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WHAT BECAME OF THE CHURCH JESUS BUILT?

compiled
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INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ said, "I will BUILD my Church." Did He build it?

That Church, said Jesus, would never be extinguished. "And the gates of hell [the grave]." He said, "shall not prevail against it"

(Matt. 16:18). Christ's Church is to last through all ages. Has it?

Where IS it, today?

Is it divided -- composed of more than 400 different, disagreeing, arguing sects?

Only ONE Church

What is a "sect"? According to Webster, it is "a group that has broken away from the established Church." And all of today's host of sects or denominations have broken away from the Church originally established -- they teach different doctrines and observe different practices.

But who "established" the true Church? Jesus Christ. The religious sects of the Jews -- Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Samaritans -- had all broken away from the true parent Old Testament Church He established through Moses. So Jesus, when He was on earth joined none of them. On the contrary, He called His disciples out of them when He built His New Testament Church. The Greek word "ecclesia," translated "church" in English, has the meaning of "called-out ones."

Every thinking person -- every denomination -- realizes that, at some time in history, there has been another great apostasy or falling away from original New Testament truth. Protestants and Catholics may dispute the time of its occurrence, but they agree that it happened!

What really happened -- especially after 70 A.D. -- to the Church of the Bible? Was it shifted to Rome? Has it ceased to exist? What DID happen?

Did God's Church rapidly grow big, become a powerful organization, exerting powerful influence on the world? Did it gradually turn to false doctrines, finally splitting up into today's hundreds of different and disagreeing sects and denominations, all founded by men, each professing to teach the truth, yet contradicting and disagreeing with all the others in a modern religious babylon?

You need to ask -- and to answer -- these questions.

It's time you knew how to recognize the true Church Jesus built. For the actual facts of history -- both Biblical and secular -- are astonishing. And strange to say, almost everyone -- for these past nineteen centuries -- has been looking at the wrong church, in the wrong place, for the Church Jesus founded.

World's Churches Deceived

All the prophecies foretold there would be false religion -- a world apostasy, deception and division in a counterfeit "Christianity."

Jesus foretold the very first event -- great deception -- to come on the world immediately after His day and last to a climax in ours.

"Take heed," He said, "that no man deceive you. For MANY shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive MANY" (Matt. 24:4,5). Few would be true Christians. The many would come in Jesus' name, proclaiming Jesus is Christ, preaching Christ to the world --

yet deceiving.

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 and FEW there be that find it" (Matt. 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 Cor. 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 -- extolling 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, 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.

And this world doesn't know the Church of the true God.

What is the True Church?

The true Church -- the "church of God" (I Cor. 1:2) -- is not many

divided, quarreling denominations, but ONE Church, composed of many members perhaps geographically scattered yet united in Spirit, mind, attitude and heart because they have totally surrendered their wills to God and have yielded to correction and reproof from the Word of God -- the Bible.

How many denominational members 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 and who accept the truth.

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 [put into] one Body" (I Cor. 12:13). Joining a local church congregation does not put you into God's Church. But God makes you a member of it -- if you surrender your life to Him -- even if you have no local church with which to fellowship.

The true Church is called the body of Christ because it is a spiritual organism through which Christ does His work today, and who LIVING, ACTIVE HEAD He is, in the same sense that the husband is head of the wife (Eph. 5:23, 31).

Jesus has purchased the members of this Church individually by shedding His own blood for them (Acts 20:28). He did not die for a religious organization:

How does one enter this true Church of God? -- this spiritual union?

When God's Church first began on the day of Pentecost, 31 A.D., Peter gave the answer: "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).

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. And if anyone does not have "the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9).

The Church's Mission

You have never heard or read very much of the history of this Church which is led by God's Spirit. But how could you? For even the historians have never known where to look for the true Church -- they did not even know what the true Church is.

That is not the true Church which grew great, and which "conquered" and ruled the Roman Empire. That was not the Church's mission.

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 is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate" (II Cor. 6:17).

In His final prayer for His one Church, Jesus prayed: "I pray for them: I pay 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" (John 17:9-16).

But 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. And 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.

Now let's notice what really did happen to that Church.

CHAPTER 1

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The world loves to have everything big -- "bigger and better":

Quantity not quality. Growth for the sake of growth. And most suppose the Church too must have followed this trend.

Yet, strange as it may seem to most, God's Church has always been composed of the few -- never the many. The world at large cannot receive the truth (John 1:5).

Why? Jesus explained it: "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil" (John 3:19).

Of course the world does not believe its deeds are evil. But no wonder at that -- for the WHOLE WORLD has been deceived (Rev. 12:9).

True Church is Small

Never in the history of the world have the many been willing to follow the right ways of God. At the time of the Flood, there was one man -- Noah (Gen. 6:5; 7:1). For Noah's sake his family was saved. In the time of Elijah, there were so comparatively few that even Elijah honestly believed he was the only remaining faithful one (I Kings 19:14, 18).

Did Jesus prophesy it would continue this way through the entire New Testament era? Indeed! Hear Him: "Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). His were always a "little flock" (Luke 12:32).

Jesus Himself made no effort to create a large following -- then. At the very close of His three and one-half year ministry, only 120 persons were found ready to be His disciples (Acts 1:15). Certainly if saving the world then -- at that time -- were His aim, we have to judge Jesus a most miserable failure. But Jesus was not a failure!

What Jesus actually did was to prepare the way for the founding of His Church (see Matthew 4:24, first part, and Acts 26:26, last part).

Then indeed the true Church did grow rapidly for a short while! About 3000 "souls" were added to the Church immediately on the Day of Pentecost, and others were added daily thereafter (Acts 2:1, 41, 47). Then mighty miracles were openly performed -- by the same mighty spiritual power that dwelt in Jesus Himself. Multitudes were healed (Acts 2:43; 3:7; 5:12, 14-16; 6:8). A few additional thousands were converted (Acts 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7) -- persons who came out of the world, left their Jewish denominations and were filled with the Spirit of God.

But the days of such growth and peace were numbered.

Persecution Begins

Truth appeals to some people -- some few. Others listen only to mock (Acts 2:13 and 26:24). But TRUTH -- absolute -- makes some people uncontrollably angry (Acts 4:2).

It was foreknown and foretold, therefore, that the 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 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.

Filled with indignation and envy, the Jewish high priest and the Sadducees "rose up ... and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison" (Acts 5:17-18). Though the angel of God quickly released them, strenuous efforts continued to be made to try to intimidate them.

It was not long before Stephen was seized and martyred for his zealous defense of the truth. Now 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 flame, 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" -- the end of the age! (Dan. 12:7).

Scattered, but never destroyed: ^{Al} Always one Church, obeying God, believing His truth -- never a hodge-podge of warring, disagreeing sects.

The Gospel to All Nations

The Church was scattered -- the truly converted Christians dispersed -- all according to the will of the living, resurrected Jesus Christ, who possessed and possesses all power to guide, direct and protect His people. Why did Jesus let them be scattered? Because the gospel had also to go to the Gentiles -- non-Jews.

Even the apostles did not at first fully understand how the gospel must go to "all nations" (Matt. 24:14; 28:19). True, it had long been prophesied (Ps. 96:1, 3, 10; Isa. 11:10). But for centuries the Jews had been a very exclusive race, cherishing their favorite theme of being God's peculiar people and hence proudly preserving the text of God's Word. As far as possible, they had no association with Gentiles. And so it was, that when the first Christian Jews fled from persecution in Judaea, and travelled everywhere preaching the gospel, they went at first to none but Jews only (Acts 11:19).

Then men like Philip, a Hellenistic Jew, and other Jews residing in foreign lands, began to speak to the Gentiles (Acts 8:5; 11:20).

Some converts were made. But this led inevitably to new problems.

Philip had gone down to Samaria. Now the Samaritans were descendants of Babylonians and other immigrants placed there by ancient Assyrian kings, though they often claimed to be Jews when it suited their purpose. Their religion was ^{a form of} the Babylonian religion, but much mixed with elements adopted from the neighboring Jews. Of all the Gentiles, the Samaritans would ^{far} seem to be the most prepared to accept the religion of the New Testament, ^{and many did believe.} Simon the Magus, the chief in the Samaritan religion, was among those who heard Philip. He thought that Philip, Peter and John were just carnal

hypocrites like himself, and Christianity merely a new gimmick. So he planned to make it an opportunity for personal advantage. He was never a member of God's spiritual Church -- never converted, though he was "dunked." But like one rotten apple in a barrel, which tends to rot every other apple it touches, this Simon later played a leading part in Church history. We will hear of him.

PETER Goes to the Gentiles:

Perhaps most people have heard that Paul was the "apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13). But what few realize is that Peter had the first and the overall commission to the nations outside of Judea.

It was Peter who was sent to Samaria, accompanied by John, to minister the Spirit to those who believed. And it was Peter whom Jesus Christ now chose to go to a Roman officer of the hated occupation force:

No Gentiles were more hated by the Jews than the conquering, oppressing Romans. Could Cornelius -- could any Roman -- be converted? Peter still had to be shown at that time that all peoples could really become one in Christ (Acts 10:28, 34).

God then used Peter to officially inaugurate salvation to the ^{visible} Gentiles, with the same special, one-time-only, manifestations of the Holy Spirit as when first it was confirmed for the Jews (Acts 10:44-47 compared with 2:1-4). And Peter was convinced! Yet some today falsely claim Peter was so completely a Jew in his outlook that even later he led a so-called "Judaizing party" within the Church in opposition to Paul. Proof that is a lie lies overlooked here in Acts 10:6.

Notice! Peter was staying at the house of one Simon, a tanner. Under Jewish ceremonial law, a tanner, by virtue of his occupation -- tanning the raw hides of dead animals -- was considered unclean. Had Peter been the

stubborn, thorough-going Judaizer some claim him to be, he would certainly have lodged elsewhere!

Here is proof Peter already knew and practiced the same freedom from ceremonial prohibitions Paul did (Col. 2:20,21).

A little later we find Peter freely living and eating with Gentiles -- whose very persons were "unclean" and contaminating in Pharisaic doctrine. He mistakenly withdrew only when others arrived, for fear they might not yet understand (Gal. 2:12).

Does this mean that Christianity is, or ever could become, a Gentile religion. Most assuredly not! "Salvation," said Jesus, "is of the Jews" (John 4:22). The main commission of His Church was to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," even ahead of the Samaritans and other Gentiles (Matt. 10:5-6). Even Paul wrote that the covenants, the glory and the promises all belong solely to the Israelites (Rom. 9:4-5).

The earliest true Christians -- almost all Jewish by race -- everywhere continued to meet in the synagogues where possible. They regarded Christianity, rightly, as the fulfillment of the Old Testament religion. Persons of other nationalities merely joined them, were spiritually adopted into the true Israel.

Notice how Paul always went and preached first in the synagogues and place of prayer of the Jews, and preached there until persecution drove him out (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 16:13, etc.). Most unconverted religious Jews listened at first without rancor -- until stirred up by the Pharisees.

Why Paul's Work Among the Greeks?

The New Testament first introduces Paul as Saul, at the time of the murder of Stephen. A bigoted, prejudiced, violent persecutor of the Church. But afterward (Acts 9:1) ...

Then Jesus Christ, actively directing His Church, struck Saul down and converted him, bringing to His Church a man of great zeal, a man with the best education his world could offer. Saul had been trained "at the feet of Gamaliel" who was regarded as the greatest Jewish teacher of the day.

But ~~what~~ was Christ's purpose? Or what was Paul's commission?

Ananias, a Christian of Antioch, also wondered. And Jesus gave him the answer: ". . . He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

A mighty assignment indeed! But Paul did fulfill his commission. In Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, even in Spain (Rom. 15:9,28), Paul's evangelism covered virtually the whole Greek-speaking world. Christ also used Paul, one of the world's most cultured and educated men, to witness before kings and other high officials (as in Acts 26). Then, in accordance with God's specific purpose, Paul was sent even to Caesar himself (Acts 27:24), where not only the soldiers of Caesar's personal guard heard God's message, but the whole imperial household! (Phil. 1:12-13; 4:22, R.S.V.)

Finally, Paul took part in the major mission of the Church, to help reach the lost House of Israel. Years later, after preaching to the Greek-speaking peoples, going always to the Jews living among them first (Rom. 1:16; 2:9,10; Acts 13:42-48), tradition plainly states, Paul went on even into Britain.

Mr. HWA fulfilled opposite pattern: (1) last hour of Israel, (2) Britain.

Now let's understand why Jesus Christ -- building His "little flock," building a Church primarily of Israel -- should have raised up (temporarily) such a seemingly large work among the Greeks.

Being of equal rank, when Paul and Barnabas found themselves in disagreement as to how best to prosecute the work in their area, they separated (Acts 15:36-41). Barnabas then continued his work to the Gentiles in the area of Cyprus and Egypt. Of his later work we hear next to nothing. Probably not a great many Gentile converts were made in those areas. And there is a reason!

Why did Paul's work prosper in Greece while Barnabas' work in Egypt did not?

The answer to that question lies in the nature of the special purpose Christ was working through Paul. What was that purpose?

Jesus Christ knew the days His gospel would have free course within the Roman Empire were limited. The true Church would soon be expelled. For long ages, it would have to exist beyond the reach of the long arm of the Roman government. To enable that Church to read His Word, some way would have to be provided to preserve it.

There would be
 ^ a people to preserve in the Roman world the New Testament through those difficult times! That people would be Greek.

They had to be people not to be persecuted from place to place, but remaining in their homeland, ^{with} their possessions -- including the New Testament -- relatively safe from destruction. Unlike God's Church, they must be a part of this world, yet with "Christian" background and tradition. Not being themselves converted, they must

nevertheless cherish and take pride in the original Greek New Testament.

Their mission would be to treasure, preserve and copy the Scripture message -- word for word and letter by letter -- through the long dark night of the Middle Ages. It was not essential that they believe it.

All this Jesus Christ knew, and prepared for, when He began by Apostle Paul what was to be essentially a one-generation work in the Greek world. Jesus Christ knew the false church, then arising, would be centered in Egypt and Rome. Hundreds of corrupt Egyptian and "Western" (Roman-influenced) manuscripts prove Jesus was right. (And even those were kept hidden lest people should read them!)

That is why Paul was sent to the Greek Gentiles. That is why thousands of Greeks were converted, many congregations established.

Paul knew the Greek nation could not long remain faithful (Acts 20:29). With the great falling away (II Thes. 2:3), these congregations would be taken over by the great apostasy which was even then at work (verse 7) through men masquerading as Jesus' apostles (II Cor. 11:13-15). But the Greeks would still preserve the true inspired Greek New Testament.

Paul's later work in Spain was no more prosperous or permanent than ^{that of} Barnabas in Africa or ^{that of} the other apostles. That is why Paul did not stay long in Spain.

Because we possess much more knowledge of the travels of Paul, the world today seems to think Paul was much greater than the other apostles. This is not the point. It was only because of his special

commission -- to teach the Greeks and to have much of the gospel preserved in their language through his own epistles -- that Paul supersedes and over shadows all the rest. The "false apostles" of those days forged writings in the names of Peter and the others as well as in Paul's.

lc lc lc lc
WHAT WAS PETER'S JOB?

In the meantime, what was Peter doing? And what of the other apostles? The main apostles' commission was to go to the "House of Israel" (Matt. 10:2-6). But to do this, they would have to leave Palestine! For only the Jews -- the House of Judah -- had returned to Palestine from captivity. The rest of the Israelites were widely dispersed in northern Asia Minor, in the Parthian Empire and in other regions still further away in north Europe -- "beyond Euphrates . . . an immense multitude" (Josephus, Ant. XI, 5,2).

Did the apostles indeed leave the Palestinian scene at an early date? They did.

Whom did Paul find left in Jerusalem no later than about 38 A.D.? Of the original Twelve, only Peter was there! The James mentioned in Galatians 1:18-19 is the "Lord's [half-] brother," also mentioned in Matt. 13:55. He was not one of the original Twelve, although he had become an apostle, and the presiding elder at Jerusalem. As late as the last six months of Jesus' life, James did not believe in Him (John 7:5-8).

When King Herod, about A.D. 42, martyred James, the brother of John, whom else did he find in Jerusalem? Again Peter was there (Acts 12:1-3). But the rest were long gone! It was the season for the Days of Unleavened Bread, and the true Church was keeping those days, which probably accounts for the temporary presence of ^{this} James at headquarters.

When Paul again went up to Jerusalem in A.D. 49, whom did he find? Peter (Cephas), James (the Lord's brother) -- and John (Gal. 2:9). This time it was John who was temporarily at headquarters in Jerusalem.

It is surely abundantly evident that most of the apostles had designated responsibilities elsewhere, which were only occasionally interrupted either by trips to or temporary tours of duty at headquarters. Peter was most often at Jerusalem. But this certainly does not mean Peter settled back on an ecclesiastical throne and never left the city. Notice!

Peter made numerous trips to places near and far, beginning from those first trips to Samaria, Joppa, Caesarea, etc. The Bible notes one trip to Antioch in extreme northern Syria, probably for the purpose of helping to conduct a regional Feast of Tabernacles (Gal. 2:11).

Other headquarters ministers and the apostle Paul were also present.

Was Peter the Head of the Church, as some say? Never! -- nor was any other mortal man. Christ was the Head. Peter and John were sent on that trip to Samaria by the apostles acting collectively under the direct inspiration of Christ. But, among the Twelve, Peter's job was to visit and coordinate the Work of the Church in all areas -- both among the Jews and Greeks in the Near East and the House of Israel scattered abroad.

l.c.
WAS PETER EVER AT ROME?

Peter also spent time in Babylon on the Euphrates, where thousands of Jews still lived, descended from those anciently carried captive there by Nebuchadnezzar, only a part (less than 50,000) of whom had ever returned to Judea.

But was Peter ever in Rome? There is absolutely no evidence he ever was! It was another Simon, also called a Peter, who went to Rome -- to build there his church. Rome, basically, was not a Christian headquarters at all. The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans about 56 A.D. Was there an organized Christian congregation to which he could write? There was none! (Rom. 1:7)

At the end of his book to the Romans, Paul devotes a whole chapter to personal greetings to individuals -- yet he never once mentions Peter. What a slap in the face to Peter, if Peter indeed were there. But Peter was not there.

Let's grant that a "Peter" did arrive in Rome in 45 A.D. as is claimed. He was not the apostle whom Jesus baptized.

When Paul himself arrived in Rome, was there a Christian congregation to which he could preach? There were only unconverted Jews (Acts 28:17). There were a few scattered Christians in south Italy (verse 14) and a few in Rome, but at the time no organized congregations in either area. Even much later, in fact, well along in Paul's Roman imprisonment, there only three other ordained true ministers there (Col. 4:10-11). But there WERE false ministers ^{there} /pretending to be Christian (Phil. 1:15; 2:20-21).

who still lived in the vast areas of the Iranian plateau. The north-eastern part of this region was often called India in ancient times. Matthew (Levi) reached many in Scythia, on the west coast of the Caspian Sea, and in "Ethiopia" (probably an area of dark-skinned people in India). Thaddeus Lebbeus ministered in upper Mesopotamia, including Assyria proper.

Farther west, Matthias' sphere was Macedonia, Dacia -- modern Romania -- and areas in central Europe. Still farther, James of Alphaeus is said to have gone to Spain, Britain and Ireland, while Simon the Zealot was in North Africa, in Britain and other islands.

Did you notice how many reached Britain?

If you would like to know more about the later life and work of the apostles who so strangely disappear from the New Testament account, write for the free article "Where Did the Twelve Apostles Go?"

End of the Apostolic Era

Why do we hear so little of the apostles' travels, mighty labors and their results? Because the true Church -- remember -- was to remain small in this world. (Though certainly it is true that most of the written records of its progress which may once have existed have perished, unless God has seen fit to preserve them.)

Just how did the Church grow -- or NOT grow -- toward the close of the New Testament period?

When the gospel first reached each new region, there were those God had prepared to receive it. Church growth was spectacular. Soon, however, the first rush was over. Real conversions now came much more slowly, as the number of Christians in relation to the population of each region tended to reach its "saturation point."

And now, side by side with success and growth, came increasing persecution.

Nero, mad Roman Emperor, initiated the first government persecution in A.D. 64. A disastrous fire had destroyed a large part of the capital city. It was whispered that Nero himself had set it, to clear away the slums that cheapened the view from his palace, and that he had celebrated by fiddling while Rome burned. To clear himself -- and safeguard his position -- Nero accused Christians.

Some were martyred by lingering torture, other by exposure to wild beasts in the arena. The infant Christian congregation at Rome was virtually destroyed. Many Christians elsewhere went into hiding.

Nero's government had, in A.D. 61, released the apostle Paul after two years at Rome. (Two years was the maximum imprisonment prescribed by a Roman "statute of limitations" since in the meantime no accusers had appeared against him -- Acts 28:30,31.) Now Paul was seized again (II Tim. 1:8, 16; 4:6-8), spoke personally before Nero himself, and in A.D. 68 was beheaded.

About this time, copies of the epistles of Paul were gathered together, possibly by Paul himself just before his death, along with copies of and ^{the whole} epistles, histories/ "gospols" by other writers, and sent to Peter

(probably by the hand of Mark -- comparing II Tim. 4:11 with Col. 4:10 and I Pet. 5:13). Then, by the direct inspiration and authority of Christ, and editing where necessary Peter and the Church, after carefully going over the material, officially pronounced certain of the books as inspired Scripture to be placed on the same level as the Old Testament as an infallible guide.

This first canonization of New Testament books occurred on the eve of Peter's own death (II Pet. 1:12-15) which probably occurred before 69 A.D. (By 80 or 81 there was little likelihood that a fraud would be exposed and Anacletus, bishop of Rome, consecrated at Rome a tomb for "Peter.")

Church Ousted From Jerusalem

Meanwhile, in Judea the unconverted Jewish nation had risen in rebellion to drive the Romans from Palestine. A Roman army generalised by Cestius came in sight of the walls of Jerusalem in A.D. 66. The rebels were beaten and ready to surrender, had he only known it. But something held him back. The rebels again took heart. His chance was past.

But God's headquarters Church was still in danger -- in the doomed and besieged city. For the sake of his Jewish mistress, Nero had tended to favor the Jews. Nero died in 68 -- shortly after the apostle Paul. With Vespasian as general the Roman army now moved energetically to crush the rebellion.

Was the living, active Jesus Christ on the job? Yes! A stronger hand than all the might of Rom would make the next move!

The new Emperor died suddenly. Leaving the army in Palestine in command of his son, Vespasian raced for Rome to take the vacant throne.

Again the Roman armies withdrew.

Christ had warned his servants to flee when they saw Jerusalem encircled by armies. The whole nation had had other warnings. "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'" (Wars of the Jews, VI, v. 3.

And God's people did "remove hence!" Christ had given them a last opportunity to flee. The Church fled to the mountains, and on to Pella, a small town just beyond the River Jordan.

Behind them the Roman armies closed in rapidly on Jerusalem, literally starving the Jews into submission. After horrible suffering Jerusalem fell. Thousands were crucified. The Temple of God was burned to the ground!

Everywhere in Roman lands the Church of God was silenced. Two Caesars had met death in one year. Out of fear of revolt no meetings of any kind ^{were allowed} after 69 A.D.

Thus ended, after just two 19-year cycles, the work of the Church in Jerusalem. Jesus founded His Church by sending the promised Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Monday, June 18, 31 A.D. -- as the exact astronomical computations of God's sacred calendar prove. It was exactly 19 years later that Paul received the call to go into Europe (Acts 16:9). Paul saw in a vision a man in Macedonia shouting "Help us!" (II Cor. 2:12-13) ^{following} which he wrote, "a door was opened unto me of the Lord" -- a way was opened to preach the gospel in Europe. From this Pentecost in 50 A.D. it was exactly another 19 years to the spring of the final siege of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 2

THE TRUE CHURCH -- AND THE FALSE:

The true Church did not die, after 70 A.D. It merely went to sleep. (Matt. 25:1-13). It's drowsy condition was already evident in the latter days of the apostles.

"Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee" wrote Paul to Timothy, his most faithful and enduring assistant (II Tim. 1:6; Phil. 2:19-21).

"And say to Archippus," he wrote the Colossians, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it" (Col. 4:17).

The earliest Christians had eagerly expected the imminent and almost immediate return of Christ. But by the late sixties, even the ministers of His Church seem to have acquired "lazy bones." Perhaps many had now decided Christ's return was not then imminent (see Matt. 24:48).

Hand in hand with this waning zeal and activity of the true Church, and more successfully after the departure of the headquarters congregation from Jerusalem, came visibility and dominance of a false church, professing to be "Christian," but being in actuality, a counterfeit -- a mystery system then already//for some years at work (II Thess. 2:7).

Recognized By All Historians

Notice what Mosheim, the church historian, admits: "Christian churches had scarcely been organized when men rose up, who, not being contented with the simplicity and purity of that religion which the apostles taught, attempted innovations, and fashioned religion according to their own liking" (emphasis ours).

These were conspirators: Men masquerading as God's ministers --

but who were actually wolves in sheep's clothing.

Since the new inventions and ideas of these clever men required proof -- not to be found in the writings of the apostles -- "recourse was had to falsehoods and impositions ... When asked where they had learned what they so confidently taught, some produced fictitious books under the names of Abraham, Zoroaster, and Christ, or His apostles; some pretended to have derived their principles from a secret doctrine taught by Christ."

This church had different leaders, different traditions, different doctrines, a widely differing spirit! Was this the true Church gone wrong? Or was this another, a DIFFERENT and FALSE church, that was being founded by men who were tools of Satan the devil? Obviously, this was not God's Church!

A telltale clue is the complete absence of historical connecting links. A great yawning gap -- an unbridgeable chasm -- separates the apostolic Church Jesus founded from the known beginning of today's professing Christian churches.

As the historian, Edward Gibbon (Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chapter 15) candidly states: "The scanty materials of ecclesiastical history seldom enable us to dispel the cloud that hangs over the first age of the church."

Jesse Lyman Hurlbut (The Story of the Christian Church) called this period, just after Acts, the "Age of Shadows."

And he continues "... of all the periods in the church's history, it is the one about which we know the least For fifty years after St. Paul's life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises about 100 A.D. with the writings

of the earliest church fathers, we find a church in many aspects VERY DIFFERENT from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul."

Again we ask: Was this -- when the curtain arose -- really the same church?

It was not!

The true Church of God had faded from view. Another church had come on the stage.

Missing History Foretold:

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" -- referring to 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 professing Christians from the truth was prophesied as something which had to happen before Jesus Christ could return.

How did it happen? Acts 8 gives us this clue.

After Simon Magus had been "dunked" yet had, in a most unconverted, un-Christian attitude, tried to buy the power to bestow the Holy Spirit in accordance with his own selfish aims, the apostle Peter told him plainly: "You have neither part nor lot in this matter; for your heart is not right" (verse 21).

Peter, by the Holy Spirit of God within him, had read Simon's mind. But why did he mention a "lot" -- the means by which Jesus Christ had

designated Matthias to the vacant place of Judas? (Acts 1:26) Because what Simon was attempting to buy was no less than an apostleship in God's Church:

Simon was already chief religious leader of the Samaritans (verses 9-10). But God's Church had a power and its message of a coming Kingdom of peace and prosperity had an appeal that his church's religion lacked. People wanted that! What a springboard for him, Simon reasoned, to gain truly universal power and authority through religion!

Simon's motives were all wrong. And when he failed to buy the power of the Holy Spirit, he neither repented nor changed his aim. Instead, he continued to claim to be a Christian, and a leader of Christians -- an apostle -- at that!

Thus Simon began building his church.

The Catholic historian of the fourth century, Eusebius, states unequivocally:

"Simon, however, we have understood to have taken the lead in all heresy; from which also, down to the present time, those that followed him still affect the modest philosophy of the Christians" (Ecc. Hist., II, xiii).

Others, taking their cue from him, either joined him as his subordinates or set out independently to gain a following for themselves, as he did

How The Apostasy Spread

Though nearly all the writings of the Church in the years after 70 A.D. have perished, yet prophecy remains. Paul, the teacher of the Gentiles, had explained how the apostasy would spread.

Paul 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 departing 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." (Acts 20:29-38). 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 centuries later, 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 ordained by Paul himself some would pervert the doctrine of Jesus to secure a following of "Christians" themselves.

Did it happen? It did! And all Asia (the province in which Ephesus was located) was turned away from Paul (II Tim. 1:15).

No wonder Paul instructed the evangelist Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering 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 pleased -- "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 turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3,4; see also I Tim. 1:3).

No wonder not only Paul, but also Peter warned the churches that MANY would be misled. That 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 Pet. 2:2).

Yes, they caused LIES to be circulated about God's truth -- and God's people!

And no wonder that Jude, 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 [permissiveness to do evil], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ ... These be they who separate themselves [R.S.V.: "set up divisions"-- sects and denominations], sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 3 and 19).

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

Jude shows these preachers separated themselves and their followers from the body of Christ, the Church. They formed their own churches and called them the churches of Christ! But they were no longer, if ever, real Christians.

The Actual Eyewitness of John

The apostle John saw the same apostasy develop. And outliving all the other apostles, he wrote nearly 40 years later as an eyewitness of things that were past:

"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 continued: "They are of the world; therefore they speak of the world AND THE WORLD HEARETH THEM. No one of God's children speaketh like this."

us; he that is not of God heareth not us" -- whoever does not obey Him -- "heareth not us" (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 had left the Church], but they were not of us; for if they had been of us [that is, converted men], 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). They were unconverted men.

This is why there are so many denominations today:

John wrote of the same condition in II John ^{C₉} 7:1 "For MANY DECEIVERS ^{entered} [are/gone forth] into the world Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God."

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

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

Long ago Jesus had warned that the time would come when any true followers of His would be put out of religious congregations mostly

composed of deceived people (John 16:2).

In John's day this occurred whenever the false ministers were able to influence a majority in a local church. They simply took over and began to expel any remaining 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 forbiddeth 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" (II John 3:1).

But that did not mean the scattered individuals were not part of the Church. They only were the Church because they were joined to Christ through the Holy Spirit. Those who drove them out became part of 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?

The life and the mission of the true Church were not finished!

And the sleeping Church was not dead!

An Amazing Prophecy!

In the book of Revelation is an amazing prophecy. Almost no one

understands it, yet it is actually very plain. It is the Seven Churches of Revelation.

Notice Revelation 1:12-13. John saw a vision of seven candlesticks and Jesus in their midst. The Bible interprets the seven candlesticks to mean seven particular church congregations (verse 20). To them the book of Revelation is dedicated.

But why to them, and to them only? The book of Revelation is equally relevant to the churches of Philippi, Corinth, Colossae, to name just a few -- or to the entire Church in every generation.

Yet 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 church must represent the entire Church. Jesus chose a particular seven for this purpose because they formed a perfect two-fold pattern:

First, these seven (the number signifying completeness in the Scriptures) local first century congregations encompassed all the general conditions typical of 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. Their circumstances, strengths, weaknesses -- even their names -- would have prophetic meaning for the Church of God in each specific, succeeding age!

Who ARE the Seven Churches?

WHY have all Bible Students, until now, been unable to identify these churches? Many have grasped the two basic facts just stated. But it seems everyone has ASSUMED, erroneously, that these picture seven stages of the visible, organized churches which have called themselves "Christian," and in vain have they endeavored to apply them. 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 church of the god of this world:

But such is not true.

These two chapters of Revelation picture, and convey God's message to the true Church of God -- the Churchⁱⁿ 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, ^{often} unorganized -- many of whose members have been martyred.

This Church is composed of members who, even though begotten 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 people who have and are led by His Spirit, who put themselves under GOD'S government -- His rule -- 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" -- the seven churches. Jesus Christ is IN these churches. He rules them -- holds their leaders "in His hand." They are His churches; not Satan's churches which falsely masquerade as "Christian."

Remember the true Church has not been powerful and recognized by the world -- but scattered, persecuted, seldom noticed by the world, and even then regarded as heretics.

Now let's UNDERSTAND what and whom each of these seven stages represent.

The Apostolic Age

The church at Ephesus -- the first mentioned -- pictured the Apostolic Church. It was a Church era which had a headquarters to which other congregations or scattered individuals could look for guidance, and as the standard for truth (I Thess. 2:14).

Let's notice this.

In Acts 15:1-2, 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. 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.

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 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.

It was the Jerusalem church, acting in this capacity, which watched over, corrected, and even intervened in the affairs of her daughter churches everywhere. No other church could claim this right.

It was the Jerusalem church which had originally sent Peter and John to Samaria. At another time, 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).

It was to the Jerusalem church that the twelve and Paul often return after completing their journeys.

The Jerusalem church remained the headquarters church even after it removed to Pella. Rome was never the parent or headquarters church. But little by little, this headquarters church lost its influence.

"Ephesus" Loses "First Love"

Jesus Christ highly commended the strong, true guidance of the faithful Jerusalem church during the first part of the Ephesian era. "I know thy works," He said, "...and thou hast tried them which SAY they are apostles and are not" -- this church had encountered and unmasked those deceivers who went around deliberately lying, claiming to be Christ's apostles (II Cor. 11:13-15) -- "and hast found them liars." The truth emanating from Jerusalem clearly convicted those lying, pretended apostles.

"...And for my name's sake [thou] hast laboured, and hast not fainted! But... Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:2-4). And the Greek word Jesus here uses is aphēkas, meaning "let go," thus linking the name he had chosen for this era, Ephesus, with aphesis "letting go." They still had salvation. Aphesis also means forgiveness, deliverance.

But time had dragged on; Jesus had not yet returned. So, especially after 70 A.D., many true Christians had let down, becoming more and more lacking in zeal. Was it false doctrine that caused Jesus concern? No! Notice the message he gave: "Repent, and DO the first WORKS." He is vitally interested in works!

This was still the true Church, still had the true doctrine. Its doctrine and message had not changed. ^{That} was the false church which was -- Sunday worship, immortal souls, going to heaven, preaching "another gospel" (Gal. 1:6), But Christ's own Church had ceased to carry His gospel to the world.

Antioch Retains Leadership of Greek Christians

In his later years, Paul left the Churches of God which he had raised up in Asia Minor under the general supervision of Peter. Catholic

writers date Peter watched over the Gentile converts from the ancient city of Antioch in Syria, which was, next to Jerusalem, the most important early center of the Church (Acts 14:26-28).

Barnabas had been sent there to be its first minister (Acts 11:22). However, trouble soon arose. Eusebius' Chronicle gives Peter the credit for "establishing" this church in A.D. 42. Another account tells why -- Peter went there to withstand Simon Magus.

Jesus alluded to the situation which existed at Antioch at that time -- and elsewhere later -- in his message to the church of Ephesus. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:15).

Christ hated the deeds -- the evil works -- of the Nicolaitans. But who were the Nicolaitans? And what was it they did?

Ignatius, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius -- church fathers -- all wrote of these Nicolaitans. From the Catholic Encyclopedia and Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, articles "Nicolas" and "Nicolaitans": These Nicolaitans felt themselves free from any obligation to keep God's Law, having "turned the grace of God into lasciviousness" -- license to do ^{what they pleased} (see Jude 4). Some of them, carrying this principle to its logical conclusion "led lives of unrestrained indulgence." They claimed to have derived from "Nicolas" their doctrine of proniscuity.

Who was Nicolas? Not the deacon Nicolas of Acts 6:5 as some have supposed. This "Nicolas of Antioch" is identified with a "bishop Nicolas of Samaria ... a heretic in company with Simon Magus."

But why was he called Nicolas of Antioch? Because he was with Simon at Antioch before the apostle Peter came there to counteract their poison. Antioch, ^{afterward} became a secondary headquarters for God's Church, because was equally accessible from Pontus, Babylon and Syria.

Greek-speaking areas of southern and western Asia Minor. Here was the major Gentile center for the Feast of Tabernacles (Gal. 2:12-14). Paul, Barnabas and other leaders continued to work in Gentile lands from a headquarters in Antioch (Acts 13:1-2).

Even long after apostolic days, Antioch remained a chief center of professing Christians. It became second only to Alexandria, Egypt, in the false church and one of the five seats of patriarchs (great fathers, the Emperor or papas) in the state church later organized by Constantine.

Headquarters Finally to Ephesus

Ephesus was Paul's headquarters for some years (Acts 19:1,10). He returned here after his first Roman imprisonment and his trip to Spain and Britain. Here, according to the earliest church historians, he placed Timothy in charge of the Greek-speaking churches in Asia (see I Tim. 1:3), and the trip, ^{he} urged in II Timothy 1:4 and 4:21 was apparently intended to be only a temporary absence.

We do not know what later happened to Timothy. We do know that ^{he} ~~he~~

^{leaders in} Ephesus and all Asia were soon after turned away from Paul personally.

These false teachers and disloyal elders ^{were} seeking power and prestige for themselves. ^{(I Tim. 1:15; Acts 20:27-31).} Probably they put Timothy out with a few other faithful ones, ^{in spite of Paul's admonition to withstand and overcome them (II Tim. 1:6-8).}

Jesus Christ allowed this. He was fully able to protect his own.

But the local church at Ephesus, like the Church as a whole, had left its first love. He let the wolves devour. This happened also to the remnant of the Jerusalem church, as we will see.

Since the end of the first two 19-year cycles, another whole cycle ^{de esprit} had passed. Now, in a fourth 19-year cycle, Jesus Christ used John to finish the writing and the canonization of the New Testament, and to give the Ephesian era a last chance to awaken and do the "first works."

In his old age John fixed his seat at Ephesus, the only one of the original apostles left alive (see John 21:22-24). Here is another reason why Jesus Christ chose Ephesus to represent this first of the seven ages of His Church. From here, John directed the work of that Church.

About A.D. 90, Emperor Domitian began what has been called the second imperial persecution. The aged John was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos in the Aegean, where he received the visions comprising the book of Revelation and the command to write them down. Probably Christ allowed John to be imprisoned for no other reason than to give him the needed leisure to write this remaining important part of the New Testament.

Ephesus Candlestick Removed

Like Nero's persecution, Domitian's persecution was local and spasmodic. Most of the slain were in Italy and in Rome itself. True Christianity, if any, was driven from Rome.

John was released and returned to Ephesus, where later he died and was buried. But before his release, he had penned Christ's last warning words to Ephesus -- and to the rest of the seven churches.

To Ephesus John wrote, at the dictation of Jesus Christ: "...repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place" (Rev. 2:5).

A candlestick symbolizes each one of the seven churches (Rev. 1:20). The church itself, then, was the thing to be removed. Yet at the time John penned these words -- about 95 A.D. -- Jesus already knew the performance record of the church of "Ephesus." The removal of its Jerusalem headquarters congregation had already been done, physically, in type. It was done spiritually when the authority and the respect in

Which this mother church had been held was gradually stripped from it.

But even the literal city of Ephesus was to suffer the stern sentence of the living Christ. Stamped on ancient coins found in the ruins of Ephesus are such titles as "First of all the greatest." How fitting that this city's name should be used for the first age of God's Church! Or that in later years the very site should be deserted, the population moved to a higher location more than a mile to the northeast, which is today called Avassoluk! That name? Nothing more than a later corruption of the ancient Greek words for "St. John, spokesman for God":

It stands thus attested -- by prophecy fulfilled -- that John did speak for God: *He had better take heed to the rest of Christ's prophecies through John!*

While John lived, he dominated the scene in Ephesus, while true Christians were cast out of fellowship in other local churches.

After John's death, it was Onesimus, according to the Catholic "church father" Ignatius, who presided in Ephesus and no longer allowed any "heresy." And perhaps it is significant that it was here, finally, in A.D. 431, that a great church council met and applied the title "Mother of God" -- earlier applied, in inscriptions found in the ruins, to Diana of the Ephesians (see Acts 19:23-35) -- to the so-called Virgin Mary! *It also endorsed belief in a future millennial Kingdom of God and superstition!*

The candlestick of Ephesus had been removed from its place among God's churches. The degenerate Greek "Christianity" which was propagated from this era was no longer accounted the Church of God.

But Christ had seven Church eras, as he was careful to point out in the very first verse addressed to Ephesus (Rev. 2:1).

Meanwhile in Palestine

After the martyrdom of James the brother of Jesus, and before the departure from Jerusalem, ^{his cousin} Simeon son of Cleopas had become the presiding elder in the headquarters congregation. Through the declining years of the Ephesian era, Simeon, like John, lived on and on, as if he would live forever. Finally, in 107 A.D. in the reign of the Emperor Trajan, at a reported age of a hundred and twenty years, Simeon was crucified.

Thirteen more "bishops" -- all circumcised Jews -- ruled the Pella-Jerusalem church in rapid succession. As He often does, Jesus Christ was still ruling his Church and working through members of the same family. Regesippus, ^{reign of} through Eusebius, tells us how, in the reign of Domitian, Zokker and James, grandsons of Jude, had been called before the Roman governor, interrogated and contemptuously dismissed as unworthy of further notice and obviously presenting no danger to Roman rule. The house of David sank into rustic obscurity.

Then, about A.D. 135, came Jesus Christ's time to separate a living "Smyrna" remnant from among the lukewarm and unspiritual.

The stubborn Palestinian Jews had revolted in 132 for the third time. This time the exasperated Romans completely destroyed the city of Jerusalem. They then founded a new Roman colony, of Gentiles only, on the site, renamed Aelia Capitolina. Jews were forbidden to approach it. This included, of course, Christian Jews.

And now was shown just how worldly and spiritually drowsy many had become. Most of the "Jerusalem" congregation rejected God's method of church government and elected to themselves (II Tim. 4:3) a Gentile -- Marcus -- for leader. Thus the majority found means to return to Jerusalem. There they

became part of that other religious organization which tried to be at the same time both Jewish and Gentile (Rev. 2:9).

Marcus proceeded to declare disfellowshipped those few who remained faithful to the true doctrine and to Jesus Christ. The Ephesus era was finished! It was time for Smyrna to begin.

CHAPTER 3

THE SECOND AGE OF THE CHURCH

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 now called these people "Ebionites" (which meant "poor") and "Nazarenes" -- the same name used in the Bible to refer to Paul and the true Church (Acts 24:5).

Even the Jews condemned these Jewish Christians. "Let the Notzrim and the heretics perish as in a moment. Let them be wiped out of the book of life and with the righteous let them not be written" intoned Rabbi Samuel the Lesser about A.D. 100 (quoted in W. H. C. Frend, Martyrdom and Persecution).

The Church of Poor People

Jew or Gentile, the members of the small "Smyrna" Church were despised and rejected by the world and the religious organizations of the day. And no wonder! Even the apostle Paul admitted he was called a heretic -- that's how the world viewed it (Acts 24:14).

But though poor in material goods, and in the eyes of the world, they were far from poor spiritually.

"These things saith the first and the last," Jesus told them, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty

(BUT THOU ART RICH)" (Rev. 2:8-9).

Why were they rich? Because they knew the truth and obeyed God, and because the living Jesus Christ continued to guide and empower ^{them} to prevent them from falling away and to bring them to eternal life.

Leadership Shifts to Smyrna

At Smyrna itself Polycarp, trained by John and now the chief leader of the Church in the Greek area, presided for more than half a century after John's death. History relates that, following the example of Peter, Paul and John, Polycarp wrote many letters to congregations and individuals, which however have all disappeared save one doubtful exception.

While the true Church in his area continued to dwindle, Polycarp stood up boldly for the truth. But the name Smyrna means bitter. And bitter indeed, was the lot of the Church/era that it symbolizes.

For meanwhile the progress and development of apostasy and the false church went on apace. In the words of the Encyclopaedia Britannica:

"The steady progress of the heretical movement in spite of all opposition was a cause of deep sorrow to Polycarp, so that in the last years of his life the words were constantly on his lips, ²⁰⁷

'Oh good God, to what times hast thou spared me, that I must suffer [tolerate] such things!'" (11th ed., article: "Polycarp")

Such things as Apicetus, bishop of Rome -- who claimed he was human head of the catholic (universal) Church of God -- and pagan Easter, being observed in churches claiming to be "Christian." These Polycarp had to allow. For indeed there was nothing he could do to stop them.

In his old age -- he could not have been less than 85 and may have been near 100 -- Polycarp journeyed to Rome. States Irenaeus:

"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 is was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus" -- 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. Perhaps even Polycarp failed to distinguish clearly between those honestly in error and the deliberate conspiracy which was never any part of the true Church.

But Polycarp's attempt at conversion was not a success. Anicetus insisted upon observing Easter. He would neither be converted, nor keep God's Passover.

Continues Irenaeus: "For neither could Anicetus 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 Anicetus had no scriptural grounds -- he followed the "customs" brought into his professing Christian church from paganism.

Polycarp returned to Asia. The following year (155 A.D.) he was seized by an angry mob in Smyrna. "This is the teacher of Asia;" they shouted, "this is the father of the Christians; this is the destroyer of our gods" (quoted from the Encyclopedia Britannica). Polycarp was burned.

Passover - Easter Sunday Confusion

From the beginning, the New Testament practice/was to observe the Passover annually on Nisan 14 of God's calendar as a memorial of the death of Christ. Then here is what happened in the East.

In order to keep the occurrence of the Holy Days in line with the seasons, a change in the sequence of years in which intercalary months were added within the 19-year calendar cycle was made in 142 A.D. Because necessary had this/change was made by the Jews to whom Christ/given the oracle of the rejected it and calendar (Rom. 3:2), many professing Christians/began to introduce their own new ideas. The true Christians "continued to use the Jewish cycle [God's method] till the bishops of Jerusalem who were of the circumcision were succeeded by others who/not of the circumcision [unconverted Gentiles --] ... they began to invent other cycles" (Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, p. 1152).

