.”¹¹⁰ It was like Totila trying a second time and yet failing once again.

Similarly decisive was the victory by Union troops at Gettysburg on 1-3 July 1863. The Confederate forces struggled on for almost two more years, and additional battles were fought. Nevertheless, Gettysburg “is generally regarded as the turning point of the American Civil War.”¹¹¹

So, too, it was at Rome in 538. This was not when all the fighting stopped, yet it began the fateful events that eliminated the Goths. Had their siege been a success, resulting in the defeat and capture of Belisarius, this would have blighted Justinian’s ambition to reconquer Italy. The papacy may not have survived, and the Germanic Church would certainly have been more firmly entrenched in Europe.

Above all, the Byzantines in 538 freed Rome and the papacy from Ostrogoth control and potential interference from the Germanic Church. This made it possible to implement Justinian’s 533 decree and elevate the pope as the “Head of all the holy churches.”

The triumph of Byzantine arms ensured the primacy of the pontiffs over all the other archbishops, at least in the West. A turning point in

history had been reached. Soon the third and last Germanic horn that had opposed the Roman Church was bloodily wrenched out.

XVI

The defeat of the Ostrogoths continued the process, begun by Clovis, that would almost completely eliminate the Germanic and other non-Catholic churches elsewhere in Western Europe. Though, in some areas, a remnant of these would survive a little longer, the papacy would find alternative ways of dealing with them, till the kingdoms represented by the surviving horns were all “converted.”

For instance, while their Gothic kin and allies still dominated Italy, the Visigoths of Spain could hold back their Catholic adversaries. But with the Ostrogoths gone, they came to think they were no longer able to resist the double pressure exerted by the Franks and the Byzantines. Eventually, for reasons of state, they gave up their ancestral faith and changed to Catholicism.

The most notable result of 538 and its aftermath was religious oppression for “the saints of the most High” by the Roman Church, during “a time, two times, and half a time” (Dan. 7:25, RSV). According to the principle that a day in prophecy symbolizes a year of human history, this period lasted for 1260 years. It began with the triumph of Belisarius in 538 and ended in 1798, when General Louis A. Berthier carried out his orders from the Directory of the French Revolution through “the extinction of papal rule and its replacement by a satellite Roman Republic.” He had Pope Pius VI arrested and carried off as an exile to France, where he died at Valence on the Rhône in the next year.¹¹²

According to several prophetic expositors, this event fulfilled the following prediction about the Antichrist depicted in Rev. 13: “And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death” (v. 3).

But was this not just a temporary humiliation and the ill-treatment of one particular pope? Subsequent developments demonstrated that it was not. “The destruction of his temporal authority by the armies of the Revolution in 1798 and his death in captivity in the following year presaged a new epoch for the papacy.”¹¹³—a tumultuous period, the details of which we consider in *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* (2011).

Not only Daniel, but also Christ predicted the awful period of persecution that began in Justinian’s time and continued for 1260 years. Jesus called it a “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” (Matt. 24:21, 22) At least in Northern Europe, it was reduced to about 1,000 years through the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Imperial and papal victory over the Germanic Church in most of Italy and North Africa exacted a dreadful price. The intervention of Justinian’s armies destroyed the last real chance of preventing the Dark Ages. Under the kingdom of Ravenna, Italy had preserved a

great deal of its ancient civilization; for the Ostrogoths admired and were successfully assimilating the Greco-Roman heritage.

The Byzantine dream of restoring the empire to its ancient borders brought only disaster. Wallace-Hadrill gives a graphic portrayal of an Italy “ravaged from end to end and her cities sacked as they had never been before. So many people perished that the country was greatly depopulated. Much of the damage must be ascribed to the ferocity of the imperial mercenaries, who had less reason than the established Goths to protect the rights of property.” Rome was plundered several times.¹¹⁴ The great aqueducts were cut. The grain supplies from Sicily and Africa were no longer arriving as they used to do.

As Cheetham puts it, the conflict “marked the end of a civilized way of life that had subsisted in its essentials since the Roman Republic and that no one expected to be so abruptly extinguished.”¹¹⁵ This is in accordance with Gibbon’s view that “it was the Christians rather than those innocent barbarians, the Goths and the Vandals, who had undermined the Empire, just as they had also dilapidated the city of Rome.”¹¹⁶ We concur with the basic meaning of this statement, though not with its wording.

As an infidel, Gibbon disliked Christianity. It would have been more accurate for him to say that the empire was undermined by the state church established in the time of Constantine, which may have been what the great historian meant. But, of course, the Goths and Vandals had also been Christians.

The culprit was not the gospel preached by the gentle Nazarene, the Prince of peace, or his humble apostles; for by the time the Roman Empire broke up irreparably, the religion of the New Testament had been so modified—through syncretism, mere tradition, and a self-seeking hatred of heretics, real or falsely so-called—that it had been largely eliminated.

It has frequently been claimed that Catholicism preserved important elements of ancient culture and learning throughout the Dark Ages. This we do not contest but point out that, at different times, the Little Horn has also been instrumental in destroying kingdoms, even entire civilizations, if these stood in the way of papal designs.

XVII

Periods of religious atrocities against minority groups have often coincided with or been followed by calamities in the persecutors’ territory. Examples already mentioned were the troubled third century after Marcus Aurelius, one of the emperors who greatly harassed the early Christians, and the Vandal conquest of North Africa, which followed Catholic cruelty toward the Donatists and Pelagians. Indeed, the collapse of the entire Western Roman Empire could to a considerable extent be attributed to religious warfare and its aftermath. When Justinian’s representatives liquidated the Germanic Church in Africa and Italy, they unleashed a holocaust of tears and blood on a scale that calls to mind the twentieth century. But even this

was greatly exceeded by the subsequent calamities visited on the empire.

One of these was earthquakes, which Gibbon says began before the North African and Italian campaigns and remained a constant peril; for a “fever of the earth raged with uncommon violence during the reign of Justinian. Each year is marked by the repetition of earthquakes, of such duration that Constantinople has been shaken above forty days; of such extent that the shock has been communicated to the whole surface of the globe, or at least of the Roman empire.”¹¹⁷

Further to the east, this extraordinary seismic activity destroyed important imperial cities, with great loss of life. One of these was Antioch where the earthquake of 526 “is said to have killed 250,000 people.” This city’s ruin became complete through the sack of Khosrau I in 540,¹¹⁸ the year when the Ostrogoths surrendered Ravenna to the Byzantine forces. Some years later, in 551, Berytus (Beirut), an important intellectual center, was also destroyed. Johannes Barbukollas mourned this event in three of his epigrams. One of them personifies the devastated city, which tells the passer-by:

Don't halt your voyage, sailor, nor drop sail
Because of me; you see the harbour dry.
I am a tomb now. Let another place
Ungrieving hear those oars beat your arrival . . .

(Trans. Peter Jay)¹¹⁹

But Justinian and his empire were called upon to endure an even greater scourge than convulsions of the earth: apparently the most horrendous plague this world has ever experienced, according to Charles Panati. “In 540, at the height of Justinian’s political and military successes, bubonic plague struck. It is probably the worst pandemic that has ever harrowed mankind . . . No invasion of Goths or Vandals could have more effectively demolished armies, cities, and governments.”¹²⁰

It raged on and off for half a century. Agriculture largely ceased, adding the horrors of famine. Entire cities vanished. A hundred million people perished.¹²¹ Not even the Black Death in the fourteenth century would prove as ruinous.

According to Gibbon, in Constantinople first five thousand and then ten thousand people expired every day for three months. Many eastern cities were emptied of their inhabitants.¹²² Justinian himself contracted the disease, but survived—apparently owing to his abstemious diet.¹²³ “The triple scourge of war, pestilence, and famine afflicted the subjects of Justinian; and his reign is disgraced by a visible decrease of the human species, which has never been repaired in some of the fairest countries of the globe.”¹²⁴

Were these disasters chance occurrences, or did the One who reigns on high withdraw his protection from an intolerant emperor and his compliant populace to signal Heaven’s displeasure for

slaughtering their fellow Christians in the East and waging wars to destroy the Germanic Church in North Africa and Italy? In later chapters, we shall further observe how this pattern repeats itself, again and again, with calamities following periods of atrocious persecution.

The political sequel in Italy was that the civilized kingdom of the Ostrogoths was replaced by two powers: the Byzantines and the Lombards. Both would for a long time trouble the papacy—the former by involving Catholicism with the quarrels of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the latter by exploiting Italy for themselves.

The Germanic Lombards, at that time a rather backward people, would prove very troublesome for two hundred years. They overwhelmed a large part of the peninsula only two years after Justinian's death.¹²⁵

Nearer home, the emperor's campaigns had weakened the ability of Constantinople to resist its enemies in the East and along the frontier on the Danube, where its real problems lay. Although, in some ways, Justinian's reign may have been, as Willis Linnquist puts it, "the most brilliant and glorious in Byzantine history," his military adventures exhausted the empire for 150 years.¹²⁶ They also put an end to the revival of Western civilization begun by Theodoric, and ushered in the darkness.

All the same, in Rome and elsewhere on the Italian peninsula, the papacy had secured a territorial base to maintain itself. Politically the pontiffs were weak, as they have been in many periods of history, but their great religious opponent, the Germanic Church, had been liquidated in their immediate neighborhood—through the elimination of the Herul, Vandal, and Ostrogoth kingdoms. Three horns had fallen before the Little Horn.

With its closest enemies removed, the papacy could gradually consolidate its ecclesiastical power, and extend it over the entire West—with a single exception: an Alpine area in northwestern Italy. Here a remnant of the Germanic Church, including the Waldenses of a later day, were destined to linger on. Catholicism, however, would grow and endure for over a thousand years, sustained by many, many kings and emperors, including some of the mightiest figures known to history.

Two Key Concerns

23 The Sevenfold Prophecy and the Year-Day Principle

I

When a mighty king, a good man but with the power of life and death, repeats himself, his subjects will ponder his words and take him very seriously. If he does it four times, it will cause consternation. But what will they do if he is so concerned that he warns about it seven times?

God also at times repeats himself. For instance, the Ten Commandments are written twice (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21); four Gospels delineate Christ's life and teachings; and a sevenfold prophecy warns against Satan and the Antichrist. As we read the following series of predictions, let us note how similar they are to one another:

1. **Dan. 7:25**, RSV: "[The Little Horn] shall wear out the saints of the Most High . . . for a time, two times, and half a time."
2. **Dan. 12:7**, RSV: It would be for a time, two times, and half a time . . . the shattering [by the Abomination that makes desolate] of the power of the holy people."
3. **Rev. 11:2**, RSV: "The nations . . . will trample over the holy city for forty-two months."
4. **Rev. 11:3, 7**, RSV: "I will grant my two witnesses power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days . . . the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them."
5. **Rev. 12:6**, RSV: "The woman fled into the wilderness [from the dragon] . . . to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days."
6. **Rev. 12:14, 15**: "To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent."
7. **Rev. 13:5-7**: "Power was given unto him [the beast] to continue forty and two months . . . and it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them."

The word *time* in these verses means "a year," as the Good News Bible translates it. A prophetic year consists of 360 days and a month of 30 days; therefore, the 1260 days exactly equal 42 months as well as 3½ years. We shall further examine the concept of

prophetic time in the second half of this chapter.

Let us first note that though the quoted passages differ in some respects, they all have much in common. In each of them, a malignant being (a dragon, great serpent, beast, Little Horn, or nation) in desecration tramples underfoot, conquers, wears out, pursues, or kills the holy city, the saints, a righteous woman, or holy witnesses for an identical period, variously expressed as a time, times, and $\frac{1}{2}$ a time; a time, 2 times, and $\frac{1}{2}$ a time; 42 months; or 1260 days.

II

These verses do not describe a single opposing power, yet they all refer to closely related aspects of a cosmic war between the Lord Jesus and his enemy, Satan—whom the Bible calls “the accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10), as well as the murderous prince and god of this world (John 12:31, 2 Cor. 4:4).

Let us look more closely at the basic ingredients of the seven prophecies. We have already noted the 1260 years. There are not two or three such periods, only one. And the heads and ten horns of these creatures represent, in every single case, the same kingdoms, ancient or modern. Let us note, again, who they are.

Like the toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream statue, the ten horns symbolize the nations that came into existence when the Western Roman Empire broke up. But what do the heads refer to? For a long time their identity has puzzled the students of prophecy, who have interpreted them in a variety of ways.

Some think they stand for universal sovereignty, since seven is a perfect number. This is an appealing idea, but it is contradicted by Rev. 17:10, which says that in John’s time five had already fallen. The heads must therefore be individual, specific powers.

Others identify them as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Papacy. These interpreters, we think, are almost right; but the list is arbitrary and unproven. A special point against it is the name Assyria, a power conspicuously absent from the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Scrutinizing the leopard-like beast of Rev. 13:1-10 helps to clarify this mystery. Many have noticed its similarity to the fearsome four described in Dan. 7. The mouth with which it tears its opponents and expresses its blasphemies is leonine, a Babylonian trait. Its imperial, crushing paws are those of a bear and symbolize Medo-Persia, to which the Antichristian beast is also indebted (inter alia for its Mithraic element). But most of all, the beast resembles a leopard, for the Grecian element has left a major, indelible stamp on it.

The seven heads, like the horns of the Antichrist, are also present in Dan. 7. We count and add up the heads of the four creatures; the result is seven!

In one respect, however, the beast of Rev. 13 is not a perfect composite of the creatures in Dan. 7; it lacks a Little Horn. But, to a

large extent, the leopard-like beast—as it lives through its heads, which culminate in the seventh one, and derives support from all the horns—is the Little Horn. This is suggested by very similar wording in these two chapters. Let us note the parallels:

| <i>The Little Horn</i> | <i>The Leopard-like Beast</i> |
|---|--|
| 1. “A mouth speaking great things” (Dan. 7:8). | “A mouth speaking great things” (Rev 13:5). |
| 2. “Great words against the most High” (Dan. 7: 25). | “Blasphemy against God” (Rev. 13: 6). |
| 3. “Shall wear out the saints of the most High” (Dan. 7:25) | “It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Rev. 13:7). |
| 4. “They shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time” (Dan. 7:25, RSV). | “Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months” (Rev. 13:5). |

Both the Little Horn and the Antichristian beast would have a mouth that speaks “great things,” that is, they indulge in arrogant speech and blasphemy against the Lord; both would wage a successful war against his holy ones; and both would prevail for three and a half years or forty-two months (that is, 1260 year-days).

Hans La Rondelle considers Dan. 7 the “taproot of all antichrist prophecies,” including the period of 3½ years.¹ Indeed. The entire sevenfold prophecy is an outgrowth of Dan. 7:25.

Over the centuries, many commentators have noted that the leopard-like beast of Rev. 13 represents the activities of the Antichrist. The ten horns, the kingdoms that arose from the breakup of the Western Roman Empire, are also involved; because throughout the Middle Ages they cooperated with a militant church in making war on its opponents. In Rev. 13, however, the activity of these political powers is only implied, not dwelt on. Instead, the spotlight falls on one of the heads: the papacy, which animates all Catholic Europe to persecute its opponents for forty-two prophetic months, i.e., for 1260 literal years. During the Christian era, the Beast lives by means of its last, apparently unkillable head, which almost dies from a well-nigh mortal wound yet revives amazingly.

Much of this prediction has already been fulfilled. In 1798, when General Berthier took the pontiff captive, it seemed as though the power of a moribund Vatican was finally at an end; and yet by 1998, just two hundred years later, much of the world was already beginning to wonder after a much revived and influential papacy.

