
A *TRUE* History
of the
TRUE CHURCH

A TRUE HISTORY of the TRUE CHURCH

Is Christ divided? There are more than 250 major denominations in America alone—and other hundreds of little groups and sects. WHY? When did this confusion originate?

How much do you really know about the TRUE CHURCH? Where has it been? Have you supposed it was re-established at the Protestant Reformation? IT WAS NOT! You will be ASTONISHED to see the true history of GOD'S Church. This true history, authentically documented, is breathtaking.

Here, then, are the astounding facts! This surprising truth is bound up in the real meaning of the SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION!

by Herman L. Hoeb

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IT IS HARD to believe, but it is TRUE! The actual facts of history—both Biblical and secular—are astonishing!

It is time we looked behind the curtain. It is time you knew how, when and where all this religious babylon started. The truth will come as a shock!

Every thinking person—every denomination—realizes that, at some time in history, there has been a great apostasy or falling away from original TRUTH. Protestants and Catholics may dispute the time of its occurrence, but they know that it happened!

It is time you knew how to recognize the true Church which Jesus founded!

Only ONE Church

Jesus Christ did not found many denominations! Christ said, "I will build my Church." He did build *his* ONE Church, commissioned to preach and to publish His Gospel—the very Message He brought from God—to all the world!

But what do we find today? Hundreds of different and disagreeing sects, all founded by MEN, each professing to teach the truth, yet contradicting and disagreeing with all the others—a modern religious babylon!

But what is a "sect"? According to Webster, it is "a group that has broken away from the established Church." Who established the Church?—Christ! Today's host of sects or denominations have BROKEN AWAY from that established parent Church—they teach different doctrines and observe different practices!

The religious sects of Jesus' day were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Samaritans. They had broken away from the true parent Old Testament Church established by God through Moses. Jesus joined none of them. On the contrary, He called His disciples out of them! The Greek word "ecclesia," translated "Church" in English, has the meaning of "called-out ones."

The Church in Prophecy

Surprise number one, for most people today, is this:

While most people today suppose that the true CHURCH was rapidly to grow big, to become a powerful organization, exerting powerful influence on the world, making this a better world, becoming the stabilizing influence of the world's civilization, actually Christ founded His Church for no such purpose!

Christ's instruction to His Church, through the New Testament, was NOT to participate in this world's politics and affairs in an effort to make this world a better world. Instead, His command to His Church is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate" (II Corinthians 6:17).

In His final prayer for His ONE Church, Jesus prayed: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world... Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be ONE, as we are. I have given them thy word, and the world hateth them, because they are not OF the world, even as I am not OF the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not OF the world, even as I am not OF the world" (John 17:9-16).

Jesus did command His BODY—the collective Body through which the Spirit of God does the WORK of God—to go into all the world and preach and publish His Gospel. But those of His Church are described as being strangers and foreigners in this world—as AMBASSADORS for Christ—representing His Kingdom which is foreign to the world—yet never being OF the world!

To Be Scattered

Now let's notice what was prophesied to happen to the Church. This true Church of God was to be

PERSECUTED—SCATTERED! "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you," said Jesus to His disciples (John 15:20). "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12).

On the night Jesus was seized to be crucified, He said: "It is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" (Mark 14:27). After HE, the Shepherd, was crucified, the "sheep"—HIS CHURCH—were to become scattered! Previously, that same evening, Jesus had said to His disciples: "Ye shall be scattered" (John 16:32).

This persecution and scattering began early. Notice Acts 8:1: "And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."

Read what Daniel says about the true Church: "And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by fame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white, even to the time of the end" (Dan. 11:33-35).

The prophet Ezekiel foretold this scattering—chapter 34. Daniel again foretold it: "When he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people (Church), all these things shall be finished." That is, the end of the age! (Dan. 12:7).

Nowhere is there any prophecy that the one true Church should become great and powerful, exerting influence in this world. Rather, Jesus called it the "Little Flock" (Luke 12:32), despised, persecuted, scattered by the world—separate FROM the world! Scattered, but NEVER DIVIDED! Always ONE Church, speaking the SAME thing—never many differing sects!

You have not read much of the history of THAT Church! Even the historians

never knew where to look for the TRUE Church—for they did not even know WHAT the true Church is!

WORLD'S Churches Deceived

On the other hand, all the prophecies foretold that in the WORLD apostasy, deception, counterfeit "Christianity," and division would occur.

Jesus foretold the very FIRST event to come on the world—GREAT DECEPTION—dimaxing, in OUR day now just ahead, in GREAT TRIBULATION!

"Take heed," He said, "that no man deceive you. For MANY shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive MANY!" (Mat. 24:4, 5).

Notice carefully! It was not the FEW who were to be DECEIVED—but the MANY. It was the FEW who were to become true Christians!

Yes, the MANY would come in Jesus' name, proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ—yes, preaching CHRIST to the world—and yet DECEIVING the world.

Jesus had pictured this same condition, when He said: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and MANY there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto LIFE, and FEW there be that find it" (Mat. 7:13-14).

That is not what the world believes, is it? Probably that is not what YOU have always heard, and come to assume. But it is what CHRIST SAID! How deceived this world has become!

And no wonder! For Satan himself is pictured in the Bible as the "god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4). He appears, not as a devil, but as a GOD—as an angel of LIGHT. And in Rev. 12:9, you read of "Satan, which deceiveth the WHOLE WORLD."

Clever Counterfeit

ASTOUNDING? Of course it is!

Hard to believe? Yes, but it's TRUE! How have the MANY been deceived? Simply by a preaching about the PERSON of Christ—exolling His virtues, worshipping Him, yet denying His MESSAGE

—HIS GOSPEL—by substituting pagan beliefs while preaching ABOUT Christ!

What a clever counterfeit! And many—perhaps most—of those so preaching in Christ's name are sincere—*themselves* deceived! It is SATAN who has deceived even *them*! It is SATAN who has made himself the "GOD OF THIS WORLD"—and thus is worshipped AS God. This world *doesn't know* the true God, strange as that may seem! This world believes that if one "accepts Christ"—"makes his declaration for Christ"—"worships Christ"—he is saved!

That is what many preach today! But what did Jesus preach? Did He say it was impossible to WORSHIP Him, and still be unsaved?

Listen! "In VAIN do they worship ME," said Christ, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...making the word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mark 7:7, 13).

That is difficult to believe, isn't it? You have been so drugged, so poisoned, so deceived by this world's deceptions—Satan's COUNTERFEITS—that even the words of Jesus are difficult to believe! May GOD HELP YOU TO BELIEVE CHRIST! It is one thing to believe ON Christ—that is, in His Person—and something altogether different to BELIEVE CHRIST—to believe what He SAYS.

Shocking though it is, the overwhelming majority *have been* deceived by ministers who come in the name of Jesus Christ, proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ, but who teach a different Gospel and a different faith! They are those who, themselves being deceived from childhood, brought up in these deceptive beliefs, enter the ministry to earn a living, who choose it as their vocation or job, who decide to appoint *themselves* as Christ's representatives, yet who were *not* called by Christ to be His ministers!

They have hired themselves out to the people, and therefore must preach what the PEOPLE want to hear! They do *not* correct or reprove their congregations for rejecting the doctrines Jesus taught and for transgressing God's law, which the BIBLE defines as SIN!

What Is the True Church?

Very few really know what the true Church is.

The true Church is the collective body of individuals, called out from the ways of this present world, who have *totally* surrendered themselves to the rule of God, and who, through the Holy Spirit, become the begotten sons of God (Rom. 8:9). Jesus has purchased *this Church* by shedding His own blood for it (Acts 20:28).

The true Church is not some *politically organized denomination* which one joins or becomes a member of in order to be "saved." Jesus did not die for some one religious *organization* called a church. Joining a local church congregation does *not* put you into God's Church.

You can't *join* the true Church: *only God can put you into it by His Spirit*. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into (put into) one Body" (I Cor. 12:13). God makes you a member of His Church—if you surrender your life to Him—even if you have *no local church* with which to fellowship.

The Church is called the body of Christ because it is a *spiritual organism* whose LIVING, ACTIVE HEAD is Jesus Christ, in the same sense that the husband is head of the wife (Eph. 5:23, 31). How does one enter this true Church of God?—this spiritual union? *Notice*:

When God's Church first began on the day of Pentecost, Peter gave the answer to this question. "REPENT and BE BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

We have to realize *our own ways* are wrong, that they have brought on ALL the suffering about us. We must be willing to *repent* and completely turn from our former ways and let God rule our lives. Then we should be *baptized*. Paul explains it in Romans 6:1-6 as the outward sign of our willingness to completely *bury* our old self in a watery grave and come up to walk in newness of life—following Jesus' example. Then we are promised the "gift" of the

Holy Spirit to guide us in obeying and following Christ — our *real* Lord and Master. This gift puts us into the Church, as we read in I Cor. 12:13.

Church Grows in Truth

Before He ascended to the Father, Jesus prayed that His Church would be kept ONE in the Father's name. "Holy Father, *keep through thine own name* those whom thou hast given me, that they may be ONE, as we are" (John 17:11).

The true Church — the "Church of God" (I Cor. 1:2) — is not many divided, quarreling denominations, but ONE Church, composed of many scattered members, ONE Church united in Spirit, mind, attitude and heart because its members have totally surrendered their wills to God and have yielded to correction and reproof from the Word of God — the Bible.

How many denominations have been willing to admit where they have been wrong, how many allowed the Holy Spirit to guide them into truth? The Church which Jesus is building is the collective body of those *scattered* individuals who have God's Holy Spirit, who admit it when they are wrong, as the apostle Peter did when he made a serious mistake (Gal. 2:11), and who accept the truth.

Now notice Jesus' promise in John 16:13. He would send the Spirit of truth who "will guide you INTO all truth."

Here is the KEY that proves which individuals are in God's Church. It is composed *only* of those who are *growing into truth* as God reveals it. The moment anyone ceases to GROW, but wants to retain only what he had five or ten years ago, *from that moment on the Holy Spirit ceases to live in him.*

Not the MANY Who Are Being Converted

It is the *few* — not the many — who understand the truth in this age. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that *not* many wise men after the flesh, *not* many mighty, *not* many noble, are called" (I Cor. 1:26). The world *cannot* receive the truth (John 1:5). Jesus explained why, by say-

ing: "Men love darkness rather than light, *because their deeds are evil*" (John 3:19).

But the world does not believe that its deeds are evil. And no wonder — for the WHOLE WORLD has been deceived — *and it does not know it!* People do not recognize truth when they hear it. They have been deceived without realizing it! They want to be lulled to sleep by false ministers who preach what the people want to hear.

It was the same in apostolic days.

Scarcely twenty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, the apostle Paul, in one of his first inspired letters, cautioned Christians not to be deceived by false preaching, or by false letters purporting to be from the apostles. "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day" — the time of God's intervention in human affairs when Jesus Christ will return to rule the nations — "shall not come except there come a *falling away* FIRST" (II Thess. 2:3).

The wholesale departure of Christians from the truth was the FIRST event prophesied *to befall* the true Church.