This author continues: "We see, at this time [beginning about A.D. 142] the Jewish calculation [determined by God's calendar which the Jews had accurately preserved] was generally rejected by the ... church, and yet no certain one agreed upon in its room"

Remember that up to this time, all professing Christians understood that Jesus rose after three days -- on Saturday evening shortly before sunset. But, rejecting God's sacred calendar, many in the professing Christian world now began to miscalculate the annual occurrence of the Passover, but not only that -- they also began to observe the Passover weekly on Saturday, the Sabbath!

Here is the proof from the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus:

"While therefore some in Asia Minor observed the day above-mentioned [the Passover on the 14th of Nisan] others in the East kept this feast on the sabbath indeed...." By "sabbath" all early writers meant Saturday.

Easter SUNDAY Propagated From Rome

But what about Anicetus and Rome? Socrates, supposing they too had originally held the custom of the East, continues:

"For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this" (bk. V, chapter 22).

Did you catch the real significance of that? Most everywhere, false teachers had transformed the Passover, an annual memorial in memory of the death of Christ, into "mysteries." And while most of their churches celebrated them on Saturday, the Romans had put them on Sunday!

What did Paul warn about sacred mysteries? "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that [of Christ's return] shall not come except there come a falling away first [an apostasy, a falling into error]. For the MYSTERY OF INIQUITY [lawlessness] doth already work" (II Thess. 2:3, 7).

Now how were the false teachers going to alter the knowledge that Jesus was three days and three nights in the tomb, so that they could get everyone's mysteries on Sunday? By cleverly miscounting the three full days and three full nights -- from Wednesday to Sabbath -- that Jesus spent in His tomb. ^{Thus they} ~~invented~~ instead a "Good Friday-Easter Sunday" tradition (see the Syriac Didascalia), making an annual Easter Sunday ^{supposed} a memorial of Christ's resurrection -- which He never commanded to be observed. At the same time ^{they were} ~~busy~~ inventing other ^{supposed} ~~reasons~~ --

most of them plainly ridiculous -- for observing Sunday, the eighth day, every week. For example? That eight persons were saved in the Ark! Or, that a male child was circumcised the eighth day in Old Testament times! (Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 41, 138).

The one reason they most emphasized, however, was the claimed necessity of doing differently than the Jews. But it was to be yet some time in the future before Sunday would be called and exalted as "the Lord's day."

Whereas in most areas the professing Christians, for a long time, observed both Sabbath and Sunday, Justin, a Samaritan settled in Rome, argued that man, not being holy, was not able rightly to keep any Sabbath so should not try!

Thus the way was prepared for the Roman doctrine to spread throughout the Empire. Already bishop Xystus (also spelled Sixtus) had handed down the tradition of Easter to his successor Telesphorus, and hence to Hyginus, to Pius, to Anicetus. Xystus was the first recorded individual to prevent the proper observance of the Passover and to celebrate the "mysteries" annually on a Sunday.

Counterfeit Vision

Shortly after Polycarp's trip, there appeared an amazing letter -- said by many scholars to have been a deliberate forgery. This letter states: "Pope Pius, who lived about 147, had made a decree, That the annual solemnity of the Pasch [the Greek word for Passover] should be kept on the Lord's day [Sunday] and in confirmation this he pretended, that Hermes, his brother, who was then an eminent teacher among them, had received instruction from an angel, who commanded that all men should

keep the Pasch on the Lord's day (Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, pp. 1148-1149).

Of this same hoax, we read in Apostolical Fathers, by Donaldson, p. 324, "One of the letters forged in the name of Pius, where one Hermas is mentioned as the author; and it is stated that in his a book a commandment was given through an angel to observe the Passover on a Sunday."

If this letter was a deliberate forgery, it was invented after Polycarp's time in an effort to lend weight to the custom of Anicetus in maintaining Sunday observance of Eucharist or Passover. If it was not a forgery, then Pius himself was the author of this deceptive letter. (Pius died just prior to the visit of Polycarp to Rome)

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 [another example of the expulsion of those who held to the truth from organized the/professing Christian churches], 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 Philip, 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" (Eusebius, Ecc. Hist., bk 5, ch. 24).

What Is the "Synagogue of Satan"?

The Passover-Easter controversy dragged on -- often called the "Quartodeciman Controversy" from the Greek word for fourteen because the true Passover occurs on the fourteenth day of the first month of God's calendar.

All sides claimed to be Christian. But of one side, Christ Himself says to his church of the Smyrna era: "I know the BLASPHEMY of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9).

Who or what was the "synagogue of Satan"? And why does Christ label them such?

"Synagogue" is customarily used in connection with the religion of the Jews. And these people claimed to be Jews -- but were not!

Was there a people and a religion which from Old Testament times had falsely claimed to be Jewish?

Yes! The Samaritans!

Read the origin of the Babylonian Samaritans and their hybrid pagan religion in II Kings 17:18-33. They were settled in the empty land of the house of Israel -- Samaria -- by the Assyrians who had conquered and carried Israel away captive. With them, the Samaritans brought the worship of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar or Easter (Succoth-benoth), upon which they later grafted certain elements of Judaism. Only one Israelite family, that of one priest, was ever allowed to return.

Through the succeeding centuries, ^{however,} the Samaritans would claim to be Jews whenever it suited their purpose. Wrote Josephus, about A.D. 75:

"See that Alexander [the Great of Macedon] had so greatly honoured the Jews, [the Samaritans] determined to profess themselves Jews....

"When they see the Jews in prosperity, they pretend that they are changed, and allied to them, and call them kinsmen, as though they were derived from Joseph, and had by that means an original alliance with them; but when they see them falling into a low condition, they say they are in no way related to them, and that the Jews have no right to expect any kindness or marks of kindred from them, but they declare that they are sojourners, that come from other countries" (Antiquities of the Jews, XI, 8, 6; IX, 14, 3).

Simon Magus -- remember -- and others who helped found his church, were Samaritans. Did his followers still claim to be Jews (even those no longer aware of Simon's real role)?

Yes! By claiming to be Christian! 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, claim-
ing to be Jews inwardly, masquerading as a "Christian" church, yet the ver-

tool of Satan himself!

What church was it? Let the shocking record of history answer!

A Church That Was Centered in Rome!

The Vatican hill in Rome had long been a center of religion.

"The Latin word vatis means a 'prophet' or 'soothsayer' [one who preaches soothing doctrines people like to hear]. In days gone by there had been an Etruscan oracle on this spot" (Werner Keller, The Bible as History, p. 389).

"The Vatican sanctuary ... seems to have been a well-known ... cult centre ... of the worship of Cybele.... No less than nine inscriptions referring to the same cult have long been known from the immediate vicinity of St. Peter's" (U. Toynbee and J. W. Perkins, The Shrine of St. Peter and the Vatican Excavations, p. 6).

The cult and statue of Cybele had been brought to Rome from Pergamos in Asia Like the Ephesian Diana (Artemis), Cybele was worshipped as the Minor in the sixth century B.C. "Great Mother" of nature, and the "Mother of the Gods." ^{The great god} Zeus or Jupiter was her first-born son (see under those names in Anthon's Classical Dictionary).

To this city, Rome, about AD. 45, came another great figure in religion, Simon Magus. The church historian Eusebius relates:

"...The enemy of salvation [Satan] devising some scheme of seizing upon the imperial city for himself, brought thither Simon.... he attached many of the inhabitants of Rome to himself, in order to deceive them. This is attested by Justin" (Ecc. Hist., II, xiii-xiv).

There Simon, ^{Myself} became a "peter":

Surprising? Shocking? It should not be. But few realize the word "peter" (spelled in various ways) had a long history before ^{later} Jesus'

apostle Peter was born:

In the Hebrew, Chaldean and related languages, peter or piter meant an "opener" or "firstborn" (even Young's Concordance will demonstrate this). Both meanings were applicable to the priests, for they were regarded as the "openers" or revealers of hidden knowledge and, in these patriarchal societies, the first-born son inherited the office of priest. In the Latin and other Indo-European languages, the same word came to mean father, padre, papa, the common title of priests.

Even the great Greek god Zeus -- "the father of the gods" -- was known in Rome as Jupiter, signifying both "god the father" and "god the first born son" of the pagan religion.

It should now become clear how the tradition arose of a Simon Peter at Rome. (There is no evidence that Jesus' apostle Peter was ever in Rome. If he was there, it was only as a prisoner for execution, much as the apostle Paul when he was taken there the second time. Nor before the end of the second century have we evidence/of the tradition that a "Peter" was crucified upside down in the reign of Nero.)

The Downgrading of Simon Magus

Simon, not content with merely being an "apostle," actually claimed to be god himself (see Acts 8:10 in a modern translation, and Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, bk. 2, ch. 13, or Justin Martyr, Apology I, chapters XXV and LVI). Apparently he claimed that he himself was the one who had been incarnate in Jesus Christ and once crucified and resurrected. Much the same thing is said of Menander who succeeded him at Antioch:

"Menander, who succeeded Simon Magus, exhibited himself in his

conduct an instrument of diabolical wickedness, not inferior to the former. He, also, was a Samaritan, and having made no less progress in his impostures than his master, revelled in still more arrogant pretensions to miracles; saying that he was in truth the Saviour This account may be easily confirmed from Irenaeus.... (Ecc. Hist. III, xxvi).

"It was indeed a diabolical artifice," continues Eusebius, "by means of such impostors assuming the title of Christian"

But before the middle of the second century, the Gnostic aspect of Simon's religion began to diverge widely (for a while) from the rest of professing "Christianity." Thus Eusebius writes of some: "From this ["Christianity"], however, they appeared again to depart, and again to embrace the superstitions of idols, falling down before the pictures and statues of this selfsame Simon, and the aforesaid Helen with him; venturing to offer them worship by incense, and sacrifices, and libations" (bk. II, ch. xiv).

As a result, Simon began to be regarded as the spiritual father solely of the Gnostics, and his true history became completely confused with that of Simon Peter the apostle.

Later leaders anathematized Simon Magus, attributing to him only the history which gave no hint of any connection with the "Christianity" they professed.

Justin Martyr, for example, himself a Samaritan who flourished in Rome from about the time of Polycarp's death, wrote in abhorrence of "that man's doctrines" ^(I Apology, xxvi) and concluded his second Apology thus:

"And I despised the wicked and deceitful doctrines of Simon of my own nation. And if you [the Roman Emperor] give this book your authority,

we will expose him before all, that if possible, they may be converted. For to this end alone did we compose this treatise."

Clearly, Justin and others like him now rejected Simon. But, sadly, their rejection did not go so far as actually becoming converted themselves!

Justin elsewhere records how even the unconverted Jews of his time judged that brand of Samaritan "Christianity" which he and the majority of all professing Christians still held:

"I [Trypho the Jew] am aware that your precepts in the so-called Gospel are so wonderful and great, that I suspect no one can keep them; for I have carefully read them. But this is what we are most at a loss about: THAT YOU, PROFESSING TO BE PIOUS, AND SUPPOSING YOURSELVES BETTER THAN OTHERS, ARE NOT IN ANY PARTICULAR SEPARATED FROM THEM, AND DO NOT ALTER YOUR MODE OF LIVING FROM THE NATIONS, IN THAT YOU OBSERVE NO FESTIVALS OR SABBATHS ... [other than those days the heathen observed, including Sunday] AND ... YOU YET EXPECT TO OBTAIN SOME GOOD THING FROM GOD, WHILE YOU DO NOT OBEY HIS COMMANDMENTS..." (Dialogue with Trypho, x).

What an indictment of this counterfeit church professing itself to be the very Church of God and His Christ!

And lest there should be any doubt whatsoever of the prophetic identity of that church, Justin plainly brands himself with the very brand of Christ's prophecy. For, writing to the Roman Emperor, he claims "the Jewish and Samaritan races are called the tribe of Israel, and the house of Jacob." But to the Jew, Trypho, who would KNOW that that was a lie, he speaks of "your fathers [who were led] out of Egypt" and other words of the same kind (I Apol., lli, and Trypho, xi).

Yes, indeed, this was the "synagogue of Satan" which "say they are

Jews, and are not":

Thus, professing Christians -- and their leaders -- came to believe their religion and its authority could be traced back through Peter the apostle, and that their actually-pagan doctrines were the doctrines of Peter, the Bible and Christ!

But the history of the true Church is our story. Let's continue.

Why Persecution?

Jesus Christ said, to the Church and era of Smyrna:

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have TRIBULATION ten days" (Rev. 2:10).

So persecution was to come again to the true Church -- persecution to the death!

After the first attempts to restrain and intimidate the newly-inspired apostles (see Acts 4 and 5), the Jewish leaders reached an official decision: "...If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought [by itself, without persecution]; But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38-39). Never again does official Jerusalem Jewry seem to have persecuted the infant Church. It was the Hellenistic Jew, whose culture and civilization was basically Greek, who gave the Church trouble.

Those who persecuted and martyred Stephen -- including Saul of Tarsus, the future apostle Paul -- were Hellenistic Jews. Those who later persecuted Paul, who even followed him from city to city for that purpose, were Hellenistic Jews (see Acts 19:2, 19). It was they who were finally instrumental in putting Paul in prison, from which his only

P. James, whose writings perhaps led more to the founding of the doctrine with the Roman church than by the one man, founded his work on 11th ch. article (Gnosticism).

escape was by way of Rome (Acts 21:27).

But shortly before 70 A.D., even this persecution came to an end. Now followed a period in which persecution came from the Roman government.

Why did Rome persecute? There was one reason. Fear.

Why? Because the Roman government or Empire was a dictatorship. Its foundation principle was exploitation of the masses. There was no democracy. Any new non-government grouping -- be it even lodge, union, or club -- was strictly forbidden -- illegal -- lest any party opposed to the government become organized to stage a revolution.

The leaders in power feared for their power -- and for their lives.

If an Emperor persecuted a church, it was not because he cared if false doctrine enslaved his subjects. All shades of opinion were welcome. But only so long as they served and supported the Emperor!

When Nero feared for his throne he persecuted Christians. For this unauthorized organization was taking root in his very capital. Nero cleared himself, and rid himself of a potential rival at the same time.

He was "killing two birds with one stone:"
of Christians occurred
Two periods of persecution, as we have seen, before the end of the first century. But both of these persecutions were somewhat local and primarily at Rome. They fell heavily on that church which was developing at Rome.

Consider! Have events proven the Roman civil government may have had reason to feel a church seated in Rome had designs on supreme secular power? History answers YES (see Rev. 17:3). Remember, this church which was seated in Rome was not the poor and humble true Church of Revelation 2.

In the true Church, the knowledge was well-known that a great apostate, antichristian power must arise in Rome. Though he dared not put this revelation too plainly in writing -- lest it fall into the wrong hands and he be misunderstood and mistakenly charged with treason himself, Paul clearly explained, verbally (II Thess. 2:5), to his converts in Macedonia that only the power of the Emperor's government in Rome hindered the false system's assuming power even then. It would happen, he revealed, as soon as the power of the Emperor should be removed from Rome (verses 6 and 7).

That did happen, later.

The true Church of God, however, never planned to usurp power in this world. Contrary to modern interpretations, the apostle Paul never once envisioned trying to make the Roman Empire into the Kingdom of God.

Remember the grandsons of Jude? When suspicion fell on them -- because they were Christians, and Jewish, and descended from David, and because Domitian feared any person who might claim a right to be a king -- they were examined, found innocent and released, exonerated.

"On the Just and the Unjust"

But just as God often sends good things on just and unjust alike (Matt. 5:45), so sometimes true Christians must suffer along with the false -- and through no fault of their own (II Tim. 3:12).

Understand what the true Christian's attitude is to persecution and martyrdom. Those were not true Christians who deliberately sought martyrdom -- challenging and daring the officials to kill them -- virtually committing suicide (a form of murder) and breaking one of the cardinal points of the Ten Commandments.

Both Peter and Paul instructed Christians to do their best to avoid giving the government any ground for persecution -- and to prove by their actions their innocence. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors.... For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" -- false accusations (I Pet. 2:13-15). Turn in your own Bible and also read carefully Romans 13:1-7.

But if unjust persecution did come anyway, the Christian had no choice but to submit to whatever penalty was imposed.

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example" (I Pet. 2:19-21).

And again, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.... For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (I Pet. 2:14, 17).

Why is I Peter so filled with such admonition? It was the reign of Nero. And Peter also knew that greater tribulations lay ahead -- and many evil doers professing to be Christian. Few have realized Peter wrote these words in the shadow of his own martyrdom, instructing and strengthening the Church for what was yet to come.

In such times, keeping one's eye on the ultimate goal beyond

would be the only way. In this one could rejoice, though certainly the Christian would not enjoy the persecution (I Pet. 1:5-6; 4:13; Heb. 12:11).

Punished For "the Name of Christ"

Once persecution had begun -- perhaps caused or drawn by lawless, rebellious "false brethren" (II Pet. 2:1, 3, 10, 13; Jude 4, 8) -- special persecution edicts were placed on the Roman law books. Nevertheless, during most of the time, they were not enforced. Throughout the first three centuries of the Christian era, persecution was only occasional.

The letter of Pliny -- written about 112 A.D. -- is a case in point. Pliny found most Christians in Bithynia-Pontus law-abiding, hard-working, model citizens. They had heeded what Peter wrote them. Yet Pliny knew, also, that for a Christian congregation to meet together -- even on the Sabbath -- was against state law. That's why he wrote the Emperor for clarification. Just how far must he go? How rigidly enforce the law?

Pliny seems to have been generally a humane and upright man. He was willing to be lenient -- to let peaceful (Matt. 5:9) Christians alone. And Emperor Trajan allowed it: Christians were to be punished only if someone formally accused them before a judge. Then, of course, law must be upheld.

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ," wrote Peter, "happy are ye But let none of you suffer as ... an evildoer Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed" (I Pet. 4:4-16; see also Acts 11:26; Rom. 16:16).

Why were Christians punished? By this time, solely for bearing the name of Christ. To bear that name was a crime! Even to the Roman

official mind, Christ was a rival King.

And what was the evidence? Simply acknowledging that NAME OF CHRIST:

On the other hand, it was easy to escape the Roman punishment. Simply deny being a follower of Christ -- lie about it -- and sacrifice to the cult of the Emperor!

So even Justin complained: "All who take their opinions from these men [Simon, ^{Mages} Menander, Marcion] are, as we before said, called Christians and whether they perpetrate those fabulous and shameful deeds ... we know not; but do know that they are neither persecuted nor put to death by you, at least on account of their opinions" (I Apology, xxvi). The deliberately hypocritical went free!

True Christians -- and some others -- did not so easily escape!

The "Ten Days" Persecution

What signs had Jesus given to herald a time of major persecution? We find them recorded in Matthew 24:6-9 -- war, famine, pestilence and earthquakes, all given as signs of the end-time.

But why is it said, "History repeats itself." Because events run repeatedly in similar cycles. And Jesus has never given a definite date when famine, pestilence and earthquake will run without interruption straight through to His ^{second and} third coming. In the ^{second and} third centuries -- even more than in the more generally recognized events in Judea just preceding 70 A.D. -- the predicted signs seemed rapidly to be in process of fulfillment.

Nero had blamed Christians for burning Rome. Now others blamed them for many things. Human beings want a scapegoat. If Christians

had mentioned prophecies foretelling these troubles -- and it was well known that they had -- and if those troubles then occurred, wasn't it logical that they had caused them! It was all their fault! So people reasoned.

The result?

"Under Marcus Aurelius (161-180)," says Fisher (History of the Christian Church), "Christians suffered both from popular fury and from government. In this reign risings of the populace against the Christians were frequent. These were occasioned by the terrible calamities which the empire suffered."

What were those calamities? "There was not only warfare without cessation; there was a plague, from the destructive effects of which, Niebuhr tells us, the empire never recovered."

Instead, as the work of the Smyrna age drew toward a close, civil and economic conditions became worse and worse throughout the third century. The famous Edict of Diocletian (A.D. 301) fixing standard prices empire-wide came as a direct result of several bad harvests and resulting scarcity of food. Unfortunately, as always in similar cases, this legislation only made bad matters worse.

Eusebius (Ecc. Hist., IX, 8) gives a vivid description of the awful culmination of famine, pestilence and war about A.D. 310.

Then came the persecution!

In the days of Diocletian (284-305), so-called "Christians" were deeply involved in political haggling. Diocletian believed he had uncovered a plot to take over the empire when he found "Christians" taking sides between himself and co-emperor Galerius. "Church father" Lactantius

Christianity.

Diocletian's first persecution edict of February, 303, was directed solely against Christians in government or in homes of servants of government personnel. These were the ones he most suspected and feared. But when once the edict was issued and there ensued rebellions in Syria and Melitene, his suspicion became certainty. In a second and much stiffer edict, he ordered all church leaders imprisoned.

He decreed also that the special civil tax on all Jews -- which the Romans had substituted for the former temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27) when the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. -- should be rigorously exacted of all "Christians" including those of the "synagogue of Satan." After all, did they not call themselves Jews? (Rev. 2:9).

In Rome and Italy, there was active persecution for about eighteen months and it was ended officially after three years. But in the Eastern Empire -- where God's people were -- the persecution raged on.

After Diocletian retired and the victories of the new Emperor Constantine in the west, Galerius was constrained to issue briefly in 311 an edict of toleration. But even so, Maximian, his subordinate ruling in Palestine and Asia Minor, only pretended to cooperate and again persecuted until 313.

Thus the deadly persecution raged for ten long years (see Eusebius, Ecc. Hist., VIII, 15-16).

Now Jesus Christ had spoken of a special persecution -- one that was to affect Smyrna "ten days." The major part of Smyrna's persecution was to come at that time. What and when were those "ten days"? Obviously between 303 and 313, the total length of the persecution that

raged where God's people were.

A few years later, Maximian's successor, Licinius, was about to persecute again. "Again the worshippers of God began to flee; again the open fields, the deserts, forests, and meadows, received the servants of Christ" (Eusebius, Ecc. Hist., X, 8; see also Sozomen, Ecc. Hist., I, 7). But this time the threat was quickly ended by the moving eastward of Emperor Constantine's army.

Constantine and the Church

From that time on, Constantine began to play an increasingly important role in affairs of religion. It was Constantine who made Sunday worship -- already common among both pagans and so-called Christians -- an official mark of the Roman Empire (Rev. 13:16).

Here are the words of his famous edict of 321 A.D.: "On the venerable day of the sun let all magistrates and people ... rest" (see Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, article "Sunday Legislation").

Constantine was not yet even a professing Christian. He was a worshipper of the sun god. But he was an astute politician who wished to unite the empire, and he foresaw at this time how it might be done and political advantage reaped for himself by an alliance with "Christianity." Naturally he allied himself that the faction which offered the most immediate benefits -- the strongest ally. That faction just happened to be reigned over by Sylvester, bishop of Rome. ^{And} He, too, observed the day of the sun.

Now 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 [the time for God's Passover] 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 controversy continued equally divided between both parties ... Constantine appeared to be the only one on earth ^{capable}.... He convoked a ^{of bishops} general council.... "A in 325 A.D. at Nicaea in Asia Minor.

This -- the first of the great church councils -- discussed many things and, under the influence of Constantine laid down a single authoritative dogma for "Christianity."

After the Nicaean 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 ^{(Eusebius, Life of Constantine, III, 5-6 and 17).} on one and the same day. The Council of Nicaea decided, under his authority, that Easter must be celebrated on Sunday and that the Passover must be forbidden.

Persecution By STATE CHURCH Begins!

Not all accepted the decrees of the Council, which for the first time established a form of counterfeit "Christianity" as a state religion.

To all objectors, among whom must be ^{spiritually} included the small surviving true Church of converted Christians, 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 by a public manifestation of displeasure?" -- by persecution, he meant.

Constantine continues: "Forasmuch, then, as it is no longer possible to bear with your pernicious errors [any nonconformity whatever to the compromises of Nicaea], 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 merely, 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 other 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."

The servile Eusebius, always a supporter of Constantine, sums up the emperor's work by declaring: "And the credit of having achieved this mighty work [of forcing all heresies into one uniform church] our Heaven-protected Emperor alone, of all who had gone before him, was able to attribute to himself" (Life of Constantine, III, 66).

successors. The pagans were made to embrace Christianity ^{secretly}. Constantines tended to follow his example. The Gnostics were hit hard, most of them forced into the recognized church, bringing more of their doctrine with them. By the end of the century "both Gnosticism and the polemical literature directed against it die out" (Ency. Brit., 11th ed., article "Gnosticism"). During this century even Arianism was driven outside the empire.

Thus by the "marriage" of a popularized form of Roman Samaritanism with sun worship did Sunday Christianity become dominant. Only it was NOT really marriage -- but spiritual fornication! (contrast II Cor. 11:2 with Rev. 17:1-5). Each party remained separate, distinct, each striving TO GET from the other. Neither has that "woman" ever obeyed any Husband!

And From this time on God's people began to migrate. They knew that Christ counseled flight in time of trouble (Matt. 10:23; 24:6). As periods of persecution reoccurred or threatened, they no longer returned from the fields and deserts to the cities. From this time on an established state religion falsely called Christianity stood ready to begin its share of persecuting.

But let's drop back a few years to wind up the story of the true Christians of the age of Smyrna.

Ebionites in History

Eusebius, whose chief theme was to justify and eulogize Emperor Constantine and the church of Constantine's choice, copied much of his information about the early true Church from Hegesippus, who though afterward a famous Catholic, was once an "Ebionite" of Pella. Hegesippus copied the example of Marcus. He yearned to follow the crowd. So, determined to find the majority right, he convinced himself by finding about the same (false) doctrine taught

and mislabeled "Christian."

^{4 eqs: pp 13}
 He it was who originally drew up the list of Roman bishops, on which Anicetus and his successors -- down to today -- based their claim to be the successors of a Peter.

We know but little of Ebionite history, because their own writings have perished. Our scanty information must come malicious records of their enemies. And here, clearly, truth is well-tempered with lies: These records attribute beliefs to God's people which they never held. Heretics and the true Church are often called by the same names. "Others, besides these, but of the same name," wrote Eusebius, "avoided the absurdity of -- that Christ was an ordinary man, not born of a virgin the opinions maintained by the former" (Ecc. Hist. III, 27). But

Eusebius' account too is confused. Some Ebionites thought the writings of Paul ^{being against God's Law} should be rejected as. But in the generation after Eusebius, Jerome ^(not only) confirmed that others ^{birth} acknowledged the pre-existence and virgin/of Christ (Ep. 72, to Augustine) but "...while adhering as far as possible to the Mosaic economy as regarded circumcision, sabbath, foods and the like, they did not refuse to recognize the apostolicity of Paul or the rights of heathen Christians" (Comm. in Isa., ix, 1). (There is no Bible statement that Christians of Jewish birth, or any other if they wished, should not be circumcised)

The example of these Ebionites also had an influence on many. As late as the beginning of the fifth century, the bishop Chrysostom (347-407) in his 'Orationes VIII Adversus Judaeos' lifted his voice with zeal against the 'Judaizing' of Christians at Antioch. Many Christians, he complained, were accustomed to celebrate the Jewish New Year, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles [they also kept the true ^{Christianity did not mention because} Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost which the false

and professed to observe these themselves ^{them} Christians had counterfeited [rather than abolishing outright]....

"What forgiveness can we expect" -- Chrysostom bewailed -- "when we run to their synagogues, merely following an impulse or a habit, and call their physicians and conjurers to our houses ... I invoke heaven and earth as witnesses against you" -- he thundered -- "if any one of you should go to attend the Feast of the Blowing of the Trumpets or participate in the fasts or the observance of the Sabbath or observe an important or unimportant rite of the Jews!" (L. I. Newman, Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements, p. 428; or see Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, bk. XVI, ch. vi).

One rigid splinter group of Ebionites was indeed antagonistic to Paul. It was composed of carnal-minded Jews who could plainly perceive Jesus was no ordinary man. But they could never forgive Paul for having put Gentiles on the level of Jews by offering them salvation. ^{Of these, Irenaeus of Lyons in Gaul wrote about 180 A.D. that they were the gospel of Matthew in the New Testament -- as it had been written in Hebrew.} What they were really protesting, whether they understood it themselves or not, was a false version of "Pauline" theology which claims the Law was abolished and that Paul taught so (using Paul's name to put over false doctrine began early -- II Thess. 2:2).

And those who said Jesus was only an ordinary man were actually protesting the interminable Catholic arguments of those days in regard to whether God is one Person or three (neither answer is correct) -- whether Jesus was God or man (He was both -- God in the flesh) -- and all the other elaborate theology of Catholicism and Gnosticism!

These very doctrines and arguments were in fact the very problems Constantine tried to settle in the Catholic Church by enforced compromise. But unlike Constantine, ^{at least some of} the Ebionites or Nazarenes had the truth.

There were a few faithful. And they -- and they only -- were in and really constituted God's Church.

One other group also labelled Ebionites is, however, worth mentioning. These had accepted some Gnostic doctrines. From them, as the second century ended, a considerable number had changed the simple creed of Jesus Christ for a strange blend of Christianity and Essenism. Following a false prophet led astray by demon visions, they were denominated from him Elchasaites. Their doctrine was propagated at Rome about A.D. 200, which was quite possibly the real origin of the "pseudo-Clementine" Homilies (composed about 170 A.D.) and Recognitions (written later, but based on the former) whose perverted ramblings betray knowledge that Simon Magus, not Simon Peter, founded a church at Rome.

About 200 A.D. an Ebionite from Ephesus, named Theodotion, revised earlier translations of the Old Testament into Greek. His translation of Daniel gained universal acceptance in place of the poorly done original Septuagint version.

A little later another Ebionite, Symmachus, also made a Greek translation of the Old Testament. His was probably the most readable -- yet faithful -- such translation ever made. Symmachus is also noted for his Commentaries on various Old Testament books.

The Ebionites still kept their headquarters at Pella, and spread themselves into villages near Damascus. Epiphanius mentioned them there as Nazarenes late in the fourth century (Panarion, xxix, 7) -- as Jewish believers in Christ and the New Testament. There is also record of a small congregation in Boerea, now called Aleppo.

Among the people east^{and northeast} of the Jordan, Ebionite views lingered until the Islamic conquest in the 7th century (see Ency. Brit., 11th ed., articles "Ebionites" and "Nazarenes."

Summing Up the Era of Smyrna

Just before 70 A.D., the headquarters church at Jerusalem had been given a special sign -- armies encompassing Jerusalem -- to signify the time to flee from Judaea.

But that flight from Jerusalem was only a forerunner of two other great flights of God's Church, both of which, recorded in Revelation 12, are preceded by the same universal conditions prophesied in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6. Revelation 12:6 thus describes the fourth to sixth century flight, whose beginning dates from the edict of Constantine following the Council of Nicaea:

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

With the ^{gradual} enforcement of the 29th Canon of the Council of Laodicea (believed to have met about A.D. 365, 40 years after the Council at Nicaea) the removal of the true Church from the Greek areas became complete. This enactment reads: "Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, resting rather on the Lord's day...." But, if any be found to be Judaizing [keeping God's Sabbath] let them be declared anathema from Christ" -- excommunicated and cursed (Hefele, A History of the Councils of the Church, vol 2, p. 316)

Where did they flee? Most migrated to the north and east, into Cappadocia, Pontus and Armenia -- into a symbolic "wilderness" on the again.

How long was the Church to be in the "wilderness"? Twelve hundred and sixty days -- which we will find fulfilled as 1260 long years, using again the year for a day principle that was proven in the "ten days" persecution.

This flight and exile could never have applied to the great ruling church of the world. But this is just one more proof that God's Church was and is another Church entirely.

The name Smyrna is identical with myrrh -- a substance very bitter to the taste (symbolic of the experience of the people of this era of the Church) but having a fragrant odor. The more ^a myrrh plant is crushed and bruised, the greater the fragrance becomes. Likewise in the Smyrna age, the bitter suffering and persecution brought forth abundantly the sweet incense of prayer to God (Rev. 5:8) -- and will prove ultimately to be sweet, because of its result, even to those who suffered.

Ancient Smyrna was a "Crown City" in its heyday. The "crown of Smyrna" was an acropolis -- a circle of beautiful buildings standing on a peak close to the bay. In its day, the view from the sea must have been famous in all the world. But that "crown" fell into ruin. It became desolate, deserted, DEAD. From the fourth century, when Constantine built his new capital at Byzantium on the Bosphorus, commerce and prestige were shifted from Smyrna and the city dwindled away.

All this was a type of God's Church. The time and the area were the same. ^{Even} causal the/role of Constantine was the same.

But from the beginning, a slow but sure decline unto death was the destiny of the Smyrna stage. And to this Jesus referred in his closing words to that age:

"Be thou faithful unto death," said Jesus, "and I will give thee" -- not a crown of dead ruins but -- "a CROWN OF LIFE" (Rev. 2:10). The dead in Christ in "Smyrna" shall rise in the resurrection of the just, and shall receive a crown of rulership that shall never tarnish.

Not he who exercised rulership in carnal-minded greed, not those whose religion was a cloak for their lust, not those who by scheming sought dominance of governments -- but the "poor" Eblonites and others like them who by patient endurance, surrender and obedience overcome THEMSELVES -- will reign over the earth.

To the individual members who died in faith, perhaps as martyrs, Jesus -- who also once died as a martyr but is now "alive FOR EVERYMORE" (Rev. 1:18; 2:8) -- promises: "he that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death" (verse 11).

But where is the confirmation of His promise?

Why! It is there for all to see! For the literal city that "died" -- ancient Smyrna -- was later rebuilt and is today the living modern city of Izmir!

A living prophecy demands a living Overseer. Jesus Christ is alive! And He is overseeing His Church and His Work even yet today.

CHAPTER 4

THE AGE OF PERGAMOS

At times, ^{even} to an astute and careful observer, Christ's "little flock" (Matt. 16:18) might have seemed in imminent danger of extinction! The period just following the close of the Smyrna era -- when the true Church had fled to the "wilderness" -- was one of those times. The Church was out of sight. And since that time even till today, that Church of truly converted members has ^{only} rarely been in view of the blind eye of history!

But God's Church ^{could} never completely die. Why? Because Jesus Christ ever lives with all power to guard and protect His Church -- to keep His statement true that "the gates of hell shall NOT prevail against it."

"Because I live," promised Jesus to His Church, "you shall live also" (John 14:19).

The True Church Lives On!

So -- just as each new Roman governor of the province of Asia during the first century always landed and assumed office first at Ephesus, then proceeded past Smyrna to Pergamos -- we now see the Church of God in a "Pergamos" stage.

Notice what John writes to the "church at Pergamos": "These things saith he which has the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and ^{seat} where thou dwellest, even where Satan's/[Greek throne] is" (Rev. 2:12-13).

This city was the capital of the Roman province of Asia.

Here was Satan's throne of worldly human government for the province. Here the broad double-bladed Roman sword was the highest symbol of authority (and execution) and was Satan's counteranswer to the gospel

sword of Christ (Eph. 6:17). According to Pliny, Pergamos was also the seat of a Roman supreme court to which prisoners were brought for trial from all parts of the province.

And Pergamos was Satan's seat in yet another way.

For this city had been a religious seat of Satan since the chief college of the ancient Chaldean mysteries had been set up there after the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. As for "practical" religion, there was a famous shrine of the Greek god of medicine, Aesculapius, variously known as "the god of Pergamum," "Healer" and "Savior" where a living serpent was worshipped. Many came there hoping to be healed. And there was an associated medical school.

Afloat on the earlier potpourri of Satanic religion was the worship of the Roman Emperor, who bore the title "Pontifex Maximus" -- high priest of the world. Attalus, the last and heirless god-king of Pergamos had willed all his titles and kingdom to Rome in 133 B.C. In A.D. 29 a great temple was erected to Augustus where prayers were addressed to "Lord Caesar." Each succeeding Emperor was so deified. (For additional information, ^{about Pergamos,} see Hastings' A Dictionary of the Bible, art. "Pergamos"; Taylor G. Bunch, The Seven Epistles of Christ and Bible commentaries on Revelation 2).

Yes, doubly, when John wrote, Pergamos was "Satan's seat"! But that was the first century.

Satan's seat in the Pergamos era ruled the entire eastern Roman Empire. Constantine had rebuilt Byzantium, renamed it Constantinople. He made it his capital. Then after his death, most of the western part of the Roman Empire had fallen to the barbarians.

Satan was now symbolically seated, in religion, in the "Christian" church, falsely so-called. (The Emperor Gratian had even conferred the old pagan title of "Pontifex Maximus" on Damasus bishop of Rome, while succeeding emperors gave official lip service to the Roman bishops' claims to supremacy in the church.) And in politics, Satan's seat was conveniently located at Constantinople for easy cooperation with the representatives of religion in their attempts to extirpate all in Asia Minor who did not conform to Satan's rule.

The false "saviour," false "healer," the living Serpent, all found counterparts here!

The two facets of Satan's government -- the political and the religious combined -- spelled persecution for the Pergamos Church. Well might Jesus say: "I know ... where Satan's seat is ... where Satan dwelleth." ^(Rev 2:13) His Pergamos Church soon found reason to know also.

This was to be a different kind of era. An age in which the true Church was actively pursued, and had to remain in hiding. No longer could any part of the true Church be regarded, as Polycarp had been, as simply an autonomous part of "the catholic church of God." The great conspiracy had succeeded -- it had stolen the name of Christ, the name of God's Church. No longer need it acknowledge the existence of the genuine Church, no longer pretend to be of it.

The Church Along the Border

The scattered remnants of God's Church were now mainly in Pontus, Cappadocia and Armenia. It was a relatively safe and yet civilized area where the Church could survive. Though most of the area was nominally under the authority of the emperor at Constantinople until the

the piecemeal Islamic conquest in the seventh and eighth centuries, it was rather loosely controlled. Greek and Armenian Catholics were frequently at odds with one another. In such a setting, God's people could maintain a precarious existence for several centuries.

The orthodox churches began to call these people Paulicians. But they called themselves "the true Church," "the true believers," "the body of Christ," "the people who have not swerved in faith" (Garsolian, The Paulician Heresy, pp. 163, 172, 174, 213).

A.D. 555 is the earliest known positive mention of "Paulicians" in Armenia. An earlier reference, if genuine, attests the presence of "Polikeans" about 490/ Our first real historical knowledge of them, however, comes with an expansion of their activity over the border into Roman (Byzantine) territory proper in the middle of the seventh century.

Here, about 654 A.D., Christ raised up an inspired leader to correct and teach His remaining people and to begin again to spread the gospel. Constantine of Mananali, a well-educated man (not to be confused with the Emperor Constantine), had been given a gift of portions of the Bible by a Syrian deacon who also helped him to understand its message. Constantine believed what he read. Soon he began to preach the truth that he found and to train evangelist assistants to minister to the scattered remnants of the Church. For a while he was so successful that later people regarded him as the founder of the Paulicians.

Constantine led his people for 27 fruitful years. But his ministry was ended by martyrdom in 681 A.D.

"Antipas" in the 7th Century

Why did this great minister of God have to be martyred? The answer is prophetically revealed in Revelation 2:

"And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."

Though an original Antipas may well have been martyred in the first century congregation at Pergamos -- and absolutely nothing is now known of that event -- this prophecy was amazingly fulfilled in antitype in the life and death of Constantine of Mananali.

Notice the meaning of this name. Bible commentaries have explained anti-pas as meaning "against all for Christ" and certainly this is a possible derivation. But this name has a much more specific and revealing meaning. For all scholars recognize that Antipas is but a short form of the Latin and Greek proper name Antipater.

So what does Antipater mean? Remember pater in both Latin and Greek is "father." It has given us patriarch, the title claimed by the head of the Greek Orthodox Catholics at Constantinople, as well as Italian papa (pope) and Spanish padre. Antipas, then, may be freely translated "against Patriarch, against Pope, against whoever takes to himself the name of Father as a religious title, in direct contradiction to the commandment of Christ" (see Matt. 23:9; also Fred C. Conybeare, The Key of Truth, pp. 83-84).

All of this Constantine of Mananali was: His ^{own} the Bible religion! He -- and the Paulicians -- absolutely rejected the authority the orthodox clergy claimed (Garsolian, pp. 41, note 66; 166; 172).

So why and how was he martyred? Again let's examine Christ's

prophetic message.

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent ..." (Rev. 2:14-16).

God's Church since the Pergamos era began had remained on a moral and spiritual downtrend. All of Constantine's labors had not sufficed to reverse this decline. Why? Because many who claimed to be and associated with members of God's Church were not really converted people. These were ones who cleaved to the Church with flatteries -- that is, in insincerity (Dan. 11:34). They held the false "doctrine of Balaam."

Through John, Jesus Christ addressed those who were led by the Holy Spirit, who really constituted the Church, the body of Christ. He sternly warned them to repent of allowing those carnal minds with their Satanic doctrine to assemble with them. Why? Because Jesus Christ knew what the result of this coexistence with evil would inevitably be:

Such foolish and improper fellowship could only lead to the total corruption and resultant destruction of the Church (see II Cor. 6:14 - 7:1).

Because the Church had need to repent, to separate itself from these false brethren, to cleanse itself of their false doctrines, Christ allowed His apostle Constantine to die to shake them up and perhaps wake them up to the problem. Here are the circumstances of his death.

An officer, Simeon, was sent by the emperor at Constantinople, at the behest of the ^{orthodox} religious leaders, to destroy the leadership of God's Church. Simeon offered to spare the people if they would simply

stone Constantine to death. Most of the gathering remained quiet. But it was one of those false "Christians" ^{named} Justus, an adopted son of Constantine -- a man who should have been disfellowshipped long before -- who picked up a stone!

Later, so greatly impressed was the officer Simeon by the fortitude and sincerity of most, and especially the faith and courage with which he saw Constantine die, that he became convinced these were indeed God's people. After three years he completed his duty at the emperor's court and returned to / spend his life with the humble members of God's Church. He was soon placed by Jesus Christ at their head to carry on the ministry of Constantine for yet another three years. Then he too was martyred.

Because he was Constantine's adopted son, Justus had managed to remain the leader of part of the Paulicians. Now he accused Simeon to the local orthodox bishop, who sent word to the emperor, and Simeon was burned at the stake! In this persecution most of the congregation also perished.

Yet for all this, the Church did not cleanse itself of those who held the doctrine of Balaam.

What Was the Doctrine of Balaam?

We find Balaam mentioned back in Numbers 22. His name in Hebrew means "conqueror of the people." It is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek "Nicolas." Both words denoted the office once held by Nimrod, dictator and arch-rebel, who after the Flood first established man's political and religious government based on false principles, in opposition to the government of God.

This Balaam was the greatest pagan prophet -- the greatest religious figure -- of his time, the Pontifex Maximus of that day, the chief oracle of paganism.

Note that this man's headquarters -- 1500 years before Christ -- was called PETHOR (verse 5). Now let the wise understand -- who today, in the same kind of office, is headquartered in a place called (St.) Peter's:

In Balaam's day, when the king of Moab was desperate because he feared the Israelites, newly arrived out of Egypt, were about to take away his kingdom and dominion, there was no higher religious authority on earth to whom he could go. That is why he sent all the way to Pethor in Mesopotamia, a place far to the north of his own country, and near the border of modern Turkey. He completely passed up his own priests, magicians and astrologers in his own nation.

Balaam's doctrine was contrary to God's.

"Oh, but..." some will object, "The Bible says Balaam was a holy man -- a man of God!" Yes, but which god (see II Cor. 4:4). When the emissaries of Balak, king of Moab, asked Balaam to curse Israel, Balaam asked God if he might be allowed to do it. Would a pagan high priest do that? Why, certainly! Even Satan himself asked God's permission to bring a curse on a man under God's protection (Job 1:9-12; 2:4-5).

Balaam wanted to go just as far in the way of evil as he dared. This is Satan's way. When God said "NO!" to Balaam's evil suggestion, Balaam was not willing to take God's answer as final (verse 19). Notice however, in the rest of this and following chapters, how God forced Balaam to actually bless instead of curse Israel, in spite of Balaam's determination to get the gold that Balak offered (see also II Peter 2:15 and Jude 1).

Then, in direct opposition to God's contrary instruction, Balaam did teach Balak how to tempt the Israelites into sin (Num. 31:26), to cause them to bring a curse on themselves by their breaking of God's Law.

For that reason Jewish rabbinical literature knows Simon Magus as the new "Balaam" (Simon Magus in der Haggada." Hebrew Union College Annual, vol. 3, ⁽¹⁹⁰¹⁾ p. 257-275).

The doctrine Balaam taught may be summed up this way: to take part in the political and religious affairs of the world, and in their "sacrifices" (at which physical fornication often occurred), to be a part of Satan's world and thereby commit spiritual fornication against Christ the affianced Husband of His Church.

And this was exactly the teaching of some false teachers who had crept into the congregations of the true Church in the Pergamos era:

Balaamites and Nicolaitanes

There were also those with the Pergamos Church who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. We have seen who these were in the story of the Ephesian era. Their doctrine too was one of NO LAW -- "unrestrained indulgence," "promiscuity." Remember? Their doctrine and the doctrine of Balaam sprang from the same source.

But how did they differ? Why did Jesus Christ charge the Church in Pergamos with harboring both?

The answer is plain.