But how is this beast related to the great red dragon of Rev. 12 or the scarlet beast on which the harlot rides in Rev. 17? These, too, are

composites, though they are not shown with attributes of the lion, the bear, or the leopard; yet all three have ten horns and seven heads. A significant feature is the position or the absence of crowns, which indicates that each beast begins its activity at a different time.

The dragon primarily symbolizes Satan but also various pagan powers through whom he has worked. His earthly career began by seducing the first two human beings. After that, he dominated the ancient world. For this reason, the dragon has imperial crowns upon its heads but lacks the crowns of the later European states. It largely has its way with the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greece, and Rome, which all succumbed to its blandishments. When Rev. 12 zooms in on him, Satan's great instrument is the Roman Empire, still in its pagan period; but he survives it, continuing to the end of the 1260 years and beyond.

The Antichristian beast of Rev. 13 has crowns on its horns, not its heads, to indicate the kings of medieval and renaissance Europe. The dragon—that is, pagan Rome as the devil's representative—gives to it “his power, and his seat and great authority” (vs. 2). For 1260 years, the career of the Antichrist runs parallel with that of the dragon. The prophecy of Rev. 17, however, highlights a later period. The scarlet beast on which the woman sits refers only incidentally to the past; it especially concerns the future. It has no crowns on either its heads or horns. Though its relationship with the Babylonian prostitute is an old one, the focus has shifted to the end time when the Western monarchies are gone (apart from a handful of largely ornamental kings and queens). We identify the beast of Rev. 17 more closely in a separate book, *Seven Heads and Ten Horns in Daniel and the Revelation* (2012).

The successive creatures that persecute God's people resemble one another because of their family relationship with Satan. Whether they realize it or not, he is their father, lord, and commander-in-chief. In this book and other volumes, we shall be scrutinizing them more fully.

The main point here is that all these wicked powers are related, however much they differ in some respects. The features that bind them together are the seven heads, the ten horns, and especially the identical period of time—all mentioned twice in the Old Testament and five times in the New.

III

Various writers have considered the 1260 years a time of papal supremacy in a political as well as an ecclesiastical sense. That is not quite correct. The Bible says nothing about the Little Horn ruling over the other horns. Instead, it focuses on the desecration of true religion, centered in the Saviour's redemptive and intercessory ministry, and the suffering saints. The pages of history are smudged with their tears and blood. The so-called holy Inquisition and other agencies have murdered millions of them in the name of God. But the popes were not the temporal rulers of Europe for that entire period.

After the uprooting of the Heruli, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths, the surviving Germanic nations supported the papacy as a religious institution. In some ways, it grew larger than they; but it mostly failed to dominate them politically. As Cassels puts it, "Antichrist is himself but 'a little horn,'—his regal power is small;" yet he wields tremendous power "by means of the ten greater horns, or kingdoms, which with himself arose out of the ruins of old Rome."² This is in line with the prophecy of Rev. 17:12. Only rarely, however, have these powers been mere puppets of the Roman Church.

In the high Middle Ages, the Roman pontiffs did to a considerable extent subordinate the rulers of Western Europe politically as well as ecclesiastically. They established and maintained a "papal monarchy" from the time of Gregory VII (1073-85) to that of Boniface VIII (1294-1303),³ a period of 230 years. This, however, was only 18 percent of the 1260 years. For most of that time, the kings and emperors voluntarily cooperated with the pope to destroy his religious opponents; but they did not allow him to dictate to them in political matters.

Sir Isaac Newton believed the papacy became a horn through the Donation of Pepin II after his campaigns in 754 and 756.⁴ That development certainly gave a further boost to the papacy's temporal power, but its official beginnings were really Justinian's "pragmatic sanction" two hundred years earlier, in 554.

Through this decree, "the emperor acknowledged, confirmed and increased the temporal power of the pope, who was henceforth to have a voice in the nomination of the governors of the Italian provinces of the empire and to participate in the control of their finances." The edict should be seen against the background of the Ostrogoths' defeat and the fact that the pontiffs literally owned so much of Italy. "This power was to grow so rapidly that Gregory the Great could write, a few years later: 'I should like to know whether the pope, in this world, is a spiritual leader or a temporal king.'"⁵

From 554 to 1870, the popes controlled considerable parts of Italy—for 1326 and not just for 1260 years. But political domination of that peninsula is hardly the same thing as ruling all of Europe. This is a crucial distinction. The Bible focuses on 1260 years of persecution throughout the West and not on the pontiff's temporal power in Italy.

In 1870, the patriotic forces of Victor Emmanuel completed the conquest of the Papal State by making Rome his capital and dethroning *il papa re* ("the pope-king") as a secular monarch. Nevertheless, the pontiff survived, though impoverished. In 1929, a tiny piece of his territorial holdings was restored. The Vatican became a statelet within the city of Rome. This has, however, proven sufficient to make the pope the head of "a country," with all the privileges and opportunities that such an office implies.

Mussolini also paid an amount of approximately \$90,000,000 to compensate the pontiff for the loss of revenue from the Papal State. This endowment came a few months before the Wall Street crash. Wisely invested and greatly benefiting by the Depression, these millions rapidly grew into billions of dollars, making the pope the

richest man on earth. More than that, international banking and business have provided the Vatican with enormous influence throughout the world. These later events in Italy, which occurred a long time after Newton died, suggest that the Little Horn can function quite well without a really big country to rule.

IV

Of crucial importance for understanding the sevenfold prophecy as well as Daniel and Revelation is the year-day principle.

If a day in prophecy equals a year of history, all the events of the 1260 “days” unfold in a period of more than a thousand years. If, however, no such principle is involved, the time frame must be literal, fewer than three and a half years. Another major prediction affected is the 2300 days of Dan. 8:14, of which we have already analyzed the first part—the 490 years.

Equating a day with a year is indispensable to the Historical School of interpretation, for obviously literal days and weeks or even months cannot span the centuries. If this equation is invalid, Preterists or Futurists like LaHaye may well be right. What is the evidence for the year-day principle?

Two verses in the Old Testament deal explicitly with this issue and are often quoted. They are Num. 14:34 and Eze. 4:6. We need to examine them in context.

The first describes an episode shortly after the Lord delivered the Israelites from Egypt, where they had been slaves for more than four hundred years. They were now just outside the borders of Canaan, the country God had promised to their forebears. To spy out the Promised Land, Moses sent twelve men, one from each tribe. On their return, they greatly praised the country; but ten of them advised against an invasion, because of Canaan’s fortified cities and formidable inhabitants. These included the giant Anakites, who so scared them that they whimpered: “We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (Num. 13:33).

This majority report dismayed and terrified the Israelites, who rebelled against Moses and refused to go further. Their attitude greatly displeased the Lord, who had in Egypt on their behalf defeated an even more formidable pharaoh. Now he had brought them to the edge of the country where he wanted them to live and prosper; but all along the way they bellyached. Instead of praise and thanksgiving, they repaid the One who saved them with doubt and recrimination. This time they exclaimed: “Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword . . . ?” (Num. 14:2, 3) With this cowardly unbelief and hateful speech, they wore out the divine patience. God decided to grant their ugly wish and sentenced them to a nomadic existence for forty years, to let that ungrateful generation pass away.

To the spineless spies, he said: “But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall be shepherds in

the wilderness forty years, and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, *for every day a year*, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.” (Num. 14:32-34, RSV, emphasis added)

More than a thousand years later, the Lord told Ezekiel, a prophet of the Babylonian exile and Daniel’s contemporary, to make prophetic toys and depict a siege that was about to devastate Jerusalem. His materials were a brick on which he scratched the image of the city and an iron plate to represent its walls. After creating this toy Jerusalem, no doubt with interested people watching his every move, Ezekiel lay down beside it and enacted the siege. (Eze. 4:1-3)

He also got further instructions: “Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For *I have laid upon thee the years* of their iniquity, *according to the number of days*, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: *I have appointed thee each day for a year.*” (Eze. 4:4-6, emphasis added.)

These passages in Numbers and Ezekiel are the most compelling Biblical evidence for the year-day principle.

V

It was Jewish scholars that first invoked it to explain the seventy weeks of Dan. 9 and afterwards to interpret all of Daniel’s longer time periods.⁶ So far as we know, the earliest Christian writer who applied it to the 1260 years was the twelfth-century Joachim of Floris.

Following him, two centuries later, Walter Brute of England in the fourteenth century also explained the 1290 and 1335 days of Dan. 12 as literal years. Then, in about 1440, Nicholas (Krebs) of Cusa, was the first to apply the year-day principle to the longer 2300 days of Daniel 8:14.⁷

These Christians were not Protestants but Catholics; intellectual and theological renewal has often also manifested itself in the Roman Church. Both men became very famous.

Joachim (c. 1135-1202), an Italian of Calabria, was a former Cistercian monk and founder of the Florentian order, recognized by Pope Celestine III.⁸ He never left his church, though he departed from its Augustinian approach to prophecy and history, returning to millenarianism. As McGinn puts it, Joachim’s interpretation “seems to represent a step on the road to the full-blown conception of a papal Antichrist” and “was to prove influential over many centuries.”⁹

Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64) was no ordinary theologian but a universal genius and polymath. From lists a large number of fields in which he was an expert.¹⁰ Other writers have also remarked on his

versatility. Inter alia, “Nicholas emphasized mathematics and experimental knowledge, including diagnostic medicine and applied science. Before Copernicus he discerned a universal movement involving but not centered in the earth; he denied that celestial bodies are strictly circular in form and motion.”¹¹ Johann von Döllinger (1799-1890), an outstanding Catholic historian, considered this man “the most profound thinker of his time.”¹² Though he sometimes got into trouble for his ideas, Cusa remained a member of the Roman Church. In 1447, he was even made a cardinal “and became, near the end of his life, the vicar general of the papal states.”¹³

Both Joachim and Cusa were men of massive intellect, and so were many others that through the ages have pondered the Bible’s predictions.

VI

Froom is fascinated by “the high caliber of the men who have devoted themselves to the study of prophecy.” Over the centuries, these have often been leading lights in other spheres than theology. “Clerics, statesmen, recluses, poets, scientists, historians, teachers, kings, and explorers, spread throughout the various nations, are included in the vast sweep.”¹⁴

A few of these were Dante, the greatest Christian poet and Shakespeare’s only equal in extrabiblical literature; Petrarch, father of the Renaissance; King James I, who united Scotland with England, wrote the first anti-tobacco tract, and sponsored the Authorized Version; and Sir Isaac Newton, scientist without peer.

These, too, have been servants of God and part of a providential scheme. First, to give his messages, he raised up the prophets. Then, at different times, he created and stirred up magnificent minds that could interpret their writings.

VII

William H. Shea, in *The Year-Day Principle* points out that the Bible contains more than two dozen time prophecies, including the interrelated 1260, 1290, 1335, and 2300 days.

He also demonstrates that “the year-day principle in prophecy did not crop up all of a sudden in a *sui generis* manner. It developed from a more general relationship that was already part of Hebrew thought before this specific prophetic application was made.”¹⁵ This is a valuable insight. A number of non-prophetic, historical passages in the Old Testament exemplify the idea.

The Scriptures often represents a human lifetime as somebody’s *days*, though these are obviously *years*. For instance, “the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua” (Judges 2:7);¹⁶ “Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life” (1 Sam. 7:15);¹⁷ and the model wife “will do [her husband] good and not evil, all the days of her life” (Prov. 31:12).¹⁸

Sometimes the equivalence is explicit, as in Gen. 5. There we read

that “all the *days* that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty *years*” (vs. 5, emphasis added). This formula is repeated ten times in that chapter.

Delving into the underlying Hebrew text, which is not always reflected in English translations, Shea discovers other meaningful constructions. Inter alia, “two passages in which the word for days is used for a period of time equivalent to a year are found in 1 Sam. 27:7 and Num. 9:22. In the former passage it is stated literally that David dwelt in the land of the Philistines for ‘days and four months.’ That a period of a year and four months is intended here is evident and that is the way in which translations of the Bible have generally handled this phrase.”¹⁹

Some expressions are, at least to Westerners, downright odd. One is “from days to days.” In several passages listed by Shea, this means *yearly*. “Ex. 13:10 states that the Passover was to be kept, literally, ‘from days to days,’ i.e., from year to year or yearly.”²⁰

Shea concludes: “When we come to the occurrence of the word ‘days’ in time prophecies, therefore, an ancient Semite whose mind was steeped in this type of thought would naturally have made an association of years with days found in a symbolic context . . .”²¹

VIII

The year-day principle is frequently entwined with typology, an ancient literary device that establishes a parallel between events or persons, separated in time but linked in meaning. A famous example is Paul’s idea that the Israelites passing through the Red Sea were undergoing a kind of baptism (1 Cor. 10:1, 2).

Typology is not simply a figure of speech but a concrete metaphor that juxtaposes realities. Often it builds a bridge between the Old Testament and the New, yet similar literary structures also exist within the Hebrew Scriptures.

For instance, the account of Dan. 1 and 2 remarkably parallels Gen. 39 and especially 41, that is, a story from a thousand years earlier. There are no fewer than ten similarities. (1) Both Joseph and Daniel were captives in a foreign country, (2) the superpower of their time. (3) Both were principled young men, beginning their careers by resisting strong temptations. (4) Both Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar had puzzling dreams, so that their “spirit was troubled” (Gen. 41:8, Dan. 2:3). (5) They therefore demanded that their wise men and magicians provide an interpretation, (6) which these were unable to do. (7) Both Joseph and Daniel asserted they could interpret dreams only as God enabled them. (8) In each case, the Lord was revealing the future to the king. (9) The young men successfully interpreted the respective dreams (10) and were both rewarded with the highest political appointments in the country, just below the monarch himself.

Typology in the later, Christian sense of the word is also present in the Old Testament, as where David becomes a type of the Messiah (Eze. 34:23, 24).

Temporal typology takes its cue from Scriptures like Num. 14:34

and Eze. 4:5, 6. Twelve representative Israelites reconnoiter Canaan for *forty days*; ten return with an unfavorable report, which unleashes a rebellion, so that the Lord condemns the nation to *forty years'* wandering in the wilderness of Sinai. After besieging a tiny Jerusalem with his prophetic toys, Ezekiel lies on his side for a total of 430 *days*, which represent the *years* of Israelite and Jewish transgression.

Revelation contains a number of typological allusions to Old Testament situations via the year-day principle. This can be most clearly seen in Rev. 11, where both the 3½ years and the 3½ days are related to the work of ancient prophets.

During the 1260 days of their ministry, the two witnesses are able to destroy or punish the enemies that wish to harm them. This statement contains a triple reference to Old Testament situations. First, the passage recalls an episode when the Israelite king in Samaria sent several batches of messengers to bring Elijah to him; but the prophet distrusted them and twice called down fire to consume them (2 Kings 1:9-12). Second, the Lord commanded Jeremiah to exercise a similar power; he must speak fiery destruction to a sinful house of Israel (Jer. 5:14). Third, the witnesses can, like Moses in the time of the Exodus, turn water into blood (Ex. 7:17-19) and bring other plagues upon the earth.

They "have power to shut heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy" (Rev. 11:6). This is a further reference to Elijah as well as what James wrote about him: "He prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (5:17).