HOW It Happened

In Acts 20:29-39, Paul, the teacher of the Gentiles, explained *how* the apostasy would begin. He gathered the elders (ministers) of the church at Ephesus to deliver them a final message concerning their responsibility over the local congregations. "For," said Paul, "I *know this*, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things," why? — "to draw away disciples after them." To gain a personal following for themselves! To start new denominations! Do you catch the full significance of these two verses?

The elders or ministers were especially assembled because, *immediately after Paul would leave Ephesus* — not at the time of the Protestant Revolt, but IMMEDIATELY — there would come within the local church congregations false ministers, wolves in sheep's clothing, to make a prey of Christians, and even from those elders

already in the church congregations some would pervert the doctrine of Jesus to secure a following of "Christians" themselves.

Paul instructed the evangelist Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come that they will not endure sound doctrine, but *after their own lusts*" — the congregations wanting to do what they please — "shall they heap to themselves teachers" — elect ministers who will preach what they want to hear — "and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4:3, 4).

Not only Paul, but also Peter warned the churches that MANY would be misled. False teachers among Christians would bring in heresies, "and MANY shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (II Peter 2:2).

Jude, the apostle, and brother of Jesus, had to include in his letter the stern admonition that every Christian "should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. FOR THERE ARE CERTAIN MEN CREPT IN UNAWARES, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, TURNING THE GRACE OF GOD INTO LASCIVIOUSNESS, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ... These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 3 and 19).

These false teachers *crept in unawares* — professing to come in the name of Jesus Christ. Yet they denied that Jesus is the Christ by *rejecting the only sign* that proves that He is the Messiah (Mark 12:39, 40) and substituted for it the "Good Friday-Easter Sunday" tradition.

They turned the grace or unmerited pardon of God into a license to disobey the commandments.

Jude says *these preachers at first separated their followers from the body of believers*. They formed their own churches and called them the churches of Christ! But they were no longer real Christians. John saw the same apostasy develop. "MANY false prophets (or preachers)

are gone out into the world...." he warned. They professed to be Christ's ministers, they came in the name of Christ, but they were anti-christ!

John continues: "They are of the world; therefore they speak of the world, AND THE WORLD HEARETH THEM. We are of God: who knoweth God heareth us; who is not of God" — whoever does not obey Him — "heareth us not" (I John 4:1, 5-6).

Do you grasp the meaning of these verses?

The WORLD believed the many false ministers. The few listened to and believed the apostles of Christ. The world did not believe the apostles! The world accepted, instead, the FALSE PREACHERS who rose up in the Church. Notice:

"Even now have many antichrists arisen... They went out from us (they left the Church), but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (I John 2:18-19).

This is why there are so many denominations today!

John wrote of the same condition in II John 7: "For MANY DECEIVERS are gone forth into the world... Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God."

Those false teachers who left the true Church "professed to know God" — they pretended to obey God — "but by their works they denied Him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work disapproved" (Titus 1:16). They professed Christ and the Father; but they rejected the authority of God and His law! They were DISOBEIDENT.

They acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ; they came in His name, professing to be the ministers of Christ — but they rejected His message.

True Christians Forced Out

Whenever they were able to influence a majority in a local church these false ministers began to expel the true Christians.

In the letter of the apostle John to

Gaius, we read: "I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbideth them that would, AND CASTETH THEM OUT OF THE CHURCH" (III John 9 and 10).

The true Christians, who alone comprised the true Church, were being put out of the visible, organized congregations. They were the SCATTERED ones of whom John said: "Therefore the world knoweth us not" (I John 3:1).

But that did not mean the scattered individuals were not part of the Church. They were the Church because they were joined to Christ through the Holy Spirit. Those who drove them out became the false church—the church of the god of this world—"the synagogue of Satan."

But Jesus promised to be with the faithful remnant of His Church to the end of the age—to guide His people into truth. Where has His Church been these 1900 years?

An Amazing Prophecy!

In the book of Revelation is an amazing prophecy. Almost no one understands it, yet it is so very plain. It is the Seven Churches of Revelation.

Notice Revelation 1:12-13; John sees a vision of seven candlesticks and Jesus in their midst. The Bible interprets the seven candlesticks to mean seven particular church congregations (verse 20). Jesus Christ is pictured as dwelling among the seven churches AS THOUGH THEY WERE A TYPE OF THE ENTIRE CHURCH.

There is the answer! Jesus dwells in the entire Church. Since this vision pictures Him dwelling only in seven churches, those seven churches represent the entire Church!

Jesus chose the seven because they formed a perfect two-fold pattern.

First, they were typical of general conditions among God's people anywhere. That is why we today are admonished to

hear what the Holy Spirit says to all the seven churches.

Second, those seven churches, each with its own particular characteristics, were chosen because their location in successive order on a long mail route was typical of seven successive stages of Gospel labor of the Church of God THROUGH ALL AGES.

Who ARE the Seven Churches?

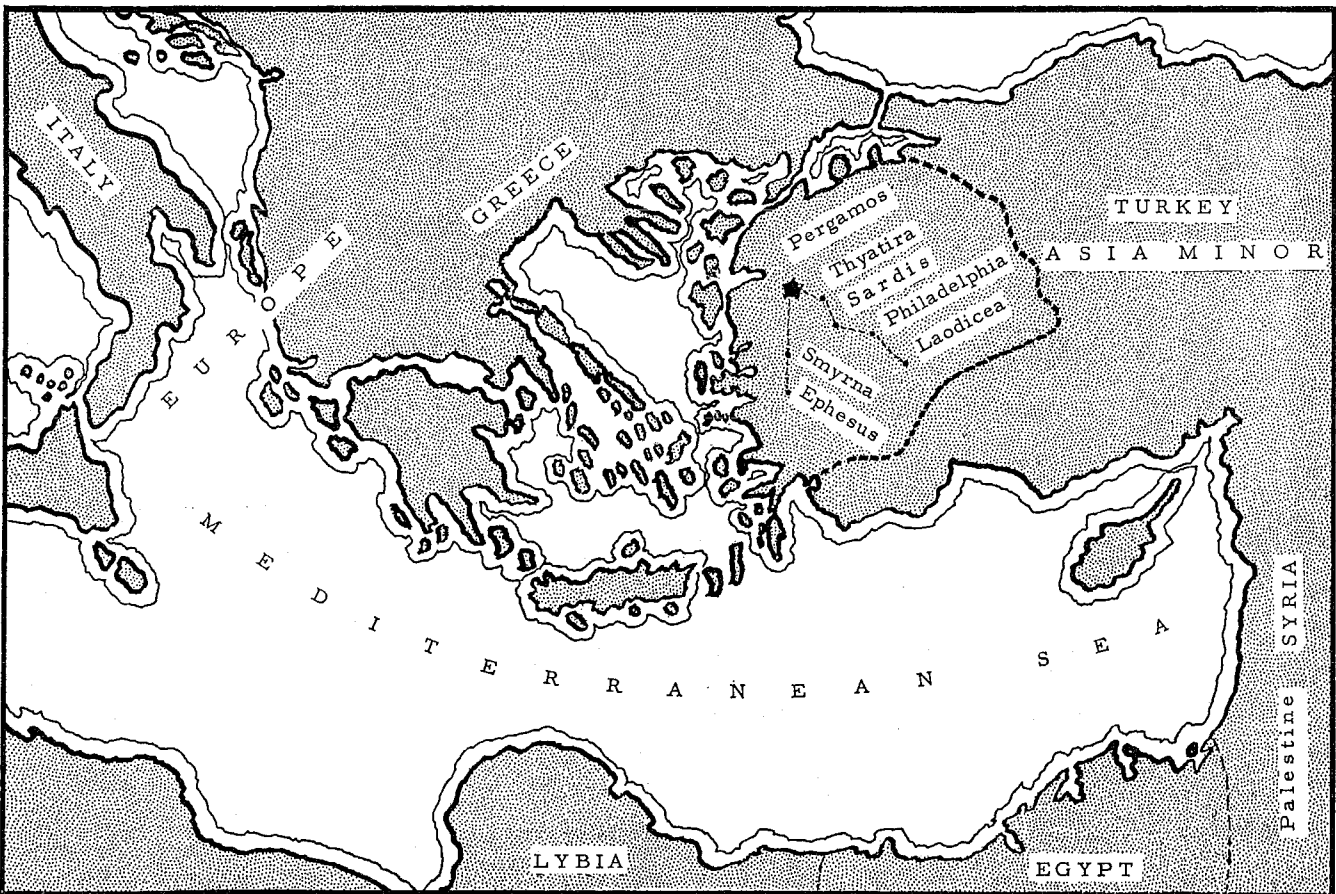
WHY have all Bible students, until NOW, been unable to identify these churches? It is due to the fact that everyone has ASSUMED, erroneously, that these picture the seven stages of the visible, organized churches which have called themselves "Christian." In other words, it has been assumed that the churches of this world are pictured in Revelation 2 and 3 as continuations of the true Church in apostolic days.

Everyone, it seems, has supposed that, following the apostolic Church, these seven churches picture the course of history in the Greek and Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches—the churches of the god of this world!

This is not true!

These two chapters of Revelation picture, and convey God's message to THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD—the Church in which CHRIST lives and works—the Church which is HIS BODY—His instrumentality—the Church HE USES! It is the Church that was scattered, persecuted, unorganized—many of whose members have been martyred. This Church is composed of members who, even though forgotten by and led by the Holy Spirit, yet are human and therefore not perfect. In the message to each of these seven churches Jesus has a word of correction. In every case He points out things they need to overcome. But they are the people who have and are led by His Spirit, who put themselves under GOD's government instead of human traditions or self desire or the way that seems right to a man, and who have in the main THE TRUE GOSPEL, even though they often lost vital portions of it.

Notice, chapter 2, verse 1: "These



things saith He that holdeth the seven stars (the angels of the TRUE Church) in His right hand, *who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*" (*these seven churches*). Jesus Christ is IN these churches. They are His churches, not Satan's churches which falsely masquerade as "Christian."

And remember the TRUE Church has not been politically organized, powerful and recognized by the world — but scattered, persecuted, *seldom noticed* by the world, and even then regarded as heretics.

Now let's UNDERSTAND who they are, one by one.

The Apostolic Age

The church at Ephesus pictured the *Apostolic Church* — a Church which patiently labored in the gospel, which many false apostles but remained steadfast to the truth (Rev. 2:1-7), and which continued, though scattered, until the time of Emperor Constantine.

Jesus spent His ministry *preparing the foundation for THIS CHURCH.*

Jesus called out disciples, teaching them the gospel, setting them an example by His own ministry. He authorized them with the greatest commission ever given to human beings — to preach the "gospel of the Kingdom of God in the whole world" (Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:15).

Before Jesus ascended to the throne of God, He commanded the apostles and disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were imbued with the Holy Spirit, which made them the begotten sons of God, put them into His Church (1 Cor. 12:13); and endured them with the POWER OF GOD to carry out His work!

Jesus founded His Church by sending the promised Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Monday, June 18, 31 A.D. — a date *absolutely* established by the exact and *inspired* mathematical and astronomical computations of God's Sacred Calendar.