The doctrine of Balaam was the original, universally received Babylonian religion of Agia Minnir (where the city of Pergamos was), as well as of the Tigris-Euphrates valley and Armenia. Here was the home of the licentious worship of Bacchus and Venus. The Pethor of Balaam was right at its center. And here, during the succeeding centuries of Persian rule, something of the Zoroastrian concept of eternal dualism (good vs. evil, light vs. darkness, etc.) had been engrafted, ^{just as it had been in Samaria.} The Nicolaitanes (Hedings, Dictionary of the Bible, art. "Nicolaitanes") when they came here, must have felt right at home. Gnostic

Significantly, the Armenian Apostolic Church, so-called, until modern times practiced or allowed the old pagan animal sacrifices for the dead, and the eating of sacrificial flesh: ^(Cymbaere, Key of Truth, pp. 134-135) Could Revelation 2:14 be any more specific?

To this area, fleeing persecution, came God's Church of the Pergamos era. Naturally, many unconverted "members" soon sat in the congregations of God who were still influenced by former beliefs. They were just local people whose minds had not been completely changed or re-educated.

On the other hand, the Nicolaitanes represented a more specific religion -- though an offshoot of the old, believing most of the same old pagan doctrines, practicing similar heathen rites or sacraments -- and masquerading as Christian, using Christian sounding names. Some of these had a definite doctrine of making sexual licentiousness a necessary rite of religion. They were the extremist wing of the church of Simon Magus.

In Armenia the earliest records of these heretics and their "filthiness" slightly precede the earliest mentions of the Paulicians (see Garsoian, pp. 82-83).

Together the Nicolaitanes and the doctrine of Balaam presented a very grave danger to God's Church. Because God's people did not keep their fellowship separate from the heretics. As a result, true conversions became rarer. The true doctrines gradually became perverted among them. And even those ^{few} who did hold to the truth were judged by the world by the conduct of the heretics, as some of the surviving descriptions plainly show (see Garsoian, pp. 95, note 46; 97 and 132 for examples of this kind).

Paulician History

After Simeon's death, the surviving Paulicians fled southeastward across the frontier to Episparis and Melitene in Armenia. Their leader at Episparis was Paul the Armenian, though the others did not accept him. Later, however, his son Gegnesius was recognized by all.

Gegnesius was called to Constantinople to be interrogated and given a safe conduct from the emperor. There he was able to satisfy the patriarch that his doctrines were not heretical, though no doubt what he had in mind in his answers was not always what the patriarch understood! The scurrilous attack of a later heresiographer states that he deliberately deceived his questioner by trick interpretations.

On his return Gegnesius gathered his disciples and removed to Mananali, and a safer location.

At Gegnesius' death, his son Zacharias laid claim to his office. But by this time many were so freely taking part in the affairs of the world that they joined an abortive Armenian revolt against the then-ruling Arabs. When it failed, Zacharias fled, deserting his people in a time of danger, and after a flareup of violence between two parties of Paulicians one Joseph became the recognized spiritual leader.

Joseph again led his people across the border, where he was received by other Paulicians. Under attack there by a local ruler, he led them on into Pisidia. From there, in 30 years of ministry, he evangelized all Phrygia. By 800 A.D., Paulician Christians were numerous throughout the regions of Phrygia and Lycaonia.

But greater numbers did not ^{necessarily} mean more true Christianity, and about this time, the Paulicians began to be permanently reduced.

largest number from 801 to 815 was Sergius.

Sergius is the most renowned of all the Paulician leaders. He was originally a woodcutter and carpenter and earned his living with his two hands. For 34 years in the ministry, travelling on a mule with a dog, he labored earnestly to bring the people to repentance. "I have run from east to west, and from north to south, until my knees are weary, preaching the gospel of Christ" he wrote (Fred C. Conybeare, The Key of Truth, p. 111).

By his preaching, a surviving remnant of the Montanists, after having been prepared by great persecution, apparently came into the Paulician Church.

Sergius assured his disciples he had taught them the truth, and continued: "We are the body of Christ and he who departs from the tradition of the body of Christ departs from us; he sins, for he goes to those who teach different things and does not believe in the true doctrine" (quoted in Garsolan, p. 174).

Sergius was greatly concerned about splits and parties among those who professed to be in the Church. But Sergius' own insistence, claimed Peter of Sicily, "split the heresy." Another Paulician leader, Baanes (Vahan), half-Armenian son of one of Joseph's Jewish disciples, reproached Sergius for innovation:

"You are newly come and you never saw any of our teachers nor were you ever present with them, but I began as a disciple of the lord Epaphroditus [Joseph] and what he transmitted to me from the beginning this do I teach" (Garsolan, p. 184).

Finally Sergius, alone on a mountain cutting a tree, was murdered by an orthodox (catholic) zealot. The Paulicians were never again re-united.

Now let's examine the beliefs and practices of these people, among whom was Christ's "little flock" of truly converted members.

The True Paulicians Have Been Maligned!

In its original Armenian, the word Paulician meant "a follower of wretched little Paul." This is the kind of opinion the world holds of those willing to obey God! How true is Matthew 10:22!

Some contend this "wretched Paul" was the Catholic patriarch of Antioch called Paul of Samosata, who was deposed from his office about 270 A.D. But such contention is merely a slander. The Paulicians willingly anathematized Paul of Samosata, disclaiming any connection with him (Garsolan, p. 116).

On the other hand, their very names show which Paul they followed. Constantine of Mananali took the name of Silverus, helper of Paul the apostle (see I Thes. 1:1; II Cor. 1:19). Simeon, his successor, took the name of Titus, another of the apostle Paul's close associates. Simeon's successor was a man named Paul who did not need to change his name. Later, Gegnesius, his son and successor, took the name of Timothy. His successor Joseph became Epaphroditus (compare Philippians 2:25), and lastly, Sergius was called Tychicus (Eph. 6:21).

Yes, these men were followers of Paul (I Cor. 11:1).

Also, by the names of their congregations they claimed descent from the apostle Paul's own converts. Greek-speaking Paulicians had retained the very names of the congregations of Christians who had fled Greece and western Asia Minor as a result of Constantine's and later persecutions.

Those gathered in Mananali called themselves Achaia (from the name of the province where ancient Athens and Corinth were located); those in

Castrum Coloniae and Cibossa, Macedonia. The congregation at Cynoschora was called Laodicea; the one at Argaeus, Colossae; the one at Mopsuestia, Ephesus, etc. (Refer to map).

Were these names arbitrarily chosen, and meaningless? Scholars have assumed so. But a closer examination would have revealed that the Armenian Paulicians were not called by any of these Greek names! And it would have been seen that no New Testament congregation was ever called "Macedonia" or "Achaia." In Paul's day Christians in those provinces were in separate congregations. Within Macedonia, for example, were Philippi, Berea, etc. In Achaia, were Athens and Corinth.

Is it remarkable then, that those members of the Paulician church of Macedonia who removed to Antioch of Pisidia and began a new church were known as the congregation of Philippi? Or that, putting together the supposedly contradictory accounts of two writers, we find both a Laodicea and a Colossae church at Cynoschora and both also at Argaeus?

One of the fables invented by Greek Catholic writers in the Middle Ages to explain the origin of the Paulicians also betrays the fact. Though the story is completely garbled it shows the spiritual, and to a great extent the physical ancestors of these people were those who were taught by John as well as by Paul. Where did that occur? In the province of Asia and the Aegean area!

But does this mean, as some claim -- echoing "pseudo-Photius" of the 10th century, that they rejected Peter in following Paul? Not at all! They merely taught -- rightly -- that Peter was not the only one to whom were given the keys of the kingdom of God, as the false church claims, but ^{twelve of} that all/the original apostles, and Paul -- and all their true successors -- shared in the knowledge and authority to guide Christians into the way of eternal life (Garsoian, pp. 155, 172 note 116, Conybeare, p. 93, Eph. 2:20). If ever they seemed to reject Peter, it was only because they rejected the claims of a pope to exercise Peter's authority.

Notice some additional proof. The evangelist Silvanus, whose name Constantine of Mananali chose for his own, was the very scribe who wrote down the words of the first epistle of Peter (I Peter 5:12). Any reader of the New Testament should know that one could not follow Peter OR Paul singly, one without the other, and that the whole story of a rift in doctrine between Peter and Paul was an invention of false "Christians." Read and compare I Cor. 1:12; Gal. 2:9 and II Peter 3:15 (Cephas is Peter).

Furthermore, Paulicians used the writings of Peter. They also used the Old Testament which some falsely said they rejected (Conybeare, pp. xxxvii, 83, 92, 112, 114, 115, 121, 174).

The reports written about these people were often slanderous and false. And unfortunately history has preserved little about them except hostile evidence. Only by careful sifting and comparing can the truth be proven. Of Paulician writings, only the Key of Truth has been preserved -- in part, and that was written very late in a corrupted age.

The Armenian accounts are sketchy. No surviving Greek account is earlier than the early ninth century. And suspiciously, in what profess

to be firsthand reports, most ^{of them} slavishly copied from a single scurrilous older document. Obviously, these authors' ignorance of the Paulicians must have been near total, and their object in writing about these people of God anything but truth:

NOT Manichaeans!

One of their chief accusations was that Paulicians were Manichaeans, followers of Mani or Manes whose doctrine was a combination of the ancient Persian Magian doctrine of dualism with Christianity."

But this was a false charge. Several early writers admit the Paulicians totally rejected Mani (Garsoian, p. 215). The authoritative Dictionary of Christian Biography, article "Paulicians," states flatly: "There is no indication of anything like the Manichaean esoteric and exoteric organization of their communities into 'elect' and 'auditors.'" Manichaean, and Gnostic writings also, they completely repudiated.

What the Paulicians did believe was that the devil is the ruler of this world (II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9), and that human nature dominates it. Nearly all the orthodox "fathers," however, including Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, Jerome, etc., pretended either in ignorance or duplicity that the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4) meant the God of heaven (Conybeare, p. xliiv note). No wonder they were unable to distinguish true Christians from the abundance of dualists.

When confuting "heretics," anyway, the "fathers" were not too scrupulous of the truth. It was their common practice in the seventh to ninth centuries to brand all opponents indiscriminately Manichaeans, if by any stretch of false logic they could argue a connection, for the

simple reason that a death penalty decreed by Diocletian ^{the Manichaeans} about 296 was still in effect in the Byzantine Empire (Garsoian, pp. 194ff).

Nor was that dualist influence Manichaean which was so plainly apparent later in the Bogomils of the Balkans and especially in some of the Cathars of western Europe.

Paulicians rejected the false practice of praying to saints -- or to Mary. They rejected purgatory. Images, pictures, crosses, incense, candles, etc. They said that monks are the agents of Satan, that Mary, according to Scripture, did not remain a perpetual virgin, that she had other children after Jesus (Garsoian, p. 42)

They rejected the "bath water" (Conybeare, p. 126) of the persecuting church -- infant baptism. But they practiced real baptism after genuine repentance at mature age (p. 87, 88, 92), and cited Jesus' age of 30 at his baptism as a significant example. One has to be old enough to realize ones own human ways are wrong, that OUR ways have resulted in all the suffering we see about us. And we have to have become mature enough to stick to it, once the decision is made. Only then should one be baptized.

To those who advocated baptizing infants, the Paulicians said:
"You do not know the mystery of baptism; we are in no hurry to be baptized, for baptism is death" (Garsoian, p. 160-161). They knew baptism signified the death of the self.

How They "Held Fast" Christ's NAME

The Paulicians believed in the receiving of the same Holy Spirit that had been in Jesus Christ. Their persecutors found this incomprehensible

-- that Christ himself literally dwells in Christians today by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2:20). They charged that the Paulician leaders called themselves "Christa" (Christ simply means one who has received the anointing of the Holy Spirit -- see I Cor. 1:21-22) as if this were blasphemy.

Christ said that His Pergamos Church "holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith" (Rev. 2:13). This was Christ's faith -- not any human faith in Christ -- a divine faith placed in the converted members of the Church by the Holy Spirit (Ga. 5:22). Christ's faith also means the things which Christ himself believed. These the Paulicians also believed. This Church had not denied the truth.

What does it mean to "hold fast his name"? What is a "name"? This word, especially in Greek, is much more important than we casually think. God puts great stress on names. He calls things by the name which expresses what they are. To hold fast to Christ's name, then, the Paulicians had to have known who and what Christ really was.

Jesus means "savior," and Christ means "anointed." Emmanuel, another of his names, means "God with us."

To save us, Jesus became a human being. He had human nature (Heb. 4:15; 5:8; I John 4:3; II John 7; I Tim. 3:16). Paulicians emphasized His humanity. He was God made flesh. In this way He became "God with us."

But He could not have saved us unless He were ^{still} also very God -- not only one whose life was worth more than the sum total of all other humans who have ever lived, but one who now ever lives to save us.

As shocking as it may sound, many people have no Savior, because they fail to discern that it had to be human life that paid for their

sins, yet a human life worth more than all other human lives combined:

As a human being, it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that He successfully resisted Satan and overcame the evil pulls of the flesh, living a perfect life, setting us an example that we should do likewise. It was the Holy Spirit which made Him Christ -- the Anointed. And though He was begotten by the Holy Spirit and sinless from birth, at baptism (to set us the example that we should be baptized), He received an extra measure of the Holy Spirit which appeared in the form of a dove. These things the Paulicians believed:
The view that Christ was not really human but only appeared to be, that he himself did not suffer and die, that he was really immune to pain, were doctrines of the early followers of Simon Magus.

But even today, Catholicism insists on regarding Jesus as though in actual fact he were wholly God-like, as Adam is assumed to have been before he "fell." No wonder even His mother Mary had to have been "immaculately conceived" that she might become the "Mother of God"! But she was not the mother of God, only the mother of the human Jesus.

Perhaps because the Paulicians so strongly emphasized that Jesus was a man, some of them later seem to have forgotten He was God also, before ever the Spirit rested on Him at his baptism. This may have been the "innovation" of Sergius. At any rate, it is after this time that Paulicians are accused -- probably in part because of resemblance of name -- of being followers of Paul of Samosata who held this kind of doctrine (see Garsoian, pp. 139, 210-212, 218-219), as had also some of the Ebionites and many others. By its ambiguity, the Key of Truth, also written later, may indicate the same thing.

Athinganoi are last mentioned about 950. When not long afterward, Gypsies first arrived in the area with supposedly similar ^{like} beliefs and practices, the Byzantines (deliberately?) confused them with the Athinganoi and gave the Gypsies the name which they still bear in Europe to this day (Athinganoi, Zigeuner, etc.).

About 813, at the instance of the patriarch of Constantinople, the emperor decreed the death penalty for all Athinganoi and Paulicians. When it was presently commuted to banishment and confiscation of property, many Athinganoi and Paulicians were transported to Europe (p. 94).

Meanwhile, the main body of so-called Paulicians in Byzantine territory had followed military leaders -- Karbeas and his successor Chrysocheir -- from about 840. ¶ But then disaster struck!

What the Doctrine of Balaam Brought

The name "Pergamos" may mean either a place fortified for war, or "married to [the use of] force." Either meaning is illustrative of the result of Paulicians' great error. Knowing the end from the beginning, Jesus Christ, in his opening words to this Church, introduces the thought of his "sharp sword with two edges." And in verse 16 he warns: "Repent; or else I will come unto thee [the real Church] quickly, and will fight against them [the Balaamites, Nicolaitanes and those influenced by them] with the SWORD of my mouth."

Clearly the sword -- warring -- was to be of unusual and paramount importance to this stage of God's Church.

Make no mistake: Christ himself is a warrior -- the time is coming when he will not hesitate to use military power to enforce His rule on

earth (Rev. 19:15). And Christ's sword is said to be ^{the} sword of His mouth because all he needs do is speak for either its fighting or teaching.

The Paulicians had a choice of swords. Either these people of the Pergamos church era would submit wholly and gladly, as they professed, to Christ's rule exercised for them and in their best interest -- the rule of the "sword of the spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12), and its pure Biblical doctrines -- or they could follow the ways of the world and he would call for a sword against them.

It was one sword or the other!

But the Paulicians should never have taken up the physical sword themselves, for in the end, multiple thousands did perish by it. Because the Church did not repent of its error -- and it grew and grew.

End of the Paulician Era

For a while, Paulicianism had become an accepted faith in a vast region along the Taurus Mountains. It had made inroads in Armenia, Albania on the Caspian Sea and other nearby regions. But with most it was only a form of religion. Truly converted members of the Church were few.

Ever since the Arabs began to contest the Byzantine power over Armenia, about 650 A.D., persecution had driven some Paulicians to hide in Moslem territory. Even so they were constantly exposed to war, depredation and persecution. About 750 the Emperor Constantine Copronymus reconquered the upper Euphrates region from Armenia and removed many Paulicians to Europe to fill the deserted cities of Thrace. Then many of them began to be obsessed with a militant doctrine of

retaliation! They had forgotten -- or never knew -- that Christ was the one to wield the sword!

The day of the sword had begun!

Sergius had absolutely condemned fighting and retaliation. But of course few would listen to him. Most would not listen to any true minister of Christ now! Remember, most of these Paulicians now merely cleaved to the Church with flatteries (Dan. 11:34). They were not converted.

Leo V (813-820) opened yet another persecution against Paulicians in Cappadocia. So carnal were the vast majority of these physical descendants of God's people, so used to their "fornication" -- mixing with the politics of this world -- that it provoked a military rebellion! When it failed, most had to flee to Saracen (Arab) territory.

After the death of Sergius, even those who had heeded him began to fight. For the 50 years, they continued to raid Byzantine territory, establishing themselves for a while as an independent military dictatorship at Tephrike. Armies of Moslems and carnal-minded Paulicians combined ranged through the heart of Asia Minor. But the Empress Theodora (829-867) continued the persecution -- now a "legitimate" war -- with unabated zeal. Trusting in their worldly alliances with the Arabs instead of relying on Jesus' protection, the Paulicians were betrayed and slaughtered. One hundred thousand perished! After total defeat in 871, most of the survivors fled to Cilicia and Syria.

The sword had prevailed.

The Great Move to Europe

From this time on, the Paulician name became famous as a warrior people -- useful to neighboring powers as mercenaries. No longer was a Paulician a follower of Paul. Yet still they claimed the distinction of being a remnant of the true apostolic church. Perhaps a few real Christians, invisible to the world, did live among them, growing in grace and knowledge. ^{It was the "hidden manna" and a white stone with a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" which Christ promised the few over-comers of this time (Rev. 2:17). They lived} Emperor John Zimisces in 970 transported to Thrace 100,000 more Paulicians to help defend his European border against the Bulgarians. ^{They lived in the world around them, and were equally difficult to identify as they did in time.} But soon some of them were fighting for the Bulgarians, though they had enjoyed full religious freedom.

^{a century earlier,} As early as 870, missions from the Paulicians of the Taurus had begun to teach their religion to the Bulgars who had moved to the Danube from the Volga. A great Slavic church developed later, known as Bogomils -- "beloved of God." Working in conjunction with Byzantine Paulicians "they thrived for centuries, and ... spread...their tenets into Bohemia, Poland, Germany, Italy, France and even into ...England" (Conybeare, p. civ). They formed a great, though mostly non-spiritual church.

But wherever they were, the sword never ceased from their land. From Anatolia, the emperors continued the policy of Copronymus of transporting and arming Paulicians. In the end this policy not only destroyed the Paulicians, but the empire's only bulwark against the Saracens.

The wars with the Saracens, on top of centuries of Irano-Roman rivalry, left all central Anatolia a desolation. Considered already spiritually "the wilderness" when the true Church went into it, it was

now truly a desert. Cappadocia had been famous for a "thousand" orthodox church buildings. Now they all lay in ruins.

Such is the fate to befall any land which has had a full warning, which has been the very center of God's Work on earth, and has rejected it: Let modern nations beware!

By physical destruction and mass transfers of population -- both official and unofficial -- Christ removed the last Israelites, some Armenians and a remnant of Assyrians from Asia Minor. Thus he prepared the land for the coming of the children of Esau -- the Turks.

At the end of the 11th century, the knights of the First Crusade ^{many Paulicians} found/scattered in several parts of Cilicia, Syria and Palestine, fighting for the Moslems. They called them Publicans (Paulician is Pavlikani in Medieval Greek), a name strangely descriptive of their apostasy -- involvement in public affairs: Yes, even the world knew why they were rejected by Christ. The Bible calls this meddling spiritual "fornication" (Rev. 17:2)

Shortly after this, so-called "Publicans and Sadducees" (self-righteous ones) began also to be found in western Europe.

CHAPTER 5

THE LIGHT IN DARK AGES

Few really understand the prophecies relating to God's Church through the Middle Ages. Most people assume no church continued through those dark centuries except the great visible church east and west. Even commentaries ignore, deny and totally misapply the Scriptures that would reveal the facts

But why?

Obviously because prophecy not only identifies the true Church, it also exposes the fakes!

God's Church is a spiritual body (Rom. 8:14). It is composed only of those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, those who teach and obey His commands (Rev. 14:12). Bible prophecy lays bare the whole course of that Church. ^{But} _A we must often trace it in history by finding records of the larger numbers of those who were not led by the Spirit of God but who claimed to be -- those who merely associated with the true members ^{The numbers in the true Church were few} of the Church of God. _A But clearly that true Church never died.

The "Thyatira" Setting

As the time drew near for the beginning of the Thyatira age, certain parts of western Europe were as a fertile field, prepared by the living Jesus Christ, and waiting for the sowing of His Word, the planting of His Church. The middle and lower Rhine Valley and adjoining regions enjoyed a significant measure of freedom, as did southern France and northern Italy, where a developing middle class of townsmen had begun to be emancipated from bondage to the land. South France, in particular,

since the days when thousands fled there from the Mohammedan conquest of Syria, Egypt and North Africa, was receptive to new people and new ideas.

In all these areas weaving was one of the principal occupations.

In this, ancient Thyatira was a type. Thyatira was a city of merchants and weavers, and especially famous for fine woolen cloth, usually dyed the famous Thyatiran purple.

In connection with this industry, the Bible first mentions Thyatira. And it is significant that the mind of the woman Lydia from Thyatira had been previously prepared by Jesus Christ to receive His true gospel (Acts 16:14). Similarly the minds of many in western Europe had been prepared in the 1100's A.D.

As remnants of the previous era of the Church appear in western Europe, we find them noted as weavers. Contemporaries frequently designated them Texerant, Textors, Tisserants -- all of which meant simply weavers. And as late as the end of the twelfth century, the itinerant cloth merchants who carried the woven silks of Byzantium and the east to the eager markets of the west were the missionaries who secretly propagated the religion of Paulicians and Bogomils.

The parallel with the pagan city of Thyatira is complete. But note that the message to the Thyatira CHURCH does not mention merchants nor weavers. These are therefore not signs of the Church itself, but of the economic setting in which that Church was to exist.

The Church in the Wilderness

The first significant notices of "heretics" in western Europe began with Ravenna about the year 970. In the succeeding decades, many small groups were found in a wide area ranging from Lombardy to Belgium

to Toulouse. About 1040, Gerhard, a Catholic bishop and missionary to Hungary, reported to his church that "heresy" was spreading ^{into} Greece into the west (J.D. Russell, Dissent and Reform in the Early Middle Ages, p. 196, and see his description and analysis of every known heretical group of this period).

When the Crusaders, having become acquainted with war-making Paulicians of the east, returned to Europe, they immediately recognized the similarity in the doctrines of the "heretics" in the west, and began to call them Publicani, Populicani or sometimes Piphles (which also meant weavers). In the later 12th century, some who held dualist doctrines by the more scholarly writers were stigmatized as "Manichaeans," which they were not, and Cathars (Puritans). But that was later. In fact, historians now admit there is no firm evidence that eastern dualism was present in western Europe until about 1140. Says Russell:

"...Beyond a doubt...dualism was introduced into the Occident by Bogomil missionaries.... But... not in 1000, but in the 1140's. Many historians had already discovered that there was a great difference between the Catharism before the mid-twelfth century and that which flourished after that period" (p. 192).

Among these pre-"Cathars" were zealous self-denying seekers after an apostolic ideal who preserved all the essentials of Christianity (see Wakefield and Evans, Heresies of the High Middle Ages, pp. 46-50 -- we will refer the reader to this work often in this chapter for its rendering of many of the original source documents in modern English and its ready availability). It may be doubted, because of constant persecution and

doctrine. For in this spiritual "wilderness" much of truth had been lost. But among these people, Christ had preserved a germ of His Church -- in the few who were faithful to His rule over their lives.

Long before these faithful individuals and the groups with which they were associated, had passed from the scene, the Thyatira Church proper began.

The Thyatira Age Begins

Organized objections to the authority and teaching of the bishop of Rome were no new thing in north Italy or south France. It is not, however, possible to demonstrate that any true Christianity had survived in these regions ever since the early centuries, and that is extremely unlikely. Late and obviously unreliable is the tradition that the apostles Paul and James preached in the Waldensian valleys, or that converts of the first apostles were gathered into those valleys in the first, second and third centuries.

The "Thyatira" Church arose as a result of Paulician and Bogomil evangelization. It was about 1111 that an ex-Catholic priest from the Val Louise in the French Alps, afterward known as Peter de Bruys, began at Embrun /to preach repentance throughout all of Languedoc and Provence.

"It seems probable," writes Runciman, "that Peter de Bruys originally learnt his doctrines from an Eastern missionary" (The Medieval Manichee, p. 119). But Peter was in no way a Cathar. That name and dualistic doctrine were yet unknown in the west.

In full accord with one of the suggested definitions of the Greek word Thyatira, "sweet savor or sacrifice of contrition" (Taylor Bunch, The Seven Epistles of Chelso, p. 160), Peter de Bruys taught

"real repentance." Infant baptism was useless. He would only baptize persons old enough to know and mean what they were doing.

He further rejected the Catholic mystery teaching that the priest in the Mass produced the literal flesh of Christ. He opposed reverence for crosses, emphasis on huge church edifices, the fable of purgatory, prayers for the dead and the inevitable heavy bribes paid to the greedy religious leaders who falsely claimed to be able to benefit deceased loved ones (Russell, pp. 74-75).

"For one who was not baptized with the baptism of Christ was not a Christian. If he was not a Christian, neither was he a cleric, nor was he of the people of Church of Christ.... the Church of God consists not of a multitude of stones put together but of the unity of believers congregated." (Reagan, J. C., "Did the Petrobrusians Teach Salvation By Faith Alone?" The Journal of Religion, VII [1927], pp. 81-91).

God's Church was beginning again to do a Work. A spiritual gospel was only again being widely preached. Converted members gathered, led by the Holy Spirit.

For "nearly twenty years" Peter preached. Then he was taken by an incensed mob and burned alive at the stake!

And Christ's message to Thyatira had begun to come true!

Age of Flames of Fire

Few people are aware that burning to death first became the regular penalty for heresy about this time. Among Roman, Goths, and others, burning was a civil penalty, and for only the most heinous crimes. Mob action such as the burning of Polycarp in the second century was outside the law. The early Catholic fathers taught that for the church to put a

to put a heretic to death would be an inexplicable sin. They allowed no more than banishment or imprisonment.

But since civil authority had prescribed burning for sorcery, it gradually became the custom to equate sorcery with heresy, which made burning the new official punishment for heretics (Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., articles "Burning to Death" and "Inquisition").

In the Middle Ages, fire engrossed men's thoughts. The lake of fire was very real. Dante Alighieri's (1265-1321) ever-burning, tormenting inferno is a product of this obsession. To such an age, Jesus Christ addressed Himself as One having "eyes like a flame of fire" and "feet...as if they burned in a furnace" (Rev. 2:18; 1:14-15). The eyes, which saw everything that men did, would remind the willfully disobedient of their ultimate fate. His feet, too, glowing like white hot molten metal, would remind of His power to tread down His enemies and to walk on the ashes of the wicked (Mal. 4:3; Mic. 7:10).

On the other hand, the all-seeing eyes (see also Rev. 2:23) assured the obedient that none of their suffering and work would be in vain (1Cor. 15:58), while His feet pointed out the Christian's walk -- the way we live -- the only light in this dark world (Mat. 5:14).

The first burning of heretics had been at Ravenna. Others were burned at Orleans in 1022. Thereafter burnings became numerous, an ever-present threat to all heretics, and to God's Church. Books and Bibles were likewise consigned to the flames.

The clergy became openly involved. About 1028, twenty-eight persons at Turin, including the local countess, had accepted the Bible as their guide in life. They held meetings in the castle of Monteforte.

It was the bishop of Milan who ordered their arrest and burned them alive in the courtyard before the cathedral.

Christ had foreseen that the trial by fire was to occur during the long Thyatira era. He had also foreseen that the greatest persecutions His Church would ever have to face would come, not from government, but from religious leaders (Matt. 10:17; 23:29, 34). For even more than governors, pseudo-religious men fear for their positions of influence over others. And especially do they persecute the real TRUTH -- because it convicts them of iniquity.

They consigned victims to "the fire of God," but they were just as deceived about what was really transpiring as those who attributed the loss of Job's servants and sheep to "the fire of God" (Job 1:16). The god of those fires was SATAN!

So evil men did indeed wax worse and worse (II Tim. 3:13). For good fruit cannot come from an evil tree (Matt. 7:18).

Later, after 1229, the Dominican and Franciscan preaching friars carried on the infamous Inquisition. They were the accusers, judge and jury. And when they turned their victims over to the civil authorities, usually with a hypocritical plea for mercy, it was tacitly understood that most of the "heretics" would be burned!

First Works Cut Short

The Thyatira Church did not end with the death of Peter of Bruys. His friend and colleague Henry now continued the work.

Henry had first attracted official attention in 1116 at LeMans, France, as a popular reform preacher originally from Lausanne in modern Switzerland. To the people he seemed to be able by merely scanning

their faces to know and declare even their secret sins which they hid from others. Being driven from LeMans by the bishop, he moved southward to Poitiers and Bordeaux and beyond, preaching a witness against the corrupt church and society as he went.

"Hair cropped, beard untrimmed, tall of stature, quick of pace, he glided along the ground barefoot as winter raged; easy of address, awe-inspiring in voice, young in years, scornful of ornate dress; his unconventional way of life was on the surface unlike that of ordinary folk..." -- thus he is described by a contemporary (quoted in Wakefield, p. 108).

To those who questioned him, he replied: "To answer your question about obedience: I confess that I obey God rather than man, for obedience is owed to God rather than to men. To answer your question about my mission: He sent me who said, 'Go, teach ye all nations.' He who imposed the duty was the same as He who said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'" (p. 116).

They called him a "publican," decried his "truly Jewish blindness" (pp. 112, 123). But finally he was taken and imprisoned, and tried before the pope at Pisa in 1135. He was sentenced to a monastery, from which he quickly departed and returned to south France to continue preaching, assuming now the leadership also of those who had followed Peter de Bruys.

Exactly how Henry had come into contact with Peter is not known, but it is clear that the two were in some kind of alliance. To Peter's doctrines, Henry now joined additional truth (pp. 115, 121), denouncing and exposing the corruption of priests, the baptism of

infants, the worldly Roman holidays. The Church of God which had previously been nicknamed Petrobrusians now became known to their enemies as Henricians.

~~The works showed that /Peter and Henry occupied the office of apostle.~~ "Has the whole world been so blinded ... [that it should] have to wait so long for you, and choose Peter of Bruis and Henry, his disciple, as exceeding recent apostles, to correct the long error," chided the contemporary abbot/Clugny (quoted in Armitage, A History of the Baptists, p. 285). How similar this is to the way some disparage God's Church today!

Years passed. Many accepted the truth. But persecution increased and in 1145 a Catholic expedition was made to seize Henry. When it arrived, Henry had fled, though possibly he was captured elsewhere. At any rate, he disappears from the record of history and his disciples were scattered. One mention is made, in 1151, of a disputation against Henry's "errors," and the return afterward of a few of his his followers to Catholicism.

But still, as late as 1163, the Council of Tours officially excommunicated both the Petrobrusians and Henricians by name.

Multitudes had been attracted by the preaching of Peter and Henry. But people then were like today. Many listen and accept parts of the truth. But instead of continuing on to become converted, most either do nothing, or they join "the church of their choice." In that day most of Peter's and Henry's hearers merely swelled the numbers of those who were loosely termed Cathars.

At Perigeaux, some hundred-odd miles to the north of Toulouse,

one Ponnus, supposed to have been a disciple of Henry, led a religious group from 1140 to at least 1147. But the connection is in doubt.

A connection has also been suspected (see Wakefield, p. 85) between Henry and certain true Christians at Cologne, and even between them and Tanchelm, a Netherlands leader of "heretics" who existed from before 1115 to at least 1125. Certainly much in their doctrine agrees. But no connection is demonstrable, and it is most likely the group at Cologne represented the last spiritually living remnant of the Pergamos Church of the previous era.

Real Heretics Appear

It is a repeated fact that after a few generations local congregations tend to be no longer generally composed of truly converted brethren, but of unconverted children and halfhearted believers, of whom many go astray into error. And Satan is not one to 'let grass grow under his feet.' He will deceive the world to the fullest extent God will allow.

This is why the inspired apostle Paul recorded: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (I Tim. 4:1). Notice that Paul was not writing of events to take place just in the first century, but things which would occur centuries later. People would fall away from the truth, but still claim to be of God's people. And that happened!

Wherever God's Church found freedom to preach, there too the real heretics found freedom. Where God's Church migrated, there too the heretics with their false opinions migrated. When there was persecution,

it tended to drive true Church members and heretics together -- as sufferers in common -- to lead some weak ones further and further into error.

Why does God allow heresies to tempt the weak of His people?

Notice:

"For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (I Cor. 11:19). Because so many were so spiritually weak, heresies were necessary -- as they had been in the early Corinthian church -- in order to bring to light those who really were being saved.

Thus, as it had been in Asia Minor and Armenia, and as it had been in Bulgaria and Thrace, so now in western Europe dualism influenced many of those who still claimed to be the true Church.

The Coming of the Cathars

About 1145, ordained dualist teachers called "perfects" (and sometimes their "bishops") came from Bulgaria, and soon after that, dualists /even more thorough-going came from a center near Constantinople, and while the two groups struggled with one another, they both worked diligently to take over the non-dualist groups wherever they were found.

Catholic officials reported two separate and opposing kinds of heretics in the Cologne area in 1143. But by 1163, there was only one group, the dualists having become a dominating core group of Cathar "perfects" (so-called). They were in active expansion, having branches in Reims, Liege and other places. In south France, at the same time, they or others like them were in the process of building

a great church organization with many dioceses and bishops. Others were in Italy.

This "debris of an earlier Christianity" (that is, of the Pergamos era), as the Encycloedia Britannica calls it, became "the abiding background of medieval heresy" (11th ed., art. "Cathars"). Fully initiated perfects, not counting the far more numerous believers and hearers, soon numbered several thousands. They called themselves "apostles, Christ's poor" (Wakefield, p. 26), owned nothing, worked only as necessary for sustenance (many were weavers -- p. 38) and preached constantly. Wherever they went, they always remained in contact with their brethren in Thrace and Bulgaria and with one another.

They claimed to have the only true priests, to be the only true Church of God (p. 42). Their church, they had told Catholic questioners in 1143 at Cologne, was worldwide and had persisted in Greece and other lands from the days of the apostles.

The Apostle Paul, by the inspiration of Jesus Christ, had pinpointed their most striking errors as "doctrines of demons ... forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received..." (I Tim. 4:3). These things were literally fulfilled in the "perfects." They would not eat meat, milk, eggs or anything resulting from sexual union. Neither would they marry, lest, as they thought, more eternal spirits be imprisoned in bodies in this world which they believed was created by the evil god.

Those who were merely "hearers" sometimes did marry. Others remained officially celibate. The result of course, was rampant fornication (see I Cor. 6:18; 7:2).

Not all truth was extinguished at once. One Hartuvinus still approved marriage at Cologne in 1161 (Wakefield, p. 38). Here also an annual fall festival was celebrated which they called Malilosa (Russell, p.222 and Conybeare, p. cxli). Compare this otherwise unexplained name with Hebrew melilah (a harvested ear of grain) and the Biblical title "Feast of Ingathering" (Ex. 23:16).

But now another Thyatira WORK began to be done. For Thyatira's last works were "to be more than the first" (Rev. 2:19).

Once again, Jesus Christ chose a man to occupy an apostolic office. This man was named Waldo (Valdés) and was a wealthy merchant in Lyons, the weaving capital of Europe.

Last Works To Be Greater Than the First

Three Catholic writers who later attempted to explain the origin of the work Waldo began know nothing of its first dozen years! One, writing in 1241-1244, does relate that Waldo began to preach 80 years before (see Wakefield, p. 744). That would have been in the early 1160's. Other writers make him begin in 1173 or 1176.

In one account Waldo is presented as having been deeply touched by the words of a travelling minstrel, and hurrying to the master of a school of theology to learn the way of life. "If you will be perfect, sell all you have" was the word. So Waldo gave half of all he owned to his wife, made provision for the education of his two daughters and then proceed to give away most of what was left. In a time of severe famine, he was able to feed many before his money ran out. Thereafter, he himself lived in poverty, dependent on others, often his own wife for the necessities of life (Wakefield, pp. 200-202).

His money had been his enemy, he told the crowds, keeping him from God. He began to urge them likewise not to trust in riches. But with a part of his wealth, he hired two priests to translate the Bible into the language of the people (p. 209). He himself began diligently to study God's Word.

Christ saw by his actions that Waldo was deeply earnest. His mind began to be opened to truth that had formerly meant nothing to him.

As Waldo preached, others united themselves and their efforts to his. A group of preachers gathered which became known as the "Poor Men of Lyons." They went out two by two as Christ had originally directed His disciples (Lu. 10:1-4), representing and to teach the Church of God.

Not much is known of the first 15 to 19 years. As the Catholics afterward viewed it: "Waldes presumptuously arrogated to himself the office of the apostles"; and again, "Waldes and his fellows fell first into disobedience by their presumption and their usurpation of the apostolic office" (Wakefield, pp. 209, 210). But Jesus Christ had made Waldo an apostle!

The Waldenses, as these preachers and their hearers began to be called, strongly emphasized just the Bible itself. For years they made every effort ~~at~~ least to appear to work in harmony with the Catholic Church. But the truth ^{soon} began to step on some people's toes:

The Turning Point About 1181

About 1176, persecution was raised by the archbishop of Lyons. First, he forbade the "Poor Men" as they were often called, to preach. "We must obey God rather than men," they replied, quoting Acts 4:18-

19 and 5:28-29 (Wakefield, p. 210). When they persisted, they were cited to appear before Pope Alexander III.

Now it was no longer just a question of preaching at Lyons. The issue at stake was whether God's Work anywhere would be allowed. For archbishops and popes exercised civil power in that age.

Striving to be wise as serpents yet harmless as doves, Waldo himself went boldly to Rome in late 1179. An English archdeacon wrote an eyewitness account of his meeting with the pope (p. 203-204). Waldo put forward the Bible translated into Provençal -- which could be understood all over southern France and adjoining parts of Italy and Spain -- and "most urgently" pressed on the pope the common people's need for it. Doctrine was kept in the background.

The pope appeared willing to accede to Waldo's demands, but left the decision to the Lateran Council of 1179. Two of Waldo's associates, prepared to maintain politely but firmly the tenets of their faith, appeared before the council (Even as late as the following year they were able to subscribe to a long creed prepared by the Catholics mainly to deny the doctrines of the Cathars -- pp. 205-208) But they were merely ridiculed and dismissed.

"You can preach," they were told, "but only if a local priest asks you to:" The reason given? "The Roman Church cannot endure your preaching!"

Their reply, paraphrased, was: "Christ sent us. If you were HIS Church, you would not hinder us." And they continued to preach wherever they went. The archbishop excommunicated them about 1182, but still they preached. It took five and a half years, a new pope, and a

papal bull anathematizing Waldo and all his followers, to finally drive them from Lyons.

But Waldo had already gone elsewhere. For Jesus Christ had opened a door (II Cor. 2:12).

At the same Lateran Council, members of a religious and social association from Lombardy had also sought the right to preach. They were a section of the "Humiliati" or "Humble," since about 1000 a widespread movement within the Catholic Church (The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, art. "Humiliati"). Their request too was denied. They then defied the Roman Church and asked Waldo to become their leader. Waldo crossed the Alps to teach them.

Thus a second branch of Waldenses was established in Italy.

"Waldenses" in Italy

Some years before (1155) an Italian religious leader and political reformer called Arnold of Brescia had been put to death at Rome for allegedly having incited the Roman people to rebellion against the government and against the pope. He, like other so-called "heretics" had also objected to infant baptism and Catholic teaching about the mass. His followers were known as the "Lombards" / After Arnold's death, becoming known as Arnoldists, they continued to be aroused by the corruption of pope and priesthood, and in the ^{early} 1180's they too made common cause with the Waldenses.

And still another ^{such} group had appeared in north Italy, at almost exactly the same time that Waldo was attracting attention at Lyons. This group was led by Hugo Speroni, a judge of Piacenza, from whom they were known as Speronists. Speroni taught that no one is a Christ-

ian unless he is a son of God with the law of God written in his heart (Jer. 31-33). He taught against infant baptism, the mass, confession to priests, priestly uncleanness, Sundays and saint's days. He stood for a true baptism, observance of Passover, ^{etc.} (see Wakefield, pp. 152-158).

Of the relationship between these groups and the early Lombard Waldenses, an inquisitor about 1220 wrote: "Separated and cut off from the Church, when they [Waldenses] mingled with other heretics and imbibed their errors, they combined with their own fantasies the errors and heresies of heretics of earlier days" (p. 387).

Catholics continued to use many names for these people, however. Even new names, ^{appear} such as that of the "Rebaptizers" who, states an original source, were Waldenses, and who claimed that a man did not have to fast more than 40 days in a lifetime, instead of, as the Catholics taught, keeping a "Lent" every year (pp. 234, 277).

The statements regarding "Passagii" are among the most important for the story of the true Church. With these, the Waldensian emphasis on the Bible itself reached its apex, and various investigators have therefore regarded the Passagii as Waldenses (Newman, Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements, p. 278). ¹⁸⁵⁻¹⁸⁶ They not only accepted the New Testament literally, but the Old Testament as well, holding that "the Old Testament is to be observed in the matter of feasts circumcision, choice of foods [clean vs. unclean], and in almost all other respects, with the exception of sacrifices" (Wakefield, p. 175).

Certainly the true Church was here!

They also asserted that no one was in purgatory or a tormenting hell and that no one was in "paradise," nor would be until the day of judgment for the whole world should come.

Why were they called Passagii? Various explanations have been offered: from pesach, Hebrew for Passover; from Latin passagium, a journey for religious purposes (to keep annual festivals? or even to minister to the scattered flock as the Waldensian ministers are known later to have done?); from the same word because they lived in the passes of the mountains (probably they did not live in the mountains till forced to flee the plain of Lombardy); from Greek pas 'agios, all holy; etc. See Newman, pp. 274ff, for an exhaustive discussion of the possibilities.

Scarcely had Waldo been settled in Lombardy, when Pope Lucius in 1184 issued a bull in which he anathematized the Passagii along with the Poor of Lyons, the Humble, the Arnoldists, Josephists, Cathars and Paterines (Italian Cathars). All who were detected were to be punished. But the so-called "heretics" continued to spread.

Certain references of Lucas of Tuy, a monk of Spain, seem to refer to the Passagii. They "simulate the perfidy of the Jews," he wrote. "With a certain deliberate malice [they] become circumcised [they might be able to escape punishment as heretical Christians if if circumcised], and under the guise of Jews, as if for the sake of disputing, come to Christians and ask heretical questions [to teach the people or prod them to think.]" (Newman, pp. 140, 141).

For Waldenses did come to Spain.

Trouble in the Southwest

There were Waldenses in the vicinity of Narbonne about 1190. There already a Catholic writer declares them truly named, a "'dense vale' inasmuch as they were enveloped in the deep, dense darkness of error" (Wakefield, p. 211).

In 1194, Alphonse, King of Aragon, Barcelona and Provence decreed these "Waldenses, Zapatati or Inzabbati [those who wore a special distinguishing shoe, and those who cut away the tops of their shoes until it almost appeared they had no shoes at all -- pp. 229, 338] who otherwise are called the Poor Men of Lyons" to be worthy of any punishment short of death or mutilation. They were to leave his dominions immediately. Anyone who even listened to them was to have his property seized!

Alphonse commanded Waldenses "to depart out of our kingdom and all our dominions. Whosoever therefore from this time forwards shall presume to receive the said Waldenses and Zapatati, or any other heretics, of whatsoever profession, into their houses, or to be present at their pernicious sermons, or to afford them meat, or any other favor, shall incur thereby the indignation of Almighty God....

"We will further, that if any person, noble or ignoble, shall in any part of our dominions find any of these wicked wretches, who be known to have had three days notice of this our Edict, that do not forthwith depart, but rather obstinately staying or lingering, shall in any way plague, despitefully use, or distress them (wounding unto death, and maiming of them only excepted), he will in so doing, act nothing but what will be grateful and pleasing to us" (quoted in Allix.

Some Remarks on the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont).

The successor of Alphonse in 1197 added that every Waldense taken should be burned! Those who had fled to Castile were relentlessly tracked down.

Meanwhile, these Waldenses were standing up strongly against the errors of the Cathars of southern France, who were now called Albigenses (from Albi where they established their first major center). But the Albigenses were also having an effect on some Waldenses, and so were the schemes of the pope.

More Papal Machinations

Innocent III was one of the most energetic and forceful popes of all times. Already by 1200, he had caused a group of Waldenses who were reading the Bible to large numbers of people in Metz to be dispersed by a delegation of abbots from Rome -- and their Bibles burned (Wakefield, p. 257). The Inquisition, in a sense, actually began in that year, though it was not generally active until 1208.

Waldenses were found in 1203 at Liege. In 1207-8 those at Metz were again attacked and dispersed toward Cologne and Strasburg. Then in 1211, over 400 of a group in Strasburg were forced to recant and surrender their books. The rest -- about 80 -- were burned.