The beast that ascends from the bottomless pit succeeds in slaying the two witnesses. Their bodies lie on the street "of that great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt" (RSV) for three and a half days; after that the Lord resurrects them and they ascend to heaven. Here the 3½ prophetic years are mirrored in a smaller period of 3½ prophetic days.

This prediction was fulfilled in Revolutionary France. On 10 November 1793, the National Assembly in Paris passed a law to abolish Christianity and in its place establish atheism as the official "religion." The Bible was burned in large quantities and reason exalted, even symbolically worshiped as a goddess. This continued until 17 June 1797, a period of 3½ literal years.

Amazed, the world looked on, observing how that country plunged ever deeper into depravity. Largely within this period, the Terror swept away 17,000 people who were officially executed on the slightest pretext, while "many more died in prison or without trial." This had begun just two months before the official introduction of atheism, on 5 September. It raged on until 27 July, 1794,²² when Robespierre fell. A day later, the axe of the guillotine descended and also lopped off that head, which had decreed so many judicial murders.

It was after the French had supped full of horrors and witnessed the moral degradation brought on by officially turning their backs on God that they repealed the law which had promoted or brought it

about. And only a few years afterwards, in 1804, the British Bible Society was organized, the first of many such enterprises. Ever since then, an astounded planet has seen a dissemination of the Scriptures without parallel throughout history. Printing presses have been pouring forth the Word of life into the minds and hearts of people all over the earth. On 13 February 2005, the United Bible Society reported that the Bible, in part or as a whole, was now available in 2,377 of the 6,500 languages spoken around the globe. It was aiming, "together with partners worldwide," at least to begin a translation in all the remaining ones that need one by 2025.²³

Uriah Smith correctly interpreted such activity as a fulfillment of Rev. 11:12: "And they [the resurrected two witnesses] heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them."²⁴ In its proper place, we will have more to say about these events and the Bible's great enemy, "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 11:7), which must "go into perdition" (Rev. 17:8), an event that has not yet taken place.

In their experience during the French Revolution, the two witnesses no longer just parallel that of Moses or Elijah but also of the Saviour. He himself is the faithful and true witness, the first to be resurrected and taken up into heaven, after his enemies had slain him in Jerusalem.

IX

It is also possible to see a relationship between the 42 months (3½ years) of Jesus' earthly ministry and the 42 generations listed in his genealogy according to the first Gospel (Matt. 1:17). Actually there were more, and we do not propose to discuss all the aspects of this problem. But it is certain that to make up this number, Matthew has omitted the names of the following four undoubtedly biological ancestors: Queen Athaliah, her son Ahaziah, her grandson Joash, and her great-grandson Amaziah. She was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who had introduced the odious worship of Baal into ancient northern Israel. Athaliah was a horrible person. Not only did she usurp the throne of Judah but tried, as Satan's instrument, to exterminate the entire Davidic line, by killing all her grandchildren—though Joash, hidden by his aunt Jehosheba, escaped (2 Kings 11:2). The hateful queen, together with the names of her brood, was expunged from the Lord's genealogy, "unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me," as the commandment against idolatry expresses it (Ex. 20:5). This omission also enables the Gospel writer to arrive at his 14 + 14 + 14 = 42 generations. Matt. 1:17 may well contain an inspired hint for the reader that this is an important prophetic number.

But why would the 3½ years of Jesus' earthly ministry be mirrored in as many prophetic years? He said that whatever oppressors do to his faithful followers is tantamount to afflicting him personally (Matt. 25:45). According to Ellen White, "He foretold the

portion which the rulers of this world would mete out to the church of God. Matthew 24:9, 21, 22. The Lord's servants must tread the same path of humiliation, reproach, and suffering which their master trod. The enmity that burst forth against the world's Redeemer would be manifested against all who should believe on his name."²⁵

We discern a typological relationship between the 3½ literal years of his earthly ministry and the 3½ prophetic years, when Satan and his wicked followers persecute his dear ones. Another chapter will show that this is especially apparent in Rev. 12, which describes the attempts of the great red dragon to destroy both Christ and his followers.

X

Dispensationalists, who belong to the Futurist school, contradict the application of the year-day principle to the 3½ years, and therefore the 42 months and 1260 days, which are their equivalent. According to those expositors, this is literal time on our calendar, half of the last prophetic week described in Dan 9:27.

As we have already noted with astonishment, these Bible students detach it from the previous sixty-nine septennates (483 years) and introduce a gap of more than two thousand years before the seventieth year-week. In their theology, the 490 years are not consecutive but discontinuous. They also think those last seven years refer to the career of Antichrist between the Rapture and a period they call the Tribulation, rather than the earthly career of our Lord and its apostolic aftermath.

LaHaye asserts that Rev. 13 "describes the work of Antichrist during the entire seven years of Tribulation."²⁶ But nowhere does this chapter of the Apocalypse say so. It only mentions the 42 months of the beast's career and absolutely nothing to link them with a seven-year period. The same is true of every other passage in the Bible that deals with the 1260 days/42 months/3½ years. That is, the sevenfold prophecy uniformly preserves a sevenfold silence about this supposed relationship. How strange!

There is, moreover, an even more powerful reason for rejecting a linkup between the 1260 days/42 months/3½ years and the last septennate of Dan. 9:27. Simply stated, it is this: that period must be prophetic and not literal time because it is shorter than three and a half years on the calendar!

How many days are there in a year? Everybody knows that on the Gregorian calendar it is mostly 365 days but 366 in leap years. (It is actually, on an annual basis, 365.2422 days.) Three and a half years of literal time is 1278 days, and not 1260. The prophetic period falls short by 18 days. It is actually somewhat less than 41½ months of our time; that is, just under 3 years and 5½ months.

The arithmetic—or in American parlance, the math—of the Futurists is wrong. As already noted, the same applies to Preterism, the other school of prophetic interpretation propagated by Jesuits of

the Contra Reformation. This view represents the Little Horn as Antiochus Epiphanes, an ancient Syrian king, who desecrated the temple in Jerusalem, terrorizing its inhabitants for three years and ten days—but certainly not for three and a half years.

These simply cannot be fitted into the last prophetic week of Dan. 9:27. But what happens when we reckon it the other way round, dividing 1260 prophetic year-days by $3\frac{1}{2}$? The fit is perfect: it goes in 360 times, because a prophetic year consists of 360 year-days—and because of the typology dealt with above.

I used to wonder why in his sevenfold scheme the Lord did not, to keep it simple, refer in every case to $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. Why did he in some verses also speak of days or months? Now, I think I know the reasons. First, he equated 1260 days with 42 months and $3\frac{1}{2}$ years (as in Rev. 11: 2, 3 and Rev. 12:6, 14) to ensure that we would understand this as an exact, specific period. But second, he also meant us to compare these figures and see that they cannot be literal time, as some expositors would one day assert.

The 1260 days can make prophetic sense only on the basis of the year-day principle. It is like Cinderella's shoe, which just could not be made to fit any other foot but hers.

XI

And now it is our pleasure to tell a beautiful but almost incredible story, which throws additional light on the year-day principle.

In the early eighteenth century, various countries were still switching from the imperfect Julian calendar—introduced by Julius Caesar—to a new one finalized by the Jesuit German astronomer Christopher Clavius (1537-1612), who worked for Pope Gregory XIII. A change was necessary to reestablish a correct relationship between the calendar and the seasons, which were no longer harmonizing properly. There was, however, also a religious factor. The pontiff wanted to correlate the year, the month, and the week with special reference to Easter Sunday. Because the week is not an astronomical unit, it is intrinsically impossible to do this perfectly; but the Gregorian calendar, which we all use today, with its leap years and other special arrangements, is accurate within a day every 20,000 years.²⁷

Though a Catholic invention, it was so good that even the Protestant countries adopted it; but because of its religious overtones some were slow to do so. In Britain, the Calendar (New Style) Act was accepted only in 1751 and went into effect the next year, when 2 September was followed by 14 September. The reason for this adjustment was that the old-style year of 365.25 days had been a little too long; the time it takes the earth to go around the sun is closer to 365.2422 days. The Julian calendar had therefore erroneously added an extra 11 min. 15 sec. per annum or a little more than a day every 130 years.²⁸

In that century, many also bent their minds to a study of celestial cycles. One of the men so occupied was Sir Isaac Newton, the great

scientist who was also a writer on prophecy. In 1733, his *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* appeared with calculations about the seventy septennates. At about the same time, another Protestant scientist was doing related work in Switzerland. He was the astronomer M. Jean Philippe Loys de Chéseaux, a correspondent of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris and a foreign associate of the Academy at Göttingen, Germany.

De Chéseaux, a reputable professional with several publications in his own field of astronomy as well as mathematics, was doing chronological research. Seeking an accurate date for the crucifixion, he turned to the prophecies of Daniel, especially the eighth and the ninth chapters. He began to wonder about the relationship between the 1260 and the 2300 days conceived as years. He must have noticed that these periods are linked to one another by the themes of desecration, a treading underfoot, and a sanctuary cleansed. This led him to scrutinize these periods from an astronomical point of view, relating them to attempts by scientists who were seeking to harmonize three basic time units, namely the *solar day*, the *solar year*, and the *lunar month*. Of these there were four possible combinations:

1. Harmonizing the *solar day* and *solar year*.
2. Harmonizing the *solar year* and *lunar month*.
3. Harmonizing the *solar day* and *lunar month*.
4. Harmonizing all three—*day, month, and year*.²⁹

First, de Chéseaux discovered that both the 1260 and the 2300 years of Daniel's prophecies were remarkably perfect and accurate lunisolar cycles. Each was a harmonization of the second class, i.e., the solar year with the lunar month. No previous astronomer had discovered this relationship.

Continuing his calculations, de Chéseaux now tried to discover a cycle of the fourth class (a harmonization of the day, the month, and the year), which up to that time had eluded the astronomers. For this cycle, the 1260 years were also a good fit, not quite perfect yet with "a remarkably small error." The 2300 years were even better, the kind of cycle that had long been unsuccessfully sought by astronomers. It was thirty times longer than the ancient Period of Calippus, with only a seventeenth part its error, namely 8h 12'.

Next, de Chéseaux pondered the similarity of the very small error in each case and theorized that the difference between the 1260 and the 2300 years—namely 1040 years—would prove to be a perfect cycle of the fourth kind so long and vainly searched for. And that is exactly what he found!

"This period of 1040 years, indicated indirectly by the Holy Ghost, *is a cycle at once solar, lunar, and diurnal or terrestrial of the most perfect accuracy*. I subsequently discovered two singular confirmations of this fact, which I will explain presently, when I have adduced all my purely astronomic proofs; may I in the meantime be permitted to give to this new cycle, the name of the DANIEL CYCLE."³⁰

De Chéseaux believed this astonishing discovery provided absolute proof that the book of Daniel was divinely inspired. "Such a cycle would never have been chosen by accident. And since it was not accidental, it must have been chosen by Him who timed the movements of the sun and moon in their orbits."³¹

Froom states that the results were checked and declared astronomically correct by two contemporaries, Messrs. Mairan and Cassini, "celebrated astronomers of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Paris."³² De Chéseaux recorded his discovery in *Remarques historiques, chronologiques, et astronomiques, sur quelques endroits du livre de Daniel* ("Historical, Chronological, and Astronomical Remarks on Certain Parts of the Book of Daniel"). Edited by his sons, this booklet was published in 1754 after his death.³³

De Chéseaux therefore never saw it in print, but it made a tremendous impression on several leading prophetic interpreters, especially in Britain, of whom we mention three from the nineteenth century. They all used this astounding discovery to argue for the rejection of Futurism, which had increasingly been taking root among Protestants.

The first of these scholars was William Cunningham (1776-1849), who spent the greater part of his life on his Scottish estate, studying the prophecies of the Bible for forty years. The results of this endeavor appeared in twenty large and smaller works on prophecy and biblical chronology.³⁴ In his *Dissertation on the Seals and the Trumpets of the Apocalypse* (1813), which chiefly dealt with the 1260 years, he says:

"I take for granted, that the four beasts seen by Daniel in the seventh chapter of his prophecies signify the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman monarchies; and that the little horn of his fourth beast is a symbol of the papal power; and likewise that the Babylon of the Apocalypse is the church of Rome. These may be considered as *first principles* in the study of prophecy, of which no well-instructed protestant ought to be ignorant."³⁵

We ourselves believe that the symbol of Babylon refers to more than just the Roman Church, but Cunningham was restating the position adopted by the Reformers of the sixteenth century. Fighting against the ideas of Futurists like William Burgh, he maintained that De Chéseaux's discovery conclusively confirmed the year-day principle.³⁶ A little after Cunningham, another major prophetic expositor hailed the Daniel Cycle as evidence. He was Thomas R. Birks (1810-83), canon of Ely Cathedral, Cambridge, and professor of moral philosophy at that leading British university. Like Cunningham, he was a prolific writer. According to Froom, Birks's *First Elements of Sacred Prophecy* (1843) was "the most exhaustive and masterly treatise on the year-day principle of the entire nineteenth-century Advent awakening."³⁷ Like Cunningham, he expended much of his time on combating Futurism, as taught by Maitland, Todd, and Burgh. Birks was awed by de Chéseaux's discovery, which is meaningful only in terms of the Historical School of prophetic interpretation.³⁸

The third expositor who referred to this amazing discovery was Henry Grattan Guinness (1835-1910), born near Dublin, Ireland. An

intellectual and spiritual giant, he led revivals, founded institutes for foreign missionary work as well as two colleges, became a Doctor of Divinity, wrote poetry, and preached in many countries. His tours included Europe, Africa, Asia, America, Australia, and New Zealand. He was a powerful and popular speaker, comparable to Wesley, Whitefield, and Spurgeon. But his main accomplishment, from 1878 to 1905, was nine tremendous books on prophecy, totaling more than 3,800 pages. He strove mightily against the papacy as well as Futurism.

Froom says that as a modern writer on prophecy he was “without a peer in Britain” and a “powerful exponent of the Historical School.”³⁹

Guinness’s works included his remarkable *Romanism and the Reformation from the Standpoint of Prophecy*. An unusual book was *City of Seven Hills*, “a comprehensive prophetic exposition of 302 pages in verse, supported by documented notes. With incisive words and trenchant phrases this poem portrays the rise of papal Rome, the Reformation, the papal reaction, and the retribution.”⁴⁰ In his *Creation Centered in Christ*, Guinness “takes up the astronomical angle—numbers in the Bible, and the analogy of revealed times, the scientific basis of the chronology of the four empires, the chronology of the 70 weeks and the 1260 years, the cyclical character of prophetic time according to De Cheseaux, and the relation of the 1260 and 2300 years as the most central and fundamental cycles.”⁴¹

These British writers were deeply impressed and awed by what the French astronomer had discovered. We, too, are amazed.

As our planet spins upon its axis and drags along the circling moon to swing with it around the sun, the solar system completes a Daniel Cycle every 1040 years. What is this, if not a message from the Creator himself, speaking to us not only from the pages of an ancient Book, but also from among the stars?

24 Why Christians Persecute Christians

I

Looking back over the previous chapters, the reader is almost certain in one respect to be perplexed and disturbed. Apparently sincere believers were using torture, murder—even warfare—to silence and exterminate other Christians, who also served their Lord. How was this possible?

Religion is not always a beautiful thing. It has its dark side, as does ideology, if it is believed in with misguided intensity. The basic reason for this is that we are all deeply motivated by the thoughts we entertain; as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7).