It was an inspired Church, a Church in which Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, was living His life and THROUGH WHICH JESUS BEGAN TO PREACH AND PUBLISH

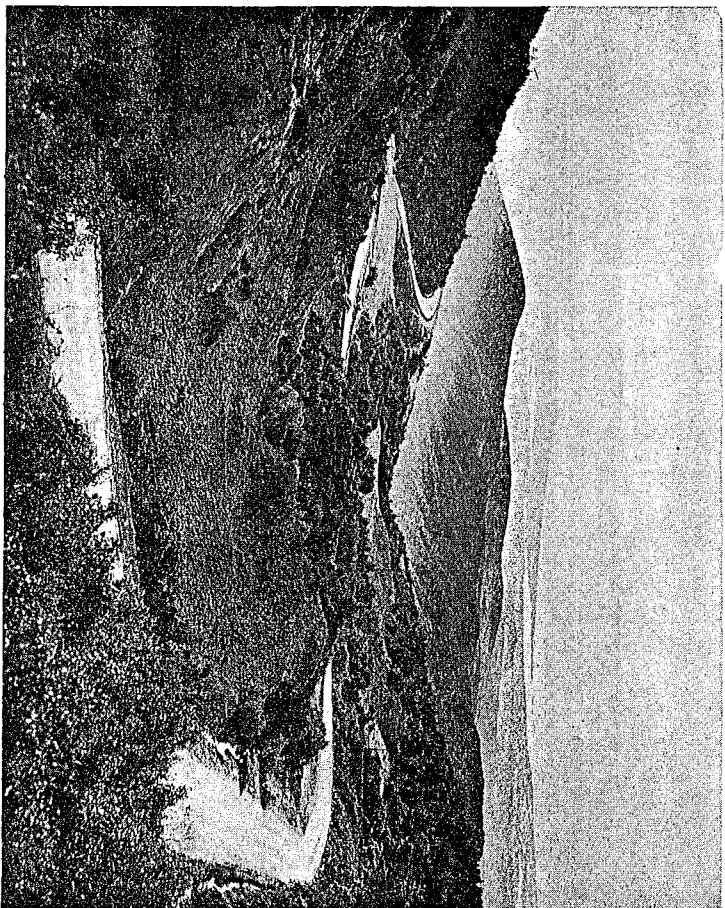
HIS GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD.

THERE WERE TWO 19-YEAR CYCLES IN THE HISTORY OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH DURING WHICH THE GOSPEL WAS CARRIED TO THE OLD WORLD. It was exactly 19 years from A.D. 31, when the Church was founded, to the time Paul received the vision to go into Europe! In Acts 16:9 Paul had a vision of a man in Macedonia (in Greece) who shouted, "Help us!" Paul described this even in II Cor. 2:12-13 where he wrote that "a door was opened unto me of the Lord" by which he meant that a way was opened to preach the gospel in Europe.

Paul went into Europe about the time of Pentecost in the late spring of 50 A.D. After a few months of preaching, he arrived in Corinth in the fall of that year (Acts 18:1) where he remained for *a year and six months* (verse 11). It was now the beginning of 52 A.D. An insurrection broke out against Paul when Gallio was deputy or pro-consul of Achaia (verse 12). A recently discovered inscription in Greece states that Gallio held this position during 52 A.D., which proves that the gospel went to Europe in 50 A.D., just 19 years after the Church was founded!

From 50 A.D. it was another 19 years until the fleeing of the Headquarters Church at Jerusalem in 69 A.D. Here is what happened in 69 A.D. on the Feast of Pentecost — exactly two 19-year cycles after the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost: "Moreover," records Josephus, the Jewish historian, "at that feast which we call *Pentecost*, as the priests were going by night into the inner court of the temple . . . they said that in the first place they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a multitude, saying, 'LET US REMOVE HENCE'." (From *Wars of the Jews*, bk. VI, ch. v, sec. 3).

God's people did *remove hence!* The Christians in Jerusalem fled to Pella, beyond the River Jordan. From that time forward the *united* power of the Church of God to spread the gospel of the Kingdom ceased. Christians throughout Judaea were scattered because of the Jewish wars.



The Watson Photo Service

The countryside in which the apostolic church first took root. Here is part of the Antioch road extending from Palestine, with the Lake of Antioch in the distance.

The headquarters church at Jerusalem, to whom all churches could look as the standard of TRUTH, was now moved to Pella.

Church at Jerusalem Was a "Headquarters Church"

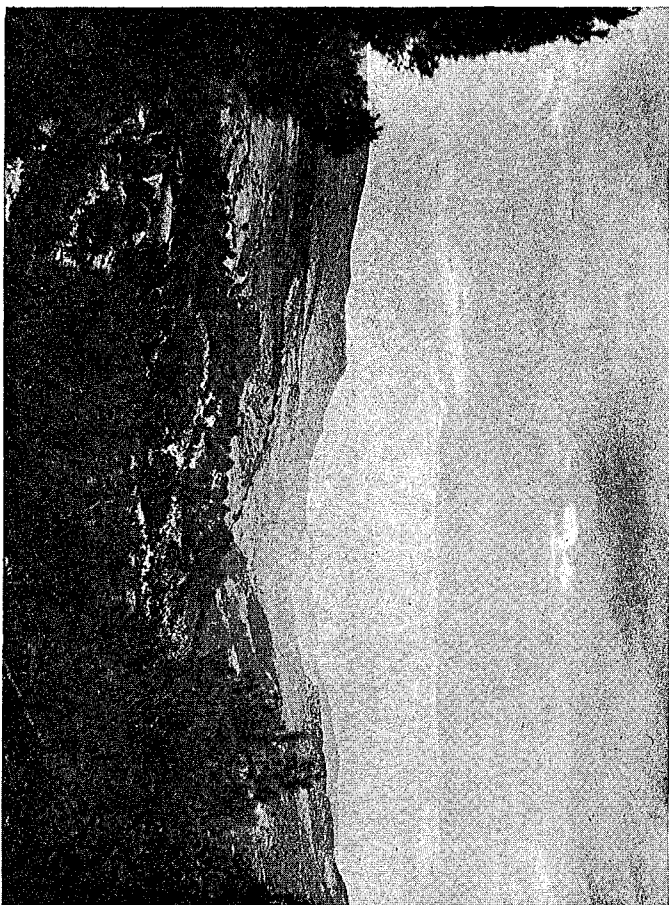
The Church of God which had been at Jerusalem was a "headquarters church" to whom all looked for TRUTH! Other local churches often became confused. Controversies and disputes on certain points entered. It was to the Jerusalem church, now moved to Pella, *which had God's authority*, that they all turned. Let's notice it:

In Acts 15:1 and 2, we read of a dispute that arose in the local churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. In their midst were Paul and Barnabas, both of great

authority in the church. Yet to whom did the brethren turn in order to settle the dispute? TO THE HEADQUARTERS CHURCH — JERUSALEM — WHERE THE OTHER APOSTLES AND ELDERS WERE GATHERED!

At Jerusalem the question would be considered and *decided* — why? Because the brethren *knew* that Jesus had given special *authority* to His ministers who were at the headquarters church — Jerusalem.

Jesus conferred upon His representatives the keys of the kingdom of God and authority to guide the Church through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They could "bind" or *forbid* certain things, and they could "loose," or *permit* certain things. In Matthew 18:18, Jesus gives his ministers the authority to make *binding*



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Looking west from the land of Gilead across the Jordan Valley toward Palestine. From Jerusalem the Headquarters Church fled in 69 A.D. to this region in which the city of Pella, to the right, is located.

decisions, based on the revelation of God and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in order to preserve the unity of the Church in *love* and *truth*!

This explains the reason that the brethren mentioned in the book of Acts turned to the headquarters church at Jerusalem to settle their questions and disputes. They knew Jesus had promised to guide his apostles into all truth (John 16:13). The apostles had been thoroughly trained and fitted for their responsibilities through the personal correction, reproof and instruction of Jesus.

The apostles in turn had thoroughly instructed the elders and the congregation at Jerusalem in the way of truth. The church at Jerusalem was kept *pure* by the constant admonition and correction of the elders and apostles so that *it might be the example to all other*

churches. Christians, like all human beings, need to learn *by example*. In New Testament times the churches in Gentile nations "became followers of the churches of God which in Judæa are in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 2:14); and the churches in Judæa were to pattern themselves after the headquarters church, the church at Jerusalem.

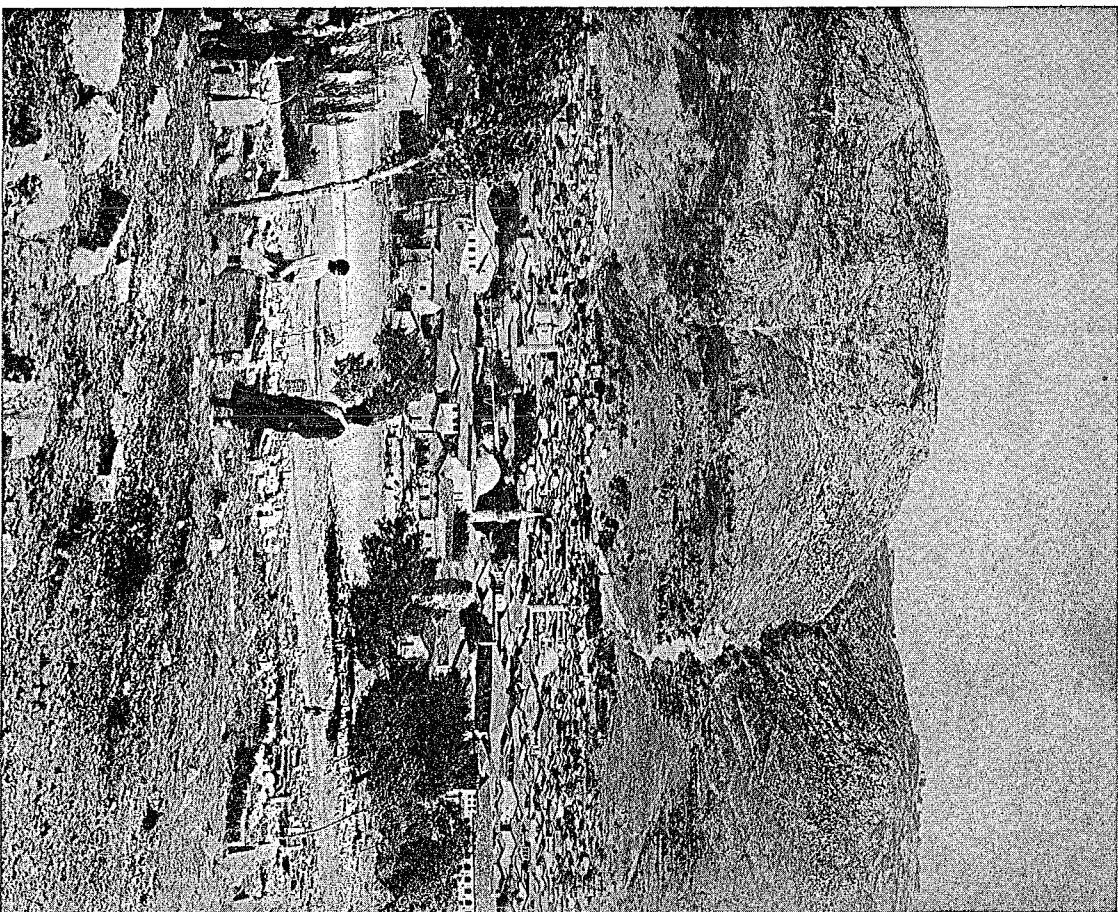
The congregation at Jerusalem, later at Pella, recognizing this responsibility, acted in her capacity. The apostles and elders made the decisions and they were binding on all other churches (Acts 15:22). They sent letters to the various local congregations explaining what "seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us" (Acts 15:28). Again, in a previous situation, when it was known that certain individuals had preached in Antioch and news of "these things came unto the ears of the church

which was in Jerusalem... they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch" (Acts 11:22).

