

UPON THIS ROCK



**THE UNFOLDING MYSTERY
OF GOD'S CHURCH**

**By
Colin A. Gyles**

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God's Love

**P. O. Box 542
Kingston 10
Jamaica W.I.**

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Foreword

Within Christendom there is a multiplicity of different denominations. Traditionally, it had been the case that many of these considered their particular religious establishment to be, uniquely, the “true church. However, more recently, as the ecumenical movement gathers momentum and widens its envelope, more and more of these religious bodies are extending their acceptance criteria to include other belief systems. In doing this, they have now started to reckon the ecumenical fraternity, broadly, as “The Church”

To what extent is either of these concepts of The Church compatible with the Biblical definition and description? This treatise seeks to establish the Biblical perspective on the subject. We consider the Biblical perspective on the subject of The Church to be more important and determinative than any other opinion or outlook on the subject because the subject itself is a Biblical one, having originated with God who chose His written Word (the Holy Scriptures) as a primary means of revealing Himself to humanity.

This book is the result of a sincere and candid effort to explore the Biblical concept of The Church. The findings of the study as outlined in this book are to a large extent not agreeable to the popular organizational church groups.

It was not my desire to denigrate and undermine traditionally held sentiments and values or to be controversial. Therefore, I submit that the findings of the study would equally have been presented for consideration, if on the other hand, they were in support of the popular tradition.

As social institutions, church organizations do make valuable contributions to society in a number of ways, some of which include providing opportunities for academic advancement for the youth, implementation of welfare programmes and providing family counselling services, to mention a few. However, in this book, church organizations are considered solely from a spiritual perspective as they relate to God, salvation and the continued conflict between good and evil. It is my firm conviction however, that the ultimate value of any human instrumentality lies in the role that it assumes in the controversy between good and evil, and that in this conflict, there is no neutral ground.

The first two (2) chapters outline the basic picture of The Church that is painted in the historical settings of ancient Israel and the apostolic era. The greater portion of the remaining text compares this picture with the present prevailing concepts and conditions, and outlines the spurious innovations that have been employed to supplant the Biblical pattern and the resulting effects upon the spiritual experience of multitudes of professing Christians.

It is my earnest desire for you dear reader, that you will consider prayerfully the principles outlined in this book, and with all sincerity of heart, measure their consistency and authenticity against the Bible, God’s standard of faith and practice.

- Colin A. Gyles

Introduction

For what is considered to be THE CHURCH many individuals have endured the most gruesome torture and even death, not accepting deliverance. Others, having a different view of what is THE CHURCH have felt, not only justified, but duty-bound to persecute relentlessly, even to the death, others who are differently persuaded.

One of the saddest and most awful occurrences in human history occurred nearly two thousand years ago when the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was brutally and mercilessly murdered by those who professed to be the chosen people of God. Every well-thinking person would do well to seek an explanation for such an awful paradox, lest ignorance and lack of understanding should break down possible safeguards against the repetition of similar anomalies in their own experience.

An explanation of such an awful paradox can be found in the phenomenon of misplaced affection; and specifically, love of church above love of truth. On the one hand was Jesus Christ who was the embodiment of truth, righteousness, justice, love and mercy. On the other hand was Caiaphas, the designated spiritual leader of God's professed people - the chief representative of the religious establishment. In between were the people, many of whom had seen the righteousness, innocence and blameless life of Christ but were also fully persuaded of the legitimacy of the religious institution to which they were committed.

What an awful choice for one to be called upon to make. Indeed, it would have been preferable if both were on the same side. But unfortunately, as it was then, so it has been on so many other occasions, not excluding the present, that institutionalized religion is not always aligned with truth. Thus, individuals, at times, are faced with a choice. The decision which prevailed on that fateful day, which culminated in the ignominious death of Christ on Calvary's cross reveals the little appreciated truth that the majority is not always right.

Some persons, in an attempt to avoid the unpleasant task of making such choices, make an unspoken rule for themselves that the church is always right. Unfortunately for them, their silence or indifference does constitute a choice which, though proven to be right in some instances, is also proven to be wrong in others. In which case, the individual stands either vindicated or condemned before God.