As early as 1206, Innocent had begun to send out his own proven men by two's, poorly clad and living austerely, to counteract the Waldensian preachers by adopting their own methods. He also gave official standing to those of the Humble who had not departed from the Catholic Church.

In 1209, he authorized a rival "Waldensian" movement into which he hoped to entice as many Waldenses as possible. It was an official organ of the Catholic Church, headed by Durand of Huesca, a Spanish ex-Waldense who had submitted to the pope in 1206 at a public disputation in Languedoc, and preaching nothing but Catholic doctrines, chiefly against the Cathars (pp. 220-221, 715). A similar arm called "Poor Catholics" was founded in Lombardy by Bernard Primo, another ex-Waldensian.

It was one of Durand's companions who wrote about 1210 that although many Waldenses posed outwardly as good Catholics, in secret meetings they believed quite a different set of doctrines. They claimed to have the power to bind and loose (Matt. 16:19); they rebaptized, refused to allow oaths or participation in war, denied the right of the magistrates to take life in punishment, said tithes were better given to the poor than to priests, ridiculed masses or prayers for the dead, holy water, incense, etc. (pp. 234, 348).

Several sources prove the Waldenses also celebrated the Passover yearly, which the Catholic writers called their mass. But among the Waldenses all was not well. (pp. 374-375, 394).

Who Was Jezebel?

"I have a few things against thee," said Jesus to Thyatira, "because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20).

Here was a false church -- presented under the symbol of a fallen "woman" -- a source of false doctrine to God's people in the Thyatira age.

The original wicked Jezebel had been a queen of ancient Israel. She was a Gentile herself, but she ruled over God's people by virtue of being married to King Ahab. She was a worshipper of Baal the sun god

(I Kings 16:31), utterly without scruples, selfish, grasping, destructive (I Kings 21:8-10, 25, and whole chapter). She dominated and ruled over the king, greatly misusing the power of sex to lead not only her husband but many other men around by the nose (II Kings 9:22, 30). Last but not least, she martyred the servants of God (I Kings 18:4; 19:2-3).

Who or what was the antitype of this Jezebel in the Middle Ages? The same wicked "woman" John saw in another vision and described in Revelation 17:1-6 and 18:2-7!

This great false church, who made deals with and ruled over the kings of Europe during the Middle Ages, palmed herself off as a prophetess (claiming to speak for all Christendom). Like Jezebel she dealt in sorceries (such as claiming to make the actual body and blood of Christ from wafers and wine) and killed the saints. But God will hold her guilty of all the blood of prophets, saints and all who have unjustly been slain on the earth! (Rev. 18:22-23).

In the Middle Ages, this church sank to its lowest depths. Careful, reputable, scholarly historians bear unanimous witness of her scandal and sin which blasphemed God's name. Here "celibate" priests begat numerous offspring. Popes filled their palaces with harlots and thieves. Vicious females actually ruled that church, elevating their lovers to the papal throne -- murdering them later to elevate others!

We strongly recommend you read the short, unemotional, easy-to-read summary in Halley's Pocket Bible Handbook, the section on popes. Note especially the periods 900-1050 and 1200-1550. You will be shocked!

Why would God call such a "woman" Jezebel? Because like the ancient Gentile Jezebel, ruling as an Israelite queen, this "Jezebel" of

the Middle Ages was a Gentile church having the same old pagan religion while masquerading as God's Church, spiritual Israel. Here is merely a later form of the same universal paganism that had earlier falsely claimed to be Jewish, being actually the synagogue or church of Satan (Rev. 18:2).

Yet here counterfeit pretensions were so bedazzling to the world that even John had to be carried in vision into the "wilderness" to view her in proper perspective (Rev. 17:3). This signifies that while the whole world was drunk on her false doctrine and "Jezebel" herself drunk on the blood of God's servants (Rev. 17:2,6), only the persecuted, suffering members of the Church in the "wilderness" were able to see her clearly revealed in all her filthiness.

And yet even they were not able! Because she called herself Christian, and because individually they themselves had come out of Catholicism, they remained partially blinded! Waldo and his followers, and the others to whom God had begun to reveal His truth, had tried for years to cooperate with her, and to find as much good as possible in her doctrines. Thus she was able to persuade many of them to partake of her sacrifices (the mass which is of pagan origin and does not honor the true God) and to commit spiritual fornication (having an illicit union in this world instead of remaining pure to be married to Christ).

Now, before we continue to see the result of Jezebel's influence, let's notice how the religion of Jezebel was also foreshadowed in the ancient city of Thyatira.

Background Types in Ancient Thyatira

The earliest known name of the city of Thyatira was Semiramis (Stephanus, De Urbibus). It had been named for the Semiramis who was

the most famous queen of ancient Assyria and, like Jezebel, a paragon of political and sexual evil. Now it should be obvious why Jesus Christ chose this city to represent the setting in which the fourth stage of His Church must live.

But there is more. Within the city was an enclosure which was called "the Chaldean's court." Surely this represented that court from which the "daughter of the Chaldeans" held sway (Isa. 47:5,9, compared with Rev. 17:5, 9-10 and 18:8,10). And how close to "daughter" (in Greek, θυγατερ) is Thyatira, the name the city bore after 300 B.C.! An obvious, and significant, pun!

Her principal deity was the sun god Apollo, who was usually depicted as a feminine-looking young man with a thin face and long hair. (How like the "Christ" of professing "Christianity" today!) There was also a great worship of Artemis the "Virgin."

This small provincial city was culturally inferior to the great cities of Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos. Instead, ^{most} Thyatiran society was organized into craft guilds of weavers and other laborers. In the religious and social gatherings of these guilds, everything was pagan — the sacrificing or dedication of the food to idols, even the sexual looseness that often ensued. These were the things God's Church in Thyatira of the first century had to come out of (I Cor. 10:20-21).

Laboring guilds likewise existed in Lombardy in the 12th century. The Humble had originated from just such a background. Waldo had demanded the severance of all ties with the labor organizations, but it was a long time before all were willing to comply (Wakelfield, p. 280). North Italian society also fulfilled all these other types.

The Waldenses Divide

In 1205, the influences from the ground permanently split the Waldenses into two groups. Giovanni di Rouco, a native of Piacenza (pp. 276-277) and thus perhaps a former Speronist, became the leader of the Lombards who/the smaller of the groups, said to number no more than 100 actual members. (pp. 371, 736) According to tradition, Waldo spent his later years preaching in Germany, barely escaping capture during the 1211 raids at Strasburg. Some Waldenses who were captured reported that they had then three chief leaders and centers, at Strasburg, Milan and Bohemia. It is believed that Waldo died in Bohemia.

All agree that Waldo was dead by 1218 when six representatives each of the Poor of Lyons and the Lombard Waldenses met at Bergamo to seek a basis for cooperation and reunion (pp. 278-289). They did agree on many basic premises, but the Leonists insisted Waldo was right then in "paradise" believing in a conscious immortal soul (p. 283). The Lombards were not willing to grant that, did not believe in the pagan soul doctrine (p. 347, 349). They did believe that by receiving the Holy Spirit, a good man becomes literally a son of God (p. 350). They also pointed out, in their report of the conference to their German brethren, that it was only to be expected their beliefs now differed from what they once had accepted, inasmuch as they were growing in knowledge and putting away childish things (p. 288, I Cor. 13:11).

With that attitude, these people would continue to grow.

The Leonists, on the other hand, were accepting as valid the Catholic baptisms and priests. Like the Cathars they had both men and women "preachers" -- actually just representatives who went from place

to place (pp. 213, 370-371). They were shortly to absorb many Cathars so that the Catholics began to speak of their ordained ones as perfects. One William the Albigensian even became their leader (pp. 370, 395, 756 note 10). Here is why that happened.

The Albigensian Crusade

Pope Innocent had meanwhile moved irresistably to end once and for all the Cathar threat in southern France. Rome had first tried military action against the Cathars as early as 1180. But both the people, impressed by the asceticism and dedication of the Cathar perfects, and the local nobility and civil rulers, who were jealous of and antagonistic toward the grasping, corrupt Catholic clergy, protected the heretics. By 1208, this unacceptable situation led Innocent to all-out proclaim a "holy war" -- the Albigensian Crusade. Pope and clergy, backed by all the power of northern France, were arrayed against the people of the south.

Why? Not primarily because of religion, but because the rulers and population of the region were rejecting the civil domination of Rome.

When the war began in 1209, the Provencal civilization was the most brilliant in Europe. When it was over, after 20 bitter years, that civilization had been completely destroyed. South France had become a backward region completely subject to Paris and Rome.

The infamous Inquisition was then set up to complete the job by eliminating religious objections completely. Papal bull decreed severe punishment against any person suspected of even sympathizing with "heretics." Confiscations, imprisonments, burnings and every imaginable form of persecution continued for more than a hundred years. Thousands died. In the Albigensian fortress city of Montsecur 200 persons were

burned on one day alone.

Extreme measures were taken also against the Waldenses. Many fell victim to the Inquisition. They were "excommunicated (if ecclesiastics, degraded) and abandoned (or relaxed) to the secular power with the dishonest prayer to spare them from mutilation and death" (Leff, p.49). Most were burned.

When the Lateran IV Council of 1215 forbade the reading of the Bible in the vernacular it virtually closed the door on any evangelistic work. The Council of Toulouse, 1229, further strengthened the rule against Bible reading -- the Inquisition enforced it by torture and fire. (In 1242, the Council of Tarragona even prohibited the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church from reading the Bible lest any of them see the light and be converted!)

About 1215, also, the pope instituted the Franciscans (Preaching Friars) to combat more forcefully the Lombard Waldenses, and the Dominicans (Minor Friars) to combat the Poor Men of Lyons. They were given charge of the Inquisition itself in 1233.

Double Trouble From Church and State

The chief civil and religious powers arranged for mutual cooperation (spiritual fornication, Rev. 17:2-3).

Pope Gregory IX decreed in 1231: "We excommunicate and anathematize all the heretics, the Puritans, Paterines, the Poor of Lyons, Fasagines, Josephines, Arnoldists, Speronists and all other of whatever name: their faces might differ, but their tails are entangled in one knot" (emphasis ours).

And Emperor Frederick II chimed in with a decree of his own:

"We condemn to perpetual infamy the Puritans, Paterines, Speronists, Leonists, Arnoldists, Circumcised, Passajines, Josephini, Garatensians, Albanensians, Francisks, Bagnorols, Comists, Waldensians" (quoted in Andrews, History of the Sabbath, pp. 557-559).

Between 1220 and 1239, both Frederick and the pope issued a whole series of such persecution edicts, as did other lesser figures. The local archbishops "Statutes of Pignerol" (named from a town just below the mountain valleys where many of the persecuted Waldenses were beginning to settle) took away all civil rights from the accused in 1220. Frederick decreed death by fire or loss of the tongue, at the whim or option of the judge in 1224; in 1231, cremation -- absolute!

At the same time Frederick and the pope became involved in a vicious struggle for power between themselves. Picking up points from the "heretics" the emperor maintained that ^{the} pope was "Antichrist." The pope retaliated by branding the emperor the "beast from the sea" (Rev. 13:1). And BOTH, to an amazing degree, were RIGHT! Frederick then called the pope the dragon, a second Balaam, the prince of darkness who misquotes scripture, etc.: (From, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, vol. 1, p. 795).

From 1231 to 1233 a general persecution raged in Germany and Holland, cutting short the prospering work which had begun. By 1235, persecution on a large scale had begun at Milan, original seat of the Lombard Waldenses. The archbishop "razed their school" though he left the people free. On the French side of the Alps, burning and killing pursued the Waldenses even into the mountain fastness of the Val Louise by 1238.

That phase of the Theatrical Work was through!

The College and the Barbes

Most of the Lombard Waldenses fled into the high valleys of the Cottian Alps which were afterward to become famous as the "Waldensian valleys." There they were joined by many French Waldenses and even by a Cathar church, which however remained separate in the vicinity.

In the valleys the Waldenses practiced their religion openly, and though often threatened, were divinely protected through most of the 13th and 14th centuries.

Here, in the Angrogna Valley at a place called the Pra del Tor or plain of the tower (or perhaps "plain of the law?") they re-established the school which was destroyed at Milan and here they operated a small college for nearly two centuries for the purpose of training ministers to be sent out all over western Europe. At this headquarters also, articles and small booklets were written and laboriously handcopied -- there were no printing presses in those days -- to be given to those who should be found interested in the truth (Matt. 10:8). A few of these tracts, but mostly of later date, have survived to this day.

Beginning at an early period, they also translated the Bible itself into different vernacular languages for use in different countries. One unusual version, in Low German, was all in rhyme to make memorization easier. For, because of scarcity of Bibles and imminent danger to both Bible and person found carrying one, every potential minister had to memorize a large amount of Scripture, besides being able to explain it (see Wakefield, p. 757 note 22).

(Cathars too had their local "translations" but these were filled with apocryphal eastern legends, uninspired additions and other perversions of the text. Why do we today call a written or printed work a text? Because so many weavers [textors] spread their written material throughout Europe in this period.)

Young but mature men of about age 25 came from many countries of Europe to be trained in the valleys. If found acceptable, they attended classes during the winter months for three or four years before going fulltime into the ministry. After further testing when necessary, if their fruits showed Jesus Christ had called them to the ministry, they were ordained by the laying on of hands. ⁹The Waldenses were no longer -- as the earliest Poor Men of Lyons had been -- a band of untrained, unorganized preachers, but a fully qualified ministry serving as directed by the Church.

Most of these ministers learned to speak at least three languages. Each also learned a trade, to be able if necessary to earn his own living, following the Apostle Paul's example (Acts 18:3; I Cor. 4:12; II Cor. 11:7). Many were specially trained in matters of physical health (see Col. 4:14 and Newman, p. 185), for the world's ways, then as now, were diametrically opposite to God's ways, including the dietary laws He set in motion, and its people were often suffering the penalties. The Waldensian ministers understood that our healing is made possible by Christ's broken body.

To conceal their identity the Waldensian ministers were addressed as "barbes" (uncles). In those dangerous times, most were continually on the go, on evangelistic journeys, in visiting scattered brethren.

Even those given stationary assignments in old age rotated every two or three years.

It was because they would not expose wives and children to these hard perpetual journeys that few married (Par Bresse, Authentic Details of the Waldenses, p. 140). But they deplored and condemned the celibacy rule imposed on Roman priests (see I Cor. 7:25-26; I Tim. 4:1,3).

They always traveled in pairs -- a younger/^{man}with an older (Mark 6:7; Acts 15:39-40). Thus the younger man received an opportunity to profit by the older man's experience.

During the fourteenth century, the overpopulated valleys sent out colonists as far as Calabria and Apulia, where about 1380 the chief Waldensian leader dwelt. The travelling barbes were the only links that kept them in contact with the valleys.

Character of the People

The Waldenses practiced overcoming and education in every walk of life. They were obedient, clean, honest. Even their enemies acknowledged they could find no fault with their lives. They would not lie or swear (Matt 5:34), no do anything to others which they would not have done to themselves (Matt. 7:12). They dressed and acted modestly (I Tim. 2:9; I Pet. 3:3). They were chaste, temperate in all things, in control of their emotions, diligent, continually keeping busy, founding their whole teaching on the Bible.

The rocky soil, even in that harsh mountain climate, responded generously to their diligence. It was said that they often reaped double what others got elsewhere from good soil. Their enemies marvelled.

Men, women and children made it their business to learn a little more each day, according to each person's ability.

They "declared themselves to be resolved, with the Lord's help, to embrace, so far as their minds were capable of bearing it, the truth of Christ and of His bride, small as their knowledge of it might be. If to any man more knowledge of the truth was given, then, they more humbly desired to be taught by him, and to be corrected of their mistakes" (Neander's Church History, vol. 8).

Below the college level, a system of elementary schools was established which both boys and girls attended. Even small children learned to memorize and recite whole chapters of Scripture.

Women did a major part of the teaching in the Waldensian schools. It was for this reason that the Catholics continued to raise the old accusation against them of ^{having} women preachers (the Lombards did not ordain women) railing at the women and the whole system of Waldensian education: "These are they who creep into the houses of widows and lead them astray. They are the ones who ever labor in their schools at learning more, but never attain knowledge of the truth" (Wakefield, pp. 219-220, 271; Schaff, History of the Christian Church, p.503).

Waldensian schools were first founded in Italy, but about 1260 the Inquisition found them in 42 parishes in Austria. They must have existed wherever sufficient numbers of Waldenses were found.

Evidence of the Church From Papal Decrees

Throughout the 13th century, a series of papal bulls continued to condemn the "heretics" under many names.

A bull of 1267 was addressed to the ruler of upper Burgundy "to arouse his zeal against 'the defenders of Waldensian heresy and certain adepts to Judaism, very numerous in his domains.' These adepts were called Judaizing Christians because they ... wished to sanctify the Seventh Day in memory of the Mosaic Sabbath.... It was especially in the Jura and the mountains of Doubs that these Judaizers were to be found during the thirteenth century" (Newman, Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements, p. 403).

A generation later "...on January 28, 1290, the Pope called upon the Bishops and Prelates of Aix, Arles and Embrun to support the activity of the Inquisitors in their endeavours against the many apostasies to Judaism occurring there, and against local Jewish proselytism. On February 20, 1290, the Inquisitors of the three provinces mentioned, together with the Franciscans commissioned to act in the Comtat Venaisin, were summoned by Nicholas [IV] to proceed to action against the 'very numerous' Christians who inclined to Jewish practices. In moments of sickness or other tribulation, anxious for friends at sea or over approaching childbirth, these Christians frequented Jewish synagogues with lighted lamps and candles, offering oblations, watching through the vigils of the Sabbath, and showing by superstitious signs reverence and adoration for the Torah [the Old Testament books of the Law]. The Pope enjoined his deputies to treat as idolators or heretics those who urged these Judaizing Christians to such actions, whether they were Jews or Christians" (pp. 407-408).

The point to be noticed is that the pope tacitly admitted these "heretics" were Christians -- they believed in Jesus Christ as their

Savior -- they were neither Jews nor even proselytes to Judaism.

Why did they frequent Jewish synagogues? It was the only way they could keep Sabbaths and Holy Days under the watchful eye of the established religion. They could keep them with the Jews!

Clearly these "Waldensian heretics" were "Passagii," determinedly practicing the ways of God as late as the very end of the thirteenth century. In the following year, another bull of Nicholas specifically named and again condemned the Passagii.

Annual Fall "Conference" in the Valleys

The Passagii kept God's Holy Days. The earlier church at Cologne had kept a fall festival. Did the Waldenses keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the valleys for those who were able to get there?

Each September or October (about the time of God's seventh month -- see Lev. 23), they held a great ministerial "conference." As many as 700 delegates attended from afar, besides the local people. New students were chosen at this time, ministerial assignments were made for the coming year, and crowds gathered daily to listen to sermons (Par Bresse, pp. 138-142).

What could this gathering have been but the Feast of Tabernacles? Even today the modern Waldensians hold a very similar gathering, only now they observe it in August.

The three-part division of tithes paid the Waldensian church is significant. Here it is, as described in the 1500's:

"The money given us by the people is carried to the aforesaid general council, and is delivered in the presence of all, and there it is received by the most ancients [the elders], and part thereof is

given to those that are wayfaring men, according to their necessities, and part unto the poor" (George Morel, Waldensian elder, quoted by Lennard, History of the Waldenses).

Compare this practice with Numbers 18:21 and Deuteronomy 14:22-25, 28-29. Isn't that exactly what the Bible commands? Of course!

Most authors have assumed the "wayfaring men" were the traveling "barbes." But their expenses would have been paid from the money given the elders, at every time of year, for the direct conduct of the Work -- "first" tithe and offerings. Notice that in Numbers 18:21. What Morel then mentions is a "second" tithe, for those traveling to and from the festivals -- wayfaring men; and following it, the "third" tithe which was given to certain of the poor (see the explanation of it in Deuteronomy 14). Feast goes who had more "second tithe" than they needed shared their excess with those who had need, even as they do today!

Prophetic Identities Perceived

The Waldenses recognized the Roman church in prophecy. One of their oldest surviving books, the Book of Antichrist, equates the Roman papacy and priests with Babylon (Isa. 47), the little horn of the fourth beast (Dan. 7), the whore (Rev. 17-18), the man of sin, the son of perdition (II Thess. 2), false prophets, lying teachers (II Pet. 2), spirit of error (I John 4), clouds without water, trees without leaves (Jude) ministers of darkness, Egyptians, Balaamites, etc.:

And as early as 1250, it was recorded of the Waldenses: "they say that the [Roman] Church is the church of the wicked, the beast and the harlot which are described in the Apocalypse.... Also, that the Church of Christ subsisted in the bishops and other prelates down to the time

of the Blessed Sylvester [as viewed by the Catholic writer] and in him it fell away until they themselves restored it. Nevertheless, they assert that there were always some who feared God and were saved" -- true Church never died (quoted in Wakefield, p. 346).

They perceived that as it was in the days of the original Jezebel, Christ had always preserved a few faithful ones for himself, and those were the only true Church (see I Kings 19:2, 10, 18). The Waldenses regarded themselves as that only true Church (p. 282) -- and Church of God:

"They say," repeats the monk Moneta [c. 1244] 'that the Church of God had declined in the time of Sylvester, and that in these days it has been re-established by their efforts, commencing with Waldo....'

"We do not find anywhere in the writings of the Old Testament," continues a later Waldensian record of 1404, 'that the light of truth and 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, History of the Waldenses, pp. 7, 10-11).

But more amazing still is the fact that they recognized their own prophetic identity as the fourth church era of Revelation. They knew

they were the Thyatira Church!

On the Waldensian emblem or seal were seven stars (Rev. 1:20). Directly below and pointing at the fourth star was a lighted lamp representing the then active Thyatira Church. Around the rim was the Latin motto LUX LUCET IN TENEBRIS -- "a light shines in darkness" (see Matt. 5:14-16).

Yet in spite of all this, and in spite of the fact that a full half of Jesus' message to Thyatira, the longest message of the seven, is devoted to warning against "Jezebel," many did fall in her trap!

Decline of the Waldenses

Many, especially those outside the sheltered valleys, were coerced by fear of persecution into following her ways -- committing spiritual fornication with the world (I John 4:15-18). They began to allow "Jezebel's" priests to "baptize" their infant children as demanded by civil and ecclesiastical law, gradually took part in her Sunday worship and ate the "sacrifice of the Mass" (see last 7 words of Rev. 2:20; I Cor. 10:20-21; Acts 15:29 -- note also that the Greek word does not specify animal sacrifice).

No doubt the Waldenses who gave in to these ceremonies and sacraments rationalized that they were meaningless and therefore harmless. But Christ thought otherwise. This coexistence with evil cost following generations the understanding of real repentance, true baptism and even of the true Creator God.

Even in the valleys, the prevailing doctrine became in time little more than a form of puritanic and independent Catholicism. Under severe persecution, they forgot their original connection with Waldo, accepting

indeed the name of Waldenses given them by the world, but interpreting it as Vallenses (Vaudois in French) meaning people of the valleys, especially because, as they said, they "dwelt in a vale of tears." Knowing that the true Church had always existed since the days of the apostles, they came to believe it was always in their valleys. They began to claim the 9th century north Italian bishop Claude and other early dissenting Catholics as their spiritual ancestors.

Thus when, in 1380, many of them took up arms to repel the special Inquisitors invading their valleys, God's/protection ceased. On July 1, 169 persons were burned. Thereafter, the valleys of the now war-making Waldenses were invaded and reinvaded by Inquisitors, armies and a Crusade (1487) until their inhabitants were decimated.

After the Protestant Reformation had begun, in 1532 an assembly of the surviving Waldenses in the valleys declared their solidarity with the Swiss Calvinists. Only a handful refused to subscribe to this agreement.

Finally, in the 1680's a French attack forced the last fugitives into Switzerland, from which about 3 years later some fought their way back to their ancestral valleys in a so-called "Glorious Return," where many of their descendants still remain, while others have colonized in North and especially South America.

But there is much more to tell about Thyatira -- which will be done in the next chapter -- before we come to that time.

Christ Speaks of Protestant Daughters

God's Church was a centuries-long witness to Catholicism. "I gave her space to repent," said Jesus (Rev. 2:21). But like Simon

Magus, Jezebel "willed NOT to repent" (correct translation) of either her spiritual or her physical fornication. Her hierarchy kept grasping for power.

"Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her" -- it was mere fornication for this church which had never been married to Christ, but it was spiritual adultery for those who were actually espoused to Him (II Cor. 11:2) -- "into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." Children were to be born of her. "And I will kill her children with death."

Did these things happen? Yes! In the birth of the Protestant churches who came out of her protesting/ and in the accompanying strife. Their end is to be utter extinction.

The Waldensian church of the valleys should not have become one of those. Remember, the original Waldenses were not "Protestant" (Schaff, pp. 501-502). They had no doctrine of salvation by "faith alone" which faith is worthless and dead (James 2:17). The lawless spirit of Protestantism was utterly foreign to them, as to God's Church in all ages. Every one, said Jesus, shall be rewarded according to his "works" (Rev. 2:23).

"But unto you" -- to His Church -- "I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine [of spiritual adultery], and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden" (verse 24).

Not as much was required of the persecuted Middle Ages Church "in the wilderness" as would have been required had her opportunities been greater. To whom much is given, of him much is required (Lu. 12:48)

"But that which you have already hold fast till I come." To those who hold fast, the overcomers, Christ will give authority to rule the nations with a "rod of iron" -- His very own power (Rev. 12:5) -- the same power that Jezebel sought for centuries to wield by spiritual harlotry, cruelty and deceit. For the overcomers are the ones who learned by repentance and long-suffering (patience does not adequately convey the meaning -- Rev. 2:19) to show love and mercy.

And He will give them "the morning star" -- Himself (Rev. 22:16) -- His own ability to enlighten the world, just as they did in a very small way when first their motto was Lux Lucet in Tenebris, "a light shines in darkness," on the seal with the candle and the star, when they themselves shone spiritual to a dark world as a "morning star" does before sunrise.

Certainly the "sure word of prophecy" predicting the rise of the "Daystar" (Christ) / identifies this era of God's Church (II Peter 1:19).

CHAPTER 6

The Thyatira Age -- Continued

- The true Church of God must believe the true gospel. What is that gospel?

Jesus came preaching "the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14-15). Matthew called it the "kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 4:17) meaning the kingdom ON EARTH which is ruled from heaven. Paul preached -- to the end of his life -- only the gospel of the "kingdom" (Acts 28:3).

What Is a Kingdom?

Four things must ^{be present} to constitute a kingdom: a king, laws by which he rules, a territory and people. In the Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ is to be the King. For that purpose He will return to earth (Acts 1:3, 6, 11). The earth itself is the territory; those dwelling on it at the time the Millennium begins and after will be his subjects. His Kingdom's laws are the same ones He has laid down for eternity, those which are revealed in the Bible. For "I change not" says God (see Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8).

A true Church MUST teach obedience to those laws and to God, repentance from (not penance for) past sins. And we must set ourselves henceforth to obey. Because the rule of God that will encompass the earth in the Millennium must first be implemented in the personal lives of everyone who is to be made immortal and help rule and teach those still mortal then.

God's people in the Thyatira age, persecuted, often fleeing, hiding, "in the wilderness" often had only the barest minimum of the true gospel. But "millennarianism" at least in some of its features,

[was held] by the Vaudsais or Waldenses, Albigenses, Lollards, Wickliffites and the Bohemian Protestants" (George N. H. Peters, The Theocratic Kingdom, p. 421). ^{They were} Noted for "works," ^{for} "love," and ^{for} "faith" more than for doctrine (Rev. 2:19). ^{They} emphasized Christian living, ^{But} they nevertheless saw clearly the crying need for the great abuses and falsehoods with which the world abounded to be changed in the World Tomorrow, at the return of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the Catholic world had long forgotten the true gospel. No Millennium was expected. Not even obedience to God's law was really demanded.

Originally and until Constantine's "conversion," it was widely understood "that Rome would be the seat of the Antichrist and the Roman power would be destroyed" (p. 511). The Kingdom of God was never visualized as a Roman Empire in union with a church. Instead, the doctrine of Kingdom and Millennium had been universally accepted for 250 years from the time of the crucifixion, until the time came that such men as Eusebius and Jerome "could flatter the Emperors with the idea that the Millennial glory was already inaugurated under their sway" (p. 484).

Then the accepted doctrine changed.

"Immediately after the triumph of Constantine, the Christians [so-called], emancipated from oppression and persecution, and dominant and prosperous in their turn, began to lose their vivid expectation of our Lord's speedy Advent, and their spiritual conception of His Kingdom, and to look upon the temporal supremacy of Christianity as a fulfillment of the promised reign of Christ on earth. The Roman Empire, become Christian, was regarded no longer as the object of prophetic denunciation

but as the scene of a Millennial development" (McClintock and Strong Cyclopedia, article "Revelation").

It was Augustine, in his work The City of God who firmly established in Catholicism the idea that the Millennium had actually begun with Christ's first coming. Consequently as the year 1000 passed, there was a certain expectation of the imminent end of the world and the earth's destruction by fire. But this expectation was entirely Roman (Peters, p. 522).

The Waldenses had a much broader historical overview of prophecy and of the false church. They knew that 1260 years had to be fulfilled according to the prophecies of Revelation 13:5 and Daniel 7:25, and then a Millennium. And as they had spread their doctrines so widely, there was a much greater general expectation of the end of the world about 1260, especially among some of the Franciscans (Froom, The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers, vol. 1, p. 740).

Church Tried by Fire -- And Found Wanting!

A great many people were dissatisfied with the degradation and oppression of the established church. Most, though perhaps sincere, had never given themselves completely and unreservedly to God. Yet all of these people in the eyes of the world began to be lumped with the Waldenses.

Persecution bulls and decrees penalized any friend, receiver or supporter of Waldenses. This "prepared the way for the transformation of his [Waldo's] following [including many who were merely sympathizers or friends] into a sect or antichurch, a tendency already present in 1184.

Under the pressure of persecution even the 'friends' felt themselves sectaries, and became increasingly merged with the main body [or better said, the small flock] of Waldenses" (Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religion, art. "Waldenses").

Not all of these people composed the true Church, though the true Church was AMONG them.

Daniel prophesied of these days of the Middle Ages: "They that understand [the true Church of God] among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame [Thyatira was pre-eminently the era of flame], by captivity [imprisonment], and by spoil [confiscation], many days." All this came literally true.

"Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen [helped] with a little help: but MANY shall cleave to them with flatteries" -- in pretense, not in wholehearted conversion. These many might mean well, but lacked the Holy Spirit. They compromised with doctrines and practices of the false church. And when real danger drew near, many recanted.

"And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white" (Dan. 11:33-35). There were to be martyrs even among those mostly faithful! Why?

Because even they needed to be made perfect:

Waldenses in the German Realm

After leaving Italy, Waldo had preached in Germany, finally dying in Bohemia, according to the tradition. Pope Innocent wrote in 1214 to the clergy of Bremen in north Germany that Waldo was a "son of perdition, a heretic and schismatic" for denying the power

of the keys and presuming to exercise priestly office himself although excommunicated and deposed" (Gordon Leff, Heresy in the Later Middle Ages, vol. 2, p. 449). Other contacts with Waldenses in Italy had continued.

Thus while the Waldenses in the valleys of the Cottian Alps were striving to "hold fast," other Waldenses were widely scattered throughout Germany, Austria, Bohemia and even Poland.

About 1310 to 1330 the activities of the Inquisition in Germany reached a high peak. One obvious result was that Waldenses about 1340 formed entire villages among the German colonies of southern Bohemia, until in the 1370's another great persecution in Germany was teamed with a shortlived nation^{Bohemian} Inquisition. After these persecutions and later ones Waldensians were found ever further northward, and eastward, in Saxony, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, Pomerania, Poland, Hungary and Transylvania.

During this century, the scattered groups in general lost contact with the Lombard valleys.

In the same century, the Cathars disappeared. But their influence continued in Germany as in other areas. Here was another influence tending to drag down God's people. For the tell-tale doctrines of the Cathars show that those who had thus far escaped the Inquisitors had linked themselves with the Waldenses. Henceforth, even the Inquisitors were often confused as to what to call some of the heretical groups they discovered (see Leff, Vol. 2, pp 450, 465-467, 476).

From about this time the doctrine of the Waldensians, ^(outside the 'valleys') tended to become very simple -- condemnation of the apostate church, rejection

of her priests and their ministry, affirmation that the Waldensians and they only were the true Church and successors of the apostles, emphasis on sinlessness and obedience to God in daily living (pp. 461-462).

Much truth was contaminated with error or lost as a result of constant persecution. Waldenses sought to avoid any outward action that would bring about conflict with or attention from the established church.

Most attended Catholic services, and taught their own children and close friends a better religion, ^{privately} as best they could.

How many Waldenses were there? There are no complete figures.

It was reported about 1315 that 8000 lived in Austria, Bohemia and Thuringia. But about the same time, in the same area, an elderly heretic leader who was accused of both Cathar and Waldensian beliefs, claimed to have 80,000 adherents (vol. 1 p. 324, vol. 2, p. 477).

In the Rhineland and North

Other fourteenth century Waldenses, living in the Rhine Valley and being subjected to the same persecutions, were moving northward.

Here they became called by new nicknames.

In the Netherlands, the name Lollard came into use. It is derived from a Flemish word, lollen or lullen, meaning to sing or speak softly, or to mumble -- because of the Waldensian practice of memorizing Scripture, in the vernacular, by mumbing it to themselves or to one another.

Catholic writers seized on this name and attempted to connect it with Latin lolium -- tares (see Matthew 13:25). They began to apply the word to all so-called "heretics" (see Deanesly, The Lollard Bible, p. 70).

Lollards, those "wandering and hypocritical fellows" (as their enemies called them), were noticed in Holland as early as 1309. Many of

them were engaged in caring for the sick and burying the dead after the great plague called the Black Death (Ernest McDonnell, The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture, p. 267).

Other Waldenses became known as Picards, Beghards, etc. because the persecutors often confused them with the Beghards and Beguines (male and female members of a semi-official Catholic order which professed to be under the overall supervision and protections of the Franciscans), among whom were real heretics (probably derived from the former Beguines or Albigenses of south France) called "false Beghards," "Picards" and "Apostolics" (pp. 436, 496, 512, 516, 571).

Despite the confusion, some of these "Picards" may be identified as Waldenses by the accounts of their doctrine -- certain "Beghards" of Metz, for example, made an annual "pilgrimage" to attend special convocations away from the world! (Leff, vol. 1, p. 361). At the same time, the very confusion that reigned made it possible for Waldensian doctrines to spread among actual Beghards, while unfortunately the same situation also threatened Waldenses with an additional very dangerous kind of false doctrine.

This false doctrine was such a threat for a time to the persecuted, weak Christians of God's Church that Jesus Christ specifically warned of it in His Thyatira message. It was the heresy of the "free spirit."

The "Depths of Satan"

To "as many as have not" Jezebel's doctrine of spiritual fornication, neither have "known the depths of Satan, AS THEY SPEAK"

Jesus Christ promised, "I will put upon you none other burden" (Rev. 2:24). ⁹But there were some in the world who did know the depths of Satan:

Most of them were ostensibly members of the quasi-official Beghards and Beguines, living a supposedly holy and celibate life of poverty and labor, or of wandering and begging. Some lived in or even managed Beghard and Beguine houses, and it was chiefly because of these Brethren of the Free Spirit that the Beghards and Beguines were persecuted intermittently/by the Inquisition. Independent "free spirit" groups also existed (Leff, vol. 1, pp. 368, 395, 399).

What was their Satanic error? Their starting point was Biblical teaching. Man is to receive within him^{by it} and be begotten again. / (the Holy Spirit of God) Thus we become sons of God and members of God's very Family. They viewed this, however, from the ^{standpoint of} God-denying neo-Platonism-- "God^{is} in all, ^{therefore} all is god." By first humbling themselves, beating themselves down, denying themselves everything good or desirable and deliberately forcing themselves to do the most revolting work or to eat the most revolting food, they believed they could come to a condition of complete identification with God. Then once they had become wholly perfect (by their own works!), / (judged by their standards), as innocent as Adam at the instant of creation, they felt they could do anything whatsoever they pleased, indulge in any lust, commit any crime -- all entirely without sin! It was their prerogative being "god" themselves! (pp. 360-361).

This "secret wisdom," as one adept of the Free Spirit told the astounded Inquisition, was "drawn from the innermost depths of the Divine Abys!! What blasphemy of blasphemies! (quoted in N. Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium, p. 187).

Truly that doctrine and practice were indeed the "depths of Satan, as they speak."

Stealing, lying, complete sexual promiscuity, even murder -- all done with no consciousness or admission of guilt -- all in the name of enlightened religion -- sprang from those "depths,"

The doctrine of damnation surfaced in western Europe in the 1200's and in various forms influenced some as late as the 1600's. But whatever its interim history, it was the direct revival and continuation of the doctrine and practice of the old Gnostic Nicolaitanes, of whom Eusebius wrote: "they also taught that the basest deeds should be perpetuated by those that would arrive at perfection in the mysteries, or rather that would reach the extent of their abominations. So that, as they were accustomed to speak, one could in no other way escape the rulers of the world, unless by performing his part of obscenity to all" (Ecc. Hist., IV, 7).

"Before the advent of the Hussites, the prevalence of the heresy of the Free Spirit was one of the central preoccupations of the ecclesiastical authorities as well as of the emperor Charles IV" (Leff, vol. 1, p. 323).

But what did this have to do with God's Church? Notice.

What made this Satanic doctrine so doubly dangerous to the often-isolated and illiterate followers of God's truth was that both they and

the promulgators of the "free spirit" doctrine were being actively pursued by the dominant church. Common persecution might throw them together, and faithful members of Christ's Thyatira Church might be perverted by association with falsehood and evil as the congregations of Pergamos had been.

Undoubtedly some did fall prey to this error. For of the many accused there were some whose other doctrines indicated a Waldensian connection (Leff, vol. 1, pp. 364-365).

Even the congregation led by the famous Walter of Hohenland at Cologne may have been infiltrated. Walter "the Lollard" had little knowledge of Latin, did not speak French, but had written several small books in low German. He was burned in 1322 -- all efforts to convert him to Catholicism or to make him reveal his accomplices having failed. But about 5 years after his death, the group that he had led was brought to light and accused (perhaps falsely) of ending their meetings with a sexual orgy (McDonnell, pp. 368, 519-520; Leff, p. 335).

Whether or not there was any basis for such allegations, God's people were certainly nearing their lowest point. Yet the Church Jesus built continued.

God's Church the Preserver and Distributor of the Scriptures

You would not have had a Bible if you had lived in the Middle Ages -- unless you were very rich, and a "heretic."

The major labor of God's Church in the Thyatira era had been to translate, copy and make the Scriptures known. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV ⁽¹³⁴⁷⁻¹³⁷⁷⁾ recognized the vernacular Scriptures as the main strength of "heresy" and commanded such to "be presented to the Inquisition to be

burned," declaring it was "not lawful, according to canon law, for lay people of either sex to read any book whatever of holy scripture written in the vulgar tongue" (Deanesly, pp. 83-84).

Yet for all the effort, the truth remained virtually unknown to the broad masses of the people. In any language, Bibles were very expensive. It took a skilled and rapid writer ten months to make a complete copy of the Bible. A reliable finished and bound copy was worth the price of a landed estate. Printing had not been invented and there was precious little education to enable God's Word to be read.

The Work of the Church and the confiscations of the authorities did have one remarkable result.

It is a little known fact that most of the manuscripts which came to be stored away in Catholic monasteries and cathedrals are ultimately traceable to God's Church. ^{How?} You see, few scholars in the Middle Ages had ability to read or translate from the original Hebrew or Greek. And Church policy had kept even Latin manuscripts scarce. So when Bible texts were needed, they used the Waldensian versions, which all originally came from the Provençal version, which itself came from an early form of the Vulgate, as their main source! (Deanesly, chapters 2, 3, and 4).

During the 14th and 15th centuries such Catholic groups as the Fratricelli, Beghards, Brethren of the Common (Communal) Life, etc. occasionally even helped to copy them. When they did, however, they too immediately ran into trouble. Many such people were falsely stigmatized as Waldenses or Lollards and burned. (Those truly belonging

to God's Church were not, as some may have assumed, the most apt to be martyred. They were not reaching the world, in those days, and were not often in public view.)

Bible Translated Into English

But now Jesus Christ provided His Church "a little help" (Dan. 11:34).

The name Lollard sprang into great prominence in England a few years before 1400, as a result of the studies and writings of John Wycliffe. Though Wycliffe was perhaps never a member of God's spiritual Church -- he lived and died within the Catholic communion -- he was a man whom Jesus Christ used.

It was an evil time in England. According to a contemporary description: "England and the English have lost all their former glory. Lechery and pride reign. The land is full of violence; those who feared us, now press upon us. The fear of God is departed; the speaker of truth is shent; whisperers and flatterers have their way. The rich make merry; worn out the people grieve. Spiritual forces decay; God's holy days are not observed. The laws are perverted; the evil go unpunished. The King knows not the truth; men fear to 'bell the cat.' ... Simony is loose; the Church is vicious, not a clear light...." (from A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, edited by John Edwin Wells).

It was the abuses and blasphemies committed and condoned by priest and prelate that Wycliffe, a theologian and professor at Oxford, became increasingly aware of. After a disappointing effort to turn much of the church's power to the king, Wycliffe began to write and

distribute tracts concerning those abuses.

Immediately, he was surrounded by enemies -- and was branded a "Lollard" -- a heretic of the kind that was well known across the English Channel.

Wycliffe responded by speaking out more freely, even declaring the priesthood in communion with Rome was not the ministry of Christ. A group of Oxford scholars and teachers gathered around him. Many of the rulers of England who had been his former associates listened to him with respect. And a great many of the common people began to look to him as their leader.

Sympathizers became very numerous for a while. In the words of a contemporary, the "sect" of the Wycliffites was "held in such great honor in these days, and has so multiplied, that you can hardly see two men passing in the road, but one of them shall be a disciple of Wycliffe."

Wycliffe was not actually the leader of a sect. He was a scholar rather than a saint, a man with a penetrating mind and carefully guarded mental balance. He believed in the Catholic doctrines, including infant "baptism". But his life and work proved a tremendous inspiration to many because of what he did in his last three years. In semi-seclusion, having suffered a stroke, he wrote fiery tract after fiery tract. Most important, however, for the history of God's Church, he began to translate the Bible into English.

Though Wycliffe himself died in 1384, his secretary, Purvey, and the circle of scholars that had gathered around Wycliffe, carried

this translation work on to a successful conclusion. They saw it distributed in all parts of England during the next 30 years -- a blessing for God's people.

The Later Lollards

Purvey (as well as others) continued to preach and write. Purvey may have written many of the books usually attributed to Wycliffe, but he went beyond Wycliffe's doctrine to hold substantially Waldensian beliefs (Leff, p. 578). A Catholic record written somewhat later for the year 1372 gives that date as the time the Beghards and Fraticelli (meaning actually the Lollards) of the Rhine and Netherlands linked up with Wycliffe's followers (McDonnell, p. 566). Clearly the date is too early -- possibly chosen by mistake for 1374 because Wycliffe had then visited Belgium on the king's business. But "Lollard" beliefs and practices from the continent did make their appearance in England. Later Lollards baptized adults only.

There were instances of the ordination of Lollard ministers (Leff, p. 575).

From the very first, some Lollards -- both of Wycliffe's scholarly associates and others, had practiced the Waldensian (and Biblical) principle of going out by twos to travel and preach throughout England. They likewise memorized much of the translated Bible and taught the people to memorize it. In their preaching, they called attention to grievances against the religious authorities, and gave the people supplementary instruction (Encyclopedia Britannica, articles "Wycliffe" and "Lollards"; MacFarlane, John Wycliffe and English Non-Conformity, chapters 4 and 5).

A second translation of the Bible into English, and then a third -- a very readable version -- were brought out and used in this work.

The established church all the while remained set against the use of a vernacular Bible, and made repeated attempts to stop it, but could not. In 1401, the famous statute called De Heretico Comburendo was propounded against all Lollards in England. It forbade preaching without license, and teaching "new doctrines" or favoring those who taught them. It provided that those who did so should be imprisoned or fined, and, as the name implies, if obstinate or relapsed after once renouncing their "errors," they were to be burned to death!

Purvey was forced to "recant," but afterward continued a Lollard "priest" and even wrote a tract in defense of English Bibles. He lived at least until 1427, probably dying in prison (Deanesly, p. 227). Most of those directly influenced by Wycliffe had already recanted when faced with martyrdom. The movement, insofar as it was Wycliffite, soon became involved in a political scheme which was betrayed and its leaders executed.

Other men, however, more influenced by the Bible itself and the truth, were steadfast even to death. Under oppression, Lollards -- God's people and those who merely helped them -- retreated to the west of England, to Wales and later even to Scotland. There, ^{in out of the way corners,} scattered true followers of Christ survived for two centuries, though they were never again prominent (see Thomsen, The Later Lollards).

Wycliffe's connection with this Lollardy was only indirect (Leff, p. 607).

They were constantly hunted and oppressed by the established church, and only survived by remaining under cover as much as possible. Our only source of information about them is that which was brought out in the trials of those who were caught.

They maintained the papacy was a "beast" and anti-Christ, and that it had never been given any authority by Jesus' Apostle Peter. On the other hand, its spiritual character, some clearly stated, was that of Simon Magus! They were closer to the truth than probably they knew!