Notice how the Jerusalem church, acting in her capacity, watched over, corrected, and even *intervened* in the affairs

Antioch with Mt. Silpius in the background and the Orontes River below. In this Syrian city the disciples were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). From here Paul began his apostolic journeys throughout the Greek world.

The Matson Photo Service



of her daughter churches everywhere.

No other church could claim this right which God had conferred on the Jerusalem church alone. The Jerusalem church was the headquarters from which the apostles carried on their work of evangelizing the world. It was to the Jerusalem church that the apostles and Paul often returned after completing their journeys. Jerusalem remained the headquarters church during the entire apostolic period. When the church moved to Pella, it continued as a headquarters church for the "Ephesian Era" of the Church. *Rome was never the parent or headquarters church.*

Antioch Retains Leadership of Greek Christians

The Churches of God which Paul raised up in Asia Minor were later under the general supervision of the apostle Peter. Peter wrote to the Churches in Asia and Galatia (I Peter 1:1). Catholic writers have acknowledged for centuries that the apostle Peter watched over the Gentile converts from the ancient city of Antioch, which was, next to Jerusalem, the most important center of Church life (Acts 14:26-28).

Consider what happened at Rome. The local Church of God at Rome, which was built up by Paul's, not Peter's, teaching, was severely persecuted by Nero in 64 A.D. Nero falsely charged the Christians with burning the city. Perhaps some three or more years after the burning of Rome Paul was seized near Troas (II Timothy 4:13) and brought to trial at Rome where he was martyred. Events were now moving rapidly.

While the Church in the East was being held together through Pella and Antioch, the Roman Church—with most of its leading members martyred—became the prey of false teachers. As soon as Peter was martyred, probably around 80 A.D., events moved to a climax. (See Ramsey's *The Church in the Roman Empire to 170 A.D.*) There was no James or Peter or Paul. John alone was in charge. The apostasy was developing rapidly—especially in the West. Many people who listened to false teachers began to look for

new leaders and new headquarters. They did not look to Christ, the head of the Church. Where did they turn?

Rome Assumes Leadership of Apostasy

At this moment in history, the centuries-old pagan tradition was revived and widely circulated that "Peter" had been in Rome. The heathen had never heard of the apostle Peter. But everyone at Rome had heard that there was a shrine of a Peter on Vatican hill and that that Peter traditionally had come from Babylon. Who was that Peter?

Let the shocking record of history answer!

When the Babylonian mysteries in Mesopotamia were broken up by Alexander the Great and introduced into the West, they gravitated to Pergamos and then to Rome. Rome had long been a center of religion. And the most important part of Rome was Vatican hill. "The Vatican sanctuary... seems to have been a well-known... cult centre... of the worship of Cybele (the "Mother of God")... No less than nine inscriptions referring to the same cult have long been known from the immediate vicinity of St. Peter's..." (from *The Shrine of St. Peter and the Vatican Excavations*, by J. Toybee and J. W. Perkins, p. 6).

In the days of the apostles a "pagan cemetery lay on a knoll called Vaticanus"—Vatican hill, where the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church is today. "The Latin word *vatinus* means a 'prophet' or 'soothsayer.' In days gone by there had been an Etruscan oracle on this spot," writes Werner Keller in *The Bible as History*, p. 390.

Notice that this Saranic oracle was a soothsayer—one who soothed the people by preaching what the people wanted to hear. And it was associated with a cemetery. The chief object of reverence at this cemetery centuries before the time of Christ was the shrine or tomb of a "Peter"! But why would pagans be honoring "Peter" long before the apostle Peter was ever heard of?

The answer astonishingly points back

to Babylon and Nimrod. Nimrod, according to ancient tradition, was "the opener" of secrets, "the firstborn" of defiled human beings. He was the religious hero or star of that day—just as many have their "Hollywood idols" today. Nimrod was therefore called the "opener," and in the Babylonian tongue (a dialect of Hebrew) the word for opener was "PETER"! (See *Young's Concordance*.)

But how did Nimrod—"Peter"—become associated with Rome?

Because it was to Rome that Nimrod fled from his pursuers. The ancient name of Rome was "Saturnia," recorded Pliny in his *Natural History*, bk. III. But what does "Saturnia" mean? It means the dwelling place of "Saturn." And the inhabitants of ancient Italy called Nimrod "Saturnus," meaning "the hiding one"—because he "lay hid" from his pursuers at Rome (Jackson's *Chronological Antiquities*, p. 233). Nimrod was discovered hiding at Rome. There he was executed.

His worshippers mourned his death. A pagan shrine was later set up on Vatican hill to commemorate this event.

It is no wonder that wherever the Babylonian Mystery spread, people heard that Peter, another name for Nimrod, was killed at Rome!

Anacletus, an elder or bishop in the apostate church at Rome, dedicated the ancient shrine of the pagan Peter (or Nimrod) to the apostle Peter around 80 A.D., according to a record in the Liber Pontificalis (I, p. 125).

It was now an easy task for Anacletus to convince the drifting, unemployed pagan population of Rome—which was becoming interested in the mysteries—that the shrine at Rome was the site of burial of the apostle Peter—for had not the apostle Peter been at Babylon! And to cement his authority, he claimed to have been ordained by Peter.

Anacletus claimed to be the sole successor to Peter. He insisted that Rome should be the new headquarters of all the churches.

When the news of the pretended authority of the bishop of Rome spread abroad, many other false teachers saw the

advantage of casting in their lot with him. If they were associated with him, they, too, could use the name of Peter and take the customs celebrated in honor of the pagan savior and attribute those customs to Christ in order to create a following after themselves.

That is how the new headquarters of the apostatizing churches quickly gravitated to Rome!

It now became a struggle to strive for the faith once delivered (Jude 3). The Church had left its first love.

But there were still faithful churches, though small in number, who kept "the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). The world called them "Nazarenes"—the same name used in the Bible to refer to Paul and the true Church (Acts 24:5).

The TRUE CHURCH after the Apostles

Here is what the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says of them:

"Nazarenes, an obscure Jewish-Christian sect... they dated their settlement in Pella from the time of the flight of the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, immediately before the siege in A.D. 70;... Jerome (Ep. 79, to Augustine) says that they believed in Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rose again, but adds that, desiring to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither the one nor the other"... while adhering as far as possible to the Mosaic economy as regarded circumcision, sabbaths, foods and the like, they did not refuse to recognize the apostolicity of Paul or the rights of heathen Christians (Jer. Comm. in Isa., ix, 1)." (From article, "Nazarenes," *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, Volume XIX, page 319.)

Among the Gentiles the churches in Asia remained the most faithful to the word of God. We pick up the story of the true Church in the lives of such men as Polycarp and Polycrates. They were called "Quartodecimani" because they kept the true passover celebration instead of Easter.

Here is what the early Catholic historians admit about the true Church:

"But Polycarp also was not only instructed by the apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church of Smyrna... He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus"—bishop of Rome around 154 A.D.—"caused many to turn away from the... heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles..."

While at Rome, Polycarp discussed with the Roman bishop the matter of the introduction of the pagan Easter in place of the passover.

Irenaeus continued: "For neither could Anicetus (the bishop of Rome) persuade Polycarp not to observe it"—the passover—"because he had always observed it with John the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles, with whom he associated; and neither did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it, who said that he was bound to follow the customs of the presbyters before him." (Quoted from Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, book V, chap. 24, in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1).

Notice that bishop Anicetus had no scriptural grounds—he determined to follow the "customs" of men—Easter Sunday!

But the Easter controversy did not end here!

Within 35 years it broke out vehemently between Polycrates of Asia Minor and Victor of Rome, who attempted to "cut off whole churches of God, who observed the tradition of an ancient custom"—the true passover.

Here is a part of the forthright answer given by Polycrates to Victor, vindicating the truth of God:

"As for us, then, we scrupulously observe the exact day, neither adding nor taking away. For in Asia great luminaries have gone to their rest, who shall rise again in the day of the coming of the Lord... I speak of Phillip, one of the twelve apostles... John, moreover, who reclined on the Lord's bosom... Then

there is Polycarp... THESE ALL KEPT THE PASSOVER ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOSPEL, WITHOUT EVER DEVIATING FROM IT, BUT KEEPING TO THE RULE OF FAITH."

This remarkable letter is preserved in Vol. 8 of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, pp. 773-774.

Polycrates came from that area in which Paul spent most of his time—in Asia Minor, near Ephesus. This is also where John spent his last days. Here we have Christians still remaining true to the faith!

Here is proof that both the apostles to the circumcision and Paul, the special apostle to the Gentiles, taught the true Church to observe the passover on the 14th of the first month of God's sacred calendar. Chrysostom, who wrote several centuries after the apostles, admitted that "formerly it (the passover) prevailed also at Antioch" from where Paul began many of his apostolic journeys.

But the Church as a whole never repented of leaving its first love for the truth of God. Jesus was now about to fulfil His warning: "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place" (Rev. 2:5).

Thus ended the first age of the Church, typified by the "Church at Ephesus."

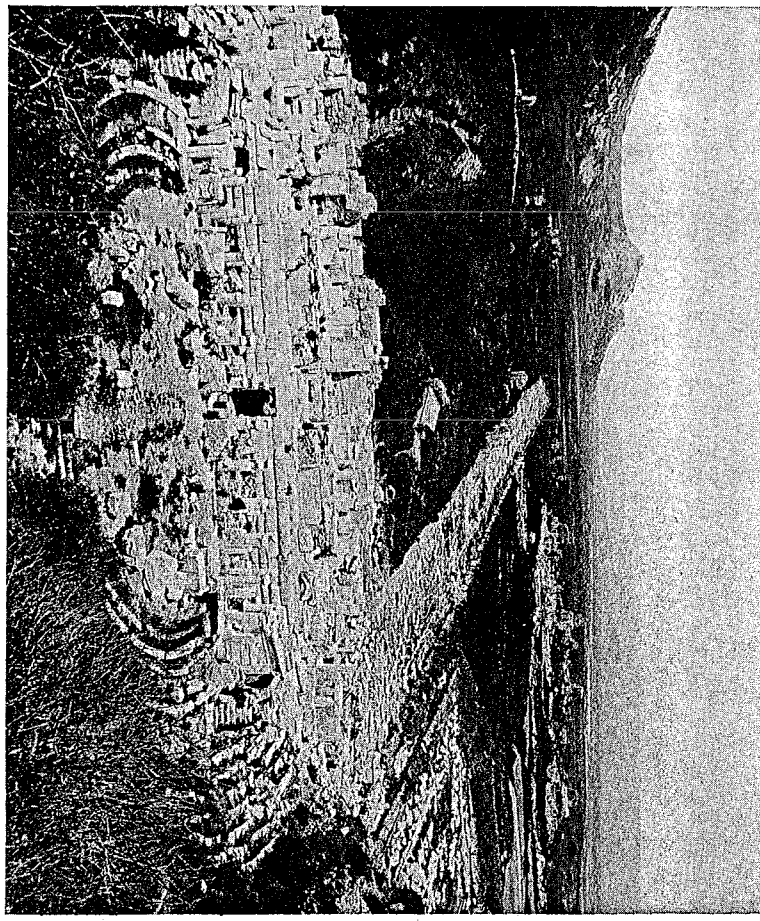
The prophesied "Church at Smyrna" arises next. Its people appeared physically poverty-stricken—yet it was spiritually rich and alive, though suffering through persecution. This pictures God's Church during the next three centuries under the persecuting power of the Catholic-dominated Roman Empire.