The lessons of Calvary are many. Calvary should impel religious leaders to be humble, recognizing that truth is not always the preserve of the religious elite. Jesus Christ was rejected largely because of his humble earthly beginnings and continuance. He was not educated in the schools of the rabbis. He did not court the favour of the religious establishment or patronize its leaders. The religious leaders felt that their authority was being bypassed and therefore, sought and succeeded, to some measure, in ridding the world of Him whom they considered to be a threat.

The lesson for the people at large who profess a religious faith is that a religious order, culture or establishment stands justified only when it is aligned with truth. Truth stands pre-eminent and is not always enunciated or embraced within the religious establishment to which one is committed. The

choice with which one is faced is sometimes unpleasant, but nevertheless, weighted with eternal consequences.

But what is this mysterious entity - THE CHURCH over which individuals hold such diverse, yet unyielding passion? Is it a national establishment, the great cathedral or the various denominations? What is the Biblical perspective on this matter?

In describing the relationship between Christ and His Church, the apostle Paul refers to it as a mystery. He admonishes husbands to Love their wives “even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it,” declaring that men ought to love their wives as their own bodies and that one who loves his wife loves himself. He further goes on to say:

“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Eph.5:32

A mystery, by definition is something that is hidden from or obscure to the understanding. This might raise the question as to whether or not there is much to be gained by probing into the Biblical concept of The Church, since it is a mystery. However, to those who genuinely desire a closer walk with God and who sincerely seek to know the truths of God’s Word, the promise of Christ holds true today as it did when He spoke thus to his disciples:

“Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.” Luke 8:10.

Of Christ it is declared that in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3) and we are further assured that:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not and it shall be given him.” James 1:5.

These are our assurances, so with these in mind we now consider “The Unfolding Mystery of God’s Church.”

Chapter 1

The Old Testament Church

Originally Intended Purpose For Israel

In God's choice of the nation of Israel as His special people there was a greater purpose than simply selecting favourites - God is not partial. It was not God's intention that the blood descendants of Abraham should be the only set of people on the face of the earth with whom He would have a meaningful relationship. It was intended that Israel should be a nucleus through whom God would work to bring all humanity back into harmony with Him.

The record tells us that in the beginning man was a perfect creation but as a result of sin, that communion - that open communion and meaningful relationship that man had with God was broken; as it is put in Isa. 59:2:

“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.”

As a result of sin man became subject to the influence of the Devil. Adam rebelled against God and brought the entire world which was under his dominion subject to Satan (Heb. 2:6-8; 2 Pet. 2:19). Over time, the character of the Devil became so indelibly stamped upon the thoughts and actions of the majority of human beings that, by the time of Noah, God had no option but to stem the tide of wickedness by destroying the earth with a flood (Gen. 6:5-7). And even after a new beginning with the eight (8) persons who were saved, evil reared its ugly head once again and so corrupted the human family that God had to choose a special people through whom He would try to retain some loyalty in a revolted world.

Amidst the din and miasma of prevailing evil God saw that Abram loved righteousness. As a result, God called him to separate from his father's house and go into a land that God would show him, so that he and his descendants (Israel) could enter into a solemn covenant with God - a covenant that would result in all the families of earth being blessed (Gen. 12: 1-3). God wanted to use Israel - this special people - as a nucleus through whom He would work to restore harmony between Himself and the human race. Indication of this is given in Isa. 56:3-7. It says:

“Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from His people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

Notice the words used: “every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting, it and taketh hold of my covenant.” An incentive was given to the strangers and the eunuchs to keep God’s Sabbath and to take hold of His covenant. He declared that a name better than that of sons and daughters would be given to them - an everlasting name, and their name would not be cut off. The promise is that they would be made joyful in God’s house of prayer as God said: “mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.” This shows that it was God’s intention that the strangers and the eunuchs also, and not only the blood descendants of Abraham should lay hold on His covenant. After all, it was by means of the covenant that God’s plan was revealed to man as to how he would reconcile erring man back to Himself.

The Method

The means by which mankind would be brought back into harmony with God was firstly, by His forgiving them of all sins which they had committed and then by granting them the gift of His Holy Spirit to dwell in their hearts. This would enable them to live holy lives, not continuing in sin, since it was sin that originally created their separation from Him, as we have read in Isa. 59:2. Hence His promise that is given in Eze. 36:25 He says:

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.”