Pondering the meaning of things during America’s bicentennial, journalist and author Theodore White concluded that ordinary people are “either captives or descendants of ideas.”¹ He realized “their cruelties and nobilities, their creations and tragedies, flowed far more certainly from what was in their minds than from what was in their glands.”²

While emotions can influence thinking very deeply, they themselves are usually kindled by ideas, especially under the skillful manipulation of leaders whom the masses accept and follow. What is especially frightening about this is “how very few men it takes at the head of any state to give it its character of good or evil, of freedom, tyranny, torture, butchery or benevolence.”³ This helps to explain not only the terrible power of political ideologies in the twentieth century, but also the destructive fervor that has often been unleashed by theological orthodoxy.

Before the worst atrocities committed by Nazis or Communists, W. B. Yeats (1865-1939), perhaps the greatest English poet of the twentieth century, exclaimed in “A Prayer for My Daughter”:

An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.

(June 1919)⁴

He was deeply concerned about his country, Ireland—where the evil mixture of politics and theology is still claiming its victims, more than eighty years later.

Unfortunately few things, if any, give rise to as many horrible excesses as religion, too zealously believed in and forcibly imposed on others. This was well understood and expressed by that shrewd and lucid thinker, William Lamb, second Viscount Melbourne (1779-1848), who was Queen Victoria’s Prime Minister and friend in the earlier part of her reign: “The danger of religious zeal is the spirit of ill-

will, hatred and malice, of intolerance and persecution, which in its own warmth and sincerity it is too apt to engender.”⁵

Melbourne’s suspicion of this quality was shared by another British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81). When Queen Victoria strongly wished to make Archibald C. Tait, bishop of London, successor to the archbishop of Canterbury, Disraeli opposed the idea. The man, he felt, was too enthusiastic. He sympathized “with everything that is earnest; but what is earnest is not always true; on the contrary, error is often more earnest than truth.”⁶

II

Here we cannot go into detail about other systems of belief, but to prevent a possible misconception that only Christians have ill-treated those who disagreed with them, we give just a few examples to show that this is not the case.

The ancient Greeks were supposedly a very tolerant people, yet they engaged in religious persecution when the Athenians sentenced the great philosopher Socrates (c. 470-399 B.C.) to death and made him drink hemlock. He had been accused of corrupting the youth through his impiety toward the gods, whose immoral myths he rejected, and of individualistic ideas about the Deity. As Cary and Haarhoff explain, “A person who openly denied the existence of the state gods was liable to prosecution. The physicist Anaxagoras found it expedient to retire from Athens after asserting that the sun was not a god, but a huge incandescent stone. . . . Similarly it was a punishable offence to introduce new cults into a city without authorization, because these might disturb the existing cycle of worship: it was one of the charges on which Socrates was put to death at Athens, that he ‘introduced new gods.’”⁷

Four centuries later, this law was still in place. One day the apostle Paul, another wise and good man, came walking through the very same market place that the murdered sage used to frequent in his day. When the herald of Christianity began to speak against the Greeks’ idolatry and told them about Jesus, some people pointedly remarked: “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities” (Acts 17:18). And “They reminded him of Socrates, a great philosopher, who was condemned to death because he was a setter forth of strange gods. Paul was counseled not to endanger his life in the same way.”⁸

Hellenic bigotry had also revealed itself against the Jews, when Antiochus IV (c. 215-164 B.C.), whom his flatterers called Epiphanes (“the illustrious”), captured Jerusalem. He “prohibited Judaism, and tried to establish the worship of Greek gods,” which made the Jews revolt under the Maccabees (167-160 B.C.) and drive him from Jerusalem.⁹

Judaism persecuted the early Christians in Palestine. One of the most prominent Pharisees who did so was a young rabbi named Saul of Tarsus, who after his conversion became the beloved apostle Paul.

Islam prescribes execution for anybody who insults this religion and for Moslems who convert to another faith. A notorious case is that

of British Indian author Salman Rushdie (b. 1947), whose work, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), so enraged the devout that the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran pronounced a death sentence against him.¹⁰ It is presumably still hanging over him today. At the beginning of the new millennium, many Moslem states were officially persecuting Christians, especially for converting from Islam. In Sudan they have been crucified and often sold into slavery. Other examples abound.

III

The most dangerous people are not ordinary murderers, who—because of greed or some dark perversity in their makeup—kill a person here and there. Nor are they straightforward tyrants, even bloody ones like Idi Amin. Instead, they are great *idealists*, who have some fine-sounding goal and exploit the group psychology of their fellow human beings, often with tragic consequences. As Chung Hwan-gun, a modern Korean sage, has put it:

“For our nation!”
“For God!”
“For freedom!”
“For the people!”
How many innocent ones
have been killed
in the world
under these slogans!¹¹

To those who love grandiose ideas, human beings are often less important than this or that scheme for improving society. For such enthusiasts, the glorious end (as they see it) justifies the means, however vile. Once they are in power, nothing will stop them. No act can be too cruel, no deed too base. Obsessed with their ideals, they barricade their hearts against all pleas, and their minds against all evidence that what they are creating is not a paradise but rather a hell on earth.

The most obvious example in the previous century was Adolf Hitler, who wanted to build a very great nation and produce a breed of supermen, by eliminating all bad genetic material from the human race. To do this, he murdered the feeble-minded, the insane, and so-called inferior or dangerous groups, like Gypsies and Jews—six million of the last mentioned alone.

Another such man was Joseph Stalin. In pursuit of his Marxist fantasy, he labored diligently to create a marvelous and mighty socialist country, and to bring about a better world. As a result, he murdered even more people than his German counterpart. Stalin . . . “we now realize was responsible for the deaths of 30 million of his own people.”¹²

Similar to this Soviet dictator, but probably still worse, was Mao Tse-tung, who decided to propel China into rapid progress through his People’s Communes during what he called the “Great Leap Forward,”

which the government announced in 1958. He believed that however it was achieved, industrialization would inevitably cost countless lives; and so—according to him—the Marxist “merely prefers to get it over quickly. Wading through rivers of blood, he hopes to find a shortcut to the promised land. Thus the Communist fanatic like Mao has his eyes on the future. The people of today mean no more than the instruments out of which that future is made.”¹³

Within two years, however, it became plain that the Great Leap Forward was a blatant failure;¹⁴ it had turned into a great leap backward. Its chief result was that “anywhere from 20 million to 43 million people died, mainly in the countryside.”¹⁵

But none of these mass murderers saw himself as a fiend. On the contrary, each was convinced his social engineering would one day greatly benefit the human race.

For example, Hitler imagined he was the father of a new world order, even “the Messiah, the promised one, who would lead the world out of darkness into the light.”¹⁶

In many ways, he seemed to contemporaries a normal and even sensitive man. There is a photograph of him bending benignly to accept a bouquet from a little girl, and on 1 September 1943 he himself gave roses to Edda Ciano, Mussolini’s daughter—for he was “a man who would never forget a woman’s birthday.”¹⁷ He was also loyal to his old comrades, loved music, and delighted in good, clean humor.¹⁸

But Hitler hated Communists and Jews. Like many of his contemporaries, he believed they “had willfully, grievously injured and were a source of continuing harm to Germany, and that Germans would and should profit enormously by the elimination of the Jews and their influence from Germany.”¹⁹ The further to justify his anti-Semitism, Hitler’s twisted mind produced an idea as nasty as it was nonsensical: “the Jews have made no contributions to human culture, and in crushing them I am doing the will of the Lord.”²⁰

The führer was not an atheist but a nominal Catholic. He also dabbled in the occult, especially astrology.²¹ But he was especially fascinated by Nietzsche, who looked forward to the emergence of the *Übermensch* (Superman), Comte Joseph A. Gobineau (1816-82), who taught that the white or “Aryan” race was superior,²² and Darwin, who emphasized the survival of the fittest. Writers on eugenics maintained that the human race should be improved by breeding healthier, more intelligent, and superior people. This, however, would ordinarily be a slow process; but Hitler wanted to speed it up by eliminating what he saw as inferior stock, and so he became a mass murderer.

Appalled by the vast support, or at least the cooperation, that such monstrous idealists have been able to command, Edwin Honig remarks, “Civilized men and women easily relinquish their liberty of action and belief to disciplined madmen incarnating some abstract notion of national or racial supremacy.”²³

There is, however, more to it than that: their followers are also rewarded for being so loyal. During the first part of his rule, the führer rescued his country from economic misery and rebuilt it into a world-

class power. “Most Germans profited materially and psychologically from the first six years of Hitler’s rule, and they were quick to point this out when criticism of any kind was leveled against the Leader.”²⁴

Not more than a third were ever prepared to vote for him in the free elections that preceded his assumption of power. But all had been suffering from the dreadful economic conditions that plagued their country after World War I. They generally believed the Western Allies had deceived them at the peace negotiations of Versailles. They smarted under the war reparations that the country had to pay, especially at the insistence of a remorseless France, which greatly embittered them. Despite their misgivings about Hitler, these people adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

What they saw was a remarkable turnabout in the economy, though soon they observed that much of their prosperity was bound up with preparations for war. Eventually Hitler catapulted them into a destructive conflict. The subsequent ruin of Europe, including Germany, fully unmasked him as a deceiver and a murderer.

His power over them did not, however, depend on words alone or even economic benefits. Brutally supported by his henchmen and the Gestapo, he soon fastened on the country an iron yoke from which it was impossible to break free. Many details appear in *Beyond All Fronts: A Bystander’s Notes on This Thirty Years War* by Max Jordan, an American radio journalist stationed in Switzerland who in the 1930s and 1940s often visited Germany and for a decade closely followed what was happening there.

Hitler and the Nazis brainwashed the public through incessant speeches, radio propaganda, patriotic music, and warlike pageantry. They also did their utmost to cut the people off from access to information sources that could counteract the conditioning. Gestapo agents ransacked the libraries and burned all literature that displeased them. “Later on, after virtually all foreign publications had been excluded from German territory, those who could afford it, traveled across the border to ‘read up.’ It was a dangerous sport, for Gestapo eyes were everywhere, and many a homecoming tourist found himself questioned by secret agents about ‘subversive reading abroad.’”²⁵

The führer’s close supporters made a liberal use of beatings, torture, imprisonment, and executions—some very horrible, such as hanging people on butchers’ hooks. Their victims were fellow Germans who displeased or opposed the regime.

In the 1920s, Berlin had been the cultural, scientific, and intellectual capital of the world; but under Hitler the brightest and best of the Germans fled abroad or were silenced. By 1943, as many as two million political prisoners crowded the jails and Himmler’s concentration camps. These were not foreigners but Germans who dared to think for themselves or criticized the regime.²⁶

Daniel J. Goldhagen has recently maintained that most of the people in Nazi Germany shared the führer’s anti-Semitism and were not greatly upset by the extermination of the Jews. He rejects the idea that many were secretly opposed, and says “no German was ever killed

or incarcerated for having refused to kill Jews;" indeed, the perpetrators often engaged in their horrible work with enthusiasm, joy, and merrymaking.²⁷

We think this judgment is too severe and question the idea that many of the murderers were ordinary Germans. Most of them were dedicated SS men and other members of the Nazi party, only four million out of sixty-six million Germans, as well as hardened jailbirds whom the organizers of the Holocaust used to do their dirty work. Nor was it possible for anybody to criticize the Final Solution with impunity. It is true, however, that for a time the public acquiesced in Hitler's gigantic crime against humanity and was therefore tainted with his guilt.

Leaders that order mass killings are usually not stupid but intellectuals, mostly writers and fascinating speakers, clever at exploiting the concerns of ordinary men and women, whom they ensnare with beguiling words and other means. As Theodore White points out, "They can mobilize these people to change things, to kill, to hunt, to die, to be cruel, with the moral absolution that intellectuals can always give simple killers and terrorists."²⁸

IV

The modern ideologues we have referred to were not the greatest murderers for what they believed to be a noble cause. No, it was a church, empowered by statecraft, which exterminated first hundreds, then thousands, and eventually millions of fellow Christians. In this way, over the centuries, it ruined communities, countries, and sometimes entire civilizations.

This process started with Constantine. But he, who fatefully began the tradition of Christians murdering Christians, naturally did not think of himself as a fiend in human form—despite his personal atrocities, to which we have already referred. Like many rulers who succeeded him, including Justinian, he was a misguided idealist. Constantine, as his modern biographer Grant expresses it, "genuinely felt that he was in continuous touch with God."²⁹ Nevertheless, he "did immeasurable harm and set a bleak precedent for every century to come."³⁰

According to Walter M. Montaña, "it is estimated that in the Inquisition period close to one hundred fifty million martyrs died for their faith."³¹ Reared in an aristocratic Bolivian home, this scholarly monk turned Protestant and went on to become the director of Christ's Mission in New York. He was in a good position to speak of that awful organization because he formerly belonged to the Dominicans, the inquisitorial order.³²

As late as 1950 (the date of Montaña's book), the Inquisition or the spirit it represented was still very much alive in Latin America. He gives many details of Protestants killed there, with the approval and often at the instigation of priests. In 1996, Pastor Herculano Cornejo, a retired Spanish-speaking Mennonite living in southern Texas, told me that such things were still happening in those countries.³³

Montaño calls the Inquisition the Gestapo of the church.³⁴ According to John Foxe, people that disapproved of any action taken by it, or even doubted what an inquisitor said, incurred the severest punishment.³⁵ Officially, the organization had a fair-sounding name: the Holy Office, for it was supposed to seek the eternal salvation of the “heretics” it tormented and destroyed. Its agents usually expressed themselves in moderate terms, employing the language of Christian piety and love.

But deeds are much more eloquent than words. The most horrible place I ever visited was the Museum of the Inquisition. I suddenly stumbled on it during the summer of 1992 as I was roaming through Carcassonne in southwestern France, a medieval city with beautiful outer walls. The museum houses hideous instruments, which those “men of God” employed to torture Albigenses and other religious dissidents. I cannot forget the rack that stretched and broke those people’s bodies, the pulleys that hoisted them up by their wrists or ankles, the spikes that poked into their eyes and private parts, or the texts that drily detailed how every piece of equipment was used.

V

In our makeup, there is a strange deficiency that can cause us to withhold our compassion from those whose thinking differs too much from our own. For far too many, their love or hate is not a spontaneous, individual thing—but is defined for them, often by a few leaders, as part of their group identity. They care for those who belong to their own nation, church, or ethnic group but are indifferent or hostile to those who do not. In this way, others can be labeled and treated as potential enemies: Japanese Americans, Blacks, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and so on. What interests us here is not simply these atrocities themselves, but the sick mentality that produces and accompanies them; for we believe that ideological and religious murder results from more than natural though distressing human traits, as stimulated by misguided enthusiasts. Intrinsicly people are not that bad.

We think such actions are also prompted by the archfiend Lucifer, who instigates all cruelty. Of him the Lord said that he had been “a murderer from the beginning” and was the father of those who exterminate their fellow human beings (John 8:44). And Jesus was speaking to and about the religious leaders of God’s own “church” that were plotting his death! The Greek original uses the word ἀνθρωποκτονος (anthrōpoktonos), which means a “homicide,” a “killer of people”—one of Satan’s favorite roles through the ages.

In relation to the life of Christ, Ellen White explains this activity as follows: “In an unpitying confederacy, evil men and evil angels arrayed themselves against the Prince of Peace. His every word and act revealed divine compassion, and His unlikeness to the world provoked the bitterest hostility.” The same, she says, is true of the Lord’s followers: “In all ages Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has

tortured them and put them to death, but in dying they became conquerors.”³⁶

VI

How terrible to think that our planet has for millennia been the stamping ground of a powerful, malignant alien, with human as well as extraterrestrial collaborators, whose chief delight is to hurt and warp, or even wipe out people wherever he can: in private tragedies, national disasters, and innumerable wars!