Besides the true Church there was also a "Synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9) dominating during this period.

The "Synagogue of Satan" — What Is It?

Now read Revelation 2:9. "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

Notice, this is a synagogue of Satan. A synagogue is merely the Hebrew word for church. Then Jesus is not speaking of a



The ruins of the city of Ephesus. This view is of the Theatre and of the Esplanade which extends toward the Aegean Sea.

Ewing Galloway

race, but of a church that belongs to the devil!

This church claims that they are spiritually Jews. Why? Because Jesus said, "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). "To the Jew first, then also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

"He is a Jew," says Paul, "which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:29).

In Romans 11:16-27 Paul explains that Israel and the Jews, to whom salvation belonged, were broken off because of unbelief. Gentiles were grafted in their place. But once grafted in, they were no longer Gentiles—"being in time past Gentiles in the flesh" (Eph. 2:11). Now

they were all one in Christ Jesus, "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints" (Eph. 2:19). So here was a church made up of Gentiles, claiming salvation, claiming to be Jews inwardly, masquerading as a "Christian" church, yet the very tool of Satan himself!

This synagogue of Satan is the great apostate church which developed after 80 A.D. and ultimately became recognized as the State Religion of the Roman Empire. That Church has had many Protestant daughters which are also Satan's churches (Rev. 17).

The True Church Persecuted

What happened to stamp out the true Church and the passover from the world?

Let the Catholic historian Eusebius, who lived in the time of Constantine, tell the story:

"But before this time another most virulent disorder had existed, and long afflicted the Church; I mean the difference respecting... Easter. For while one party asserted that the Jewish custom (as to time) should be adhered to, the other (did not).

"Accordingly, the people being thus in every place divided in this respect... no one appeared who was capable of devising a remedy... BECAUSE THE CON-TROVERSY CONTINUED EQUALLY DIVIDED BETWEEN BOTH PARTIES... Constantine appeared to be the only one on earth capable... He convoked a general council..."

After the Nicæan Council closed, Emperor Constantine sent the following letter to all the churches:

"At this meeting the question concerning... Easter was discussed... First of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this... feast we should follow the practice of the Jews... Let us then have nothing in common with the Jews... It has been determined by the common judgment of all, that the... feast of Easter should be kept on one and the same day." The Council of Nicæa decided, under his authority, that Easter *must* be celebrated on Sunday and that the Pass-over must be forbidden!

The TRIBULATION Begins!

Not all accepted the decrees of the Council, which for the first time established Catholicism as a State Religion. To those who continued to follow the *truth*, the Emperor wrote the following official letter:

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to the heretics:

"... To speak of your criminality as it deserves demands more time and leisure than I can give... Why not at once strike, as it were, at the root of so great a mischief"—he means the TRUTH OF GOD—"BY A PUBLIC MANIFESTATION OF DISPLEASURE?"—by inciting persecution, in other words.

Constantine continues: "Forasmuch, then, as it is no longer possible to bear with your pernicious errors, we give warning by this present statute that none of you henceforth presume to assemble yourselves together. We have directed accordingly, that you be deprived of all the houses in which you are accustomed to hold your assemblies: and (we) forbid the holding of your superstitious and senseless meetings, not in public places, BUT IN ANY PRIVATE HOUSE OR PLACE WHATSOEVER... Take the far better course of entering the Catholic Church.

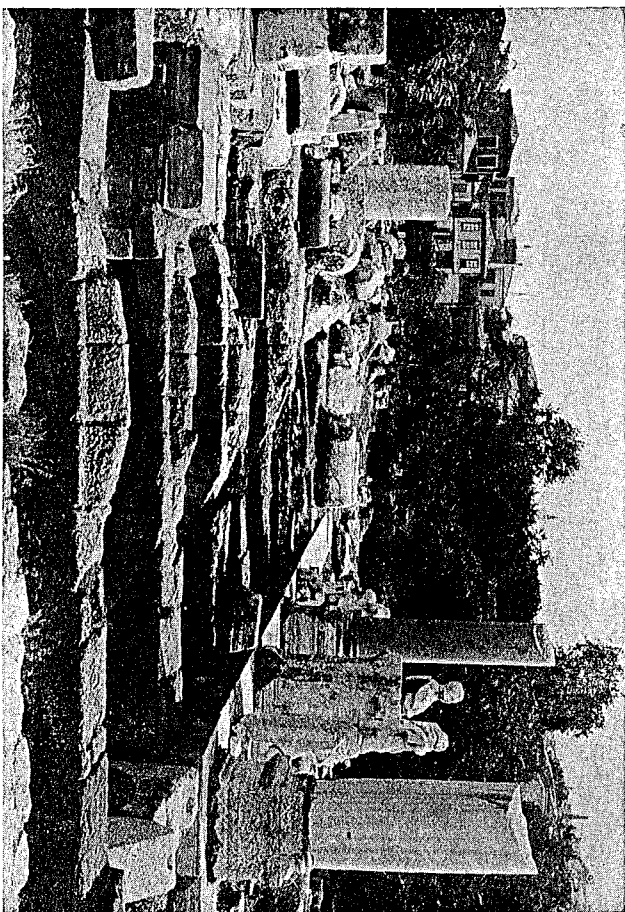
"... We have commanded... that you be positively deprived of every gathering point for your superstitious meetings, I mean all the houses of prayer... and that these be made over without delay to the Catholic Church; that any other places be confiscated to the public service, AND NO FACILITY WHATSOEVER BE LEFT FOR ANY FUTURE GATHERING, in order that from this day forward none of your unlawful assemblies may presume to appear in any public or private place. Let this edict be made public" (from Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, book 3).

That is why the true Church was forced to flee for 1260 long years! It sounds unbelievable, but it is true.

The servile Eusebius sums up the work of Constantine by declaring: "And the credit of having achieved this mighty work" (of stamping out the truth) "our Heaven-protected Emperor alone, of all who had gone before him, was able to attribute to himself" (bk. 3, ch. 66).

Everyone was now forced to observe a pagan Easter or flee the confines of the Roman Empire. Not even the persecutions of pagan Rome marched the terrible slaughter of Constantine's "Christian" Rome. From the Council of Nicæa (325 A.D.) to about the death of Constantine, the persecution raged for 10 long years as prophesied (see Rev. 2:10, where a prophetic "Day" represents a "year" in fulfillment—Numbers 14:34).

It is only from the enemies of God's Church that we have scanty, malicious records of God's people, who were now maligned as "heretics" and "enemies of



F. K. Denner Photo
Ancient Smyrna—with modern Izmir in the background. Here you see recently excavated arches which once supported a public court. Christians in this city were among the most faithful. Polycarp and Polycrates came from here.

the church." These records attribute beliefs to God's people which they never held. Heretics and the true Church are often called by the same names.

For centuries Catholic writers mention small remnants of the true Church within the bounds of the Roman Empire. Sometimes they were individuals, sometimes scattered families, and especially in the Near East there were still a few local congregations preaching the gospel and keeping the commandments. As late as the beginning of the fifth century in Asia Minor, the bishop Chrysostom bewailed members of the Catholic Church, who, upon learning the truth from the scattered remnants of the true Church, repented of their ways and began to observe the sabbath and "the feast of trumpets, the feast of tabernacles, and the feast of the great expiation" (Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Bk. XVI, ch. VI).

As a result of the Council of Nicæa (325 A.D.), the great false Church commenced 1260 years of Tribulation (Rev. 12:6) with full force. The true Church fled into the valleys and mountains in Europe and Asia Minor.

Now notice what John writes to the next age of God's Church—the "Church at Pergamos": "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and has not denied my faith" (Rev. 2:13).

The Work of God Revived

The local church to which John wrote was situated in Pergamos, the capital of the Roman province of Asia in Asia Minor—Pergamos was Satan's seat of worldly human government for that province. Just as the local Church at Pergamos was situated in a city where Satan swayed human politics, so the next work of God's Church occurred within the

bounds of Satan's government—the Eastern Roman Empire—where a small body of God's people was found.

It was about 650 A.D. that God, as if by miracle, raised up among the scattered remnants of his Church in Cappadocia and Armenia a man who revitalized his people and spread the gospel. This well-educated man, by the name of Constantine of Mananali, was given a gift of portions of the Bible. He was utterly amazed by the truth he found revealed in it after study. Soon he began preaching and with the help of trained evangelists found such a fruitful harvest that there were tens of thousands converted to the truth.

After twenty-seven years of ministry, he was stoned to death in 684 A.D., but an officer, Simeon, sent to destroy him, was so stirred by his death that he became converted and carried forth the gospel until he was burned at the stake six years later! Within another hundred years God raised up a third great minister, Sergius, to guide His people who were allowing many false teachings to grow in their midst.

The names given to these people of God by their enemies were "Abyrgans"—meaning "those who understood prophecy"—and "Pahlitans"—the followers of the apostle Paul. The reports circulated about the doctrines of these people were slanderous and false. Often "false brethren" who lived among God's people were confused with the true Church. It was not till almost the beginning of the twentieth century that a book called *The Key of Truth*, containing many of their teachings—and the teachings of other groups—was translated into English by Fred C. Conybeare.

This partially preserved record of God's people proves that they preached the gospel of the Kingdom; that they believed the Church was founded not only upon Jesus Christ, but also upon the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20); that they baptized by immersion; that they laid on hands for the "reception of the Spirit" (P. CXXIV). They not only "continued to keep the Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan," but they also observed the sabbath

and the festival of unleavened bread (pages CLXII and CLII of *The Key of Truth*).

The devil was angry with these people who understood the gospel and kept the commandments. Knowing that he could not overthrow their faith by force, he corrupted them by introducing false teachers who taught the "doctrine of Balam" (Rev. 2:14). In turning to Numbers 31:16, you will see that Balam induced the Israelites to practice idolatry and commit spiritual fornication.

