

**The** **USE**  
**and** **ABUSE**  
**of Prophecy**

Edwin de Kock



# **The Use and Abuse of Prophecy**

***History, Methodology, and  
Myth***

by

*Edwin de Kock*

Edinburg, Texas

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# The Use and Abuse of Prophecy: History, Methodology, and Myth

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*To Ria, with all my love . . .*

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The errors, of course, are all my own.

Edinburg, Texas  
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## Preface

**T**he chapters that make up this book were not originally planned to appear together. To some extent, they are a collection of essays held together by related themes.

In "Two Thousand Years of Prophetic Interpretation," we have a record of how Christians through the ages have gone about interpreting the Bible's inspired prophecies. The result is not a mere hodgepodge. A limited number of patterns emerge, of which only a few are significant. Some are erroneous. One of them, which has endured from Jesus' time, is wholly dependable. It is the Historical School of prophetic interpretation.

Next we go on to provide a methodology for interpreting divine predictions, entitled "Seven Keys to Unlock the Mysteries of Revelation." We do not, as so many have done, simply trust our instincts like every wild enthusiast who plunges into the Apocalypse to fetch forth his or her subjective explanation. Understanding prophecy requires definite criteria. Surprisingly, few interpreters have or reveal the principles they follow, except in a sketchy way. This section is more comprehensive than most, if not unique.

Very closely intertwined, even entangled, with prophecy is history. Inflexible Predestinarians and extreme Arminians may argue as to whether things happen because they are predicted or are merely predicted because they are going to happen. That is, does prophecy lay out a scenario for the future, from which the Lord will allow no deviation; or does he rather just reveal it beforehand? We pursue a middle way. The Father of us all is not a passive spectator; he has a plan for the world, pursued through all the ages, but so does our great Adversary, and so do many interest groups. The same has also been true of ambitious individuals, though they are fortunately limited by their fleeting life spans. Freedom of will or choice is precious in God's sight, for that is what essentially makes people human beings, with their astonishing power to think and to do, in any meaningful sense.

But history, considered in even the most secular way, is problematic. It is never just a chronicle of events but always a selection from them, a construct colored by opinion and bias. Paul Conkin and Roland Stromberg have gone so far as to regard "much of history [as] a stab into partial darkness, a matter of informed but inconclusive

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conjecture."<sup>1</sup> But even worse, the record of the past too often betrays deliberate lying and distortions by those who chronicle it. Most surprisingly—and it must be said to their shame—the worst of historical forgeries have been perpetrated by Christian authors.

Are we, in studying prophecy from a historical perspective, erecting our structure on a rotten platform? Our chapter, "History as Christian Forgery," deals with this kind of topic.

From that a further, natural question emerges: What about the Scriptures? They are both prophetic and historical. As Jacques B. Doukhan—a Christian Jew, who is steeped in the wisdom of his people—points out, the Lord has not revealed himself through "elaborate theological systems or philosophic categories."<sup>2</sup> That is very true. The Good Book itself contains an ancient question, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11:7). No, we cannot, but he does communicate with us: "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1, 2). And so, as Doukhan goes on to say, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as the God of Paul, John, and Peter, has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through history." Therefore, "theology derives from events, not the other way around."<sup>3</sup>

In accordance with this, any record of the past should be dependable, not twisted, befuddled, or falsified in any way, which is the reason for the chapter "But is the Bible True?" If it is not, the predictions of the Good Book can obviously also be of little interest. Therefore, we indicate why we believe in its reliability.

People's outlook on the past has not infrequently become contaminated by and needs to be cleansed of myths about historical origin as well as false and extra-Biblical typology. These are themes discussed in "History and Prophecy as Christian Mythology." Particularly pernicious has been the notion, in country after country and age after age, that the Franks, the British, the Dutch, the Boers, the Americans, and others have been or are a latter-day Chosen People, the very Israel of God. Often this has been the imperialist rationale for exploiting, oppressing, or exterminating dark-skinned people in their native land.



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# **The Use and Abuse of Prophecy**

# Introduction

by William H. Shea

**T**he historian's proverb is that "we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us." This is just as true in prophetic interpretation as it is in other fields. In this review of some of the major figures and turning points in prophetic interpretation Edwin de Kock has covered a very large part of history in a very short space. This is a work that has needed to be done for some time. We have on hand L.E. Froom's magisterial presentation of the history of prophetic interpretation in four volumes. Unfortunately, these are not usually available to the general reader. In addition, it has been a long-term need that they should be boiled down into at least one volume. De Kock has gone farther and has boiled them down into four lectures. For that he deserves our thanks.

In his study of the historical periods of prophetic interpretation de Kock has clearly delineated two major tracks that proceed through all of the periods involved. One track may be called the mainline orthodox historical school and the other track may be called the divergent view. In the period of the early church, up to the time of Constantine, these two tracks are quite clear. On the historical path are stalwart figures like Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus. The divergent track is also quite clear. It begins way back in history with Plato. Plato's influence was then felt strongly by the Jewish interpreter in first-century Alexandria, Philo. He in turn influenced Clement and Origen in the Alexandrine school of biblical interpretation. A later product of this influence was Tichonius. In this line of thought, the text is not what it seems. The text was allegorized in three or four different ways to turn it into something which it originally was not. All of this had a devastating effect upon Christian teaching in general and the interpretation of prophecy in particular.

Augustine has long been considered a pivotal figure in the transition from early Christian teaching to medieval theology. What has not been so evident, but is borne out by de Kock, is that in addition to the figures in the second list above that influenced Augustine, Eusebius also played a part.

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As de Kock has spelled out in some detail, the early medieval period was when prophetic teaching and interpretation was at a low ebb, just as were Christian morals and teaching in general. In the later medieval period there was an attempt at a revival or renaissance from this low ebb, but it was soon stifled. Representative of this period were the Albigenses, the Waldenses, the spiritual Franciscans, and the Joachimites.

Joachim of Floris was a pivotal figure in this period and in the interpretation of prophecy at large, as he was the major Christian figure to introduce the year-day principle into the interpretation of symbolic apocalyptic prophecy. Enough time in the Christian era had passed so that it was recognized that the time prophecies in the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation could not be talking about literal time. Thus the symbolic interpretation of prophetic time according to this rule was introduced.

With the rise of the Reformers, who also used the year-day principle, there was a need by theologians in Rome to counteract this historicist movement. Thus came to the fore two alternate lines of interpretation proposed in the Counter Reformation. Alcazar introduced Preterism, which put the fulfillment of all these symbols back in the past. Simultaneously, Ribera developed and emphasized Futurism, which put the major fulfillments in the future. In this way these prophecies were turned away from contemporary Rome. A point emphasized here by de Kock is that these two lines of interpretation did not arise *de novo*. There were antecedents upon whom these scholars drew to develop these two lines of interpretation.

Rather than emphasize the teachings of the various Reformers, de Kock has given a dramatic example from Martin Luther and focused on one more noteworthy figure from the seventeenth century, John Milton, the blind poet of England. It is remarkable to see his development of Christian teaching on prophecy and other doctrines couched in his elevated language.

A turning point in historical events and prophetic interpretation related to them was the fall of the papacy in 1798. This event brought out a whole spate of writers who saw it as marking the end of the great 1260 day-year prophecy. This in turn stimulated a great interest in prophecy, and this attention was found not only in the Millerite movement of North America but also in other parts of the world. De Kock emphasizes two great figures here.

The first was Lacunza, the Catholic priest who wrote on prophecy in his great work *La Venida del Messias*. This book had a broad influence in calling people back to the importance of prophecy. It was published and widely distributed, not only in Latin America but also through translations in England and France. Lacunza had a profound impact upon an Argentine interpreter by the name of Francisco Ra-

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mos Mexia, who wrote on prophecy in the 1820s. Unfortunately most of his writings have been lost, but his annotated version of Lacunza's work has survived.

The decade of the 1820s was a critical period in the interpretation of prophecy. Not only was William Miller studying out his interpretation at this time but prophetic conferences were held at Albury Park in England and at Powerscourt in Ireland. Edward Irving was one of the prominent figures in this movement to whom de Kock pays considerable attention. From Lacunza to Ramos Mexia to Joseph Wolff, also covered in some detail, to Irving and the prophetic conferences one may see these developments enhancing historicism, the track of which has continued on into the Seventh-day Adventist church.

At the same time, however, the movement of Futurism with its dispensational aspect was also developing in a prominent way. A key figure who started off this movement was S.R. Maitland. His major contribution was to discard the year-day principle (1826). Maitland got some of his teaching on this subject from Ribera.

Maitland in turn influenced J.H. Todd at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. By 1838 he was openly teaching the same anti-historicist teaching. Several other Futurists also had connections with that college, including W. Burgh (afterward De Burgh) and J.N. Darby. The latter was an early leader in a movement which started near Dublin and later in England became known as the Plymouth Brethren. Darby studied at Trinity College and after becoming an Anglican priest accepted the dispensational Futurism which is now so widely spread in evangelical Protestantism. De Kock rightly puts his finger on these developments as the "Irish Connection." For our present situation vis-à-vis the Protestant world this final section of de Kock's study is very important for perspective on the different views of prophetic interpretation that currently occupy the stage in world opinion.

Simultaneously with these developments in prophetic interpretation, the Oxford Movement arose within the Anglican Church and was aided by Futurism in its increasing orientation towards Roman Catholicism. The Oxford Movement was significant, not only for causing some of its leaders to defect from the Church of England to the Church of Rome. It also promoted Anglo-Catholicism among those who did not, as well as ecumenism.

De Kock has provided us with an important summary and synthesis of the major developments in prophetic interpretation through the Christian era. His writing is clear, and he has put his finger on some very important twists and turns in the story of the development of these views. What some may hold to be new teachings are actually seen to be not so new as we trace their origins. We do indeed stand

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on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, regardless of the line of interpretation that has been followed.

From the high plateau of this review of the history of prophetic interpretation, de Kock goes on to give what he considers to be the seven most important lines of evidence that contribute to a correct interpretation of prophecy. While allowing for other biblical influences in this direction, he selects these seven as of central importance.

The first of these principles is that of paying attention to internal expositions. The prophecies of the Bible do not come without their own interpretations. Starting from Gen. 40-41 and the experiences of Joseph, de Kock goes on to illustrate this feature in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. In the former case the symbols are given first, then their interpretation. One feature of this is the angelic interpreter who was sent to aid the prophet in understanding. He shows up in various locations in both Daniel and the Revelation. Daniel is also the rudimentary key to the understanding of the more elaborate prophecy of Revelation.

Beyond the internal explanations, that is explanations within the prophecies themselves, there are the derivations of symbols and prophetic language from other books of the Bible. Thus the symbols of Revelation draw heavily upon the language of the Old Testament. As a case study of this de Kock cites the sun and moon with the woman of Rev. 12. Considering the language of the Old Testament gives a more detailed understanding of what is involved here.

In this modern age it is evident that consistency should be a hallmark of correct prophetic interpretation. Two attitudes have been expressed about it. One is contained in the maxim "consistency, thou art a jewel." The other is the opposite, "consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." The latter was an expression of a more romantic age. The former is the principle that we should follow today in our interpretation of prophecy. Thus, when one comes to the nations represented in the four major lines of prophecy in Daniel, there should be a consistency of application through all four lines.

An evident principle of progressive elaboration is what de Kock calls "augmentation." Thus in Dan. 2 we see only a non-moving statue consisting of metals representing kingdoms. Dan. 7 puts those kingdoms in action with wild beasts. Dan. 8 and 11 add more details to this scheme. While not contradicting what has gone before, these four lines progressively fill out the pictures of these kingdoms.

De Kock's fifth principle is historical correctness and accuracy. This is difficult in view of the partial record we have of ancient times. I once had a teacher who said that reconstructing ancient history was like doing a picture puzzle with 90 percent of the pieces missing.

We are fortunate that we have as much of the picture of the ancient world as we do. This lack in our sources urges us to do the most careful work with what we have, the use of the best and most accurate sources, honestly.

Then there is the trap of the contemporary. The world is ever with us, and we commonly err by reading the headlines of the newspaper into our views of prophecy. Instant relevance is what we desire. But not all of the prophecy need be relevant to us. Some of it, perhaps most of it, may have been relevant to those who have gone on before us.

Finally there is respect for the interpreters who have preceded us. No one originates his or her views on prophecy *de novo*, as from a totally blank page. We are all indebted to previous interpreters, regardless of our prophetic orientation. This is readily apparent from the historical review of prophetic interpretation that is found in the first section of this work.

De Kock's seven principles are sound and solid. If they had been followed more carefully, many of the errors that have abounded in the field of prophetic interpretation could have been avoided.

The next chapter deals with the interpretation of historical material. Here a caution is in order. Since many ancient inscriptions originated from the palaces of kings, there is a considerable amount of propaganda contained in them. De Kock cites the examples of Ramesses II and Sennacherib of Assyria and then goes on to the Greek and Roman classical writers. Ramesses has been known as "the greatest chiseler in history" because of his penchant for carving out the names of the pharaohs before him from their monuments and inserting his own name and cartouche into them to take credit for them. As the discovery and decipherment of ancient inscriptions took place in the nineteenth century, the idea developed that everything in those extra-Biblical inscriptions was factual and that the Bible was not. Now historians have come to a much more sober evaluation of those records, recognizing that they contain a considerable amount of royal propaganda.

From this discussion de Kock goes on to measure the Bible by these standards, and when that is done, it stands up very well in regard to its factuality. It has now become evident that the Biblical writers were willing to describe the kings, "warts and all." This is in contrast with the ancient world where, as one professor of mine said, "there was no such thing as contemporary criticism of the king," for the obvious reason that the one providing such criticism could easily lose his head. There is no such thing as a Nathan in extra-Biblical societies saying to the king, "Thou art the man," you are guilty! For one thing, the kings in Egypt were considered to be gods and a god

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could do no wrong, and even if he did, you did not tell him so. There was such a thing as later criticism of the kings, looking back to them when things had gone wrong. When measured by this sober standard, the Bible holds its own with any of the literatures of the ancient world.

De Kock also treats what he calls Christian mythology and the way in which prophetic interpretation has been bent to that end. It has been true in many instances that peoples of the ancient and modern world have considered their place in the sun to be the center of everything. The people of Babylon thought that their city and country were the center of the world. They have left us a map showing that. The Romans thought that Rome was the center of the world, and so it goes on down even to our day. Thus interpretations of prophecy could be made to support these egocentric ideas as well. May the warnings sounded in chapter two of this work serve as a precaution to prevent us from falling into the same trap.

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# 1 Two Thousand Years of Prophetic Interpretation

## 1.1 From Jesus to the Middle Ages

**I**n the study of Bible prophecy, few things are as instructive as a journey down through the ages to see how our distant forebears and their many successors have sought to understand it.

Let us begin, as Christians always should, with Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. In his time on this planet, he was both a prophetic interpreter and our most important prophet. It is largely in these roles that he expressed his eschatology.

At the beginning of his ministry, our Lord announced, "The *time* is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14). What was he referring to? The seventy prophetic weeks, or 490 years, of Dan. 9. And so was Paul in his letter to the Galatians, where he stated, "when the fullness of the *time* was come, God sent forth his Son . . ." (Gal. 4:4). (Emphasis added in each case.) Here both the Master and the great apostle were acting as prophetic interpreters, setting a pattern for others who would succeed them.

After the resurrection, the Saviour almost immediately, when he walked with two of his disciples to Emmaus and at his first appearance to those who were gathered in the upper room, explained how the Old Testament prophecies had been fulfilled by his life and ministry. This is also what the apostles did.

According to Peter, the Holy Spirit is needed for correct interpretation, as for the giving, of prophecy: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:20-21)

This is not to say that a prophetic interpreter can be equated with a prophet or is infallible, but apostasy from truth in areas of doctrine also brings with it a loss of interpretive soundness. There is a correlation between obedience to what the Most High has taught in the Bible and the Holy Spirit's guidance of people's understanding. That this is not a fanciful or hair-splitting idea is clearly borne out by the

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subsequent history of the Christian church. Two examples of this will here suffice.

As the great Mediterranean apostasy deepened during the early ages, the prophetic interpretation of Jesus and the apostles as well as of the New Testament church was abandoned and, with it, the biblical teaching about last things. The Protestant Reformation, by restoring—to a considerable extent—a more correct understanding of Bible doctrines also reinstated much of what the early church had taught about prophecy. But afterwards, in the nineteenth century, when wrong attitudes toward the Bible and its doctrines set in, sound prophetic interpretation was again increasingly given up. More and more Protestants apostatized, through skepticism about the Bible, under the impact of higher criticism and Darwin's ideas. They also refused new light, as represented by the Remnant Church. Instead, in the nineteenth century, they began and in the twentieth as well as the twenty-first continued their fateful walk along the path of ecumenism. And, at the same time, they increasingly adopted Futurism, which itself represents a return to Romanist ideas.

But we must also consider another, quite different factor: even to his most faithful followers, the Redeemer during his life on earth was not willing to give a full explanation of the prophecies. Right up to the ascension, there was something his followers especially wanted to know: just when he was going to set up his earthly throne. "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." (Acts 1:6, 7)

Note the two words *time* and *times*, and particularly that expression "the times or the seasons." It is a virtual quotation from Daniel's explanation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Of the Most High, he said, "He changeth *the times and the seasons*: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings . . ." (Dan. 2:21, emphasis added). Daniel, more than any other book in the Old Testament, is characterized by time prophecies: the 1260 days, the 1290 days, the 1335 days, and the 2300 days. But when that prophet, so beloved of heaven, wanted more information about these periods, especially the first one, his request was refused. He was told: "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. . . . go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Dan. 12:9, 13). And to him those were heaven's last words, for with them he ends his book.

In both the Old Testament period and at the beginning of the Christian era, the Lord did not want the saints of the Most High to understand these time prophecies. Why not?

I believe the answer must be that such knowledge would have de-

moralized his faithful followers. The early church was not to know what a very long period of time would elapse between the Resurrection and the Second Coming, or the full truth about the Great Mediterranean Apostasy with its terrible sufferings for the Lord's elect in the centuries ahead. What they knew was a general outline, which included the great tribulation, but they were spared the details.

More than a thousand years were to pass before a prophetic expositor would be born who could unlock the secret to the great time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, which we historicists now take for granted. That secret is the year-day principle. For instance, the 1260 prophetic days, which those books mention no fewer than seven times, were actually as many years.

The apostles were unable to grasp that principle. They did understand the 70 prophetic weeks of Dan. 9:24, but that text says nothing about days. The Hebrew word *shabua'* in the original text need not even be translated as *weeks*. It really means *sevens*, as Guthrie's *New Bible Commentary Revised* points out.<sup>1</sup>

As demonstrated in the first volume of my *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History*, this is how a scholarly Jew like L.L. Zamenhof, the inventor of Esperanto, understood it. He was a very gifted, polyglot Jew with a splendid knowledge of Hebrew. In his excellent 1912 version of the Old Testament, the "seventy sevens" in Dan. 9:24 are translated as *sepdek jarsepoj*.<sup>2</sup> This expression means "seventy year-sevens" or "seventy seven-year periods." In English, we have a similar word, *septennate* (from the Latin *septem* = "seven" + *annus* = "a year"). The dictionary defines a septennate as "a period of seven years."

Another word for this, though more ambiguous, is *hebdomad*, originally derived from Greek. It means "a period of seven days, a week," but sometimes also "of seven years, a septenary."<sup>3</sup> Its plural, ἑβδομάδες (*hebdomádes*), occurs in the Septuagint of Dan. 9:24. Because so many early Christians read the Old Testament in this Greek translation rather than the original, some have wondered whether it is legitimate to explain that text by referring to the Hebrew *shabua'*. But the first men who preached the gospel, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the twelve apostles, were not Hellenistic Jews or converts but Palestinians. Their mother tongue was Aramaic, a language related to Hebrew, with which they were also well acquainted, hearing it in the synagogue every Sabbath. As for the scholarly apostle Paul, educated at Jerusalem, it is evident that though he quotes from the Septuagint, he often has in mind the original Hebrew text; for he sometimes makes his own translations from it.

So the year-day principle is not necessary for understanding the 70 weeks, as mentioned in chapter 9:24 of Daniel's book. But for correctly interpreting the complete 2300 days it is. The same applies to the other three time prophecies referred to. As we have noted, some

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issues related to those periods would fully dawn on prophetic expositors only in the time of the end (Dan. 12:7-12).

But does understanding that 70 year weeks equal 490 years not at least hint at the year-day principle? In more than one place, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* by Le Roy Edwin Froom suggests as much. In retrospect, it seems so easy to recognize that the 490 years of Dan. 9 form a part of the 2300 days of Dan. 8:14 and to subtract these periods from each other. Nevertheless, in all his research, Froom found no instance of anybody following up on that "hint" for more than a millennium beyond apostolic times. In practice, solving the time riddle of the 2300 days required the year-day principle, the full import of which was not discovered before the High Middle Ages. This followed the application of that principle to the 1260 days by Joachim of Floris, to be born a thousand years after John the beloved apostle went to his rest.

This matter can also be tested by observing that present-day Dispensationalists clearly understand and apply the *shabua'* (year-week) principle to Dan. 9:24-27, while they fail to grasp—indeed, reject—the year-day principle. Therefore, they insist that the 1260 days are literal and actually try to fit them into the last septennate of Dan. 9:27. They can, moreover, not see the nexus between Dan. 8 and 9.

Let us now look at the prophetic and eschatological ideas of the earliest Christian writers in post-apostolic times. Lack of time forbids that we mention more than three, so we will be referring to the views of Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus. These men had one thing in common: they were all born in the second century, within thirty-five years of one another, and died in the third century. That is, before the era of Constantine, who consciously amalgamated Christianity and Mithraism and created his imperial church. With him, the union of church and state began, as well as persecution for dissenter Christians. What was also initiated then was a totally different way of interpreting prophecy.

Irenaeus (c. 130-c.202) was the bishop of Lyons in Gaul, which later became France. Concerning Dan. 2 and Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he refers to "the ten kings who shall arise, among whom the empire which now rules [the earth] shall be partitioned." He interprets the stone that strikes the feet and grinds up the image as Christ. On Dan. 7, he writes of the ten horns and the one "who is to come and shall slay three." He believed in (1) a literal resurrection, (2) the Second Advent, and (3) the millennium bounded by two resurrections. In these matters, Irenaeus sounds quite a bit like a nineteenth- or twentieth-century historicist—1800 years ago—except for some things he taught about the Antichrist and one important detail: he did not understand the year-day principle.

He believed the Second Coming would happen just after the breakup of the Roman Empire. Then it was, according to him, that the Antichrist would appear, immediately before the Lord's return. He identified this being, the one "sitting in the temple of God" (2 Thess.) with the beast of Rev. 13. To his mind, the time, times, and the dividing of times of Dan. 7:25 and the equivalent 1260 days mentioned in Revelation represented three and a half literal years.

In this respect, his teaching is very different from that of present-day historicists where it links the Antichrist with the final three and a half days of the last week described in Dan. 9. Froom points out, however, that Irenaeus "says nothing of the seventy weeks; we do not know whether he placed the one week at the end of the seventy or whether he had a gap. He mentions only the half week, which he gives to Antichrist."<sup>4</sup>

How did this interpretation arise? It centered in the word "temple" and the wording of Dan. 9:27 according to the Septuagint Greek translation, which Irenaeus would have used, because he was originally from Asia Minor. This is significantly different from our Bible, based on another Hebrew manuscript. Here the Septuagint, in Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton's text (with a parallel English version), reads as follows: "And one week shall establish the covenant with many: and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and drink-offering shall be taken away: and on the temple shall be the abomination of desolations; and at the end of the time an end shall be put to the desolation."<sup>5</sup>

The King James expresses it differently: "*He shall confirm the covenant*" and "*in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*" (emphases added), which makes it plain that these words refer to Christ's career and not that of Antichrist. We note that "the temple" in Dan. 9:27 is τὸ ἱερὸν (to hieron), according to the Septuagint. This, too, is the word that appears throughout the Gospels, as in Matt. 24:1, to designate the sacred complex that Jesus used to visit. But the New Testament also uses another word, ὁ ναός (ho naos), which *inter alia* means "the dwelling of a god . . . the inmost part of a temple."<sup>6</sup>

Now where would the Antichrist, the Lawless one of 2 Thess. 2:4, install himself—in *to hieron* or *ho naos*? It is the latter. The full expression is εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ (eis ton naon tou theou, "in the inner sanctum of God").

Does this particular expression occur in any other part of the New Testament? Yes, it does. The same author, Paul, who wrote to the Thesalonians, informed the Corinthians that they were the ναός τοῦ Θεοῦ (naos tou theou), "the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16). Again using *naos*, he also said that their body was the temple of the Holy Spirit within them (1 Cor. 6:19). In both cases, he is referring to individuals as well as the church.

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It is, however, especially the Apocalypse that copiously refers to the *naos*. Here a key text is Rev. 11:19: "and the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of the testament." In several other chapters, too, this sanctuary is mentioned—always in heaven, which is where God the Father dwells and Jesus our high priest intercedes for the human race.

The Antichrist has usurped the place of the Most High in the Christian church and also, through the mass, created a substitute sanctuary service. This, however, does not center in the "ark of the covenant" (RSV). Instead, the Lawless one has tampered with the Ten Commandments which that sacred chest contained; he has even tried to change both times and the Decalogue itself (Dan. 7:25).

From our very much later vantage point in history, the ideas of Irenaeus may sound like a mixture of Historicism and Futurism; yet this is an anachronistic perspective. With the knowledge of hindsight, we may think that people so early in our era had a greatly foreshortened view of what lay ahead. But, of course, that is not exactly how it was. Their future still had to happen, and there is no such thing as the history of coming events—except in the mind of God, and the prophecies. Irenaeus was a child of his age, who could and would not be allowed to know how many ages still lay ahead. Like us, he simply believed that the Lord Jesus was coming soon.

The same was true of Tertullian (c. 160-c. 240), who was born in Carthage, North Africa. His ideas about Dan. 2 were like those of Irenaeus. He also knew that the stone in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represented Christ, and thought that the breakup of Rome would precede "the very end of all things." He correctly stated that the resurrection would take place at the Second Coming, not at death, as some people were evidently beginning to believe. Furthermore, he maintained that Babylon, as depicted in the book of Revelation, was Rome.<sup>7</sup>

But he avoided the errors of his colleague in Gaul. "Unlike Irenaeus . . . Tertullian does not describe Antichrist as a Jew sitting in a Jewish temple at Jerusalem. Indeed, he says that the temple of God is the church."<sup>8</sup> He also thought the seventy prophetic weeks were completed through the Saviour's ministry and death, as well as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus.<sup>9</sup>

The last of our chosen three examples is Hippolytus (c. 165-c. 235). He lived and worked as a bishop at Portus Romanus, a harbor town just fifteen miles from Rome, and died a martyr's death. His prophetic ideas were very similar to those of Irenaeus and Tertullian. This is a quotation from Hippolytus' *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*:

"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 . . . ."10

That sounds very much like Uriah Smith, but it was written 1800 years ago. Pagans were still ruling in Rome, and Constantine had not yet been born or accepted Christianity. It would be more than two hundred years before the Empire would begin to break up. Hippolytus did, however, live in a most unstable period, which modern historians call the Troubled Century. Many emperors were assassinated and barbarians kept on invading the Empire.

Actually, not all Hippolytus' prophetic ideas were kosher. His intellectual background included, in addition to what Jesus and the apostles had taught, more dubious elements. As William Shea, pointed out in a letter: when dealing with Dan. 8 and 11, Hippolytus identified the Little Horn and the king of the north as Antiochus Epiphanes, "under the influence of Porphyry," who was his contemporary in Rome.<sup>11</sup> The latter, a great opponent of Christianity, had at one time studied under Origen at Caesarea<sup>12</sup> but ended his days as a pagan disciple of the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus, whose works he edited and published.<sup>13</sup>

While Hippolytus on the whole reflects the eschatology of the earliest Christian church, his ideas about the seventy weeks resembled those of Irenaeus, with a dramatic addition: "Hippolytus places the period of the Antichrist's predicted domination of three and one-half 'times,' or 1260 days, in the last half of the 'last week' of Daniel's seventieth hebdomad, or week of years, which he *arbitrarily separates by a chronological gap from the preceding sixty-nine weeks, placing it just before the end of the world*, and dividing the seventieth week between the two sackcloth-robed witnesses (Enoch and Elijah) and the Antichrist. Hippolytus is believed to be the first to have projected such a theory."<sup>14</sup> (Froom's italics)

By his time, syncretism—including the cult of Mithras—had begun to corrupt Mediterranean Christendom. We must therefore not be surprised if even the best prophetic expositors of the Western church were already, in such an early period, prone to error. Doctrinal apostasy offends the Comforter, so that he will no longer guide the student of the Bible into all truth, according to the Saviour's promise (John 16:13). For studying prophecy, a special preserve of the Holy Spirit, the result cannot fail to be intellectual confusion.

Meanwhile, in the southeastern corner of the Mediterranean, a very serious problem was developing for the church. In Alexandria,

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the intellectual center of the ancient Greco-Roman world, Christian academics were undermining the exegetical foundations on which prophetic interpretation and even Bible doctrine rested. Imbued with an ecumenical spirit, these men sought common ground with pagan philosophy, especially that of Plato. This endeavor culminated in the career of Origen (c. 185-254), "an Egyptian who wrote in Greek"<sup>15</sup> and headed the Catechetical School or Christian Seminary. Though subsequently many considered him a heretic, he became the most influential theologian of the early Mediterranean church.

Origen was not content to accept the Bible in a straightforward manner. Instead, he adopted a "spiritualizing, or *anagogical* principle (passing to a higher sense than literal, i.e. a 'more literal')," which "determined the whole pattern" of his exegesis.<sup>16</sup> That is to say, he allegorized everything.

Froom gives an enlightening example of Origen's method. Through the ages, many Christians have read in Matthew's Gospel the story of how Jesus entered Jerusalem by riding a donkey. For the ordinary person, this passage is quite simple and uncomplicated, but note how Origen explains it. He begins by debunking its literal truth in an introduction entitled "Matthew's Story of the Entry Into Jerusalem. Difficulties Involved in It for Those Who Take It Literally." So, according to him, the Bible as it stands is not really believable. Then he comes up with a different approach; he says, "The Ass and the Colt Are the Old and the New Testament" and goes on to give the "Spiritual Meaning of the Various Features of the Story." For him, "the real truth of these matters," accepted by "true intelligence," is as follows: "Jesus is the word of God which goes into the soul that is called Jerusalem." Then he also in detail allegorizes the "branches," the "multitudes," etc. "Thus Origen's perpetual allegorizing muddled even the clearest and most explicit statements of Scripture."<sup>17</sup>

Some of his fellow Christians must have been amused at what nonsense the learned professor could write. We can imagine them guffawing, "The ass and the foal are the Old and the New Testaments, indeed!" But others were indignant, especially the Syrian church, with its center in Antioch. Like us, they insisted that wherever possible the Scriptures should be understood in their literal sense, and practiced historico-linguistic exegesis.

It was, however, Origen's threefold approach to the Bible that eventually prevailed in the Western world. It soon evolved into a fourfold system, the so-called *quadriga* (the "four-horse chariot") which dominated the preaching of the Roman Church for a thousand years.<sup>18</sup> As William Shea aptly expressed it to me, such allegorizing is like a wax nose: one can twist it any way one likes.<sup>19</sup> It can make anything mean anything.

Where did Origen's allegorical method come from? Partly from his old teacher, the former head of the Catechetical School, Clement



(c. 150-c. 215), who had taught in Alexandria for more than twenty years but fled in AD 202 when the Emperor Severus unleashed a persecution against the Christians.<sup>20</sup> Clement never returned but left behind him a troublesome—a mentally and spiritually baneful—heritage. Like dragon's teeth, his ideas would sprout and survive in the minds of leading thinkers that were to shape the church for generations to come.