Perhaps not strangely, the devil has been the greatest inventor of religions. He has a special love for theology, when he can dissociate it from the life one is supposed to lead and use it as an instrument of suffering and death, by turning dedicated believers against one another. On this subject, Ellen White in *The Desire of Ages*, her masterpiece about the life of Christ, remarked perceptively:

“In all human experience a theoretical knowledge of the truth has been proved to be insufficient for the saving of the soul. It does not bring forth the fruits of righteousness. A jealous regard for what is termed theological truth often accompanies a hatred of genuine truth as made manifest in life. The darkest chapters of history are burdened with the record of crimes committed by bigoted religionists.”³⁷

We are tempted to add that if God did not need religion, he would be against it, since it brings out not only the best, but sometimes also the worst in people. Ideas divorced from goodness and love can be dangerous, and ideas that require the ill-treatment or destruction of others simply because they disagree with us are evil.

VII

In 1996, toward the end of his life, Pope John Paul II proposed a dramatic plan for the year 2000 Catholic jubilee. He would ask forgiveness for “all the forms of violence that have been perpetrated in the name of the faith . . . the wars of religion, the inquisitorial tribunals, and other ways of violating the rights of the individual.”³⁸

What a splendid idea! According to two international journalists, Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, this apology was going to be quite specific. The pope was “ready to confess the guilt of the Catholic Church for burning at the stake men such as the great Bohemian religious leader Jan Hus (d. 1415), a forerunner of the Protestant Reformation, or the Florentine friar Girolamo Savonarola (d. 1498), who attacked the luxurious and anti-Christian lifestyle of the Renaissance pope Leo X.”³⁹ When we first became aware of this plan, we applauded the elderly pontiff’s noble intentions, yet we wondered how much the Vatican would be willing to concede. Would it really allow him to repent for the horrible deeds of the Inquisition as well as anti-Semitism? There was widespread opposition to this idea among the Cardinals.⁴⁰

Such an apology would also need to repudiate two great Catholic saints, Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, for making the

killing of heretics a doctrine. At the same time, it would constitute a condemnation of all popes who ordered religious atrocities in the past, with the further implication that they were not infallible. It would also have to extend into the present and be reinforced by meaningful steps to stop all contemporary persecutions.

We were frankly skeptical. Though the pontiff is supposedly an absolute monarch and directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, he cannot simply speak or act on behalf of the Roman Church without consulting other powerful figures in the Vatican. At any given time, he—and they—support a common policy and Canon Law.

It can be dangerous for popes to act against the traditional interests of their church or certain groups within it. Through the centuries, uncooperative pontiffs have at times been toppled, occasionally in the public eye, more often by silent assassination. The killing of a pope is called the Italian Solution. It is possible, even probable, that this is what happened to Karol Wojtyła's predecessor.

In late September 1978, a group of powerful ecclesiastics and financiers were terrified by the news that John Paul I was planning a general cleanup of Vatican affairs. He was greatly concerned about irregularities involving his senior clergy, some of whom were Masons, contrary to the rules of their church. Especially troublesome were criminal acts affecting the papacy's vast financial empire, centered in the Istituto per le Opere di Religione, that is, the Vatican Bank. It had, among other things, been laundering money for the Mafia. To this end, the pope was planning senior personnel changes, which he discussed with Cardinal Jean Villot, his Secretary of State. The replacements were to include Bishop Paul Casimir Marcinkus, president of the Vatican Bank, and Villot himself. The pope made notes to that effect. Their discussion ended at 7:30 p.m. on the evening of 28 September.

The next morning, the pope was discovered dead in his bedroom under very suspicious circumstances.⁴¹

Various writers have claimed that John Paul I, a righteous man, was poisoned, after a pontificate of only thirty-three days. Delving into the complexities of the case, David A. Yallop has devoted an entire book to the subject, especially as it affected the Vatican Bank. He tells how both the general public and the news media demanded an autopsy. But this had been rendered impossible by the swift embalming of the body, within twelve hours of its discovery. Normally, those who do this work begin by draining it of blood. But, "at the Vatican's insistence," this was not done, "nor were any organs removed."⁴²

We are not suggesting that John Paul II was threatened with the Italian Solution, but he was certainly pressurized into moderating his words; his eventual performance fell far short of what he had intended or we had been led to expect.

He apologized on 12 March 2000, in a "public act of repentance solemnly woven into the liturgy of Sunday Mass inside St. Peter's Basilica."⁴³ He did not, however, refer to Jan Hus, Savonarola, or any other martyr by name. He also refrained from mentioning the

Inquisition or any specific dignitary of the church. The entire apology was couched in generalities. The opponents of his original idea had prevailed! Karol Wojtyla could not express what really lay in his heart. Instead, he had become just the mouthpiece of the hierarchy. In the background, according to Alessandra Stanley, was “a dense 31-page treatise by the International Theological Commission, which, with Vatican oversight, ground out the theological precedents and also the limits to the apology.”

One of its concerns had been “whether it is fair for today’s church to condemn acts by previous generations made in good if misguided faith.”⁴⁴ In other words, the Roman Church could not really distance itself from its blood-stained past.

The pontiff’s vagueness and the lack of specific names disappointed many. Jews were incensed because the pope’s confession had failed to mention Pope Pius XII, who could and should have condemned the Holocaust. Other criticism was from within the Catholic Church itself: “The document should have put it in bold print that ‘children of the church’ includes popes, cardinals and clergy, and not just people in the pews,” the Rev. Thomas Reeves, editor of the Jesuit magazine *America*, commented. “The pope had a great idea that some in the Vatican are obscuring with a fog machine.”⁴⁵ This reaction is significant, since the Society of Jesus was founded especially to safeguard the interests of the pontiffs.

Like the Jews, we would have liked to see specific references to earlier twentieth-century as well as contemporary situations. Pius XII was the pope of not one but of two holocausts. The first was the well-known and notorious murder of six million Jews. There was, however, also a second genocide, the mass liquidation in World War II of Serbs for refusing to join the Roman Church. Supervised by Hitler’s and Mussolini’s armies, the Croats had set up a Catholic state, under its Poglavnik, Anté Pavelić. Also implicated was the Catholic archbishop of Yugoslavia.

VIII

Michael de Semlyen paints a horrific picture of what happened. “During Pavelic’s four-year reign, a Roman Catholic Prelate, Archbishop Alois Stepinac, pursued a ‘convert or die’ policy among the 900,000 Eastern Orthodox Serbs, Jews and others in Croatia. 200,000 were converted; 700,000, who chose to die, were tortured, burned, buried alive or shot, after digging their own graves. This appalling persecution carried out by the Ustashis included many of the worst atrocities of the War; certainly the mutilations were horrific, the savagery terrible.”⁴⁶

Edmond Paris states that after the Jews and Serbs had been outlawed, “Whole villages, even whole regions were systematically wiped out . . .”⁴⁷

What was the bond between the Croatian dictator and the archbishop? Brian Hall, who visited Yugoslavia in 1994, has thrown some light on this question: “Inside the cathedral [St. Catherine in

Zagreb] I came across a bas relief by Ivan Meštrović of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, who had been Archbishop of Zagreb during the Ustasha regime. He had proclaimed the foundation of the Independent State of Croatia from the pulpit of this very cathedral on Easter Day 1941. Throughout the war he gave his public support to the Ustashes, referred to Ante Pavelić as 'our glorious leader' and disingenuously welcomed, as a wholly coincidental working of God's grace in the hearts of the Serbs, the suddenly high number of conversions of the Orthodox to Catholicism on Croatian territory, which he estimated at 240,000. (Mass conversions were held with armed Ustashes present. Jews were not allowed to convert; as neither were most intellectuals, students, priests or village leaders. Their conversions were considered 'insincere,' and they were shot instead.)"⁴⁸

Today the Croats pooh-pooh the statistics of Serbs eliminated, but during those heady days their fathers and grandfathers boastfully inflated them. Let us therefore quote Hermann Neubacher, Hitler's representative in the Balkans, who later reported: "When leading Ustashi state that one million of Orthodox Serbs were slaughtered, this, in my opinion, is a boasting exaggeration. On the basis of reports I received, I estimated that three quarters of a million defenseless people were slaughtered."⁴⁹ Senior Nazis have been guilty of many things, but not of poor arithmetic; and this one had no motive for lying. We can accept his figure of 750,000 Orthodox Serbs that were martyred for their faith.

As a mass murderer, Anté Pavelić was comparable to Pol Pot of Cambodia and Hitler himself, though even the führer "was concerned about these numbers, saying to Neubacher, 'I also told the Poglavnik that it is not so simple to annihilate such a minority, it is too large.'"⁵⁰

What makes those wartime atrocities particularly loathsome was the involvement of the Catholic clergy. "Many of the Ustashi officers were priests or friars sworn to fight 'with dagger or gun', for the 'triumph of Christ and Croatia.'" They "supervised concentration camps and organised the torture of many of the victims."⁵¹ De Semlyen maintains that in its ferocity and for the sheer number of people killed in just four years, this persecution was more hideous than the one under the Spanish inquisitor Torquemada (1420-98) or during the St. Bartholomew Massacre of sixteenth-century France.⁵²

Nowadays the Vatican prefers not to discuss the genocide of the Serbs; it especially disputes the contention that Archbishop Stepinac was involved. It is true that he "belatedly criticized the government in 1943 for policies that had taken place for several years;"⁵³ but the scornful Serbs, who lost relatives and fellow religionists in that holocaust, will never accept the idea of his lily-white innocence.

After the war, "Stepinac who had, as he said, a 'clear conscience,' stayed in Zagreb where he was tried in 1946. Condemned to hard labour, he was in fact only made to reside in his native village. The penance was easy to bear, as we can see, but the Church needs martyrs. The archbishop of Zagreb was then made a member of the

holy cohort, in his lifetime, by Pius XII who hastened to confer on him the title of 'Cardinal', in recognition of 'his apostolate which displays the purest brightness.'⁵⁴

When that pope extended this accolade in 1953, President Tito, a Croat, was furious: "Permit me to say something about the propaganda of the Vatican . . . The Vatican is full of resentment against our socialist country, it hates and does everything possible against us. It has now done us the offense of nominating as cardinal the war criminal, Stepinac. With this act it has offended our entire country. Are there, perhaps, no other bishops in Yugoslavia? There are, but this is a political bishop."⁵⁵

In the light of the pontifical apology, we think the papacy should at least have condemned the evils perpetrated by the Croatian Catholic state not so long ago, and in particular its killer monks and priests. It also needs to be more careful about whom it wants to portray as saints.

But if the Vatican's words are vague, its actions are eloquent. At the very time when John Paul II was apologizing to the Jews in Israel, his church was going ahead with plans to canonize Pius XII. This, however, has been stalled, if only temporarily. As for Yugoslavia, the pontiff committed himself. On 3 October 1998 (amid the tumult of the NATO war against the Serbs), he was in Marija Bistrica, Croatia, where he beatified Stepinac, as a martyr to "the atrocities of the Communist system."⁵⁶ This means that at some future time the archbishop will probably be declared a saint.

IX

To make its apology of the year 2000 more relevant, the Roman Church should also distance itself from other atrocities in the name of religion. We especially recommend a conciliatory statement about Ulster. For centuries, the pontiffs have regarded themselves as the feudal overlords of Ireland and in the twentieth century hoped to subjugate the Protestant North to the Catholic South. Their involvement has not been confined to wishes. For instance, the Papacy actively supported the Easter Rebellion of 1916 in Dublin, even fostering military action. This eventually resulted in the Irish Free State and later the Republic of Eire. The Vatican denied such participation, but in 1933 Eamon De Valera, the Prime Minister and president of Sinn Fein, published the details in the Irish press. On Ascension Thursday, 1933, G. N. Count Plunkett confirmed them. He had been the rebels' envoy and was received by the pope himself.⁵⁷

Since then, the Roman Church tolerated the Catholic terrorists on that green but blood-stained island. It should have roundly condemned their actions as unchristian. It also needs to acknowledge the right of Ulster Protestants to freedom from Catholic domination within the larger context of Ireland.

Above all, the pontiff should speak out against the persecution of Protestants in Latin America. A recent instance concerns the Maya Indians in the Chiapas province of southern Mexico.

In late February 1997, the *Adventist Review* reported their sufferings: “There are local controlling organizations that perceive Seventh-day Adventists as a defiant religious group. This mentality has brought about religious persecution in several areas of south Mexico.” What especially seemed to trouble the perpetrators was the numbers and the rapid increase of these 335,000 Protestants, 14,000 members being added in a single month.⁵⁸

In a follow-up article, the *Review* elaborated: “In Chiapas Adventists are being threatened, raped, kidnapped, tortured, driven from their homes and crops, and shot, bludgeoned, and hacked to death.”⁵⁹ Part of the motivation was political, because these Christians refused to side with the guerillas against their government; therefore, the rebels attacked them in anger. “But there is evidence that religious factors play a part. Adventists are suffering and dying because of their convictions.”⁶⁰ Indeed; they are martyrs of the Lord Jesus Christ. How we admire them, and how splendidly their blood—like that of the early Christians—has been the seed of the gospel!

By mid-1998, the Adventists were still the “fastest-growing denomination in southern Mexico,” with one in every thirty-four people belonging to it.⁶¹ Three years later, on 3 February 2000, another report from Chiapas in the Adventist News Network revealed that both the large-scale conversions to this Protestant church and violence against its members were continuing. On Sunday, 23 January, of that year, more than 3,600 people were baptized in the sea off Puerto Madero, Chiapas, with thirty-three pastors officiating. These conversions followed a weeklong evangelistic campaign.

In the neighboring Plan de Ayala, the General Assembly, a local governing body, refused permission for the town’s surviving Adventists to build a church. It threatened to force them out of the village. In the preceding years of conflict, since 1994, at least twenty Adventist families had left after ten of their homes were burnt down.⁶²

Unlike Associated Press in May 2000, the *Review* reports did not refer to the possible role of Samuel Ruiz in Chiapas, where he had been bishop for forty years until the beginning of that month. In all this time, he was outspoken in defending Indian rights, which was no doubt virtuous of him. He even blended “prehistoric texts like the Maya book of Chilam Bilam and the Popol Vuh” into Catholic worship services. According to government and other critics, however, he may also have had links with the leftist Zapatista National Liberation Army.

All the same, we wonder whether anything much has happened to him. Certainly, his syncretism as well as his political activism was nothing new for either Latin America or the papacy.

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., America’s oldest Catholic and Jesuit institution of higher learning, has perceptive things to say about the complicated and varied relationship between the Mexican state and the Church of Rome. Here are a few of its statements to ponder. First, “the Mexican Revolution of 1910 brought formal freedom of religion, securing rights for minority faiths.” It also

introduced anticlerical measures aimed at curbing the power of the priests. These policies, however, led to “a series of religious civil wars in the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1940s, the government and the Catholic Church settled for the non-enforcement of most of these provisions.” But in 1992 negotiations with the Vatican and other religious groups resulted in greater freedom for the churches. “The constitution was amended again in 2001 to explicitly ban discrimination based on religious affiliation.”⁶³

The persecution of Adventists in Chiapas has greatly abated, partly owing to this, but most probably also for another reason: publicity, which the Mexican authorities have found embarrassing. We touch on a few highlights to illustrate this idea.