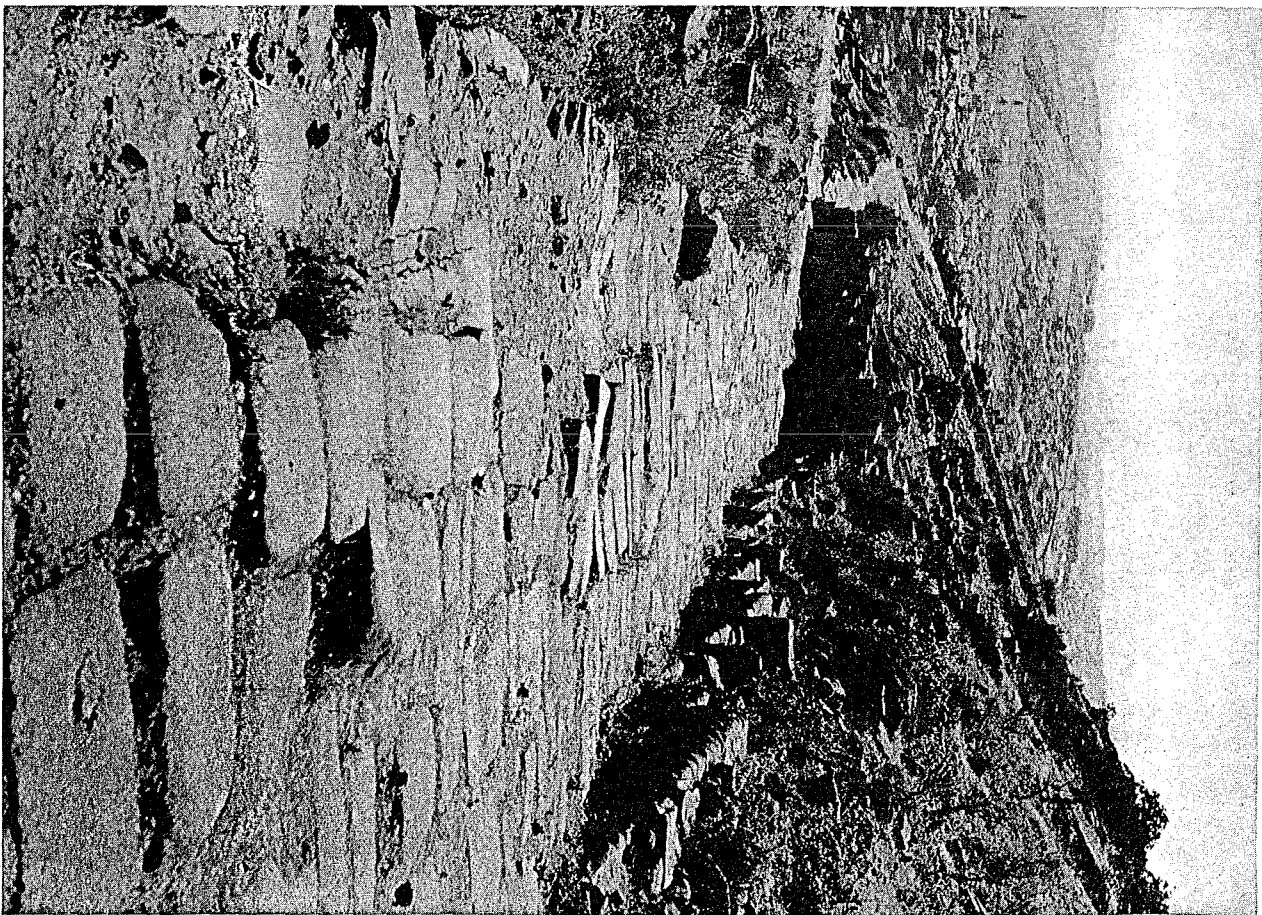
These unconverted teachers gradually introduced many in the Church to celebrate certain *idolatrous* pagan holidays, particularly the Orthodox feast of Epiphany—the original birthday of Nimrod, the pagan "Christ child"—supposedly in honor of Christ's birth and baptism.

Satan also caused many to take part in worldly politics in the hope of safeguarding themselves. Mixing with the politics of this world is called "fornication" in Revelation 17:2. God's Church is to be a virgin and remain pure and *separate from the world*, waiting for the marriage to Christ (II Cor. 11:2).

As a result of these sins, Jesus warned his Church: "Repent; or else I will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:16). Most took the warning lightly until it was too late. Trusting in their worldly political alliances with neighboring Arabs, instead of relying on Jesus' protection, they were betrayed and slaughtered—one hundred thousand of them! The faithful few who escaped were driven to Southeastern Europe and called Bogomils: "There they thrive for centuries, and...spread...their tenets into Bohemia, Poland, Germany, Italy, France, and even into...England" (p. CIV). The prophesied "Church at Thyatira" arises next.

The Church in the Wilderness

John was inspired to commend the "Church at Thyatira" because the last works of the Church were more than the first. In the local Church there was a false woman teacher (symbol of a great Mother Church) who taught some to practice



Pergamos — where "Satan's Seat" of Government in the province of Asia was located! Above is the paved way to the citadel.

F. K. Deener Photo

idolatry. Jesus warned He would cast them into great tribulation and "kill her children (Protestants) with death" unless they repented (Rev. 2:18-29).

Now let us notice how this description fits exactly the next great expansion of God's people.

As a result of the evangelization of the Alpine regions by the Paulicians and Bogomils of Bulgaria, as God's people were called, there arose numerous ministers and faithful congregations around 1000 A.D. One of these men was Peter de Bruys who preached the gospel of the Kingdom in the south of France (Jones' *Church History*, ch. 4, sec. 3). Two other preachers of the time were Arnold and Henri. They were charged by the Catholic Church with remaining faithful to the whole law of God and of observing the sabbath (*Ecclesiastical History*, by Peter Allix, pp. 168-169).

The Lutheran historian Moshemism admits that the congregations of the Church in the twelfth century held "a notion that the observance of the law of Moses, in everything except the offerings of sacrifices, was obligatory upon Christians... they abstained from those means the use of which was prohibited under the Mosaic economy, and celebrated the Jewish Sabbath. The second tenet which distinguished this sect was advanced in opposition to the doctrine of three persons in the divine nature."

Yes, they knew that God was not a trinity, but a family!

A crusade was instituted against many of these people in Southern France. Thousands perished. But when it seemed that the *first work would soon be ended*, there arose an even *greater* leader among God's people.

It was the close of the twelfth century. In Lyons, France, lived an astonishingly successful and wealthy merchant, Peter Waldo. "One day, while in the company of some of the leading citizens, one of his friends fell lifeless at his side. Terrified by the event, he said to himself: If death had stricken me, what would have become of my soul?"

Being a Catholic, Waldo asked one of

these theologians what is the *perfect* way. "Ah!" answered the theologian... here is Christ's precept: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up thy cross and follow me..." (Comba, *History of the Waldenses*, p. 21).

Waldo disposed of his property by distributing to the poor. But from his wealth he also had a translation of the Scriptures made. In this translation he noticed the command to the apostles to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. His mind began to understand the Scriptures.

Comba says that "he brought to the study of the Scriptures that practical common sense which had guided him in his business transactions... The word of Christ was clear enough, for Waldo it was simply a question of furnishing a literal translation" (p. 243 of Comba's *History*).

The humble remnant of the Church of God listened to him. Soon many new disciples were coming to repentance. "His disciples became almost as many *co-workers* for him" (p. 26). The world called them Waldenses.

God's Church was once again spreading the gospel! *A school for ministers was established to provide the trained help to carry the gospel.*

Called the "Church of God"

Here is a marvelous record from these people, still preserved, dated 1404: "We do not find anywhere in the writings of the Old Testament that the light of truth and of holiness was at any time completely extinguished. There have always been men who walked faithfully in the paths of righteousness. Their number has been at times reduced to a few; but has never been altogether lost. We believe that the same has been the case from the time of Jesus Christ until now; and that it will be so unto the end. *For if the Church of God was founded, it was in order that it might remain until the end of time...* We do not believe that the Church of God absolutely departed from

the way of truth; but one portion yielded, and, as is commonly seen, the majority was led away to evil." (Quoted in Comba's *History*, pp. 10-11.)

Their enemies admitted that these people proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom of God, that they baptized repentant believers and obeyed the *whole* law of God.

But just as there was a false teacher, Jezebel, in the local church at Thyatira, so now there were many *false* teachers and *false* brethren among these people. Some rose up among the Waldenses teaching that it was right to have Catholics, and later, Protestants, baptize their children and to attend *idolatrous* mass once in a while. Others committed spiritual fornication by meddling in politics in the hope of avoiding persecution.

To correct His people God caused a faithful remnant to pass over them about 300 years after the death of Waldo. Only a faithful remnant escaped.

Once again we see the repeated fact that after a few generations, the local congregations are no longer composed of truly converted brethren, but of unconverted children and half-hearted believers who either go aside into total error in the face of persecution or else are forced to give up their lives for the faith, as Daniel prophesied.

But in 1315 A.D., long before the crusade against the Waldenses occurred, the truth of God was carried to England by a German Waldensian preacher, Walter Lollard. It took deep root for a while until the Protestant Reformation.

Now let's notice what John wrote to the "Church at Sardis."

The Church in England and America

The "Church at Sardis" had a name that it was alive *but it was dead* (Rev. 3:1). Only a minute fraction of its people were really surrendered to God and holding to the faith once delivered. This is just the picture of the Church of God for 400 years after the outbreak of the Reformation.

Through the preaching of Lollard and other helpers, hundreds were repenting.

Thousands were learning for the first time that baptism means immersion—that the world's religious holidays came from paganism and that Sunday was not the Sabbath.

After a period of persecution, there remained only a few who kept the faith and observed the Sabbath and God's annual Holy Days. When confronted with imprisonment at the hands of Protestant "reformers" for their faith, several ministers gave up the faith even though some of their followers remained steadfast (Cox's *Sabbath Literature*, Vol. 1, p. 167).

It was not until about 1650 that there were again enough Sabbath keepers to establish local congregations. They often called themselves the Church of God, but the world termed them "Sabbatarians" and Sabbatarian Baptists.

From England the true Church of God spread to America. In 1664, Stephen Mumford, sent to Newport, Rhode Island, raised up a small church mainly from Baptist converts. One by one new churches were established through continued help of the churches in England.

But as always happens, after several generations the children take truth for granted and never really surrender their wills and their lives to God. In less than one hundred and fifty years, the English churches almost disappeared, having cut themselves off from God by *turning from* His truth, and by adopting the name "Seventh-day Baptists."

In America the number of churches gradually increased as the gospel was spread from state to state. But so nearly dead were these congregations that in 1802 many began to ORGANIZE THEMSELVES together into a General Conference instead of submitting to the government of God for the carrying out of the gospel. At this serious juncture, most of the local churches *joined themselves together* to form the Seventh-day Baptist General Conference and thereby ceased to be the true Church of God. Soon they began teaching the pagan Trinity doctrine and the immortality of human souls!

Several faithful congregations did not become members of the Conference be-

cause they would not submit to the new Protestant doctrines being introduced (see p. 246 of Belcher's *Religious Denominations*). For another half century the congregations maintained the little truth they possessed although most of them did not go all the way in obedience to God. John aptly described this period: "Be watchful, and establish the things remaining, *which are about to die*, for I have not found thy works perfected before my God" (Rev. 3:2).

The Adventist Movement

During this time the advent movement among *Sunday-observing churches* was begun by the uninspired William Miller. In 1843 several followers of Miller in Washington, New Hampshire, became acquainted with the truth of the Sabbath. It was not until after the miserable disappointment of 1844, however, that the general body of adventists had the Sabbath question called to their attention. A small number accepted the Sabbath and soon *mixed with the few remaining Church of God brethren* who refused to be affiliated with the Seventh-day Baptist Conference.