Before his conversion, Clement, who may originally have been an Athenian,<sup>21</sup> had been "a pagan philosopher"<sup>22</sup> and probably also initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries,<sup>23</sup> a kind of ancient Freemasonry. It seems that he never shook off his early training as a philosopher, and his amazing immersion in pagan writers of the Hellenic world continued to shape his thinking throughout his life. It is true that his writings are full of Scriptural quotations on virtually every page he wrote, but he was not really intent on teaching what the Bible says.

While he attacked and ridiculed the stupidity and many practices of everyday, lowbrow paganism, especially in his *Exhortation to the Greeks*, he kept on linking Christian theology to his Hellenic heritage, partly through allegorization. His chief concern is very evident in the *Stromateis* or *Stromata*, a miscellany of eight books and his greatest work.<sup>24</sup> "It is inspired by one idea, to show the use which devout Christians may make of Greek philosophy. 'All sects of philosophy,' says Clement, 'contain a germ of truth. Greek philosophy, as it were, purges the soul and prepares it beforehand for the reception of faith on which the Truth builds up the edifice of knowledge.'"<sup>25</sup>

We, on the contrary, are convinced that a preoccupation with pagan ideas does not purify but muddies the soul. The god of those pagan philosophers was not the personal being—our heavenly Father—presented by the Bible, but a transcendent notion thought up by people like Pythagoras (c. 580–c. 500 BC) in southern Italy and his Athenian disciple Plato (c. 428–348/347 BC).

Clement's conceptions affected Origen. But both were also influenced by an earlier, Jewish professor, Philo (c. 30 BC–AD 40), who lived and taught at Alexandria two centuries earlier, a little before and during the time of Christ. Philo was in love with the Greek philosophers, especially Plato. He blended their ideas with those of the Old Testament. Now, intrinsically the Hebraic and the Hellenic accounts of origin and views of reality are worlds apart. Nothing can, for instance, be more different than the stories told in the Old Testament and the myths of Greece, as any clear-headed reader should be able to see. Yet Philo somehow managed to discover in the first five books of the Bible "everything which he had learned from the Greeks." These, according to him, "must in some way have drawn from Moses."<sup>26</sup>

But how could Philo bridge the vast discrepancy between such differing texts? "These presuppositions were maintained by an allegorical interpretation of Scripture. With its aid he discovered indications of the

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profoundest doctrines of philosophy in the simplest stories of the Pentateuch. This method of allegory is borrowed from the Stoics."<sup>27</sup> He was twisting the wax nose.

Origen passed on this allegorizing method—learned from Philo and Clement—to his pupil Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (c. 260–c. 340). This man is best known for his *History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, which became "the founding document of medieval history"<sup>28</sup> and influenced all subsequent writers on the topic.<sup>29</sup> To a large extent, it still determines what most people think of the early church, especially in the West.

Unfortunately he was a very biased writer, and his view of church history was, according to Paul Johnson, "a reconstruction for ideological purposes. Eusebius represented the wing of the Church which had captured the main centres of power and established a firm tradition of monarchical bishops, and had recently allied itself with the Roman state. He wanted to show that the Church he represented had always constituted the mainstream of Christianity, both in organization and faith."<sup>30</sup> Eusebius centered his enthusiasm on the new Hellenic state that Constantine was creating by the Bosphorus, especially since "in theological matters he appears as his chief adviser. At the Council of Nicaea he sat on the Emperor's right hand."<sup>31</sup>

Much of what that bishop wrote was tainted with flattery, to which Constantine was susceptible.<sup>32</sup> This is especially clear from Eusebius' *Praise of Constantine*. In the words of Michael Grant, he "falsified the emperor into a mere sanctimonious devotee, which he was not, and showed himself guilty of numerous contradictions and dishonest suppressions, and indeed erroneous statements of fact, or untruths."<sup>33</sup> About Eusebius' oration as well as his biography to celebrate Constantine, Andrew Louth declares that these "are works of flattery."<sup>34</sup>

Eusebius also carried this preoccupation over into in his prophetic exegesis, by using the allegorizing method he had learned from Origen, for whom he "had intense admiration." He even collaborated with Pamphilus in writing a defense of their master.<sup>35</sup>

In this way, a new line of prophetic interpretation was born. Eusebius asserts that Constantine fulfilled Rev. 12, by casting down the Dragon—Paganism. The Scripture about the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21, "he now applies to the glories of the church as established by Constantine." Therefore, by his time, "the anticipated millennium had arrived."<sup>36</sup> "At the close of Constantine's thirtieth year of imperial rule—one of his sons having been advanced to share his imperial power during each decade—he appoints a nephew to the same dignity. And Eusebius is moved to declare that by these arrangements Constantine fulfils the prediction of the prophet Daniel (7:18), 'the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom.'"<sup>37</sup>

Obviously this type of thing reflected the ad hoc enthusiasm and unctuousness of the courtier-bishop. But, strange as it may seem, it had a tremendous influence on Catholic thinking for many hundreds of years.

Let us see how this happened by skipping down another century to Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo in North Africa, writer of *De Civitate Dei* ("About the City of God."), a very famous book. His ideas have molded much of Catholic thinking for the past 1600 years.

He must have derived his approach to prophecy from Eusebius. Another powerful influence on Augustine was a Donatist and fellow African named Tichonius<sup>38</sup> (c. 379–c. 423), author of *Seven Rules of Interpretation* for understanding the Scriptures. This man "also explained the whole Apocalypse of John, understanding all of it in a spiritual sense, nothing carnally. In this exposition he said that the body of man is the dwelling-place of an angel."<sup>39</sup>

According to Tichonius, the first resurrection is spiritual, i.e. *of the soul*, "as hinted by Origen." It takes place, he said, at baptism, which symbolizes the sinner's identification with Christ, who died but then also rose from the grave. Therefore, the first resurrection is a rising from the deadness of sin unto eternal life. The second resurrection, however, will be literal, of the flesh, and apply to all people. As for the millennium, it started with the birth of Christ. The New Jerusalem is the true church.<sup>40</sup>

Despite his allegorization, Tichonius was on the verge of a great discovery. "He interprets the three and a half days of the slaying of the witnesses (Revelation 11:11) to be three and a half years."<sup>41</sup> Here, in a limited context, he actually uses the year-day principle! Others follow him in this, like Bishop Bruno of Segni (c. 1049-1123), who lived seven centuries later and even related it to Eze. 4:6. But he also limits the application of that principle to their being killed and lying in the streets for three and a half years.<sup>42</sup> Neither interpreter applies it more widely, to the longer time periods of Daniel and Revelation. What is so peculiar about Tichonius' and Bruno's failure to do this is that the 3½ days of Rev. 11:11 are embedded within the 42 months or 1260 days of verse 3 in the same chapter. That is how people can be blinded by a mindset resulting from their background, intellectual experience, and prejudices—often more learnedly referred to as hermeneutics.

In any case, "the revolutionary Augustinian philosophy of the thousand years, as the reign of the church in the present age, soon swept over the Roman Catholic Church and dominated the view of Christendom for a thousand years to come—until at last abandoned by the Protestants, but then only when the Reformation was well along."<sup>43</sup>

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For Augustine, the stone that smote the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream and grew into a mountain represented the establishment of the Lord's kingdom on earth, but not as we understand it. This is how Froom explains the Augustinian view: "The camp of the saints [in Rev. 20] is the church of Christ extending over the whole world. The 144,000 are the church of saints, of the city of God; and the Jews are to be converted. The imperial Catholic Church is the stone shattering all earthly kingdoms, until it fills the entire earth. He assents to the four standard empires of Daniel, but makes Antichrist come, nevertheless, at the *end* of the thousand years,"<sup>44</sup> to reign for three and a half years.<sup>45</sup> The devil, too, is to be loosed for three and a half years<sup>46</sup> of literal time. Satan had already been bound from the time of Christ. (I personally think the devil was very much on the loose throughout the Middle Ages and still is.)

The next lecture will show how from the later medieval period onward the passage of time and other developments necessitated a return to the prophetic interpretation of the early Christian church.

### 1.2 From the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century

We have seen how the prophetic interpretation of the apostles and the earliest Christians—as represented by men like Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus—largely disappeared from the Constantinian era onward. It was replaced by allegorical ideas that had germinated in Philo's, Clement's, and Origen's Alexandria, grew in the work of Eusebius, blossomed in Augustine's exegesis, and firmly rooted themselves in the medieval mind.

History, however, has a way of sorting out error and truth. The Middle Ages did not look anything like the Millennium, which Augustine assured his readers had already begun; nor did the people who headed the Roman Church resemble the saints of the Most High. Obviously, too, the devil was not bound or even restrained but on the rampage.

Four hundred fifty years after Augustine, while the terrible Vikings were raiding northern Europe and Moslems kept threatening the South, the papacy experienced squalid, almost unbelievable decadence, which lasted over one hundred fifty years, from just after John VIII (872-82) to the time of Gregory VII (1073-85).<sup>1</sup>

For several years during the first half of the tenth century, successive pontiffs owed their position to the family of Theophylactus, or rather his immoral wife, Theodora, and her equally profligate daughters Theodora junior and especially Marozia. Collectively they are known as

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the pornocracy<sup>2</sup> or—in King's more pungent phrase—the Rule of Harlots. According to him, they appointed and then disposed of nine popes in thirteen years.<sup>3</sup>

Especially Marozia prospered amazingly, until in 928 she was "the unchallenged mistress of Rome," and named herself Patricia and Senatrix. She had her own son crowned as Pope John XI (931-36), who was a layman and possibly fathered by Pope Sergius. Thereupon she married king Hugh of Provence. Her career ended when Alberic, a son by her first husband, disapproved of this match and locked her up for the rest of her life.<sup>4</sup>

Not all the pontiffs of that time were cruel, immoral, or incompetent; but it is significant that they were so ephemeral. While only eleven popes had reigned during the preceding two hundred years, there were thirty-five between 882 and 998, that is, in little more than a century. In the eight years from 896 to 904, no fewer than ten were elevated and then replaced, "of whom at least one was strangled and two died or were murdered in prison."<sup>5</sup>

Europe wondered: Were these popes really God's appointees?

Many contemporaries, some in high places, did not think so. An outspoken critic 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. He said the reigning pontiff, "clad in purple and gold, was 'Antichrist, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself as God.'"<sup>6</sup>

The papacy then introduced reforms, recovering some of its lost prestige. In comparison with the previous centuries, Europe also underwent remarkable development. In his *Rise of Christian Europe*, H. Trevor-Roper speaks of a medieval Renaissance, with the century from about 1150 to 1250 as its most splendid period.<sup>7</sup>

This was the time when the universities, an invention of the Middle Ages, began to flourish. Especially famous was the one in Paris. Its greatest ornament was probably Peter Abelard. This period also saw, again according to Trevor-Roper, the first Reformation and later, alas, a most successful Counter Reformation, which introduced a "general stagnation,"<sup>8</sup> the ill-effects of which would last for two hundred years. It would have "as much influence in retarding the development in Europe in the two centuries after 1300 as the Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century was to have in the two centuries after 1600."<sup>9</sup>

Medieval attempts at thorough reformation partly came from Christian dissenters like the Albigenses in southern France and the Waldensians in the alpine valleys of northern Italy. The latter thought the papacy was the Beast and Rome the Apocalyptic Babylon.<sup>10</sup> The Albigenses had similar views.<sup>11</sup> Using the secular arm of rulers that supported it, the papacy set out to silence and destroy these people. The

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bloody crusade it launched against the Albigenses in 1209 was largely successful, eliminating a splendid civilization that had flourished in Southern France, producing amongst others the cultivated Troubadours. But the Waldensians in their mountain fastness survived. We cannot, however, here deal further with those wonderful people or their ideas; nor can we refer to other non-Catholic expositors, like the Jews.

Instead, we need to concentrate on dramatic developments within mainline Western Christendom and focus first on a most remarkable man: Joachim of Fiore or Floris (c. 1135-1202), one time abbot of the Cistercian Abbey at Corazzo. He appeared exactly halfway through the 1260 years predicted in prophecy, at a time when the papacy was nearing the zenith of its power. He was thirty years of age in 1168, that is to say exactly 630 years after 538. The career of Innocent III (1198-1216), the highest point of pontifical power, largely fell within Joachim's lifetime.

In 1182, he asked Pope Lucius III to relieve him of his duties as an abbot. With papal permission, he applied himself to full-time biblical research and writing. The result was his *Liber Concordiae Novi ac Veteris Testamenti* ("Book of the Harmony of the New and Old Testament"), *Expositio . . . in Apocalipsis* ("Exposition of the Apocalypse"), and *Psalterium Decem Cordarum* ("Psaltery of Ten Strings").<sup>12</sup>

As a prophetic expositor, Joachim became tremendously famous.<sup>13</sup> He mingled with and witnessed 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."<sup>14</sup>

This learned man was a good Catholic, and let us in passing note that the same was true, at first, of the sixteenth-century Reformers, including Martin Luther and John Calvin. The people of the high Middle Ages just could not know what effect Joachim's ideas were to have on future generations, or they would undoubtedly have burned him at the stake. As a "Biblical commentator and philosopher of history" he would prove "influential in the later middle ages and Renaissance in reformist circles . . .".<sup>15</sup>

The greatest of Joachim's contributions were to apply the year-day principle to the 1260 days and to revive the Historical School of prophetic interpretation, which had been eclipsed by Augustine and those who followed in his footsteps. The reader will recall that neither the apostles nor their successors in the early Christian church had grasped this key to unlock the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. So how did it happen that a medieval Catholic could find it?

The precise answer to this question is lost in the mist of a distant past, but we can try to reconstruct it. The earliest believers had simply assumed that only a modest number of years, or possibly a very few centuries, would pass before the Second Coming. And since they saw no problem, they also did not seek a solution. Besides, the Lord did not want them to understand "the times and seasons" prematurely. But by the late 1100s not a few centuries but almost twelve hundred years had elapsed. The Redeemer had not yet returned, and Joachim realised something was wrong. As he pondered the prophecies, he just could no longer believe that the three and a half years or 1260 days were a literal period. They had been rendered incredible by the sheer passage of time.

Led by the Spirit of God, Joachim read the Latin Bible, as medieval clerics were able to do. One day he must have come across Num. 14:34, and the crucial words leaped into his mind: "After the number of days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, *each day for a year*, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise" (emphasis added). Later he would also have found the same idea in Eze. 4:6: "I have appointed thee each day for a year."

In passing, let us note that Joachim may also have known about the application of this principle by Jewish scholars, some going back a long time before him. It is a fruitful topic for research, but we cannot and need not pursue it here. The day-year equivalence is, in any case, quite clearly stated by and was directly available from the Bible.

"Not only the 'Joachimites' and the Spiritual Franciscans, but also Dante, Wyclif [*sic*], Cusa, Huss, and some of the Reformers were definitely moulded by certain principles enunciated by Joachim."<sup>16</sup> Some people, including Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), the greatest Italian poet, even thought Joachim was "endowed with the prophetic spirit." But Joachim himself contradicted this idea. He only claimed the ability to explain what the Scriptures had predicted, by "rightly interpreting the prophetic content of the Old and New Testaments, and of construing the course of events in the world and the church from the prophecies, types, and analogies of the Bible."<sup>17</sup> Today we find a good deal of what he wrote rather quaint, but nothing can detract from his two tremendous achievements: discovering the year-day principle and refocusing on history as the fulfillment of prophecy.

Two hundred years after Joachim, a Englishman, Walter Brute, discovered that the 1290 and 1335 days of Dan. 12:11, 12 were also literal years. Later, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64), the amazing German scholar and polymath, became the first to state that the same applied to the 2300 days (Dan. 8:14).<sup>18</sup> These developments, of vast prophetic and eschatological importance, owe much to Joachim. Once he had found the indispensable key of the year-day principle, others, too, could use it. He also had something to say about the great apostasy. According to

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Bernard McGinn, "Joachim always identified God's temple not with a rebuilt Jerusalem structure, but with the temple of the Church, so in this passage he hints that the 'priestly' aspect of Antichrist implies that he will be a false pope (in reality a member of a heretical sect) who will deceive the faithful as well as the Jews. Joachim's thought thus seems to represent a step on the road to the full-blown conception of a papal Antichrist, though it must be stressed that he also emphasized the role of a true and holy pope of the time of crisis . . .".<sup>19</sup>

Unmasking the papacy as the Antichrist became more prominent in the generation after Joachim. This resulted from the conflict between Pope Gregory IX (c. 1170-1241) and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250), whom the papacy wanted to destroy because he had become too powerful. Those two men, in a heated exchange of invective, denounced each other as the Antichrist. We think the emperor got the better of the argument. At the Council of Regensburg in 1240 or 1241, he had a powerful ally: Eberhardt II, Archbishop of Salzburg (1200-46). This was one of Frederick's most important counsellors as well as the "chief spokesman for the emperor among the German bishops."<sup>20</sup>

In support of his master, Eberhardt distanced himself from the Vatican and roundly declared that the papacy was the Little Horn, which was a new interpretation.<sup>21</sup> Looking back over almost two centuries, the learned archbishop castigated the pontiffs of the high Middle Ages, declaring, "Hildebrand, one hundred and seventy years before, first laid the foundations of the empire of Antichrist under the appearance of religion."<sup>22</sup>

For their pains, both Frederick and Eberhardt were excommunicated. The archbishop "died under the ban in 1246. Burial in consecrated ground being refused, he was buried in common ground in an annex of the parish church in Radstadt. Some forty years later, in 1288, his remains were transferred to the consecrated ground of the Salzburg Cathedral. In the *Annals of Convent Garsten* his obituary states that he was 'a man of great learning' who 'ruled his see most nobly forty-six years.'<sup>23</sup>

It is surely more than a coincidence that almost three hundred years later the anti-papal Reformation led by Martin Luther would also arise in the imperial reaches north of the Alps and be led once more by German-speaking clerics. The seed of dissent from Rome, deposited in the European mind by their medieval compatriots through what these had said and written, did not die with them. It only lay dormant, ready to germinate again in the abundant harvest of a better season.



Criticism of the medieval church was not confined to monarchs and clerics. Several Catholic authors, 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 who finished the *Romance of the Rose*—a vastly popular work in those days—and two eminent Italian writers, Jacopone da Todi (c.1230-1306) and Dante Alighieri (1265-1321),<sup>24</sup> the greatest Christian poet of the past seven hundred years.

In the nineteenth canto of his *Inferno* (the *Divine Comedy*), Dante commits a number of popes to hell for simony and lusting after worldly possessions. He clearly indicates that the church through the love of money had become the harlot woman of Rev. 17. He rages against several pontiffs: Nicholas III, Boniface VIII, and Clement V, consigning them 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)."<sup>25</sup>

This impassioned criticism did not, however, at the time appear to achieve so much. The papacy prevailed by applying force. It created the dreadful Inquisition, largely eradicated the Albigenses, and through its allies defeated Frederick, after which it obliterated his line. It also clamped down on the universities, which it thought had too much freedom of discussion. And so, the "Renaissance of the twelfth century died away. The Reformation of the twelfth century was snuffed out. For another two centuries Europe, Christendom, seemed stagnant."<sup>26</sup>

The terrible fourteenth century set in, with which we cannot now concern ourselves, except to remark that nemesis often overtakes those countries and organizations that persecute people for their faith. Among the calamities was the plague, the notorious Black Death that swept away a third of all the people in Europe. There were also famines, economic disaster, even climatic change, and an epidemic of conflict, including the hundred years' war between France and England.

But unlike people, ideas cannot die, and so the contributions of Joachim and other thinkers like Eberhardt II awaited future prophetic development. Two hundred years after Joachim, John Wycliffe (1330-84), the morning star of the Reformation, also abandoned Augustine's interpretation. He returned to the Historical School, alternatively known as the continuistic interpretation of prophecy, which Joachim had reinstated; and so did that noble martyr Jan Hus (1372/73-1415).<sup>27</sup> A century later, Martin Luther (1483-1546) also equated the Little Horn of Dan. 7 with the pontiffs. Indeed, as Froom points out, throughout Europe and Britain the Reformers were "unanimous in applying most of the prophecies of the Antichrist to the papa-

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cy." They considered the pontiffs, in their succession, the Man of Sin; and "Christians were urged to obey the command, 'Come out of her, My People.'"<sup>28</sup>

The Reformers were vigorous prophetic expositors. It is significant 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."<sup>29</sup>

For their interpretation, the Reformers owed much to their predecessors of the Middle Ages. Their spiritual ancestors included so-called heretics like the Albigenses and Waldensians, but also many good Catholics, to whom the Lord had spoken in years gone by. Let us not forget that Wycliffe, Luther, and Calvin (like many other Reformers) began their careers as clergymen of the Roman Church.

The Reformers did not, however, just unmask particular popes as the Antichrist, but went further than men like Joachim, by identifying Antichrist with the papacy itself. All the same, they were building on foundations laid by the earliest Christian expositors as well as medieval Catholic writers.

Eight hundred years have come and gone since the death of Joachim, who discovered the year-day principle and led generations back to the Historical School of prophetic interpretation. For more than half a millennium, Protestants persisted with this approach. They have, in the words of Michael De Semlyen, included the following: "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."<sup>30</sup> Seventh-day Adventists, the main surviving bastion of the Historical School, should also have been in this list.

But how did Rome react? It was not to be expected that it would idly stand by and see its prophetic and eschatological concepts thrown onto the scrap heap of history, while entire countries denounced the papacy as the Antichrist. Therefore, during the Counter Reformation, which began in the later sixteenth century and continues to the present, two Jesuit scholars, Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) and Francisco Ribera (1537-91), revitalized two older lines of prophetic interpretation.

Known as Preterism, Alcazar's idea was that the Little Horn cannot refer to the papacy because Dan. 7 and 8 were fulfilled by Antiochus IV (c. 215-164 BC), nicknamed Epiphanes ("the illustrious one"). This was a rather insignificant Greco-Macedonian king of Syria, who lived 160 years before Christ and persecuted the Jews, until—under

the Maccabees—they drove him from Jerusalem.

Preterism was a transplant from the Jewish religion, apparently derived from Hayyim Galipapa (c. 1310-80),<sup>31</sup> a medieval Jewish rabbi; but it really goes back to pre-Christian sources. Josephus refers to such an interpretation more than a thousand years earlier in his *Antiquities* (AD 93 or 94), where he comments on Daniel's vision.<sup>32</sup> We cannot here deal further with Preterism, except to point out that this identification of Antiochus Epiphanes as the Little Horn is contradicted by Christ himself. In his Olivet discourse, the Saviour links 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). Nevertheless, Preterism has influenced many rationalist and Protestant writers.

Futurism, the brainchild of Ribera, the other Spanish Jesuit, has been more influential. It was not, as some Protestants have thought, a completely new approach to prophecy. In a modified form, it continued the same deviation that had begun so many centuries before in the time of Origen, Eusebius, and Augustine. In the meantime, however, events had demonstrated the falsity of the medieval views about the Apocalypse. Therefore, some elements in them had to be abandoned.

But Ribera retained and emphasized the idea of an end-time Antichrist. From the pre-Augustinian period, he resurrected Hippolytus' ideas about the seventy weeks of Dan. 9, including his gap theory. (Augustine had still believed this time prophecy extended only to the death of Christ.<sup>33</sup>) Most problematic in Ribera's reformulation is the vastness of the gap: so many centuries that had accumulated in the meantime, a further 1400 years, which by now have added up to more than 1800.

The gap theory is a most illogical idea. Except perhaps in quantum mechanics, on the subatomic level, there can be no such thing as a gap in time. A specified period can be shortened or lengthened, days being added to or subtracted from it, but no gap can be inserted into it. So what did Hippolytus and Ribera really mean? They were just lengthening the seventy prophetic weeks, and by the sixteenth century, Ribera's time, it would no longer consist of 483 years plus a little extra; it would now be 483 plus fifteen centuries! Which blatantly contradicts both common sense and the Bible.

There are, besides, significant differences between the ideas of Hippolytus and those of Ribera. The early Christian expositor had imagined a short future and therefore a small gap. For him, the Second Coming was just around the corner. The intervening years would be filled up by the events predicted in Dan. 2 and 7. First the Roman Empire would fall apart and then, immediately afterwards,

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would come "the kingdoms that are to rise" with "the Antichrist in their midst."

By Ribera's time, every bit of this had already happened. The Roman Empire did break up and its successors—the kingdoms of a divided Europe—become a reality, together with the papacy, which the Protestants were now unmasking as the Antichrist. For Catholicism this was all so inconvenient. Therefore, Ribera tried to excise a massive chunk of history from prophetic consideration. He wanted to drop the evidence out of sight into a gigantic gap of non-events. To make this possible, his readers were required to take a mental leap across a veritable Grand Canyon of credulity. How all this would have astounded and dismayed Hippolytus! Nevertheless, Futurism, a fine example of Jesuitical doubletalk, became an important Catholic school of prophetic interpretation.

Earlier Protestants just ignored this strange explanation. It was so obviously an attempt to provide an alibi for the papacy, hugely embarrassed by the fact that medieval history closely met the specifications of Bible prophecy about the Antichrist. Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century, Dispensationalists and others would embrace Ribera's ideas—and add a few peculiar views of their own, including the Secret Rapture and the doctrine that even Jews who reject the Saviour as the Messiah remain the Lord's elect. Today, in Evangelical circles, Futurism has become the prevalent prophetic school. That is, these folk have now largely adopted a Catholic eschatology, going all the way back to Augustine and his predecessors at the very beginning of the great Mediterranean apostasy.

This development has again obscured the Bible's predictions about what lies ahead for humanity, just as misinterpretations had done throughout the Middle Ages. In the next section, we shall further examine the Futurist view, which relates not only to Dispensationalism, but also to the nineteenth-century Oxford Movement and the ecumenical attitudes that it engendered.

For several hundred years, from the time of Wycliffe onward, the prophetic interpretation of the Reformers largely harmonized with what the apostles had taught and passed on to men like Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus—and was rediscovered by medieval interpreters like Joachim and Eberhardt II. But we need to note that an umbrella name like "Protestantism" is sometimes awkward. For all their agreement about some prophetic interpretations, the Reformers and their spiritual progeny have also differed from one another.

Since we cannot here do justice to their variety, let us just refer to an example from Luther and a single, rather special English Puritan a century later.

The German reformer was dramatically explicit. "An illustration

to the first edition of his New Testament had shown 'the whore of Babylon' (featured in the last book of the New Testament), wearing a triple crown—clearly it was the papal tiara. Old Frederick the Wise had received such a blast of complaint from Duke George [his staunchly Catholic cousin] that in the next edition the headpiece had to be cut down to a single crown. But later again, Luther had the triple tiara reinstated."<sup>34</sup>

John Milton (1608-74), the greatest English poet after Shakespeare, was more than a literary genius. He not only wrote *Paradise Lost* (1667), the most celebrated epic in the language, and others poems (some in Italian, Classical Greek, and Latin—which he knew like his mother tongue). He was also a deep theologian.

Originally he had been destined for the ministry. But for this he had to take an oath, by which he would have subjected his conscience to what he called the "tyranny" that "had invaded the church"; so he "thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and foreswearing."<sup>35</sup>

But what interesting ideas this conscientious layman had! Somewhat like a latter-day Adventist, Milton favored the seventh-day Sabbath and believed in conditionalism (including the unconsciousness of the dead) as well as the Second Coming.

To the first-mentioned doctrine, we find a beautiful monument in *Paradise Lost*, where he portrays the Lord as returning to heaven after he had made the earth. The hosts of accompanying angels are represented as singing:

"Open, ye Heavens, your living doors; let in  
The great Creator, from His work returned  
Magnificent, His Six Day's Work, a World!"<sup>36</sup>

Milton also warned against Sunday laws, arguing that if Sabbath legislation were contemplated, it would "surely be far safer to observe the seventh day, according to the express commandment of God, than on the authority of mere human conjecture to adopt the first."<sup>37</sup>

Against the existence of the soul divorced from the body, he used not only the most common arguments known to conditionalists of our day, but also interesting additional ones. For these, the reader is referred to *De Doctrina Christiana*, or its English translation by Charles R. Sumner, published in 1825. Extracts appear in the SDA Source Book.<sup>38</sup>

About the Second Coming, Milton exclaimed: "Come forth out of Thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth; put on the visible robes of Thy imperial majesty; take up that unlimited scepter which Thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed Thee. For now the voice

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of Thy bride calls Thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed."<sup>39</sup>

From what sources did this seventeenth-century author derive these ideas?

Regarding the Sabbath, he would probably have been at least aware of "the Seventh-day Men," whom Bryan W. Ball describes in his scholarly work on Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800. This branch of Puritanism that gave birth to the Seventh Day Baptists eventually established themselves "in over sixty identifiable discrete or mixed-community congregations, and probably in many others which cannot now be positively identified."<sup>40</sup>

Yet Milton does not mention the Sabbatarians. He may therefore have discovered those ideas through his own devotions and study of the Scriptures in the original languages. According to Elliot Rosenberg, a Jewish writer, Milton read the Hebrew Bible "each morning until his vision failed, and, as he aged, turned more and more to the precepts of Mosaic law."<sup>41</sup>

After he went blind at 43, his paid assistants, relatives, and friends are known to have read to him in foreign languages, apart from recording the epic verse he had created in his head the night before. Therefore, he would surely not have given up his contact with the Hebrew text. He may even have committed much (if not all) of it to memory, which in his case was extraordinarily retentive. He is "said to have known the Homeric poems by heart."<sup>42</sup> In A.T. Murray's bilingual edition, the *Iliad*<sup>43</sup> and *Odyssey*<sup>44</sup> comprise no fewer than 543 pages of pre-Classical, ancient Greek! So imprinting Hebrew on his mind should not, for Milton, have been burdensome, especially since he would have delighted in its beautiful poetry.

In religion, he "had moved from the low-church Anglicanism of his parents to Presbyterianism to Independency to independence. In the latter part of his life, according to his early biographer John Toland, 'he was not a professed member of any particular sect among Christians, he frequented none of their assemblies, nor made use of their peculiar rites in his family.' But, as Samuel Johnson observed, 'his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer.'"<sup>45</sup>

His theological individualism was not, however, absolute. Apart from the beliefs already mentioned and his Armenian refusal to accept the doctrine of predestination, "most of Milton's essential beliefs are those of traditional Christianity."<sup>46</sup> This certainly applies to his thoroughly Protestant views on prophecy.

Several of these are mirrored in his sonnet "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont." It indignantly protests the slaughter of the Waldensians on 24 April 1653, as ordered by the Duke of Savoy. Milton was the Latin or foreign secretary working for Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of republican England after Parliament had executed

King Charles I. Diplomatic pressure was exerted against the Duke in several countries. England even sent "a special ambassador to Savoy to protest the persecution and to indicate that Cromwell was willing to go to war if necessary."<sup>47</sup>

According to Marjorie Hope Nicolson, an eminent critic as well as an authority on seventeenth-century literature and thought,<sup>48</sup> that poem is "in structure, style and intensity of feeling" Milton's greatest sonnet.<sup>49</sup> It contains a number of expressions from the Protestant eschatology of his day, e.g. "triple Tyrant" [triple-crowned], "Babylonian woe" [the destruction foretold in the Apocalypse], and especially the idea "vengeance is mine" as well as the words "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth" [the opening of the fifth seal].<sup>50</sup>

Is all this not familiar terrain, for us who live some three hundred years after Milton? Such or similar views were also later taught by Seventh-day Adventists like Uriah Smith, as well as their immediate British and American predecessors in other denominations toward the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. This is the topic to which we now must turn our attention.