First, “in 2008 Adventist News Network visited congregations whose neighbors wouldn’t allow construction of permitted church buildings. In other areas of the state, property was sometimes destroyed or Protestant believers imprisoned for converting from the dominant faith [Catholicism].”

Then, ‘in 2011, IRLA [the International Religious Liberty Association] held a forum in Chiapas that brought together 600 people, including pastors, lay members, and government officials. Federal and state officials at the forum said that laws had recently been enacted to guarantee religious freedom and that full recognition and implementation were soon to come.”

Subsequently, in 2013, “crowds marched through the streets of Tuxtla Gutiérrez on March 24 . . . to celebrate and thank government leaders for their increasing commitment to religious freedom in the state of Chiapas.” Six days later, 25,000 people attended a festival of “Friendship and Religious Freedom” at the Manuel Rayna Stadium in the same city on Saturday, 30 March. Among the Adventist dignitaries who attended, were John Graz, IRLA’s secretary general, and Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The latter publicly thanked the mayor of Tuxtla Gutiérrez “for allowing event organizers to facilitate the ceremony in the city.” He also said: “We are so grateful to the authorities of the government and all peoples of good will for the religious freedom you enjoy,” to which he added: “God asks us not only in Chiapas but also around the world to promote and foster freedom of conscience.”

These events were related in the *Adventist Review* of 25 April 2013.⁶⁴ We trust that this situation will stabilize and also that Mexico will surmount the many difficulties which currently beset it.

X

The pope’s apology has reminded some people of a statement by Ellen White in 1888: “The Roman Church now presents a fair front to the world, covering with apologies her record of horrible cruelties. She has clothed herself in Christlike garments; but she is unchanged.”⁶⁵ How feasible is it to relate the words of John Paul II to this passage?

It forms part of Ellen White’s predictions about a national Sunday law in the United States, demanded by Protestants in league with the Catholic Church, that will unleash the horrors of religious persecution against those who observe the seventh-day Sabbath. Future events will vindicate or refute what she wrote so many years ago. At present,

however, we find it hard to fault her—against the background presented above as well as certain statements in *Dies Domini*, John Paul II's 1998 Encyclical about Sundaykeeping.

He wrote, "In this matter, my predecessor Pope Leo XIII [1878-1903] in his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* spoke of Sunday rest as a worker's right which the State must guarantee." But this was not only the wish of a pontiff that lived and died a century ago; it is also a thinly veiled instruction from John Paul II himself. Only two years before his apology in St. Peter's Basilica, he wrote, "Therefore, also in the particular circumstances of our own time, Christians will naturally strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy."⁶⁶

Over the centuries, many people have been beaten up, imprisoned, even killed for breaking Sunday laws—not only in Catholic, but also in some Protestant countries. That final, mild-sounding sentence of the pope is actually an ominous demand, especially if read with *Ad Tuendam Fidem* ("For a Secure Faith"), another recent apostolic letter by John Paul II. According to Norman R. Gulley, this one preceded *Dies Domini* by a mere three days.

Ad Tuendam Fidem makes additions to the canon law, under which the Roman Church is governed. The following paragraphs are both from Canon 1436:

"Whoever denies a truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or who calls into doubt, or who totally repudiates the Christian faith, and does not retract after having been legitimately warned, is to be punished as a heretic or an apostate with a major excommunication (par. 1) . . .

"Whoever obstinately rejects a teaching that the Roman Pontiff or the College of Bishops, exercising the authentic Magisterium, have set forth to be held definitively or who affirms what they have condemned as erroneous, and does not retract after having been legitimately warned, is to be punished with an appropriate penalty" (par. 2).⁶⁷

"Heretic . . . apostate . . . does not retract . . . is to be punished . . . penalty"! These are words we would have associated with Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, or the Council of Trent, not with a seemingly mild, apologetic, and peaceful Karol Wojtyla. They have a distinctly medieval ring about them; yet they originated in the mind of a twentieth-century pope who was, at least officially, their author.

This is most instructive. Whatever the pontiff may say for public, ecumenical consumption, Canon Law is still draconian, the Roman Church is in essentials still what it has always been, Catholicism still regards conscientious Protestants as heretics, and the papacy still insists that it alone has the right to define what everybody in the world must believe. It also retains the right to punish dissenters.

In the specific case of *Dies Domini*, it throws down the gauntlet to all who prefer to believe the Bible and keep the seventh-day Sabbath while they reject the pontiff's insistence on Sundaykeeping by his ecclesiastical authority.

As previous chapters have shown, the first phase of the Beast's career as a persecuting power lasted for 1260 years. That terrible, long

period ended in 1798, when revolutionary France tried to abolish the papacy, inflicting a mortal wound, as prophecy had foretold. *Dies Domini* appeared in 1998, which is, so to speak, the bicentennial of that event. After two hundred years, the papacy has now largely, if not completely, recovered and compensated for its losses; it has healed up. The Vatican is again a ecclesiastic superpower; already we can see the rest of the prediction being fulfilled: “and all the world wondered after the beast” (Rev. 13: 3).

What, under the blue laws that John Paul II demanded, would happen to dissenters like Orthodox Jews, Seventh-day Adventists, or Moslems? They all observe another day. Clearly, if they do not toe the line and “keep Sunday holy,” the courts and the police would be called upon to act against them. This fills one with foreboding; unpleasant images arise in the mind of Waco—and of the not so distant past, when people were still legally persecuted in America.

If the pope’s desire for Sunday legislation is implemented, some of the very evils for which he has so recently asked forgiveness are bound to recur. People would suffer pain, perhaps even death—with bloodguilt for those who brought the persecution on them. If so, we wonder how much of it would be charged to Karol Wojtyła’s personal account in the Domsday Book, which the Judge of all the earth will open on the final day?

XI

To minimize the effects of pious intolerance and to prevent ecclesiastical crimes against humanity, the only effective plan is the one enshrined in the American Constitution: to maintain, at all times, a legal separation between the state and all religious bodies. In this way, idealists can thrive, while dissenters are protected against them.

The matter goes beyond the interests of religious people; it concerns the very survival of what Allan Bloom has called “the rational quest for the good life according to nature,” on which democracy is based.⁶⁸ This “good life” has manifested itself in various ways, including the prosperity that characterizes many middle-class households in America and without which its ascendancy in the world could not exist.

During the early days of the Second World War, Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested that these factors are interrelated when he said the United States “should help build a world in which the four freedoms prevailed: the freedom of speech and religion, and the freedoms from want and fear.”⁶⁹

Any device that forcibly shackles the human conscience to a particular creed perverts the power of reason and stunts the mind. One result is mental and material backwardness, since the pursuit of wealth—like that of spiritual happiness—is curtailed when a people loses its liberty. We agree with Max Eastman that “any state religion, as all the great liberals have pointed out, is death to human freedom. The separation of church and state is one of the main measures of

protection against tyranny.”⁷⁰

Laws are necessary to safeguard people’s right to think, decide, and worship (or not to worship) as they alone shall decide. But some that acknowledge this in relation to Catholic lands, with their history of religious intolerance, may question whether Protestant countries have the same need. And yet they do, as even the history of America has amply demonstrated.

XII

At first, this country was not really the land of the free, for religious persecution soon established itself, even though the Separatists among the Pilgrim Fathers had fled to these shores from oppression unleashed by the Church of England.

Following the bad example of Britain, Protestants made laws to establish their own churches. Boston became a second Geneva, the center of a theocracy. A prominent feature in several colonies was Sunday laws, though intolerance was not by any means confined to this area of theology. Dissenters were punished, often very harshly. As George E. Vandeman points out, “Unbelief was a crime. Faith was enforced by law. Believe it or not, certain religious offenses were even punishable by death.”⁷¹

According to Clifford Goldstein, Quakers had an especially bad time of it. The Baptists also suffered much; they “were beaten, exiled, mobbed, fined, and jailed, most often for refusal to obtain a license to preach, refusal to attend established churches, or refusal to pay taxes to established religion.”⁷² That was mostly in the seventeen hundreds.

But religious persecution in America, though diminished, continued sporadically into the eighteenth, the nineteenth, and even the twentieth century. It became quite vigorous in the decade before the year 1900. Then, however, it no longer targeted Quakers and Baptists, but those who failed to heed existing blue laws, which required rest on Sunday. Hardest hit were the Seventh-day Adventists.

Church historian John N. Loughborough—a contemporary, who had lived through that time and wrote about it in 1905—amongst others recorded the following details:

“Before me is a list of one hundred and sixteen arrests of Seventh-day Adventists in America, from the year 1878 to March, 1896. Of these, one hundred and nine were convicted. Many of these have been imprisoned from twenty to sixty days, and about a dozen of them were compelled to work in the ‘chain gang’ with murderers, thieves, and the worst sort of criminals. In every case they were admitted, by those imposing sentence upon them, to be the best of citizens.”⁷³

Several examples of prosecution and punishment are also given in *Dateline Sunday, U.S.A.* by Warren L. Johns, a graduate in church history and a Doctor of Law, who practiced before the United States Supreme Court. Quoting from the *American State Papers*, p. 562, he noted that “During the years 1895 and 1896 alone, ‘no less than seventy-six Seventh-day Adventists were prosecuted in the United States and Canada under existing Sunday laws. Of these twenty-eight

served terms of varying lengths in jails, chain gangs, etc., aggregating 1,144 days.”⁷⁴

Johns’s book contains an old photograph showing nine Seventh-day Adventists, including their minister, in a chain gang of Rhea County, Tennessee.⁷⁵ Surveying a somewhat longer period, George R. Knight asserts that scores of them went to prison.⁷⁶

How was this possible? Surely, they were protected by the First Amendment! But they were not, for it is a Federal statute; therefore, when they wished to do so, the States could still defiantly implement religious laws and punish those who broke them.

Intolerance toward Seventh-day Adventists resurfaced badly during the First World War, because conscripted young men insisted on observing the Sabbath on Saturdays. Frederick C. Gilbert, a converted Jew and Christian minister, recounts their sufferings. More than a hundred were court-martialed. “Over thirty were sentenced to Fort Leavenworth, as military prisoners, whose sentences ranged from ten to fifty years of imprisonment at hard work.”⁷⁷

At that place, abominable treatment awaited them:

The military prison officials endeavored to compel our young men to work on Sabbath at ordinary labor crushing stones. Of course, they could no more do this kind of labor in prison than they could do it out of prison in the military camps. The prison officials endeavored to coerce them by meting dire punishments upon them. For refusing to work on the Sabbath, they were deprived of their daily rations and given only a few slices of bread and water, and the amount of stone they were to crush was greatly increased per day, and at night they were confined to underground dungeons and strapped on bare hard wood planks for their beds, and exposed to the dampness and the cold. This punishment lasted for two weeks. If they refused to work the second time upon the Sabbath day, they were put upon still smaller rations, and their hands were handcuffed behind their backs around the prison bars of their cells on a level almost with their shoulders, and in this awkward standing position without any relief they were compelled to stand for nine hours each day. Others were confined in dirty cells for months where they were unable to stand upright or lie down without being cramped for room.⁷⁸

Gilbert also relates, however, that most of these wrongs were ended and redressed, when Warren G. Harding (1865-1923) intervened.

“We are glad to report, however, that through the friendly assistance of Senator Harding, now president of the United States, in this matter, who made two personal visits to Secretary Baker, and laid our grievances before him, we obtained an immediate release not only of our young men, but of all military prisoners from this dastardly and cruel mode of punishment, but also an exemption from Sabbath labor in prison for our boys, and in time the release of our boys from prison parole, which finally was made permanent.”⁷⁹

Furthermore, the Religious Liberty Department of their church

acquired “special exemptions from Sabbath labor in more than twenty military camps in the United States. The secretary on several occasions defended our young men before the military courts when they were court-martialled. At other times he was put on the witness stand as the chief witness in their behalf, and to answer for the denominational attitude toward military matters. On three different occasions the judge advocate of one of the army camps, put forth a supreme effort to convict the secretary under the espionage act and give him a twenty years’ sentence, but the ruse did not work.”⁸⁰

Harding’s presidency lasted for fewer than two and a half years and was beclouded by scandals. The most serious of these concerned subordinates, especially over a bribe from oil interests to his secretary of the interior, Albert B. Fall. Although he was “personally free from corruption, Harding had imprudently appointed and trusted corrupt men whose betrayal of his trust broke his spirit and doubtless contributed to his untimely death.”⁸¹ Especially this error of judgment has overshadowed his achievements.

We therefore take pleasure in honoring his memory for intervening on behalf of those persecuted young men, at a time when this would undoubtedly have undermined his popularity with many voters, whom the spirit of war had made cruel and unreasonable—as it often does. Whatever his blemishes, Warren G. Harding was an active champion of religious liberty, although in a sense he was also repaying a debt he owed to their church. “In 1889, at age 24, he suffered from exhaustion and nervous fatigue. He spent several weeks at the Battle Creek Sanitarium to regain his strength and ultimately made five visits over 14 years.”⁸² While being treated at that Seventh-day Adventist institution, he was no doubt favorably impressed with their lifestyle and also noted their ideas about religious liberty.

On a more diminished scale, faith-related persecution in America continued sporadically for several more decades. Religious freedom ultimately prevailed, through the full implementation of the Fourteenth Amendment and important decisions by the United States Supreme Court.

As for Harding, he was not only right-minded in this vital area but also a compassionate man. While others saw no discrepancy between professing Christianity and oppressing minorities or grinding the faces of poor, exploited workers, he championed their cause. Of this, John Kenneth Galbraith, the eminent economist, has recorded another example:

“In the early twenties the steel industry was still working a twelve-hour day and, in some jobs, a seven-day week. (Every two weeks when the shift changed, a man worked twice around the clock.) Workers lacked the organization or the power to deal with conditions like this; the twelve-hour day was, in fact, ended as the result of personal pressure by President Harding on the steel companies, particularly on Judge Elbert H. Gary, head of the United States Steel Corporation.”⁸³

This, too, was surely a contribution of monumental proportions toward building a better America.

In these ways, Harding belonged to his country’s political nobility,

though he has often been ranked among the worst of the country's presidents. We wonder what Thomas Jefferson, a great champion of religious liberty and with his own ideas about greatness in an American, would have thought of him. Or how Heaven has evaluated these aspects of Harding's career.

XIII

The persecution of Christians by Christians with the backing of civil legislation began in Constantine's time and persisted through the ages, down to the present. Pagan Rome was converted and amalgamated with the most influential part of the church, and so the Beast of Dan. 7:19, 23 continued its persecutions, treading underfoot and breaking to pieces the children of God, who would thenceforth often be called *heretics*: Donatists, Pelagians, and many others. On earth, not only their bodies but also their reputations were murdered, though the Bible calls them the "saints of the most High" (vs. 27).

But did many of these people not believe in false, that is, unscriptural, doctrines? Well, some may have done this, but so have their persecutors. That, however, is not the paramount issue. God is not a narrow-minded and coldhearted theologian, but—as our incarnate Lord insisted on calling him—the Heavenly Father of every human being on this planet; he loved us all, before we ever existed or knew about him.

Such a Being will not in the slightest tolerate the inhumanity of man toward man in the name of doctrinal orthodoxy. Surely, as Ellen White says, "Nothing can be more offensive to God than for men, through religious bigotry, to bring suffering upon those who are the purchase of the Saviour's blood."⁸⁴

All persecutors would do well to note the following words of Jesus: "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7:2). This is one of the basic principles that apply in the tribunal of our Lord. Unrepentant evildoers, who loved to use fire for their atrocities (including the devil himself), will be committed to the fire.