Notice what is mentioned here: cleansing from filthiness; cleansing from that which has made one filthy - filthiness that one already has. In real terms, sins that one has already committed. Then, notice that not only does He do that, but further in verses 26, 27 He says:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh. And I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them.”

So, God does not only want to forgive us of our sins so that we can continue sinning and coming back to Him for forgiveness over and over again. He wants to forgive us of our sins and go a step further, to put His Holy Spirit in us and by virtue of His Holy Spirit dwelling in us we will be made to walk in His statutes and keep His judgements and do them. In other words, we would walk His way and not sin.

One Gospel

Even though individuals in every era of Israel’s history grasped this truth, this greater and ultimate purpose was largely missed by Israel as a collective body. As the Apostle Paul mentions in Heb. 4:2:

“For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”

These words were written to people who were living in New Testament times. Paul was saying that the Gospel - the same gospel that was being preached in New Testament times was preached to them (Ancient Israel), but it did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. In

essence, Israel failed to fulfil the purpose that God intended to be fulfilled in them and through them.

Israel Rejected

This failure culminated in their rejection and crucifixion of Christ, their only hope of reconciliation to God. In light of their failure Christ told them a parable that is recorded in Matt. 21:33-40. He says:

“Their was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?”

“When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?” That was the question that Jesus asked after relating this parable; to which the Jews - those that were present there, answered:

“He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.” Verse 41.

To this, Jesus concluded:

“Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” Verses 42, 43.

So, in conclusion Jesus is saying: this is exactly what you have done, and as a result of that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Worship In Spirit And Truth

This same truth of Israel’s fate and the transcendent importance of a heart relationship with God was told by Christ to the woman of Samaria whom he met by Jacob’s well.

You see, the Samaritans were the offsprings from mixed marriages between the Jews and the heathen nations that occupied Samaria after the ten tribes were taken away as captives and scattered among the nations by the Assyrians. The apostate Jews and their offspring had proceeded to build in Samaria a rival temple to the one that God had established in Jerusalem.

Now, here was this woman of Samaria asking Christ where it is that God's people should worship Him, whether in Samaria or in Jerusalem. The ignorance of both Jews and Samaritans of God's greater purpose led them to practice a religion that was centered in the temple and not in God, who wanted to dwell within them as individuals, by His Holy Spirit, through the services that He had commanded them to perform continually at the temple in Jerusalem. The story is given in John chapter 4.

Jesus answered the woman:

"Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." John 4:21,22.

The fact is, the temple that was in Samaria was a counterfeit. From the very outset it was an effort by men to do their own thing, contrary to what God had outlined to them. Hence, Jesus' statement *ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship.*" Because, after all, it was to the Jews that the outline was given as to what was required. It was through the Jews that this temple, as God intended it, was built at Jerusalem. This temple at Samaria was totally contrary to God's revealed purpose. God did not build it. He did not ask or authorize them to build it.

With the temple at Jerusalem, God gave specific instructions as to how it should be built, by whom, and what particular services were to be carried out there; and all of this, towards that greater purpose of forgiving men of their sins and dwelling in each heart by His Holy Spirit.

He continues:

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Verse 23.

Christ outlined the fact that the true worship as God intended it was given to the Jews, and hence, that which the Samaritans took upon themselves to do did not satisfy God's Word - it was not in accordance with what God had asked. However, He pointed out at the same time that the time was then coming when "the true worshippers" - suggesting that neither the Samaritans nor the Jews were these true worshippers - would "worship the Father in spirit and in truth" for these are the ones that the Father seeks to worship him.

Chapter 2

The New Testament Church

The True Worshippers

Now the question is: who are these “true worshippers” - that “nation bringing forth the fruits thereof”? The Apostle Paul tells us in Gal.3:27-29:

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

As many as have been baptized into Christ - them that are Christ’s; these are the ones that the Apostle Paul has identified as Abraham’s seed - Israel, the true Israel of God in the Christian dispensation. These are the ones who have inherited the promises of ancient Israel: as many as have been baptized into Christ - them that are Christ’s.