### 1.3 The End of the Eighteenth and the Early Nineteenth Century

Martin Luther, after finishing his translation of the Bible and shortly before he died, is reported to have said, "I am persuaded that the judgment is not far off; yea, that the Lord himself will not be absent above *three hundred years* longer"; and several generations later John Wesley (1703–1791) "thought the millennium might commence in about *one hundred years*."<sup>1</sup> Within the lifetime of the latter, a startled planet witnessed the fulfillment of an Apocalyptic prophecy: "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake [Lisbon, 1755]; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood [1780]; And the stars of heaven fell upon the earth [1833], even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind" (Rev. 6:12, 13).

In that period, an arresting announcement began to be heard all over the world. It was the voice of the first angel depicted in Rev. 14: "Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7). Symbolically flying in mid-heaven, he spoke to many different countries, through the voices and writings of dedicated messengers. As John N. Loughborough points out, "at about the same time, men were raised up, who, without a knowledge of one another's work, went forth to sound this message to all parts of the earth."<sup>2</sup>

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Adventists largely equate this with the Millerite story, and this movement was indeed important; the denomination of this writer rose in its aftermath, first establishing itself within the United States of America. But this tale has often been told, so it is not necessary to dwell on it here. Let us instead, rather more than is usually the case, consider the first angel's message as it manifested itself in other countries.

We begin with one way in which it revealed itself at the southern tip of Africa. During the 1830s, William Miller's time, dissatisfied Afrikaner Boers, who called themselves Voortrekkers (the word *trek* originated with them), were migrating northward from the Cape Province to establish an independent country, outside the hated British Empire. One of these groups was known as the "Jerusalem-gangers" (the Jerusalem goers).

Convinced the Lord was coming soon, they believed that, according to Zech. 14:4-9, Jesus would return to the Mount of Olives—from which he had ascended—and establish his kingdom in Jerusalem. So these people with their ox wagons wanted to go there and join their Saviour.

Africa, however, is huge, much bigger than they imagined. But much of it was in those days still unmapped. Eventually, in northern South Africa, they came to a very large river, swollen by recent floods. Believing they had reached the headwaters of the Nile, they named it Nylstroom (Nile Stream). And that is where they settled down.

A few years later, practically at the antipodes, in Sweden, an amazing phenomenon characterized the proclamation of the first angel's message during 1843.

The law did not allow adults to preach, unless they had been authorized to do so by the established Lutheran Church. And so the Second Advent was heralded by child preachers, supernaturally inspired. For instance, "a little girl, only five years of age, who had never learned to read or sing, one day, in a most solemn manner, sang correctly a long Lutheran hymn, and with great power proclaimed 'the hour of his judgment is come,' and exhorted the family to get ready to meet the Lord; for he was soon coming." Another illiterate child, a boy of eight, confounded a priest by quoting numerous scriptures and telling him, "I know where there is a text that has the word *and* in it fourteen times." The cleric contradicted him but, when compelled to read Rev. 18:13, saw his error, whereupon he left the lad and his audience, discomfited. Such events occurred in many towns. "The same movement among children was manifest to some extent in Norway and Germany."<sup>3</sup>



But the earliest Advent heralds of that time arose in neither South Africa nor the Nordic countries, but in Latin America, Western Europe, and Britain. This is where, before William Miller, the story of the first angel's message first became prominent. As its powerful precursor, the Almighty chose a person even more improbable than inspired children: a Jesuit, Manuel de Lacunza (1731-1801), who thought he had settled into a comfortable if humdrum career as a Latin professor in Chile.

During 1767, the thirty-six-year-old academic suddenly suffered banishment from his country. Charles III, the Spanish king, had decreed the expulsion of all Jesuits,<sup>4</sup> for meddling in politics. Whether they were guilty or innocent, they all had to leave the empire.

Only exiles, emigrants, and God can know the heart of a stranger. Far from home and his loved ones, Manuel first went to Cádiz in Spain, but later settled in Imola near Bologna, Italy, for the rest of his life. In 1801, "he was found dead on the bank of the river which flows near Imola."<sup>5</sup> The seventy-year-old man had apparently died by accident.

But he left behind the manuscript of a book that was destined to make a remarkable impact on many countries: *La Venida del Mesías en Gloria y Magestad* ("The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty"). From his home in Imola, he had been able to visit important libraries in Venice, Bologna, and Rome. The providence of God could not have brought him to a better place. "For thirty years, Lacunza profoundly studied the Holy Book, the writings of the Fathers, and theological interpreters. He compassed the entire Patrology—1,000 large volumes." In 1770, however, he gave up his trips to the libraries; they no longer benefited him. Now he devoted himself solely to the Scriptures. From 1772 onward, he was a recluse, shutting himself up with his books, his Bible study, and his writing.<sup>6</sup>

The actual composition of *La Venida*, written under the pseudonym Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra, took up twenty years, from 1771 to 1791. It was a work of remarkable scholarship; Lacunza was "never charged with inaccuracy, misquotation of authorities, or distortion." Though not printed in his lifetime, it was copied by hand and had an amazing circulation, especially in Latin America, "from Havana to Cape Horn." In 1799, just one year after the Time of the End had begun, the Jesuit Father Maneiro took with him to Mexico "an elegant Latin translation," a smuggled book—in the Soviet Union dissidents would have called it a samizdat, an underground manuscript. It had obviously been prepared for use among the clergy, who "read it avidly."<sup>7</sup>

The first edition of *La Venida* was printed secretly near Cádiz, on the Isle of Leon, or San Fernando. This was made possible because Napoleon's army had overrun Spain and taken King Ferdinand VII (1784-

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1833) prisoner. But the French were unable to capture Cádiz, which now became the capital. It remained under siege from February 1810 to August 1812, and then was relieved by Wellington. In that time, the Cortes acted as the interim government. Two of its actions were to abolish the Inquisition and allow some press freedom. Within this brief period, Lacunza's book appeared. In 1814, Ferdinand VII was restored to power (and he promptly reinstated the Inquisition).<sup>8</sup> But *La Venida* had taken off and was now unstoppable.

In 1816, a four-volume London edition appeared. It was very popular in Mexico by 1818. Within that same year, it jumped an important language barrier: A French compendium, running to one hundred twenty pages, was published. In 1821-1822 an edition appeared in Mexico,<sup>9</sup> during its struggle for independence. Great controversy surrounded *La Venida*: in 1824, it was placed on the Catholic Index of Forbidden Books.<sup>10</sup>

But what did it teach? Lacunza's "key to the prophecies was his discovery of the two comings of Christ. He separated the confusing parts, and emphasized the second advent at the beginning of the millennium."<sup>11</sup> Setting aside the views of the early church Fathers from the time of Jerome and Augustine, he returned to earlier Christian interpretations.<sup>12</sup> He stressed Scripture over tradition.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning the ten toes and the stone that struck them and the feet, Lacunza had an essentially "Protestant" view. He insisted the stone was not the medieval church, as taught in the Middle Ages. According to him, the Antichrist was not an individual but a body. "Lacunza analyzes and exposes the absurdity of the usual Romanist view of an individual Jew, of the tribe of Dan, born in Babylon, received of the Jews as the Messiah, and conquering Jerusalem"—though in some ways he was a Futurist. According to him, the Antichrist existed from Paul's time alongside "the mystical body of Christ."<sup>14</sup>

He saw the harlot Babylon of Rev. 17 as papal Rome, which may well "at some time or other incur the guilt, and before God be held guilty of fornication with the kings of the earth, and amenable to all its consequences."<sup>15</sup>

*La Venida* had a wonderful career in Latin America. Amongst others, it fell into the hands of one who would study it avidly: the most remarkable Francisco Hermogenes Ramos Mexía (1773-1825) in Argentina. A great patriot, and a man with good connections, he was a subdelegate of finance as well as a delegate to the Argentinian legislature. He was, moreover, a man of considerable wealth, including his large estate at Miraflores, near Kaquel, south of Buenos Aires.

According to Froom, Don Francisco was considered "a man of genius,"<sup>16</sup> but was also known as the Protestant or, as Catholics called him, the great "Heretic of the South."<sup>17</sup> What did he do to earn this epithet? "Ramos Mexía's purely Protestant theology is on record through

his marginal notations on Lacunza (Vol. VI, p. 387), 'The just lives by faith, before Jesus'—virtually the same words as used by Luther. . . . He calls transubstantiation crude 'idolatry' . . . The advent of the kingdom of God is his sole hope and faith . . ."<sup>18</sup> He also angered people because he protested unfair treatment of Indians "by Catholic officers and by priests of the Roman faith."<sup>19</sup>

Ramos Mexía was more than a Protestant; his religion was similar to that of the later Seventh-day Adventists in North America. He believed in the Second Coming, kept the seventh-day Sabbath, and even seems to have had the gift of prophecy, as early as 1820-1821.

He based his ideas about the Lord's return on the Bible, in the writings of Daniel, Paul, and John. Apart from Lacunza, he knew the "teachings of the Montanists, the Fraticelli, the Bohemian Brethren, and numerous other 'sects,'"<sup>20</sup> and probably also the writings of Joachim. According to Ramos Mexía, "The world has passed its midnight, and he sees the dawning light of Jesus the Light Bearer, who will make all things right."<sup>21</sup>

To this unusual Argentinian, the seventh-day Sabbath was especially important. He kept it himself and taught others to do so as well. This happened "not only on the Ramos Mexía estate at Miraflores, near Kaquel-Huincul, but by groups on his farm near Buenos Aires, known as Los Tapialas, also south of the river Salado, and on the estate of the Patria." Furthermore, "he had established six chairs, or professorships, of theology in the South, evidently in and around Miraflores, and at the Indian camp Ailla-Mahuída (New Hills), the other name of which was Llamóida. So the observance of the Sabbath was quite widespread."<sup>22</sup>

At least once, Ramos Mexía was arrested and "ordered to cease observance of the Sabbath." We know this from a report on 8 September 1822 in *El Centinela* ("The Sentinel"). But he was a brave man and spoke with power and authority to his people. Indeed, "he considered himself as constituting a voice from on high . . . "from his establishment at Miraflores his voice was heard like the voice of a prophet in the desert, vibrant with the 'loneliness of the Pampa [sic],'" declaring, "The Omnipotent has sent me to you—the Omnipotent has placed His hand on my shoulder—and since He took the veil from my face, I have never remained silent."<sup>23</sup>

But Francisco Ramos Mexía was more than a religious reformer. On 9 July 1816, his country had declared its independence at Tucumán and named itself the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata. This was after the Napoleonic intervention in Spain, which unleashed a civil war. The struggle in southernmost South America continued under Argentina's great liberator, José de San Martín, though he "withdrew in 1822 in favour of the Venezuelan liberator Simón Bolívar, who completed the task two years later."<sup>24</sup>

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Amid this ferment, there appeared in 1820 a publication called *The Gospel That Is Presented before the Nations by the Citizen Francisco Ramos Mexía*, "at the height of the wave of reform that was sweeping over the nation." This was just after "the citizenry had called his brother Idelfonso Ramos Mexía into the turbulent swirl of affairs at Buenos Aires to act as governor." Part of the southern Adventist's publication focused on the Sabbath. He "sums up the struggle of all crea-tion from the days of Adam onward, as between unbelieving men, given to idolatry and paganism, and believers in the mediation of Jesus Christ through His blood and sacrifice. Sunday, he boldly declared, was the iniquitous symbol of the former, and the seventh-day Sabbath, the holy emblem of the latter—the sign between believing men and their Creator." The purpose of Francisco Ramos Mexía in writing this work was not simply theological. He was trying to enunciate basic principles for his country "in the very storm center of the church-and-state struggle over independence and ecclesiastical reforms."<sup>25</sup>

We can wonder what greatness Argentina missed when it failed to accept the ideas of this godly man and patriot. We also wish his writings could all have survived. But they did not. After his death, his fanatically Catholic family destroyed the majority of them. "But happily the marginal notations in his own characteristic handwriting have been preserved on the volumes of his set of Manuel Lacunza's *La venida del Mesías*, who was his favorite author."<sup>26</sup>

It is to this book that we now return, for remarkably it also had an influence in the United Kingdom—at that time the cultural and intellectual center of the English-speaking world. There, in 1804, the British Bible Society was organized,<sup>27</sup> and soon the missionary societies began to flourish. At least in part, this resulted from prophetic study, around the turn of the nineteenth century. A direct stimulus was the French Revolution, which variously enthralled and terrified people in both England and the United States.

Numerous British commentaries on prophecy were reprinted and also widely circulated in North America. An especially striking compilation was the anonymous *Prophetic Conjectures on the French Revolution*, containing ninety-six statements by eight well-known European scholars. In the United States it sold like hot cakes, the first edition being exhausted within just a few days.<sup>28</sup>

Particularly striking about this compendium were statements in it, published more than a hundred years before, that foretold a coming upheaval in France and a revolt from the Papacy, all of it based on Revelation 11.<sup>29</sup> One of these predictions was from the pen of a Huguenot writer, Pierre Jurieu, before 1687. In his *Accomplishment of the Scripture Prophecies*, he said, "France, which a long time ago has begun to "shake off the yoke of Rome," will "break with Rome and the Roman Religion."<sup>30</sup> And Robert Fleming, a Scottish Presby-

terian minister at Lothbury, in his *Rise and Fall of the Papacy* (1701) predicted papal humiliation by 1794, which was "his end date for the 1260 years (from Justinian on to 1794)."<sup>31</sup>

When Pius VI was arrested on 15 February 1798, "a whole group of men began to assert that that very date, 1798, marked the end of the 1260 years." One of the first to do so was Edward King, a graduate of Cambridge University, England.<sup>32</sup>

This interest was not limited to the writing of books and articles. Fervent preachers also went about to proclaim the Second Coming and the end of human history. Outstanding among these was Edward Irving (1792-1834) from Scotland, who had graduated from Edinburgh University in 1809 and was ordained in 1819. "Piety was his outstanding characteristic; fasting and prayer his habit. Deep sympathy and understanding of their joys and sorrows endeared him to his people,"<sup>33</sup> and in the pulpit he was powerful.

From Christmas day, 1825, he regularly began to preach about the Second Coming. Just then, a Church of England clergyman, who had been working in Spain, came back to his country and brought a copy of Lacunza's great work. It so happens that Irving "had been studying Spanish." He found *La Venida* a compelling book with a very clear message and decided to translate the whole of it into English.<sup>34</sup> This is what he did. Edward Irving's English translation of Lacunza appeared just two years later, in 1827, and had "a really remarkable circulation."<sup>35</sup> In this way, *La Venida* entered into the bloodstream of the Advent movement in the Anglo-Saxon world.

In Regent Square, Irving had a large and wealthy congregation. "There a thousand persons packed the church Sunday after Sunday to hear Irving's extended expositions of prophecy. In 1828 he undertook a tour of Scotland to proclaim the imminence of the advent. The overcrowded galleries of the largest churches could not accommodate the crowds, where he was heard with enthusiasm. The people of Edinburgh came out to hear him at five o'clock in the morning. At Holywood and Dunscore he preached to open-air congregations of 10,000 to 12,000."<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately this powerful preacher became bogged down in other issues. One was the human nature of Christ; the other, glosso-lalia—which plagued his congregation in October 1831. Though Irving never spoke in tongues, he was afraid of condemning the phenomenon. So when he came back from his highly successful tour of Scotland, he had to face a charge of heresy, and was removed from the pulpit in 1832. Following an ecclesiastical trial in 1833, he lost his status as a clergyman in the Church of Scotland. After this, his health gave way, and he died in 1834. All the ministers of Glasgow attended his funeral service "as that of a minister of Christ."<sup>37</sup> But he had translated Lacunza, and the message he had loved lived on.

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Froom states that in Britain and on the European continent "a veritable galaxy of premillennial writers had arisen, and at least eight periodicals were exclusively or chiefly devoted to the exposition of prophecy—the *Jewish Expositor*, *The Morning Watch*, *The Christian Herald*, *The Investigator*, *The Christian Witness*, *The Christian Record*, *The Watchman*, and *The Expositor of Prophecy*."<sup>38</sup>

Remarkably active in the field of prophetic exposition between 1831 and 1844 was Joshua William Brooks (1790-1882), "prebendary of Lincoln Cathedral, author, and editor of *The Investigator*."<sup>39</sup> He also compiled *A Dictionary of Writers on the Prophecies*, containing more than 2,100 titles, with 'occasional descriptions' of treatises, together with 500 commentaries on whole books of Scripture issued up to 1834."<sup>40</sup>

To this we can add a list of twenty men who, according to Loughborough, seem to have had a reasonably clear understanding of the 2300 days as a time prophecy, even if the sanctuary doctrine was not yet properly understood. Apart from some North Americans, most of these people lived in continental Europe or Britain.<sup>41</sup>

Much of this material was also read in the United States. With such tremendous prophetic witnesses, we would have expected the Advent movement, too, would greatly prosper in Britain; and, indeed, for a while it did—though not for all that long. Froom gives many examples of such writings and also mentions outstanding preachers, of whom Joseph Wolff (1795-1862) became especially famous. Let us dwell a little on his story.

Born and reared as a Jew (in fact, he was a rabbi's son), he decided to become a Christian. The rationalism of many Protestants disgusted him, so first he turned to Catholicism but later became an Episcopalian.

Known as the Bible man, because he widely distributed the Scriptures, he also urged the reading and translation of *La Venida*. All this angered many Catholics. In 1822, he disputed with Romanist priests on Mount Lebanon, telling them that the pope was Antichrist.<sup>42</sup> Soon, in 1825, the Catholic Church issued bulls against him, attacking him for distributing the Scriptures and teaching "heresy."

In London during 1826, he met with an international group. They concluded unanimously that the end of the world would come in 1843,<sup>43</sup> though later he thought it would be in 1847.

Also in 1826, he attended the first of the very important Prophetic Conferences at Albury Park, near Guildford in Surrey, England. Among those present were Edward Irving, William Cunninghame (1776-1848), and Hugh M'Neile (1795-1870). The last mentioned had been educated at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, and acted as moderator. For six days, these devoted scholars studied the approaching Second Advent, both Daniel and Revelation, the times of the Gentiles, and the Jews in prophecy. "All seemed agreed that the 1260 and 1290 days of Daniel

were accomplished, and that the remaining years of the 1335 had begun," though "certain questions were left open—whether 2300 and A.D. 1843, or 2400 and A.D. 1847 was the right number."<sup>44</sup>

In 1831, Joseph Wolff was sent as a missionary from Great Britain to labor, first, among the Jews of Palestine.<sup>45</sup> This was at the very time when Irving was nearing the end of his witness. Afterwards, Wolff traveled throughout central Asia and the rest of the world, proclaiming that Jesus would come in 1847.<sup>46</sup>

Wolff, like the apostle Paul, was a man of massive intellect as well as an untiring, persistent worker. To equip himself for carrying out his gospel commission, he learned many languages, including Arabic and Persian.

Between his missionary exertions, Wolf was in 1833 ordained to the Anglican priesthood. In that same year, he received the LL.D. degree from the University of Dublin. Later, in 1837, he was also ordained in America as a deacon of the Church of England and granted the D.D. degree by St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland.<sup>47</sup>

According to his journals, down to the year 1845, this converted Jew proclaimed the Lord's speedy advent in Palestine, Egypt—including Sinai and the shores of the Red Sea—Mesopotamia, the Crimea, Persia, Georgia, the Ottoman Empire, Greece, Arabia, Turkey, Bokhara, Afghanistan, Cashmere, Hindustan, Tibet, the Netherlands, Scotland, and Ireland. He preached on board a ship in the Mediterranean, at Constantinople and Jerusalem, on St. Helena, and in New York City, to all denominations.<sup>48</sup> Part of the time, he carried with him a printing press, donated by Henry Drummond.

In 1827, Wolff had married into the British aristocracy. His bride was Lady Georgiana Mary, daughter of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Oxford, the acquaintance being fostered by Irving. Also at that time, Joseph Wolff was naturalized as a citizen of the United Kingdom.<sup>49</sup>

He shared the message of the Second Coming with the people of more than twenty nations, belonging to many denominations and religions. Among those who listened to him were Christians (including Syrians and Chaldeans), Jews, Muslims, Parsees, Hindus, Yesees, Sabians. He spoke to pashas, sheiks, shahs, the kings of Organtsh and Bokhara, the queen of Greece<sup>50</sup> and, at a joint session, the United States Congress. On this occasion, the legislators were joined by the clergy of Washington, D.C. Wolff enjoyed a very special privilege: the use of the House of Representatives in the Capitol. The motion that this be permitted had been introduced on 18 December 1837 by ex-President John Quincy Adams, who referred to Wolff as "one of the most remarkable men living on the earth at this time."<sup>51</sup>

But did it always go well with this herald of the kingdom? No, he was often opposed and persecuted. At one time, like his namesake in the Old Testament, he was even enslaved. "On his last mission to Bo-

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khara, in 1843-45, the Persian banditti of the Khan of Khorasaun made him a slave, with the design of selling him to the Turkoman chiefs, but they finally set him free, declaring him their guest and sending the Arabic Bibles he gave them to their mullahs."<sup>52</sup>

When he died in 1862, at the age of sixty-five, Joseph Wolff was "contemplating a new and still harder missionary journey."<sup>53</sup>

In Britain, many other preachers, some of them very powerful and persuasive, also proclaimed the Second Coming and showed from the Bible how its end-time predictions and eschatology were being fulfilled. Therefore, we would have expected that island—the center of the British Empire—with all its spiritual light and great intellectual advantages, would witness greater triumphs for the three angels' messages.

But this, alas, was not to be. In the British Isles, the prophetic witness would soon be not only greatly opposed but largely stifled. Much of the blame for this must be squarely placed on clergymen and academics who contradicted it. A fatal factor was the ever-increasing acceptance of Ribera's Futurism, generated more than two hundred years earlier to counteract the Historical School.

### 1.4 From the Later Nineteenth Century to the Present

For prophetic interpretation and the correct understanding of eschatology, 1826 was a momentous year. The first conference on prophecy took place at Albury Park; Edward Irving was translating Lacunza's *La Venida* into English, preparatory to its publication the following year; he had furthermore, on the preceding Christmas, begun to lift up the trumpet to herald the Second Coming.

But also in 1826, somebody who was very antagonistic to what these men were doing suddenly came out with a dissonant counterblast, in the form of a seventy-two-page pamphlet entitled *Enquiry into the Grounds on which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John Has Been Supposed to Consist of 1260 Years*.<sup>1</sup> In it, he emphatically rejected the year-day principle, without which the traditional Protestant interpretation would collapse. The author was Samuel Roffey Maitland (1792-1866). Who was he?

Born in London, the child of nonconformist parents, Maitland was mainly self-educated, though he did attend St. Johns and Trinity College. In 1821, he was admitted to deacon's orders and two years afterward became curate of Christ Church, Gloucester.<sup>2</sup> Later he was librarian to the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace.<sup>3</sup>

Though Maitland eventually wrote fifty books, his notoriety (or fame, depending on one's point of view) resulted from his 1826 *Enquiry*, and especially the following paragraph: "After much consider-



ation, I feel convinced that, '*the time, times, and dividing of time;*' Dan. vii. 25; '*Time, times, and a half;*' Dan. xii.7; '*Time, times, and half a time;*' Rev. xii.14; '*Forty and two months;*' Rev. xi.ii—xiii.5; '*The thousand two hundred and threescore days;*' Rev. xi.3; are not mystical phrases relating to a period of 1260 *years*; but, according to their plain meaning, denote a period of 1260 *natural days*."<sup>4</sup>

As time went on, it would become abundantly clear that "he had contempt for much of the general concept of the 'Reformation as a religious movement'." He also attacked the orthodoxy of the Waldensians and Albigenses, to whom he mistakenly attributed the Historical School of prophetic interpretation, though—as we have noted—the earliest Christians belonged to it. And the year-day principle was discovered in the twelfth century by Joachim of Floris, a Roman Catholic.

Maitland pooh-poohed many time-honored prophetic interpretations. For instance, he did not believe the fourth empire of Dan. 2 represented Rome and said the 2300 days were literal time. He rejected the idea of the pontiff being the Antichrist, and attacked the Evangelical party, as well as many others, such as John Foxe, the sixteenth-century Protestant who had written *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.<sup>5</sup>

From what source did this controversial man obtain his ideas? There are "strong indications" that in his writings Maitland borrowed from Ribera. In the Lambeth Palace library, "he found Ribera's book on the shelf" and even "had it reprinted as a matter of public interest."<sup>6</sup>

Maitland was essentially a Protestant successor of this Jesuit writer, whose concepts we now need to examine further.

Ribera's ideas were published in about 1590 as a five-hundred page commentary on Revelation. In it, he denied that the papacy was the Antichrist, as Protestants had been teaching. His basic approach was to omit from prophetic scrutiny almost the entire period occupied in history by the Roman Church, except its very beginnings.<sup>7</sup> After Ribera's death, his book was revised and printed in five more editions within the next thirty-three years.

"Ribera assigned the first few chapters of the Apocalypse to ancient Rome, in John's own time; the rest he restricted to a literal three and a half years' reign of an infidel Antichrist, who would bitterly oppose and blaspheme the saints just before the Second Advent. He taught that Antichrist would be a single individual, who would rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, abolish the Christian religion, deny Christ, be received by the Jews, pretend to be God, and conquer the world—and all in this brief space of three and one-half literal years!"<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, Ribera retained the medieval doctrine that the millennium extended throughout the Christian era, from the cross to the coming of the Antichrist just before the Second Advent.<sup>9</sup> This cor-

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responded to the thousand years of Satan's binding as described in Rev. 20,<sup>10</sup> For him, this was an elastic, indefinite, or figurative period of time.<sup>11</sup> Now all of this is obviously pure Augustine.

But the latter had also taught that the Lord's holy ones, as represented by his church, were already reigning on earth. This conception Ribera could no longer accept. After all, the history of Catholicism throughout the Middle Ages had been dismal. For hundreds of years, within the church itself, the papacy had been drawing sharp criticism: from Bishop Arnulf in the tenth century, the learned Cistercian abbot Joachim in the twelfth, Archbishop Eberhardt II, and the great Dante in the thirteenth, as well as many others who followed them. And then came the Protestants, whose condemnation had by Ribera's time already swollen to a chorus that could be heard all over the earth.

So in this respect Ribera departed from Augustine's teaching and said the saints of the Most High would reign in heaven and not on the earth. In addition to this, he gave up the Augustinian interpretation that the seventy weeks of Dan. 9 had ended with the crucifixion,<sup>12</sup> which is what Tertullian had also believed.<sup>13</sup> Instead, he adopted two ideas from other early writers whom we have already referred to.

Irenaeus had pondered Antichrist's three and a half years, referred to in Dan. 7:25 and Rev. 13:5, and noted that the great reprobate would be sitting in God's temple (2 Thess. 2:4). Searching for another Scripture that may refer to such a period of time, Irenaeus thought he had found it in Dan. 9:27. Thereupon he allocated this period to Antichrist, although he did not link it with the seventy weeks or mention a gap.<sup>14</sup> It was, however, a radical departure; for Irenaeus was here applying the last of the seventy year-weeks, not to our Saviour but to our mortal enemy.

Hippolytus' view of this period was somewhat similar. He made "the sixty-nine weeks reach from the first year of Darius the Mede to Christ's *first* coming, and the seventieth to begin separately after a gap, just before Christ's *second* coming." Hippolytus divided the last prophetic week of Dan. 9 "between the two sackcloth-robed witnesses (Enoch and Elijah) and the Antichrist."<sup>15</sup>

This ancient writer, born in the second century, occupies a strange position in the history of prophetic interpretation. Like Historicists, Futurists have laid claim to him. He certainly interpreted Dan. 2 and 7 in terms of the distant past as well as his present and immediate future. Therefore his perspective was largely continuistic, despite that gap idea, which was a quixotic quirk. And how long would it be? As Hippolytus experienced his world, the future was likely to be very short, and so would the gap be; after all, he believed that Jesus would be coming very soon.

But Ribera, who lived about fourteen hundred years later, had a very different perspective. He was faced by the same problem that had confronted Joachim three hundred years earlier—and solved it in a different way: with an anachronistic hodgepodge of ideas from the past. Essential to them, and his greatest weakness, was the preposterous gap theory. Time is continuous. There are no gaps in it. The same holds true for the plan of salvation.

There is also another reason why the Futurist solution is hopeless. As shown in *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History* (2001) as well as a *Ministry* article (August 2002), there is simply no prophetic link between the 1,260 days/42 months/3½ years and the second half of the seventieth year-week in Dan. 9. It is contradicted by the simple fact that, as literal time, 3½ years do not consist of 1260 days. We can easily prove this with a simple electronic calculator.

According to the Gregorian calendar, the year comprises 365 days, except when there is a leap year. The actual number is 365.2422 days. So we must use this figure as the basis of our calculation, as follows:  $365.2422 \times 3.5 = 1,278$  days; not 1,260 days. There is an 18-day discrepancy!

Did Ribera not notice this? He certainly did, for in 1582—just as he was putting the finishing touches to his manuscript—Pope Gregory XIII proclaimed the new calendar and had it implemented throughout the Catholic world. Ribera even admitted the problem: "These days do not completely make up three years and a half, just as Christ did not complete a half year [*sic*] of preaching."<sup>16</sup> This, however, is a feeble argument. The fact that the Bible also expresses the 3½ years as 42 months and 1260 days shows that Inspiration meant this to be not an approximate but a very specific number. And it is meaningful only as a symbolic figure, in terms of prophetic year-days. In other words, this prophetic period just cannot, as literal time, be identical with the last half of the final year-week described in Dan. 9:27.

It is doubtful, however, whether Maitland—Ribera's successor—was also aware of this fatal calculation error embedded in Futurism. The same is true of his intellectual heirs, the present-day Dispensation-ists.

For all that it no longer recognized the pope as its head, the Church of England, to which Maitland belonged, had always contained an element which was more Catholic than Protestant. But in the nineteenth century, the distance that separated Canterbury from the Vatican was about to be narrowed, with Futurism providing the theological bridge for doing so. In this process, two institutions of higher learning were to play a prominent part.

The first of these was Trinity College, later the University of Dublin, Ireland. Here Maitland soon acquired a passionate disciple: Dr. James Henthron Todd (1805-69), the Regius Professor of Hebrew, who had become an Anglican priest in 1832.<sup>17</sup> Though a Protestant, he was

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also a nationalist, preoccupied with the history of his country, writing a biography of Saint Patrick and working hard on the resurrection of Irish manuscripts.<sup>18</sup> In 1838 and the next year, he was Donnellan lecturer "and chose as his subject 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."<sup>19</sup> His 1838 lectures were later published as *Discourses on the Prophecies Relating to Antichrist in the Writing of Daniel and St. Paul* (1840) with a dedication to Maitland.<sup>20</sup>

For Todd, too, the Antichrist was not the papacy but an individual, who would appear immediately before the Second Coming, with a Jewish rather than a Christian background.<sup>21</sup> Todd attributed the traditional Protestant views to the Waldensians and Albigenses, who had "applied the Scriptural symbols . . . of beast, harlot, and synagogue of Satan, to the Papacy." This line of thinking, he thought, resulted from Manichaeism. He did, however, also acknowledge the role of medieval Catholics like the spiritual Franciscans, Fraticelli, and followers of Joachim. According to Todd, "'the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's vision is even yet to come,' and is not Rome. And again, the fourth kingdom of Daniel 7 is not the Roman Empire, and the horns are not fulfilled in the Roman Empire. Furthermore, he maintains that the first, second, and third beasts are not identical with the gold, silver, and brass. He reiterates that the fourth kingdom 'will at some future period be established upon the earth.' Moreover, Daniel 11 is not a chronological prediction of the events of modern history."<sup>22</sup>

Todd was denying very much of what the earliest Christian expositors, including Tertullian and Hippolytus, had explicitly affirmed. Especially noteworthy in all this was that he did not regard Catholicism as an apostasy from Bible religion. For him, despite its errors, "the Church of Rome [was] a true Christian Church."<sup>23</sup>

It was no random circumstance that such ideas would be cherished at Trinity College in Dublin, or even that the man who held them should be a Protestant Anglican.