There is soon to be a startling reversal of roles. Judgment will be pronounced in favor of the persecuted, and against their great oppressor, the Beast and its Little Horn (Dan. 7:22, 26). According to Rev. 20:4, the slaughtered saints and those who opposed the Antichrist are even to become co-judges with the Lord. Imagine the dismay and horror of an inquisitor, brought back to life in the resurrection of the damned, to discover that the heretics whom he tormented have been transformed into his judges.

But does anybody who ill-treats or kills a fellow human deserve to be punished, if such an act is performed with what seems to be a good intention? As we have noted, a persecutor may, like Hitler, believe that he is doing the will of God and promoting social welfare.

Though this is not an easy issue to deal with, there can be no excuse for cruelty. Even when the persecutor's mind informs him that brutal means can serve some wonderful end, the unseared

conscience—dimly remembering the Lord's express commands—must recoil from inflicting pain and religious murder. But the problem is that the conscience can be suppressed and later cease functioning.

N. P. van Wyk Louw, the greatest Afrikaans poet and a philosopher, wrote a dramatic monologue of an old-fashioned inquisitor during the Renaissance. The title of this brilliant poem, "Die hond van God" (the dog of God), refers to the word play that medieval wits applied to the Latin name of the Dominican order, which provided these pious torturers: *Dominicani*, *Domini cani* = "the Lord's dogs."

What the inquisitor of the poem dreads most is his own suspicion that he may be serving, not a loving God, but a very evil being. Yet he resists the idea, refusing to see that it has welled up from something wholesome in his humanity; therefore, through an act of the will, he suppresses the prompting of his conscience, rejecting it as just another temptation. In the end, he practically hallucinates, rejoicing in the salvation of the heretic whom he has—through brainwashing and torture—"persuaded" to give up his unorthodox beliefs. Before the victim can change his mind, he is quickly handed over to the secular executioner and burned to save his soul.⁸⁵

Like Saul of Tarsus, whose religion also turned him into a persecutor, the inquisitor was kicking against the pricks (Acts 9:5; 26:14); for somewhere in the recesses of his mind he knew he was doing wrong, however much he rationalized it. The future apostle also refused to face the implications of his deeds, until he met Jesus on the Damascus road.

Eric Hoffer has provided us with an excellent analysis of the hideous pitfall into which very many persecutors have rushed: "The most effective way to silence our guilty conscience is to convince ourselves and others that those we have sinned against are indeed depraved creatures, deserving every punishment, even extermination. We cannot pity those we have wronged, nor can we be indifferent toward them. We must hate and persecute them or else leave open the door to self-contempt."⁸⁶

The fundamental error of all Christian persecutors is that they have forgotten what their religion is supposed to be based on: love, not only for the Lord in heaven, but also for every human being on earth. As the beloved apostle points out, "If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20, RSV). Jesus insisted that this love should include one's enemies (Matt. 5:44).

Our Lord, himself the victim of ecclesiastical murder by those who were heading God's official Judaic "church," foretold that many who followed him truly—his fellow heretics—would share his fate. Indeed, a time would come when "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Matt. 24:9).

XIV

This prophecy was partially fulfilled in early Christian times by the Roman Empire and in the medieval period by the Western nations.

But it was not a universal hatred, being largely confined to Europe and the Middle East. One day, however, Satan will seduce *all* nations into joining his war on the Lord's remnant, "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17).

The Redeemer also identified the basic reason for this animosity, at least on the part of human beings: "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, *because they have not known the Father, nor me*. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." (John 16:2-4, emphasis added)

Jesus did not, however, suggest they could commit these awful crimes with impunity. On the contrary, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). And so religious and ideological persecutors, who indulge in what is perhaps the most horrible activity on this planet, cannot expect to be treated leniently in the final judgment. This applies to such evildoers from every religion on earth, but particularly to all the "people of the book": Jewish, Moslem, Catholic, and Protestant alike, for these should have known better.

Over the centuries, so many have oppressed and tortured their fellow Christians, imagining that they were pleasing God, exactly as our Lord foretold. Often they have shown a fondness for feeding people to the fire. How will they fare at last when they are reminded of what the Saviour said, and find that for their allegedly pious deeds they themselves must face the flame?

Appendix:

Literature and the Bible

I

Scholars who favor the historical-critical school reject the method of comparing Scripture with Scripture. They insist that a Biblical passage primarily reflects the time, the environment, and circumstances of its authors. These, they maintain, were not really concerned with the distant future. Therefore, the Bible is not a single book but a series of writings linked only indirectly because of a common culture. Hence the Scriptures are primarily the word of man and not of God. To link them directly with other pieces written centuries earlier or later is to take them out of their natural context.

This is, however, a simplistic view that betrays a fundamental lack of knowledge about how literature functions.

II

The writings that make up the Bible belong to different categories, technically known as genres. Much of it is narrative, that is, it has a story line. In reading such material, we often benefit by considering the historical and cultural background. But for many other passages, such as the Psalms, this is less useful; for they are poetry, transcending the concerns of time, place, and circumstance.

A really good poem excels precisely because it is able to survive its own time and original setting. Lyrical pieces by ancient Greeks and Romans such as Sappho (c. 600 B.C.) or Catullus (84-54 B.C.), the medieval Italian Dante (1265-1321), and the twentieth-century Irishman W. E. B. Yeats (1865-1939) can all still speak directly to present-day readers. T. S. Eliot, the greatest poet that America has produced as well as a first-rate literary critic, concurs: "What matters most, let us say, in reading an ode of Sappho, is not that I should imagine myself to be an island Greek of twenty-five hundred years ago; what matters is the experience which is the same for all human beings of different centuries and languages capable of enjoying poetry, the spark which can leap across those 2,500 years."¹ -

And the reason why it can is that no amount of history has been able to alter our basic human nature, as Edith Hamilton, a world-renowned Classical scholar, has also said: "Though the outside of human life changes much, the inside changes little."²

This is why, in some kinds of writing, the historical and cultural background does not matter all that much.

Yet this fact is apparently unknown to some scholars of the historical-critical school. They do not really see the Bible as the Word of God, but as a collection of human writings that fail to be a unity. They overemphasize the fact that its various authors wrote against different backgrounds, each with an intention of his own. For people

with such a focus, direct comparisons of Scripture with Scripture are problematic. This line of thinking is related to Higher Criticism and Classical Liberalism. This is how Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, a Ghanaian scholar, summarizes the underlying theology of the latter:

It “denies God’s supernatural intervention in the world; hence, it denies the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection, the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ, miracles, etc. *Because of classical liberalism’s antisupernatural assumptions, it cannot accept the Bible’s claim to be divinely inspired by God.* The Bible is ‘inspired’ in the sense that Shakespeare is inspired; it is an inspiring book that reflects the religious expressions of certain ancient people. All the miracles in the Bible are myths designed to teach truths.”³

To put it plainly, this is an agnostic or atheist approach to the Scriptures, since it leaves God out of the picture. We see this strikingly in the New Testament scholar, Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), who tried to debunk the life of Christ, maintaining that it did not take place as described in the New Testament. Instead, its main events “are derived from the mythology of Jewish apocalyptic and Hellenistic Gnosticism.” In 1941, he insisted on the reinterpretation of Christianity by “demythologizing” it.⁴ He has been most influential in undermining the religious faith of many people.

According to Gerhard Hasel, another German and a meticulous scholar (but one who did not become a doubting Thomas), Bultmann simply could not believe that Christ was physically resurrected from the dead, “no matter how many witnesses are cited.” Why? He had a preconceived, allegedly scientific idea that supernatural events are intrinsically impossible. Therefore, Bultmann’s bias made him reject any statement in the Bible that Jesus rose from the dead, because he thought such things just did not happen nowadays.⁵

But if there really is a personal God, if he is actually out there and has spoken to the world through the Bible, this marvelous old Book cannot be evaluated simply as the production of human authors. In it, Christians, Orthodox Jews, and Muslims detect the working of a divine mind, which transcends all earthly limitations.

III

Believing in the Lord’s existence, we have no problem with the idea that he used his human authors to transcend their limitations. He was also able to coordinate their efforts. That is one reason why, despite the great variety of material that constitutes the Bible, it is—in the final analysis—one Book. If this were not so, much of Scripture would be incomprehensible and Christianity a farce. Predicting the future would also be impossible.

The Apostle Peter made a far-reaching claim that prophecy “came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). That is why prophetic writers could deal with the distant future, whose events and ideas lay outside their cultural matrix. Sometimes they found puzzling things in the very text that God required them to create and yet would not

explain to them.

An instance of this is found in Dan. 12:4, 8, 9, where the aged prophet vainly tries to puzzle out his own predictions but is told, "Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." The reason for his confusion is not far to find. Benjamin G. Wilkinson explains it well: "For man to foretell in general terms with noteworthy accuracy some future situation, is a rare occurrence. To do this, is not prophecy, but human calculations. Bible predictions of future situations, however, are given milleniums in advance; they tell of peoples yet to arise and of events to come of which at the moment of the prophecy there was nothing in contemporaneous events to inspire the prediction. Only divine foreknowledge could do this."⁶

This is a factor with which liberal theology, being essentially Godless, cannot cope. Even well-meaning historical criticism, if overemphasized, is incompatible with prophecy. Since it primarily interprets any Scripture in terms of the time that produced it, it has an affinity with Preterism, a prophetic school that stresses the past and discounts the future. This can sometimes lead to peculiar conclusions.

For instance, Preterism teaches that the Antichristian beast in Revelation must be Nero, who, according to a legend during the final years of the first century, had not really died but would one day return to haunt the empire—much as some people in our time have refused to believe that Hitler is dead. According to Bernard McGinn, the Nero legends constitute "the central motif" of the book.⁷

Yet John wrote the Apocalypse after the death of that human monster. One wonders, therefore, why Christ would have his servant solemnly record a ridiculous prediction that "all the world" would follow Nero and that he would have power "over all kindreds, and tongues and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him." (Rev. 13:3, 7-8) But, presumably, the book was not really inspired by a power beyond its writer; he simply made it up! Besides, he was really getting on in years . . .

IV

Despite their talk of literary criticism, some Biblical scholars have been remarkably ignorant of what literature is about, as C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) has pointed out. We warmly recommend his brilliant essay, "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism."⁸

Lewis became the most famous twentieth-century convert from atheism, well known for writing "the most glittering religious apologetics of his time." His mind was powerful and precise, with a very wide scheme of reference; for "his books grew out of the collective memory of Western mankind."⁹

Apart from his personal piety, Lewis is remembered for solid learning in various languages and cultures, including ancient Greek and Latin. He had an excellent academic career at the two most prestigious universities in Britain, first as an Oxford don and then as professor of Medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge.

Lewis has hard things to say of Loisy, Schweitzer, Bultmann,

Tillich, Alex Vidler, and others like them. According to him, they “lack literary judgment” and are “imperceptive about the very quality of the texts they are reading.” Their problem, Lewis maintains, was a narrow over-specialization; such scholars may have spent a lifetime poring over parts of the Bible, but their “literary experiences of those texts lacks any standard of comparison such as can only grow from a wide and deep and genial experience of literature in general.” Bultmann and others “ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the old texts; the evidence is their obvious inability to read (in any sense worth discussing) the lines themselves. They claim to see fernseed and can’t see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight.”¹⁰

Some Biblical scholars just do not understand how literature functions. Many of them do not even grasp how the minds of secular authors work.

As already indicated, especially the great ones among these are *not* exclusively concerned with their own time; they constantly think of posterity, writing with an eye on the future. At the same time, they have an abiding sense of cultural traditions. That is, great writers are very knowledgeable about what the best authors have produced in other times and places.

The productions of literary giants survive their own space-time, because the human spirit is not limited by the passing fads and fancies of history. Outstanding works remain valid for the future, sometimes for ages to come. For instance, the Roman poet Horace knew and in exquisite Latin lines foretold how long his mighty verse would endure:

Exegi monumentum aere perennius
Regalique situ pyramidum altius,
Quod non imber edax non aquilo impotens
Possit diruere aut innumerabilis
Annorum series et fuga temporum.

(“I have completed a monument more lasting than bronze and more lofty than the royal memorial of the pyramids—a monument which no devouring rain, no violent northern blast can overthrow, or the innumerable succession of years or the flight of ages.”)¹¹ And twenty centuries have passed since then.

Partly inspired by Horace, Shakespeare also knew he was a transtemporal writer, though he realized that the Judgment Day would cancel his relevance:

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rime;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmear’d with sluttish time . . .
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.¹²

That was four hundred years ago, the end of the world has not yet come, and Shakespeare’s work lives on, as powerful as before.

Among lovers of literature it is taken for granted that first-rate authors are not simply preoccupied with everyday affairs, however absorbing these may sometimes be. They do not create for transient purposes, in contrast with many popular writers of the day.

This idea was already well expressed some two hundred years ago by Johann G. von Herder (1744-1803), the famous German critic, philosopher, and theologian who influenced Goethe. Herder maintained that “literature was the bridge of communication between men of different ages and tongues.”¹³

Sometimes this conception figures quite prominently. Saul Bellow, the Chicago novelist and playwright who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976,¹⁴ even comforts himself with it: “You do not always feel that you are writing for any of your contemporaries. It may well be that your true readers are not here as yet and that your books will cause them to materialize.”¹⁵

People are not, like lower animals, imprisoned in the physical here and now, or even the history of their ancestors. By reading, thinking, imagining, and the commingling of minds—whose background may differ vastly from their own—they are enabled mentally to travel back through space and time. They can even, tentatively, try to reach into the future.

This extends a human being’s life span, at least intellectually. About fifty years ago, I shocked a class of youngsters by announcing: “I am thousands of years old!” I said I was an ancient Israelite murmuring against Moses somewhere in the desert, but also Plato listening to Socrates, a Roman soldier standing by the cross, a peasant dying of plague in the Middle Ages, Columbus peering over breakers as they splashed and splashed onto an unknown island—and many, many more. Our species is able to live not only in history but also, when it wishes to, in the marvelous regions of the mind. We can even identify with good or evil people that existed long before us.

This is eminently true of writers, even secular ones. Is it so hard, then, to accept that it also applies to those who wrote the Bible? It was no problem for God, himself unhampered by space and time, to communicate across the centuries. He simply inspired, coordinated, and used skillful authors who were able to speak effectively to people “of different ages and tongues.”

Apart from a clear awareness of time and eternity in a general sense, great writers—including those who produced the Bible—also use allusive techniques to a remarkable extent. That is, they work within a tradition, well aware of and often referring to their predecessors. This is particularly noticeable in literatures that develop over many hundreds of years, such as those of Hebrew and Chinese.

The authors of the Bible reveal a wonderful ability to integrate their subject matter with what others have created before them; they did not write in isolation from one another, but as part of a highly developed literature, rich in allusions, recurrent symbols, and closely woven, interdependent patterns. Later writers often deliberately took over from earlier ones, and reused (in an ever more elaborated form) the same images, which therefore did not simply reflect the here and

now but long-range and eternal realities.

V

But does this mean that the Bible is a difficult book to read? Not at all. Much of it is simple, so that even a child can understand it, and all of it is rich and wonderful. Some parts, however, are more complex and need a little explaining—chiefly because so many modern people, unlike their ancestors, are no longer familiar with the Word of God.