They called themselves the "Church of God" and began publishing "The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald." Their first songbook was dedicated to "The Church of God scattered abroad."

With each passing year, new and different doctrines were being introduced by Ellen G. White to explain away the adventist failure of October 22, 1844. The original Church of God brethren generally did not go along with the "inspired testimony" of Ellen G. White. Finally, a meeting was held by some of the members in Bartle Creek, Michigan, September 28 through October 1, 1860.

"This conference also took into consideration the subject of a name by which our people should be called," wrote Loughborough. "This again called forth a diversity of opinions, some pleading for one name, and some for another. The 'Church of God' being proposed, it was objected to on the ground that it gave none of the distinctive features of our

faith, while the name 'Seventh-day Adventist' would not only set forth our faith in the near coming of Christ, but would also show that we were observers of the seventh-day Sabbath. So unanimous was the assembly in favor of the latter name, that when *put to vote* only one man voted against it. He contended to the last for the name, 'Church of God.' A few days afterward, at the close of a meeting... a stranger came forward and purchased some books, who said he belonged to the 'Church of God.' I asked, 'Are you a Winebrearian?' 'No,' said he, 'Church of God.' I then asked, 'Are you a Dunkard?' 'No,' he answered, 'I said, Church of God.' We knew he was not an Adventist, and on turning to the man who had so strongly favored the name, said, 'Brother _____, can you tell me what the man's faith is?' 'No,' said he, 'I cannot.'

And that is how the Seventh-Day Adventist movement began. Let's see, for a moment, who was responsible for naming this organization. Continuing Loughborough's account of Mrs. E. G. White's testimony:

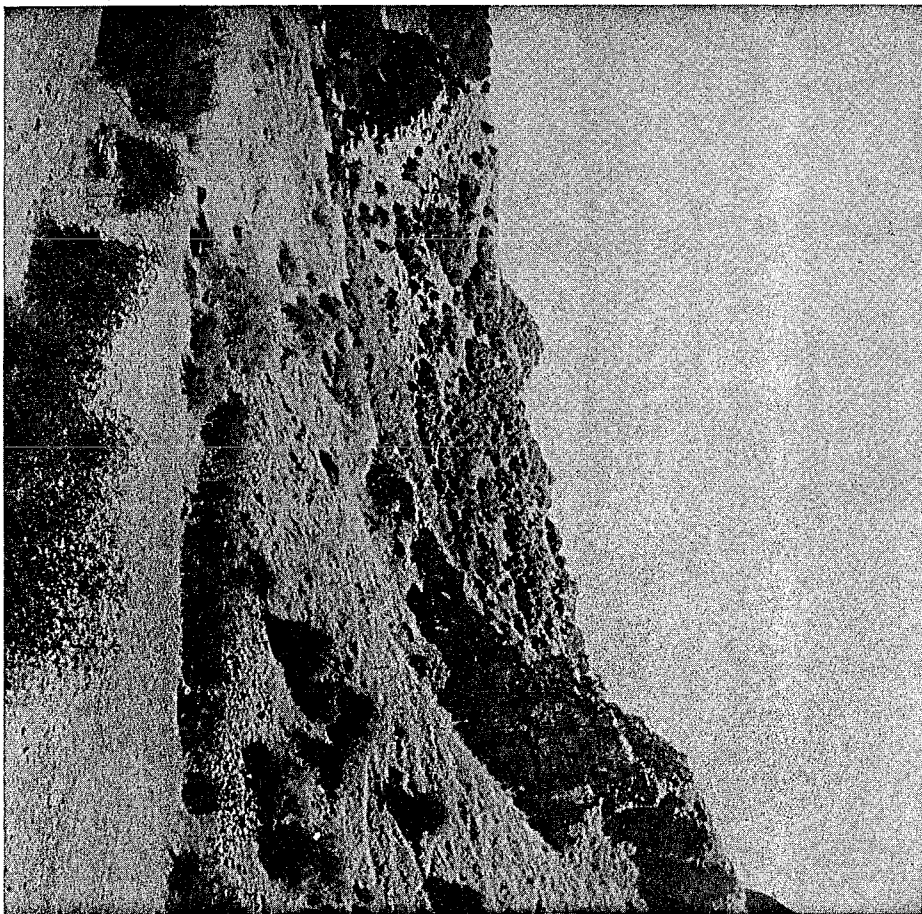
"In 'Testimony for the Church,' No. 6, we read:

"No name which we can take will be appropriate but that which accords with our profession, and expresses our faith, and marks us as a peculiar people.

"The name Seventh-day Adventist carries the true features of our faith in front, and will convict the inquiring mind...."

"I was shown that almost every fanatic who has arisen, who wishes to hide his sentiments that he may lead away others, claims to belong to the Church of God. Such a name would at once excite suspicion; for it is employed to conceal the most absurd errors." (J. N. Loughborough's *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-Day Adventists*, chapter XIX, page 227.) Presumably this makes the Apostle Paul a fanatic because he called the Church "the Church of God."

In the spring of 1861 another conference was held in an unscriptural effort to reorganize local congregations. The following covenant was recommended for



Sardis — the city whose Christians were spiritually dead. Today even the city is dead! Here you see the all-but-vanished remains of a Roman Theatre located below the citadel.

Almet, Donnez Photos

this new church organization: "We, the undersigned, hereby ASSOCIATE OURSELVES TOGETHER AS A CHURCH, taking the name of *Seventh-Day Adventist*..."

Once again men forgot that they can not organize themselves *into* the Church of God. They can only organize themselves *out of* the Church of God!

A Remnant Remains!

When this new name was being forced on the churches, there appeared a letter

submitted to the Adventist "*Review and Herald*" of April 9, 1861, reading:

"Brother Smith: We conclude from present aspects that the name, 'Seventh Day Adventist,' is being made obligatory upon our brethren. Without further light Ohio cannot submit to the name 'Seventh Day Adventist,' as either a test, or an appropriate name for God's people.

"Being appointed a finance committee at the last conference, and having now on hand means for carrying on the cause in

Ohio, we could not conscientiously expect these means in any other than the advancement and extension of the truth and the 'Church of God...' Signed by the Finance Committee of Ohio.

Thus in the space of sixty years, two major departures from the Church of God occurred. The church — *the only true Church left on earth* — was falling apart like the decayed branches of a tree! The ministers would not strengthen that which was ready to perish!

For another seventy years' conditions remained almost unchanged. The remaining brethren retained the name "Church of God," with headquarters finally at St. Louis, Missouri. Among local congregations only a few individuals repented and strengthened the truth that was ready to perish in their midst. But most of the ministers resorted to organizing pitifully weak evangelistic work on the pattern of state conferences rather than yielding themselves to God's government and direction in the carrying of the gospel with power. In fact, instead of the true gospel, most ministers taught a "third angel's message," which they had accepted from the adventist people. They also published a small paper called the "Bible Advocate."

Today's Church Prophesied!

Notice the amazing description of the next event in the history of God's people. John writes to the "Church at Philadelphia": "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name" (Rev. 3:8).

Here is a Church with little strength, few in numbers, but which has kept the word of God; one which has not denied the truth. Here is a Church which is preaching the gospel with power because Jesus promises to set before it *an open door* until the work of the Church is completed.

Here is a Church which Jesus loves despite its smallness! Here is a Church to which He says: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience (which Jesus interprets in Revelation 14:12 as

keeping the commandments and the faith), I also will keep thee from the HOUR OF TEMPTATION, WHICH SHALL COME UPON ALL THE WORLD, TO TRY THEM THAT DWELL UPON THE EARTH" (Rev. 3:10).

This verse pictures a Church which is carrying the gospel just prior to the last great time of trouble that will engulf all the world. *This is the Church of God TODAY!*

The Gospel Goes to All the World

Jesus chose Paul, who was highly educated, for spreading the gospel to the Gentiles. He later raised up Peter Waldo, a successful businessman, to keep His truth alive during the Middle Ages. In these last days WHEN THE GOSPEL MUST GO AROUND THE WORLD, Jesus chose a man amply trained in the advertising and business fields to shoulder the mission — HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG.

Paul was struck down. Waldo was shocked by the sudden death of his friend. In like manner God three times swept away Mr. Armstrong's business in order that he might come to understand the truth.

Shortly before this event, God had opened the mind of Mrs. Armstrong to understand the Sabbath truth from an elderly Church of God woman. After six months of study, in a persistent effort to prove Sabbath-keeping unscriptural, Mr. Armstrong also *surrendered his will to God* and accepted the Sabbath.

From this moment forward, God opened the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong to understand one truth after another. The Church of God brethren with whom they associated became so intensely interested that Mr. Armstrong soon found himself speaking at their insistence — then preaching to small groups in Oregon!

Not long after his ordination in 1931 (see *A History of the True Church*, by Dugger and Dodd, p. 304), a momentous juncture occurred. A movement was under foot to organize the local congregations of the Church of God under human government — a financial board of seven men. By 1933 certain leading ministers

demanding that no more *new* truth be preached to the brethren. They were refusing to repent and allow the Holy Spirit to work through them to establish the truth that was ready to perish!

Most of the congregations succumbed to spiritual DEATH. The age of the Church of Sardis was over. *The Church period of Philadelphia was to begin!*

A DOOR Opens

The time had come for the gospel TO GO AROUND THE WORLD!

Having tested and proven that Mr. Armstrong would remain faithful and subject to His government, God opened before him and a few faithful brethren the marvelous DOOR of radio and the printing press to carry forth the gospel. From a minute beginning in Oregon, in 1934, the work of God spread to cover much of North America in 19 years. In 1953 it leaped to Europe and the world!

This is very significant.

God gave the Apostolic Church *just two* nineteen-year cycles to carry the gospel to the Old World. He opened a DOOR to the apostle Paul *at the beginning of the second nineteen-year cycle* by which the gospel went to Europe (Acts 16:9; II Cor. 2:12-13).

So now, just before the second coming of Jesus Christ, God has given His Church — THIS CHURCH — *just two* nineteen-year cycles in which to carry the gospel to the world!

The first cycle *passed*. Then God suddenly opened the door for the second cycle in January 1953, and the gospel is now going to all the world!

Do you catch the significance of this? It means that this work, this MISSION to which God has called us *all*, is a DIVINE work, a DIVINE mission — not the work of some one man. It is the work of THE CHURCH OF GOD to whom Jesus committed this *greatest* task ever to fall upon mortal men — the carrying of His gospel, the good news of the Kingdom of God, to *all* nations.

We are a people with "little strength," but God has set before us an OPEN DOOR WHICH NO MAN CAN SHUT. We must

use that door. We must become zealous, working, praying, studying, giving tithes and offerings as we have never given before, so that this gospel can go *in power* around the world!

Notice that this Church has not denied God's NAME. What is the true name of the Church?

The TRUE NAME

The Bible gives the true NAME of the Church in *twelve* different places. Twelve, remember, is God's *complete* number.

In five passages where the true NAME of the Church appears, the entire Body of Christ — the Church as a whole — is indicated. Thus when speaking of the entire Church, including all its individual members on earth, the name is "THE CHURCH OF GOD." Here are these five passages:

1) Acts 20:28. The admonition to the elders is to "feed THE CHURCH OF GOD."
2) I Corinthians 10:32. "Give no offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to The Church of God."
3) I Corinthians 11:22. "... or despise ye The Church of God, and shame them that have not?"