Founded in 1592, before the English settlement of North America, that academic institution has grown into one of Europe's premier research centers. It "enjoys the privilege of receiving all Irish and UK copyright material—a right it has had since 1801."<sup>24</sup>

In our time, it seems almost axiomatic that an Irish nationalist must also be an Irish Catholic. This has not always been the case. Herbert A. Kenny points out that England's oppression of Ireland began before the Reformation, inter alia when Anglo-Norman barons invaded that country in the twelfth century.<sup>25</sup> But England, always eager to benefit itself, has frequently also treated Irish Anglicans as poor cousins

and discriminated against them. Therefore, as Kenny reminds his readers, "a disproportionate number of Ireland's heroes" as well as "a disproportionate number of its literary and artistic geniuses" were Protestants, or at least their descendants.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed. An extraordinary number of the most eminent "English" writers have been Irish, often linked with Dublin. These have included Jonathan Swift, Richard Steele, Oliver Goldsmith, Richard Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, and William Butler Yeats—the greatest poet in the language after the earlier Wordsworth.

Surely, Todd's Irish patriotism and fellow feeling for likeminded Catholics provided a powerful motive for not wanting to see the Roman Church or the papacy as the Antichrist. The same is true of other figures we must now introduce.

The first of these was William Burgh, afterward De Burgh (1806-66). Educated at Trinity College in Dublin, he also became Donnellan lecturer at that institution, in 1853 and again in 1862. He produced a treatise on *Antichrist* (1829), as well as *The Apocalypse Unfulfilled* (1832) and *Lectures on the Second Advent* (1832). The last-mentioned work was directed against Hugh M'Neile, another Irishman but a staunch supporter of the Historical School. At first, up to 1821, Burgh himself had still believed in a premillennial Second Coming, "but soon afterward he became persuaded of the Futurist concept of a personal antichrist that would be revealed before the Lord's coming. He also expressed 'unfeigned gratification' over Maitland's Futurist *Attempt to Elucidate the Prophecies Concerning Antichrist* (1830)."<sup>27</sup>

Another Futurist with an Irish connection was John Nelson Darby (1800-82), who was educated "at Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated in 1819 as Classical Medallist. He was called to the Irish Chancery Bar, but soon afterwards, in 1825, took Deacon's orders from Archbishop Magee, by whom he was priested the next year. He was appointed to the Wicklow parish of Calary, residing in a peasant's cottage on the bog."<sup>28</sup>

Even the Plymouth Brethren originated in Ireland. "About 1825 Edward Cronin gathered the first congregation in Dublin, and was joined by other leading spirits, the most notable perhaps being John Nelson Darby and B.W. Newton. The name Plymouth Brethren is derived from the fact that Plymouth was long the chief center of the movement."<sup>29</sup> It was not, however, before the conferences (from 1830 and onward) held at the mansion of Viscountess Powerscourt near Bray<sup>30</sup>—also in Ireland—that this group "became the formulators and promulgators of the Dispensationalist-pretribulationist-Futurist premillennialism now widespread in Fundamentalist circles."<sup>31</sup>

Nothing has for the past two hundred years played a more important part in the religious history of the Anglo-Saxon world than

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the Irish connection, in both its purely Catholic and its ecumenical aspects.

Regarding the former, Paul Blanshard has in *The Irish and Catholic Power* presented a startling analysis. Especially his chapter on "The Irish Catholic Empire in America" shows how in 1953 the Roman Church of this country—and, for that matter, of the entire English-speaking world—was dominated by people from the Emerald Isle. "Every cardinal in the United States was of Irish extraction—Spellman in New York, Mooney in Detroit, Stritch in Chicago, and McIntyre in Los Angeles. (Moreover, every other cardinal in the English-speaking world was of Irish stock—McGuigan in Toronto, Griffin in London, and Gilroy in Sydney.)"<sup>32</sup>

But in another way, too, the ecclesiastical impact of Ireland has been immense and possibly even more dangerous to the Protestant world. In the later nineteenth century, Futurism—particularly through its espousal by Irish Anglicans—largely neutralized the first angel's message in the British Isles. More than that, it did much to Catholicize the Church of England and also to prepare the way for the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century.

While these developments were afoot, the religious ferment affecting Britain in the early nineteenth century had also reached Oxford University. There, however, it did not concentrate at first on eschatological events like the Second Coming or the fulfillment of the time prophecies in Daniel or Revelation. Instead, it began by using aesthetic and emotional methods, focusing attention on England's medieval, Catholic roots.

This movement began in 1833 with John Keble's sermon on "National Apostasy" at Oxford. It eventually caused the defection of many Anglican priests to the Roman Church. The most eminent of these were two scholarly men: Henry Edward Manning (1808-92), Prime Minister Gladstone's friend, and John Henry Newman (1801-90). Manning went on to become the Archbishop of Westminster—a purely Catholic title. That is, he was appointed head of the Roman Church in England. Both converts became cardinals.

The Oxford Movement formally ended in 1845, with Newman's conversion to Catholicism,<sup>33</sup> though to this day its Rome-ward influence has endured.

Another name for the Oxford Movement was Tractarianism, because it produced a series of ninety *Tracts for the Times*, issued in that university town between 1833 and 1841. The most important writers were Newman, Pusey, Keble, Froude, and Williams.<sup>34</sup>

Though the tracts discussed a variety of questions, "the underlying intention of all of them was," as Lytton Strachey puts it, "to attack the accepted doctrines and practices of the Church of England."<sup>35</sup>

But according to Froom, they also sought "to demolish the doctrinal barriers that separated the Anglican Church from Rome, and so let down the bars for the re-entry of many in 1845-46."<sup>36</sup> Tract 90 set out "to prove that there was nothing in the Thirty-nine Articles incompatible with the creed of the Roman Church," provided they were correctly interpreted.<sup>37</sup>

Newman was the editor<sup>38</sup> and by far the most influential personality of the Oxford Movement. A gifted writer and poet, "he was a child of the Romantic Revival, a creature of emotion and of memory."<sup>39</sup> He was also a slippery and charming sophist, about whom Thomas Huxley wrote when he had reread him, "After an hour or two of him I began to lose sight of the distinction between truth and falsehood."<sup>40</sup> All the same, Newman was absolutely enchanted with the Middle Ages, in which both he and Keble "saw a transcendent manifestation of Divine power, flowing down elaborate and immense through the ages; a consecrated priesthood, stretching back, through the mystic symbol of the laying on of hands, to the very Godhead . . ."<sup>41</sup>

Unlike the Lollards and other dissenter groups from the time of Wycliffe down to the Reformation, the Church of England had been founded by King Henry VIII (1491-1547), because he wanted a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, which the pope could not agree to. This was really a nonsensical as well as a sordid basis for separation from Rome. Newman and his friends did not deny that subsequent history, including Reformational influences, had been beneficial by cleansing the church in England of many Roman corruptions. But they thought "she had become enslaved by the secular power, and degraded by the false doctrines of Protestantism."<sup>42</sup>

Increasingly Newman felt pressed "toward the doctrines of a living and infallible authority in the Roman Catholic Church,"<sup>43</sup> which for him was just as important as the Bible.

Yet one special hurdle barred the way of the Anglicans on their way back to Rome: the Protestant teaching that the papacy was the Antichrist according to various Bible prophecies, including the 1260 year-days. But Ribera's Futurism, revived by Maitland and emphasized by Todd, enabled them to surmount it.

About this, Henry Newman was quite specific, in his essay "The Protestant Idea of Antichrist," written five years before he joined the Roman Church. He said, "'The discourses which Dr. Todd has recently given to the world, are, perhaps, the first attempt for a long course of years in this part of Christendom [Protestant England] to fix a dispassionate attention and a scientific interpretation upon the momentous 'Prophecies relating to Antichrist in the writings of Daniel and St. Paul.'"<sup>44</sup>

Newman added, "We entirely agree with Dr. Todd"<sup>45</sup> and also wrote, "The question really lies, be it observed, between those two alter-

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natives, *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 fulfilment is yet to come, or whether it has taken place in the person of the Bishop of Rome, as Protestants have very commonly supposed."<sup>46</sup>

Newman, much like Todd, attributes the Historical School of prophetic interpretation to "three heretical bodies," between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, namely the Albigenses, Waldensians, and the Spiritual Franciscans—"the third of which arose in the Church of Rome itself, as well as the Fraticelli, and the Joachimites, including Olivi," and afterwards "the Hussites, Lutherans, Calvinists, and English Reformers."<sup>47</sup> We, however, have traced it much further back, to the earliest Christian church.

Manning, whose defection to Catholicism came six years after that of Newman, held a similar view. He also declared, "Now, a system like this [Catholicism] is so unlike anything human, it has upon it notes, tokens, marks so altogether supernatural, that men now acknowledge it to be either Christ or Antichrist. There is nothing between these extremes. Most true is this alternative. The Catholic Church is either the masterpiece of Satan or the kingdom of the Son of God."<sup>48</sup>

But he went further. He not only considered the Protestant interpretation of Scripture and prophecy the "master-stroke" of deceit, but also added an argument based on Dan. 8:11-14. His ideas on this should interest Seventh-day Adventists, who exactly at that time in America had begun to teach the doctrine of a heavenly sanctuary and its cleansing from 1844 and onward.

According to Manning, the Jewish sacrifices in type apply to "the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist, the true Paschal Lamb, which came in the place of the type—the sacrifice of Jesus Himself on Calvary, renewed perpetually and continued for ever in the sacrifice on the altar."<sup>49</sup> As Manning saw things, Protestantism had already desecrated, in many lands, the continual sacrifice. "What is the characteristic mark of the Reformation, but the rejection of the Mass, and all that belongs to it. . .? The suppression of the continual sacrifice is, above all, that mark and characteristic of the Protestant Reformation."<sup>50</sup>

This, then, is what Futurism led to in nineteenth-century England. It defeated the Historical School of prophetic interpretation, together with an incipient British Adventism, and then went on to bolster the Oxford Movement. Not only did important Anglican clergymen like Newman and Manning become Catholics. They came to see the work of Reformers like Luther, Calvin, and others as the abomination that makes desolate the sanctuary service of Catholicism. For them, the *tamid*, the continual sacrifice, had become the sacrifice of the Mass!

Chronologically there is a curious parallel between the career of Adventism in America and of the Tractarians in England.



During August 1831, William Miller (1782-1849) covenanted with God to share what he had discovered in the prophecies, and was promptly asked to preach. He continued to do so until 1844.<sup>51</sup> In 1833, the Oxford Movement began, when John Keble also preached a sermon. The Tractarians formally ceased their activities in 1845, when Henry Newman joined the Roman Church.

These Catholic conversions coincided, in 1845-1846, with the seminal years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, when its pioneers were formulating three of its most distinctive doctrines: the Sanctuary, the Sabbath, and the Spirit of prophecy.

And so the reader may imagine: "Well, that's how it all ended! The Oxford Movement ceased to be a factor in the English-speaking world." But, no, those nineteenth-century events were only a beginning. They crystallized two competing structures, diametrically opposed to each other—and set on a collision course for the future.

With the Oxford Movement there had also begun a tremendous growth of Anglo-Catholicism within the Church of England; it has gone far to liquidate its Low Church or more Protestant strain; and the spirit of the Tractarians still lives on in the ecumenical movement.

This is how Michael De Semlyen contextualizes it: "The Reformed faith of Anglicans and Free Churchmen had been eroded over the centuries by the Counter-Reformation, and particularly in the nineteenth century, after the 1833 launch of the *Oxford Movement* in the Anglican Church, by John Henry Newman and the other Tractarians. As belief in the Bible was diminished by humanism, rationalism and liberal theology, Roman Catholic tradition was held firm and strengthened by the new Anglo-Catholic group in the Church of England. By the beginning of this century High Anglicans had joined liberal traditionalists in key positions at the head of the church, doctrinal differences were downgraded and ecumenism was well and truly under way."<sup>52</sup>

Since the twentieth century, the Church of England has been teetering on the brink of the abyss, about to jump right back into the arms of Rome; and—apart from that—two pontiffs, Paul VI as well as John Paul II, have described "Cardinal John Henry Newman . . . as the man who inspired the Second Vatican Council."<sup>53</sup> But to this they really ought to have added something about the role of Futurism, transmitted from Ribera to Maitland, to Todd, and finally to Manning and Newman, which broke through the prophetic barrier between Protestantism and the Roman Church.

In addition to these developments, Futurist Dispensationalism also migrated to America, where it was destined to become especially potent. Its original popularizer was the Scofield Reference Bible with its notes. This was first published in January 1909 and reissued at various times. "In 1967, E. Schulyer English wrote that the sales of

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the Scofield Bible had topped three million copies. Now, the number hovers near the five million mark with all language editions."<sup>54</sup>

But who was the author of this work? He was an American, influenced by ideas from Britain. "Cyrus Ingerson Scofield was born in Michigan in 1843. When the Civil war began, he was in Tennessee with his sisters. While there, he enlisted in the Confederate army. Military records show he fought in the Confederate Army for over a year in 1861-1862, then was discharged by reason of not being a citizen of the Confederate States, but an alien friend. Scofield told his biographer Charles Trumbull that he served through the war, and that he was awarded the Confederate Cross of Honor." After his conversion, he became a Congregational preacher in St. Louis and, from 1882 in Dallas, Texas. The next year ordination followed, after his successful raising up of a full-fledged church in that place.<sup>55</sup>

In the late twentieth century, Dispensationalism received a tremendous boost through two books by Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) and *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon*, plus a spectacular movie. The former book was an international best seller, with more than thirty million copies sold in thirty-one foreign languages.<sup>56</sup> However, the public largely lost interest in his ideas, when the Second Coming did not materialize in 1988. Lindsey had predicted Christ would return within a generation, that is, about forty years after the founding of the Israeli state on 14 May 1948.<sup>57</sup>

At the turn of the millennium, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins with their *Left Behind* series repeated Lindsey's success. Their conception is very similar to his, though they have avoided the pitfall of time setting into which he fell. Also, they present their ideas through the medium of fiction, though the underlying theology is supposed to have a factual basis, as explained in LaHaye's *Revelation Unveiled*.

He has retained the idea from the Cold War era that Russia will seek to conquer Israel. For this, he thinks it is due to suffer destruction at the hand of God.<sup>58</sup> He also maintains that Antichrist's kingdom will be fundamentally atheist, with socialism as the "basic philosophy" of its government and economic system.<sup>59</sup> Well, these notions are also now outmoded, like those of Hal Lindsey. Russia has returned to the fold of the Orthodox Church and is striving to become a more or less capitalist country.

Dispensationalism began as the nineteenth-century Protestant version of Futurism, a Jesuit product of the Counter Reformation. As demonstrated, it is basically Catholic eschatology.

The intellectual currents that started flowing in the British Isles during the early decades of the nineteenth century so many years ago are still with us, stronger than ever before, and are threatening

to overwhelm the entire Protestant world as with a flood. In a crisis hour, proponents of the Historical School must also confront it.

Now it rests with them, and particularly Seventh-day Adventists—its final champions—to safeguard and maintain this strain of prophetic interpretation. It is a precious and eschatologically an indispensable heritage. Central to it is the year-day principle. Many of the views we hold have come down to us from very long ago: from the Apostles, from the earliest Christian Church, from the Waldensians and Albigenses, from Joachim and other devout medieval Catholics, from the sixteenth-century Reformers, from Lacunza and Ramos Mexía, from Joseph Wolff, from the Millerites, and from those who established the Remnant Church—"which keep the commandments of God," having the testimony as well as the faith of Jesus (Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

Placed into our hands, historicism is a bright and shining torch. We must never let it go out, but hold it high, to illuminate aright the events that lie ahead, not only for us but for a benighted Planet Earth, as it plunges on through space toward its rendezvous with destiny, when the Lord returns.

## 2 Seven Keys to Unlock the Mysteries of Revelation

Christianity repelled him, and he did not care for the Bible, yet the British novelist and poet D.H. Lawrence wrote *Apocalypse*, an entire book about Revelation.

He confidently maintains it is "a kind of palimpsest, with 'a pagan substratum,'"<sup>1</sup> a statement requiring evidence. But he presents none, only speculation, as in the following passage, with its threefold use of the word *probably* plus a *surely*, an *if*, a *seem*, and a *must* . . . *have been*: "The oldest part, surely, was a pagan work, probably the description of the 'secret' ritual of initiation into one of the pagan Mysteries, Artemis, Cybele, even Orphic: but most probably belonging there to the east Mediterranean, probably actually to Ephesus, as would seem natural. If such a book existed, say two or perhaps three centuries before Christ . . . So that the old pagan book must quite early have been taken and written over by a Jewish apocalypticist, with a view to substituting the Jewish idea of a Messiah and a Jewish salvation (or destruction) *of the whole world*, for the purely individual experience of pagan initiation."<sup>2</sup> (Emphases added.)

Such is the mental compost he has muddled together, or he read it somewhere. But he at least had the grace to confess a few of his motivations. He said his very instincts resented the Bible,<sup>3</sup> and that of all its books he found Revelation "most detestable," if it is "taken superficially."<sup>4</sup> But his approach to the Apocalypse is far from profound. On the contrary, it is a wonderful example of how not to go about explaining the last book of the Bible.

We, too, now need to delve more deeply into it, though unlike Lawrence and the so-called scholars that may have influenced him we shall not be trying to puzzle out its meaning with an appeal to extrinsic symbols like those of pagan mythology. Instead, we shall be adhering to seven specific principles of prophetic interpretation. (There are no doubt more, but the ones we mention are, we think, the most important ones.) They are paying heed to the Bible's own internal expositors, comparing Scripture with Scripture, consistency, prophetic augmentation, historical correctness and honesty, avoiding the trap of the contemporary, and a respect for previous prophetic interpreters. Let us briefly consider these principles.

## 2.1 The Internal Expositors

An interesting feature of the Bible's predictions is that not infrequently they have a dual nature: part prophecy, part explanation. The latter often centers in a figure, either human or angelic, who acts as an internal expositor. That is, the Lord does not simply say what will happen by using symbols, but also provides inspired guides to tell the reader what they mean. Our first principle is to note and take seriously all such internal expositors. These first occur in Genesis and become very prominent in Daniel. They are also found in the New Testament, including the Apocalypse. Let us briefly note their significance with reference to the following.

**Gen. 40, 41.** While Joseph, the unjustly enslaved and ill-treated son of Jacob, was in prison, the Egyptian Pharaoh also thrust in two high officials who had offended him: his chief butler and his chief baker. In the same night, both had dreams, which they were unable to puzzle out, until Joseph explained that these were prophecies of their imminent future.

Afterwards Pharaoh also dreamt and could not understand the symbols of the cows and the ears of corn that he had seen. The Egyptian magicians and wise men were also stumped. At this stage, the chief butler remembered and told the king about Joseph, who was hastily prepared and summoned into Pharaoh's presence. Again the young Hebrew explained the symbols.

For the reader of the biblical text relating these experiences, Joseph is the Lord's internal expositor. It would be very incorrect and ridiculous to ignore him.

Everywhere, throughout Daniel, the prophecies are presented together with internal expositors. It is no doubt because of this that Sir Isaac Newton could state that of all the "old Prophets, *Daniel* is most distinct in order of time, and easiest to be understood: and therefore in those things which relate to the last time, he must be made the key to the rest."<sup>5</sup> In the following, let us observe the abundance of internal expositors:

**Dan. 2.** God gives Nebuchadnezzar a dream, which the king forgets. When none of the astrologers, magicians, or other wise men in Babylon can help, another Hebrew captive, Daniel—instructed, like Joseph, by God—recounts and also explains it. In studying this chapter, it would be wrong to ignore the internal expositor and simply come up with our own explanation, as some have done. For instance, verses 40 and 41 speak of the "fourth kingdom" and say, "the kingdom shall be divided." These divisions, represented by the feet and toes, are not—as God views history—a fifth and different kingdom. In other words, the feet and toes can only refer to states that developed out of the Roman Empire; they are not some coalition of international powers all over the planet, as some Futurists

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have imagined. The only fifth kingdom mentioned in Dan. 2 is the coming kingdom of God.

**Dan. 4.** Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of a huge, mysterious tree that is cut down and yet not destroyed. Again it is Daniel who explains it. The tree, he says, is the king himself; therefore, the "seven times" of verse 32 must be obviously literal and cannot be symbolic. To interpret them as a prophetic period extending over more than 2500 years with a terminus in 1914, as taught by some who go from door to door, is to ignore the internal expositor.

**Dan. 5.** At an impious feast, Belshazzar and his guests are terrified by a bloodless hand that appears and writes mysterious characters on the wall. Daniel explains them. They mean that the neo-Babylonian Empire is at an end, with Medo-Persia as its imminent successor. Again the now aged Hebrew captive is the internal expositor.

**Dan. 7.** Four beasts come up out of the sea. Daniel asks for an explanation from "one of them that stood by" (7:16), who now becomes the internal expositor. This celestial being also gives details about the fourth beast and its horn (vv. 19, 20).

**Dan. 8.** Daniel has a vision of a ram and a he-goat, with first one and then four horns growing on its head—as well as a little horn that follows these. An instruction is given to a majestic angel, "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision" (8:16). He is the internal expositor.

**Dan. 9.** Daniel, who has in the meantime become ill, seeks further illumination, and Gabriel returns (9:21) to explain the seventy prophetic weeks, in relation to Dan. 8. Again this mighty angel is the internal expositor. Nobody, neither Francisco Ribera, the Jesuit who went down into darkness four hundred years ago, nor one of his Protestant successors, should tamper with what he has to say.

**Dan. 10.** Daniel in vision sees two beings, one like the Son of Man, the other a majestic angel. The latter is Gabriel, who comes to explain further. He says, "I am come to make thee understand" (10:14). Once more he is the internal expositor.

**Dan. 11.** Everything in this chapter is literal explanation rather than a symbolic vision. Sir Isaac Newton convincingly links Dan. 8 with Dan. 11: "This prophecy of the Ram and He-Goat is repeated in the last Prophecy of Daniel."<sup>6</sup> But we do not quite agree with Newton's word choice: the prophecy of Dan. 8 is not so much repeated by Dan. 11 as it is explained. Gabriel, the internal expositor, does so in literal, largely non-symbolic language. He begins with the Greeks and continues through Roman as well as papal history, right to the end of time. Since some of this appears to be unfulfilled prophecy, it is still obscure, which is not surprising. What we should not do in dealing with this chapter is to deviate from the literal mode employed by the internal expositor.

**Dan. 12** directly continues from Dan. 11:1-3. Verse 4 refers to the time of the end. But in verse 9 Daniel is told to ask no more. It will all be sealed up until long beyond his life span, to the time of the end.

Internal expositors are also at work in the New Testament. The greatest of them is Christ the Lord himself. For instance, in the Olivet discourse (Matt. 24, Luke 21, Mark 13), he is not only a prophet in his own right; he is also a divinely appointed guide to help his hearers and us the readers understand, as where he says: "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:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains . . ." (Matt. 24:15, 16). Paying heed to these words, his immediate disciples were able correctly to identify their applicability to the Romans, who in the first Jewish war came to crush the uprising against their domination. Fleeing across the Jordan, all the Christians were saved. We also need to benefit by the insights provided by the supreme internal expositor.

**Rev. 1:1** states that Jesus used his angel in conveying his revelation to John, the beloved apostle. This celestial guide "has been identified as Gabriel."<sup>7</sup> He had communicated with Daniel. He also spoke to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19) and Mary, who would become the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26, 27).

**Rev. 17.** This chapter is not so easy to understand; therefore, here, too, the Lord has provided an internal expositor, an angel who explains about the woman and the beast: "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns" (v. 7). Apart from providing further details in other parts of the chapter, he speaks of "wisdom" (v. 9) as a prerequisite for comprehension. This can no doubt be taken to mean that clarity about these symbols is not likely to come easily, though we need not despair. It is also a challenge, like the one in Rev. 13:18 about the number of the beast.

**Rev. 19:9, 10.** After this vision, the angel continues as John's prophetic assistant. For instance, "he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." (Rev. 19:9, 10)

**Rev. 21:9-27; 22:6.** In these passages, the angelic messenger provides both visions and explanations. It the same one who showed the woman sitting on the beast and as an internal expositor explained their meaning. This is clear from the phrase "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials," which occurs in both Rev. 17:1 and Rev. 21:9. According to Rev. 22:8, 9, John again fell down to worship him; but he

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once more refused to accept such adoration: "For I am thy fellow-servant, of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." He went on to state: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22:10).

**Rev. 22:16.** At the end of the Apocalypse, we read the Redeemer's reminder, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches."

Shea points out that there is not nearly as much internal interpretation in Revelation as in Daniel. The former is a more complex book and harder to expound. And therefore Daniel constitutes the most important single key for unlocking the meaning of the Apocalypse. "Even when in Revelation there is an angel talking, he rarely interprets a symbol, whereas in Daniel the internal expositors say explicitly: this equals this." Not to use their guidance in our study of Revelation as well is to leave us "adrift upon a sea of subjectivity"<sup>8</sup> and to ignore the apostle Peter's warning "that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Pet. 1:20). This links up with our second principle, discussed below. But more than that, the internal expositors of Daniel and other Scriptures—including the Lord Jesus—also apply to Revelation.

### 2.2 Comparing Scripture with Scripture

Comparing Scripture with Scripture to explain a prophecy is not to be confused with a simplistic use of "proof texts." It is, rather, compatible with methods of literary analysis in, say, an English college course. Fundamentally it recognizes that the Old and New Testament together form a single, coherent whole. Its many references, quotations, and allusions are closely—often deliberately—interrelated. This is partly so because the various authors, including highly gifted poets, were intimately acquainted with the writings of their predecessors. Bible passages and books are not discrete but reveal a large measure of intertextuality. This, however, is not confined to the Scriptures; it also characterizes other literatures created over many centuries. An example from outside the Mediterranean world is the highly allusive poetry written in Chinese, which reflects millennia of development. Also, over and above this human factor, the Old and New Testaments are linked, and in their details closely intertwined, through the operations of the mind of God.

Much of Revelation is made intelligible by tracing its symbols and statements back to other Bible books. We can and need to rely on these, together with the internal expositors, if any are present.



In doing so, we shall not be referring to the Apocrypha or the Pseudepigrapha. These are problematic books that follow Malachi and antedate Matthew. Some are accepted by Catholics, while Protestants reject them all. They admittedly do have their uses as history and for providing a limited perspective on the nature of prophecy. Certainly the fact that 1 Enoch leans heavily on Daniel shows the latter was written before the second century before Christ, a favorite date of liberal scholars. But it is anachronistic to derive from such writings the concept of "Apocalyptic" and then retrospectively apply it to the earlier book they imitate.

So we will set this word aside. It has largely been prompted by a study of such extra-Biblical writings, which "in the absence of a living prophetic voice . . . relate alleged revelations attained through dreams, visions, and heavenly journeys." The apocalyptists even pretended to be this or that Old Testament saint and uttered pseudo-predictions. That is, they lied and were false prophets. Like the real ones, they also resorted to symbolism, especially imitating Daniel, "often going to bizarre extremes in the employment of a veritable menagerie picturing Israel's history and prophesying the coming of God's kingdom."<sup>9</sup>

The symbolism of Revelation gives up many of its secrets if we let the Bible be its own expositor. It must be allowed to speak for itself. Too often clever people like Lawrence and others are not really explaining the prophecies; they inject extraneous matter. Pondering the symbols, they really say: "This is what I *think* they mean" or worse: "This is what I *feel* they mean." Then there are those who seek support for their purely subjective ideas by claiming that the Spirit has inspired them.

All this is too much like the inkblot game devised by Hermann Rorschach. This was, to quote Webster, "A personality and intelligence test in which a subject interprets inkblot designs in terms that reveal intellectual and emotional factors." No, we need to start within the text of Revelation, together with its internal expositor(s). Furthermore, we should compare Scripture with Scripture and link up what the last book in the Bible tells us with the rest of its witness. For instance, Rev. 13 contains a number of clues that take us all the way back to Dan. 2 and 7.

Even usually sound expositors like Uriah Smith have sometimes wandered from this path, as in his explanation of Rev. 12. According to him, the woman clothed with the sun is the true church. With this, we are in basic agreement, though there is more to the symbol than that. But he equates the sun with the gospel era and the moon with Old Testament Judaism: "The Mosaic period shone with a light borrowed from the Christian era, even as the moon shines with light borrowed from the sun."<sup>10</sup>

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Though this is plausible, there is unfortunately nothing in the rest of the Bible with which to link it up. A more rigorous approach, in accordance with the principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture, necessitates the following question: "Where else in the Bible are the sun, the moon, and twelve stars used together symbolically?" The Scriptures contain a highly satisfactory answer.

Apart from Rev. 12:1, there is only one passage that explicitly deals with the sun, the moon, and twelve stars within a single metaphoric context, namely Gen. 37:9-11:

"[Joseph] dreamed another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, 'Behold, I have dreamed another dream; and behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.' But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, 'What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?'"

In these verses, the sun represents Jacob, the moon his wife Leah, and the stars the sons that would father the tribes of Israel. An objection to this interpretation may be that Joseph saw not twelve but only eleven stars. That is true, but a twelfth star is implied, for all these luminaries bowed down to him—the twelfth son.

Rev. 12 is concerned with God's people from the beginning of time, though the emphasis is on the period following the Messiah's birth. The woman does represent the church, as Smith and others have maintained, but in this chapter there is also a pointed reference to Israel. It is the Jewish nation and Old Testament Judaism that gave birth to the Redeemer.

### 2.3 Consistency

This principle, suggested by honest common sense, requires that wherever possible, the writer or speaker on prophecy should assign the same or a similar meaning to the same symbol wherever it occurs. We must either consider Daniel and the Apocalypse a chaotic jumble not worth our attention or believe that they are a harmonious revelation from a God of order. This means that there is a consistency within particular passages, as well as of the various chapters and books among one another.

For instance, in Dan. 11:2 Gabriel embarks on a remarkable future history, first of the Persian Empire and then of the Greeks, beginning with Alexander the great, whose domains would be divided (vv. 3, 4). After this, the internal expositor focuses on two powers, the king of the South and the king of the North (vv. 5-15). These are obviously two divisions of Alexander's empire, ancient Hellenistic Egypt and Syria. Then other entities come onto the scene of history. These we believe to be the Romans and the papacy, with the assist-

ance of another power (vv. 16-39). Near the end of the chapter, we once more read about the king of the South and the king of the North (vv. 40). What finally happens (vv. 41-45) seems yet to lie in the future. About this, we here have little to say; the point we wish to make is about consistency. If formerly the king of the South was Egypt and the king of the North was Syria (plus territories that used to belong to it but now lie in modern Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq), why should these entities be different in modern times? Also, since the entire first part of the chapter is about literal battles and conflicts, it must be an error to interpret its final verses symbolically.

Let us take another example. The seven heads and ten horns of Rev. 12, 13, and 17 should, according to the principle of consistency, refer to the same entities as in Dan. 7. These Apocalyptic heads have enjoyed the dubious distinction of evoking eight or more interpretations, which largely violate this principle. And what of the ten horns? They can be seen on the beasts of Rev. 12, 13, and 17, as well as their predecessor in Dan. 7. Surely they represent the same kingdoms, which must furthermore be related to the ten toes on the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2). If so, they always refer to the countries of Western Europe.

If this seems too simple and restrictive to imaginative minds, we are potentially faced with the idea of twenty-eight heads and forty horns, which are surely too many.

Consistency also helps to explain the conundrum of just what is represented by the beast in Rev. 17. For this, we need to consider the total scheme of the Apocalypse. It reveals that this book is concerned with only three major opponents of the Lamb: the dragon of Rev. 12, the leopard-like beast, and the two-horned beast (also known as the false prophet), both of Rev. 13. How do we know this? They are the only ones that end up in the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10). So the beast of Rev. 17 must be identical with one of these.