To illustrate the Hebrew method of allusion, and to show that it is not really difficult, let us refer to the well-known Psalm 23.

David, the sweet singer of Israel, begins by saying, “The Lord is my shepherd” and then develops this idea into an extended metaphor over several verses. It is a wonderful poem, picturing the Almighty as one who cares for and protects his own. For more than three thousand years, these words have been comforting God’s children; but how many modern readers realize that the image on which it is based was already a few centuries old when David incorporated it into his psalm?

The shepherd metaphor applied to God did not originate with the poet-king, but already existed in the time of his ancestor Jacob, when he blessed his sons a little while before his death. Earlier in their lives, most of these twelve men had been very wicked; they even sold their brother Joseph into slavery. He, however, was protected “by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel)” (Gen. 49:24, RSV).

In Psalm 23, David—himself originally a shepherd—was not inventing, but reusing and adding to an ancient metaphor.

After him, other writers developed the image further. One of these was Isaiah. In one of his most magnificent chapters, he applies the shepherd image to the future, predicting the coming of the Mighty One as a judge, though for those who accept him he will be the infinitely tender One:

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:
he shall gather the lambs with his arm,
and carry them in his bosom,
and shall gently lead those that are with young.

(Isa. 40:11)

According to Isaiah, the shepherd symbolizes more than pastoral care; he also represents royalty performing a divine commission. For instance, the Lord says of Cyrus, the greatest and most famous Persian king, “He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure,” by rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem (Isa. 44:28).

During the Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel expanded the image further into an entire allegorical chapter (34). First, it contrasts two kinds of shepherds or overseers: the good and the bad. Among the sheep, there are also evil ones that must be brought to justice. Second, the coming Messiah is presented as “one shepherd . . . even my servant

David” (vs. 23), who will feed and care for the flock, exactly as in Ps. 23. The very king who wrote it now became a type of his descendant, who would one day be born in Bethlehem and die on Calvary to redeem his people.

After the Jews’ return from their exile in Babylon, Zechariah—or the One whose thought he was transmitting—further developed this symbolism. The Messiah would not simply be a mighty and caring king; he would also suffer as a human being, though associated with God himself:

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,
and against the man that is my fellow,
saith the LORD of hosts:
smite the shepherd, and the sheep
shall be scattered . . .

(Zech. 13:7)

The symbol lives on powerfully in the New Testament. Most marvelously, Jesus applies it to Himself, when He says, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14, 15).

This is part of a famous parable, simple on the surface but also deep, like the mind of God; it is ultimately based on an ancient symbol, already more than fifteen hundred years old by the time of Jesus. Against the background of the Old Testament passages we have touched upon, we can see that the parable contains a very definite Messianic claim, which at least the learned Scribes and Pharisees in the Lord’s audience understood and mostly resented.

From the foregoing, it ought to be clear that the historical-critical method just cannot fully cope with the Word of God. By its very nature, it is contextual and best adapted to single works. But the genius of the Scriptures is precisely that they also function intertextually, since writers often depend on and refer to their predecessors.

Prophetic symbols are also like that. They often weave together references to other parts of the Bible. Much of what scholars call “apocalyptic” writing—such as Daniel and Revelation—is of this nature; its images are not archetypes in a Jungian sense, nor are they related to fantasy or Romanticism. On the contrary, they are often highly intellectual, like hieroglyphs from heaven, reflecting the experience of Israel over one and a half millennia.

Allusions and structural interrelationships are evident in many parts of the Bible, but especially in its prophecies. The culmination of the method is found in Revelation.

VI

A considerable percentage of it consists of references or quotations.

According to Hans La Rondelle, it contains six hundred allusions to the Old Testament alone. Many of them echo Daniel, and especially its seventh chapter, which is the “major root of John’s Apocalypse.” This last point need not surprise us, for prophetically “the seventh chapter of Daniel . . . was known by the scribes as the greatest chapter in the Old Testament.”¹⁶

But Revelation is not a loose collection of quotations; it forms a structure known as a chiasm. It “is construed according to the pattern of an inverse parallelism, comparable to the corresponding arms of a lamp stand or menorah, of which the arms on the left side parallel those on the right.” That is, the opening verses of Revelation echo its conclusion, the second section links up with the second last, the third with the third last, and so on. Right in the middle of the book are chapters 12-14, which center the reader’s attention on the conflict between Christ and Antichrist, as represented by their respective followers.¹⁷

In 1922, T. S. Eliot leapt into fame as an outstanding modern poet with the publication of the “Wasteland,” which also applies a method of multiple allusions. At that time, many readers and critics considered such a technique *avant-garde* and shatteringly different from previous literature. Today we know that the poet was imitating ancient and medieval masters, e.g. Virgil and Dante, as well as Biblical authors like John, who wrote the Apocalypse.¹⁸

Against this background, we see the Beloved Apostle in a different light. As a ninety-year-old exile on Patmos, he was not a doddering if lovable old man. On the contrary, his was a massive intellect, marvelously stocked with Biblical phrases, images, and echoes, as well as highly sophisticated literary structures. He knew the Old Testament and much of the New as though he had memorized them.

But over and above all this, we believe that God’s infinite mind was and is communicating with us through the mind of his servant John—like that of Daniel, centuries before.

We can safely pass over most objections to the comparison of Scripture with Scripture. Provided this is done with the proper care and necessary insight, it is not only a valid, but also an indispensable key for unlocking the meaning of the Bible and its predictions.

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The Author's Other Prophetic Publications

The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy (2011). *Book, \$39.95, Data CD or Attachment, \$19.95.

The Identity of 666 in Revelation (2012), **Video DVD (Power Point presentation), \$14.95.

Seven Heads and Ten Horns in Daniel and the Revelation (2011).***Book, \$15.00. Data CD, \$14.95. Attachment, \$10.

Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History plus 13 other items (2013).****Book, \$20.00. Data CD, \$20.00.

Cristo y Anticristo en la Profecía y la Historia (2018), Spanish translation, book, \$19.95. E-mail attachment, \$10.00. In the U.S. Beyond the borders of the U.S., the book sells for \$10.00.

The Use and Abuse of Prophecy (2007). Book, \$14.95.

A More Sure Word of Prophecy (2015). Book, \$10.00. E-mail attachment, \$10.00.****

La Palabra Profética Más Segura (2015). Spanish translation, book, \$8.00. E-mail attachment, \$8.00.

*Ranging over the entire Christian era, *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* is a penetrating 874-page book in three volumes for both scholars and lay people concerned with past, present, and future events. This is the most comprehensive work on prophecy and history ever produced by a Seventh-day Adventist, with the assistance of excellent researchers and scholars. About the earliest Christian centuries, it agrees with and defends Ellen G. White's *Great Controversy* as well as Uriah Smith's *Daniel and the Revelation*, but it adds much that neither of them dealt with.

For instance, the Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths were not really Arians. Most of them were ancient Sabbathkeepers, who stood in the way of papal supremacy. Therefore, they had to be eliminated. The popes were supported by the kings and emperors of Europe in persecuting those who opposed the Roman Church. For centuries, the pontiffs also struggled to dominate these rulers.

With amazing new discoveries in Latin as well as five other languages, this book vindicates Uriah Smith's conclusion that the 666 in Rev. 13:18 really refers to *vicarius Filii Dei* (the vicar of the Son of God). This title first appeared during 753 or soon afterwards in a document known as the *Donation of Constantine*, which was forged by the papacy to claim ecclesiastic supremacy as well as secular domination. The narrative of *The Truth About 666* is enlivened by many fascinating episodes. For instance, it shows that

the people of Brazil, the largest country in Latin America, speak Portuguese, while the others speak mostly Spanish, due to a papal decision based on that fraudulent manuscript.

This book is a storehouse of brand-new discoveries. One of its treasures is an Appendix with material quoted from more than eighty non-Seventh-day Adventist writers, mostly Protestants who lived and labored before Uriah Smith. They testified to the fact that *vicarius Filii Dei* was indeed a papal title. Most of them also showed that it had a number value of 666.

Very many Catholic writers also bore witness to the fact that the popes have for more than a thousand years been called the *vicars of the Son of God*, in Latin as well as other leading languages of Western Europe.

In its third volume, this book discusses the problem of some Seventh-day Adventist scholars who now say that 666 does not refer to the pope but only means human sinfulness or imperfection. Some of them also claim that the number, the name, and the mark of the Beast are one and the same thing. By implication, there will therefore be no Sunday laws, nor will America cooperate with the papacy in its pursuit of world domination. Such ideas undermine the third angel's message, suggesting that Seventh-day Adventists are not really the Remnant Church of prophecy. As *The Truth About 666* demonstrates, these scholars have most unfortunately been influenced by writers from outside their church: Sundaykeepers, Protestants and Catholics, as well as others, including Spiritualists.

***The Identity of 666 in Revelation* (2012), Video DVD. The author had been invited by the Adventist Theological Society (Southeastern Chapter) to lecture on this topic pursuant to the publication of his book, *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* (2011). This is a copy of his Power Point presentation with a subsequent session of questions and answers in a very full Lynwood Hall Chapel at Southern Adventist University, College Place, Tennessee, on Saturday, 14 January 2012, at 3:30 p.m.

****Seven Heads and Ten Horns in Daniel and the Revelation* (2011) looks penetratingly at the woman Babylon depicted in Rev. 17. She rides a Beast with seven heads and ten horns, the identity of which has so far eluded all Historicist prophetic interpreters. Amongst other things, this work examines nine interpretations by Seventh-day Adventist writers, showing that these unfortunately fail to solve the mystery of Rev. 17:10 and related Scriptures. It presents a brand-new Historicist explanation and resolves a number of awkward problems concerning the beasts and horns described in Dan. 8.

*****Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History* (2013). This work only, as a single item, sent by e-mail attachment, \$10.00, but it is also available on a data CD for \$19.95, which additionally contains 13 further items:

1. An updated revision of *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History*, originally printed in 2001 (440 pages). While in print, it was prescribed for Master of Divinity classes at the Seminary, Andrews University, at least three times, by two professors.

2. "The Role of Prophecy in Our Lives" (28 January 2008) by Ria de Kock, which was originally published in the South African *Signs of the Times*. Amongst other things, this article surveys the totality of her husband's prophetic writing in the English language.

3. *Africa and the Bible* (1988, revised in 2006). Israel first became a nation in Africa and was partly Egyptian. That ancient continent is also where the first Bible writer was born and the infant Jesus found shelter. Africans have played a significant role in salvation history. An uplifting read for black people everywhere in the world. *Africa and the Bible* is a revised and considerably augmented version by Edwin de Kock of *Africa in the Bible*, an undated pamphlet by Fares Muganda, a Tanzanian church leader and evangelist.

4. "About Diet, Law, and Holy Days," a four-page letter written to a non-Seventh-day Adventist scholar during 2006 to answer his e-mail query about Rom. 14:5-6. This concerns its larger context in both that chapter and the rest of the Bible.

5. "Ingredients, Scope, and Structure of *The Great Controversy* by Ellen G. White," 27 July 2006. Amongst other things, this deals with nonverbal as opposed to verbal inspiration, the prophetic writer's use of sources, and so-called plagiarism.

6. "Why People Were Created with Freedom of Choice," 28 May 2005, a short, unpublished article. It shows that choice extends beyond religion; it is what makes us human. Without it, we would be robots, lacking all real freedom and creativity, even on the most humble level of everyday life.

7. "Prophecy Validated by Events," ADVENTISTS AFFIRM, Fall 2005. This validates the Seventh-day Adventist explanation of the two-horned beast described in Rev. 13:11-17 within its historical context, showing how ridiculous it must have seemed during the nineteenth century, even as late as the first World War (1914-1918), and yet how feasible it is today.

8. "Letters About Inspiration" (c. 2003), to a correspondent. Three forms of inspiration mentioned or discussed are: *The Lord or His Angels Speak Directly to the Prophet*, which "often takes the form of an actual voice"; *The Prophet Has a Dream or a Vision* but describes the objects or actions seen in his or her own words; and *Guidance in the Writing Process*. An example of this is the Gospel according to Luke, who did diligent research and also quoted extensively from his predecessors.

9. "A Dispensationalist Calculation Error," *Ministry* magazine, August 2002. Amongst other things, this article demonstrates that Futurism is based on bad arithmetic in claiming that the 1260 days, 42 months, and 3½ years of Daniel and Revelation are literal time. That is, the math for fitting this period into Dan. 9:27 is wrong.

10. "The Main Reason for the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," an unpublished article (c. 2000). It surveys the interaction of Jews and Arabs over the centuries. Among the myths debunked is the idea that all people in the Middle East who speak Arabic are descendants of Hagar, Abraham's concubine.

11. "How Pieter Wessels and My Mother Became Seventh-day Adventists," a Vespers talk on 26 January 1996 in Inchon, South Korea, at the SDA English Language Institute where Edwin de Kock was teaching English as a second language as well as Bible classes. Pieter Wessels was an Afrikaner who lived at Kimberley in the Northwestern Cape Province of South Africa during the last part of the nineteenth century. In that area, where the richest diamond strike in the world had been made, he was one of the men whom this made very wealthy. Wessels discovered the true Sabbath from his own reading of the Bible and soon not only pioneered but also funded the Seventh-day Adventist Church in his country. De Kock then told how his mother likewise discovered the Sabbath by reading the Ten Commandments on her own. He went on to tell how for him these events were linked, because they also caused him to meet his wife Ria who was born within thirty-five miles of Kimberley.

12. "The Best Book About the Sabbath" (*South African Union Conference Lantern*, 1 June 1987) relates how in 1935 Susanna E. de Kock (born Olivier) discovered the truth about the Sabbath by reading the Ten Commandments and afterwards became a Seventh-day Adventist. At that time her five-year-old son, the future writer of *The Truth About 666*, understood what she was doing and decided to follow her example.

13. "Three Golden Calves" (*South African Union Conference Lantern*, November 1979). A cautionary tale of an event from more than three thousand years ago. It traces the destructively evil influence of the golden calf, which the high priest Aaron made at Sinai, on Israel's subsequent history.

14. "The Influence of Most Fiction, Whether in Books, Movies, or Plays," adapted from a sermon preached in a South African Church, during the 1960s or the 1970s. The main point was: "Story books, movies, and plays very often destroy a love for the Bible and sacred things. Our main concern should not be where the reading or viewing takes place (at home or in a theater), but the pernicious influence of fiction."

****A *More Sure Word of Prophecy* (2015) and its Spanish translation, *La Palabra Profética Más Segura* (2015), are based on four lectures presented in Havana, Cuba, at the La Vibora Seventh-day Adventist church during 17-19 October 2014. At the beginning of his Acknowledgements, the author says:

"In a sense *A More Sure Word of Prophecy* sets the capstone on everything I have written about prophecy. Underlying all my books in this genre is a key concept: Historicism is true, because it uniquely validates itself. When Bible prophecy is compared with the events of history, we find an accurate match. The same cannot be said of any

other school of prophetic interpretation. Neither Preterism, Futurism, nor Idealism is properly anchored in history, as this book reveals.”

One of the gems that it contains is a passage quoted from Hippolytus (c. 170-235). Astoundingly, he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about a great image—as well as the four beasts in Daniel 7—just like Uriah Smith (1832-1903), who lived 1700 years after him. Hippolytus died before the Western Roman Empire broke up into ten kingdoms or the rise of the papal Antichrist, but simply on the basis of these prophecies he foretold their coming.

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