A man ought not to be baptized, they said, until mature, and the true Church was not "universal" but, in this age, was limited to a few. They maintained that the sacraments of the "universal" church were blasphemous, leading men to damnation. The relics of saints, and the miracles claimed for them, were nothing but fakes and impositions.

As late as the year 1494, thirty persons called "the Lollards of Kyle" were accused before the king in Ayrshire in Scotland. Every item on the list of their alleged "heresies" is truth, and exposes the religion of Rome.)

Fortunately, this group of Christians escaped execution. Others, not so fortunate, perished in a renewed fury of persecution that was provoked in Scotland by the beginning of the Reformation in Germany about twenty years later (The Lollards, published in London by the Religious Tract Society, no author given, p. 337).

The whole Lollard movement -- including the majority who were not really converted -- played no small part in preparing the people and rulers of England and Scotland to accept the Protestant Reformation. And the work they did led directly to the rise of Puritanism (an attempt

of carnal minds to satisfy the commandments of God -- especially the fourth one -- without actual repentance and obedience). ⁶⁴It is important to realize that most of those who were stigmatized as "Lollards," persecuted and even executed, were only interested in purifying the established church -- restoring it to what they supposed was its original condition -- while remaining within it. These were not converted members of God's spiritual congregation. And some who were labeled "Lollards" by the prosecutors were indeed heretics, and even atheists.

Church Continues in Bohemia

The writings and ideas of Wycliffe were carried early to Bohemia. They commanded great respect at the University of Prague. And there they provided the inspiration for John Huss -- sometimes called the "forerunner of Luther" -- who led in demanding reforms in the Catholic practice.

These were dramatic events. It seemed a great opportunity was beginning for the promulgation of the truth. But Huss was burned in 1415. Instead of peace and opportunity there was a series of wars in which all Bohemia for a time was in active rebellion against the Catholic power and the neighboring powers which supported it, and in which even the old line Waldenses and the ^(Lollards) Picards who had come from the Low Countries had to flee from city to city or into other regions to avoid being forced into military service.

Some Waldenses became leaders of the Hussites. And as early as 1415, Peter Payne, an English Wycliffite in Bohemia, had plans to unite the Hussites and Waldenses (Leff, vol. 2, pp. 469-470). But such a

union never occurred.

The Waldenses declared they had lawful bishops and a lawful, uninterrupted succession from the apostles among them. (They did not publicly use the title of bishop because of the "anti-Christian misuse" to which the word had been put by Catholics, but called their ministers simply elders). But they preferred hiding. They were in no mood for a head-on confrontation with the Catholic Church. ^{Not} even the Hussite rejection of infant baptism, or the strong chiliasm (millennialism) of the Taborites, a Hussite group, could tempt them.

As the Hussite movement failed and Bohemia returned to the Catholic fold, another group which called itself simply "the brethren" conducted negotiations for union with the Waldenses from 1450 to 1467. The two groups recognized each other as "brethren." About this time, ~~some~~ Waldenses in Pomerania and Brandenburg were found to believe that Wycliffe, Huss and Jerome (another martyred Bohemian leader) were then "in the life of the blessed" (p. 463). Yet so spiritually dead were most Waldenses, that they would not give up their illicit union with the Catholic Church!

By letters, the Bohemians reproached the Waldenses for frequenting the pope's churches, and for too much zeal in heaping up money for use in times of persecution! Finally, the aged Waldensian bishop Stephen in Austria ordained three of the leaders of the Bohemians as legitimate ministers.

Soon after, Stephen too was burned. ^{Renewed} bitter persecution drove many ~~Austrian~~ Waldenses to Bohemia and union with the "Brethren" after all. Others perished from privation and cold, or were scattered to

to other places.

The Bohemian brethren themselves divided. The larger part adopted a modified, easier religion, more acceptable to the world. They wrote of themselves as the "Brethren thru envy ... called Waldenses and Picards." The smaller, more religious group soon disappeared from public view (Lutzow, Bohemia: an Historical Sketch; the Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, article "Bohemian Brethren").

At least some of them observed God's Sabbath. "They [the Picards, or Waldensian Brethren] do not celebrate the feasts of the divine Virgin Mary and of the Apostles," says an old Latin record, "some [observe] only the Lord's day. Some indeed celebrate the Sabbath with the Jews" (quoted in Seventh-day Adventist Bible Students Source Book, item 1469).

Though information is very scanty, it appears the observance of the seventh day had never ceased even in the worst of the persecution. ^{inquisitorial} ~~Any record of 1391 states of the the Waldenses in Poland that they "prayed on the seventh day"~~ (Leff, vol. 2, p. 464). Obviously this has reference to a special observance of the day, not that they only prayed once a week! The Passagii kept the Sabbath through all the thirteenth century, ~~the~~ Polish Waldenses in the fourteenth, ~~some~~ Picards or Bohemian Brethren in the fifteenth.

In the sixteenth century -- before Luther ever thought of rebellion -- another bit of evidence is provided by ^a bull of Pope Julius II, of March 1, 1511. It is not an "anachronism" or "strange." Pope Julius once more condemns the "Passagii" -- over 200 years "too late": Clearly, he recognized the Sabbatarian "Picards" as the spiritual

descendants of those who had obeyed God's commandments throughout the Middle Ages! (see Newman, pp. 301-302).

The scattered Waldenses had disappeared. The travelling ministers who returned every seven years to their Lombard valleys ("paradise," a place of peace and safety apart and away from the world -- Leff, pp. 335, 464-465, 477) to replenish their "wisdom" had ceased! But the Church of God had reached modern times!

Sabbath Keepers Throughout Europe

Everywhere at the end of the Middle Ages, the traces of the true Church reveal its shattered condition.

Records of the Catholic Church in Norway mention obstinate keepers of the Sabbath at Bergen and at Oslo about 1435 (Andrews, History of the Sabbath, p. 673). Apparently these people followed the familiar pattern of sitting among the Sunday congregations at mass, but privately keeping the true Sabbath (and no doubt other true doctrines).

We hear of them again -- still continuing the same practice -- over a hundred years later.

A little known Sabbath-keeping group existed in Russia from about 1470 to 1503, after which it still continued underground. It was crushed with great cruelty by the government and church, many being burned in cages (Jewish Encyclopedia, article "Judaizing Heresy").

In Luther's day, a book was published in France openly defending the Sabbath (Belcher, Religious Denominations in the United States, p. 228).

And about the same time, according to the old Dutch Martyrology, at least one person was executed for keeping the Sabbath in East

Friesland. There a so-called "anabaptist" minister, Stephen Benedict, became famous for baptizing during a severe persecution. One of his converts was Barbary von Thiers, wife of Hans Borzen. At her trial she declared her rejection of the idolatrous sacraments of the Priests and the mass. She declared the Lord God had commanded to rest the seventh day. And she was executed September 16, 1528!

But here, half a century later, one person in four was an "anabaptist." The Catholic Encyclopedia, article "Sabbatarians" speaks further of these: "The two errors in doctrine and discipline [the keeping of God's Sabbath and adult baptism] are often found together. Thus Sabbatarianism made many recruits among the Mennonite Anabaptists in Holland and among the English Baptists."

While this was happening, Jesus Christ had raised up another important work among so-called "anabaptists."

The Work of Oswald Glait

An "anabaptist" was anyone who re-baptized in adulthood -- for the Catholic sprinkling of infants was accounted a "baptism." As soon as the Protestant Reformation was a success, many groups of "anabaptists" appeared, finding followers in nearly every region where the Waldenses had taught. They believed strongly in the Millennium, though many false doctrines, even Cathar influences were among them.

In 1531, a letter to "anabaptist" leaders in Switzerland raised the question of "those who wish to reinstate the physical Sabbath" and keep the whole Ten Commandments (Mennonite Encyclopedia, article "Sabbatarian Anabaptists"). It referred to Oswald Glait.

Glait had been born in southwest Germany, joined the Lutheran church in the early 1520's, served as a minister in Austria and had

come to Nikolsburg in Moravia, on the Austrian border, in 1525. Nikolsburg at that time was "a real haven for all kinds of non-Catholic groups such as Bohemian Brethren (formerly Hussites), Lutherans" and others (article "Glait," p. 522).

In the following year Glait supported an attempt to unite all the evangelical parties at Nikolsburg. Here he came under strong influence of the Bohemian Brethren. He did not join them but he became an "anabaptist." Soon he had written and published several booklets.

In a dispute regarding use of the sword, he sided for absolute non-violence (with Hans Hut ^{a forerunner} of the Hutterites). But persecution began; the most famous anabaptist leader of all, Hubmaier, was martyred and many were scattered. By late 1528, Glait was working in Silesia with Andreas Fischer (an Austrian anabaptist) and others. It was here that he published a booklet "Concerning the Keeping of the Sabbath."

This booklet taught obedience to the whole law of God. The Sabbath, because it is a part of the Ten Commandments, is as binding on Christians in the New Covenant as it was on the Jews of the Old. Other anabaptist leaders, their historical overview not being sufficient to perceive the difference between that which was merely Jewish and that which began in the time of Adam, generally rejected the Sabbath, reasoning logically that all the Judaic law would have to be reinstated, including circumcision. But Glait and Fischer set out to do the work of the true Church of God.

They taught for a while in Liegnitz in northern Silesia, but

had to leave because of the opposition of the duke. It was the same in Prussia where Glait wished to go, so he turned south to Falkenaus in the western tip of Bohemia, where a Sabbath-keeping Church is mentioned by Luther, Erasmus and others at least as late as 1588, very likely continuing the Sabbath-keeping "Picards" (see Hasel, "Sabbatarian Anabaptists," Andrews University Seminary Studies, vol. 5 [1967]).

A Sabbath-keeping church was also raised up at Nikolsburg, where it was one of three totally separate "anabaptist" groups. It was probably the result of the earliest labors of Glait and Fischer in 1527 (see Hasel, "Capito, Schwenkfeld and Crautwald"). Later Glait became the leader of a little known congregation around Jammnitz in Moravia, but in 1545, just 19 years after his accepting the truth about repentance and baptism, he was ^{an Anabaptist Theologian} ~~imprisoned~~ in Vienna, and martyred a little over a year later (19 years from his ^{-Hasel, AUSS, p. 115} beginning to keep the Sabbath?) by drowning in the Danube. Fischer worked in Slovakia and Poland, and was martyred in 1549. ^{in Scandinavia Too}

Even in Finland, where the Swedish King Gustav Vasa I ruled and introduced the Lutheran Reformation, the common people were persuaded the hard times which had come on them were for "not observing the seventh day called Saturday." A letter from the king in 1554 ordered them to "forsake this way [keeping the Sabbath] leading to damnation at once!"

What was the source of this seventh-day teaching? Anjou's Swedish Church History speaks of an "antichurch party." It was, then, a separate non-Catholic, non-Lutheran group which taught this truth.

"Entirely distinct from this antichurch party of Sabbath keepers," says Anjou, "were the rest who kept Saturday holy, abstaining from all work on it, but who did not separate themselves from the [Lutheran]

Church." These were observing Mass and the Sabbath too. They were following the practice the Waldenses had begun 300 years before.

This Sabbath-keeping was not finally stamped out until the beginning of the Thirty Years' War in 1618. Many "suffered death rather than deny their faith. It was very common for these itinerant preachers, who proclaimed the sacredness of Saturday, to connect their teachings with visions and revelations, just as they did in Norway" (Daase in Theol. Tidsskrift., 1871).

Did you catch that? It was the same Sabbath-keeping Church (with ministers) throughout Scandinavia. But it was involved in spiritual fornication -- illicit relationships with Satan's established churches.

The 1260 Years Fulfilled

Daniel had prophesied that the papacy -- symbolized by a "little horn" -- would be allowed to "make war against the saints," and by constant pressure on them to give up the true ways and conform, would actually "wear out the saints" (Dan. 7:8, 21, 25).

And that happened! The Waldenses were completely "worn out." Even many of the "anabaptists," at Luther's imperious demand, gave up their rebaptizing.

The rest soon found Rome was not the only persecutor. More people were martyred after the success of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin than ever before. Worst of all to persecute were the Calvinists. The sixteenth century was a time of great intolerance and cruelty, especially for about two generations following the Reformation. One did not have to be right, but only to differ, to be martyred.

Now notice how long it was to take to "wear out the saints." "They shall be given into his [the little horn's] hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" -- three and a half prophetic "times."

And how long was the true Church to have to exist "in the wilderness" -- that is, away from the main centers of civilization? "A thousand two hundred and threescore days" (Rev. 12:6). These two periods are the same.

Three and a half "times" (prophetic years) of 360 days each equals 1260 days. Computing according to the Biblical principle revealed in Numbers 14:34, a year for each day, we have 1260 years as the length of this sojourn. Do not confuse this period of 1260^{years} of flight from Satan's anger with another 1260-year period -- A.D. 554 to 1814 -- during which revivals of the old Roman Empire were politically dominated by the papacy (Rev. 13:5).

Waldenses, Cathars, Lollards and Wycliffe and a host of others all agreed in stating the time of the beginning of the persecution and exile of God's Church. Unanimously they dated it from the beginning of cooperation between Emperor Constantine and Pope Sylvester. There is no mistaking the time.

From Constantine's decree in 325 A.D. and consequent discrimination against all non-Catholics, 1260 reaches to the time immediately following 1585.

Did you notice, in the mentions of scattered Sabbath-keepers, how most were either completely extinct or very insignificant and spiritually weak at that time? The true Church was nearly non-existent -- all but dead -- at that time. But it could never totally die, for Christ had

said "the gates of hell [the grave] shall not prevail" against it (Matt. 16:18).

And as soon as this time was past, the hand of God moved in human events to make it possible for His Church to grow again, and for His Work to be done!

The Turning Point

In 1586-1587, conviction and execution for conspiracy of Mary, Queen of Scots, and signing of a treaty which began to draw England and Scotland firmly together, removed for the last time the threat to Britain of a Catholic domination by way of the throne. (Later Catholic monarchs no longer had the power to impose their religion on Parliament and people.)

The following year, as the supposed "invincible" Spanish Armada approached Britain to attack, it was utterly overwhelmed by a great storm at sea, a miraculous intervention in the weather.

What a miracle it was! And recognized as such.

In that day, it was on the lips of every Englishman and even on those of continentals that it could have been no other than a judgment from God. Thus, not only was England enabled to remain politically free, she was encouraged to stay non-Catholic. In the political and moral climate of freedom-loving, Israelite, Protestant Britain, God's Work could again develop.

But just as at the beginning of the 1260 years it had taken the true Church a few years to be completely removed and re-established elsewhere, now it took the Church which had been brought down to nothing a while to revive and become significant in Britain. Meanwhile, the living Jesus Christ took special steps to insure that His Church on the continent would continue to exist, as once more Thyatira's last works

became "more than the first."

The Church of Thyatira Continues

Shortly after the middle of the 16th century, a new air of religious freedom and Bible doctrine came into Transylvania (western Romania today, then part of Hungary). Here an ex-Catholic priest named Francis David joined successively the Lutheran (1540), Calvinists (1559), and Unitarians (Polish "anabaptists"). He founded in 1566 the first Unitarian (which then meant simply "anti-Trinitarian") congregation in Transylvania.

Continual study and reason led him to ever more understanding -- and some errors. He was soon branded an unscrupulous innovator by his former associates. Proving immovable in his convictions, he was condemned and imprisoned in 1578 and died the following year.

After David's death a few of his flock refused to give up the light they had received and soon there were two groups -- those who observed Sunday and those who kept the Sabbath. Meanwhile, Christ had struck down (1567) and called to His service a rich Szekler noble who was destined to be the next leader of His Church.

Andreas Eössi had turned to the study of the Bible as a result of a long illness, and the deaths of his ^{wife} and all three of his sons. With him was the talented young tutor of his children, Simon Pechi, whom Eössi now saw must become the future "apostle" of the Church. So he adopted Pechi and sent him abroad to study in 1581 (Samuel Kohn, Sabbatarians in Transylvania [in German], pp. 42, 132-133): "But Pechi did not go and settle at some recognized theological institution of this world. Instead he went many places -- Wallachia, Constantinople, Carthage, to the kings

Spain and Portugal, France -- learning from travel and broadening experience as well as study.

Eössi himself had never studied at a large institution. He had no knowledge of Hebrew, though he was well-versed in church history and found the Bible clearly revealing its truths. "They ask me in vain," he once commented, "where I discovered the true way of salvation, since I sojourned neither at Padua nor at Paris. As if salvation consisted of knowing many heathen writings and many heathen languages" (W. Bacher, "The Sabbatarians of Hungary," Jewish Quarterly Review, II, 1890, p. 472).

In the year 1588, he became openly known as the leader of the Sabbath-keeping Church.

These people put into practice and lived by every word of God, the whole Bible, Old Testament and New. They saw the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath was a type of the future state of "spiritual marriage" of Christ and His Church. And so they rejoiced by adorning themselves for the Sabbath in their finest attire. In the great antitypical seventh day they would rule with Christ a thousand years.

They also kept all the annual Sabbaths or Holy Days claiming to follow Jesus' example in so doing. (They did not / observe Hanukah or Purim -- Jewish days) They understood that the Passover with unleavened bread and wine was the continuation of the Old Testament Passover, but now in remembrance of the Redeemer who died for the sins of mankind. Their civil New Year was the Feast of Trumpets.

The so-called "Christian" festivals however -- Christmas, Easter, etc. -- they declared were the inventions of popes (Glaik had used the same words about Sunday!). They of course rejected the "baptism" of

such "Christians."

They made a distinction between clean and unclean meats. But they did not circumcise. They understood that they, being Gentiles descended from Gomer son of Japheth (most were Hungarians or Szekler) had become part of spiritual Israel and sons of Abraham in that way.

"Not Abraham was our father, neither are we the remnant of his seed; but we are sprung from the house of Japheth, sons of ignorant heathens yet hast Thou turned unto us and made us sons of great Abraham" (Bacher, p. 472; Eph. 2:12-20; Gal. 3:29).

Most important of all, they inculcated the moral conduct emphasized by Jesus Christ -- love for God and man, obedience to the Ten Commandments, moderation in all things, respect for authority, honor to those in civil offices, etc. Yet it was not a salvation by works. They knew God had given man free moral agency, and they knew we can only be saved by grace, through Jesus Christ.

About 1600, they compiled and printed a hymn book of 110 paraphrases of Psalms and other poetical passages of the Bible. Forty-four relate to the Sabbath, 5 to the new moons, 11 to Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, 6 to Pentecost, 3 to the Festival of Trumpets 1 to the Day of Atonement and 6 to the Festival of Tabernacles.

New Efforts to Wear Out the Saints

As their numbers rapidly increased, most continued to assemble with one of the four established denominations of the country, holding their own meetings in secret, usually keeping the Sabbaths in the privacy of their own homes. And no wonder! For new persecutions were continually being devised against their property, their liberty

and their lives.

The first law for the suppression of Sabbatarians was passed in 1595. In 1600, a new, usurping prince ordered them punished and their property confiscated, including many of their books and writings which were burned. A similar regulation was propounded in 1607. (Notice an amazing pattern of 7 [1581-1588, 1588-1595, 1600-1607], 12 [1588-1600] and 19 [1581-1600] in the history of this Church.)

Pechi returned from abroad in June, 1599, barely in time to see the elderly Eössi alive, who died the same year. He now became the acknowledged leader of the Sabbath keepers. Like many others, he passed as a "Unitarian" and a good "Christian." But, with his unusual education and experience, he was soon appointed to public offices, finally becoming Prime Minister of the county -- which proved to be his undoing. Christ has not called his people to govern the nations in this life.

Pechi's position did keep the increasingly restrictive and unfavorable laws against God's people inoperative for a while. ^{But} In 1618 a Unitarian synod formally excommunicated all seventh-day keepers, while the prince of the country himself proposed yet another new law against them. They were given one year to "come to their senses" and rejoin one of the recognized churches. Soon thereafter most of their books were seized and burned.

In the same year the Thirty Years' War began. As Prime Minister (Chancellor), Pechi was forced to accompany the prince and his army to war in Austria in 1619.

This was another turning point -- and the end of another 19-year cycle -- in the history of these people of God.

One cannot be both a part of this world and a true Christian at the same time! Pechi was suddenly seized and imprisoned for three and a half years and afterward placed in retirement. He did not again take a leading role until about 1629, when he began to aid in drawing the Sabbath keepers into closer association with a great influx of recently arrived Sephardic Jews. (There had been no Jews in Transylvania 10 years before.)

During the last part of this 19-year cycle, Sabbatarians in Transylvania stood at the height of their secular influence. Pechi was again highly honored and stood high in government circles. But it was a false prosperity. It was estimated that between fifteen and twenty thousand people in Transylvania were keeping the Sabbath by 1635 when a new, severe law was issued.

It remained inoperative for three years. Then suddenly in 1638 a commission representing the four recognized religions summoned many of the Sabbath keepers before it and sentenced them to loss of life and goods. Pechi himself was condemned, imprisoned, but later freed, having been forced to renounce the Sabbath! From this time on, the Church in Transylvania survived only in secret. Usually one member of a family (a different person each week) would be sent to attend the Sunday meetings while the Sabbaths were kept at home and the Holy Days in the woods.

Many Sabbath-keepers became outright Jews. Others migrated. Of those who remained behind, a handful "held fast" (Rev. 2:25) till the 20th century. It is said Pechi himself fled with a number of his followers to Moldavia and Constantinople.

Is it significant that many "Unitarians" fleeing adjoining Poland in the same period made their way to Holland? There were Sabbath keepers there and England was just across the Channel, where God's Sabbath-keeping Church was beginning to revive!

CHAPTER 7

THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA

It was the beginning of the seventeenth century. The 1260 years had ended. The Protestant Reformation had occurred. It was time for the "Sardis" Church.

"Many conscientious and independent thinkers in the reign of Elizabeth [1558-1603] advocated the seventh day" (Chambers' Encyclopedia "Sabbath").

A "great disputation" about the Sabbath arose. Many proved they could argue about it. Many could plainly see that keeping the Sabbath was required by the Commandments of God. But would they fully surrender to God's government? Now that was something else!

Let's understand what was really happening in England.

The Puritan Sunday

Henry VIII had put himself in the place of the pope -- and cut the ties with Rome. The Catholic clergy automatically became the ministry of the Church of England -- Anglican or Episcopalian. A few saw the need for further reforms. They became known as Puritans. Those who went so far as to separate themselves from the state church became Separatists or Independents (the later Congregationalists).

These people had heard of God's Sabbath. In fact, in the official church services each Commandment was read aloud and the congregation responded: "Lord, incline our hearts to keep this law" (Thomas Broad, Three Questions Answered, 1621, title page).

No wonder then that some Puritans became increasingly aware of a glaring discrepancy between the Commandment and their Sunday practice:

Would they -- or would they not -- return to God's Law?

Here's what happened.

The Protestants had rejected Roman authority (though not neces-

arily Roman doctrine or practice). Now, in their attempts to claim Bible authority to replace and withstand that of the pope, the Puritans found an impassable gulf between the Fourth Commandment and traditional Sunday observance.

Though Sunday previously had been the day for Catholic mass, it was otherwise not a religious, but a civil holiday. It was the civil "mark of the beast" (Rev. 13:16). After mass, business, labor or pleasure continued as usual. Sunday was not "kept" holy (nor could it ever be -- for God had never made it holy in the first place). So-- thinking to bridge the gap, these British Protestants began to imagine that all the sanctity and obligation to "keep it holy" had been transferred from the Sabbath to Sunday.

Such terms as "the Christian Sabbath," meaning Sunday, began to be used for the first time, and new theories about the "Lord's day" were invented to justify it.

Forming a Protestant Doctrine

What the Puritans did was to try to justify Sunday observance from the Bible, and to argue that the Fourth Commandment required the observance not of "the seventh day" but merely "one day in seven."

Sunday was the day they had inherited from "mother Rome," and the day observed by all the world around them. To leave Sunday and to fly in the face of all public opinion was unthinkable to the Puritans. They would merely observe Sunday more strictly!

Nicholas Bound, D.D., taught the following in a book published in England in (1595): "...the Christian Sabbath, that it is a perpetuation of the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment, but that the day specified in that commandment has been changed by authority from the seventh to the

first day of the week."

Dr. Bound's book was suppressed by order of the archbishop in 1599. Nevertheless, his theory, in the words of a learned contemporary, was a "most bewitching error, and the most popular infatuation that ever was embraced by the people of England" (quoted in Balcher, Religious Denominations in America, p. 228). It soon permeated the thinking of all Anglo-Saxon Protestantism.

Later, when the Puritans gained power in England (1649-1660), and though they had been persecuted themselves, they were quite willing to persecute any who disagreed with them. In stern rules and strict enforcement for Sunday, they went far beyond anything God commands for His true Sabbath. They fell into the same rut as the ancient Pharisees whose added "do's" and "don'ts" had made the Sabbath a strait-laced yoke of bondage to the Jews!

It was to escape the harsh and unjust rule of Massachusetts Puritans that Roger Williams founded the original colony of Rhode Island.

But from such a background, Jesus Christ began to call a few to begin a new era in His Church.

The Work of John Traske

Some few were not satisfied with Puritan Sunday observance. One of these was a stentorian-voiced Puritan minister named John Traske. Traske came from Somersetshire and Devonshire to London to preach in 1617. Both he and his wife were schoolteachers, but they were willing to learn as well, and to practice the truth.

It is said that the first to introduce the seventh-day Sabbath was Hamlet Jackson, one of their associates. At any rate, the Traskes

Ten Commandments, far from being a part of the "law of Moses," which the majority of religious teachers were falsely teaching had been done away, had actually been revealed to the very first humans. From this, they went on to understand the truth concerning clean and unclean meats (Lev. 11).

They saw that the true Church was "knowne to very few, consisting of 2 or 3 gathered together in Christs name, himselfe promising to be in the midst of them Matth. 18. vers. 20. that is to say, a small number of such little ones as have truly repented" (A Briefe Refutation of John Traskes Judaical and Novel Fancies, 1618, p. 33).

Traske emphasized this matter of repentance. There was some one definite experience, he said, after which one was a Christian, and he would "often presume to tell his disciples, whether at all, or when, they truly repented" He professed to be able to tell if a person was converted merely by the person's habitual expression (p. 7).

Then he saw that the early church had kept the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and God's other Holy Days, and he himself began to keep them (pp. 17, 34, 58-60). These were referred to in God's Word as statutes, ordained to be kept forever, and like the Ten Commandments, they antedated the law of Moses.

He had written several books (which have perished). But as his enemies viewed it, his "only learning is a literall knowledge of Scriptures, and some little Hebrew and Greeke lately learned" (p. 4).

A few accepted the truth. Traske ordained four as evangelists, including Hamlet Jackson and Returns Hebden. But the Church was not long left in peace.

Because of his teaching, Traske was censured in the infamous Star Chamber, pilloried, publicly whipped and then imprisoned. He was sentenced for three years, but recanted and was released in 1619. He "afterwards relapsed, not into the same, but other opinions rather humorous than hurtful" (Cox's Literature of the Sabbath Question, vol. 1, p. 157).

Jackson and some others contacted ^{or Judaisers} Jews at Amsterdam (Jews had been banished from England) whose influence ultimately led a few of them to reject the New Testament entirely. Others died or rejoined the Anglican church (Ephraim Pagitt, Heresiography, 1661 ed., pp. 164-195).

Mrs. Traske proved herself more faithful. Because she refused to teach her pupils as usual on the Sabbath, she too was seized and jailed, where she remained for 16 long years until she died about 1644. "Her sect" (as Pagitt calls it), as far as Mrs. Traske knew, had dwindled to no more than "two or three women." *Hebden, tho, had died in prison.*

But all the truth was not dead.

Another Leader

Meanwhile, Christ was calling another leader in the person of Theophilus Brabourne, a Puritan minister in Norfolk (where lived many hundreds of people from Holland just across the North Sea). Brabourne published in 1628 and again in 1632 books advocating the observance of God's seventh day. The Sabbath, he wrote, is eternal and was revealed to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

But Brabourne was quite unlike Traske in one way. "...The ceremonial Sabbathes with all other ceremonies, I do reject: It is the Decalogue, and nothing else, which I defend" (A Defence of the Most

Ordinance of God the Sabbath Day, 1632, p. 4). He, like most of God's Church in the Sardis from that day forth, ~~had been deceived by the~~ King James rendering of Colossians 2:16-17. Very few people, it seems, have ever noticed that verse 16 and 17 are all one sentence: "Let no man judge you ... but the body of Christ [the Church -- 1:18]." (Note that the "is" in verse 17 is an addition -- an error actually -- of the translators.)

These verses do not do away with anything. They merely warn true Christians not to let anyone but a minister of the true Church of God tell them how to observe the weekly and annual Sabbaths in the matter of eating, drinking, etc. on those days. Why? Lest some "man beguile you of your reward": (verse 18).

Brabourne did observe a Pentecost. But he miscounted the 50 days from an annual Sabbath to make it come out on a Saturday! (A Discourse upon the Sabbath Day, 1628, p. 15).

Do nothing rashly, he counselled. It was better, he thought, to keep Sunday strictly till the Sabbath should be observed everywhere, than to sit at home with no church service. Study the Sabbath "and let green thoughts be ripened by years ... ^{he counselled.} "...Neither is the point so green in me as some may judge...." (pp. 229,235). Clearly he had been in contact with the Thyatira Sabbath believers of the continent.

Of Brabourne, Cox says, "[He] may be regarded as the founder in England of the sect at first known as Sabbatarians, but now calling themselves Seventh Day Baptists." (But they did not call themselves Seventh Day Baptists until much later. Brabourne himself in his 1632 book uses the name Church of God or God's Church repeatedly -- pp. A3.

B1. C. 612, 614).

Cox continues: "This sect arose in Germany in the 16th century." He means the Sabbath-keeping-"anabaptists" of Bohemia and elsewhere. When official pressure was brought to bear, Brabourne "became a convert, conforming himself quietly [though temporarily] to the Church of England. His followers, however, did not all accompany him back to orthodoxy" (vol. 1, p. 220; vol. 2, p. 6).

One of those followers was James Ocford (Oakford, Ockford) who also published a book in defense of God's Sabbath about 1642. He too was derided and called an "Anabaptist." Wrote Daniel Cawdrey in 1645: "another before him was so resolute for his opinion, that in pursuance thereof he resolved to dy a martyr. That was T. Brabourne, as the B. of E. [Bishop White of Ely] reports him. p. 282. But so far was he from dying a martyr, that he is rather turned Apostate, in this particular of the morality of the fourth Commandment, being convinced, or rather seducd by the B. to judg the commandment to be ceremonial, and abolished" (Sabbatum Redivum, p. 427, his italics and spelling).

After this, however, even Brabourne again stood fast, writing in 1654: "I have adventured to publish it [the Sabbath] and defend it, saying with Queen Esther, 'If I ^{perish} perish,' and with the Apostle Paul: 'neither is my life dear unto me, so that I may fulfill my course with joy'" (see Lewis, A Critical History of the Sabbath and Sunday, p. 327).

These were still days when those who held opinions different from the establishment were in danger -- especially so-called Arians, Anabaptists, Antitrinitarians, and "such monsters raised from Hell partly in Germany, partly in these Islands" (T. Edwards, Churchiana, 1646,

part 2, p. 193).

Ocford's book was "confuted with fire." But neither Brabourne nor Ocford had to die. The 1260 years were over! Instead the continuing verbal attacks actually caused the truth to grow stronger. On July 29, 1646 the following letter was written: "Sir, I think it is fit to give you an account of things: The last Saturday the Jewish Sabbath was kept again, with windows shut. I am informed this day, that they have begun it in other parts of the Town; ...[some Sabbath keepers told the magistrate] they would keep the Jewish Sabbath, and hoped before long to see it here as at Amsterdam" (part 1, p. 95).

Even from the persecution following the end of the Council of Laodicea, when direct Sabbath persecution was inaugurated, 1260 years were now past. In the English-speaking world, there was no more any official persecution (as a continual policy of the Church of God), nor persecution to the death.

About this time, Philip Tandy or Tanny, a minister of the established church in the north of England, saw the truth concerning the Sabbath and the true mode of baptism, and abandoned that church. Many others were soon to be preaching to Sabbath keeping congregations, as throughout the 1600's and 1700's a succession of authors wrote and published works expounding and defending Biblical truth, especially the command to keep God's Sabbath.

But now that the time in the wilderness was ended, the zeal which was needed was lacking. For that reason, Jesus calls the Sardis Church "dead" (Rev. 3:1).

Character of the Sardis Era

"I know thy works," said Jesus, "that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art [spiritually, all but] dead."

And with this indictment, Jesus pictures Himself able and willing to dispense a plentiful supply of zeal and life from the "seven Spirits of God," symbolic language for the sum total of God's Holy Spirit:

But in case the ministers of this Church era failed to receive the life and zeal He offered, He then added a scarcely veiled warning. He reminded this Church that He has not just one, but seven stars -- that is, seven messengers (angels in the King James version -- Rev. 1:20) who are these seven "messengers". They represent the totality of the ministry of Christ's Church throughout the seven church eras. Christ's gospel reaches His people through His ministers as messengers. Then all the members have a part in carrying it on to still others. But if the Sardis ministers and people would not properly do His Work, He would have to raise up other people -- another church era -- who would:

Trask had started out well. But he did not continue. And so through the Sardis era this was the pattern. True ministers were few. They were negligent to restore the whole truth. Instead, they often let what truth they had gradually die!

Christ exhorted these people to get busy (become watchful, or "wake up" according to the original Greek) and "strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die" (verse 2). "Hold fast ... repent" (verse 3). Much was lacking in the organization, government and doctrine of this Church.

Of all the seven churches, Christ has the least to say to Sardis. For the leadership actually called for a look at the same things

their leaders, and among them only a very few were worthy, who "had not defiled their garments" spiritually speaking (verse 4).

Significantly, the site of the ancient city of Sardis is completely deserted today. Only nomad Turkish herders pitch their tents near the place they call Sart. Its dead condition aptly symbolizes the spiritual condition of the Sardis era of God's Church.

Sabbatarian Congregations Multiplied

In the 1650's and later a number of Sabbath-keeping congregations were formed in various parts of England. In Brabourne's city of Norwich a congregation was pastored by Christopher Pooley. Brabourne left money to this church in his will.

A church was founded at Natton, near Tewksbury in the far west of England. "There is evidence of Sabbath keepers at Natton as early as 1620, who were probably gathered into a church about 1640 and were completely organized as a congregation by 1650" (The Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, pp. 44-45). But its minister too, John Cowell, eventually found the way too hard.

In 1671, Cowell apostatized and published a book entitled The Snare Broken. In this, he justified himself for rejecting the truth entirely, because some Sabbath keepers began to rest at sunset while others waited until dark! And because they claimed that all Sabbath breakers were under the penalty of death (Rom. 6:23.) And because a few ^{individuals} did go to extremes, perhaps, as he claims, actually rejecting ^{the divinity of} Jesus Christ and the New Testament.

He accused several of the chief Sabbatarian leaders of Judaizing, "of circumcision (which they also practised), and for the observations of the Sabbath day, even to offering and sacrificing. If they

actually did this, certainly they also kept God's annual Holy Days and eschewed unclean meats], as may be seen in the propositions and queries of Christopher Pooly and Edward Skipp, printed 1664...." (Cox's Sabbath Literature, vol. 2, p. 57).

Now consider: What is "Judaizing"? Were these Sabbath keepers "Judaizing"? Is believing and obeying the Old Testament being like the Jews? Absolutely not. Jesus never condemned the Jews for honoring and obeying the Law, but because by their man-made additions and fables they made the law of God of no effect (Mark 7:13). That is not what Sabbath and Holy Day keepers do. Not obeying and ^{not} teaching all that God commanded does that (Matt. 5:19).

Not keeping the Sabbath, Holy Days, etc. (judging one's self more righteous than God, in effect) is Judaizing. Adding do's and don'ts that God never commanded, while making a strait-laced observance of man's customs into a sort of penance -- an unacceptable self-imposed fin^e offered to God while continuing to disobey what He commanded. That is what the Jews did. Have you ever asked yourself who prohibited the things most churches say one must abstain from? (Of course sacrifices and rituals were merely a schoolmaster to teach habi^ts of obedience and lead the Israelites to Christ -- Gal. 3:26 -- and having served their purpose are no longer needed. But the Old Testament has not been abolished! Its spiritual precepts are still to be lived by!)

After Cowell, the Natton-Tewksbury church continued under the ministry of John Purser.

To the north, at Hexham, Northumberland, Thomas Tillam was pastor of a church in the early 1650's. A little later he was at

Colchester, Essex where he soon had several hundred people keeping the Sabbath and had baptized over a hundred. How did he achieve such success? Under Cromwell's rule, at this time, many of the more "ignorant and scandalous" ministers had been ejected from their pulpits in the Church of England. Tillam, who had earlier been "a Baptist chaplain with Cromwell's army, came to occupy the parish church of Colchester and, upon accepting the Sabbath, closed the church on Sundays, and opened it for Sabbath services about 1656. Needless to say, this was too much for the authorities and so his career there did not last long" (James McGeachy, The Times of Stephen Mumford, p. 5). Probably few of those people continued to keep the Sabbath.

Tillam was greatly stirred by the prospect of the imminent return of Jesus Christ to earth. "The signs of his second coming who is the Lord of the Sabbath are so fairly visible that, although the day and hour be not known, yet doubtless this generation shall not pass..." he wrote (E.A. Payne, "Thomas Tillam," The Baptist Quarterly, Vol. XVII, no. 2, April 1957, p. 64). His lively mind became dominated by millenarian hopes.

At least Tillam was zealous, but he was not wise. He was briefly imprisoned for his coup d'etat at Colchester, but soon was free. Now with Christopher Pooly, who had become his close friend, he colonized about 200 English and Dutch Sabbathkeeping families from Essex and East Anglia and from the north of England to an area near Heidelberg, Germany.

What happened to them? That is not known. It is known, however, that following the French invasion of 1689, there was a great movement of refugees from that area to America (p. 66).

Tillam himself died in 1675 after having been disowned -- "Jewish" partly for his/doctrines -- by the calmer group of English Sabbath-keepers and by Edward Stennett's pamphlet "A Faithful Testimony Against the Teachers of Circumcision and the Legal Ceremonies, who are lately gone into Germany."

The Sabbath Churches of London

In the meantime the work that Trask began in London continued under Dr. Peter Chamberlen, a Cambridge University graduate. He and Tillam had been associated before either became a Sabbathkeeper. In 1658, Chamberlen, Tillam and Matthew Coppinger, a convert of Trask, cooperated in defending the Sabbath in debate with a group of Sunday Baptist leaders. One result of this debate was the conversion of a bricklayer named John Belcher. By 1662, Belcher had raised up a second London church, which became known as the "Bell Lane" church.

In those days in England, there arose a religio-political movement called the Fifth Monarchy Men (see Dan. 2 and 7). They believed the time had come for Christ's appearing and his kingdom. "The earliest tract about 'King Jesus' appeared in 1642, from an Oxford scholar.... Many leading Baptists considered the Fifth Monarchy as imminent" (Payne, "Seventh Day Baptists in England," The Baptist Quarterly, vol. XII, no. 8, Oct. 1947, p. 252). But some of these men conceived the erroneous idea that they -- mere human beings --

should set up Christ's Kingdom for Him before His return. This of course was treason and brought the wrath and suspicion of the English government on all who proclaimed the Kingdom of God.

With such ideas extant, the true teaching regarding Christ's coming kingdom was suspect. And as a result, the successor of Peter Chamberlen, John James, was pulled from the pulpit and martyred in 1661. He too was more zealous than wise, considering the circumstances of the day. His vehemence and vigorous emphasis on the Second Coming and the millennial kingdom cost him his life, but he was faithful to the end.

As a matter of fact, John Belcher too was so ardent for the Kingdom of Christ that the State Papers of September 26, 1661, reported him as likely to lead a rebellion (McGeachy, p. 10).

Two Famous Families

Jesus Christ often uses more than one member of a family to proclaim His Word. Such was the case in the Sardis era with the Bampfield brothers, Francis and Thomas. Both wrote and published books on the Sabbath, creation, the Law of God, etc.

The younger, Thomas, wrote later. He was a member of Parliament, a respected personage of his day, whose views will serve to illustrate the degenerating attitude of the Sardis Church. "Circumcision, the ^{by} Passover, and the then Priesthood, were ^{his} [Christ's] death taken away," he wrote, "and Baptism, the Lord's Supper and another more excellent Gospel-ministry instituted" (Thomas Bampfield, An Inquiry Whether the L. J. Christ made the WORLD and be Jehovah and gave the Moral Law, 1692, p. 34). He regarded God's annual Sabbaths as

"Jewish Ceremonial Festivals" (p. 73), and argued that the annual Passover is no longer to be kept (p. 123). However, he admitted some still kept them, "but these few and mean [not of the upper social classes]" (pp. 3, 73).

He did teach that God still required tithing (p. 136), that the Sabbath began with Friday evening (p. 100), that Jesus Christ was the Creator, and LORD of the Old Testament.

With the Bampfields, the tendency becomes discernible that later led to the development of a Seventh-Day Baptist denomination. For, while no doubt correcting some earlier errors, the Church was falling into othersequally as bad. But as yet, and for long afterward, the Sabbatarians claimed no other name than "The Church of God" (Francis Bampfield, Shem Acher, pp. 28, 58-60), and taught most of the basic doctrines, not of the Baptists, but of the Church of God.

Francis Bampfield had been driven from a Church of England pastorate in Sherbourne, Dorset by the 1662 Act of Conformity, which required all clergy to be ordained by bishops and to conduct all services according to the official English Prayer Book. In 1665, while he was in Dorchester jail, an inquiring letter from an insistent questioner finally led him to investigate the Sabbath question. As a result, he began to keep the day that God had made holy, and soon had raised up a small Sabbath-keeping congregation within the walls of the jail.

He remained eight years in that jail. When he was released in 1671, he quickly raised up another Sabbathkeeping church at Salisbury. But this resulted in imprisonment again, 18 months in Salisbury jail.

Free once more, he began to hold meetings in London in his own hired house -- much like the Apostle Paul (Acts 28:30-31) -- and organized the "Pinner's Hall" congregation in the following year, which continued for over a century.

The Pinner's Hall church sent Bampfield out as a "messenger" to five (or more) other Sabbatarian churches in Salisbury (Wiltshire), Hampshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Wallingford (Berkshire). He also took the lead in attempting (unsuccessfully) to establish some sort of union encompassing all the Sabbatarian congregations. In it he envisioned not only the English churches, but also the Sabbatarian congregations in Holland (p. 25).

Afterward, Francis Bampfield was seized again and soon died in London's Newgate prison. Edward Stennett then became the pastor of the Pinner's Hall church.

The famous Stennett family, which provided ministers for the Church of God in England for four generations, is another example of a family from which came more than one leader.

Church Ignores Prophetic Warning

But now the shortcomings of the Sardis ministry were becoming more and more evident.

Christ had warned His servants of this era to "remember therefore how thou hast received and heard." HOW had they received His truth? Mostly by diligent study of the Bible itself -- and from those who had zeal in the times of persecution and danger. They should have continued to study diligently, to "prove all things," to acquire even more truth

and to put every bit into practice. But Sardis' zeal had died! Christ warned them to remember because He knew they would tend to forget.

Differences -- as a result of errors -- existed among them in doctrine and practice. The Bampffields and Stennetts were Calvinistic. The other London congregations held Arminian views. Both were partly right, yet both were wrong. The reason? Neither were properly keeping, meditating on and really understanding the meaning of God's Holy Days which picture and reveal His master plan of salvation. Only a few are called now. But God will give everyone a chance -- each in his own order -- and it will then be up to every man whether he will persevere to be finally saved.

The Sardis Church had no school or organized training program for the development of converted and dedicated Sabbatarian ministers. Because it had such a system, the Waldensian church in the Thyatira era had survived three centuries of direct persecution. Christ Himself set the example of training His first ministers for three and a half years. Not following Christ's example, the Sardis Church dwindled away.

Consider, for example, the further history of the London congregations founded by Francis Bampfield and John Belcher.

For many years, the two separate seventh-day congregations met in the same hall -- one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Through the years -- and several changes of meeting place -- this continued (The Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, p. 65). They could not officially unite because of the difference in doctrine.

For lack of qualified ministers, services were often conducted by ministers of other churches. During one period, four different Baptist ministers preached in rotation to the afternoon congregation. Similar instances seem to have occurred in the morning church. The leaven of error became more firmly entrenched than before. And gradually the two congregations merged.

Later, this "combined" congregation merged again -- this time with the so-called "Mill Yard church" -- which owed its origin to Trask. Significantly, in the Mill Yard church building, also there had been separate morning and afternoon services with separate ministers since 1754. In that year, the Mill Yard church records contain the earliest extant mention in England of "a congregation of Protestants dissenting from the Church of England, commonly called Seventh-day Baptists" (p. 42).

Even some of the ministers, ^{who} preached to God's congregations on the Sabbath, and kept the Sabbath themselves, also pastored "first-day" congregations on Sunday! (Belcher, Religious Denominations in the United States, pp. 232, 235, 238). The natural result was a divided interest at best, and this led inevitably to an almost total lack of feeding the flock of God, or promulgating His truth. No wonder Christ calls the Sardis era "dead"!

No wonder Jesus Christ was concerned. He foresaw the certain result of this relationship with the churches and ministers of the world. It allowed -- even encouraged -- the circulation of more and more false doctrine among His people.

Did they not realize that false doctrine was the cause of false churches?! God will not grant repentance to those too far from the truth!