## 2.4 Prophetic Augmentation

Closely related to the principle of consistency is prophetic augmentation, which the expositor needs to understand.

Visions may basically cover the same ground, yet they are almost never repeated exactly. Instead, later representations add further details to the prophetic scenario, often with a change of focus or to zoom in on elements that require greater clarification. In the process, symbolism may be expanded, modified, or even changed, but it always remains consistent.

We call this prophetic augmentation, which is at work throughout the Bible as a whole and related to comparing Scripture with Scripture. It is particularly evident in Daniel and the Revelation. Prophetic augmentation interacts dynamically with historical events as human

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destiny unfolds, progressively unveiling the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

This principle is clearly exemplified by the vision of the four beasts (Dan. 7). They parallel the statue of the perplexing dream that Nebuchadnezzar had and the youthful prophet explained, yet they are not limited to what we read in Dan. 2. New elements not mentioned there are now added: especially the Little Horn and the judgment, as well as other details, such as the lion morphing into a frightened, quasi human being, to reflect Babylonian impotence in the face of the imminent Medo-Persian onslaught. The historical situation has altered drastically, and the neo-Babylonian Empire is now on its last legs.

The rest of Daniel also illustrates prophetic augmentation. *Inter alia* Roman as well as European power—together with the papacy—are predicted in Chapter 7. Further details emerge in Dan. 8. Here, however, the Adversary's attack on the Lord's people and the truth extends to the Messiah as well as his sanctuary. A new time prophecy, the 2300 year-days, is mentioned, though not discussed. Dan. 9 explains it in relation to the first 70 prophetic weeks or 490 literal years, which augments Chapter 8. More is also revealed about the Messiah's life and death, as well as the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Chapter 11 is a further, non-symbolic explanation of all the entities depicted in Dan. 8, expanding on their activities and final fate.

Prophetic augmentation is powerfully present throughout the Apocalypse. For instance, the seven heads and ten horns depicted in Rev. 12, 13, and 17 always—according to the principle of consistency—refer to the same empires and kingdoms. Yet the details are different, *inter alia* as symbolized by the crowns. In the first vision, these are on the dragon's seven heads (Rev. 12:3). The leopard beast resembles this entity, but its heads are without crowns; instead, these now sit on the horns (Rev. 13:1). But neither the seven heads nor the ten horns of the scarlet beast has crowns. There is, however, an addition. The heads are also now equated with seven mountains, and an immoral woman is sitting on them. (Rev. 17:9)

What do these changes mean? They signal a different period of time. Rev. 12 delineates the dragon, which is Satan through the ages, but it chiefly focuses on his rebellion in heaven before the world was created, his attempts to destroy the Messiah, and his persecution of the early church—though with a glance at the end time. The crowns on the heads refer to an ancient period, from Babylon to the Roman Empire. In Rev. 13, we see the Antichrist, also to the end of time; but for 1260 year-days (the greater part of his career) its destiny is intertwined with the monarchs which used to dominate Western Europe. In Rev. 17, however, the crowns are gone. Although the earlier career of Babylon is briefly described, the focus is now on the final period of

this planet's history just before the Second Coming. That portion of Western Europe which used to belong to the Roman Empire no longer has monarchs with dictatorial power. It consists of republics.

It is true, of course, that England still has a queen and Spain a king, but they are constitutional monarchs and largely figureheads. In his *Idylls of the King* (1859), Alfred Tennyson, whom Victoria had made poet laureate and would later elevate to the peerage, aptly described his country—then the planet's leading imperial power—as the "crowned republic" of Britain.<sup>11</sup>

Recognizing prophetic augmentation necessitates a realization that the visions in Daniel and Revelation should be studied together. Each book presents as it were not separate, disconnected snapshots but a connected film consisting of interrelated sequences. Even more, the Apocalypse is like a continuation of Daniel, though it also refers abundantly to other books in the Bible.

Alternative schools of prophetic interpretation, like Preterism and Futurism, often fall short by overlooking prophetic augmentation.

## 2.5 Historical Correctness and Honesty

In the second chapter of our first volume, we dealt a little with the interrelationship of prophecy and history. To this we now need to add. The predictions of the Bible should be correctly measured against historical events. This is our fifth principle.

Using history as a key to understanding prophecy involves a number of questions. Some of these are rather theoretical, for instance just how objective and scientific historical enquiry can be. Let us admit at once that in its higher reaches it results in a reconstruction from this or that rather subjective point of view. Paul Conkin and Roland Stromberg assert that this makes "much of history a stab into partial darkness, a matter of informed but inconclusive conjecture."<sup>12</sup> Reconstructing the past is, incidentally, also a form of literature, filled with imagination as well as scholarship, which needs to please and hold, not lose, its audience.<sup>13</sup>

So whose point of view do we reflect? As far as possible, we seek to be guided by God's perspective on history, as made plain in the Bible.

Let us note, however, that apart from the writer's overall slant on history there is such a thing as basic facts, and it is these with which we are here particularly concerned. Fortunately, nowadays, these are "rarely a point of controversy among historians; much of it they take for granted."<sup>14</sup> That has not always been the case. For instance, as one respected Bible Commentary puts it:

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"When Sir Isaac Newton wrote his *Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms* (published in 1728), his source material consisted of the Bible and the works of classical Greek and Roman writers. His conclusions drawn from the historical parts of the Bible have stood the test of time, and need only slight corrections even today, but his reconstruction of ancient history built on secular classical information was completely erroneous. . . .

"Bible commentators writing in the early 19th century, like Adam Clarke, were in the same predicament as Sir Isaac Newton. . . . Even today [1979], with our much greater knowledge of ancient history, we are still far removed from a correct understanding of all the interwoven happenings of the ancient nations, and are still unable to identify in all cases the figures and events described by the classical authors."<sup>15</sup>

Those words have been corroborated by the statements of professional historians. For instance, J.H. Plumb of Christ's College, Cambridge University, declared in 1965: "What the common reader rarely recognizes is the inadequacy of factual material that was at the command of an historian one hundred years ago or even fifty years ago. Scarcely any archives were open to him; most repositories of records were unsorted and uncatalogued; almost every generalization about a man or an event or an historical process was three-quarters guesswork, if not more." To this, however, he could fortunately add: "Laboriously, millions of facts have been brought to light, ordered and rendered coherent within their context."<sup>16</sup>

The twentieth century has begun to bring about what can justly be called a revolution in the field of history, and this work is still continuing. A present-day prophetic interpreter needs an awareness of such findings and insights, which were beyond the reach of former writers. Consequently, several older books, like those of A. T. Jones—though competently written—may contain some outdated historical material.

One area in which there has been a notable shift of perspective concerns the pervasive influence that Greek civilization has exerted on the Roman Empire. This can have an important bearing on a question like the following: Why is the Antichrist beast of Rev. 13 depicted as a giant *leopard*? With this, older writers cannot help us, for history as they understood it did not yet fully portray the dominance of the towering Hellenic intellect over the derivative Roman mind, theologically and otherwise. A further volume of our *Christ and Antichrist* will contain a number of chapters about this topic, which is most relevant for interpreting, inter alia, Rev. 13 and 17.

Closely connected with using history correctly is historical honesty. A shocking fact, to be substantiated in the next chapter, is that much of church history is tainted at its source—including Euse-

bis' important but biased *History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, which covers the period "from the birth of Christ down to 323."<sup>17</sup> We need to be aware that in ages past and up to the present religious writers have repeatedly perverted the facts, at times deliberately falsifying them. Zealous to promote the interests of their church, and no doubt for the greater glory of God, clerics have even resorted to blatant forgeries. Refraining from similar, shameful abuses needs to be one of our goals.

## 2.6 Avoiding the Trap of the Contemporary

Sometimes a writer, noting a superficial resemblance between prophecy and a contemporary event or circumstance, rushes into print. The book or article produced may be exciting and is almost certain to impress a certain type of reader, especially when a specific person is named. But when subsequent history turns out differently and contradicts expectations, the writer is caught in what we call the trap of the contemporary. Mockery and embarrassment follow. Avoiding this trap is another sound principle.

Some readers may recall that Adolf Hitler, Jimmy Carter, and Henry Kissinger—to mention just a few—have all been unsuccessfully named as Antichristian villains in someone's prophetic scenario. But Hitler is no longer with us. Carter and Kissinger are now in harmless and beneficent retirement. Once upon a time, Dispensationalist Hal Lindsey focused on 1948, when the Israeli state was founded, suggesting that the end would come just forty years later. His books were sold by the millions all over the world. But then 1988 came and went, and the world just kept on spinning as usual. He could not have felt good about it.

Rushing into the trap of the contemporary is an old mistake. People have been making it for centuries. The following can, we think, be instructive for people in our time.

In the first dozen years of the nineteenth century, Napoleon I, who had risen to eminence during the French Revolution, was still constructing his empire. This prompted Samuel Toovey, an Englishman, to write his *Essay on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, which was published under the pseudonym Philo Britannicus in 1813.<sup>18</sup> In it, according to Froom, Toovey declares, "the two-horned second beast [of Rev. 13] 'is now personated by France.' Then he tries to find the 666 in Bonaparte's name."<sup>19</sup>

Alas, in the very next year, on 31 March 1814, the allied forces conquered Paris, and on 20 April Napoleon was sent packing into exile on Elba, a Mediterranean island near Italy. He escaped and jubilantly returned to France but was soon defeated at Waterloo in 1815.<sup>20</sup> After that, he was transported to distant St. Helena in the South Atlantic, hundreds of miles from the Southern African Coast.

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This time, the Royal Navy ensured that there would be no escape. After a few years, he died. And then it was not France but the British Empire that became the global superpower for the rest of the nineteenth century.

Toovey had been just a little too enthusiastic. He may have finalized his spectacular prophetic exposition late in 1812 after 14 September, when Napoleon took Moscow, even though the retreating Russians had set it on fire. But before the year was out, the terrible winter drove the conqueror back to where he had come from, decimating his splendid Grande Armée. This should have warned the author of the *Essay*, but he did not tell his publisher to hold it back. Perhaps he thought the Russian debacle was just a temporary setback, yet it proved—for Napoleon—to be the beginning of the end. When Toovey's work appeared, it was already out of date. Today it is just a curiosity, known to only a few.

As a rule, individual people fail to have a sufficient impact on history for them to feature in prophecy. Occasional exceptions do occur. Of these, the most prominent is obviously Jesus Christ, who is more than human. Three emperors have also loomed large enough for explicit, individual prophetic attention: Cyrus (Isa. 45), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:38), and Alexander the Great (Dan. 8:21). The reason for singling them out is that they were virtually synonymous with their empires, which they founded.

But surely contemporary affairs can sometimes herald a real fulfillment of prophecy. Yes, they can; after all, another name for the historical approach to its interpretation is the *continuistic* school. Contemporary affairs can be very relevant, yet we need to be cautious in how we interpret and evaluate them, realizing inter alia that only time can really tell. An example of healthy caution is that of Adam Clarke (1762-1832), the famous Irish Wesleyan preacher and Bible commentator, in his reaction to the pope's contemporary capture and exile:

"If we knew precisely when the papal power began to exert itself in the *antichristian* way, then we could at once fix the time of its destruction. The *end* is probably not very distant; it has already been grievously shaken by the French. In 1798 the French republican army under General *Berthier* took possession of the city of Rome, and entirely superseded the whole papal power. This was a deadly wound, though at present it appears to be healed; but it is but *skinned over*, and a deadly cicatrice remains."<sup>21</sup>

Subsequent expositors have affirmed the importance of 1798, with 538 as the beginning date for the 1260 year-days. They have also noted that the apparent healing of the papal wound to which Clarke referred was temporary, a skinning over, as he put it. In 1801,<sup>22</sup> Napoleon concluded a Concordat with the Vatican, but nothing came of it. Through the ups and downs of the nineteenth century, the pontifical



beast just kept on bleeding from that deadly wound. In 1870, from a Protestant perspective, it seemed to be on the point of expiry; for in that year the Papal State was finally annexed to a united Italian kingdom.<sup>23</sup> By then, Adam Clarke had been dead for almost forty years, so in this world he could never know how correct he had been.

Nor was it possible for him, as for us, to see how—in fulfillment of Rev. 13:3—papal power was to recover since 1929, after its Concordat with Mussolini. This created an independent Vatican State, endowing it with a religious monopoly and huge financial advantages throughout Italy, including tax exemption. Il Duce also gave the pontiff some \$90 million dollars as a cash payment and \$150 million in government bonds. That was to compensate him for the loss of the Papal State in 1870.<sup>24</sup> Coming a few months before the Great Depression, this made possible brilliant investments, which turned the Vatican into a financial superpower, with a stupendous growth of Catholic influence all over the planet during the last part of the twentieth century and beyond.

Expositors that belong to the Historical School do not always avoid the trap of the contemporary. Like everybody else, they hurry through space-time with their fleeting lives, and sometimes stray from a more dependable path—perhaps because they are eager to see their Lord return while they are still alive. In his enlightening *Adventists and Armageddon: Have We Misinterpreted Prophecy?* Donald E. Mansell in an excellent survey shows over many pages how Uriah Smith, the grandmaster of historicist prophetic interpretation, on one subject committed this error, sending his church's exegetes and evangelists off on a wild goose chase that lasted for several generations.

James Springer White (1821–81), who with his wife Ellen and Joseph Bates had largely founded the Seventh-day Adventist Church, earlier maintained that the entity depicted in the last part of Dan. 11 as well as in the preceding verses 20–39, was the Roman power, both pagan and papal. This view observed the principle of consistency already dealt with and linked the whole chapter to Dan. 8, as Sir Isaac Newton had also done.

Originally Smith had accepted White's conclusion, but from 1871 veered away from it. Conclusive for him was the outcome of the Franco-Prussian war in which the formerly puissant French were defeated. "When Smith learned the humiliating terms of the treaty [signed on 10 May of that year], he evidently concluded that since the papacy's chief defender could no longer help the pontiff, the papacy had no future in the fulfillment of the last verses of Daniel 11." And after all, Garibaldi had already captured Rome during September 1870, taking away from the pope the last vestige of temporal power in Italy, where he had reigned as *il papa re* for a thousand years.<sup>25</sup>

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Smith became fixated on the Eastern Question, which concerned the Ottoman Empire centered in Istanbul (Constantinople), the Turk often being referred to as the "sick man" of the Middle East. James White protested against this deviation. Unfortunately he died on 6 August 1881<sup>26</sup> and therefore could have no further voice in the debate.

With Smith's ideas ascendant, a century of Adventist writers and evangelists—explaining both Armageddon and Dan. 11:40-45 in almost the same breath—watched the ups and downs of the Ottoman Empire with eagle eyes. Militarily it appeared to be ever more impotent. Then, in World War I, it made the mistake of joining the Central Powers: Germany and Austria. Like others in the Christian world, these expositors enthralled their audiences by pointing out how the British under General Edmund H.H. Allenby (1861-1936), closed in on and on 9 December 1917 captured Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> Finally, by war's end, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated. The British victor was "later nick-named 'Allenby of Armageddon'"<sup>28</sup> He actually called himself Viscount Allenby of Megiddo and Felixtowe. He had changed his title to incorporate a commemorative reference to his victory in the valley of Megiddo, although at the end on the tel it was only "a group of about 100 Turkish fighters who were defending the last vestiges of the Ottoman Empire."<sup>29</sup> The Second Coming seemed so near!

But then, to the world's amazement, the Turkish people rallied under a new and resolute leader, Mustafa Kemal Attatürk (1881-1938). They defeated the Greeks, who between 1919 and 1922 had invaded the western territories of the dying Ottoman Empire. Turkey swiftly became a revitalized and rather formidable republic, which still survives today. Increasingly it became evident that the Turk was not going to abandon Constantinople and somehow "plant the tabernacles of his palace in the glorious holy mountain" (Dan. 11:45) of Jerusalem. Though a few diehard writers and preachers persisted with this view, originated by Uriah Smith, until after the Second World War, events had obviously rendered it obsolete and shown it to be wrong. As Harold E. Snide, a Bible Teacher at Union Springs Academy, ruefully remarked as early as 1927, "from being the 'sick man of the East,' Turkey . . . has truly become the 'sick man of prophecy.'"<sup>30</sup>

Nowadays, Adventists have basically reverted to the interpretation that the power depicted in much of Dan. 11 is the papacy, originally enunciated by James White. But, as Mansell puts it, present-day interpretations of the "last power" in verses 40-45 are in "disarray."<sup>31</sup> Concerning this prophecy, he also quotes three similarly worded paragraphs by Ellen G. White, *inter alia*: "The judgments of God are

in the land. *The wars and rumors of wars*, the destruction by fire and flood, say clearly that the time of trouble, which is to increase until the end, is near at hand. We have no time to lose. *The world is stirred with the spirit of war*. The prophecies of the eleventh [chapter] of Daniel have almost reached their final fulfillment" (emphasis added).<sup>32</sup>

Despite this language, which could hardly be clearer and more self-evident in its meaning, Mansell thinks that "the 'war' Ellen White speaks of is not necessarily armed conflict between nations. As shown above, it is far more likely she is speaking of the persecution of God's people by the nations and, as previously pointed out, she is simply using military terminology."<sup>33</sup> One reason for believing that Dan. 11:40-45 requires a symbolic interpretation is a traditional view that these verses must necessarily be linked with the imagery of Rev. 16:12-16. But the two passages may just be somewhat different end-time prophecies.

For the reasons stated in a previous section, we think the final events of Dan. 11 will have to be literal in their fulfillment. We suggest the following possibility: To solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the great powers internationalize Jerusalem, with the pope as presiding authority and ombudsman. Islamic Jihadists find this unacceptable and stir up first Egypt and then an alliance led by Syria to sweep into the Holy Land, with the purpose of eliminating this arrangement as well as the Jewish state. First one and then the other invade it. Especially successful are the Syrians, helped by Muslims from Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey. Subsequently they turn on Egypt, which they invade successfully. They enjoy tremendous support in the Middle East, but are distressed by ominous news about developments in the East (possibly Iran with its Shiites) and the North (European forces, perhaps under American leadership, or Russia). At first, however, the Syrian-led coalition enjoys tremendous success, exterminating an immense number of Jews, for they "shall go with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many" (Dan. 11:44). They establish an Islamic state with Jerusalem as its capital. Nevertheless, the king of the North—Syria together with its allies—"shall come to his end, and none shall help him" (vs. 45). They may be annihilated by Western or other forces, unless they perish in some other, unspecified way.

This, however, is a very tentative idea and may be wide of the mark. Only time will tell.

Other prophetic interpreters who risk being caught in the trap of the contemporary identify fundamentalist Islam with the two-horned beast of Rev. 13, which is wrong for reasons we need not enter into here. It is, moreover, risky to name specific persons like Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden as figures in Bible prophecy. We believe that these men, like so many before them, will soon disappear into

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the mists of history and generally fade from people's minds.

Writers on prophecy could avoid the trap of the contemporary, together with the consequent embarrassment, by pondering the shipwreck suffered by those ill-fated views propounded at various times by Samuel Toovey, Hal Lindsey, and even Uriah Smith.

### **2.7 A Respect for Previous Prophetic Interpreters**

Another principle is a respect for, though not a slavish adherence to, the conclusions of previous writers in this field. For those who like us belong to the Historical School of prophetic interpretation this is more than important; it is indispensable.

Those who wish to add to human knowledge, scientists and other scholars as well as college students, take it for granted that they must, through research, first find out what predecessors in their field have already discovered. The writings of such people are evaluated. Their errors are discarded, but what is valid in their contribution becomes the starting point for further adventures of the human mind and spirit.

This is also how modern technology proceeds. For instance, on 16 December 2003, John Glenn, the first American who went into orbit around the earth, together with Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, the first men to walk on the moon, were at Kitty Hawk. Commemorating a hundred years of flight in aircraft heavier than air, they had come to honor the Wright brothers, who on that day in 1903 began to equip the human race with wings. Senator Glenn said, "Whatever we were able to do we were able to do because we stood on the shoulders of others."<sup>34</sup>

Even business people recognize this principle. In April 1959, Joseph R. Wilson, Honorary Chairman of the Board, Xerox Corporation, said to the Philadelphia Securities Association, "We build on the treasures of others' minds, present and past. Intellects of other centuries and from other lands contribute to our progress now because we can make use of their ideas."<sup>35</sup>

A great fault of enthusiasts who hurry into print to acquaint the world with their views about this or that prophecy is often to overlook or even willfully shove aside what others have done in this field. Since we belong to the Historical School of interpretation, we consider it both more profitable and safer first to ponder the findings embodied in a classic like Uriah Smith's *Daniel and the Revelation*, written well over a hundred years ago. Much of what he has to say did not originate with him, for it embodies centuries of research and hard-won insights obtained throughout the Christian era. Despite a few blemishes, most of his book is still valid. An outstanding merit is

that for his time Smith had an excellent grasp of history as well as contemporary affairs.

Another such work, though of a somewhat different character, is *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (1946-54) in four volumes by Le Roy Edwin Froom. As a compendious survey and far-ranging history of the field it has no equal. Denton E. Rebok, referring to it, asserts that it proves "conclusively that Seventh-day Adventists have made but few contributions to this field."<sup>35</sup> We think this overstates the case, but he is basically right: Adventists have largely not originated but rather perpetuated, and still maintain, a very ancient tradition. It is sad to record that present-day writers pay insufficient attention to Froom's monumental research.

Like scientists, moon explorers, and even business tycoons, we need to stand on the shoulders of others who came before us.

Where we occasionally modify the positions adopted by intellectual giants like Martin Luther, Charles Wesley, Sir Isaac Newton, Uriah Smith, Le Roy Edwin Froom, and other expositors, we are led to do so by no frivolous motives or desire to reinvent the prophetic wheel. More often than not, our guide is a more accurate knowledge of history, made possible by subsequent scholarship, or the fact that events occurring after their time have brought greater clarity.

A good example is provided by the seven heads of Rev. 17. In Smith's time and country, nineteenth-century America, both historical theory and the educational system placed an excessive emphasis on ancient Rome. This helped to produce the idea that those heads refer to seven stages of Roman government. Today we no longer need to take this interpretation seriously. Instead, we know that intellectually—and in their culture as a whole—the Romans were heavily, even slavishly, indebted to the Greeks. This enables us to view the role of the latter in a different light. It illuminates a number of prophecies, including Rev. 13 and 17.

Another reason for being acquainted with what previous writers have discovered or propounded is that God has had something to say to all his children throughout the ages, not only to our own or some future time. To think that Daniel and Revelation are mostly about us is being shortsighted and not a little egocentric. (Through the centuries there have been many people, long vanished, who imagined such a thing about their own time.)

In all this, moreover, we need to be aware of the rivalry between the Historical School of prophetic interpretation and Futurism, which looms so large in Dispensationalist thinking. This is rooted in the traditional Catholic approach to the subject, which has evolved from the third and fourth centuries onward and was modified by a Jesuit intellectual, Francisco Ribera, during the Counter Reformation toward the end of the sixteenth century.

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Futurism seeks to focus all the readers' attention on the last few years of human history, brushing aside the views that predominated in Protestant countries between the Reformation and the early nineteenth century. It seeks to divert attention from the career of the real Antichrist, which right now is quietly but powerfully proceeding apace.

Furthermore, we maintain as did Froom that the Lord has not only foretold the future through the Scriptures but also from time to time provided "prophetic witnesses," people who could read what Jesus called the signs of the times. Though not directly inspired like Daniel or John, these have usually also been guided by the Holy Spirit—over and above their ability and despite the imperfections of some things they have written. Through the ages, they have augmented the work of the internal expositors to whom we have already referred. It is therefore not inappropriate to call them external expositors.

The apostle Peter points out "that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private *interpretation*" (emphasis added). That is, the Holy Spirit who inspires the prophets also enables us to understand what they have written. (2 Pet. 1:20, 21) Our Heavenly Father is anxious for us to grasp what the Bible has to say about the future. He has not left us with a heap of unintelligible symbols, yet only those who have a disposition to serve him will understand.

The Bible says so, especially in relation to time prophecies: "The wicked shall act wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand" (Dan. 12:10, 11). This is very forceful in the Septuagint, the Old Testament Greek translation used by the apostles and the early Christians: "ἀνομήσωσιν ἄνομοι, καὶ οὐ συνήσωσι πάντες ἄνομοι" (anomēsōsin ánomoi, kai ou sunēsōsi pántes ánomoi, "the lawless ones will act lawlessly, and none of the lawless will understand")—only those who are wise unto salvation. That word *ánomoi* ("lawless ones") is most significant. In the singular, it is Paul's name for the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8). Those who follow or consort with the Beast, featured in Rev. 13, adopting its Futurist explanations, cannot expect the Lord to illuminate their minds as they try to puzzle out what the Scriptures predict.

For interpreting prophecy, especially Revelation, we need a sound methodology. We ourselves apply and highly recommend the seven principles explained above. They are, we think, indispensable. And so is a teachable spirit, on the part of those that love and obey the Lord, who will guide them into all truth.

## 3 History as Christian Forgery

**A**s far back as 1700, discerning Germans—whose nation had invented the printing press—began to say, "er lügt wie gedruckt" (he lies as though it were printed). What they especially had in mind were people who through the newspapers were massaging the truth. All over the world such skepticism, far from abating, now encompasses all the popular media. Above all, the word of rulers and politicians is suspect.

Not so well known is that those who seriously research the events and ideas of former generations have had the same problem and been compelled to extend this attitude back into the past. According to Barbara Tuchman "any historian with even the most elementary training knows enough to approach his source on the watch for concealment, distortion, or the outright lie."<sup>1</sup> And in 1944 Sir Basil H. Liddell Hart, a British military writer both respected and controversial, was even more pointed: "Nothing can deceive like a document." It lies as though it were printed! His starting point was not only the memoirs but the official archives of World War I. He found that generals and others in high office edited the past with a view to how the future would regard them. Documents were altered retrospectively, destroyed, or even replaced with outright forgeries.<sup>2</sup>

Such distortions have a long, dishonorable history. They first appear in ancient writings about generals, kings, and emperors, of which the following two examples can be instructive.

Ramses II (1279-1213 BC) of the nineteenth dynasty during Egypt's New Kingdom is often called Ramses the Great, as he also wished to portray himself by erecting hundreds of huge, megalomaniac monuments throughout Egypt and Nubia. He loved to brag about his achievements "with grandiose scenes of his victories." He fought against the Hittites for seventeen years. Their greatest battle was at Kadesh on the Orontes in 1299 BC, which Ramses also celebrated as a great victory.<sup>3</sup> But this is an unsubtle lie engraved in stone. The battle of Kadesh against King Muwatallis was no better than a draw. Ramses could not defeat the Hittites, who fought him to a standstill. "The actual result was a truce between the two nations."<sup>4</sup>

Half a millennium later, King Sennacherib (705—681 BC) came to occupy the center stage of Middle Eastern history. After a tempo-

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rary weakening of Assyria, he rebuilt Nineveh and made it his capital. He became a mighty and seemingly irresistible monarch, crushing many rebellions against his empire. On a clay prism that archaeologists have recovered he tells how his campaign against Judah and its neighbors was a total success. He mentions capturing no fewer than forty-five of its fortified cities as well as laying siege to its capital. About this, he boastfully states that he made Hezekiah "a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage." This is all corroborated by the parallel biblical records. Sennacherib omits to state, however, his failure to capture the city;<sup>5</sup> he was compelled to leave without accomplishing this design. Instead, he had to content himself by accepting "a heavy indemnity (c.f. II Kings 18-19),"<sup>6</sup> But this was most uncharacteristic. Why would a predatory Assyrian king accept a part of the city's treasure if he could have had all of it? Actually he was driven off by a lethal pestilence that the Bible mentions (2 Kings 19:35-36) but which he passes over in silence.

C.W. Ceram, surveying all the campaigns of this megalomaniac emperor, declares: "His chronicling of these deeds is exaggerated, and freely invented in point of numbers. Indeed, the records of Sennacherib bring to mind the typically modern picture of a dictator shouting vast lies at vast audiences, civilian or military, confident in the knowledge that they will be swallowed whole."<sup>7</sup> That is, until twenty-six hundred years later archaeologists patiently dug up and reconstructed the truth.

Then there is the *Aeneid*, Virgil's magnificent cock-and-bull story about the origins of the Romans, who he said were descended from the Trojans. Aeneas, his hero, was even the son of Venus, a goddess! Well, the ancestors of the people who settled in Latium, where Rome developed on its seven mountains by the Tiber, possibly were immigrants, but from the Balkans<sup>8</sup>—not from northeastern Asia Minor near the Hellespont, where Troy used to stand so many centuries before. Just a little thinking suffices to disprove this myth. Apart from the bit about the Roman gods, we only need to reflect on a single, crucial fact: the people of Troy and its surroundings would have spoken Mycenaean Greek, not Latin, as the Romans did.

The *Aeneid* is marvelous poetry and a splendid literary fiction, one of the best in the world; but it also grossly distorts the history of the Romans, whose most significant antecedents were much more local: the Etruscans and their contemporaries, the Greeks. The latter had settled on or just off the Italian peninsula a few centuries before. In this matter, Virgil's great epic is downright political propaganda, singing the praises of Augustus, the first emperor, a sly dictator (really just an upstart, Julius Caesar's adoptive son), for whom the



poet was helping to invent an illustrious past. For this, as well as his other works, he was well rewarded in suitably material ways.

Owing to the example and prestige of Virgil's *Aeneid*, this myth sent down many echoes through the centuries. In the Middle Ages and beyond, it enabled other European peoples also to lie to themselves about their origins, warping the Western European mind by stuffing it with stories about illustrious forebears.

"For some thousand years there persisted a literary—even a patriotic—tradition that the dispersed heroes of Troy had founded certain Western nations, notably the British and the French. In about the middle of the 7th century a Frankish chronologer, Fredegarius, related how a party of the Trojans, after the destruction of their city, settled between the Rhine, the Danube, and the sea, under their king, Francio. This is the first known reference to the Trojan origin of the Franks, but a long succession of chroniclers, genealogists, and panegyristes echoed it. The myth was still persistent enough in the 16th century to inspire . . . Ronsard's national epic *La Franciade* (1572)"<sup>9</sup>

Across the English Channel, "in Britain a similar tradition had been early formulated (before the 9th century) that Brutus, the great-grandson of the hero Aeneas, legendary founder of the Romans, was the founder of the British people. . . . This tradition was followed by Wace of Jersey in his *Roman de Brut* (1155), and it persisted until the time of Shakespeare."<sup>10</sup> According to this myth, the British are a species of Romans!

More striking still was a masterpiece in Portuguese, *Os Lusíadas*, 1572 ("The Lusíads") by Luís de Camões. This is "the greatest of all Renaissance epics after the pattern of the Roman poet Virgil."<sup>11</sup> The name of the book means "the sons of Lusus, companions of Bacchus and mythical first settlers in Portugal."<sup>12</sup> So the people of that country supposedly also had no ordinary ancestors!

Historically, of course, those tales about European nations somehow being Romans and descendants of fugitives from Asia Minor or thereabouts are nonsense, pure and simple, as was their prototype, which Virgil wrote. So why should we trouble the reader with it? It so happens that his fabrication has a bearing on the understanding of prophecy as it relates to the Romans themselves. What the Bible predicted about them can only be properly understood in the light of their real history as they interrelated with and were profoundly shaped by other people living in Italy and Sicily before the Christian era, especially the Greeks.

Unfortunately it is not only pagans and unbelievers that have tampered with truth, adjusting the historical record to flatter them or

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suit their purposes. Many who profess to serve the Lord, especially clerics, have also done so, on numerous occasions. Liddell Hart takes a very jaundiced view of them: "I have found in dealing with men of fine character that if they are devout and orthodox Christians one cannot depend on their word as well as if they are not. The good man who is a good churchman is apt to subordinate truth to what he thinks will prove good."<sup>13</sup>

This, we think, is too harsh—though it is a sad testimony to the impression that Christians sometimes make on unbelievers. It also overlooks the role of other religions and ideologies, in fact every paradigm by which people live, including agnosticism and atheism. Yet it is true that men of the cloth have often distorted facts or badly misinterpreted them, and therefore much of church history is suspect.