This baptism into Christ is primarily the reception and infilling of the Holy Spirit. Notice the words that Jesus used to his disciples shortly before the day of Pentecost. Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem “for the promise of the Father” which they had heard from Him, Jesus (Acts 1:4). He went on further to say:

“John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”
verse 5.

They should tarry in Jerusalem and a few days hence, they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The next chapter (Acts 2) gives us an account of that experience, and the Divine account is that “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:4). So, this baptism that they were to receive a few days hence, they actually received on the day of Pentecost and according to the record, in that experience “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”

The Apostle Paul also expresses a similar idea in Rom. 8:9. He says:

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

So, those who are Christ’s will of necessity have the Holy Spirit in them.

Receiving The Holy Spirit

But, back to that experience on the day of Pentecost. On that very occasion the Apostle Peter explained that one will receive the Holy Spirit upon one’s repentance of sin and acceptance of Christ. He also told them that the Holy Spirit is available to all who sincerely desire Him. This idea is expressed in Acts 2:38,39. Says Peter:

“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 Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

So, Peter is saying: Look, what you have seen happen here - us receiving the Holy Spirit, is not something that was intended for us alone, because the promise is unto you and to your children as well.

Jesus himself also, before he had left, gave this same indication as recorded in Luke 11:13. He says:

“If ye then, being evil, known how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”

So, it is quite clear that the gift of the Holy Spirit was not intended only for the apostles, but the gift of the Holy Spirit is something that God intends for each individual.

The Church Of Christ

The point being made is that it is these that have repented of their sins and accepted Christ and have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts that are the true worshippers that will worship God in spirit and in truth. These are the “nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” These that have been baptized into Christ - these that are Christ’s are Israel, Abraham’s seed.

Further, these are the ones that are of the Body of Christ. Hence it is said of them in 1 Cor.12:13,
27

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit.” Verse 13.

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” verse 27.

What is the point that is being made here? Simply this, that having been baptized by the Holy Spirit one automatically becomes a part of a body. What is that body? According to verse 27, that body is the Body of Christ. “For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body,” and that body is “the body of Christ.”

Is there another name by which this Body of Christ is called? Yes; this other name is given in Eph. 1:22,23. It explains that God has put all things under the feet of Jesus and “gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body.” Did you get that other name? The Body of Christ is The Church.

Therefore, we have gathered so far that God’s Church is made up of all those who are Christ’s, all those who have been baptized into Christ. It is these same ones that are referred to as Abraham’s seed, Israel. These are the ones that have inherited the promises that were given to ancient Israel (subject, of course, to their continued obedience by living faith).

Professed Or True Followers?

The Bible has made it abundantly clear that The Body of Christ -The Church comprises only those who have the Spirit of God in them. Regardless of what one professes, one is not a member of God's Church except as one receives the Spirit of God in his life and genuinely wills to walk the path of righteousness. The words of Christ to Nicodemus are just as applicable today as when they were spoken by Christ. He said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:3,5.

The Church is declared by the apostle Paul to be of the very flesh and bones of Christ.

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Eph. 5:29,30.

One who is at enmity with Christ could never be considered to be of his flesh and bones. Indeed, one is at enmity with Christ if he is not born again. Consider the words of the apostle:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Rom. 8:7,9.

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Hence, he is certainly not a part of The Church of Christ which is Christ's very Body, of His flesh and of His Bones. Furthermore, the apostle Paul declares that it is by the Spirit of God that individuals are baptized into the Body.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." 1 Cor. 12:13.

It is on the basis that the Israel that God recognizes comprises only those who are truly converted that the apostle Paul declares that "all Israel shall be saved." Rom. 11:26. Accordingly, he declares:

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart." Rom. 2:28,29.

Also he says of the blood descendants of Abraham:

"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” Rom. 9:6-8.

Thus, while the Bible does indicate that there will be two (2) classes of people who profess to be followers of Christ, namely: those who are truly born again and those who only profess to be followers, The Church that God recognizes includes only those who are born of the Spirit.

This principle is sustained consistently throughout the Bible. Even Jesus Himself, referring to His fold in the parable of the Good Shepherd, where He makes His famous statement about “other sheep” declared:

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

“He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.”