"What shall we say," wailed Dr. Peter Chamberlen, "of those that take away of those ten words [the Ten Commandments], or those that make them void [particularly the fourth one] and teach men so? Nay, they dare to give the lie to Jehovah, and make Jesus Christ not only a breaker of the law, but the very author of sin in others, also causing them to break them! Hath not the little horn played his part lustily in this, and worn out the saints of the Most High, so they become little horn men also!"

The Bitter Fruit of Neglect

Although a 1690 list shows no fewer than 18 congregations (The Baptist Quarterly, Oct. 1951, XIV, 4, p. 165), Sabbathkeepers in England were never a very numerous people. By about 1800, they had become almost extinct.

Says Andrews, "With the eighteenth century, their zeal vanished" (A History of the Sabbath, p. 733). The cause? Being willing to remain in fellowship with false churches (p. 734).

Election of pastors — instead of relying on Christ to select them, rejection of the annual Passover and footwashing (The Sabbath Observer, vol. 1, p.109) etc, had become their normal practice. Finally the surviving Mill Yard church, unable to find a "7th-day" pastor in Europe, imported an American and formed a connection with the Seventh-Day Baptist denomination in America, although continuing to hold some differences of opinion. In the 20th century, the Mill Yard church has consistently taught the identity of the modern, so-called "lost" ten tribes of Israel and has returned to the observance of Christ's Passover on the 14th of Nisan ^{originally taught by its founder, John Treske.}

But long before this, God's Church had also been established in America.

The Sardis Church in America

The seventh-day Sabbath was a cause of much discussion and disagreement in Massachusetts in 1646 (Felt, The Ecclesiastical History of New England, p. 569). So far as we know, no one there actually kept it at that time. Nevertheless, the Church of God did spread to America almost as soon as local congregations began to multiply in England.

In 1664, Stephen Mumford, a member of the Bell Lane church in and former member at Natton, London, migrated to Newport, Rhode Island. Perhaps his coming was triggered by the promulgation of the Conventicle Act of 1664 in England which forbade any religious assembly of more than five persons and the family of the house, except in accordance with the official Prayer Book. The Act provided severe penalties, including the death penalty for repeated violations.

In Newport, Mumford associated with the members of a Sunday Baptist church pastored by John Clarke.

Why this fellowship with a Sunday-observing church? Because John Clarke and John Belcher, minister of the Bell Lane Sabbathkeepers, had been associates earlier in England. And because this Newport church believed very strongly in the Second Coming and millennial kingdom of Christ, and other things just as Mumford did.

Mumford persuaded several of the members to keep the seventh day holy. For a time they all continued in fellowship with Clarke's church. But differences arose; some of the Sabbathkeepers gave up the Sabbath

the Sunday observers then began to apply pressure to the rest, so that they found it wise to separate themselves and form their own church. Thus, seven years after Mumford's coming, a seventh-day congregation was formed of seven members. They identified it as (a part of) "the Church of God" (Seventh-day Baptist Memorial, vol. 1, p. 36). William Hiscox became its first elder.

In the meantime, they had written to some of the Sabbatarian churches of England for advice. One of the answers came in 1668 from Edward Stennett. He addressed the Rhode Island members as "the remnant in Rhode Island who keep the commandments of God and the testimonies of Jesus" (see Rev. 12:17). In England at that time, wrote Stennett, there were "nine or ten congregations besides numerous scattered believers in other places" (Cox, Literature of the Sabbath Question, p. 267).

Such contact continued, strengthening the new church. In addition to a number of letters, one Isaac Wells, who had been an officer with Tillam at Colchester, came across and settled on Long Island as member of the Newport church. About 1674, Mumford returned to England to report the exact situation in Rhode Island and to encourage others to come. An ^{ordained} elder from the Bell Lane church, William Gibson, returned with him and later became the second pastor of the Newport church.

Gibson was an educated man, and like some of the Stennetts, a Hebrew scholar (Seventh-Day Baptist Memorial, p. 9).

As time passed, the church in Rhode Island became the mother church of Sabbathkeepers in the United States. It grew slowly for

about 30 years. Then in 1708, the enlarged and geographically widespread Newport congregation was officially constituted into two congregations.

The "Westerly" or "Hopkinton" branch retained the original records -- being recognized as the leading or headquarters location.

"Annual Meetings" Meant for God's Feast Days

The reason for this transfer is most interesting. Previous to this time, the "Westerly" or "Hopkinton" site had become the regular meeting place for "a yearly meeting" of members from all over! It was at such a meeting -- on September 28 (Gregorian calendar) -- that the decision was made to establish the new congregation. It is significant that this date falls during the Feast of Tabernacles time for that year.

God's people, not really understanding at that time that God's annual Festivals should be kept literally -- mistakenly believing those days had been done away as/ accepting and being deceived by the common mistranslation of Colossians 2:14-17 -- were nevertheless attempting to follow the pattern of God's ^{instead the days of} days of heathen origin the world observes (Seventh-day Baptist Memorial, vol. 1, p. 32).

Says Bailey, "The [General or Yearly] meeting was regarded somewhat in the light of the yearly feasts of the Jews, when all the tribes went up to Jerusalem to worship. It was a time when the members of the Church, generally, were expected to come together for a spiritual re-union" (The Seventh-Day Baptist General Conference, p. 20-21; see page 124 also).

Shem Acher, autobiography of Francis Bamfield, also makes mentions of solemn "fasts" and assemblies in England, which they seem to have

believed took the place of the Day of Atonement.

Annual meeting dates consistently fell either during the fall Holy Day season or near Pentecost (The Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, pp. 127, 150-152, 174, 602, 614). The earliest of which we now have record was held in late May, 1684. None of these meetings came at Christmas, Easter, or even in midsummer. This was not mere chance! On the other hand, they did ^{not} seem to feel it necessary to keep them on the exact dates specified in the Bible or for the full time, and instead of keeping the true Passover, most of them were merely "breaking bread" at the annual meetings and every two or three months locally.

As time went on, a number of other congregations of Sabbathkeepers were formed -- mostly of new converts and immigrants from England.

And though they recognized a close relationship to the mother church in Rhode Island, distance made it necessary for most of the brethren in New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania to gather in annual meetings in their own areas. Such local assemblies often sent greetings to each other by letters and delegates. At these times, "the Sabbath, with its general communion, was indeed an high day" ^{Sabbath} (p. 151 and John 19:31).

The Name of God's Church

The official name of God's Church is just that -- the Church of God (Acts 20:28; I Cor. 10:32; 11:22; 15:9 and Gal. 1:13). That name is found in 12 places in the New Testament. The Church is also the Church of Christ (see Rom. 16:16 for a Biblical use of this name), who is a member of the Family of God, although he himself showed that

Until modern times the name of the Church had never been in question. Roman Catholics, Paulicians, all the Cathars, the Waldenses -- all concurred in calling themselves "the Church of God" or occasional "the Church of Christ." It was not until the rise of numerous Protestant denominations that such names as Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, Adventist, etc., became an issue.

One of the most important early Sabbathkeeping congregations in America was founded in 1705 at Piscataway, New Jersey. A farmer had challenged Edmond Dunham, a "first-day" ministerial trainee there, to prove by the Bible -- if he could -- his condemnation of farming on Sunday. Dunham found and accepted the truth! He began a new congregation whose records use the name "the Church of God" (Seventh-day Baptist Memorial, vol. 2, p. 121, 159-160).

The connection of this name with the Rhode Island headquarters also is demonstrated by the fact that Dunham was sent to Westerly for ordination.

At Shrewsbury, New Jersey, also, where a church was organized in 1745 by members who had migrated from Rhode Island, Connecticut and Long Island, the record plainly speaks of "the Church of God dwelling at Shrewsbury" (Seventh-day Baptist Memorial, vol. 2, p. 160; Randolph, A History of the Seventh Day Baptists in West Virginia, pp. 19-20).

At the same time, the Church was very frequently referred to as "the Church of Christ," and individual congregations as "the Sabbatarian Church of Hopkinton, Westerly, Newport, Shrewsbury, etc., or simply as "the Church at" such and such a place, as in many instances in the

Emergence of Other Seventh-Day Congregations in America

In 1695, certain Sabbathkeepers, who were in contact with the Rhode Island church, lived on western Long Island. From there Jonathan Davis migrated to Trenton in western New Jersey and Abal Noble to southeastern Pennsylvania. Both proceeded to make converts. But neither chose to take to himself the office of pastor. Davis' converts became members of the Piscataway church, until those who lived in southern New Jersey became the Shiloh church in 1732 under the direction of Davis' nephew, also named Jonathan Davis.

West of the Delaware River, Noble's converts were organized by one of them, Thomas Martin, into the Newtown church of Upper Providence, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. From this beginning, the fruits of Noble's efforts were churches at Nottingham near the head of Chesapeake Bay and, about 1722, farther inland at Nantmeal or French Creek, as well as the Pennepek church and the German Sabbathkeepers soon to be mentioned.

Many of these members were of Welsh descent and former Quakers. They were plain of dress and speech, had nothing to do with oaths or war-making. A noted English visitor wrote of them in 1788:

"Such Christians I have never seen, who take the Scriptures as their only guide.... They read much, they sing and pray much... they walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless... and whatsoever they believe their Saviour commands, they practise without inquiring or regarding what others do" (The Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, vol. 2, p. 674).

It was members of this kind -- and they only -- who composed the actual Church of God!

William Davis

But unfortunately not all of persons who had accepted the Sabbath had become converted, nor acquired the habit of prayer and Bible study. Some had merely accepted the doctrinal "argument" of the Sabbath.

Among them were some individuals who had "crept in unawares" -- just as they had in Jude's day (Jude 4) -- for the express purpose of drawing away converts to their own style of belief.

One of these was an "evangelist" very important historically in connection with the future development of a denominational church. William Davis had studied at Oxford to become a clergyman of the Church of England, but changed his mind and became a Quaker instead. Migrating to Pennsylvania, he soon fell into disagreement with other Quakers. He then switched to the Baptists. Soon afterward he accepted the Sabbath at Newtown and founded his own seventh-day church in 1700 at Pennepek (now within the city limits of Philadelphia). Further disagreements here soon caused this "obnoxious brother" (Seventh-day Baptist Memorial, vol. 1, p. 8) to move to Rhode Island.

Davis came among the members of the Newport church in 1706 and applied for membership. He was turned down on the grounds that he held wrong doctrines:

Four years later he tried again at Westerly and was accepted, subject to approval by the annual meeting. Approval was finally granted though some still objected. In 1713, he was authorized to preach and to baptize.

But had this man become a true member of God's Church? His fruits show he had not. He was in trouble with the Church, and was

"in" and "out" of fellowship for the rest of his life. He twice moved to Pennsylvania and back, lived in Connecticut for a while, and finally died pastor of the Shrewsbury church in New Jersey. To the end, he maintained the "rightness" of his own views and argued with God's Word.

Listen to a bit of this letter he wrote, defending himself and accusing the truth. "Now all this enmity against ME among seventh-day men arose against ME originally from a noted seventh-day man and soul sleeper in this country [Davis apparently refers to one of the leaders of the churches in Pennsylvania; a 'soul sleeper' is one who knows that death is a ^{temporary} sleep and that there is no 'immortal soul' in heaven or hell], who above twenty years ago opposed ME about my principles of immortality of human souls, and afterward proceeded to differ with ME about my faith in Christ and the Trinity, who having poisoned several other seventh-day men with the mortal and atheistical notion, and set them against ME, he secretly conveyed this drench [enmity or accusation] against ME over to Westerly to the persons beforenamed ['old' Mr. Clarke, Joseph Crandall, Thomas Hiscox -- the elders and pillars of the Church of God in Rhode Island], who, complying with him in their judgments [doctrines] in the Socinian and Anti-Trinitarian error, drank it greedily down before I came among them..." (Seventh-day Baptist Memorial, vol. 2, pp. 101-108, emphasis ours).

Notice how he continually accuses his opponents of being "against" HIM, at the same time tacitly admitting it was really his false doctrine they were against -- doctrines which were totally at variance to the

truth the Church had long held "before [he] came among them."

By such as he, more error was introduced among the members. Belief in a Trinity, an immortal soul, participation in war, etc., became common -- though there continued to be objectors to these things (see Randolph, pp. 38-45).

German Sabbatarians Too

A delegation of German ministers and leaders helped organize the Shrewsbury (or Squan) Church of God in 1745 and made William Davis the pastor. A great many Germans had settled in Pennsylvania. They, like the Quakers, were in search of religious freedom, and some accepted the Sabbath when Abel Noble introduced it among them.

By 1699, a church at Philadelphia under Thomas Rutter was keeping the Sabbath, and was in contact with the Church in Rhode Island. Other Germans began to keep the Sabbath about 1724 at Ephrata and some at Bethlehem a few years later. All these people believed the Millennium was at hand (The Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, vol. 2, p. 950).

The Ephrata group, ⁽¹⁷²⁸⁾ led by Conrad Beissel, tended toward semi-mysticism. They were also strongly influenced by certain (supposed) "Jewish Indian traders" (Julius Sachse, The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania, 1708-1742, p. 116). Who these so-called "Jews" were, where they came from and where they got their wives is unknown. It is certain, however, that they practiced and taught "the Mosak ceremonies and customs." Several German families went together to build a "synagogue" and two or three individuals even went so far as to become circumcised!

The shofar (ram's horn trumpet, as in Joel 2:1) was blown. Surely God's Holy Days were kept. Is it possible that these "Jews" were the remnant of the English and Dutch colonists Tillam and Pooley settled in Germany? For they had emphasized the Old Testament as much as the New!

Several families from the Nantmeal church joined the German group at Ephrata. But more and more, the German groups tended to rely on rites, forms of dress, etc.

They objected to war, sought to live a quiet religious life. Their "Lord's Supper" was kept with footwashing, unleavened bread and wine.

They had only portions of ^{the} truth, but perhaps some of their attitudes were right. "When we were first drawn together as a society," one explained to Benjamin Franklin, "it had pleased God to enlighten our minds so far as to see that some doctrines, which were esteemed truths, were errors we are not sure that we have arrived at the end of this progression" (The Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, vol. 2, p. 1201).

As the zone of settlement moved westward, German churches were founded in western Pennsylvania at Snow Hill and Salemville. English-speaking Sabbathkeepers were also on the move. After the death of William Davis, the Shrewsbury church continued under a son and then a grandson, Jacob Davis, who led this congregation in a mass migration to the western frontier. With many from the Piscataway church, the WoodBridgetown church was founded in western Pennsylvania, while the majority of the Shrewsbury church moved on to become the New Salem,

Virginia (now Salem, West Virginia) church in 1789. Other migrants settled between to become the West Fork church, and not long afterward still others came from southern New Jersey to found the Lost Creek church, both in (West) Virginia.

Meanwhile, much the same thing was happening to the north, where a number of Sabbathkeeping settlements which later became congregations were founded in upstate New York, mainly by people from New Jersey and New England. The Berlin church was organized in 1780. A "church of God" (Clarke, History of the Sabbatarians or Seventh Day Baptists in America, p. 51) was founded in 1797 at Brookfield. And besides these who settled in groups, many other individuals and families were scattered all over the developing frontier of the early 1800's.

The Seventh Day Baptist Church

But something was increasingly wrong. For the spirit of Sardis seemed to be exemplified in every congregation.

When John Maxson was about to be ordained in 1743, he was asked first to state whether he believed the seventh-day keeping church in Rhode Island was Christ's Church. His reply? "I believe their profession in the fundamental points of religion to be according to the gospel of truth; but have had fears of them, that they were as the church of the Laodiceans in a dead, dull or cold state" (The Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, vol. 1, p. 6). Clearly he was describing, not the Laodicean, but the Sardis church attitude, just as the prophecy describes it.

In 1753, the Newport church wrote to Mill Yard of a "great deadness" (Seventh-day Baptist Memorial, vol. 2, p. 37). In 1754, Joseph Davis

charged the Westerly church: "I believe this church as to externals is a Church of God; but that the members are cold branches.... many of the church are carnal." In 1778, many of the Hopkinton members admitted their coldness and indifference (vol. 3, pp. 126, 136).

The situation had not improved when in 1800 many began to try to organize, hoping that greater cooperation would somehow increase their effectiveness in the world. Seven or eight congregations united as a Sabbatarian General Conference, others gradually being added during the succeeding years. In 1818 this group officially adopted the name "Seventh Day Baptist Church of Christ" from which the last two words were later dropped. (It continued to regard itself as a part of a larger "Church of God" -- Bailey, p. 93)

Did organization correct the deficiency? It did not correct their doctrines. Nor could it give them more of God's Spirit. Only Christ could do that: "The [1810 General Conference] circular letter 'acknowledges with sorrow the general declension of the religion of Jesus Christ throughout our Union'" (The Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, vol. 1, p. 164).

In 1811: "The circular letter laments 'that a day of trial generally prevails in the churches of our order'...warns of antinomianism [the insidious heresy that God's Law was done away]...regrets that many of the brethren, near and remote were adopting the seventh-part-of-time theory" (p. 165). Many were becoming Sunday-observers! The Church was that dead:

In the 1830's the signs of spiritual decay were everywhere apparent

Abstracts from church letters to the Conference in 1833 tell the story. Newport: in a dull and barren state, "we humbly hope there are a few names among us who have not defiled their garments" (see Rev. 3:4). Hopkinton: "a low time with us." Shiloh: "We have nothing special to communicate as to additions or remarkable excitements, as in former years." Berlin: complains of apathy. Waterford: Tone of religious feelings is not so high as in some past seasons (Bailey, p. 145).

In succeeding years till 1842: 'very little change ... for several years,' "absence of that lively Christian feeling," "not, in general, that deep-felt interest in our spiritual welfare, and in the advancement of our Saviour's kingdom, as could be wished." "We have not experienced the outpouring of the spirit of Christ so much of late." "It is a cold time with us" (pp. 156, 149-150).

The "Seventh Day Baptists" had forgotten what they stood for! Instead of emphasizing the coming and Kingdom of Christ, most were now thinking in terms of immortal souls going to heaven!

Weakly -- God's Church continued, among the few who were obedient to God. But who can say whether it perhaps survived among the German Sabbatarians of Pennsylvania and among isolated and scattered believers who studied and obeyed God's Word, and in certain congregations who had both seventh-day and first-day observers, ^{as much} as it did among those who were organized as Seventh Day Baptists? (Those who allowed Sunday observers in their fellowship -- a mistake: -- included the large "Wilcox" church near Hopkinton of 1765 to at least 1810, and the West Fork and the Woodbridgetown congregations.)

Henry Clarke, eminent Seventh Day Baptist leader, estimated in 1811 twice as many people -- maybe 15,000 -- kept the Sabbath as attended the churches (p. 60; see also The Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, vol. 2, p. 906). He urged at that time the establishment of a seminary to train ministers and raise up many more churches. The subject came up again in 1849. Still nothing was done, until it was much, much too late.

Ancient Sardis was a rich city. It had a good location for trade. Its rich soil was the best in Asia Minor. Sardis originated coinage under rich King Croesus, who became the very symbol of wealth. Similarly, Israelite America and Britain in the Industrial Revolution, and especially after 1800, became rich through manufacturing, trade and the exploitation of vast untouched reaches of some of the world's richest agricultural and resource-laden lands. After 2520 years, our people had finally inherited the "blessings of Jacob" (Gen. 27:28; Lev. 26:18). The Church shared in this wealth.

And what was the result? Sardis began to trust in material wealth. Twice the overconfident city was taken by armies who simply walked in, after climbing a difficult, unguarded rear path. In that attitude, too the Church shared.

In A.D. 17, ancient Sardis was devastated by an earthquake from which it never recovered. Its prestige waned. But the people refused to admit the facts and began to live on the reputation of the past. In America and Britain, the entitypical Sardis Church did the same. "You have a name [a reputation] that you live," said Jesus, "but you are dead."

Letters received by ^{the} 1820 Yearly Meetings and Conference show "a more or less widespread belief in the near coming of the Lord" (p. 171). Yet only a few years later when William Miller and the Adventists began to proclaim a similar doctrine, even that feeling had mostly passed.

Survival of CHURCH OF GOD Doctrines

The truth was not lost. It simply was no longer taught! Except by small groups and individuals here and there.

"The Sabbatarians in America, even those belonging to the churches composing the General Conference, are not uniform in their doctrinal sentiments," wrote Eli S. Bailey to the pastor at Mill Yard about 1820. "It is probable that there are few sects, which indulge the exercise of private judgment to a greater extent than the Sabbatarians in America" (James Bailey, p. 165).

How could this be? The General Conference had "no prerogative over the Associations or churches, but shall act as an advisory council only" (p. 74). And within the congregations? "The government is purely Congregational, and in no sense Presbyterian or Episcopal" (p. 117). Each member could believe virtually whatever he pleased, be it carefully researched truth or careless error!

~~Clarke wrote in 1811 that "few, if any" believed God is a "Trinity, so-called" (p. 62-63). The record shows that Mrs. Traska disbelieved that false doctrine also (Pagitt, p. 211). God's people have always disbelieved it, even when some went so far as to doubt that Christ is God. From the letter abovequoted: "There are some among our ministers who have a strong aversion to the term Trinity, who [however] would contend strongly for the proper Divinity and Eternity of Jesus Christ ... very few be~~

willing to call themselves Arian. There are a few societies of Sabbatarians in the State of New York, not of our fellowship, however, that may strictly be called Ariana."

Clarke understood, as Rampfield had understood, that Christ was crucified on Wednesday and spent three days and three nights in the tomb before being resurrected on the Sabbath.

The laying on of hands was practiced, though most regarded it more as accepting the authority of the Church than for the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-18; 19:6). Nothing was practiced by a few Bailey, p. 203-4).

Some still believed in washing one another's feet as Christ commanded in John 13 (Clarke, p. 64; Randolph, p. 15).

Of course, ALL still ^{officially} subscribed to the cardinal doctrine of obedience to all the Ten Commandments.

Chapter 8

GOD'S CHURCH ON THE FRONTIER

Never were Christ's words more applicable than in the early 1800's -- never more urgent: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, for I have not found thy works perfect [completed] before God" (Rev. 3:2).

Most of those willing to keep God's Sabbath -- and thus all of God's Law, not arguing with it, but simply saying, "Yes, LORD," and DOING what He commands -- were now calling themselves Seventh-day Baptists. They were losing the true gospel of the kingdom, and had nearly lost sight of Christ's second coming.

Yet there was still a great Work for "Sardis" to do! And from this time forth, Christ would see to it that His Church, very gradually, would begin to strengthen -- for a while -- basic doctrinal truths and again show them forth, though with limited power, to the world.

But WHO would do this Work?

Where Was the Church Just Before 1844?

There was still a "Mill Yard" church, and one at Natton, in England. About 1820, there were two Sabbatarian churches in Birmingham, and two churches and ministers in north Ireland (Bailey, p. 168). There was also a church on the isle of Bute, Scotland (SDBEA, v. 1, p. 57). Could these -- with real power -- carry God's Work onward?

These churches were dwindling in numbers, all but one soon to disband. As He had earlier done on the continent, in different locations, and as He had done in the east, God seemed just to have quit calling people to conversion in those countries.

There were also scattered believing individuals and groups of families on the American frontier as it then existed, from western Virginia to western New York and moving westward fast. A little book entitled Journal of a Missionary Tour, by James L. Scott, originally published in 1843 and now again in print, gives an interesting picture of the life of some of these people.

But these people were few, widely scattered, disunited and mostly uneducated. Many of them and their descendants would be found in later stages of God's Church. Some were very sincere. But what could they do -- ALONE?

Meanwhile, a few non-Sabbathkeeping people actually had as much or more doctrinal truth as most who kept God's Sabbath. Some among Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists and even Methodists understood that mortal human beings would continue to live on the earth and be continuously judged -- just as we in God's Church are today (I Peter 4:17) -- during a Millennium separating two other periods of judgment. Many also believed Christ's coming to inaugurate His kingdom and the Millennium was very near. Some in those churches were willing to swallow neither the "unitarian" nor the "trinitarian" heresy, nor immortal soul teaching, nor call a minister "Reverend" (for that is God's name -- Psalms 111:9). They believed the Church of God should not be named after any man or doctrine, and Christians

should be known simply as Christians. Many other popular (pagan) usages and teachings were denounced.

From about the beginning of the century, quite a number of these people began to be loosely linked together in a denomination called the Christian Connection, where an atmosphere of doctrinal freedom made it easier for parts of God's truth to spread and others to learn and accept it.

and give them a chance to do His Work
Might Christ call some of them to repentance? We shall see.

An Appeal to God -- And the Result

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference had begun as early as 1818 to appoint days for fasting and prayer, for the prosperity and promulgation of the gospel (Bailey, p. 243, 301-303). Over a period of a quarter of a century the practice was intermittently continued -- 1827, 1835, 1837 etc. As the people "afflicted their souls" (Lev. 23:27) God could not but honor their earnestness.

In 1843, deeply concerned over the threat of fresh Sunday legislation, as well as general spiritual lack and indifference to the Sabbath on the part of the popular religious bodies, they took to prayer and other activity with great than usual alacrity. The General Conference resolved to send an appeal to the first-day Baptist denomination and to keep November 1 as a day of fasting and prayer that God would "arise and plead for his holy Sabbath" (SDBEA, v. 2, p. 185).

There were noticeable results. For instance, the October 10, 1844 Sabbath Recorder carried a notice of a new Seventh Day Baptist

church in Niagara county, N.Y., all the members and the pastor being new converts to the Sabbath within recent months.

At the 1844 meeting of the General Conference, Elder Samuel Davison (a minister from whom we shall hear much more later) made thankful reference to the results of the fasting and prayer for the Sabbath one year before, "since which time a deeper and wider-spread interest upon the subject has sprung up than has ever before been known in our country; Therefore [continued Davison's resolution, which climaxed the series of calls for days of fasting and prayer],

"Resolved, That the 1st day of the week in January next, ^[1845] be observed as a day of fasting, devout acknowledgement for blessings bestowed, and earnest prayer that God would continue to plead for his holy Sabbath, and also prepare us by his Holy Spirit for the labor thus devolved upon us" (Bailey, p. 244).

God did "prepare by His Holy Spirit," this man and many others for further service!

The same conference also resolved: "To prepare and print an address to all First-day Evangelical denominations.

"To grant the request of the Mill Yard Church, London, to be considered, for the purposes of friendly correspondence, a member of conference, while lamenting the important doctrinal differences between them and us" (SDBEA, v. 2, p. 106).

Earnest editorials also appeared in the Sabbath Recorder and other literature, detailing the history of Sabbath and Sunday and the supposed change of holy time.

For His own name's sake, God answered their prayers and their efforts. Yet because of their many false doctrines, which they were organized to promote, He would not answer them as they fondly hoped -- by adding more converts to them. Instead, He raised up totally separate congregations. There were definite results -- even beyond the seas. Let's notice these latter first.

A Start of Sabbathkeeping Around the World

With the first days of churchwide Seventh Day Baptist fasting and prayer, there were results. In Catholic Argentina, for example, a wealthy landowner of partly Protestant background, named Francisco Ramos Mexía began to speak out for the Sabbath and a Bible-only religion. He taught the Indians on his lands. The Sabbath was kept there and in several other places. He published two books in 1820-21. A wave of reform began to sweep over the nation.

Then severe persecution arose. Certain religious figures fought the truth desperately. Mexía was arrested in 1822 and died in 1825 (Froom, v. 4, pp. 928, 936).

But other results occurred.

In Münchberg, Germany, in the previous century, a man named Tennhardt had kept the Sabbath and had written a book about it. Now, through its influence -- as the fasting and prayers continued -- a number of people in Bavaria began to follow this truth. Similar groups in Württemberg did likewise during the 1840's.

Later, a weaver in the Rhineland established four congregations, based on belief in baptism, the Sabbath, the near return of Christ and His millennial reign.

established an even more wide-ranging church! By 1878, the Stangnowsky church had a missionary in Brazil!

The Seventh Day Adventists would later attempt to absorb all these independent groups. Some individuals, however, were never willing to go along with Seventh Day Adventist doctrines (The Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia, articles "Germany" and "Brazil").

Even in far-off China, a notable independent native Bible-believing, Sabbathkeeping work began as a result of one man's study of portions of the Bible which had been given him several years before. Not only the gospel and the kingdom he preached but also the work he founded was called the Tai-Ping which means in Chinese "Great Peace" -- the message of God's kingdom. But it lasted only a few years. It too was met with great opposition. The Western missionaries and imperialist-minded merchants and politicians, determined for filthy lucre to force the opium vice on China, managed to bring many of the "Tai-Ping" into military activity in the 1850's. Thus the so-called Tai-Ping Rebellion was crushed, and Chinese Sabbathkeeping with it!

A noteworthy leader arose in Scotland. James A. Begg had published literature on the prophecies as early as 1829. In 1832, he began to keep the Sabbath, which he continued for over 30 years, until death. He was also responsible for others following his example. He faithfully proclaimed "the truth of the kingdom" in western Scotland (Froom, v. 3, p. 560-561). ¶ In 1840, when the Millerite excitement in America was in full swing, he offered to contribute articles on the Sabbath, prophecy, and other Biblical subjects to the Millerite Signs of the Times. He frankly stated that he differed with Miller's views on many things, including the use of the

"2300 days" to determine a date for the coming of Christ. His offer and teaching rejected, he finally in 1852 became a Seventh Day Baptist.

These truths from Begg, and the 1843-44 appeals and literature from the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference were alike generally unwelcome to the Millerites as well as to all the rest of the Sunday-observing churches. Nevertheless, it was from the ranks of Millerites that God was about to bring forth the most significant and permanent answer to the fasting and the prayers.

What the Adventist Movement Was

The uninspired William Miller taught, on the basis of an erroneous interpretation of Daniel's prophecy of the "2300 days" (Dan. 8:14; write for a free article explaining their true meaning) that Jesus Christ would return to earth in 1843. Many began to follow his interpretations. Scores of ministers joined him. Tons of literature were distributed. The term Adventist (from "advent," meaning coming, arrival) was coined, and whole congregations became "Adventists." The hopes of thousands rode on a single mistaken conclusion.

When the appointed year arrived, it was found that Miller had made a simple mistake in figuring, and 1844 was actually the date he intended. The excitement rose higher than before. Finally, the long awaited second coming was fixed to an exact day, the day of Atonement (Karaites calendar), October 22, 1844!

But Christ did not come! The hopes of many were crushed.

However, the Millerite movement and the similar "literalist" movement in Britain (which never set a date, and which had passed

its peak slightly before Miller began to preach) had served a purpose. They had brought again to the fore the truth of Christ's coming before the millennium and his establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, in a world that was mostly expecting man to bring about the millennium before the coming of Christ. They had also gotten itself, some people to actually look into the Bible/who never otherwise would have done so.

For its size, the Christian Connection had provided more advent believers than any other church. And Christ would now call some to His Church.

Washington, New Hampshire

At the height of the Millerite excitement, Rachel Oakes, an ardent Seventh Day Baptist, came to live with her daughter in Washington, New Hampshire. She came well-stocked with Seventh Day Baptist literature, which she began to offer to the members of the local Christian (now "Adventist") church. She herself was interested in the possibility of the near return of Christ, and apparently, in that small town, there was no one else with whom to fellowship. But she did not believe that God would "translate" a Sabbathbreaking host of Adventists.

The Millerites were at first too busy with their expectations to notice her literature. Being a very outspoken woman, she told the circuit-riding pastor, ex-Methodist Frederick Wheeler, in no uncertain terms, that he had no business presiding and teaching until he was willing himself to obey all of God's Commandments, including the

to keep the Sabbath about March 1844. Another Millerite minister, nearby Thomas Preble, joined in this in August. - This was before the disappointment. Later, both these men gave the Sabbath up, but in the meantime, about the end of 1844, several of the members of the Washington church began to keep it, until there were about 40 members in all (Loughborough, Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1892 ed., p. 109).

Then Rachel Oakes also became an "adventist":

It is important to realize that the Washington, New Hampshire church was not a "Seventh Day Adventist" church, as the words are used today. It had no "inspired" visions, none of the erroneous "sanctuary," "investigative judgment" or other dist_inctive doctrines of the Seventh Day Adventists. No Seventh Day Adventist church was organized here until 1862: (Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia, "Washington, New Hampshire.")

Neither was it a Seventh Day Baptist church. It was a group of sincere people simply trying to walk in obedience to all the light they had received. Such a church, Jesus Christ administering to it the Spirit of God, need have no other link with other members or ministers to be a part of God's Church.

Was it mere coincidence that the Seventh Day Baptists, at their most recent General Conference, had specifically gone on record to that? (See Bailey, p. 104.) It was not!

Other Independent Groups

But the Washington, N.H., members were not the first, nor the most numerous of the Millerites to begin to keep the seventh day.

The Seventh Day Baptist Sabbath Recorder of June 13, 1844 reported the following:

"We learn from several sections that considerable numbers of those who are looking for the speedy appearance of Christ have embraced the seventh day and commenced observing it as the Sabbath. There are several reasons why we are particularly gratified to learn this fact.... It is very easy to convince an intelligent and candid man, who is not connected with any religious system or organization, that the seventh day of the week is the only Sabbath."

The September 5, 1844 issue (still before the disappointment) stated:

"We have received, in advance of the day of publication, a copy of the (Millerite) Midnight Cry for September 5. It contains an editorial article headed 'The Lord's Day' and occupying five columns in that paper. As the reason for its publication in that paper the writer says: 'Many persons have their minds deeply exercised respecting a supposed obligation to observe the seventh day.'" The Midnight Cry then attempted to show that God's Law, including His Sabbath, was done away.

Through the winter of 1844-45 following their disappointment, many Adventists read the Sabbath Recorder as it continued to call for a revival of the Sabbath (Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia, "Sabbath"

In Philadelphia, within a few months of the disappointment, an Adventist congregation learned to keep the Sabbath and to wash one another's feet as the annual Passover Christ

commanded. This congregation was probably an indirect result of booklets published by Henry Grew on such subjects as the nature of God, the atonement of Christ, the nature of man and the meaning of eternal punishment. Here in Philadelphia in 1844, Grew published a booklet against the Sabbath, which contrary to its intent, may have led truly repentant persons to the truth.

It was also from a Grew booklet of 1817 that George Storrs had first learned that man is mortal -- has no "immortal soul" -- and left the Methodist church. He himself began to publish this truth in 1841, and identifying himself with the Millerites soon after, widely expounded among them the "annihilation of the wicked," "no immortal soul," "the celebration of the Lord's supper...at the time of the Passover, of which...it was the continuation" (Spalding, Origin and History of Seventh Day Adventists, vol. 1, p. 193).

In their soul searching, in the aftermath of crushing disappointment, Christ was calling some to real repentance. Such people of course would keep the Sabbath:

Another writer worthy of mention was Elder Jabez Chadwick of west central New York state. Originally a Congregationalist minister, he became in turn a Presbyterian, a Baptist and lastly a Sabbatarian minister of the Christian Connection.

He would never affiliate with the Seventh Day Baptists because they believed in a Trinity. Nor was he ever a Millerite. His first booklets about baptism appeared as early as 1811. Later he wrote against the idea of eternal torment of the wicked and about church government. A booklet published in 1842 was entitled Trinitarianism Examined and Refuted. Others on this subject followed, his teachings

in western New York helping to spread the truth there in the 1850's as the Church of God was growing stronger.

Meanwhile, the February 28, 1845 issue of the Millerite Hope of Israel (Portland, Maine) carried a revealing article about the seventh-day Sabbath by Thomas Preble which brought this truth to Joseph Bates. Bates hurried the 150 miles to Washington and conferred with Preble and others, and himself accepted the Sabbath. Further articles followed, by Preble, J.B. Cook and others, in the Hope as well as in the Day-Dawn of New York state and the Day-Star of Cincinnati, Ohio. But it was really a booklet by Bates which in 1846 called the Sabbath to the attention of the main body of Millerites, though very few would accept it.

Through the efforts of Joseph Bates, James White who like Bates had been a minister of the Christian Connection, also believed in the Sabbath. These two, in the next dozen years, would play a major role in expanding the numbers of Sabbathkeeping Adventists. Unfortunately, it was also they who would ultimately organize many of them out of the Church of God into a Seventh Day Adventist denomination.

"The Church of God"

By 1846, the main body of the Millerites had begun swiftly falling to pieces. Their various doctrinal positions, usually associated with the beliefs of their pre-Miller churches, made it impossible for them to agree. While the great majority of them ultimately melted back into the various Protestant churches, small minorities formed several new groupings. One of these was a Sabbathkeeping "Church of God."

Here and there, a few had stepped out as God's people. But they were widely scattered. And except for the "advent" and the Sabbath, hardly any two of those who were newly persuaded from Millerism had exactly the same doctrine. James White and others set out to attempt to draw together all the Adventists who had begun to obey all the commandments of God, and to add other Millerites to their number.

To this purpose, a series of local conferences was held in 1848, which led to a degree of cooperation between several groups in the New York-New England area. Leading men studied the Bible together to find Bible answers and doctrine, and prayed earnestly, till late at night (SDAE, "Sabbath Conferences").

Then, while Bates devoted himself wholeheartedly to incessant traveling and preaching, James White began to write articles and publish a new periodical called at first The Present Truth. It was chiefly devoted to the Sabbath question and included extensive extracts from the Seventh Day Baptist tracts. In 1850, this paper became the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald. White and a group of other leaders formed a publishing committee to acquire their own press and equipment and to publish it free to all who requested it, in the name of "the Church of God."

Their also published a songbook dedicated to "The Church of God scattered abroad."

They did not join the Seventh Day Baptists. Why? Because they were primarily leaders in their own right, used to working independently of any established church. Most were trained ministers, some

of them extremely able men. Through their experience in the Millerite movement, they felt a kinship with one another which they did not feel with the Seventh Day Baptist leaders. Then there were doctrinal questions. Having nearly lost sight of the second coming of Christ, the Seventh Day Baptists did not really welcome those who still looked for his advent. Nor were they any longer willing to listen to the truth about the Trinity, the soul, etc.

This adventist Church of God did, however, begin to unite with the few members who remained of God's spiritual Church. Their history is today difficult if not impossible to trace. But God has never left Himself without witnesses. "Adventist" ministers, seeking to draw together all keepers of God's Sabbath, made no distinction in practice between persons recently brought to such observance and individuals or independent congregations older in the faith.

They also turned their attention toward those in fellowship with the Seventh Day Baptists, and considerable numbers, recognizing the same emphasis on Christ's return for which the Sardis Church had originally stood, began to enter the fellowship of the Church of God. Some brought to it more truth. Others, unfortunately, had only their need of learning.

Unorganized But Growing

It was not that they were intending to desert one organization for another. There was as yet no thought of organizing another denomination. In fact, those who affiliated themselves with the new churches of God quite often remained for some time still officially members of the Seventh Day Baptists. Rachel Oakes' former church,

for example, actually refused it when she requested her name to be removed from its roll, and continued to carry her as a member in good standing. Even ministers -- and whole congregations -- altered their doctrines and ceased to be, in effect, Seventh Day Baptists, without any formal withdrawal and without attention being drawn to the fact.

One such illustration will suffice at this point. It was not until 1860, a member having requested the Scio (Willing) church of near Wellsville, N.Y. to be dropped from the regional Western Association, that investigation disclosed that nine of the members of the small church had become "adventists," eight other remaining but too discouraged to continue as a church (SDBEA, p. 736).

Some were drawn from the Ulysses church, which had been formed of new converts to the Sabbath in 1844, and that church fell to pieces (p. 742). Leading Adventists had held public meetings with the Seventh Day Baptists of this area, called in their report "the heights of the Alleghenies, near the headwaters of the Genesee, Allegany, and Susquehannah rivers" in 1851. "They had never heard the evidences of the speedy coming of Christ" (Review and Herald, Sept. 2, 1851, p. 24). Another series of meetings were held here in 1851, at which time Elder W.S. Ingraham organized a new congregation for the Church of God (SDAE, "Pennsylvania Conference").

Other Seventh Day Baptists departed from the Independence, Clarence and Genesee churches. There are no statistics available, but it surely is significant that the number of baptized members in

the Western Association's communion, increasing in all the other decades during the century, registered nearly a 20% decrease from 1846 to 1856.

In this regard, a basic fact of human nature must be realized. A majority will always stay in whatever organization they happen to find themselves; only a few will recognize truth and embrace it when that means drastically upsetting and altering their lives. But Jesus prophesied of those "few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments" (Rev. 3:4). Of those living there at that time, probably most of them did change.

It must be emphasized again that it was not the distinctive errors which would later be Seventh Day Adventist dogma, that attracted them. It was the message about the return of Christ, the setting up of His Kingdom, the Millennium, the truth about "soul-sleeping" and others things which the "Seventh Day Baptists" had once held, but were no longer actively teaching, ^{still} if they/believed them at all.

The following entry regarding its pastor is found in the records of the Friendship church: "[Received into the local church] November, '48, R. F. Robbins, Rev., excommunicated (joined S.D. Adventists). November, '48, Mary Ann Robbins, excommunicated" (W.D. Burdick, Sketch of the Friendship Seventh Day Baptist Church, Nile, N.Y., 1905). This was 1857.

The Review and Herald in 1853 (vol. 4, p. 12) referred to a "Bro. Cottrell," then 69 years old, who was a Seventh Day Baptist but "differed" in that he rejected the Trinity fable. A relative, Seventh Day Baptist minister R. F. Cottrell of New York state had been

reading the Review since about 1851 and had already begun to contribute his talents as a writer to teach Biblical truths. He not only became a leader in the Church of God, he also wrote for it, as early as 1854, a series of Bible lessons, and continued for years to contribute many articles to the Review as well as to the Seventh Day Baptist Sabbath Recorder.

In 1854, the entire Hayfield, Pennsylvania, Seventh Day Baptist church became "adventists" (Sabbath Recorder, Aug. 20, 1863).

In Ohio, too, "Millerism" made discord for the Seventh Day Baptists (Randolph, p. 268). And in Wisconsin, the preaching of the Millennium by J. M. Stephenson in 1856 caused problems in the newly founded Christiania-Utica church. One of those who turned to the Church of God was founding member, leader and deacon John Mills (Christiania-Utica church records).

Even in Rhode Island, cradle of American Sabbathkeeping, "an Advent society or church" was organized as early as 1855 (J.R. Irish, History of Richmond from 1747 to 1876, p. 19), probably in the aftermath of trouble which agitated the Richmond Seventh Day Baptist church from at least 1847 and culminated in the secession of the congregation from the association after it voted to censure the pastor -- John Green -- one of the most successful Seventh Day Baptist evangelists and organizer of several of the above-mentioned western New York churches. A little later, Adventists took over the nearby Green Hill church, which also he had founded (SDBEA, p. 664).

But could God's Church be free from troubles, trials of faith and other tests to separate the real sheep from those not approved?

Tests help to build the spiritual character God desires, in those who pass them. And so the adventist Church of God also had great problems.

"And Satan Came Along"

It is recorded in the book of Job: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.... [And]

"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord (Job 1:6; 2:1).

Let us realize that, even till today, Satan's method of operation has not changed: Notice now how the Advent movement had manifested his influence -- from its beginning.

From the time Satan and his demons perceived a rising, sincere interest in the second coming of Christ, they began to step in to deceive and to pervert. In Scandinavia, for example, mostly in the southern Swedish regions of Elfsborg, Smaland/^{and}Skaraborg, demon possessed child "preachers" appeared in 1842 and continued till 1844. They were too young to have yet experienced true conversion. Some were no more than six or eight years old (E.G.White, The Great Controversy, p. 366).

Because they were "mostly children or unmarried girls" (Froom, v. 2, p. 671) the religious people of the area declared this preaching did not jibe with the New Testament. The New Testament Church which Jesus built never had child preachers -- nor women ministers. Gods ministers are all ELDERS -- not children (see Acts

14:23; Titus 1:5). "I suffer not a woman to teach," wrote the Apostle Paul (I Tim. 2:12).

God's ministers are always men and mature enough to have been taught, trained, tried and tested. Jesus Himself was "about thirty" when He began His ministry (Luke 3:23). Even in the Old Testament, commands are given that God's ministers of that time -- the Levitical priests -- had to be mature men (see Numbers 4:2-3, 22-23, 29-30, etc. and Numbers 8:24).

The preaching of these young Scandinavian preachers was always against what the world considers wrong, not what God's Word says is wrong. It did not bear the fruit of real repentance, but of confusion. And the same passage of Scripture which says, "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but ... to be under obedience, as also saith the law," also says, "God is not the author of confusion" (I Cor. 14:33, 34).

Their preaching was clearly of the devil. They were unconscious of what was going on around them. Their voices were not their own while "under the spirit." Some preached lying down, insensible, with eyes closed. One sang, though her mouth was shut. Bystanders could not stop it even by compressing both mouth and nostrils. "Voices" were heard, as from nowhere, cautioning people not to think these manifestations were of Satan! Why? Because it was so obvious they were! The voices declared anyone who thought this was condemned! (Froom, v. 2, pp. 678-684).

God's Spirit leads (Rom. 8:14), but it does not compel or force one to do anything. When God uses human beings as His spokesmen,

"the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (I Cor. 14:3)
 The power which seizes and completely controls a human subject is demonic! (See Mark 9:20, 22.) But now notice how one of those poor, deluded and misused children later described his experience:

"Preached! Yes I had to preach. I had no devising in the matter. A power came upon me, and I uttered what I was compelled by that power to utter."

Another, who was 15 years old when these events occurred, related:
 "As soon as we were seized by this heavenly power, we began to speak to the people, and to proclaim with a loud voice that the judgment hour had come" (Emma Howell Cooper, The Great Advent Movement, pp. 22-23).