Most notorious has been a forgery known as the Donation of Constantine, which the papacy used for many centuries to validate its claims to Western European dominion in both church and state. Christians who doubted its authenticity were burned at the stake, for instance at Strasbourg in 1478, and yet Renaissance scholars convincingly exposed its falsity, which Catholicism today acknowledges.

To it were added the False Decretals, otherwise known as the Decretals of Pseudo-Isidore. This ninth-century collection of Catholic ecclesiastical laws seems to have originated somewhere in France.<sup>14</sup> Purporting to contain "the decrees of councils and decretals of popes (written replies on questions of ecclesiastical discipline) of the first seven centuries," it also cleverly blended genuine material with blatant forgeries. It included the Donation.

All this fraud was to bolster the power of the medieval church and protect it from governmental interference. First brought to light at the Council of Soissons in 853, "the False Decretals was also used extensively during the reform of Pope Gregory VII in the 11th century." It was only in the seventeenth century that David Blondel, a Protestant theologian, convincingly refuted these documents.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, this material entered into the foundation on which medieval papal power was erected and the effects have never been eliminated from the Catholic mind.

More of this will be said in another, forthcoming book.

Of course, not all people are deliberate liars or prone to drastic distortions. An eminent exception, mentioned by Sir Alec Guinness, was the famous French humanist Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), a man "who could always see the two sides of a coin."<sup>16</sup> Another, in the early Christian period, was Augustine of Hippo. He clashed with Jerome, an almost equally venerated Catholic worthy, for attempting to explain away the Apostle Peter's denial of the gospel at Antioch

through his cowardly anti-Gentile behavior, as well as the fact that Paul reprimanded him in public.

The record of this episode obviously undermined the idea of Peter's being pope, elevated above all criticism by his apostolic colleagues, and therefore infallible. So Jerome suggested that the two men were play-acting. He said "'Peter's feigned observance of Jewish law (which was offensive to gentile believers) was countered by Paul's feigned rebuke, so that both camps would be kept safe—those favoring circumcision would follow Peter, and those resisting it would praise the liberty preached by Paul.' This is what Jerome calls 'profitable dissemblance' (*utilis simulatio*), by which 'one dissembles for a time, in order to work out one's own and others' salvation.'"<sup>17</sup> What an interesting euphemism for lying!

But Augustine, "though he recognized a special office in the Pope, was not surprised by the notion that Popes could err, just as Peter had at Antioch."<sup>18</sup> That is, he did not believe in papal infallibility. And he hated lying, which boded ill for this relationship with his fellow Catholic, who could be most unpleasant toward people he disliked. As Wills expresses it, "Augustine did not know, when he first addressed Jerome in his distant Bethlehem monastery, that he was seeking the truth from one of history's great liars. Jerome's biographer, J.N.D. Kelly, has shown how his subject lied whenever it served his purpose to do so."<sup>19</sup>

Much more harmful, however, than Jerome's small-time twisting of truth had been the large-scale falsification perpetrated by Eusebius (AD 265-340), the church historian.

He was born in Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine, where he also studied at the institute created by Origen after leaving Alexandria. This was "the most famous centre of Christian philosophy."<sup>20</sup> Here Eusebius studied under Pamphilus, the "most learned" pupil and successor of Origen.<sup>21</sup> He imbibed an "intense admiration" for the Alexandrian founder of that school, wrote voluminously, and collaborated with Pamphilus in writing a defense of their Master.<sup>22</sup>

Eusebius' greatest work is his *History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*. Its ten books cover the period "from the birth of Christ down to 323, the date of the victory of Constantine over Licinius being taken as the end of the period of persecution."<sup>23</sup> It became, for the medieval period,<sup>24</sup> the basic document for histories about early Christianity and kept on influencing all subsequent writers.<sup>25</sup> Even in our day, most Westerners still think of the original church as it was depicted by that ancient bishop and his successors.

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Owing to his pivotal role for so many centuries after him, we would therefore have liked to see in Eusebius the qualities that mark the best historians, who combine—as George M. Trevelyan expresses it—a "knowledge of the evidence with 'the largest intellect, the warmest human sympathy and the highest imaginative powers.'"<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately the goal that Eusebius set himself was not to give a balanced account of ancient Christianity as a whole. His history is both incomplete and very partial to the imperial church co-founded by Constantine and the bishops of the fourth century. It has also been strongly colored by the author's personal attitude toward that emperor. Gibbon noticed this bias over two hundred years ago:

"The gravest of the ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius himself, indirectly confesses that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of religion. Such an acknowledgment will naturally excite a suspicion that a writer who has so openly violated one of the fundamental laws of history has not paid a very strict regard to the observance of the other; and the suspicion will derive additional credit from the character of Eusebius, which was less tinctured with credulity, and practised in the arts of court, than that of almost any of his contemporaries."<sup>27</sup>

This is especially noticeable in his *Praise of Constantine*. According to Michael Grant, the historian-bishop falsified the emperor into "a mere sanctimonious devotee." His version of the man's character and events is often erroneous, contradictory, or factually untrue, with "dishonest suppressions."<sup>28</sup> Andrew Louth characterizes such productions as "works of flattery."<sup>29</sup>

Paul Johnson demurs a little by saying that "Eusebius was in many ways a conscientious historian, and he had access to multitudes of sources which have since disappeared." Nevertheless, he had to admit that the *History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* was "a reconstruction for ideological purposes." Eusebius really represented only "the wing of the Church which had captured the main centres of power and established a firm tradition of monarchical bishops, and had recently allied itself with the Roman state." Moreover, he sought to show retrospectively that in organization and faith this is what mainstream Christianity had always been about.<sup>30</sup> Above all, he focused on Constantine's new Hellenic state with its capital on the Bosphorus. In matters of religion, Eusebius seems to have been the emperor's chief adviser, and at the Council of Nicaea even sat on his right hand.<sup>31</sup>

But entire and prolific branches of Christianity lay outside or on the periphery of the Roman Empire. These the episcopal historiographer largely ignored, so that huge communities of believers in Britain, Ireland, Ethiopia, Syria, Georgia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, In-

dia, and Central Asia, received scant or no coverage in his writings.

Louis Nizer, a celebrated American courtroom lawyer, once pointed out that "the truth is necessarily the reconstruction of the past." This, however, results only from responsible "factual resurrection,"<sup>32</sup> at the hands of someone equipped with the necessary forensic skills and a passion for truth. But through strategic omissions, slanting, and improper emphasis it is easily possible to lie with facts. What results from such a reconstruction, or rather misconstruction, of the past is not truth but falsehood.

Another problem with Eusebius is that at times he intermingles history with pagan mythology. According to Jean Seznec, he explains in his *Ecclesiastical History* that the Babylonian god Baal was in reality the first king of the Assyrians, and that he lived at the time of the war between the Giants and the Titans (PG, XIX 132-133). In this he was probably influenced by Clement of Alexandria, who had from the pagan writer Euhemerus accepted the idea that originally the gods were simply deified human beings. It was at any rate Eusebius "who bequeathed to the Middle Ages, through St. Jerome, the prototype of those crude historical synchronizations which grouped all the events and characters of human history, from the birth of Abraham down to the Christian era (including the gods themselves), into a few essential periods."<sup>33</sup>

The religion to which Eusebius belonged was not the same thing as the Christianity of Jesus or the apostles, but in some ways a brand-new structure, resulting from its accommodation with the empire. An indication of this is the fact that a Roman bishop's area of control is still known as a diocese; this was one of the imperial subdivisions introduced by the pagan emperor Diocletian, who preceded Constantine. In many ways the church became "a mirror-image . . . the Doppelgänger of the empire."<sup>34</sup>

Eusebius has been guilty of a double misrepresentation. Not only did doctrinal deviations put a great distance between what the imperial church believed and what Jesus had taught, but statecraft corrupted Christianity. Writing to Peter Carr on 10 August, 1787, Thomas Jefferson, that clear-headed student of the past and Gibbon's contemporary, puts it in a nutshell: "But a short time elapsed after the death of the great reformer of the Jewish religion, before his principles were departed from by those who professed to be his special servants, and perverted into an engine for enslaving mankind, and aggrandizing their oppressors in Church and State."<sup>35</sup> This is a concept Jefferson kept close to his heart.

The scope of Eusebius' history was also unacceptably limited. "He knew next to nothing about the Western Church,"<sup>36</sup> according to

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the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. And Andrew Louth says he also knew "next to nothing about Syriac Christianity."<sup>37</sup>

If so, in the latter case the ignorance was of his own choosing. He was probably born in Palestine or Syria and, according to Froom, "knew Syriac as well as Greek, and was liberally educated in Antioch and Caesarea."<sup>38</sup> A scholarly fourth-century bishop from that area could hardly have been unacquainted with what so many people in his general area believed. The silence of Eusebius was deliberate. The reason for this is that Syrian and Mesopotamian Christianity represented a stark alternative to the imperial religion that he supported; for in his day it was not a small, obscure community, but a large and flourishing branch of the church.

Amazingly, even today, a truly large number of westerners still know virtually nothing about those Christians in Asia. Once, when I referred to the Church of the East in a telephone conversation with a respected Protestant theologian, whom it is unnecessary to name, he confessed that he was totally ignorant of its very existence. Such is the fruitage of Eusebius' *History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*.

This omission constitutes a major defect of that work, for anciently the Syrian and Mesopotamian church played a pivotal role in extending God's kingdom and for a long time upholding His law together with other truths neglected in the West.

Eusebius' problem was not an inability to read what the Semitic Christians of Western Asia had written; he was simply allergic to Syrian theology. In his eyes, its major deficiency was no doubt that it accepted the Bible's teaching in a straightforward, mostly literal sense, while he preferred the fanciful allegorizing method derived from Origen and his predecessors.

The Syrians opposed this and other Alexandrian tendencies from their school at Antioch, under Lucian (c. AD 250-312), a great theologian. According to Benjamin G. Wilkinson, he was also the real editor of the New Testament, adopted by the Greek Church and eventually used by Tyndale and his successors to produce the Authorized Version of the Bible.<sup>39</sup> Lucian died just a year before Eusebius began to write his magnum opus.

Because of their theology, he excluded the Syrians from his *History*, which was produced in the following way: "Eusebius' method was to collect his authorities, go through them carefully, select such passages as suited his general plan, and then by means of copious quotations combine them into one narrative. His own contribution is often quite small . . ." <sup>40</sup> To include the believers of western Asia would not have been in harmony with either his method or his mindset.

Contrary to what we may be led to assume from Eusebius, Christianity did not originate as a highly organized hierarchical body, nor was it united in every respect.

Quite soon after Christ's ascension, internal differences arose, with clashes over doctrine and practice. For instance, the apostle Paul experienced many problems with an influential Judaizing faction, which opposed and troubled him throughout his career. As already mentioned, on one occasion he even had to reprimand his colleague, the all too fallible Peter (allegedly "the first pope"), for compromising with these people (Gal. 2:11-14).

Paul's arrest in the temple precincts, near the end of his ministry, also resulted from this Judaizing strain. He had gone to that dangerous place because the church leaders at Jerusalem wanted him to take part in a very Jewish purification ritual (Acts 21:20-27). Compromising with Judaism seems to have been a weakness of many Palestinian believers, including some apostles, until the Romans destroyed the temple in AD 70.

Johnson explains the early diversity of Christianity rather strongly. He says it "began in confusion, controversy and schism and so it continued. A dominant Orthodox Church, with a recognizable ecclesiastical structure, emerged only very gradually."<sup>41</sup>

In some ways, early Christianity soon resembled nothing so much as the contending sects of modern Protestantism, although the issues dividing the early believers arose from other circumstances. This, though perhaps startling to some, is not surprising; for when people insist on deciding and thinking for themselves, they often differ.

By the fourth century, European Christianity had divided into several branches. In the Balkans and the Levant, the Orthodox Church—with imperial assistance—held power, though this was far from absolute. In the West, to a large extent, Catholicism prevailed, though not everywhere. The Celtic believers in the British Isles were holding up a shining torch of truth at variance with what Rome maintained, and so was a remnant around and in the Alps of what today are northwestern Italy and eastern France.

Absolute ecclesiastical unity can only come through compulsion. But even the mighty Roman Empire under Constantine and his successors could obviously not apply it to territories that it was unable firmly to control.

Down through the centuries and to the present day, many question marks have been placed behind Eusebius' name. For all that he supported the emperor, his very orthodoxy seems to have been suspect. At first, he was inclined to sympathy for the great heresy of his time, although he "did not wholeheartedly support either Arius or Alexander" and was even "provisionally excommunicated" during a

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strongly anti-Arian synod held at Antioch in about January 325. At Nicaea, however, he explained himself and toed the dogmatic line as required of him. Years later, "the seventh ecumenical council (787)," held at the same place, "condemned him, finding him double-minded and unstable in all his ways."<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, for many, "his ecclesiastical history is the chief primary source for the history of the church up to 324."<sup>43</sup> On what shaky foundations some people have been erecting their edifice of so-called truth! Fortunately we are no longer limited to what Eusebius wrote.

In subsequent ages, too, the history of the Christian church has been falsified. The destruction of records is an especially favorite stratagem employed by the enemies of truth, as we have already noted in relation to the Germanic Church.

According to Henri Pirenne, the great Belgian scholar: "Ulfila [who translated the Bible into Gothic] had no successor. We have not a single text or charter in the Germanic language. The liturgy in the Churches was sung or recited in the Germanic tongue, yet no trace of it remains."<sup>44</sup> There would obviously also have been other theological works in Gothic. What happened to them? They were all deliberately destroyed, so that we have to depend on the writings of their enemies to establish what they believed.

According to their slanderers, they were "Arians," which—as our previous book has shown—they were not. Elsewhere, also according to Pirenne, "By the end of the 6th century Arianism had everywhere disappeared."<sup>45</sup> Yes, but why and how? The Germanic Church, still accused of Arianism, was forcibly exterminated, through warfare. Its real sin was its refusal to submit to the pope. Therefore, as foretold in Dan. 7, it was uprooted.

Nobody fully knows the history of that dark time and the subsequent Middle Ages. It has been systematically edited by the Adversary of all truth, in working through his human—and ecclesiastical—agents. This enemy can, moreover, after every hundred years or so, also rely on death and the sheer accumulation of events to blur the memory of the world; and then he recycles his lies. But constantly the Most High responds by raising up other people to refute them, again and again.

At this point, a serious question faces us: Are all church historians crooked, because of their ecclesiastical bias? It is not quite as bad as that. Examples of honest researchers can be found in all denominations. Present-day examples are three Catholics, Paul Johnson, whom we often refer to, John Cornwell, who wrote *Hitler's Pope*:



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*The Secret History of Pius XII* (1999), and Garry Wills, who scandalized many with his *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit* (2000).

Wills points back to Lord Acton, a great historian in the nineteenth century and another member of the Roman Church. Concerning him, Wills remarks: "Most people are familiar with Acton's famous axiom, 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely' (Acton 2.383). Fewer people remember that he was speaking of papal absolutism—more specifically, he was condemning a fellow historian's book on Renaissance Popes for letting them literally get away with murder."<sup>46</sup>

The young Acton studied under a thorough German historian at Munich, Johann J. I. von Döllinger. Both opposed Pope Pius IX's maneuvers to have himself declared infallible at Vatican I (1870). Through painstaking research, von Döllinger was able to demonstrate how forgeries, backed by violence and sheer effrontery, became a major basis for power—especially of a temporal nature—wielded by the pontiffs who sought to dominate Western Europe, particularly the Papal State in Italy.

Starting from the premise that the papacy began with "the primacy of Peter," von Döllinger shows "How the papacy lost its early innocence, degenerating into an absolute power." This "is the long and disreputable story of forgeries and fabrications, of which the Donation of Constantine in the eighth century and the Isidorian Decretals in the ninth were only the more flagrant examples. Usurping the rights of the episcopacy and of the general councils, the papacy was finally driven to the principles and methods of the Inquisition to enforce its spurious claims, and to the theory of infallibility to elevate it beyond all human control."<sup>47</sup>

Acton supported his teacher in rejecting the outcome of Vatican I, for Pius IX had rigged the proceedings. For instance, he saw to it that the archives were sealed to prevent any bishop from consulting them, largely excluded participants who he knew in advance would oppose his desire, ensured that everybody spoke Latin (though a majority was unable to do so or understand its Italian pronunciation), and smothered dissent through a decree "that any discussion could be cut off by mere motion on the part of ten bishops, and that any decrees of the Council could pass by a mere majority, though other Councils had aimed at consensus."<sup>48</sup>

Both von Döllinger and Acton indignantly rejected the new doctrine of infallibility. The German scholar was excommunicated,<sup>49</sup> while his English pupil—who did not want to leave the Roman Church of his ancestors—suffered initial harassment from Archbishop Manning but finally found himself spared. The Vatican, having just lost the Papal State to a newly united Italy, was loath to act against a Catholic lord with high aristocratic connections in Britain,

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where he also had a reputation as "the most erudite man of his times."<sup>50</sup>

In the twentieth century, as both Cornwell and Wills have revealed, the doctrine of papal infallibility has enmeshed the papacy as well as Europe in many and serious difficulties. How right Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) was when he wrote,

O what a tangled web we weave,  
When first we practice to deceive!<sup>51</sup>

Perverted history is a serious problem for prophetic interpreters, who must constantly be on guard against it; it lies as though it were printed—especially, alas, if clerics have been involved. If the Bible's predictions are to be measured against past events as well as current world affairs, the record should obviously be scrutinized and presented with all the honesty at our command.

## 4 But Is the Bible True?

**F**rom records on stone, as well as cuneiform tablets, potsherds, papyrus, and parchment, ancient braggarts—or their servile scribes, including eminent literati—tell us how wonderful and mighty the people of former ages used to be. At least as misleading have been the lies of religious writers. It is therefore hardly surprising that many a critic has also wondered about the truth of the Scriptures. Are the Old and New Testaments free of forgery or misrepresentation? Did their writers not also distort and lie, constructing myths about the founders and heroes of Israel as well as Christianity?

Skeptics have been assailing the trustworthiness of the Bible for the past two centuries with a ferocity and venom to which no other writings have ever been subjected. They have done so on several grounds. The very idea that its narrative portions can in any sense be historical has been pooh-poohed. To this day, not a few academics think that King David and his son Solomon never existed, but are fictitious characters. Equally uncertain for them is the status of earlier figures like Moses, as well as the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Perhaps the original basis for such views was the idea that writing did not exist so long ago; accordingly, the ancient Israelites and Jews at first had only oral records. They supposedly passed their traditions down to their descendants by word of mouth, which time and imagination over the years have grossly distorted—as though they were some preliterate tribe in the jungles of New Guinea.

Now this idea is completely passé, based on a piece of early nineteenth-century ignorance that we can firmly discard. Since the decipherment of hieroglyphics, cuneiform, and other scripts, we know that writing was invented long before Solomon, David, and even Moses. It already thrived in the time of Abraham and pre-existed him. As the peoples of the Middle East in all their variety made their way across the stage of history, they left behind them records about their deeds, ideas, transactions, laws, and literature.

The writing systems varied and changed. In Egypt, it was hieroglyphics and later the ideograms derived from them. Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Neo-Babylonians, and Persians at first used syllabic cuneiform. Along the Mediterranean seaboard, a clever Semite devised the aleph-beth with its twenty-two characters. The Phoenicians used it for their business transactions, and their southern neighbors—the Israelites—for sacred writings. Afterwards the Syrians' Aramaic variant of this script was spread throughout their neighboring countries and

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during the Babylonian captivity even replaced the older Hebrew characters. Also from the aleph-beth, the Greeks developed the first real alphabet and then bequeathed it to the Romans, who later passed it on to us.

In one way or another, all these people have left records of their passage through what is now the past. And every society was in a hurry to do so . . . except, we are expected to believe, the ancient Jews. They supposedly relied on inaccurate oral traditions, on word of mouth! But, as their history for more than three thousand years has demonstrated, there never has been a more literate society or one as scrupulous about preserving its written records. When they copied their Scriptures, they were careful—with a pedantic exactitude—to ensure an accurate transmission from generation to generation. The result can be seen by comparing the Masoretic text of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament as it existed in about AD 980, with the Dead Sea Scrolls that were copied or preserved at Qumran near the Dead Sea between 250 BC and AD 70. These are between a thousand and twelve hundred years older.

The Masoretes were Jewish scholars at Talmudic academies in Babylonia and Palestine, devoted to ensuring transmissional accuracy. To check their results, they “not only counted and noted down the total number of verses, words, and letters in the text but further indicated which verse, which word, and which letter marked the centre of the text.”<sup>1</sup> That this was not a newfound concern becomes evident by laying their scrolls beside the more ancient ones discovered in the Qumran caves.

Garry K. Bantley dwells on the astounding accuracy of the intervening copyists. This becomes specially clear from a comparison between the Masoretic text of Isaiah (a very long book of the Old Testament) with its earlier version in the Dead Sea Scrolls: “The texts from Qumran proved to be word-for-word identical to our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted primarily of obvious slips of the pen and spelling alterations.” And there were no major doctrinal differences. For instance, a comparison focusing on Isaiah 53 reveals that of its 166 Hebrew words, “only seventeen letters in Dead Sea Scroll 1QIs<sup>b</sup> differ from the Masoretic Text,” as follows:

10 letters = spelling differences  
4 letters = stylistic changes  
3 letters = added word for “light” (vs. 11)

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17 letters = no effect on biblical teaching.<sup>2</sup>

Now we come to another cardinal point about the writing habits of people, both modern and ancient. In all the ages of literacy, they have created *contemporary* records. These are frequently left by leading men who themselves participated in the events that they describe. It is true, as this chapter maintains, that they have also often—for personal, propagandistic reasons—distorted the details. But even these the historian can frequently correct from other sources. Nevertheless, the basic fact remains that some people have always had the habit, even an itch, to record the events which they themselves or their immediate predecessors have experienced. When they did not do so personally, they paid a scribe to take up a chisel, a stylus, a brush, a goose quill, or a pen to do it for them. In what follows, this is briefly demonstrated, from recent times and back into the past.

Covering 30 inches on a bookshelf at home is a twenty-volume publication, *The Annals of America* (1493-1976). Published by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* when the United States was holding its Bicentennial celebrations, this work has assembled contemporary material from almost five hundred years of American history. The first volume begins with a letter from Christopher Columbus to Lord Raphael Sanchez, treasurer of Aragon and one of his patrons, “to acquaint you with all the events which have occurred in my [first] voyage.”<sup>3</sup> The last one closes with a 1976 survey based on the foreign press abroad, entitled “Ourselves as Others See us.”<sup>4</sup> Between these two pieces, we can read, in part or the whole, such documents as the First Charter of Virginia (1606) by James I (from even before the founding of the English North American colony at Jamestown), John Smith’s “Starving Time in Virginia” (1607-1614), the Mayflower Compact (1620), and so on down through the years. Among many others, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, the two Roosevelts, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jimmy Carter, Richard Nixon, and Henry Kissinger, are paraded before our eyes from contemporary sources. Often these figures speak to us directly in their own words.

Some people are just in the habit of writing down what is going on around them. It has always been like that. But is the *Annals of America* not simply the result of Gutenberg’s great invention: the printing press? Well, that has certainly been most helpful. But the same kind of contemporaneous witnesses also existed for much older times. We could illustrate this from the Middle Ages and the first few Christian centuries, but find it more fruitful here to jump straight back to periods contemporaneous with the events recorded in the Scriptures. We look briefly at a few extra-biblical writers, three of them generals, who wrote about events occurring within their lifetime.

The first is Joseph ben Matthias, better known as Flavius Josephus, the Jewish military commander in Galilee during the revolt of AD 66-70. After he and his compatriots were defeated, he surrendered to the Romans, who spared his life. He went on to write his Latin *Bellum Ju-*

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*daicum* (History of the Jewish War) in seven books from AD 75 to 79. Its Greek version is still a classic.<sup>5</sup> It is the work of a contemporary witness.

More than a hundred years earlier, Julius Caesar (100/102-44 BC) in 52-51 BC wrote his *Commentarii de bello Gallico* ("Commentaries on the Gallic War").<sup>6</sup> In it, always employing the third person, no doubt to lend an air of objectivity, he details heroically his conquest of Gaul, which today is France. His purpose in writing was undoubtedly to boost his political aspirations and help him achieve dominion over Rome, which led to his assassination. His basic facts, however, have never been disputed. Unwittingly he also inflicted his work as a textbook on many generations of schoolboys, who through almost two millennia cursed him, having to plough through those long sentences, as they sweated at learning Latin—and were often beaten for their pains.

One of the greatest historians that ever lived was General Thucydides, a fifth-century Athenian who died, perhaps violently, quite shortly after 404 BC. His masterpiece was the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, which details that momentous conflict. Exiled for failing to prevent the capture of Amphipolis by the Spartans, he traveled widely among the combatants on both sides, collecting material for his narrative. It is "a strictly contemporary history of events that he lived through and that succeeded each other almost throughout his adult life."<sup>7</sup>

As we skip further back in time to about twenty-five centuries ago, we come to Darius I the Great (550-486 BC), who inscribed his exploits on a rock face high above the ancient road at Behistun (Bisitūn), Iran. Because his text was in three languages, Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian, it provided Major Henry C. Rawlinson and the archaeological world with a vital key for deciphering cuneiform.<sup>8</sup> It is also a contemporary record, chiseled into imperishable stone.

Some two hundred years earlier, King Sennacherib left his own monument. Just so, Pharaoh Ramses II, who lived another six hundred years before *him*, cluttered up Egypt with his many statues and boastful inscriptions. We have already referred to them. Although, as we have noted, these men deliberately adapted the truth for their own propagandistic purposes, readers accept or acquiesce in most of the data that they present. But the point here is the contemporaneousness of those monumental inscriptions.

It is now possible to read even earlier records: historical details as well as many, many other texts, including law codes—like the famous one commissioned by Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC)<sup>9</sup>, long before the birth of Moses, who wrote Genesis, the first book in the Bible. This text can now be inspected in the British Museum. Even earlier Mesopotamian rulers have left traces of their passage through the world, although as we go back in time the details do become scantier and are

intertwined with epic tales that they have inspired. Such, for example, was the dynasty of Akkad (c. 2334–c. 2154 BC). Its founder, Sargon I,<sup>10</sup> lived well before Abraham's time.

Throughout the ages, since the invention of writing, many people have been prompt to record their deeds, their laws, their dreams, and their everyday transactions. So now we have to ask just why we should suppose that the same was not true of biblical Israel. Why would only the ancient Jews, the most literate of people, and their forebears have limited themselves to oral traditions, passing on their tales by word of mouth? They themselves, in the Bible, frequently mention the act of writing.

Often the Scriptures, even in the case of minor kings, refer the reader for further details to other records. For instance, we read, "Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?" (1 Kings 15:7) and "Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kings 15:31). Despite the similarity in name, these are not the books of Chronicles in our present Bible but records kept by the two Hebrew-speaking monarchies after the breakup which followed Solomon's reign.

There were many writings that have not survived, like Jasher's book (2 Sam. 1:18) and the biographies of David, inter alia by the seer Gad and the prophet Nathan (1 Chron. 29:29). The ancient Israelite and Jewish authors clearly produced a great deal more than the Old Testament. Time has erased the rest, which also happened to the writings of other nations. For instance, according to Classical professors M. Cary and T.J. Haarhoff, the years have devoured up to 90 percent of ancient Greek and Roman manuscripts, among them indubitable masterpieces.<sup>11</sup> Something similar must have happened to much if not most of ancient Hebrew literature.

The New Testament books were also the workmanship of contemporaries or near contemporaries, portraying the events they witnessed or expressing the concerns that weighed on their hearts and minds. This is obviously true of Paul's epistles, which authenticate themselves; but what about the four Gospels, the biographies of the man whom their authors regarded as the Messiah? Matthew and John had personally listened to Jesus' words and observed his deeds. Mark may have had his details from Peter, as tradition has suggested. Luke, a travel companion of Paul, was a near contemporary. He makes it plain that his version of the Redeemer's life was based on painstaking research.

Moreover, he illuminates how these details were transmitted: "*Many* have taken in hand to *set forth in order a declaration* of those things which are most surely believed among us. . . which from the beginning were *eyewitnesses*, and *ministers of the word* . . ." (Luke 1:1, 2, emphasis added). In other words, not a few of the first believers al-

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most at once began to write down what Jesus had said and done, apart from what the apostles and other disciples kept on telling about him. All this provided Luke with primary source material, and he could follow it up through personal interviews. In his time, many of the original participants in that wonderful story were still alive, amongst others Mary, the Lord's mother, who no doubt supplied the facts about his birth and childhood.

This view is sharply at odds with the old but faulty opinion that the Christians at first had nothing to go by apart from word-of-mouth accounts and hearsay. No, like us they lived in a highly literate age. Naturally they kept on speaking enthusiastically about their Lord and the momentous experiences that had marked his career as well as the genesis of the church. But they could also write, and this they did, as contemporaries and near contemporaries—just like so many other people over the centuries and millennia who had important and sometimes fascinating matters to relate.

It used to be that critics could say the oldest surviving manuscripts of the New Testament were no more ancient than the fourth century. But the codices of the Chester Beatty Papyri are a hundred years older, and the Rylands papyrus No. 457 (P<sup>52</sup>), with parts from John 18:32-33, 37-38, originated about a generation after the death of the beloved apostle.<sup>12</sup> "It may with some confidence be dated in the first half of the second century A.D." What is especially significant about this fragment is that the fourth Gospel is one of the last Bible books to be written.<sup>13</sup>

Another point is that Greco-Roman historiography had reached a high level of sophistication well before the Christian era, as far back as Thucydides, more than three hundred years earlier. Luke, in the late Hellenistic period, produced his Gospel as well as Acts within that tradition. Unlike those who lived in the Dark Ages a few centuries later, educated people of his time could not be imposed on by writers who wrote fiction and pretended it was fact. With this, his actual and near contemporaries never charged him, or—for that matter—the other New Testament writers.

Why are so many loath to accept that the Scriptures are true? It can hardly be because archaeology contradicts it, for most of what the spade has dug up in the Middle East for a century and a half has time and time again confirmed their historical accuracy to an amazing extent. Nor can it be because the Bible is characterized by vague generalities or has a fairy-tale quality about it, for it is in all things so specific and concretely to the point. It often contains particulars that no fiction writer would ever have included, since some of them are so repetitive that the casual reader finds them boring. Such are the chapters in Exodus that tell exactly how the ancient tabernacle had to be constructed and describe its many sacrifices. Then there are the many lists of names, names, and more names, in tedious genealogies, which crop up from time to time in both the Old and the New Testament. No, let us



candidly admit that most often the reason why people reject these books is because they blend their historicity with the actions of God and emphasize our moral responsibilities as well as the fact that each of us has a heaven to gain and a hell to shun.

Let us, moreover, now provide a further reason why the contents of the Bible cannot be set aside as myths: it must be true because it is so utterly true to life. In this, it is generally superior to other writings from the past.

A significant feature of ancient as well as subsequent historiography down through the years is lacking in both the Old and the New Testaments: excessive praise for eminent people. This is a commodity that the Scriptures do not deal in. The successes, sometimes quite modest, of its key personalities are indeed recorded—but so are their failures and character flaws, of which some were vicious.

On a few occasions, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom the Bible presents as the ancestors of all the Israelites, acted contemptibly. Though on the whole they were virtuous, often admirable people, they also at times indulged in lying and deception.

Both Abraham and Isaac, whose faith was originally smaller than their cowardice, pretended their wives were their sisters, which landed them in very hot water (Gen. 12:11-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-11). And Jacob, whose name means “supplanter”, deceived his father to obtain the birthright that would otherwise have been bestowed on his brother Esau.