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” John 10:9,1,27.

Type Of Guidance

It is worthwhile to consider the type of guidance that will be given to these dear ones. The Bible tells us in John 16:13:

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall bear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

Also according to John 14:12,16-18 Jesus says:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” Verse 12.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” Verses 16-18.

We are trying to understand the kind of guidance that will be given to these dear ones. We are told that they will be led into all truth. “Greater works” than those which Christ did they will do (N.B. “Greater works” must be understood as more extensive in quantity rather than more elevated in quality since the Blessed Master cannot be exceeded in excellence). Christ Himself will come to them. He will not leave them comfortless. The Spirit of Truth will be with them continually to abide with them forever.

Two Points

Note two (2) things - The first : just about all that Christ offers to be to His people collectively (i.e. His Body) at any time, He offers to be to each individual that belongs to that Body. Hence, He is “the head over all things to the church” as we have read (Eph. 1:22,23), by being head over all things for each individual that makes up The Church. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul says “the head of every man is Christ.” 1 Cor. 11:3. So, Christ is not the Head of His Church in the sense of being

the head of a man-made hierarchical system of which, by exercising control at the top of that system He controls The Body. He is Head of The Body by being Head of every individual that makes up The Body. That is the first point.

Second point to note: one is not a member of The Body, necessarily, by virtue of the amount of knowledge that one has. To the individual it is promised that the Holy Spirit will guide him into all truth, but this is a process and not a sudden, immediate and complete experience. Accordingly, the Apostle Peter admonishes: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet.3:18; even though we clearly recognize and acknowledge the diversity of gifts and abilities invested in the individual members (refer to the parable of the talents - Matt. 25:14 -29).

One Of The Channels For Guidance

In guiding an individual into truth, the Holy Spirit often uses other individuals as channels through which this truth is communicated and brought to his attention. A typical case of the Holy Spirit guiding an individual into truth by using other individuals as the medium is found in Acts 18:24-28. The story is as follows:

“And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ. Acts 18:24-28

Here we have a situation where Apollos was “mighty in the scriptures,” quite eloquent and “fervent in the spirit,” but he knew only the baptism of John. He did not know about Jesus and all that was taught by Jesus. He was preaching in the synagogue and when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they somehow perceived a deficit in his knowledge. They took him and “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” Therefore, Apollos having accepted that new light which was declared to him, was able to “convince the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” In other words he went on preaching the good news, and that good news he preached according to the new light that he received.

Thus Far

Remember now, we are considering the mystery of God’s Church. We have identified what is The Church of God. The Church of God as we have outlined from the Scriptures is composed of all them that are Christ’s, all those in whom is found the Spirit of God. We have outlined also the type of guidance that each one would receive. We have found from the Scriptures that for each one of these, just about everything that Christ is to His Church as a whole, He is to each one individually. Also, we have found that one is not a member of this Body by virtue of the amount of knowledge that he has, although the Holy Spirit will guide him into all truth, even using as His helpers other disciples, to bring such truth to his attention.

So, these will worship God in spirit and in truth. Unlike the Jews whose worship was centered in the temple, their worship will be centered in Christ. Unlike the Jews whose worship was external and formal, their worship will be from the inside and it will be spiritual. Unlike the Jews for whom the temple and the worship made the worshipper, for these, the worshipper makes the temple and the worship. Their bodies will be the temple of the living God who dwells in them, as we are told in 1 Corinthians 3:16:.

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” 1 Cor.3:16.

Wherever a child of God is found, God is present with him. Wherever two or three of these are gathered in the name of Christ, He is in the midst of them, as we are told in Matt.18:20:

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matt.18:20.

A Particular Church

Wherever two or three of them that are Christ’s are gathered in His name, He is in the midst, and there we have a particular church -Christ the head and they, of the body.

Even a Godly family is considered in Scripture to be a particular church as demonstrated by the references made of Aquila and Priscilla in the Scripture passages that will now be considered. The Apostle Paul writes thus to the believers at Corinth:

“The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” 1 Cor. 16: 19.

Now, do you remember what we read about Aquila and Priscilla and their experience with Apollos, in Acts 18:24-28?