But were such Satanic and demonic influences also involved in the Advent movement in America? Yes! They were! There were at least seven women preachers among the Millerites (Froom, v. 4, p. 706) And several Millerites, including ministers, had been struck down by a spirit power, even before 1844 as well as after (White, Testimonies for the Church, 3rd ed., vol. 1, pp. 45, 46, 47, 49).

A little later, visions were claimed by many (Spalding, pp. 145, 182), and in after years, George Storrs -- disillusioned -- declared the whole movement had been propagated by mesmeric trances (Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-Over District, pp. 311-312).

Lest They Should Learn the Truth!

In the young United States at this period -- and especially in New England and New York -- Satan was bringing forth every manner of weird, wildfire, demonic doctrine and practice, ranging from

early Mormonism and outright Spiritualism to "spiritual marriage" (a form of communal sex practiced in the name of religion.) Why? To attempt to pervert and mislead God's people. But also to hide and conceal with a smokescreen of obvious error, ^{implied} And by/association to prejudice people against God's Church, which was then so nearly extinct but destined to revive.

As Millerite Hiram Edson was passing through a cornfield, filled with an attitude of unwillingness to admit Miller had made a mistake about the date, suddenly he "knew," as by an illumination from heaven, that the date itself was not wrong, but only the interpretation.

In actuality, not even the calendar was right by which the Millerites had set the final day as October 22. For in order to maintain a Friday crucifixion -- itself a false doctrine -- in 31 A.D., they had been forced to go to a non-standard Karaite Jewish calendar (see Froom, v. 4, pp. 792, 800). Now Edson was convinced that Christ actually had come on that day -- not to earth, which they formerly believed was His "sanctuary," but for the first time since His ascension over 1800 years before, to God's actual throne!

Of course the Bible shows that to be patently untrue. Already in the first century, Christ was seated "at the right hand of the Father" (Hob. 8:1; 10:12), there to stay till He takes over rule of the earth (Hob. 10:13). Is that throne of God actually the same "holy of holies" or "holiest" place represented in the earthly Temple at Jerusalem by the place "behind the veil," where none but the high priest, and he but once a year, could enter? Certainly!

(Heb. 9:7-8, 12; 10:19-20) Christ had already "entered" -- past tense, in the first century -- and sat down "once and for all."

Nevertheless, several believed the false doctrine, and Edson was joined by O.R.L. Craggsier in publicizing the idea in early 1846.

Other ideas were added to it. Not only did Christ supposedly "cleanse" the heavenly sanctuary on that Atonement day, but He also began, with all the saints already in heaven (in truth, of course, none but Christ have ever gone there), a process of investigation into the records of the lives of all the saints to determine what sort of reward each of them should have had. Since all the saints except those still alive were supposed already to be ⁱⁿ heaven, most people ~~one would think~~ would see this as fatal to the theory.

Then as a corollary to the "investigative judgment" was the teaching that the "door was shut" -- that is, that no one else could be saved, except those who had already taken their stand with Christ before that day in 1844: Though Seventh Day Adventists deny it now, the "shut-door doctrine" was taught by the Sabbatarians led by James White and others at least until 1850 (Albert C. Johnson, Advent Christian History, p. 196-197; Canright, Seventh Day Adventism Renounced, pp. 119-120; 140-145). ~~It was not until they began to give that up, that the remnants of earlier Sabbathkeepers began to associate with them.~~

But because of other false doctrines and Satanic influences, God's Church could not long continue this association. And chief of these influences were the demonic trances and "visions" of Ellen Gould Harmon, ^{who} soon after the disappointment ^{became} Mrs. James White.

The Visions

As a child, Ellen Harmon had been severely injured by a stone thrown by an older child, which hit her in the center of the face and left it permanently deformed. She became a frail, quiet person, extremely susceptible to suggestion. The visions began in her late teens, while under the (supposed) "power of God" and continued at intervals until she reached middle age. Here is her own account of the first such experience:

"While at family prayers one morning, the power of God began to rest upon me, and the thought rushed into my mind that it was mesmerism, and I resisted it. Immediately I was struck dumb, and for a few moments was lost to everything around me. I then saw my sin in doubting the power of God.... After that I dared not doubt or for a moment resist the power of God, however others might think of me" (Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald,....Extra, July 21, 1851).

Was this a proof the power was of God? Were the nine months of dumbness of Zacharias, father of John the baptist, a punishment for "doubting the power of God"? Of course not! It was simply a sign to Zacharias (Luke 1:18, 20). No spirit seized him, or compelled him to do anything. Nothing made him "dare not doubt," until by the passage of time, the promise of having a son was fulfilled. Nothing occurred that would have made him not resist if a demon had later tried to seize him.

But Mrs. White sincerely believed she must not resist the demon, which continued to assail her. Often there were supernatural

manifestations. She was sometimes stiff as a board, at other times possessed of supernatural strength. At times she might hold a heavy family Bible, of the kind which was popular in the 19th century, at arms length by the hour on one hand, while pointing to scriptures with the other and preaching, her eyes all the while either being closed or looking upward. In at least one instance, her body was for a similar length of time held/suspended in the air from the hips upward about ten inches above the bed in a position physically impossible to achieve for even one second (Loughborough, pp. 88ff, 118, 219). Commonly there was no discernible respiration. And often facts were revealed to her -- to make the demon's main message credible -- about persons or places far distant or events yet to occur, which could only have been known by a spirit being.

Her revelations always corresponded to common beliefs of her time and society, such as her vision of the number of moons that circle Jupiter (Loughborough, p. 126). Since then astronomers have discovered several more. That vision was not of God, but from a lying demon!

She also prophesied things on the basis of these visions which greatly missed the mark, and utterly failed to occur. She prophesied at one conference, for example, that some of those present would still be alive when Christ came (Canright, p. 132). Mrs. White stands proven to have been a false prophetess. For the devil is a liar (John 8:44).

Was Mrs. Ellen G. White, while foisting false doctrine on the Church, herself a converted person? Had she received the Holy Spirit of God which would have led her into "all truth" (John 14:26; 16:13)? Notice her own statement. For years, I "could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying.... The brethren knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters" (E.G.White, Selected Messages, v. 1, quoted in Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia, p. 1121).

Yet during that time, it was she and her visions which were gradually persuading most of the leaders of the Sabbatarian Adventists to adopt the "sanctuary" explanation and the investigative judgment, and to reject the truth of the millennial Kingdom of God on earth in favor of spending that thousand years in heaven. Though they abandoned their former Protestant belief in immortal souls going automatically to heaven, Mrs. White herself, even years later, wrote in The Great Controversy that Moses had been taken up there.

David Arnold and other leaders at the 1848 Sabbath conference held at Volney, N.Y., wanted to establish the annual Passover, but Mrs White by a trance (some thought for a while she had died) and a vision, managed to brainwash this truth from their minds (Proom, v.4, p. 13).

Later, Mrs. White led the Seventh Day Adventist church into strict rules of diet, including vegetarianism. Although they soon had to modify their stand, as a result of a marked degeneration in their health (Canright, p. 80), they still hold to it as an ideal.

Do they not know that I Timothy 4:1-5 brands forbidding such meats as God created to be eaten as a doctrine of demons, of seducing spirits?

It may be well to note that four other sickly Sabbatarian Adventist women had similar visions (Canright, p. 151), while James White himself sometimes received prophetic information in dreams similar to that Mrs. White received in her visions (Loughborough, pp. 231-233).

But such as these had most likely never been a part -- spiritually -- of God's Church. They had only associated themselves with the Church of God for a season.

The "Messenger Party"

During the early 1850's, the Review and Herald served as a unifying influence among Sabbathkeepers. There was a divergence in some doctrines, but the number of believers increased steadily. Most of the Church was in the frontier regions. And every congregation was independent.

Then, in December of 1853, James White started publishing articles on the subject of order and organization (Loughborough, p. 199). About the same time a price was put on the Review which had formerly been given freely as Christ commands (p. 193).

Meanwhile, with each passing year more of Mrs. White's doctrines -- part Methodist and part directly demonic -- were being introduced into the Church. Many questioned the truth and the source of the visions. Others perceived that James White wished to be a boss over all, and believed he was merely using the visions to gain power.

In this year, 1853, certain ones -- afterward called the "Messenger Party" by the Whites -- began to link themselves to stand for the Bible against the visions. The following year they began to publish a small paper of their own in Michigan, which they called the Messenger of Truth. The chief leaders in this were H.S. Case, a Michigan convert to the Church in 1851, and C.P. Russell. Their purpose was to expose and counteract the errors of Mrs. White and to preserve the purity of the Church. They were not starting a separate church and had no intention of doing so.

In October 7, 1854, The Prophetic Expositor, a publication of Sunday-observing Adventists, reported the Messenger of Truth was being "published by a number of sincere Jewish Sabbatharians, to expose the gross corruptions of the Advent Review ... and is now generally supported as their organ by these honest but mistaken brethren."

Perhaps, as enemies of the Review, the editors of the Expositor were assuming a bit more "support" than the facts warranted. But at any rate, the Messenger of Truth did make converts for the Church of God, and from as far away as New York state (letter in the Hope of Israel, Nov. 16, 1864).

About the same time, two leaders in Wisconsin, J. M. Stephenson and P. P. Hall, were brought to the Sabbath. Both were strong believers in the millennium during which people on earth would have a chance to be saved. During the next few months, Hall wrote the Church's first book embodying the truth about the "soul" and the second death.

Stephenson wrote for the Review on the atonement of Christ, and against the trinity doctrine.

"I saw that when we were in Wisconsin in June 1854," wrote Mrs. White, "they [Stephenson and Hall] were convicted that the visions were of God, but they examined them and compared them with their views of the age to come [the earthly millennial Kingdom revealed in the Bible], and because the visions did not agree with these, they sacrificed the visions for the Age-to-Come" (Testimonies, v. 1, p. 116). In 1855, they began to cooperate with the "Messenger Party" and attempted to carry all the believers in Wisconsin with them.

There was a great deal of politics in the struggle that ensued -- and even persecution. Mrs. White blamed it all on the Messenger party. "[I] saw that there had not been a parallel to the deception, misrepresentation, and falsehood that has been practiced by the Messenger party the church of God should move straight along ..." (p. 117).

It became a bitter struggle in which Satan had his way. ^{Allegedly} The Messenger of Truth became filled with scandalous stories about the Review personalities. It ceased publication in 1857. Stephenson and Hall gave up the Sabbath. Later Stephenson himself was disowned by his own party for divorcing his wife and marrying a much younger woman. But such are the fruits even of contact with demonic visions instead of with truth and love:

Mrs. White had prophesied the Messenger Party would soon disappear and come to naught. The Review and Herald of January

14, 1858, reported that it was completely scatterd.

Yet, later, even she had to admit "the seed sown by the Messenger Party had not been entirely rooted out" (Testimonies, v. 1, p. 229).

Gilbert Cranmer Carries the Torch

God still had people scattered in many states, and as the Messenger party disbanded, He raised up for them another leader. This man was Gilbert Cranmer.

Because of differences with the Whites, Cranmer became "independent" at the beginning of 1858. He had originally been a Methodist, then for several years a minister of the Christian Connection, preaching in New York and Ontario, then a Millerite in the disappointment. He first heard of the seventh-day Sabbath through the articles published in Millerite papers in the middle forties, but did not immediately accept it and begin to keep it. Then for some years he was in general cooperation with Bates, James White and other Sabbatarian ministers.

About the end of 1857, in accordance with her usual assumption of authority, Mrs. White commanded Cranmer to stop smoking, and to force home Bible study on his family. Now it is well to realize that the use of tobacco was not known to be harmful to health in those days. On the contrary, it was often regarded as definitely helpful because it was ^{thought to inhibit} some of the diseases that otherwise ended many lives much quicker than the tobacco. Cranmer did not immediately obey.

He had always doubted the visions, and could not agree with the "shut door." But up until then, no lines had been drawn in the Church and the visions had not yet been made a test. They were, however, fast becoming popular and some had begun to press them quite strongly. It was at this point of crisis that Cranmer visited the Whites and actually observed Mrs. White in vision. Like many others, he was constrained to affirm that indeed those trances were not put on, that the information given in that vision was true and that both vision and revelation were indeed from a supernatural power -- which all at first assumed to be God. For Mrs. White herself asserted they were either of God, or they were of the devil!

Still, Cranmer did not find the Bible clearly supported what Mrs. White commanded.

Those who took orders from the Whites were told not to let Cranmer preach anymore in his local church at Otsego, Michigan. When he inquired of James White, he was refused a certificate recognizing him as an authorized minister of the Church until he should obey Mrs. White.

But Cranmer preached anyway.

Many of the Otsego church followed him out of fellowship with the publishers of the Review. He gained additional supporters -- became one of the most powerful and eloquent ministers of his day. Several other ministers soon joined him and local congregations were established. An organization of these churches was effected in 1860, called by its members the Church of Christ, though others soon coined for them the name of Cranmerites.

Their own hymnbook (words only) was published in 1862 (General History of the Church of God [7th Day] in Michigan, p. 2).

Then in the spring of 1863 plans were laid to begin publication of a Church periodical. Special offerings enabled the press and type which had been used to print the Messenger of Truth to be bought. The new publication started with the August 10 issue.

As the by now also organized Seventh Day Adventists viewed it, "He [Cranmer] gained some followers, and soon undertook to resurrect the defunct Messenger, giving it the title Hope of Israel" (Loughborough p. 216-217).

And from the Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia, under "Marion Party," "In 1863, these defectors revived the defunct Messenger of Truth."

Was the "Messenger party" dead? It was not! Nor was the Church of God. Furthermore, the August 25, 1865 issue of the Hope of Israel carried a first page, first column reprint of a letter from H.S. Case, former publisher of the Messenger, affirming his continued presence in the Church, in spite of the slanders which the Sabbathkeeping people had been told, and assuring all of his entire support of Elder Cranmer.

"Dear Brethren scattered abroad," he concludes, "I still love the Lord, and have hope that I shall meet you in the Kingdom of God, where the tongues of the slanderers will forever cease, and the weary will rest. H.S. Case."

But were Case and Cranmer just "defectors" from the "Seventh Day Adventists" (who were at yet even a church)? They were not! And of what importance was the

Hope of Israel? From this time on, it was the Hope of Israel -- later under other names -- which was the rallying center and unifying influence of the Church of God.

The "Hope of Israel"

On the front page of the first issue, Gilbert Cranmer explained:

"I feel it my duty to inform the readers of The Hope of Israel, how I came to occupy the position that I now do, as a professed teacher of the Bible. About 34 years ago, I first made a profession of the religion of Christ. For one year I stood aloof from any creed, seeking for the true people of God. I then thought I had found them. I was baptised into the Christian Church, and remained with them until in 1842 when I became an Adventist. All know we met with a sad disappointment in 1844....

"About ten years ago a Seventh Day Advent minister, by the name of Bates, came to our town, and advocated the whole law, the gifts of the Spirit, and many other glorious truths. The gifts belonging to the Church, I had believed in for over twenty years. Hence I felt to rejoice, supposing I had found the people I had been so long looking for. He told me that the gifts were realized among them, that they had the gift of prophecy and the gift of healing the sick. But as long as I was with them I never knew of any being healed. I have known them to try but they always failed. In this I was disappointed. I also found that the gift of prophecy, with them, was confined wholly to a woman. By this time I became suspicious that I had got on board the wrong ship. I then commenced giving her visions a thorough investigation. I found they contradict themselves,

and they also contradict the Bible. My doubts concerning the visions I made known to the brethren. At once they gave me the cold shoulder, and I was held at bay. Not knowing any people I could unite with, I remained with them for years, hoping they would get sick of the visions of E.G.White, and that we could yet walk together in unity of spirit.

"At last I made up my mind I would not belong to a church that was ruled by a woman any longer. From that time the Bible has been my creed, with Christ at the head of the Church. I started alone, with my Bible in my hand. God has blessed my labors beyond my utmost expectations. We have some eight ministers, and some hundreds of members in the state of Michigan. God has manifested His power among us in a wonderful manner. The eyes of the blind have been opened; the deaf have been made to hear; and almost every disease incident to the climate, has been cured through faith, to the number of about one hundred cases.... GILBERT CRANMER, ELDER."

And this was the Church to which the scattered members of the body of Christ, including those deceived into going along with Mrs. White, were encouraged to gather!

The same first issue, in other articles, revealed that Cranmer did not believe in the three angels' messages of the Seventh Day Adventists, and announced a conference to be held in Michigan. Besides the eight ministers of the Church in Michigan, other independent leaders from Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa were expected, such as Samuel Davison, Waterman Phelps, H.S. Sheffield, E.W.Shortridge, V.M.Gray and others. We will hear more of these men.

CHAPTER 9

ONWARD TOWARD THE PACIFIC

What are the characteristics that must continue to identify God's Church, as it moved into the latter part of the 19th and on into the twentieth century?
It will cleave to, obey and believe the Bible and the Bible only. God's true Church does not and will not receive as inspired

Scripture additional writings along with the Bible. It may not hold to the Bible plus any other book or books as the source of its doctrine. It will not add further prophecies or visions or dreams to God's Word (Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6).

For the canon of inspired oracles was finished and closed in the first century A.D. among Christ's Apostles (Isa. 8:16). That finished Bible is more than adequate to make us "wise unto salvation" (II Tim. 3:15).

Neither will God's true Church ever knowingly believe and hold on to false doctrine, nor refuse to grow and change when new TRUTH straight from the Bible is found.

But while the Church in Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa and other states was continuing to ~~live and move~~ move onward, some -- for the second time in the century -- were preparing an organization of men, APART FROM the Church of God. Before proceeding on in time with the story of God's Church, let us notice for a moment how those who followed the "visions" organized themselves as Seventh Day Adventists and put out of their church such as still stood for the plain unvarnished truth of the Bible.

The Plea for Organization

Efforts had been made for several years to get all unorganized Sabbathkeepers firmly under the control of the Whites, and looking to the Review office in Battle Creek, Michigan as headquarters. The tithing principle was explained (which was right) and all were encouraged to support the Review on a regular basis. Then in early 1860 articles began to urge legal organization of the church in order that it might hold and insure property, receive bequests from wills and borrow money. Through the Review, many readers objected to organization, however.

Finally a meeting was held in Battle Creek of leaders from various areas, September 28 through October 1, 1860. Joseph Bates occupied the chair. Some whom it was thought might object were cunningly maneuvered into positions of some prestige but little power, and made to appear thus to be identified with the aims of the Whites. The conference voted unanimously to organize.

A committee was appointed to determine what name the new church would be known by. After deliberation, it reported back that its efforts had not been completely satisfactory. Several names had been considered, but some held out for the name CHURCH OF GOD as being the only Scripturally proper name, while others argued that was not suitable at all because other churches used that name and by it no one could tell just which church was meant.

Mrs. White really settled the argument. "No name which we can take will be appropriate but that which accords with our professions, and expresses our faith, and marks us as a peculiar people...."

"The name Seventh-day Adventists 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" (Testimonies, No. 6).

Presumably this makes the Apostle Paul a fanatic! Because he called the Church, "the Church of God":

When the matter was put to a vote, only one man, a delegate from Ohio, continued to the end to contend for the name Church of God. The rest were unanimous for the choice of Mrs. White.

^{drawn up by these few}
The following covenant_A was recommended to all the local churches:

"We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves together as a church, taking the name Seventh-day Adventist, covenanting to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ" (Loughborough, p. 229).

And that is how the Seventh Day Adventist church began.

Ohio Objects

There were many objections. While the committee was attempting the new name force_A on the churches, there appeared in the Review of April 9, 1861 the following letter to the editor:

"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 [local] conference, and having now on hand means for carrying on the cause in Ohio, we could not conscientiously expend these means in any other than the advancement and extension of the truth and the 'Church of God'.... Signed: J. Dudley, L.E. Jones, J. P. Fleming,"

Many other leaders had misgivings about the organization. Some merely ~~distrusted organization on principle~~. R.F. Cottrell was one of these. His mildly worded objections had great effect and provoked James White into violent opposition, but in the end Cottrell went along until old age. Others feared organization was putting James White in a position to dictate.

Waterman Phelps of Wisconsin, an 1851 convert of H.S. Case, formally withdrew. He had been an advent believer early but had come west and escaped the fanaticism in the east. He had been teaching the law of God since 1850 and associated with the Review since 1851. Now his efforts continued to be dedicated to the Church of God, refusing any other name, and refusing to go along with the visions (Review and Herald, Oct. 1, 1861).

S.W. Rhodes, one of the original Review publishing committee, resigned from the ministry in which he had served "the Church of God" 11 years (Review and Herald, Dec. 18, 1860), but remained with the Adventists as a layman. God had used him in the conversion of H.S. Case.

Even Waggoner, Poole, Loughborough and Sperry had misgivings at first but went along and apparently became staunch, although

Sperry became associated later with the Church of God, as did J.B. Frisbie who had written on the offices and name of God's Church in the Review as early as 1854.

Afraid to continue with Mrs. White's church and afraid not to, seemed to characterize some. Not knowing exactly what to do, many even of those who objected went along and became Seventh Day Adventists. Yet even of these, a large number of ministers and leaders finally dropped out one by one, some to embittered retirement, some to the Church of God, others to other churches, including the Seventh Day Baptists. Poisoned by the visions and association with the doctrines of demons, many ^{of these ministers} gave up completely God's truth and God's Church.

Those who remained found James White truly a tyrant, demanding complete submission and "confession." "From the start Elder and Mrs White would take up publicly the faults, real or imaginary, of any one and every one, ministers, editors and all, and expose them before the whole congregation. If any objected, they were 'rebels.' All this was printed in her 'Testimonies' as inspired, and circulated for all to read (Canright, p. 43-48, 62-63, 81).

Probably only the illness and death of James White saved the Seventh Day Adventist church from complete disintegration.

But our interest is ^{not with the offshoot but} with the continuing Church of God.

Parting of the Ways

Once organized at the top, the Seventh Day Adventists immediately set out on an active proselytizing campaign to command as many of the local churches as possible. Whenever they were able to take over part of a group, they then attempted to cut off that ^{part's} contact with the

others. Several hints of this are found in extant records.

In Hillsdale, Michigan, "Some stood back, not being prepared to endorse the gifts, and follow their teachings.... Fourteen took the name of S.D.A... The church and society of Oakland [Michigan] met to reorganize, and called a vote to shut us out, but the vote was negative" (Review and Herald, Apr. 8, 1862).

Another group -- these people at Marquette, Wisconsin -- reported in the November 30, 1864 Hope of Israel they had been put out for doubting the visions. The Sabbath Recorder of December 25, 1873, p. 216, mentions still other anti-vision Sabbathkeepers at Xenia, Illinois.

Almost immediately after the 1860 conference, a large group at Mauston, Wisconsin, opposed organization. These people claimed Mrs. White was wrong and that they did not need her as a prophet (Review and Herald, Nov. 13, 1860).

In northern Wisconsin, some had accepted the Sabbath but rejected the "third angel's message." They were against the visions also, but others "unwisely," wrote Mrs. White in 1862, made the visions a test of fellowship (Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 326-327). A little later she showed what gospel these people did believe: "There is not the least harmony between the Age to Come theory and the third angel's message." (That is, she denied that the seventh day Sabbath is a type of an earthly millennium of peace and prosperity. Of the elder involved, she continued, "As far as the Sabbath is concerned, he occupies the same position as the Seventh-day Baptists" (p. 334).

But the Seventh Day Baptists in Wisconsin also were giving trouble to their members who believed the truth. E.S. Sheffield, a convert about 1852 from first-day Protestantism to the Church of God and the Sabbath, wrote in 1864:

"Some of our brethren in Albion, Wis., once were members of the Seventh Day Baptist Church.... After embracing...the truth...the Church took up a labor with them, for denying the immortality of the soul. But, Pilate like, the Church could find no fault with them, as their character stood untarnished. Thus they were at a loss to know what to do with them, till finally an aged veteran in their Church told them it was the duty of the Church according to Paul's testimony, to reject a heretic, after the first and second admonition. And they deciding it was heresy to deny the natural immortality of the soul, these brethren were finally expelled from church fellowship, on the charge of heresy. Presumably these Seventh Day Baptists would have excommunicated the "father of the Seventh Day Baptists" Dr. Peter Chamberlain, and entire early connection of his, and denied fellowship, by some of the Elders connected with the 'Review,' because as they publicly told the people, we, though professing to keep the Sabbath, did not develop moral character.

"We therefore, demanded a public statement of what our immorality consisted, when the Elder simply replied that he had ^{not} been personal in his remarks" (Hope of Israel, vol. 1, no. 13).

Thus were God's people shut out of the churches of the world on all sides:

Even in New England, considerable numbers -- estimated at

nearly one fourth of all the Sabbathkeepers in that area (Hope of Israel, Mar. 24, 1864) -- were no longer fellowshipped by the Seventh Day Adventists. Against some of them, Mrs White raged in 1863:

"The only remedy for the East is thorough discipline and organization. A spirit of fanaticism has ruled a certain class of Sabbathkeepers there; they have sipped but lightly at the fountain of truth, and are unacquainted with the spirit of the message of the third angel....

"Wandering stars professing to be ministers sent of God, who are preaching the Sabbath from place to place, but who have truth mixed up with error...God's spirit is not in the work.

"There are little companies continually arising who believe that God is only with the very few, the very scattered, and their influence is to tear down and scatter that which God's servants build up.... all doing [says Mrs. White] a special work for the enemy, yet claiming to have the truth. They stand separate from the people whom God is leading out and prospering, and through whom he is to do his great work. They are continually expressing their fears that the body of Sabbath-keepers are becoming like the world; but there are scarcely two of these whose views are in harmony (Testimonies, vol. 1, pp. 411, 414, 417).

Each local church was independent, but considered it a privilege to meet together and counsel relative to the prosperity of the cause. ^{New England people} And in 1864, these, did form a union (not a denominational government) -- emphasizing the truth of being born again the resurrection, calling it "the Church of the First-born" (see Col. 1:18; Heb. 12:23). They were led by S.G. Hancock and J.C. Day, two long time Sabbath-

keeping ministers, as well as L. L. Howard and others. Gilbert Cranmer attended their conference held in November of the same year. Though widely separated geographically, the Church in the West and in the East regarded itself as one Church (Hope of Israel, Sept. 7, Nov. 16, Nov. 30).

Pensylvania and West Virginia

The former Seventh Day Baptist congregation at Hayfield, Pennsylvania, under its pastor, T.H.Dunn had turned to the Church of God in 1854. But severe disillusionment awaited them.

Lamented Seventh Day Baptist Dr. H.P. Burdick later, "In all my travels I have never been in any place where the thought of the loss of our entire interest made me more sad then when in the French Creek valley. With no pastor or missionary help, our people went to Adventism. Their anticipations were not realized and they largely went to infidelity" (SDBEA, p. 731).

He meant that these people were so disillusioned by the false doctrines they found being associated with the Sabbath that they mistakenly gave that up too. Yet they held on to the other truths.

R.F.Cottrell, himself originally a Seventh Day Baptist, felt called on to write his former brethren concerning "T.H.Dunn, leader in the sect known at Hayfield as Adventists" via the pages of the Sabbath Recorder:

"But it is due to your readers that they should know that we [Seventh Day Adventists] as a people have no fellowship with the work done for the church at Hayfield, Pa... nor for the reckless wicked persons engaged in seducing its members into the downward

road to death. They professed to keep the Sabbath for a while, but finding the way of truth too strait for them, they threw off the sheep's clothing they had assumed and returned to their no-Sabbath theory like a dog to his vomit, and as I learned with regret from your correspondence, drew the Hayfield church after them in their downward course. ...Let it be distinctly understood, then, that the work done at Hayfield was done by those who are our bitterest enemies, and were never soundly converted to the third angel's message" (Sabbath Recorder, Jan. 21, 1864).

Yet notwithstanding those who imagined themselves to proclaim the "third angel's" message, or other errors on the part of those who refused it, it was here, at Geneva, in walking distance of Hayfield that a conference was held for the Church of God for the state of Pennsylvania in 1855; at which one of the main speakers was Elder J.W. Niles of nearby Edinboro and Erie. It was Niles who had gone south and raised up a local "Church of God" at Wilbur, West Virginia in 1859. This church did not at first keep the seventh day Sabbath, it is true, but kept the annual Passover, and believed and taught the true gospel of Jesus Christ, including His coming Kingdom. And later these Nilesites, as outsiders called them, accepted the true Sabbath and became an integral part of the by then better established Church of God.

But to return to the 1860's -- let us notice how the Church developed in Iowa and spread onward from there.

How the Church Came to Be Centered in Iowa

Many members of the Church had moved westward in the 1850's from New England, New York (West) Virginia and elsewhere, and settled in Iowa. New converts were added continually. For example, M.E. Cornell came to Marion early in 1860 preaching the second coming, the unconscious state of the dead and the seventh day Sabbath. The local people did not know where he came from or who he was, but his preaching created such a stir that the local ministers began actively to oppose him. The more they fought him, however, the more he confounded them on the Sabbath subject, and the result was the gathering together of a "Church of Jesus Christ" of 50 members.

They covenanted to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, taking the Bible alone for their rule of faith and practice.

Other congregations were similarly organized in Iowa. But soon it was urged a more perfect organization was needed. Finally the crisis came. The name of the churches began to be changed to Seventh Day Adventist. An immediate split occurred between those willing and those not willing to follow the visions and false doctrines. Of the one group, ^{Seventh Day Adventist headquarters} the Battle Creek representatives from organized in Iowa in 1862 two regional "Conferences," a Southern and a Northern.

Of the other, the Review of January 29, 1861, carried the following editorial comment from James White: "Ohio was the first in the secession from the approved plan of Systematic Revivalists, at the Gilboa Conference, October 20, 1860, and with surprise we see the first steps taken in Southern Iowa to follow."

The claim of the members in southern Iowa was that "they were an independent church and could do their own business. Not only so, but some asserted that they were organized under the name 'Church of God' and therefore stood independent of the Seventh Day Adventists, that they had their own officers to transact business, etc..." (Review and Herald, Aug. 6, 1861). When the motion was made to organize under the name of Seventh-day Adventists, about half of those present were in favor. The rest rejected the "gifts of the spirit" as found with Mrs. White, and were in turn rejected by those who accepted them.

Thus the visions were made a test of fellowship. Wrote Loughborough in the January 14, 1862, Review: "We do not take in any who use tobacco and reject the Gifts of the Spirit of God, if we know it. One of the objects to be accomplished by church organization is to lop off these things, and only have those come together who stand in the light."

No Church of God ever came out from the Seventh Day Adventists, but invariably they separated themselves from the Church of God.

At Marion, in northern Iowa, it was the same. Fully half of the members of the Marion "Church of Jesus Christ" refused to enter the newly formed organization. To them were added quite a number of persons who had already been holding back, making them much stronger than those who became Seventh Day Adventists.

As soon as the existence of the various independent groups became known, a conference of these scattered believers was called.

to meet at Marion November 5, 1862. There being no pastor, V.M. Gray presided and was voted an Elder. This conference then sent out the following "Circular Letter."

"We here give a sketch of our history for the last two years and a half. On the 10th day of June 1860, something over 50 of us adopted a form of a Church Covenant, drawn up by one of the approved messengers, (to wit, M.E.Cornell) of the truth we had recently adopted. The following is a copy of the covenant--

"We, the undersigned, do hereby express our wish to be associated together in Christian fellowship, as a Church of JESUS CHRIST, at Marion, whose covenant obligation is briefly expressed in keeping the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, taking the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the rule of our faith and discipline."

"Near a year and a half afterwards, the same Messenger held up, publicly, some other volumes by the side of the Bible, of a recent date, and averred that these recent publications were of equal authority, and binding forever with the Bible, and urged us to adopt their teaching also, as a rule of faith and discipline. A portion of us were unwilling to accept these new planks in the platform of our Church. Certainly not until we had time to test their soundness and fitness. The result was, about one half of the Church decided to receive these volumes as valid Scripture, and drew off from us, or rather repelled us from them, denouncing us as rebels, &c&c, distinctly intimating that they no longer desired, nor would tolerate our company in their religious meetings, otherwise

than as spectators.

"We now discovered that the cry for our organization, had been made under false colors; and that while the plea of holding Church property, and securing the Church against impostors was held out, the real object was to put the visions of Ellen G. White on the eminence with the Bible, and secure the recognition of Elder James White as the latter-day Moses.

"As regards us being rebels, we boldly assert that we are not rebels. We have not rebelled against the constitution which we adopted, for we stand firm on it yet. We have not rebelled against Ellen G. White, for we never endorsed her..." (Hope of Israel, Sept. 7, 1864).

Meanwhile, among those who had entered the new organization, B.F.Snook, shortly to become the president of the now united Iowa Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, reported to the Review:

"We next began meetings in Marion, January 28 and closed February 12.... The church here has been in a very unhappy state, but we think now is entering upon better days. It was the opinion of all [?] that we had better organize.... Twenty-seven came in, and a number of others will soon come.... The visions are a great stumbling-block to a number that stand off.... There is something wrong somewhere. Either a few are right and the whole church wrong, or the church right and they are wrong" (Review and Herald, March 4, 1862).

Yes, it was enough to make a sincere person think. And Snook did, as we shall soon see!

In the October 28 Review, Snook warned Iowa against the "anti-organization Advents." White followed the notice with a note naming Elder E.W. Shortridge as going with the "rebellion."

But it was not long before Snook, W.H. Brinkerhof and most of the church under them at Marion were going along with it too.

The "Hope of Israel" at Marion

More and more, Snook and Brinkerhof, Iowa Conference secretary-treasurer, became concerned. Finally, in the spring of 1865, Snook wrote a letter to Elder Ingraham in Wisconsin, asking "What do you think of striking out on the old plan of the independence of the churches?" (Loughborough, p. 267). The letter was placed in the hands of James White who immediately branded it "Rebellion in Iowa." White/forced submission at that time, but solemnly promised to clarify every point of difficulty and remove every objection to the visions — which he failed to do and instead roused suspicions regarding his integrity about the visions.

"Elder and Mrs. White, having failed in their pledge, given at the conference, the minds of the brethren and sisters were left in an unsettled and dissatisfied state after their departure from this state, and a very contemptuous thrust of Elder White's against Elder Snook just on the eve of departure being communicated to the latter, again aroused his opposition.... Elder White in the midst of a roomful of brethren and sisters, in a contemptuous manner stigmatized Elder Snook as nothing but a 'church pauper.'

"All this time, however, the brethren were firm believers in

the S.D.A. view or theory of the three messages, etc., and consequently felt no disposition to leave a church built on that theory, but the expectation began to gain ground that the church would be relieved of the visions incubus that has been fastened upon it" (Henry E. Carver, The Last Call and Message to the Laodiceans of the Third Angel, 1903).

For their speaking out on these errors, Snook and Brinkerhof were soon replaced as Conference officers by George I. Butler and H. E. Carver. But Carver too soon rejected such errors.

In Michigan, by this time, the Hope of Israel was having severe financial difficulties. This was undoubtedly due in part to the reluctance of the editors to emphasize tithing as a means of supporting it, lest they should have even the appearance of emulating the policies of the Review. And even the small "subscription price" printed on the masthead of the Hope in the absence of tithes, was only a suggested donation, and was not actually required of the subscribers.

The April 28, 1865 issue asks the question: Must the Hope now like the Messenger sleep the sleep of death? A little more support was gained. The paper continued to the September issue, which requested financial aid that H.S. Case might attend a conference in Marion, Iowa for the purpose of increasing union among the brethren scattered over the several states. But shortly after that, there was a lapse of some months. When the Hope of Israel next appeared, it was being published in Marion.

W.H.Brinkerhof was now the editor. In the first issue, he, Snook and Carver explain:

"Being desirous of exerting what influence we can in our humble sphere of action in behalf of the cause of Bible truth and of preparation of the Kingdom of God and having been cut off from the sympathy and fellowship of our former brethren we deem it duty to ourselves and to our brethren and to the cause of truth in God to state thus publicly the facts connected with and the reason why we have been dis-fellowshipped by the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the motives and objects also that have prompted us to the organization of a church and also of a publishing association.

"Elders B.F.Snook and W.H.Brinkerhof having by investigation become convinced that the church is in error, not only in regard to divine inspiration of sister's E.G.White's visions, but also in the application of the two horned beast and the messages of Revelation 13th, 14th chapters, an arrangement was effected last winter for a discussion of the last named subjects between Elders Ingraham and W.H.Brinkerhof at Marion, Lynn county, Iowa. This discussion in which the entire church here were deeply interested, continued about one week when it was abruptly closed by Elder I. refusing to continue it any longer.... notwithstanding the brethren urged him to go on and the public were also deeply interested and anxious to hear.

"With the exception of those who still held on to the visions and messages, the general opinion of those who heard the discussion as far as it went, was that Elder I. met with a defeat and retreated

to avoid a worse disaster. Upon this, a minority of the [local] church withdrew from our meeting and organized a separate church. Their organization is recognized by the authorities at Battle Creek... we have formed ourselves into a publishing association called The Christian Publishing association....

"...We do not hate those who have driven us from them, or those who may differ from our view. We love them and intend to ... help them on to the Kingdom of God....

"To the former subscribers to the Hope of Israel we would explain the reason why the paper we send them is published here. Our delegate to the late conference at Waverly, Michigan was instructed to urge the necessity of a paper and to pledge our support if the Hope should be resuscitated in Michigan. It was thought best by the conference that we should publish it here and for that purpose the press, type and fixture were generously donated by the conference Henry E. Carver, President" (Hope of Israel, May 29, 1866).

The same issue carried another notice by H.S. Case concerning the next conference to be held in Michigan.

But now let us notice the work of yet another independent leader of the Church of God, whose influence was already great in the Church in Iowa.

Samuel Davison

English by birth, Baptist by conviction, minister by ordination and occupation, Samuel Davison ^{had} become a Seventh Day Baptist in 1843. His conversion to the Sabbath came as a result of literature sent him by Elder John Green. "But the word of the Lord was the final

umpire" (Sabbath Recorder, Jan. 5, 1871, p. 6). It was Davison who had introduced the 1844 resolution calling for the day of fasting

and prayer which had the outstanding results we have seen. Via the pages of the Sabbath Recorder in 1845, Samuel Davison to thousands the truth that Jesus was three days and three nights in the grave. In those years, many Seventh Day Baptists, like so many

Americans of every opinion and walk of life, were moving ever west. Elder

By 1850, Davison had moved from New Jersey to Ohio to Illinois.

where by 1857 he was involved in the plans of the Farmington church to disband preparatory to moving to new lands in Iowa. A Western Emigration Society with Davison as president had been formed for the purpose of helping Seventh Day Baptists from all over to settle together on the public domain (Sabbath Recorder, Aug. 13, Aug. 20, etc, 1857).

In 1859, we find him pastor of a church in Wisconsin, giving prominence to "Adventism" as well as obedience to all God's commandments. Very highly respected by his flock, he allowed free discussion of all views, but capably showed up the errors of any.

Through the pages of the Sabbath Recorder, he called all of "like faith" to a conference held at Edgerton, Wisconsin, September 30 of that year (Sabbath Recorder, Sept. 8, 1859, pp. 63, 65).

Letters were received for this conference from such widely scattered and significant persons, unable to attend, as J.N. Andrews, Waukon, Iowa, later a prominent Seventh Day Adventist; C.P. Russell, Jackson, Michigan, of the "Messenger Party"; and B.P. Robbins, ^{the breformention of} ~~recommunication~~ Seventh Day Baptist pastor of Friendship, N.Y. / ^{who now preached the gospel of God's Kingdom} ~~E.S. Sheffield, as secretary.~~ sent the report of this extensive Seventh Day Baptist conference

to the Sabbath Recorder, containing among others these unusual resolutions:

That we appreciate the "Christian liberality and impartiality of the editors and conductors of the Sabbath Recorder in publishing the communications of Sabbathkeeping correspondents without respect to party name," and, That we hurry and preach the message Christ is coming: (Sabbath Recorder, Oct. 20, 1859, p. 78).

Unfortunately, this last the staid, dignified Seventh Day Baptist church was not about to do! They had somehow forgotten the meaning of Revelation 5:10: "Thou hast made us unto our God, kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth."

Samuel Davison had already, earlier in the summer, made his own beliefs and position clear, in the beginning of a series of articles on the second coming and the millennial Kingdom of God. And the Sabbath Recorder had admitted it was true. Excerpts of this interchange are well worth quoting for their elucidating historical value.

"In the first several volumes of the SABBATH RECORDER," begins Samuel Davison, "if my memory serves me right, we had occasional articles upon this interesting subject. J.A. Begg, Isaac Labagh, Halsey Baker, and some other writers furnished matter for a free discussion of the subject...."

"Of late years, I understand the conductors of the RECORDER have ignored the subject.... Well, what is the consequence? This: We have driven off two churches, (in Ulysses and Hayfield, Pa.) and

many other individuals whose piety is as unquestioned and unquestionable as any that remain...."

The editors' comment to this appeared two columns to the left. "...Second coming of Christ.... It has been the avowed doctrine of the denomination...we were not cognizant of the fact that they had left the connection. That members (and we know not how many), have left us in consequence of their having adopted sentiments in connection with Adventism, not common to the Seventh-day Baptist Churches, we admit."

Continuing from Davison's article, "The Senior of the [Seventh Day Baptist] editorial Committee is reported to have once said: 'The defence of the Sabbath of Jehovah and its advocacy in these last days of the apostasy, is rolled upon us as a people, and if we are unfaithful to the cause, God will raise up some other people to whom he will give that high and holy work.' Or words to that effect. If these are prophetic words, they are surely fulfilling; for the despised Sabbath-keeping Adventists have made seven thousand converts to the Sabbath in a little less than ten years.... But what have we been doing in contrast? Our people profess to have existed two hundred years, and scarcely number seven thousand now.... Why this contrast: Oh, we have become a very respectable people. We are conducting ourselves very respectably" (Sabbath Recorder, June 15, 1859).

To this, the July 14 issue adds some further interesting bits of information. Samuel Davison resumes:

"It was never intended to make the impression that the SABBATH RECORDER had caused the loss of the churches in Ulysses and Hayfield, Pa., and as he has since been informed, he may add, Clarence, N.Y. ...Complainants...affirm that articles in defense of their position have in past years been sent to the SABBATH RECORDER and have been rejected.... And they affirm that they did not leave their churches until proscription became intolerable.

"Poor Pilgrim [pennname of Samuel Davison] was never what was called a Millerite... although a pastor of churches in the midst of that wide spread excitement, he never lost a member.... A student of prophecy years before Mr. Miller commenced his career, he knew his position and was able to defend it.... Poor Pilgrim is not identified with those who are approbriously called Adventists. Nor can he receive one-half of their present theory."

And neither could hundreds of those "Adventists" receive that "theory" -- as we have seen:

1861

Shortly after this, "Some 20 years ago, Elder Davison's connection with the Seventh Day Baptists was broken and he became identified with the Adventists, ^[the Church of God] of Marion, Iowa. During these years he has lived in various places, spending his time preaching, writing for the religious press and in business. He was a studious and careful reader, with an unusually good memory, and it was remarkable what a large amount of history he had at his command. He was able to make his preaching and conversation very instructive...." (Sabbath Recorder, June 16, 1881).

And that is why it was Samuel Davison who wrote as follows, as was published in the first column of the first page of the very first issue of the Hope of Israel, when it originally began in 1863 in Michigan:

"Dear Brother, Your letter to Brother V.M.Gray, July 3rd is received, and he handed it to me to write you a reply, he intending to write you next week.

"The account you give of the churches of God in Michigan looking for the appearing of the Lord; is to us very grateful information! We have often felt like Elijah when he made complaint against Israel, saying, 'I, even I only am left; and they seek my life....'

"It is very encouraging to us to find, that unknown to each other, there are now found to be bands of brethren and sisters, and many individuals, isolated from each other, in several different states... filled with the same spirit, and having the same hope of inheriting the Kingdom of God; looking for it nigh at hand....

"The churches of God in Wisconsin, looking for the appearing of the Lord, and the same class of churches in Iowa and some of the faith in Illinois.... SAMUEL DAVISON" (Hope of Israel, Aug. 10, 1863).

Strengthening True Doctrine

Samuel Davison called the Church the Church of God. Through the year of 1865 many suggestions were published in the Hope of Israel regarding the name that all should use. Church of the First Born, Free Seventh-day Adventists, Free Sabbathkeepers, Seven-day Christians, Seventh-day Disciples were all suggested, and over and over the Bible

name, The Church of God. By July 14, 1866, this -- the right name -- had become official at Marion -- with Davison, V.M.Gray, Carver, Snook, Brinkerhof, S.Everett, etc., and their adherents united -- as appears from the report of a conference of that date.

By the end of that year, as many as seven churches in the Iowa area were linked together, including two at Keithsburg and Mt. Carroll, Illinois and one at Fairfield in southern Iowa, which had originally organized in 1860 as the "Church of the Living God" (Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia, "Iowa Conference"; see I Tim. 3:15).

What kind of people were these Church of God people?

They were non-Trinitarian (Hope of Israel, Aug. 27, 1867). As regarding war, they were conscientious objectors (Nov. 5, 1863). Enlisting in the army was grounds for disfellowship, and President Lincoln was much honored for causing laws to be made that would deliver God's people from draft laws (Apr. 23, 1865).

They believed in growing in grace and knowledge. That Christians are only begotten now, and will not be born until the resurrection, was made plain in an article by Gilbert Cranmer in the September 1863 Hope of Israel, and one by another author on the same subject was included in the August 25, 1865 issue, and yet a third by H.E.Carver in the March 9 and 23, 1869 issues.