As for Jacob’s sons, the ancestors of the Israelites, they were at first, for the most part, a nasty lot—apart from Joseph and Benjamin. Reuben, the eldest, had sex with his father’s concubine (Gen. 35:22). Simeon and Levi treacherously massacred all the men in Shalem of Shechem, confiscated the women together with their children, and looted the city (Gen. 33:18, 34:1-31). For those transgressions, Jacob at the end of his life refused to bequeath the birthright—usually reserved for the eldest—to any of these three men (Gen. 49:3-8). Most of his sons, in their envy toward Joseph, also conspired to murder their younger brother but finally settled for selling him into slavery. Then they deceived their inconsolable father. (Gen. 37:3, 17-35) Judah, in another sordid episode, visited a Canaanite woman pretending to be a prostitute, who turned out to be Tamar, his daughter-in-law, intent on this very liaison. When she fell pregnant, Judah wanted to have her burned for playing the harlot. His male chauvinism and hypocrisy were astounding, though finally he had to admit, “She hath been more righteous than I.” (Gen. 38:1-26) On the other hand, the Bible goes on to show the deep repentance of these men, and a bunch of unappealing ruffians turned into sterling characters.

The Good Book records these details objectively, for the most part without lambasting them or overt moralization.

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A few centuries later, Moses—the human hero of the Exodus—who is called the meekest man in the world (Num. 12:3), eventually lost his temper with the ever-complaining Israelites. Instead of just speaking to the rock for water to issue forth, as God had ordered them to do, he and his brother Aaron angrily smote it, exclaiming, “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” For their presumption and disobedience, these leaders were not allowed to fulfill their lifelong dream of entering Canaan (Num. 20:7-12); both, as an example for the rebellious Israel, died to the east of it beyond the Jordan river.

King David, the greatest king of Israel, a man after God’s “own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14), on an impulse yielded to his lust and seduced a married woman, Bathsheba. Then, to cover up her pregnancy, through a dastardly deed of treachery with hardly a parallel in the Bible, he murdered her husband, Uriah the Hittite—a brave and admirable soldier—by engineering his death on the battlefield (2 Sam. 11:1-27). For these transgressions, David repented thoroughly (Ps. 51) but also suffered dreadful consequences in the form of domestic tragedy as well as several attempted coups d’état. He survived, though four of his sons did not.

The Bible does not omit a single relevant detail but remorselessly chronicles it, warts and all, including the clever ploy of the prophet Nathan, who used a parable to lure the king into condemning himself and then suddenly exclaimed, “Thou art the man”! (vs. 7). In those days, there was no such thing as contemporary criticism of the king. Anybody daring to suggest in public that he was anything less than perfect was apt to lose his head, if he was not flayed alive, impaled, or executed in some other atrocious way. The annals of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Medo-Persia have no parallel to the biblical account. The story about David, Uriah, and Bathsheba is too improbable to be a fiction, and so pointless—unless these people really existed, did, and endured what has been written about them, and all these details happened to be true.

In the New Testament, the twelve apostles whom Jesus had appointed to carry on his work, were in some ways a most unpromising collection of characters, as the four Gospels record. His treasurer, Judas Iscariot, turned out to be a systematic thief, who finally sold his master to his enemies; he even physically pointed him out to the servants sent for the arrest, by kissing him. The other eleven apostles, who had boasted of defending him and being faithful to death, just ran away when he was arrested. Eventually Peter returned to see what would happen to Jesus, but when the servants of the high priest—especially one persistent girl—began to suspect his identity, the apostle denied his Lord, perhaps because he had drawn his sword and chopped off Malchus’ ear. At that critical time, what ruffraff they seemed to be! After their conversion, however, they wonderfully continued the work of the Redeemer; and all, except John, died horrible deaths as martyrs.

Many sermons have been preached about Peter's shortcomings. He actually had excellent qualities: a full-blooded man, he could be bold and courageous, once he had fully given his heart to Christ. Yet he also had a tendency toward moral cowardice, and racism—even after his conversion. For these defects he had to submit to public criticism by the apostle Paul: "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." (Gal. 2:11, 12)

No, the Scriptures are not prone to hero worship. Unstinted praise is relatively rare, in contrast with other historical records. Why did the authors of the Old and New Testament produce such accounts? To this question, there are only two possible answers.

The first is that the ancient Hebrew writers, in both Testaments, systematically debunked their leaders and made anti-heroes of them, as fiction writers and others have been doing since the twentieth century. The best-known anti-hero is probably the one depicted by Charlie Chaplin: the pathetic little man who gets nowhere, except into trouble. But the biblical record about eminent persons does not belong to that literary genre, which had not yet been invented. Its high seriousness is mostly devoid of a tendency by authors to write with a tongue in their cheek. Patches of satire can sometimes be found in the Bible, but this is not its dominant mode. There is certainly nothing in the Scriptures like the large-scale debunking, both savage and jeering, that characterizes writers like, say, Jonathan Swift, Voltaire, or Bernard Shaw.

The other answer to the question is that the authors of Holy Writ had a passion for truth and for distinguishing between good and evil. Those ancient people—so important for Israel and Christianity—are portrayed in such a way, because that is just what they were like. And this is internal evidence for believing that the Old and the New Testaments can be relied on. Their experiences were not cunningly devised fables or myths, which as genres are of a totally different nature. The men and women who live on within the pages of the Bible in fact existed and did those very things so long ago.

And the reason for their being portrayed with such remorseless truth is that their behavior and life stories were recorded not as simple narratives. The Good Book is always concerned with more than mere events as such. It is *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation story); its history always has a core of ethics and moral values, which would be vitiated by the slightest departure from the facts.

And there is more to it, as brought out by Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), who was famous as a lexicographer, poet, essayist, critic, and probably the greatest conversationalist of his age. Apart from his famous dictionary, his chief work was *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* (1777). Some contemporaries criticized him for not suppressing a

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sordid episode in his chapter about the virtuous and otherwise blameless Joseph Addison (1672-1719), who once took savage legal action against his broken-hearted fellow writer Richard Steele (1672-1729) to recover £100.00 that the latter owed him.

Johnson, at 72 a man of uncommon insight, responded to Boswell, who had mentioned this objection: “If nothing but the bright side of characters should be shown, we should sit down in despondency, and think it utterly impossible to imitate them in *anything*. The sacred writers (he observed) related the vicious as well as the virtuous actions of men; which has this moral effect, that it kept mankind from *despair*, into which otherwise they would naturally fall, were they not supported by the recollection that others had offended like themselves, and by penitence and amendment of life had been restored to the favour of Heaven.”<sup>14</sup>

Our chapter, “Literature and the Bible” of *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History* (2001), touched on the motives of those who have been so apt to reject the Scriptures. We referred amongst others to the New Testament scholar, Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), who tried to debunk the life of Christ. He maintained the events recorded in the New Testament “are derived from the mythology of Jewish apocalyptic and Hellenistic Gnosticism.” In 1941, he insisted on the reinterpretation of Christianity by “demythologizing” it.<sup>15</sup> Gerhard Hasel, another German and a meticulous scholar as well as a genuine believer, points out that Bultmann really had a secret axe to grind: for him, the Redeemer simply could not have been physically resurrected from the dead, “no matter how many witnesses are cited.” Why? Because Bultmann assumed that miracles could not occur, since supernatural events were intrinsically impossible. This bias made him reject any statement in the Scriptures that Jesus rose from the dead, because he thought such things just did not happen nowadays.<sup>16</sup>

Yes, that is a powerful reason for disbelieving the Bible. The heart dictates to the mind. Often it is a streak of infidelity that produces such writings, even by those who allegedly serve the Lord.

Christians, however, fully believe in the existence of a living God and his beneficent plan for the human race. They do not find it strange at all that the Good Book so often mingles secular history, well written and carefully transmitted through the ages, with an account of supernatural events. They believe the Lord and his agencies—as well as the Evil One, assisted by other fallen beings—constantly strive to help or harm them, at present as well as they did in olden times. From time to time, the reader is made aware of the fact that we are not alone on this planet, and especially that the Redeemer constantly intercedes for us with our Father who is in heaven.

## 5 History and Prophecy as Christian Mythology

**E**usebius, who wrote the earliest history of the Mediterranean church, also first—to a serious extent—perverted its perspective on the future as predicted in the Bible. The Caesarean bishop began by flattering Constantine; he ended by making that emperor the focus of a new prophetic interpretation, which was destined to influence Christian and especially Catholic theology for many centuries to come.

According to Eusebius, Constantine fulfilled Rev. 12, by casting down the Dragon—Paganism. The New Jerusalem of Rev. 21 supposedly represented Constantine's imperial church, so that the millennium had already arrived.<sup>1</sup>

But the dragon of Rev. 12 is pagan Rome to only a limited extent. It also, and primarily, symbolizes Satan (vs. 9). Michael, who leads the angels in expelling him from heaven, is a heavenly being, the one, in fact, who after his incarnation became our Saviour, Jesus Christ. But Constantine, a very flawed personality, was no angel; nor does his conversion and actions against the pagans harmonize feasibly with the following statement: "And there was war in heaven . . . and the great dragon was cast out . . . into the earth" (Rev. 12:7-9).

Another example of Eusebius' muddy thinking is his reaction to Constantine using close relatives, both his sons and a nephew, as co-rulers. Allegedly this fulfilled the prediction of Dan. 7:18 that the saints of God would take the kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

All this was certainly flattering to the emperor and his household, but for us it just demonstrates how Eusebius was neglecting wholesome principles of prophetic interpretation, explained in a previous chapter. He particularly stumbled into the trap of the contemporary, and ignored the need for a careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture. Obviously he had little respect for the exegetical methods of the apostles and even Christ himself. He was, moreover, flying in the face of more sound interpreters who had immediately preceded him, like Hippolytus (c. 165-c. 235) and Tertullian (c. 160-240).

Instead of carefully adhering to what the Bible actually teaches, "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), Eusebius handled it in an arbitrary, free and easy way. He did so partly in the spirit of the allegorizing method he had learned from Origen.

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What was this about? To explain it adequately requires an entire chapter, which we provide in another context, where we show that Origen learned it from *his* teachers—Christian, Jewish, and pagan, each of whom (like him) at one time lived in Alexandria. All we need to say about this now is that through allegorization, undisciplined by sound methodology and common sense, everything in the Bible can be made to mean whatever the speaker or writer wants it to mean. Of this we here provide a single example.

In Gen. 6-9 we read about Noah, a preacher of righteousness, whom the Lord instructed to warn the antediluvians that due to their wickedness a great flood was coming to destroy the earth. To save the repentant, Noah made an ark; but, apart from his family, nobody believed him, and so almost the entire population of the planet perished.

Christian preachers can from this legitimately make a general comparison with the Gospel offer of salvation through Christ and the fact that those who despise it will one day perish. The apostle Peter uses the same analogy (1 Pet. 3:20, 21). But extra-Biblical allegorization goes a good deal further. For instance, it compares the ark with the cross. After all, they were both made of wood. And were nails not used for making both of them? These last two points are fanciful and irrelevant.

Amongst other defects, such allegorization—at best a kind of extended simile or metaphor—ignores the most obvious differences between the persons, objects, and situations it deals with. For instance, the ark was also specifically intended to save animals; but Jesus did not die for that purpose. The ark came to rest on Ararat, a very high mountain; but such was not the location of the cross. Golgotha is not even a hill but just a rocky outcrop. And then there is the story of Noah's drunkenness. Did this somehow, because wine was involved, represent the Eucharist?

All the same, it is amazing how vastly Eusebius' sloppy method of interpretation caught on and evolved in the centuries after him. Bishop Augustine of Hippo (354-430), who wrote a very famous book, *De Civitate Dei* ("Concerning the City of God"), elaborated those ideas a hundred years later, and amalgamated them with contributions from a Donatist named Tichonius.<sup>3</sup> According to the latter, the first resurrection took place for believers at baptism, so that only the second resurrection would be literal at the Lord's return. He said the millennium had already begun, at Jesus' birth,<sup>4</sup> while the New Jerusalem was a symbol of the true church.<sup>5</sup> This interpretation dominated Catholic thinking throughout the Middle Ages. During the Reformation, Protestants abandoned it.<sup>6</sup>

Augustine taught that the stone which struck the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream and grew into a mountain was the imperial Catholic Church. This he said was destined to dominate the earth, and the 144,000 were another symbol that represented it. The Jews would yet be converted, and Antichrist was to come at the end of the thousand years<sup>7</sup> to rule for three and a half literal years.<sup>8</sup> At that time, the devil—bound throughout the Christian era—would also be loosened.<sup>9</sup>

This type of prophetic interpretation equates the kingdom of God with the church right here on earth and, by extension, with Christian society—though Jesus told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Augustine was well aware of this and did not want to suggest the contrary. Nevertheless, in following the train of thought suggested by Origen, Eusebius, and others, he fostered a theocratic interpretation of history itself.

It all began by viewing Constantine as *isapostolos* (like unto the apostles), virtually a Messianic figure, and taught that his reign inaugurated the kingdom of God on earth. This line of thinking was very fruitful in producing the papacy, when the Western emperors disappeared and their prerogatives could be appropriated by the pontiff. But it could also be applied to other rulers, with the most amazing, sometimes pernicious results. Let us examine this in greater detail.

In 750, a momentous event occurred: an embassy from Francia (France) arrived at the court of Pope Zacharias. Pepin (Pippin) III the Short—Charlemagne's father—who ruled the Franks, had a problem and was seeking papal assistance. By that time, the Merovingian kings, descended from Clovis, had lost their political power, dwindling into figureheads. As mayor of the palace, Pepin had become the actual ruler over France, and he was aspiring to the throne. But he was also a son of the church, which had been favorably disposed to the line of his sovereign, ever since Clovis became a Roman Catholic; and so Pepin believed he could not safely depose his nominal master without first securing papal permission.

And so his representatives went to the pope to ask whether it was wise "to have kings who hold no power of control?"<sup>10</sup> Pope Zacharias, a cultivated Greek from Calabria in southern Italy, who was a scholar, a skillful negotiator, and a very charming man<sup>11</sup>, replied: "It is better to have a king who is able to govern. By apostolic authority I bid that you be crowned King of the Franks."<sup>12</sup> He supported Pepin's elevation to the throne, with an interesting argument: after Saul, the first king of Israel, had proved unworthy, the Lord's representative anointed David in his place.<sup>13</sup>

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The hapless Childeric III was duly deposed and hurried off to a monastery, while "Pepin was anointed as king at Soissons in November 751 by Archbishop Boniface and other prelates,"<sup>14</sup> on behalf of the pope.

Far more was involved than exchanging one Frankish ruler for another. Invoking the Biblical image of Samuel anointing the rulers of ancient Israel provided Europe with a powerful political paradigm for the future. Henceforth the Western kings, as the Lord's anointed, would be invested with a large measure of sanctity. As the pope expressed it afterwards to the kings of France, "Vos gens sancta estis atque regale estis sacerdotium" (you are a sacred race and a royal priesthood). The Frankish monarchs and others after them would henceforth be considered kings by the grace of the papacy.<sup>15</sup>

This view of the church and Germanic people as a new Israel became a potent if spurious piece of theology, for promoting churchly power in both the spiritual and the secular world. Its first spectacular result was the Donation that Pepin made to reward the pope: the Papal State in central Italy, which endured for more than a thousand years. It also proved popular in Protestant circles, during the colonial period after the voyages of discovery, from the sixteenth century onward.

This extraordinary concept was based on biblical typology, recklessly extended beyond the pages of the Scriptures into European and subsequent history.

The New Testament does, it is true, regard the Christian church as the Israel of God, or at least its remnant. An important passage in this regard is 1 Cor. 10:1-6: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our *examples*, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." In the original, the word we have emphasized is τύποι (*typoi*, "types"), from which theologians have derived the word *typology*.

But Paul, the author of these verses, also makes it plain that for the Redeemer there are no distinctions of nationality, class, or race. To the Galatians he wrote: "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" (Gal. 3:28). And to the wise men of Athens he said that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts 17:26). And what about the verse: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29)?



Theology has its ifs and buts. In another, rather extended passage Paul compared the Gentile believers to wild olive branches. Many of the natural or Jewish ones had been broken off as a result of their unbelief, while Gentiles were grafted into the tree of Israel. This was, he pointed out, a rather unnatural state of affairs. Therefore, he warned his Roman readers against high-mindedness and braggadocio towards those whom they had replaced: "Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." A wrong attitude and a failure to act as proper Christians could also cause them to be rejected, "for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." The goodness of the Lord was conditional: "If thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." (Rom. 10:17-22)

Elsewhere we have argued that this was indeed the fate of Christian churches involved in the great Mediterranean apostasy. Through fearfulness, syncretism, and by harboring patriotic, anti-Semitic resentment, the congregation in Rome turned away from Bible truth when the emperor Hadrian—angered by the revolt in Palestine—took very stern measures against the Jews, including a law against Sabbath observance. This apostasy in the early second century was led by the bishop. Two hundred years later, Constantine continued on this pathway. Even more deeply contaminated by Mithraism, he in league with the bishops made the first official Sunday law. They also ensured that the Christian Easter would never coincide with the Jewish Passover. In these respects, they rejected the apostle's warning "Boast not against the branches." We maintain their apostasy from what the Bible teaches constituted a breach with the covenant of God, who therefore broke them off from the good olive tree.

The apostle Paul insisted that Christians should be faithful to the gospel just as he had proclaimed it. He was utterly intolerant of any tampering with it. His strongest words on this subject are the following: "There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. 1:7, 8). Originally these words were written to castigate and repudiate Jewish Christians who insisted that Gentile converts needed to submit to circumcision and had to adhere to other Judaic practices. But they also apply in a wider sense. They do not, of course, contradict what the apostle wrote about the tree of Israel.

The trouble is that for a certain kind of reader Paul is a somewhat tricky writer, full of nuances. Even Peter found in his colleague's epistles "some things hard to be understood," which, he added, "they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto

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their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). But, underlying the apparent complexities of Pauline theology and the agile twisting and turning of his mind, there is a simple thought: Accept the Lord's plan for your salvation, but do not rebel against him. If you do, as an individual or a group, you will be rejected.

Catholicism, however, has a different view of these things. It clings to the concept of apostolic succession and maintains that whatever a pope or priest may do in his personal capacity cannot harm the relationship between the Lord and his church.

In post-apostolic times, Mediterranean Christianity adapted Paul's typology for its own purposes. The analogies of the Old Testament proved so useful! A priesthood, special and separate from ordinary folk, could be justified by taking Aaron and his descendants as a pattern (though all of them were married men). The ancient system of daily sacrifices provided an analogy for the sacrifice of the mass. Also, there was a theocracy, linking throne and altar.

Though it varied over the ages, this nexus of religion with politics provided the rationale for the feudal system. Its ideas could be applied in both rigorous and flexible ways. During the Crusades, they legitimized, for the upper crust and with papal consent, the establishment of new kingdoms and principalities in the Middle East. Its Western, especially Frankish, rulers were naturally also intent on making their fortune by stealing from the local population in time-honored European ways. For ordinary soldiers, it put a less sordid countenance on more direct methods of robbing them.

This mentality also flourished during the Albigensian Crusade (1209), when the Inquisition was first established. Pious as well as physical inducements of loot and property were held out by the Vatican to lure the armed rabble armies into exterminating the Cathars, who refused to bow the neck to Rome—together with their brilliant culture in what today is southern France.

Likewise, it became a permanent characteristic of the Reconquista, that long-drawn-out struggle in Portugal and especially Spain to expel their Muslim overlords, who had occupied Iberia from 718 onward. The Reconquest continued for hundreds of years, especially the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. Granada, the last bastion of the Moors, was captured in 1492, the year when Columbus sailed for the new world.

By that time, rapacious religious thinking had rooted itself deep in the psyche of the conquistadors, who soon were setting out to subjugate what today is Hispanic America. Bernal Díaz, the companion of Cortés, put their motivation with unmistakable clarity when he wrote, "We went to America *para servir a Dios y hacernos ricos* (to serve God and to make ourselves rich)."<sup>16</sup>

With the Reformation, many Protestants found it difficult or just inconvenient to rid themselves of such mental baggage. Instead, with the age of global navigation, they exported it from Europe to other continents and islands in the Western ships that crisscrossed the oceans of the world. It became an important rationale for imperialism and racial oppression.

The non-Christian inhabitants of the colonies were typologically regarded as Canaanites. They could but did not need to be evangelized, because—according to Calvinist predestination—they were probably excluded from heaven. In any case, the native peoples were destined to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Josh. 9:21), second-class people whom "Israelite" Christians kept in a subordinate position and could rightfully deprive of their property, without breaking (as they imagined) the Eighth Commandment. The state was closely connected with religion.

Of the Protestants who thought in this way, the Dutch and the English were prominent examples, though such ideas were not limited to them.

In 1860, Eduard Douwes Dekker, a Hollander writing under the pseudonym *Multatuli* ("I have borne much"), astounded the Netherlands with his novel, *Max Havelaar*, condemning the ill-treatment of the Javanese. This is the most important literary fiction in Dutch of the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> In it, spurious and hypocritical typology is quite explicit. The people of the East Indies were supposedly Canaanites, and the Dutch the Israel of God.

Dekker's nation also planted this view of history and politics at the Cape of Good Hope. The Afrikaner Boers of South Africa, descended from and heirs of the Dutch, took it with them northward as they ventured deeper into the continent. They, too, regarded themselves as a latter-day Israel and the indigenous peoples as Canaanites, "hewers of wood and drawers of water." Partly nomadic, seekers after a promised land in which they could be free of British domination, the Boers adored the Old Testament. They saw a close parallel between their experience in this new country and the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as the ancient Israelites who later invaded and conquered Canaan.

But so did the British and especially the Americans. Among the latter there was, in the words of Perry Miller, a "fixation of colonial Protestantism upon the Old Testament—a phenomenon to be noted in every settlement."<sup>18</sup> Let us consider their religious views from the time when the first successful colony was planted in the northern part of the New World.

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The English-speaking ancestors of those who today rejoice in U.S. citizenship stepped onto American soil four hundred years ago, in May 1607. In that month, three ships, the *Godspeed*, the *Discovery*, and the *Sarah Constant*, brought one hundred and five settlers to Chesapeake Bay, where they founded Jamestown.

The location, however, was an unhealthy spot and the colony beset with much hardship, especially starvation. Three years later, by May 1610, "scarcely sixty settlers were still alive," in spite of reinforcements and further assistance from England. All the food had been eaten, "there was a suspicion of cannibalism, and the buildings were in ruins." Besides, the previously friendly Indians were becoming hostile.<sup>19</sup> The town was abandoned and no longer exists, except as an archaeological site.

Nevertheless, Jamestown was "of historic importance because it began the continuous English presence in North America."<sup>20</sup> To make sure that the United States will not overlook this fact, Virginians are now, in late 2006, beginning to celebrate it for eighteen months, with publications, websites, TV documentaries, and the like.

The Londoners who ran the Virginia Company, which financed this venture, were not unmindful of religion, though they defined "their divine purpose largely in terms of converting Indians," supposedly the main beneficiaries of the colonization.<sup>21</sup>

But their main objective was material enrichment. Many of those who came had fanciful dreams of finding gold, but in the end they had to content themselves with working the land, which they were at first inclined to neglect—and often starved to death. And then something happened. But here we will let that inveterate, puckish old smoker (and half American) Winston Churchill take up the tale, beginning with the original, British point of view.

"Some thought that colonisation would reduce poverty and crime in England. Others looked for profit to the fisheries of the North American coast, or hoped for raw materials to reduce their dependence on the exports from the Spanish colonies. All were wrong, and Virginia's fortune sprang from a novel and unexpected cause. By chance a crop of tobacco was planted, and the soil proved benevolent . . . ."<sup>22</sup>

Rules of religious behavior were also established at Jamestown four years later, in 1611, by Virginia's titular governor, Thomas West, Third Baron De La Warr (1527-1618)—Delaware, as the colonists spelled it—and Thomas Gates (fl. 1585-1621), who succeeded him. These *Laws Divine, Moral, and Martial* are commonly known as Dale's Code, after Marshal Thomas Dale, whose job it was to enforce them.<sup>23</sup>

This was aimed at punishing idleness, immodesty in dress, and Sunday desecration. "For Sabbath-breaking the first offence brought the stoppage of allowance; the second, whipping; and the third, death."<sup>24</sup> In

Virginia a variation of the Church of England established itself and remained the dominant religion until the American Revolution.<sup>25</sup>

Because the Jamestown story is neither glorious nor very heroic—especially the idea that the basis for what would one day become the United States was really laid by tobacco, a noxious weed—too many, suffering perhaps from deliberate, national amnesia, prefer to believe that their country began with the landing of the good ship *Mayflower* at Plymouth, Massachusetts. This happened thirteen years later, on 21 November (11 November, Old Style), 1620.

And theirs is indeed an inspiring story, though it has in some ways been warped by later legends.

For one thing, the Pilgrim Fathers did not originally land at Plymouth Rock, a belief that "rests solely on dubious secondhand testimony given by a ninety-five-year-old man more than a century after the *Mayflower* arrived. The statement was made in 1741 by Elder Thomas Faunce, who based his claims on a story he had supposedly been told as a boy by his father, who himself arrived in America three years *after* the *Mayflower*." They actually first landed at Provincetown, which no-one cares to remember, "to the considerable dismay of the residents of Provincetown."<sup>26</sup>

Only 35 of the 102 people on board the *Mayflower* were Pilgrims, that is, separatists who had been persecuted in Britain for not conforming to its dominant religion. The rest of the passengers belonged to the Church of England.

But who were these Pilgrims? Previously, in 1609, they had fled from England as a result of persecution by the Anglicans and tried to make a new home in Leiden, Holland, because that country tolerated a diversity of religions. However, they found life in the Netherlands hard and uncongenial, especially since their children were beginning to adopt the Dutch language. Ironically, they also found the liberty of that country excessive, because the Hollanders "also tolerated other religions and behaviors they abhorred."<sup>27</sup>

For us, that may be a startling point. Nevertheless, as Louis B. Wright points out, these pious folk did not come to America as champions of religious freedom for everybody. "Let no one imagine, as school children have sometimes been taught to believe, that our ancestors came in search of 'religious toleration.' Toleration was a concept that few of them recognized or approved. What they wanted was freedom from interference by opposing religious sects or unfriendly official authorities. Once firmly in the saddle themselves, sects that had been persecuted in England became equally zealous to root out heretics from their own order."<sup>28</sup>

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Ten years after the Pilgrims, in 1630, the *Arbella* arrived with an organized company of Puritans, representing the Massachusetts Bay Company, led by John Winthrop (1588-1649). Though these people foresaw a showdown between the English king and Parliament, they had not been persecuted, nor did they desire separation from the Anglican Church.

What they had in mind was something entirely different: the creation of a theocratic state in North America. The future governor, "John Winthrop preached about this to the Great Migration in 1630, even before it reached the coast of Massachusetts." He said his group of colonists had entered into a special covenant with God. To make clear his meaning, he "invoked three passages from the Old Testament—Leviticus, I Samuel, and Micah—and only one from Ephesians."<sup>29</sup>

They had come with the deliberate intention of establishing a "self-governing commonwealth . . . The colony would not be a mere commercial enterprise, nor would it be simply a hiding place from the wrath of God. It would be instead the citadel of God's chosen people, a spearhead of world Protestantism,"<sup>30</sup> or—as Oscar Handlin puts it—"a New Canaan, set aside by divine Providence as the field for their experiment."<sup>31</sup>

Soon their capital, Boston, resembled Calvin's Geneva of the previous century. This American theocracy and so-called latter-day Israel was destined to be widely influential in other settlements.<sup>32</sup>

But then, in 1631, Roger Williams (1603?-1683) disembarked and strode into their midst. He was an Anabaptist minister from Britain who disliked the Church of England. Blending a sweet temperament with a very revolutionary view of life, he profoundly upset the Bostonians, with three unpalatable ideas.

First, he taught that all people were entitled to following their individual conscience and should be allowed to serve the Lord in their own way, without governmental interference. "Williams expressed the dangerous opinion that civil magistrates had no authority in any religious matter, that they could not even require people to keep the Sabbath [Sunday]."<sup>33</sup> According to him, the civil government "could not punish breaches of the first table (the first four of the Ten Commandments) except in so far as such breaches caused a disturbance of civil peace."<sup>34</sup>

In England and Boston, the persecution of religious dissidents was at that time a common practice. To escape it, Williams himself had hurried off to America, though there—as he soon discovered—such talk was also dangerous and would again make a fugitive of him.

Second, he questioned the right of the colonists to the land they had occupied, denying the King's authority to grant it to them. This greatly enraged them,<sup>35</sup> obviously, because it touched their material interests. Just to think of it: he was saying that they had stolen their property from the Indians!

Third, he rejected the typology, according to which Englishmen and Americans were a latter-day Israel, while the native people could be regarded as a species of exploitable Canaanites. Furthermore, in prose as well as verse, he opposed their racial attitudes in dealing with the Native Americans:

Boast not, proud English, of thy birth and blood:  
 Thy brother Indian is by birth as good.  
 Of one blood God made him, and thee, and all.  
 As wise, as fair, as strong, as personal.  
 By nature, wrath's his portion, thine, no more  
 Till Grace his soul and thine in Christ restore.  
 Make sure thy second birth, or thou shalt see  
 Heaven ope to Indians wild, but shut to thee.<sup>36</sup>

For a short time, Roger Williams joined the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, who had also fled from England for conscience sake. But even they could not understand this man or really tolerate his revolutionary concepts.

It is interesting and amusing to note the well intentioned though misguided comments on him by William Bradford (1590-1657). This prominent Pilgrim had been on the *Mayflower*. He sailed for America in 1620, signed the famous Compact, helped select the spot for their settlement, and was elected governor thirty times in most years between 1621 and 1656.<sup>37</sup> How did Bradford view Williams? He described the unusual new preacher as "a man godly and zealous, having many precious parts but very unsettled in judgment." Indeed, he was "to be pitied and prayed for."<sup>38</sup>

The verdict of history has been startlingly different. Williams, so poorly understood at that time, can now in important ways be considered the real father of America.

In the lines we quoted above, his theology and social ideas are impeccable. He based them on what the apostle Paul had said to the Athenians about the common ancestry of everybody in the world and the equality of all believers in Christ, as he wrote to the Galatians.

Miller thinks the colonists were especially disturbed because this man rejected their typological view of history: "The great crime of Roger Williams, in the eyes of the orthodox, was not so much that he advocated religious liberty but that he came to this heresy out of a previous and more shocking heresy; he denied that the covenant made with Abraham had continued unbroken down to the covenant of God with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Bay. He repudiated the hold of the Old Testament upon the churches of Christ, with the result that the orthodox the more vigorously reaffirmed their allegiance to it."<sup>39</sup>

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Williams's theology was forged in the crucible of persecution suffered by both himself and others, and through Bible study, particularly the prophecies. He focused specially on Revelation 12, a chapter that depicts the true church as a woman concealed in the wilderness for 1260 year-days. Curiously, this was the very Scripture on which Eusebius, thirteen centuries earlier, had based his ideas about a theocratic Christendom.

According to Williams, "the 1260 days that the Heavenly Woman wanders in the wilderness fleeing from the Dragon (Apoc. 12:6) signified that there can be no true *established* church in the present. Since the beginning of the reign of the Antichrist in Medieval Christianity, true religion had consisted of the witnesses of individual holy Christians symbolized in Apocalypse 11 . . . Any attempt to create a Christian state, even the very concept of Christendom, would partake of Antichrist . . ."40

In Catholic Europe during the Middle Ages as well as Protestant Britain since Henry VIII (1491-1547), the interaction of monarchs with ecclesiastical authorities had regularly brought suffering, imprisonment, or death for religious dissidents.