4) I Corinthians 15:9. Paul wrote: "For I persecuted The Church of God."

5) Galatians 1:13. This verse repairs the one last given — "I persecuted The Church of God."

Notice that Paul did not call the true Church "Catholic" or "Protestant." Nowhere is the true Church called after the name of a MAN or after the name of a doctrine.

Where one specific local congregation is mentioned, the true Church is called "The Church of God," often in connection with the *place* or location. Here are four more passages:

6) I Corinthians 1:2. "The Church of God which is at Corinth."

7) II Corinthians 1:1. "The Church of God which is at Corinth."

8) I Timothy 3:5. In speaking of a local elder in a local congregation, Paul wrote Timothy: "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of The Church of God?"

9) I Timothy 3:15: "... behave thyself in the house of God, which is The Church of The Living God." Here it is The Church of the *Living* God.

In speaking of the local congregations collectively, not as one general Body, but as the total of all local congregations, the Bible name is "THE CHURCHES OF GOD." Here are the final three verses of the twelve which name the Church:

10) I Corinthians 11:16: "... we have no such custom, neither The CHURCHES OF GOD."

11) I Thessalonians 2:14: "For ye, brethren, became followers of The Churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus"

12) II Thessalonians 1:4: "So that we ourselves glory in you in The Churches of God."

These verses prove the NAME of the true Church. Denominations *not* bearing this name could *not* be God's true church. And of all the churches that do bear the name, *only one* could be the *true* Church of God—that one which OBEYS ALL the commandments of God and maintains the FAITH delivered once for all time—the one which *grows* in truth. All others are counterfeit, even though they may have the knowledge about the true NAME of God's Church.

Since Christ is the Head of the Church, Paul also called the various congregations "the churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16)—but the actual NAME is the CHURCH OF GOD. It is kept in the NAME OF THE FATHER (John 17:11).

Today's Church Scattered

The Church Jesus founded was prophesied to be a *scattered* church, small in number, rejected by the world, its people often without personal fellowship with other brethren!

While we are instructed, in Heb. 10:23-25: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye

see the day approaching"—yet, notice carefully, we are not instructed to assemble with blinded, deceived people in the denominations. The instruction is "not to forsake the assembling of *ourselves* together"—that is, true Christians who have the TRUTH, who are filled with God's Holy Spirit, truly converted, and WALKING IN THE LIGHT, living by every Word of God. It is time you knew why!

The fallen "woman" of Rev. 17 is clearly identified as the great false Church, which ruled over the kings of the Roman Empire from 554 until 1814. Her doctrines and practise, falsely called by Christian names, are actually the same identical "Chaldean mysteries" of the ancient Babylonian Baal worship, denounced in the Bible as the most idolatrous of all false worship.

Notice Rev. 17:5: she is called "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS." She is a MOTHER church. She has *daughter churches*. She calls the Protestant denominations her *wayward daughters*. They came out of her, *in protest*, calling themselves "Protestant." They, like their mother church, participate in the governments and politics and affairs of this world. Thus they reject the Government of God! This (verse 2) is the cause of her fall from grace. All Protestant denominations contain a certain mixture of false Roman doctrines which have been handed down from the ancient Babylonian idolatry. It is an ORGANIZED SYSTEM, even though divided into hundreds of sectarian organizations. Shall the true Christian JOIN, and thus become a *part* of this apostate system?

Notice, "the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." (v. 2.) They are spiritually drunk on her false doctrines, until they are unable to see clearly Bible TRUTH—their spiritual eyesight is blurred. They are spiritually BLIND.

The truth is: GOD DID NOT PLANT THESE CHURCHES. And Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. *Let them alone*: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall

fall into the ditch" (Mat. 15:13-14).

The Bible does not say we are to assemble with the world, but with OURSELVES—*those who are truly converted*. God has *not* convoked weekly religious meetings on Sunday morning!

Neither are we to assemble on Saturday with an apostatizing Church which sees the *argument* about the Sabbath but which follows the false visions of a woman "prophets" and rejects the gospel of *the kingdom of God*. God is not in these churches. They merely assemble themselves together, by their own authority and not by the command of God's ministers.

If you are converted and made righteous by the Spirit of God, "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14).

No, God commands us "Have NO FELLOWSHIP with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). If God has opened your understanding to His TRUTH, it is precious beyond price. "If there come any to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 10-11).

When the disciples asked Jesus if MANY were being saved, he explained that the many turn into the broad way that leads to destruction—but FEW find the straight and narrow way that leads to everlasting life. Those in His true fellowship He called the "*Little Flock*."

Remember, our fellowship is WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH JESUS CHRIST first of all, and with one another *only in and through Christ* (I John 1:1-7). You can have communion and fellowship with Him wherever you are. Withdraw at once from all other fellowship, except that of CHRIST, and those who are IN CHRIST, and CHRIST IN THEM.

Assemble Without a Minister?

In John 15:5, Jesus said: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." What would you think if the branches would say to

themselves, let us bundle ourselves together? Yet that is exactly what you are doing when you meet of *your own accord without ministers!*

To be a Christian you need to "abide" in Christ—you need to *live* by His instruction. Do the branches of a grapevine receive their sap from each other? Or do they receive it from the central stump? You need to receive your spiritual power from Christ—the vine. Not from a branch—an individual who thinks he would like to hold a private study.

In Eph. 4:11-17 Paul explains that Christ gave evangelists, pastors and teachers and other ministerial offices "for the perfecting of the saints... for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man... that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness... but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things."

What is the purpose of the ministry? To instruct the brethren to grow in love and in good deeds—exactly as Heb. 10:24 mentions. Then God intends *the pastors* to set the right example and to instruct the flock which should assemble *with* a minister. If BRETHREN COULD ACCOMPLISH THIS BY ASSEMBLING WITHOUT A MINISTER, THEN JESUS WASTED HIS TIME TO TRAIN INDIVIDUALS TO BECOME PASTORS OR ELDERS. Then He was mistaken in training the disciples to preach and to feed the flock, if the flock could feed itself!

The very fact that the ministry is FOR the edifying of the Church is PROOF POSITIVE that assembling without a shepherd will NOT lead to unity and perfection in knowledge. Without a pastor, disunity, contention and error will inevitably arise in a local group. *Experience proves it!*

Where Two or Three Gather Together

But didn't Jesus promise that wherever two or three brethren gather together, He

would always be in their midst?

The common misapplication of this text comes from careless reading. Christ was discussing with His apostles the matter of making binding decisions in the Church (Mar. 18:17). He promises to back every decision—even where only two or three are gathered together IN HIS NAME!

What does "in His name" mean?

It means "by His authority"! We baptize "in the name of Jesus Christ"—"by His authority." But Jesus never gave authority for His converts to hold meetings by themselves without a pastor! Any who do so are not acting according to Jesus' commands. They are going contrary to Christ's authority. He does not promise to be in their midst. Besides, according to the pattern laid down in Lev. 23: 2-4, *God orders His ministers* to convoke

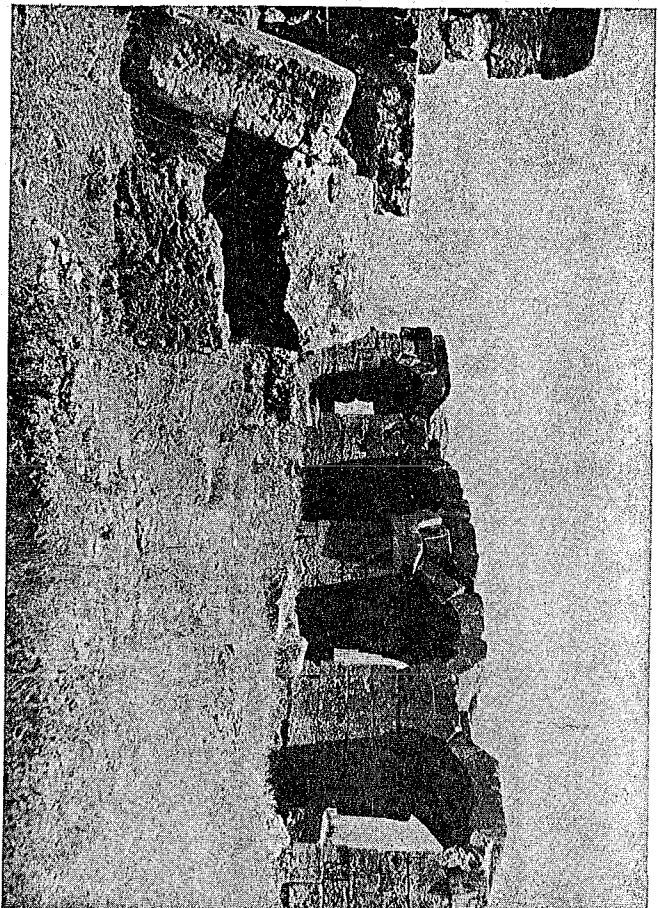
assemblies—to order meetings. God tells us upon which days we must meet, and He orders His ministers to tell the people when and where He wants the assemblies held. It is God's doing, not man's. Ministers are God's bond-servants and the shepherds of the flock.

But we are actually not left without fellowship. When the World Tomorrow Broadcast is on the air, you are attending, in a sense, a church service *with a minister*. This is how God is feeding many in His flock!

Future Is Dangerous

This is the time of the end when prophecies hidden for ages are being revealed. TRUTH is being restored, knowledge is rapidly increasing. But knowledge brings *responsibility*; it becomes *dangerous* if not rightly handled.

Laodicea's ruins. In New Testament times this city was exceedingly wealthy—a condition reflected in the character of the Christians in apostolic times. Nothing but desolation hovers over the area now. A part of the Roman Stadium is pictured here.



Ahmet Dommez Photos

Now notice Jesus' LAST WARNING to His Church. At the *very close* of this age, when the work of spreading the gospel is almost finished, Jesus addressed yet another Church work—the "Church at Laodicea": "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: . . . I will SPUE THEE OUT OF MY MOUTH" (Rev. 3:15, 16).

This frightful condition lies now ahead of us. Just as the remnants of the Sardis era of the Church exist side by side with the Philadelphia era, *so we will continue our work* to the very "end time" when another group will appear—a group not accounted worthy to escape the coming tribulation. Another separate work is yet to arise—made up of begotten individuals who are spiritually lukewarm! **WOE BE TO ANY OF US IF WE TAKE PART IN SUCH A WORK!** Here is a work, yet to arise because of our preaching, which will

say: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." And Jesus will reply: "As many as I *love*, I rebuke and chasten: be ZEALOUS therefore, and repent."

It is time to WAKE UP! If you become complacent, lacking in zeal, looking upon a local church as a social club, instead of having your heart in the gospel, you, too, may find yourself in the "Church of Laodicea" left to suffer the impending, horrifying tribulation.

Notice Jesus' admonition for today in Luke 21:36. "WATCH ye therefore and PRAY *always*, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape *all* these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Let us all *pray* and *work together* to carry this gospel to all nations so Jesus will say to each of us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."