Three main points were made clear in Carver's article. First, that the new birth, or birth of the Spirit, will not be consummated until the resurrection. Second: a preparatory work designated in the Scriptures as the begetting process is in operation in the mind or heart of the child of God in this life.

and growth of the embryo child of God preparatory to his complete manifestation is produced by the combined and harmonious agency of the Spirit and Word of God.

The magazine was not regarded at first as one to support the views of any one person or group. Many dissents were published. But on the basic truths of God's Word the scattered Church soon came to agree. They early settled on keeping the annual Passover, were against the eating of unclean meats (Lev. 11), acknowledged that man is wholly mortal in this life. They did wash feet (Hope of Israel, June 2, 1868).

The question of whether to use real wine at the Passover, or grape juice, gave more trouble. Some just could not see that real wine was right to drink at any time, although an article in July 1867 proved that grape juice was an improper offering and an insult to Christ. Grape juice can only be kept if pasteurized, and is thereafter dead. On the other hand, wine has life, and is a fitting symbol to represent Christ's blood. Because leaven is used to picture sin, some failed to see that it is also used to typify good -- the growth of God's Kingdom -- in Matthew 13:33, ^{and they mistakenly believed that wine contains prohibited leaven, failing to see that the Passover is separate, anyway.} It comes before the arrival of the days when leaven may not be eaten.

They also understood, as had earlier generations of the Church, the time element of Christ's stay in the tomb -- three full days and nights between Wednesday and Sabbath afternoon. This truth was published in the fall of 1864. The February 25, 1868 issue showed the Jews' Passover to be a day late, that Christ took the true Passover the day before.

A March 23, 1869 article even showed that Pentecost could never be on Sunday. The day the Church began had to have been on either a Monday, if one counted from the weekly Sabbath during the days of Unleavened Bread, or on a Friday, if from the annual Sabbath in that year of 31 A.D.

They did not keep God's annual Holy Day Sabbaths, however, even though as Samuel Davison showed in the July 16, 1867 issue, they knew that when the millennium begins, even the Egyptians will be forced to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (see Zech. 14).

Contrary to the implication of some Seventh Day Adventist sources, they did not regard the use of tobacco with favor. Instead they regarded it as a filthy habit unworthy of a true Christian (Hope of Israel, Nov. 15, 1864; June 29, 1864).

For obvious reasons, most of the articles in the Hope of Israel were against the visions, or against Seventh Day Adventist doctrines. For this reason also, the "gifts of the Spirit" (I Cor. 12) ^{by which they meant such things as visions, tongues, etc.} were generally disclaimed.

Progress Discouragingly Slow

The Sardis spirit, unfortunately, was still among them. It was not Laodicean -- lukewarm, not really caring -- as Mrs. White had erroneously characterized the Church since 1844. No, Sardis it still was -- some members having a considerable degree of zeal but lacking in spiritual life and strength.

Perhaps nothing will so clearly illustrate the difficulties and

frustrations, the inability of the few leaders to wholly accomplish the job God had set before them and their concern about the fact, ^{the above-mentioned Church leader} as some excerpts from a long letter written by ^{A.H.E.}Carver to the Seventh Day Baptists, and published in the Sabbath Recorder of February 8, 1872.

"DEAR BRETHREN,--For many months in the past, I have felt impelled to make an appeal to you, through the columns of the RECORDER, in behalf of many Sabbath keepers, and to call your attention to a work which I think you should prepare yourself to engage in at the earliest possible practicable moment -- a work which, if entered upon properly, would, with the blessing of God, not only tend to the building up of your church, and enlarging the sphere of your influence and usefulness, but would, in my judgment, conduce to your own spiritual welfare....

"There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Sabbath-keepers scattered over the land, from the Atlantic coast to the shores of the Pacific, who do not belong either to your church organization, or that of the Seventh-day Adventists. Some of these are lonely ones, having no church privileges.... These Sabbath-keepers are mostly men and women of strong faith and determination, who, in the face of universal opposition, maintain their allegiance to the holy law of God. With suitable effort on your part, a large number of them might be drawn into your communion; but you are not well prepared to make this effort....

"These Sabbath-keepers have been brought out and established mainly by the Seventh-day Adventists [in which he means to include

the Church of God, before the Seventh Day Adventists separately organized to promote the visions and errors]. When ministers of that church go into new fields of labor, they commence by giving an exposition of scripture prophecies, showing conclusively, that we are living very near the close of all earthly governments, when the kingdom of God is to be established upon their ruins, at the glorious second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This attracts much attention and awakens great interest, and, sustained as it is by a great amount as well as variety of Bible testimony, imparts great power to their preaching. They next usually take up the subject of the nature of man, and show from the scriptures, that man is not immortal in his nature by virtue of his creation, but the opposite, and that if he ever attains to that condition, it will be wholly through the medium of our blessed Saviour.... Having brought out and established these two leading points of truth, they present to the people the subject of the nature and perpetuity of the Law of God, and they do so with such clearness and power, that congregations will almost unanimously express their convictions...by a rising vote, that the seventh day is the Sabbath.... [But] sooner or later, those who cannot accept her [Mrs. E.G.White] as divinely inspired teacher and guide, and, cannot keep their doubts or unbelief to themselves, must leave the church. I might relate much of the sad results of this overshadowing error in the Seventh-day Advent church -- of large and prosperous churches that have dwindled away to mere remnants, whose decline is attributable to no other cause than the vision influence....

"Attempts have at different times been made to combine this Sabbath-keeping element in a distinct body; but as yet without the success desired. Our effort here at Marion has probably been the most extensive and permanent of any yet made, and has certainly done some good in encouraging Sabbath-keeping Adventists to persevere in the service of God; yet we have been far from realizing our desires in this matter.

"Now, brethren, for aught I know, it may be the will of our Heavenly Father, that you as a people should go forth and gather up these fragments, that nothing be lost; and if so, I do not believe that there is one child of God among us who would wish it otherwise. If you regard it as duty or desirable to make the effort, you shall be furnished with the names and localities of our churches and isolated brethren, as far as our knowledge at the office extends....

"We believe that the second personal advent of our Lord is near at hand, and we also believe that man is by nature mortal, and will not attain to immortality, or enter on his everlasting reward, until the Lord comes to raise the 'dead in Christ.'... and we could not act in full union and harmony with any class of people who would oppose them. If any of your ministers should come among us preaching a temporal millennium prior to the coming of Christ, or that man is by nature an immortal being and consequently destined to live forever in torment, if not saved through Christ, we should consider that he is far behind the times in his knowledge of Bible truth....

"If, as a church," Carver concludes, "you had adopted Advent

views, and enlisted in the Advent movement, it would not only have materially increased the power and efficiency of your ministry in their work, but it would have diffused a knowledge of the true Sabbath far and wide; and now, instead of the great body of Adventists being opposed to it, they would, in my opinion, be Sabbath-keepers, and thus an influence be brought to bear upon the world that would greatly glorify God. There would have been a conservative influence exerted, also, sufficient to greatly restrain much of the fanaticism...."

Thus Carver (and his associates) demonstrated their own humility and readiness to submit to whatever might be the will of God. And thus the Seventh Day Baptists had perhaps their last chance to really continue as God's Church. But as the situation stood, such a union was not God's will, and because of the doctrinal difference could never come to pass -- although it was again discussed fifty years later.

However, there was close cooperation for many years between the Church of God and Seventh Day Baptists in Iowa. Joint conferences were held -- man-made substitutes for keeping God's Holy Days -- called together by a scripture regarding the Holy Days: "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord..." -- and the work of God continued.

On to Stanberry, Missouri

As the years went by, several of the leaders dropped out or apostatized. But in spite of difficulties, God's Church continued. The name of the Hope of Israel was changed to the Advent and Sabbath Advocate. In the 1880's tithing began to be taught in its pages.

The number of believers -- and subscribers to the Advocate -- slowly increased. The scope of the Work expanded ^{preaching} from Indiana to Nebraska, then on to Oregon.

Additional state or regional conferences were formed, linking local church together. In August of 1874 the Sabbatarian Adventist Conference of Missouri was formed. Objections were voiced to this name, and the name Missouri Conference of the Church of God was adopted at the following annual meeting.

Then in 1884 a General Conference was organized to include the whole Church. At that time, all took the name Church of God.

In 1889 the press and the headquarters of the Work were moved to Stanberry, Missouri, where the name of the paper finally became the Bible Advocate, under which name it is still published.

Through the remainder of the century, members spread into many states, slowly increasing. But before we move into the twentieth century, let us notice briefly one more result of the prayers and earnestness generated by the Seven Day Baptists in the middle of the nineteenth.

The "Pine Grove" Church

In 1833, as a result of the preaching of Seventh Day Baptist Alexander Campbell, a small group of people on the South Fork of Hughes River, (West) Virginia had been baptized by Peter Davis, pastor of the New Salem church. During the following months they became Sabbathkeepers and were organized as a Seventh Day Baptist "Church of Christ" in the summer of 1834. They became known as the "Pine Grove" church.

Asa Bee came to this church from New Salem in 1839. Under his leadership, they began to search the Bible more carefully and to practice its truth. ~~Unlike most Seventh-Day-Baptists, they~~ to see in 1853 that they must keep the annual Passover (Randolph, p. 202). (It was probably this same question which nearly ended the nearby Middle Island church where Asa's brother Ezekiel Bee was pastor, and caused Peter Davis at New Salem to take the opposite stand that any form of "Lord's Supper" was done away -- which stand forced his retirement.)

After 1859, the Pine Grove church changed from congregational government -- one of the identifying characteristics of the Sardis era churches, and an unscriptural practice -- to one of ministerial authority. In 1868, after Asa Bee's death, Ezekiel Bee became that minister in charge. Under his lead, the Pine Grove people sometimes held all day Bible study meetings. Careful rules were evolved regarding child training, courtship, clothing -- even for weddings and funerals. Unclean meats were avoided. "In short here an attempt was made to apply the provisions of the Mosaic law governing the domestic life of the early Hebrews to American Seventh Day Baptists" (p. 201).

"On account of doctrinal difference between this church and the other churches of the denomination, however, it gradually drew away from the General Conference, and for a good many years before its final dissolution, it had really withdrawn from fellowship with, not only the General Conference, but all other Seventh Day Baptist organizations" (p. 205).

This church even operated its own elementary school (p. 209).

But few, even here, were really willing to be ruled! In 1870, after a generation, the church split, part forming a new congregation, the Ritchie church, and rejoining the Seventh Day Baptists. The remaining members began to read Seventh Day Adventist literature and hear their preaching, which caused a further split. Part of the members were excommunicated (1884) and became a Seventh Day Adventist church in 1885. The others had little choice but to return to the fellowship -- though not to the beliefs -- of the Ritchie group, or to remain apart from any church.

In May 1887, the Seventh Day Adventists held a statewide meeting to establish a state conference in West Virginia. Part of their aim, it seems, was even to take over the church building the Pine Grove church had built (p. 228). The usual test came, however, when the visions were brought up. Several withdrew, and forthwith began to contact the Church of God in Iowa and Missouri (Sabbath Advocate, Aug. 1887).

After the death of Ezekiel Bee in 1892, several of his family also turned to the Seventh Day Adventists -- as seeming to have more truth than the Ritchie Seventh Day Baptists. Later they too finally affiliated with the Church of God. The Parkersburg, West Virginia Church of God at first met and was established in the Bee home (private letter from Claudia Atkins, great-granddaughter of Ezekiel Bee, February, 1971).

He learned it from other COG - 7A ministers who had been preaching the mark of Philadelphia for years!

The Twentieth Century Dawn

About the turn of the century, Oklahoma was being opened for settlement. Thousands poured in. And members of the Church of God were among them. S.S. Davison (son of Samuel Davison) and J.R. Goodenough, minister for the Church of God since 1854, entered the Cherokee strip in 1896, and others followed. A state conference was organized in 1905.

It was an Oklahoma minister in the 1920's Merritt Dickinson, who brought the truth about the identity of the modern House of Israel to his relatives, the Cole family, who later moved to Oregon, and to many others. Dickinson preached far and near. Conference official wanted to license him as a regular minister of the Church. He, however, consistently refused their credentials, though he preached the same doctrines they did, lest they take it as an opportunity to halt his teaching the Israel message.

This message was not unheard of to the Church of God. A letter from English Sabbathkeepers believing the identity of Israel appeared in the Advocate of February 9, 1897. There had been a long article by Albert D. Rusk, Sr., in its favor in the April 16, 1895 number, and another in the May 14, 1907 issue by the same author.

Still, this knowledge had not been restored, following the Dark Ages, until recently. And it was not as obvious in the Bible as many other truths. Had it been, the Bible itself would hardly have survived the centuries of persecution which fell so heavily on the Jews and anything rightly or wrongly regarded as "Jewish." Many in

the Church of God were almost painfully conscious that the Church had paid dearly for allowing Mrs. White to teach what the Bible did not contain. So the Israel identity was generally doubted.

The Church also spread southeastward into Alabama and adjoining regions, and even into North-Carolina. Some of this expansion came as a result of the continued accession to the Church of ex-Seventh Day Adventist ministers, who had become disillusioned with Mrs. White's doctrines. So many Seventh Day Adventist ministers came in, the whole Church seemed to have adopted "the third angel's message" as the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The editor of the Bible Advocate found it necessary to insert the following in the November 23, 1909 issue: "Some people have a mistaken idea of the members of the Church of God, or most of them, having previously been connected with the Seventh Day Adventists, when the fact is that not many of them ever were." Of course, the Seventh Day Adventist church was claiming this ^{whole} Church ^{of God} was but an offshoot from them!

^{ex-}Some Seventh Day Adventists in California came to see that the days of Unleavened Bread with their annual Sabbath, should be kept. "Perhaps all the readers of the Advocate may not see or feel the need of our still keeping the seven days feast of Unleavened Bread," wrote Katie Gilstrap in 1907, "with the two sabbaths.... But we believe Christ and his disciples after him kept the full feast and that we should too."

Sad to say that every year the people had begun to prepare to shift the actual Passover observance to the 14th of Nisan. In the same mistake the Jews were making in Christ's day, we were keeping it as being on the 15th. This the Lord will not have correct, and soon we shall see.

"I would be glad for an opportunity to withdraw my name from the Seventh-day Adventist Church book (for I am not a member) and to me, I am no longer an Adventist in either position or connection with the Church of God. But there is no chance of my name being reached of us...."

"At first I saw a small glimmer of light when we kept the first [Passover] service in the spring of '09, we were not alone else who kept it on that time.... And not many others were there. A number of Seventh Day Adventists were present, but they could not learn a number of things because they had not read the Bible. They found their church is not as they had been told. They were at April 9, 1907).

A California availed observance of the Church of God was held in 1924.

A German speaking Church of God had been organized in South Dakota by a group of Day Adventists who had been Free Methodist by 1924. The church was organized in 1924 and during a part of the 1920's they were translated into the English language and published.

The Advocate by this time circulated around the world, and responses came from as far afield as Norway and New Zealand. A few ministers began to be sent into ^{many} far away places.

Meanwhile, a major work developed in Mexico, and a Mexican Conference met in 1922. The Philippines were also a major field. In both of these countries, ^{later,} as well as ^{by God's people} in Chile and Argentina ^{from the beginning,} annual Holy Days were kept.

For a long time, the Church had no real program for training ministers. Through the years, ministers had come to the Church of God from several other churches. A.F. Dugger, Sr., for example, had originally been an Advent Christian minister. But such means of obtaining ministers brought its own problems. Not all of them knew and taught the whole truth or were converted. Errors were brought in here and there -- belief in a "Trinity," that being "born again" is just an emotional experience at the time of conversion, etc.

The Church's need for a college was discussed for years, but little was done for lack of financial support. Many were against the idea. They said God didn't need a college, that colleges and schools were of the devil, or that the Holy Spirit was enough to guide a minister into all truth, ^{so that it was exuberance.} Most of these people, remember, were totally uneducated themselves, and could not see that in actuality conversion itself is education. God does call the most "humble" class of people into His Church (I Cor. 1:26).

It was not till mid-century that Midwest Bible College opened its doors in Stanberry, Missouri.

It was ^{much} too late!

The Church was again on the verge of breaking up. Most of the ministers, instead of serving God, were serving themselves, each carrying on his own private "work." Real conversion was rare. It was mostly among laymen that a few had "not defiled their garments."

Dissension and Fragmentation

Gilbert Cranmer had expressed his willingness and eagerness to receive new light and to change his opinions as far as he came to new understanding. That is still the official stand of the Church today.

"Some of the present beliefs which we cherish have been added over the years as light came to the church. In fact, we are still open to more light and truth, as expressed in the foreword of our 'Doctrinal Beliefs.'"

"We do not have a closed creed, 'The Church of God holds itself open for spiritual growth and for new and better understanding of the Bible as the Lord sees best to reveal same.'" (Bible Advocate, Aug. 9, 1963, p. 25)

Unfortunately, in practice, it has not always worked that way. God's people have felt they should always show "love" for those of differing opinions. They even invited them right into their meetings and asked them to speak. Many did not seem to realize that condoning falsehood -- which does harm both to the believer and the hearer -- is never showing real love. (See what the Apostle Paul says about such improper fellowship in I Corinthians 5:1-13) As a result, instead of receiving new light, or even holding on to what they had, the leaders of God's people began to struggle with one another.

each teaching his own idea.

Efforts were made to stop this divergence. The General Conference in 1929 decreed for example that each minister must teach against unclean meats. It became a bone of contention for several years. A little later the pages of the Bible Advocate were closed to all "controversial" subjects, such as the time of the new birth, the time for the Passover, clean versus unclean meats, tobacco, the work of the Holy Spirit, and a few others.

Pressure by approximately half of the leaders that all should speak the same thing brought about a split in 1933 -- one part setting up another headquarters and beginning another Bible Advocate at Salem, West Virginia, and calling itself the Church of God (Seventh Day), while the other retained the headquarters and Bible Advocate at Stanberry as the Church of God (Adventist). Numerous smaller groups have gone their own way, though the two main branches reunited 16 years later.

"At a time when the Church of God has need to be at her best in witnessing to a world steeped in sin, she is torn by the dissensions which are instigated by our archenemy, the Devil.... The message to the church at Sardis may be more aptly applied than some of us realize" (Bible Advocate, Sept. 21, 1964, p. 6).

By the beginning of the 1930's the Church -- the only true Church of God on earth -- was falling apart like the decayed branches of a tree!

It was a crucial time. The Protestant idea of democracy in church government had born its fruit. The ministers were in disagreement. The members were confused, divided, only a few converted.

These were the people with whom Herbert W. Armstrong had come into contact in the Willamette valley of Oregon in 1927.

CHAPTER 10

THE CHURCH OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Why has printing, reading and writing, and the publication of books become increasingly important during the last 400 years? Who actually is behind the great expansion of communication in the last 40? Have you ever wondered?

Who caused -- in just the last few decades -- the development of radio? Of tape recording? Television? And why?

You should have guessed the answer.

The Creator God Himself saw to it that all these instruments would be invented and developed for a great, but almost totally unrecognized purpose:

For the Use of God's Church

In the Middle Ages, Waldensians were primarily responsible for copying the Bible -- all by hand in those days -- and giving it to the people. Then, to give the Church He built some help, Jesus Christ caused the art of printing by movable type to be developed in Germany about 1450, from whence it spread to Holland, England and over the world. It was not accidental that the famous Gutenberg Bible (in Latin) was one of the first books ever to be printed.

The first edition of the Bible in the people's vernacular was a German translation of 1466. Its New Testament is demonstrably derived directly from the Waldensian version. Between this first edition and the year 1518 (the time of Luther) fourteen editions of the Bible in German and four in Dutch were printed. Others

appeared in England, Bohemia, Italy and other countries.

Clearly the impulse to spread the printed Word of God did not originate in Protestantism any more than it did from Catholicism. And the Waldensian version was preferred to the Lutheran by Baptists and Mennonites for a century.

But because of the weakness of His Church, Christ mainly used editions in others to translate and to publish/hundreds of languages between that day and this.

One entire early edition, printed in Holland and imported into England, was bought and burned. As might have been expected, however, the more of the bishop's money they received, the harder the printers worked on a new and larger edition. Soon two Bibles appeared for every one. Established religion soon graduated from the unsuccessful attempt to remove this source of "heresy" by confiscation and burning.

Meantime, Satan used the marvellous invention of printing to flood the world, not only with Bibles but every kind of book. He aimed to lose the Bible -- certainly its meaning -- amidat a flood of trash. It did result in a great increase in literacy, an advantage for those few Christ would call to real repentance.

God's Church in the late Thyatira era and even more in the Sardis era did use the printing press. But finally the time had come for this great invention, along with many others never known before to be put to its most effective and outstanding use for God's Work.

For this purpose Christ raised up a new and characteristically

different stage of His Church. The time had come for the gospel to go around the world.

Beginning Today's Era of God's Church

Jesus chose a man amply trained in the advertising and business fields to shoulder the mission -- Herbert W. Armstrong. Three times, God swept away Mr. Armstrong's business in order to humble him, that he might come to understand the truth. Then God called and converted him.

Early settlers had brought the Church of God to the Willamette valley in Oregon. There an elderly woman member introduced Mrs. Armstrong to the truth about God's Sabbath. Mrs. Armstrong gladly accepted this truth because God had opened her mind. She thought her husband would also be glad to hear it. But Mr. Armstrong was anything but pleased. It was fanaticism to him. Most of all, he was worried about what their friends would think! He commanded her to give it up!

But Mrs. Armstrong persisted in the truth. And Mr. Armstrong was challenged to study the Bible for the first time in his life.

After six months of intensive study -- trying at first to disprove this "crazy, wacky" notion his wife had accepted, trying to prove Sabbath keeping unscriptural -- Mr. Armstrong also surrendered his will to God and accepted the Sabbath.

From that moment forward, God opened the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong to understand one truth after another. Before the Sabbath question was resolved, Mr. Armstrong had proved that God does exist, that the Bible is His Word. Now he began to search for the one

true Church which he knew must exist. Somewhere there had to be the Church Jesus Christ said He would build (Matt. 16:18).

These Church of God people seemed to have the truth -- certainly they were the closest of any. But something was wrong. Even their ministers seemed unconverted, uneducated, unable to clearly explain the truths they believed.

He did not then realize the import of the prophecies in Revelation 2 and 3. He continued to fellowship with these people. But because of this deficiency, he never "joined" their organization.

As soon as Mr. Armstrong was baptized, in 1927, the fruits of Holy Spirit -- which God has promised to those who obey Him (Acts 2:38) -- began to be manifest in his life. It began to lead and guide him into further truth (John 16:13) as he continued to study to prove all things as we are instructed in I Thessalonians 5:21 to do.

He soon came to see that God's annual Festivals were commanded to be kept today along with the weekly Sabbath. As he kept them, their prophetic and symbolic meaning in the plan of salvation began gradually to be revealed to him. The true identity of the modern house of Israel was also revealed. Whoever and wherever the Israelites are today, he saw, they are the ones who will control the wealth of the earth, and will rule it under Christ and His resurrected immortal saints in the World Tomorrow. This is an important part of the true gospel -- the good news -- of God's Kingdom. Later these twin keys to understanding not only the past, but much as yet unfulfilled prophecy, were to go a long way in helping Mr. Armstrong

to understand what had started,

as commanded, to do but quickly relapsed.

The brethren with whom Mr. Armstrong associated became so intensely interested that he soon found himself speaking -- at their insistence -- then preaching, to small groups in Oregon. But they did not and would not join in keeping the annual Sabbaths. It was seven years before any other in Oregon kept these days with Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong.

Meanwhile in 1930, the Oregon brethren formed a semi-independent State Conference. Mr. Armstrong was finally ordained by this conference in June 1931, and was immediately teamed with ex-Adventist Elder R. L. Taylor in an evangelistic campaign.

Soon after this, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Armstrong attempted to start a small religious magazine to be called the Messenger of Truth of which perhaps only two issues were ever published. It was the depth of the depression. About this time, the Conference treasury ran dry, and Mr. Armstrong was let go. He again found employment in the advertising field.

It was February of 1933 before he was brought back into the ministry and employed at a salary of \$3 a week. Months of continuous evangelistic campaigns followed, culminating in a six weeks campaign at the Firbutte schoolhouse west of Eugene. People were converted. But there was jealousy with certain ministers over Mr. Armstrong's success, and disagreement which echoed the struggle and strife which had reached a climax at the Church-wide meeting at Stanberry in August.

The "Reorganization"

It was at this meeting that the outvoted faction walked out, later calling their "reorganization" conference in Salem, West Virginia. The date: November 4, 1933.

Prior to the latter meeting, a call had been sent to many of God's people around the world to pray "that God would again choose men to lead His Church as in the former time." Government of the Salem-based Church was to be placed in the hands of "twelve to look after the spiritual affairs of the church, and seven to take charge of the financial business, and also the seventy to go forth two by two in giving the warning message for the hour" (Dugger and Dodd, A History of the True Church, p. 299). An appeal was made to the "lot" to choose them, in an attempt to follow the singular case in Acts 1:23-26.

God answered that prayer! But NOT in the way they expected!

As the hands of the clock neared high noon on that fateful Sabbath day, the drawing of names for the "seventy elders" reached number forty. The fortieth name was "Elder Herbert Armstrong of Oregon" (the Salem, West Virginia Bible Advocate, Nov. 6, 1933, p. 55).

No one knew it then, least of all Mr. Armstrong, who was not present at the meeting, but Jesus Christ had made a choice -- with the number forty -- of a man to REVIVE His Work in the end time. Forty signifies the completion of testing. Now the time of trial and test for the Sardis era had run out. And as with ancient Belshazzar, it had been "weighed in the balance and found wanting" (Dan. 5:27).

This November decision, however, had only signaled what had already actually happened in Oregon.

Christ Opens A Door

Events in Oregon had reached a head in September. The Oregon Conference was going along with the Salem faction. At an all day meeting of the Oregon leaders, un-Biblical restrictions were laid down regarding baptism. Mr. Armstrong was required to observe them.

There was only one thing he could do. He gave up that \$3 salary, which was all the support he had, resolved henceforth to rely solely and entirely on Jesus Christ to provide means of support and to carry on His Work!

Almost immediately, having tested and proven Mr. Armstrong would remain faithful and subject to His government and His alone, Christ opened before him a "door." This "door" was the one promised in Revelation 3:8 to the "Philadelphia" era of God's Church!

Such a "door" in Bible usage means an opportunity to disseminate Christ's gospel (see I Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3). A local radio station offered Mr. Armstrong the opportunity to take an early morning public service religious spot which the other local preachers seemed too lazy to get up for. Thus God's truth was on the air -- beginning October 9, during the Feast of Tabernacles -- for one solid week. Then, as its impact began to hit home, this free time ceased, for the local ministers suddenly found themselves able to be there!

A start, however, had been made. And through the cooperation of the station manager, who offered commercial time at half price.

the forerunner of the WORLD TOMORROW broadcast was again on the air, starting the first Sunday in January, 1934. Mr. Armstrong began on faith, and Jesus Christ provided the means -- through a handful of dedicated co-workers. And from that day to this, the broadcast has never missed a week on the air.

Radio, before this time, was very small and unimportant. There were few radio stations or sets in existence. The potential audience was severely limited. But suddenly, just in time for His Work, Christ caused a phenomenal blossoming forth of broadcasters, advertisers to pay the main costs, and receivers.

The Work of the Philadelphia Church was primarily built on radio.

Regarding this "door," Christ presents Himself in Revelation 3:7 as "he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." It is He who makes the decisions, He who yet lives to GOVERN His Church! It was He who shut that first temporary door, only to open a much better one which could grow -- one which no man could close.

to cooperate
But as Mr. Armstrong continued to try in good faith with the Oregon Conference and the Salem headquarters, devil-inspired efforts were made in 1917, even by those who supposedly were God-appointed leaders of the Church, to shut that door, to stop and kill the broadcast (see the Plain Truth, Aug. 1961, p. 23). But this they could not do. The most they were able to accomplish was to revoke

their previous human authority and license for Mr. Armstrong to preach, which they did.

In the meantime, Mr. Armstrong had continued to hold nightly evangelistic meetings in location after location around the area. More people ^{were} converted. And this time, they were willing even to keep God's Holy Days. From meetings held in the Jeans school in the fall of 1933, and other places in following weeks, the Eugene, Oregon church eventually grew. Mr. Armstrong began the publication that very fall of a small mimeographed sheet called The Bulletin of the Churches of God in Oregon, which was supplemented beginning February 1934,

and finally supplanted, by a new "magazine" -- itself then nothing but some mimeographed pages -- called the Plain Truth.

During the next few years many small churches were raised up, often with Elders and deacons ordained by Mr. Armstrong. Two or three of the "Sardis" men worked with him for a while, some who were (During 1937, Mr. Armstrong first put out a Holy Day calendar willing to keep God's annual Festivals.) But the cooperation was not successful, and without a steady, trained ministry most of the new congregations quickly disintegrated.

As late as the end of the 1940's only the Eugene and Portland churches contained all the members who remained with Mr. Armstrong in the Pacific Northwest as organized congregations.

There were many other scattered individuals, however, most of them the result of the radio work. And constantly the radio work grew: It expanded first into Washington, then into California.

Only A Little Strength

"...Thou has [only] a little strength," said Jesus to the Philadelphia church, "and [but] thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Rev. 3:8).

Ancient Philadelphia was not as large and important a city as those where others of the seven churches were. Does this mean that the Philadelphia era of the Church must be less important, and must accomplish less? Not when supplied with the supernatural power and strength of God's Spirit, magnifying the power of the printing press and radio -- and television. Humanly the Church has little power of its own. The time allotted to it is short. But with God's power, this work was empowered to grow great -- to accomplish more -- even in limited time.

But is the Church that began with Mr. Armstrong's efforts around Eugene in late 1933 really the prophesied Philadelphia era? Is it possibly just one more stage of Sardis? It bears all the earmarks of Philadelphia, as delineated in the prophecy. Its distinguishing characteristics are totally different from those of Sardis.

To have "kept my word" means it has both believed and practiced the teachings of God's Word. To have "not denied" Christ's name, it must have understood and believed His nature, character, personality, power, authority and office. And what is that power, authority and office?

Let Christ answer (verse 7): "These things saith he that is holy,

he that is true, he that hath the key of David...."

What is the key of David? The answer is found in Isaiah 22:20- from which this reference is taken. It is the "key of the house of David" -- the authority and right to rule which was granted to David and his descendants forever (II Sam. 23:1,5; II Chron. 13:4-5; Ps. 89:3-4; Luke 1:32). Christ, the descendant of David, is King. He is Ruler. There is Authority in and over His Church. And His Church recognizes it.

Used in especial connection with the Philadelphia era of the Church, this expression signifies that those of this Church believe in and obey that government more directly than was true of most of the preceding era. It is church government from the top down -- from Christ through His ministers to the people -- not the rule of the congregation over the Elders as was typical of the whole age of Sardis.

What else is characteristic of the Church of Philadelphia? Philadelphia itself means "brotherly love" or "those who love their fellow men as brothers." It expresses the characteristic motivating zeal of the Philadelphia Church. For this Church has a mission, which we will see more of shortly, of showing love to all mankind by carrying out God's commission to "cry aloud and spare not" to show the people their sins, and to give God's last warning to this dying world of the impending destruction coming at the close of the age of man's rule.

To do this it also reveals how Jesus Christ will rescue humanity

from cosmocide and teach mankind the way of eternal peace, happiness and prosperity. The goal of the Philadelphia Church is to save the human race from ^{EXTINCT IN DO OTHER} the other church era has this goal:

The Present Work

The WORLD TOMORROW broadcast went nationwide in October 1945, on superpower XEG, just 12 years after it started. By the following summer, still on the evangelistic treadmill -- where converts were made and whole congregations gathered together only to be scattered and lost -- Mr. Armstrong had been an ordained minister 14 years, a member of God's Church for 19, when he realized it was Christ's will and the solution to the problem of obtaining capable, qualified and trustworthy ministerial help that he should start a College. The first Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, opened its doors October 8, 1947, just 14 years from the start of the broadcast.

Many were against it. There was no money to build or operate it. Few expected it to succeed. But it DID! For Christ was in it!

By the time its first graduates were ordained, 19 years had passed since Mr. Armstrong was ordained.

From January 1934 to January 1953, the radio broadcast was limited to the North American continent. In January 1953, after 19 years, with additional ministers and other college graduates to help, the broadcast expanded to Europe, and during the next 19 years to January 1972, the Work went around the world.

In this period the perfecting of tape recording had made economic for the first time large-scale broadcasting, using the same programs

on numerous far-flung stations even in different countries. Television had also come to maturity. Through these great doors, God's Philadelphia Church, though small, came to a position of worldwide influence, using millions of watts of radio power, some television, sending out tons of printed literature to those who individually request it. The Work continues with a new emphasis in the third 19 year period.

But why should the work be in Pasadena? The whole office and staff and equipment had to be moved in 1946 from Eugene, which involved a sizeable undertaking. Perhaps there is some significance in the fact that Pasadena is known as the Crown City. To the "Philadelphia" Church with Pasadena as headquarters, Christ says, "Behold, I come quickly" -- exactly when, no man can know, but soon -- "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy CROWN."

Ancient Philadelphia was sometimes called "Little Athens" because of the magnificence of its public buildings (Taylor Bunch, The Seven Epistles of Christ). Such a term might also be suitable to cultural Pasadena. And now the ultra-fine buildings on the Ambassador College campus also add their bit.

Philadelphia was in an area subject to frequent and severe earthquakes. Wrote Strabo: "Philadelphia has no trustworthy walls, but daily in one direction or another they keep tottering and falling apart. The inhabitants, however, pursue their original purpose, ever keeping in mind the writhing pangs of the ground, and building with a view to counteracting them." He questioned the sanity of the people

for remaining. They did often flee to open country and dwell in tents.

Pasadena too is in an earthquake zone, and frequent tremors are felt. But far more significant are the earthshaking times the world is passing through during the Philadelphia era, while God's Church is headquartered in this place. For ever mindful of the writhings of world political turmoil which presage the imminent end of the world and the return of Christ, the Philadelphia Church builds physically and spiritually in view of the impending day of trial, often "fleeing" to open country, as those ancients did, to dwell in "tents," booths or other temporary dwellings while keeping the Feast of Tabernacles which looks on beyond the troubles of that "day."

Meanwhile, to the parallel but fragmented end of "Sardis," Christ says, "If therefore thou shalt not WATCH, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

Only one part of God's Church is watching.

The Work of "Elijah"

When on earth nearly 2000 years ago, Jesus affirmed that John the Baptist had come in the power and spirit of Elijah as promised in Malachi 4. But He added that an "Elijah" must come again, this time to herald His second coming.

"Elias truly shall first come, and" -- do what? -- "restore all things" (Matt. 17:11-13). This Philadelphia Work has been doing that -- restoring the knowledge of God and His government which had

been lost.

John the Baptist did a one-man work. But today God works through the Body of Christ -- the Church composed of many members (Eph. 2:12, 16; I Cor 12:12-28). This Church is proclaiming the imminent return of Christ (Matt. 25:6).

What did the original Elijah do? He operated three schools for the training of young men to do the work of God (II Kings 4:38; 2:1-15). They were called "the sons of the prophets" and were being trained to continue the work of those whom Jezebel had killed (see I Kings 18:13, and remember what Jezebel symbolizes).

It is significant that today the Philadelphia era of the Church trains students on three campuses -- in Pasadena, at Bricket Wood, England, and near Big Sandy, Texas.

What else must the "Elijah" of our day do? "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Elijah and John the Baptist did this -- turning the hearts of the people back to their "fathers" Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to their God (read I Kings 18:20-40 and Matthew 3:9). And this is what the Philadelphia Church is doing. Especially -- in this day of yawning generation gaps -- is it drawing together modern children and "fathers" -- parents -- through its major emphasis on the dissemination of knowledge of proper childrearing methods, and of the principles

The greatest time of trouble ever to occur is yet to strike this earth (Dan. 12:1). And except for this Work and those influenced by it, for the sake of whom God will cut short those hellish days, there would no flesh be saved alive (Matt. 24:22). The word translated "curse" in Malachi 4, above, is the same word used in I Kings 20:42 and Zechariah 14:11. It means "complete and total destruction" -- utter annihilation! Except for the presence and prayers of God's people, this "present evil world" (Gal. 1:4) would experience "utter destruction":

this statement:
Think about / How much of this present world's population survives the coming holocaust and lives on into the World Tomorrow depends in great part on the effectiveness of this present Work in reaching the world with the good news of God's coming kingdom -- and on the number converted during this age who will be available to teach and serve those who survive.

Think how much depends on your prayers -- your efforts -- your tithes and offerings -- on you!

Promises to Philadelphia

Because the Philadelphia Church has learned to exercise proper Church government, Christ promises a special reward. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and my new name" (Rev. 3:12). That is, he -- the overcomer of the Philadelphia Church -- will be God, of the God Family, and will be a part of the headquarters government of the universe:

The ancient Anatolian city of Philadelphia -- unlike dead Sardis -- still lives today. Its Turkish name is significant, indicating the destiny of the Church it portrays. It is called Allah Sheh which means "the City of God."

What does it mean to be a "pillar" in the New Jerusalem? Peter, James and John stood out as pillars among the congregation in 49 A.D. (Gal. 2:9). They were the leaders of the whole Church. Solomon's Temple had two great pillars in front (I Kings 7:21). They were named Jachin and Boaz, that is, stability and strength. In the Family of God, former members of the Church of Philadelphia will stand out in time to come.

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie [refer back to earlier chapter for the identification of these symbols]; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet," -- and it is a sin to worship any being not of the very God Family! -- "and to know that I have loved thee" (verse 9).

Continuing with verse 10: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation [trial], which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." This promised protection from the hour of trial is evidently the same as the place of safety mentioned in Revelation 12:

As Elijah, after being pushed completely to the breaking point, but not tempted beyond that, ^{which} he was able to withstand (I Kings 19; I Cor. 10:13), was afterward taken away to a place of safety for a

few years of peace (II Kings 2:11), and as the inhabitants of ancient Philadelphia, by constant "watching" in the midst of earthquakes were able to keep their city from destruction to this very day, so will the Philadelphia Church be preserved from the wrath which Satan will bring on the earth. Significantly, Elijah and all those about him knew in advance that he was to be taken away (II Kings 2:1). (If you do not understand where and why Elijah was taken, send immediately for our free booklet, Where Are Enoch and Elijah? For greater historical detail regarding the Philadelphia stage of God's Church and its separation from the Sardis era, read The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong.)

One More Church Yet to Come

While the Philadelphia Church is kept from the hour of trial, another portion of God's Church will not be so protected.

"And the dragon [the devil] was wroth with the woman [the Church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). These must go through the tribulation.

The antitypical Church of Laodicea will be among them.

The whole history of God's Church is explained in a parable in Matthew 25. The "virgins" represent the members of the Church through the ages. The Apostolic age expected Christ's return momentarily (I Thes. 4:15). But when He did not immediately appear, they grew drowsy and lost their first love. Instead of proclaiming the message of God's coming kingdom worldwide, the Church as a whole went to sleep!

As the centuries passed, only briefly has the Church stirred in her slumber, but did not fully awaken until the very end time.

But finally, as the voice crying, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" gets louder and louder, and as world events begin to race swiftly to the unmistakable, inevitable end of this world, all the virgins will awaken. Many then will find they do not have a sufficient supply of "oil" in their lamps -- symbolic of the Holy Spirit to give them mental and Spiritual light -- to enter the Kingdom of God. The Church of the Laodiceans will basically fall in this category.

Many of its members will still be out "buying" (Matt. 25:10; Rev. 2:18) -- through bitter experience -- when Christ does arrive.

Though we cannot yet know exactly who or what the Laodicean Church will be, we do know a lot about their attitude. Christ introduces Himself to them as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning [the Firstborn] of the [spiritual, God Family, new] creation of God" It would seem many of this era have trouble believing that all He has said is true -- from one end of the Bible to the other -- but probably specifically in regard to the tribulation

"I know thy works," He continues, "that thou art neither cold, nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot" (Rev. 3:14).

They are just lukewarm, like the numerous lukewarm springs near ancient Laodicea which outnumbered the cold or hot ones, and made it a pleasure and health resort. The lukewarm water was pleasing for bathing but nauseous to drink.

Archippus, a lazy Laodicean minister (Col. 4:16-17), seems to typify the whole ministry of Laodicea.

But make no mistake. The Laodiceans are God's people. They will have been converted and received the Holy Spirit. Like some of the foolish virgins, their lamps will have been lit, but "are going out" (not "are gone out," see margin of your Bible, Matthew 25:8) for lack of being continually replenished and increased.

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will [more correctly, I am about to] spue thee out of my mouth" (verse 16).

Where Laodiceans Should Be on the Lookout

The name Laodicea means the "[self-] righteous people." The members of the Laodicean Church will think they "have it made," thinking, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" not realizing that they themselves (according to the original Greek) "are the ones pitiable and beggarly and blind and naked."

How can they be so deceived? Because they are a product of this modern affluent society, just as their ancient forerunners were of theirs.

The ancient city of Laodicea was in an earthquake zone too (modern meaning: living in upset, perilous times of imminent danger). But her citizens were so wealthy and so self-righteous they refused help from the Roman government when an earthquake destroyed the city in 60 A.D.

The city lay in the midst of rich farming country. It had extensive banking operations and large markets largely controlled by Jews. It was noted for its soft wool and the famous black cloth made from it, which Laodiceans almost always proudly wore, esteeming it even above the Roman white toga which was symbolic of victory and a privilege and high honor for any citizen or official of the empire to wear.

Not far from the city was the great pagan temple of Karu with a great medical school in connection. It was dedicated to Aesculapius, known as "the great physician" a title rightly belonging to Christ (Luke 5:31). The famous Phrygian eyesalve, collyrium, made in this temple was sold in all parts of the world.

Naturally, also, Laodicea produced some famous Skeptic philosophers.

All these conditions that existed in the community around them left their mark on the Church in Laodicea. And all of them will find their counterparts as society shapes the modern Laodiceans. They will be too close to the ways and false gods of this world to get really "shook up" about God's truth till it is almost too late!

Noting their misplaced attachment to their own style and kind of clothing (denoting their own worthless righteousness -- Isaiah 64:6), Christ advises them to buy white raiment, symbolic to Christians of purity of character and the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:8), without which they are spiritually naked. He counsels them to buy with their physical "gold" the real gold of character "tried in

the fire," which can endure tribulation, and to anoint their eyes, not with the "collyrium" of paganism -- which blinds the eyes to God's truth -- but with that which will really enable them to see spiritual things.

As long as there is hope for him, Jesus Christ will never actually spue a single one of them out of His mouth. For even though He may allow them -- for their own good -- to go through the tribulation, Christ loves them. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES."

This concluding message is for ALL the Churches.

It's time to be awake. It's time to pray and work together NOW to carry this gospel to all nations, so that when Jesus comes, He may say to each of us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Where Did the Twelve Apostles Go?

The epistle of I Peter was originally written to people in the provinces of northern and central Asia Minor (Turkey of today) along the southern shores of the Black Sea (verse 1). Had Peter ever visited these people in person? History tells us he had. As overall coordinator of the church, he met and conferred with his brother Andrew there at least once.

Who lived in these provinces? Paul visited and wrote an epistle to the people of Greek-speaking southern Galatia. But archaeology has proven northern Galatia was non-Greek in language and culture.

Notice that Peter writes to people called "strangers" scattered thruout that land. It was not their homeland, then. Now compare I Peter 2:10 with Hosea 1:10-2:1. Clearly both references are speaking of the same people--Israel! In Peter's day this region was a chief dwelling place of the "lost" tribes of Israel--brother tribes to the Jews who were mainly of the tribe of Judah.

Here then were also members of the true church.

The whole region was greatly affected by the teaching of the apostles. And the effect remained for at least two generations. About 112 A.D., Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, wrote to Roman Emperor Trajan that the temples of the old gods were almost forsaken and that Christians were everywhere a multitude!

James, "the Lord's brother"--another headquarters apostle--also wrote, shortly before his martyrdom at the Temple in Jerusalem, to these and other Israelites "scattered abroad" (verse 1).

In addition to those in Bithynia and nearby, other Israelites were widely dispersed on three continents. A major homeland already was Britain. Here Peter next turned his steps. We are told that he spent much time in Britain!

It is evident that Jesus Christ designed from the beginning for the apostle John to supervise the Church after Peter's death (Jn. 21:22-23). In accordance with Christ's usual policy of sending out men by two's (Lk. 10:1, Acts 15:39), John was selected to accompany Peter on the first trip to Samaria. And John was the last to survive of the 3 "pillars" of headquarters (Gal. 2:9). He too wrote General Epistles to the Church at large--I, II, and III John--and the Book of Revelation.

Such scanty information as we possess suggests that John only returned to the region of the eastern Mediterranean after many years absence. We hear nothing of him between the 40's and the 90's AD. He may have been in Gaul, where French tradition declares Mary came (see John 19:26-27).

History tells us Peter's brother Andrew had the primary charge of the northern Asia Minor area to which Peter wrote. Andrew went all around the eastern and northeastern coasts of the Black Sea as far as the Crimea.

Philep too worked in these areas, and far into Scythia. According to Polycrates, Philip was buried at Hierapolis in Phrygia.

Bartholomew (Nathaniel) worked among Israelites then living in Cilicia, Armenia, and beyond the Caspian. Thomas likewise went to the