Henry, king since 1509, had at first been a staunch member of the Roman Church, which he championed against Lutheranism, earning for himself the papal accolade "Defender of the Faith"—a title retained to this day by all his Protestant successors on the British throne. At that time, however, non-Catholics were more or less routinely burned for their convictions. But then, to obtain a male heir, the king decided to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon, on dubious grounds.

To this, the pontiff would not agree, because he feared her nephew, Charles V, the mighty Holy Roman emperor. Thereupon Henry, a dangerous and vindictive man, assisted by theologians, invented the Church of England, which could light its own fires against both Catholics and Protestants who disagreed with its catechism. For his part, the monarch could now divorce or execute as many wives as he wanted to.

His heir was the boy king of England, Edward VI (1537-53). From the age of nine, he ruled for only six years, from 1547 to 1553. He was more of a Protestant than his father had been. In his time, more Catholics were burned while dissident Protestants still had to watch their step. Edward died young and was succeeded by his sister, Mary Tudor. She was a Catholic who restored the power of her church, and now the fires again were stoked against Protestants, which earned her the nickname "Bloody Mary." When she died, her sister Elizabeth I (1533-1603) ruled for more than forty years and brought back to ecclesiastical power the Church of England. She was succeeded by the Scot-



tish James I (1566-1625), who inaugurated the Stuart dynasty. Both were Protestants, but would not tolerate dissidents, whose sufferings and legal disabilities continued.

Charles I (1600-49) had been king for just five years when Roger Williams hurried out of England and fled to America, which made him a wanted man. The authorities in the mother country kept on punishing dissent from and criticism of the established church as treason according to the whims of whoever happened to be king or queen.

From this point onward, Roger Williams could—for the remainder of his days—at a distance observe a veritable musical chairs of kings and religions in England, all because of the fateful link between church and state.

Charles I felt drawn to popery, partly because his Danish mother Anne revealed a "recurring interest in Roman Catholicism"<sup>41</sup> and because he married Henrietta Maria, sister of the French King, Louis XIII.<sup>42</sup> This, together with other transgressions, brought about a civil war between him and Parliament, which he lost. Found guilty of treason, he literally lost his head. A republican era followed under Oliver Cromwell, with somewhat greater (though not absolute) tolerance for those whose religion was distasteful to the authorities.

In 1660, the monarchy was restored under Charles II (1630-85). He ruled for twenty-five years, retaining the Church of England—he had no choice, for an ever more powerful and belligerent Parliament insisted on it. Anglicanism resumed its dominance and persecution.

But increasingly, like his father, the new king also inclined toward the Roman Church. At first he resisted the attempts of his Catholic mother and sister to convert him, but he was also married to the Portuguese Princess Catherine of Braganza. She, too, was a Catholic. These influences, as well as political alliances, finally tipped the scales. On his deathbed, Charles II was received into the Roman Church.<sup>43</sup>

His brother, James II (1633-1701), had become a Catholic in 1668/1669, so the majority in England did not want to see him on the throne. Nevertheless, he ruled his country for five tumultuous years, 1685-1688. It is true that at times he was somewhat tolerant. For instance, in the spring of 1686, he "issued a pardon to Quakers," for which William Penn "deserves a high degree of credit as well as for James's two general Acts of Indulgence which followed in the next two years."<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, his policies increasingly favored Catholicism, and his court was unable to distinguish clearly between religious dissent and treason.

For instance, Elizabeth Gaunt, an Anabaptist, "convicted on the most dubious evidence of having sheltered a rebel in her home," was burned at the stake in London. William Penn was among those who

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stood by watching. They saw how "she drew the straw closer about herself so that her burning would be accomplished more speedily . . . she conducted herself with such courageous martyrdom that the spectators were moved to tears."<sup>45</sup>

Soon enough, when a Catholic heir had been born to James, his enemies revolted against him. They invited a Hollander, Stadtholder William of Orange (1650-1702), and his cousin-wife Mary (1662-1694) to invade their country. These were both descended from Charles I: she was actually the daughter of James II, but had been brought up a Protestant.<sup>46</sup>

After ineffectual armed resistance, her father became a fugitive, escaped to France, and lost his throne. This Glorious Revolution, as the British call it, greatly improved the situation. The new Dutch king, assisted in his landing by Huguenots, hailed from a country that had long been more tolerant of religious dissidents than England. Besides, the British parliament insisted on legislation that granted greater religious freedom—though not for those who belonged to the Roman Church.

When Roger Williams was in Boston, however, all that still lay in the future; some of it would happen after his death. But we mention it here because all this is an object lesson of what can happen not only when Catholics but Protestants blend religion with politics.

We note again how the ideas that Williams had brought with him from England and rooted in America were related to his study of prophecy. He disapproved of "the church at Boston, because it compromised on the question of the English church as part of the 'abomination of antichrist.'"<sup>47</sup> To the pretensions of the New England theocracy to be a latter-day Israel, he bluntly retorted, "You are not a separated people."<sup>48</sup> For him, America as well as Europe and all nations still lay "dead in sin."<sup>49</sup>

Despite Roger Williams's debunking of the typological myth, it continued to work powerfully on the American mind. "By its isolation and its homogeneity New England seemed most close to the pattern of Israel, but the archetype was almost as present to the imagination of Kentucky pioneers. Describing the migration in 1780 of his parents, James B. Finley could remark: 'Like ancient Israel, who, while reviling [*sic*] the temple in troublous times, had to bear about them the weapons of war, so the ministers of the Gospel at that day were obliged to carry carnal as well as spiritual weapons."<sup>50</sup>

This New-World typology continued very much alive in the minds of some Americans when and after the country declared its independence. "By the time of the Revolution a mentality had long been sustained and perfected that made easy an identification of the new nation with the children of Abraham."<sup>51</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, it still persisted. "Thus Herman Melville, arguing in 1850 that this nation should give up the barbarous custom of flogging in its navy whether or not Britain retained it, exhorted: 'Escaped from the house of bondage, Israel of old did not follow after the ways of the Egyptians.' Exulting in all the proverbial intoxication of the metaphor, Melville could shamelessly assert: 'We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world.'"<sup>52</sup>

Miller suggests that this typology went into decline because of new religious currents which had in the meantime also started flowing in the United States, amongst others the Second Great Awakening of 1800-1850, which favored a theology with a greater New Testament emphasis.<sup>53</sup> He thinks the idea that Americans are latter-day Israelites has retreated into the background, although "the stamp of this long period of Hebraistic imagination will always be impressed upon" American culture; remaining a "part of our submerged memory."<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately things are not that simple. National typology added a new twist in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Much of this has, to say the least, been unusual; some of it startling. A part of it is sinister, sometimes with tragic results.

An additional element came to the fore: focusing on literal Israelites and Jews. For some, the national typology mutated into a belief that Americans were the actual descendants of the Lord's ancient chosen people. The Jews were also accorded a major eschatological role in prophetic interpretation. The following examples are thought provoking.

First there was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, originating with Joseph Smith (1805-44) in Western New York, a very revivalist region. He "experienced an intense spiritual revelation of God and Jesus Christ" at the age of 14. In 1827, he claimed to be a prophet and began to write the *Book of Mormon*. Supposedly an angel had led him to a cache of golden plates "containing a history of the American Indians that described them as descendants of Hebrews [the ten tribes] who centuries earlier had sailed to North America by way of the Pacific."<sup>55</sup>

The religion he and his followers founded incorporated several features derived from ancient Israel. These included a theocracy, a priesthood with a tabernacle, and polygamy. Another teaching was that non-Whites were not included in God's covenant with his people. Presumably they were, typologically speaking, "Canaanites." Headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, the official Mormon Church has in the meantime abandoned both racism and polygamy—though having several wives is still to be found in some groups that now defy

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their denomination. Today the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a worldwide enterprise, with about twelve million members.

Douglas LaPrade, a Christian scholar, perceptively points out that establishing Salt Lake City as their Jerusalem was simultaneous and consistent with "the quasi-religious notion of Manifest Destiny, America's justification for the westward expansion of the 1840s." For him, it much resembles what the Puritans were planning for Boston two hundred years earlier.<sup>56</sup>

John L. O'Sullivan coined the phrase in his *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (July-August 1845), "to prophesy the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence." The expression was quickly adopted by Congressmen debating "the three territorial questions confronting the United States in 1845 and 1846—the annexation of Texas, the joint occupation of the Oregon Territory with England, and the prosecution of war with Mexico." Manifest Destiny began as a largely Democrat idea, apart from individual Whigs or Republicans who also supported it. In the 1890s, however, it "was revived as a Re-publican policy."<sup>57</sup>

Two factors especially empowered the westward drive across America. First, in 1803, the territory of the United States was doubled by the Louisiana Purchase. In probably the greatest real estate bargain of all time, Thomas Jefferson bought 828,000 square miles from Napoleon Bonaparte for less than three cents an acre.<sup>58</sup> Lying athwart the center of the country, this opened up a vast area for new settlements. Second, by 1860, the Industrial Revolution with its *laissez-faire* economics had utterly transformed the continent. New methods of transport, especially the steamboat and the railroad—aided by the telegraph and its successor the telephone—had sewn the country together. What is more, "each region represented a division of production. New England and the Middle Atlantic states concentrated on manufacturing and commerce and relied on the West for foodstuffs for its growing urban population and the South for raw cotton to supply its textile factories."<sup>59</sup>

Though Manifest Destiny had overtones of crass materialism that owed nothing to religion, as in the 1849 Gold Rush to California, it also required an ideological basis. Unfortunately those lovely western lands were neither empty nor without owners. They were inhabited by and belonged to Native American nations, who had to be weeded out to make place for the new settlers. According to Herbert Aptheker, in the period after the Revolution "racism was virulent and widespread," and a "genocidal policy toward the Indian peoples" prevailed.<sup>60</sup>

If, in relation to the latter, his word choice is perhaps excessively harsh, no Caucasian Christian today can read about their fate with-

out shame and distress. Especially awful was the lot of the Cherokees. Having already been deprived of so much territory in Georgia, eastern Tennessee, and western North as well as South Carolina, they elected to solve their problems with the encroaching immigrants by assimilating with them. After 1800, they modeled their government on that of the United States. "They adopted white methods of farming, weaving, and home building." In 1821, Sequoyah, a half-Cherokee, invented a syllabic system of writing for them. "Almost the entire tribe became literate within a short time. A written constitution was adopted, and religious literature flourished, including translations from the Christian scriptures."<sup>61</sup>

And did these measures satisfy the whites around them, safeguard the treaty with the United States government, and permit these adaptive Native Americans to dwell at peace in their land? It will forever remain a blot on the name of President Andrew Jackson that he refused to intervene on their behalf against the Georgia officials who had ignored a US Supreme Court decision in the Cherokees' favor. Instead, they "were evicted under the Indian Removal Act of 1830 by 7,000 troops commanded by General Winfield Scott. Some 15,000 Cherokees were first gathered into camps while their homes were plundered and burned by local residents. Then the Indians were sent west in groups of about 1,000, most on foot." In a forced march for 116 days, during the 1838-1839 fall and winter, they were evicted far away from their native land. About 4,000 of them died along that terrible Trail of Tears. Herded to what today is northeastern Oklahoma, they were joined to remnants of the Creek, the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, and the Seminole—who had also been "forcibly removed from the Southeast by the U.S. government in the 1830s." During 1907, the perfidious palefaces also opened much of this new land to settlement by strangers who kept on pouring in from the East. The tribal governments were dissolved, and the Cherokee nation largely petered out.<sup>62</sup>

Since most people find it difficult to face evil in themselves, they often prefer to rationalize it through religion. Therefore the disposers of the Cherokees and other Indian nations, remained indebted to the original Puritan myth.

According to Ronald Takaki's summary of it, it masks a certain heartlessness: "The Protestant ethic had defined work as virtuous, requiring the habits of self-control and the accumulation of wealth as a sign of salvation; republicanism was now proclaiming worldly goods as markers of virtue."<sup>63</sup> If so, there can be little hope for the poor, whose penury could—according to the same ethic—be interpreted as an outward mark of God's disfavor.

Anyone truly acquainted with the Bible must find this repugnant. The Hebrew Scriptures abound with statements about the

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Lord's compassion for the poor and his threats against those who exploit or oppress them. The rich could at times be virtuous, like Abraham, although they were often extremely wicked people.

This is also a New Testament doctrine. After thirty years as a carpenter and construction worker, Christ became a penniless preacher, often without a roof over his head: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). He never flattered the wealthy but said outright, "Blessed be ye poor: for yours in the kingdom of God," to which he added, "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation (Luke 6:20, 24). A handful of the wealthy could indeed be saved, but "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven . . . . It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 20:23-26).

The problem was not the possession of riches, but keeping it all for oneself. A wise steward would share it with those who are less fortunate and use it to serve God. In one of the Saviour's parables, we read about a landowner who restructured his entire business to provide for selfish retirement. The Lord struck him down, when he decreed, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:16-21)

But Puritans, early and late, had a rather different outlook. As Max Weber shows in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, they condemned ostentation and pride, yet also taught it was the Christians' duty to be good stewards of the material and opportunities with which God had provided them—for their benefit. According to this theology, "wealth is only suspect when it tempts the devout in the direction of lazy restfulness and a sinful enjoyment of life . . . . If, however, riches are attained within the dutiful performance of one's vocational calling, striving for them [*sic*] is not only morally permitted but expected. This idea is explicitly expressed in the parable of the servant who was sentenced to hell because he failed to make the most of the opportunities entrusted to him. *Wishing* to be poor, it was frequently argued, signifies the same as wishing to be sick."<sup>64</sup>

For the destitute, the Puritans had little time: indeed, when penury caused people to fall into debt, they were—from Colonial to Revolutionary times—regarded as criminals and jailed.<sup>65</sup>

Another potent nineteenth-century development, which focused on the idea of Americans being literally descended from those ancient ten tribes was transatlantic British-Israelism, also known as Anglo-Israelism. Some scholars see its ultimate origin in the ideas of

Puritans during the 1600s, already referred to. This is only too probable. Others focus on John Wilson's 1840 *Lectures on Our Israelitish Origin*, the influence of which in later years grew first slowly and then more rapidly.<sup>66</sup>

Like Joseph Smith, Wilson was not content with mere typology. According to him, the Anglo-Saxon people were God's chosen people because they were the actual descendants of the ten lost tribes, who migrated to Britain after the Assyrians had destroyed their kingdom in 722/721 BC. For this reason, people of British stock supposedly still have a special covenant with God. This national myth was at its height in England during the 1920s and in America during the depression of the 1930s.<sup>67</sup>

Though Anglo-Israelism largely concerns itself with English-speaking people, it also does—especially some varieties of it—acknowledge "Celtic, Scandinavian, Germanic and associated cultures." These peoples, too, are regarded as descendants of the ten lost tribes.<sup>68</sup>

It is possible that some of the Millerites, who had expected Christ to return in 1844, embraced British-Israelism. Certainly the Seventh-day Adventists, who developed after the Great Disappointment, did not. But Herbert Armstrong "became keenly interested in British Israelism." By 1930, he founded his own congregation in Eugene, Oregon, which later gave rise to the Worldwide Church of God. After Armstrong's death, his movement disintegrated. In 1995, its remnants gave up many of his ideas, including British-Israelism.<sup>69</sup>

Armstrong's church was generally still benign, though very Israelite with its observance not only of the seventh-day Sabbath but also of Jewish feast days. But Christian Identity, another collection of groups, was not, for with British-Israelism it blended both racist and anti-Semitic ideas.

This began with Howard B. Rand, who in 1928 became "the National Commissioner of the Anglo-Saxon Federation of America." In the 1940s, Wesley Swift founded his own church in Lancaster, California. In addition to teaching British-Israelism, he was part of an attempt to revive the Ku Klux Klan in Los Angeles. "The [Christian] Identity emphatically believes that the modern day Jews are of the House of Judah, while Anglo-Saxons are of the House of Israel. The movement maintains that only the Anglo-Saxons, of the House of Israel, have a covenant with God, thereby inducing pro-white attitudes."<sup>70</sup>

The most extreme of these groups not only maintain that Adam and Eve were white but also that "other races are the 'Satanic spawn' of Cain," which "leads naturally to a hatred of Blacks, Native Americans, and immigrants from 'non-Aryan lands.'"<sup>71</sup>

It is amazing how the urge to be a literal, Hebraic chosen people can lead not only to racial intolerance but even to anti-Semitism. Perhaps the motive is to dispose of a competitor for being the chosen

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people of God. If so, Christian Identity and similar groups are barking up the wrong theological tree.

The Bible states that the Assyrian captivity eliminated the ancient state of northern Israel. That, however, is not the whole story about the ten tribes. They were not completely lost, for at different times some remnants of them blended with the Jews.

In the time of King Asa (c. 911-c. 869 BC), who "put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of all the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim and renewed the altar of the LORD," large numbers of God-fearing Israelites emigrated southwards into his country, which was just a few miles away. We read: "And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel *in abundance*" (2 Chron. 15:8, 9, emphasis added) Together with the Levites, this provided Asa's kingdom with representatives of at least six tribes.

Two hundred years later, Hezekiah (c. 729-c. 686 BC) also instituted religious reforms. By that time, the Assyrians had already conquered northern Israel and deported most of, though not all, its inhabitants. We read of King Hezekiah's messengers that went through that entire territory to invite their remnant to come and worship in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 30:6-10) Most of those Israelites mocked them and laughed them to scorn, yet some accepted the invitation: "Divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem" (vs. 11). At this special Passover, there were "many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun" (vs. 18).

When the Assyrian overlords, according to their usual policy of mingling their conquered people, brought in foreigners to populate what used to be northern Israel, this God-fearing remnant would have permanently joined themselves to the Jews in the south.

Just looking at the names that are mentioned in these two accounts, we now have Judah, Benjamin, Simeon, Ephraim, Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Issachar, as well as the Levites. That makes nine tribes.

A little more than a century after the Assyrians had removed the bulk of the Israelites to their own country in northern Mesopotamia as well as Media (2 Kings 15:29; 17:6; 18:11), Judah also went into captivity. This was to Babylon, which is likewise in Mesopotamia, in the south. Both these territories by now were part of Nebuchadnezzar's empire. Such Israelites as were still serving the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had an additional opportunity to blend with their brethren from Judah. When after the Babylonian captivity, the Jews were reestablished in Canaan, they had with them elements from these tribes.



At the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary praised the Lord, who "hath holpen his servant *Israel*" (Luke 1:54). Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, likewise under inspiration exclaimed: "Blessed be the Lord God of *Israel*; for he hath visited and redeemed his people." Afterwards, when the infant Messiah was brought to the temple for the ceremony of presenting him to the Lord, an inspired Simeon walked in to share the parents' joy. He had long been "waiting for the consolation of *Israel*" (Luke 2:25). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he jubilantly blessed the child, exclaiming that one day Jesus would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people *Israel*" and said to Mary, "this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in *Israel*" (vv. 32, 33). In all these verses, as well as those from which we quote in the paragraphs that follow, we have added the emphases.

We read that the prophetess Anna, who also blessed baby Jesus, belonged to "the tribe of Aser" (Luke 2:36) and the apostle Paul was, as he insisted, "of the stock of *Israel*, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Phil. 3:5). He also called himself "an *Israelite*, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1).

Jesus, when he had grown to manhood, said to the woman at the well of Samaria, "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). But before that, when he first sent out the twelve on a preaching mission, he instructed them as follows: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel*" (Matt. 10:5, 6). It was a walkabout in Palestine, and they could reach these Israelites (or Jews) on foot. The apostles certainly did not at that time set sail for Britain or America!

On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, Peter addressed the crowd not only as "Ye men of Judaea" (Acts. 2:14), but also as "ye men of *Israel*" (vs. 22). Admittedly some of the people who listened to him were from other countries, the Diaspora, but they were all Jews or proselytes. In both Rom. 10 and 11, about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, Paul uses the word *Israel* several times.

When he was a prisoner of the Romans at Caesarea, he said to King Agrippa: "And now I stand and am being judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise *our twelve tribes*, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews." (Acts 26:6, 7, emphasis added).

At the time of the incarnation and also in the apostolic period, the Jews retained the idea that they were not all just descendants of Judah. They continued to think of themselves as Israelites. They still have not lost this awareness.

Yet it is true that many, possibly most, of the people deported from the northern kingdom to Assyria and Media—seven centuries before the Christian era—did not amalgamate with the Jews. What

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happened to them? Some of them were lost . . . but only in the sense that when they abandoned their religion, they simply melted away, assimilating with other Mesopotamians as well as the Medes. Those who continued to worship Yahweh would, however, have blended with the Diaspora Jews. Of these not all returned to Canaan, though urged to do so by Ezra and Nehemiah. A large colony of them remained, for many centuries, in Mesopotamia and the Medo-Persian Empire, as becomes clear from the book of Esther. The Kurds, Iraqis, and Iranians of today are therefore partly of ancient Israelite (even Jewish) descent. But most English people and Americans are not.

The story of a westward migration of the ten tribes, who then allegedly became the British (and Americans), is pure mythology. It is in the same class as the other—but contradictory—tale, already mentioned, that they are really Romans, descended from a Trojan named Brut, who journeyed to the West!

Is it not more feasible, geographically speaking, for ancient Israelites to have migrated eastward and also to have descended into Africa?

In parts of Asia, precisely the former belief exists, as British aristocrat and parliamentarian George Nathaniel Curzon—later Viceroy for India—found on visiting Kabul during 1894. His host, the Persian-speaking Abdur Rahman Khan, Amir of Afghanistan, "loved to dwell" *inter alia* "on his belief in the descent of himself and his people from the Lost Tribes of Israel."<sup>72</sup>

That this may not be fantasy appears from the fact that a century later, since the early 1990s, almost 1,000 people of the adjacent northeastern India with a similar claim have been admitted to the Jewish state as Bnei Menashe (children of Manasseh). In 2006, another 7,000 were still awaiting emigration to Israel.<sup>73</sup>

There is, moreover, the very real fact of ancient Hebrew influence in Africa, which has lately excited the interest of Jewish scholars at Jerusalem and abroad.

First there are the Falasha, the "black Jews" of Ethiopia. Most of their remnant have now been evacuated to Israel, where I saw a few of them in 1985. The scholars in Jerusalem are puzzled as to who they are. What is sure is that they practice Judaism and claim to be of Hebrew descent, especially through an alleged liaison between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

Even more enigmatic are the Lembas, a tribe of Zimbabwe and northern South Africa. Numbering about 50,000, they also claim kinship with the Jews and certainly have several Semitic customs. Like other blacks of the region, they practice circumcision, but also do not eat pork or piglike animals like the hippopotamus. Writing in the *New York Times* on 9 May 1999, Nicholas Wade reports on two

lines of research that converge to confirm the Lemba claim to Hebrew ancestry.<sup>74</sup>

Dr. David B. Goldstein, a population geneticist at Oxford University, England, has been studying the DNA of Jews, with special attention to the cohen, their priestly caste. He has focused on the male or *y* chromosome, which is passed from father to son, usually unaltered by the reproductive process, since it is not shuffled from generation to generation. From time to time, however, mutations do take place. Studying these, Goldstein discovered that "9 percent of Lemba men carried the cohen genetic signature, and those who said they belonged to the Buba clan, 53 percent had the distinctive sequences. These proportions are similar to those found among the major Jewish populations." This is remarkable, for in all non-Jewish communities tested to date, the cohen genetic signature is either totally lacking or rare.

Goldstein's work is fascinating in the light of the research conducted by Dr. Tudor Parfitt, who directs the Center for Jewish Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. He first met the Lembas after a lecture in Johannesburg about Ethiopian Jews. They told him they were also of Jewish descent. Some, in fact, were wearing yarmulkes. Their ancestors, they said, originally emigrated from Judea under the leadership of a man named Buba. "We came from the north, from a place called Senna. We left Senna, we crossed Pusela, we came to Africa and there we rebuilt Senna."

Later, when Parfitt visited the Hadramawt region, "a former site of Jewish communities in Yemen," he mentioned the Senna tradition to a religious leader at Tarim. This man, surprised, informed him that there was a nearby village of that name. Parfitt promptly visited it, and the locals told him that "centuries ago the valley had been very fertile, irrigated by a dam, the ruins of which are still there. And then the dam burst, they think about a thousand years ago, and the people fled." Between the village of Senna and Sayhut, a Yemeni seaport, stretches a valley called Wadi al-Masilah. Parfitt thinks this corresponds to the Pusela in the tale he was told by the South African Lembas. According to him, these moreover have clan names like Sadiqui and Hamisi, which "are 'clearly Semitic' and are also found in the eastern Hadramawt."

Parfitt, who has written a book entitled *Journey to the Vanished City*, said he was excited to hear of "Goldstein's genetic results confirming the Lemba tradition."<sup>75</sup>

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Are the Lembas really the descendants of *Jews*? A people practicing Judaism most probably did at one time live in Southern Arabia, just across from the Horn of Africa. Perhaps their ancestors belonged to the ten tribes.

After all, Israelites had been on the continent from at least a hundred years before Hezekiah's time. When the merchants of Tyre founded Carthage in North Africa in 814 BC, people from Canaan accompanied them.<sup>76</sup> This was very natural. In their original homes, the Phoenicians and northern Israelites were neighbors, and more often than not on cordial terms since Solomon's time. Tyre was close to the territory of the ten tribes. They also spoke what was virtually the same language, both Phoenician and Hebrew being dialects of ancient Canaanite.<sup>77</sup> At that time they even used the same writing system.<sup>78</sup>

People from ancient Israel left a considerable imprint on northwestern and subsequently sub-Saharan Africa. "Since from the earliest times people whom we should now call Jews had been involved in Phoenician colonization, Judaic religious beliefs had been assimilated even by tribal Berbers, and especially, it would seem, by the tribes of southern Tunisia and adjacent Tripolitania."<sup>79</sup> Inhabiting the western reaches of North Africa, these were a Caucasian people but spoke Hamito-Semitic languages<sup>80</sup> akin to ancient Egyptian. With the introduction of the camel, a group of Berbers known as Tuaregs—whose men wear veils—penetrated southward along trade routes through the Sahara.

According to chronicles compiled by seventeenth-century Sudanic scholars in Timbuktu, "the first kings of Ghana were what they called 'white men' from the north." There are also legends that indicate it was northerners, the Tuareg Berbers, who established the states of the Hausa in Northern Nigeria, of Kanem-Bornu in the east and of the Songhai in the west.<sup>81</sup> This suggests that Hebraic influences, absorbed by the Berbers, also made their way into the Sudan from western Africa.

That continent may well possess the best, and scientifically the most substantial, claim to having—amongst its present-day inhabitants—people descended not only from the Jews but even from the ten tribes.

But why would those whose forebears were ancient Germans from across the English Channel, also yearn so improbably after Hebraic ancestry? "The basic reward, and primary source of appeal, that British-Israelism provides to its Anglo-Saxon advocates is its affirmation that biblical prophecy be directed to them specifically. For many Anglo-Saxons, it has been supremely desirable to have such a covenant with God. When people accept the idea, they establish a

unique relationship with their God; therefore, its proponents receive the reward of becoming an elite."<sup>82</sup> Not only in heaven, but also here and now, as well as in a future America, reshaped according to their heart's desire.

This takes us right back to Governor John Winthrop, who in 1630 taught that his group of colonists had entered into a special covenant with God—and Roger Williams, who rejected this as false theology.

We note a further point. Those who have accepted such a vision, including but not limited to Christian Identity, the Aryan Nation, and the Ku Klux Klan, have some affinity with Dispensationalist thinking, especially its view of a world government to be established by Antichrist. Motivated by a very strong patriotism, such people greatly oppose the dilution of what they see as American values. Some of them fear the internationalist United Nations, which "backed by Jewish representatives of the anti-Christ, will take over the country and promote a New World Order."<sup>83</sup>

These ideas have produced a spate of conspiracy theories, in which anti-Semitism is often prominent and seldom absent. Publications dealing with the so-called New World Order abound. They often refer to the Illuminati, the Freemasons, and the fraudulent *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.

The last-mentioned document "purports to be a report of a series of 24 (in other versions, 27) meetings held in Basel, Switz., in 1897, at the time of the first Zionist congress. There Jews and Freemasons were said to have made plans to disrupt Christian civilization and erect a world state under their joint rule. Liberalism and socialism were to be the means of subverting Christendom . . ." Written in Russian but also translated into German, French, and English, the *Protocols* first appeared in 1903 and 1905. Quite soon they became a classic of anti-Semitism and were widely circulated. In the United States, "Henry Ford's newspaper, *Dearborn Independent*, often cited them as evidence of a Jewish threat."<sup>84</sup>

But, as Philip Graves of the London *Times* first demonstrated, the *Protocols* are a blatant forgery. This was subsequently confirmed, especially by the Russian historian Vladimir Burtsev, who showed that the perpetrators were "officials of the Russian secret police,"<sup>85</sup> working for the Czar. Conspiratorialists also often refer to the role of international Jewish bankers, beginning with the Rothschilds.

Such views often overlap with Dispensationalist thinking, as described and refuted in "Two Thousand Years of Prophetic Interpretation." In saying this, we are anxious not to be misunderstood. Dispensationalism itself is not intrinsically racist or anti-Semitic,

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though its attitude toward the Jews is—in some of its variants—ambiguous. It has also lent itself to various forms of American syncretism. For this, the intellectual soil of the New World with its national Anglo-Saxon typology, fertilized by imported elements as well as homegrown ideas, has proven to be particularly congenial.

The prophecies of the Bible and history are closely intertwined. Both have often been perverted, to produce throughout the centuries a Western, Christian mythology. This has resulted from the abandonment of sound expository principles and especially by invoking unwarranted, extra-Scriptural typology. A particularly persistent, and harmful, fallacy has been that a Christian nation (such as the Medieval Franks, the later Dutch Republic, the Afrikaner Boers, the British, or the Americans is the Israel of God.

Far from being what the Bible teaches, all such ideas are red herrings, big and smelly, that obscure the proper understanding of history in the light of prophecy—leftovers from the great Mediterranean apostasy, which began in early Christian times, persisting through the Middle Ages, the Reformation, and later years, right down to the twenty-first century, our time.

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## About the Author

Edwin de Kock's first book in this field, *Christ and Anti-christ in Prophecy and History* (2001), has been widely acclaimed. Both scholars and ordinary readers have delighted in its pleasant style, blended with massive research. It displays a grasp of history, world affairs, and polyglot culture which is unusual among writers on prophecy. He has also published in Afrikaans and Esperanto. In the latter language, he is a famous poet as well as a member of its prestigious Academy. His fascination with prophecy and history began in his native South Africa almost sixty years ago. It culminated in sixteen years of intensive research, which is still continuing. He has qualifications in theology, literature, education, and speech. In Israel, on Crete, and in Europe, he visited great museums, cathedrals, art galleries, and important sites connected with the contents of his books. He was a professional educator for more than thirty-five years, in South Africa, South Korea, and the United States, especially as a college teacher. He finished this career as a writing professor at the University of Texas, Pan American, in 2000.



The following are only two of the chapters in this book, which show how foretelling the future requires an investigation of the past.

*Two Thousand Years of Prophetic Interpretation* takes the reader on an remarkable journey through the Christian era. In his Introduction, William H. Shea declares that with this the author has rendered a great service, by boiling down L.E. Froom's *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, four fat volumes, to just a few lectures. These, he says, have "clearly delineated two major tracks that proceed through all the periods involved." One of them is the Historical School. The other goes back before Christianity to pagan Greek philosophers, a syncretism that culminated in the great Mediterranean Apostasy.

*History as Christian Forgery* turns a sharp, unusual searchlight on the past. It contains a large amount of curious material and statements. In matters both secular and spiritual, "Nothing can deceive like a document." Clerics, especially, have often distorted facts. As a prominent Catholic writer puts it, for the medieval church, "forgeries, backed by violence and sheer effrontery, became a major basis for power."



*Edwin de Kock*