“And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.” Acts 18:24

Note the place; he came to Ephesus and spoke in the synagogue. Aquila and Priscilla having heard him in the synagogue, “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” Acts 18:26. From this, we are sure that Aquila and Priscilla fellowshipped in the synagogue at Ephesus, with the believers that assembled there. Yet, according to the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, they had a church in their house. He wrote that Aquila and Priscilla along with the church in their house sent greetings.

On another occasion, the Apostle Paul again made reference to this church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. This time, it was in writing to the church at Rome:

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus.”

“Likewise greet the church that is in their house.” Rom. 16:3,5

From this, we may gather that Aquila and Priscilla were known to the believers that constituted the church at Rome, and yet they had a church in their house which was separate.

From these references, the indication is that the household of Aquila and Priscilla was considered a particular church even though Aquila and Priscilla fellowshipped with believers of a wider group. This, and other Biblical precedents (like that of Philemon - Philemon verse 2) indicates that a godly family is legitimately classified as a particular church.

When these individual members of The Body of different families and kindred ties, from a particular place meet to worship and to fellowship, these, according to Scripture are described as the church at that particular place. For example, we read about “the church of God which is at Corinth” - 1 Cor. 1:2; we read also of “the church of the Laodiceans” - Col. 4:16, and others.

The Universal Church

These particular churches, collectively are referred to, as “the churches.” For example, in the following statement:

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” 1Cor. 14:33

Also, in this other statement:

“But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.” 1 Cor. 11:16

Reference is obviously made of all the different churches, and the term used to refer to them is “churches.”

It is interesting that these churches together have never been referred to as “The Church,” but rather as “churches.” The fact is, The Church - the Body of Christ is far greater and more grand than any or all of these churches put together. Consider the definition from the Word of God, what is The Church, the Body of Christ:

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” Eph.1:22,23.

The Church is defined as “the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” “Him that filleth all in all” is none other than God. God is the One of whom it is said, “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” Jer. 23:24.

The Church is also described as:

“The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” 1 Tim. 3:15.

Thus, The Church, the Body of Christ is the fullness of God, the pillar and ground of the truth. The suggestion from these terms is that The Church, the Body of Christ is of wider scope than any or all of these churches put together. The reality is that The Church, the Body of Christ is universal.

Household Of God

This fact of the universality of God's Church is brought out in Ephesians 2.

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Verses 13-18.

The apostle Paul is speaking about Jews and Gentiles - those that were nigh, and those that were afar off being reconciled to God in one body. He continues:

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Verse 19.

It is good to bear this thought in mind, that those who are reconciled to God, having been reconciled, they have become "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

What is God's household - or family? Mention is made of the same in Ephesians 3:15. In order to get the full thought, we look at verse 14 as well. They read as follows:

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

The family of God according to Ephesians 3:15 extends over heaven and earth. A household and a family are one and the same thing. Thus, in referring to the followers of Christ as being reconciled to God, becoming a part of God's household, we are saying in accordance with Ephesians 3:15 that they have now become a part of that family which extends over heaven and earth.

Now, we ask an appropriate question: Is that household, or family of God the same as God's church? The answer is yes. 1 Timothy 3:15 identifies the house of God as the Church of the living God:

"The house of God, which is the church of the living God." 1 Tim.3:15.

Spiritual House

That the household, or family of God is the same as God's Church is also borne out in the same thought expressed in Ephesians chapter 2. The thought continues in verse 20, with the reconciled ones of that same household being referred to as constituting a building.

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Eph. 2:20-22.

So, the same household is described as a building being fitly framed together, growing up into a holy temple in the Lord.

The apostle Peter takes up the same idea in 1 Pet. 2:5.

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.

He refers to Jesus as the chief corner stone in verses 4 and 6 and says that the followers of Christ, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house. That into which the followers of Christ are built up - that same household of God, or holy temple which the apostle Paul referred to, is referred to by Peter as a spiritual house. This spiritual house can be none other than that “house of God, which is the church of the living God.” 1 Tim.3:15.

So, the thought is that the household, or family of God that extends over heaven and earth is the same spiritual house that the followers of Christ, as lively stones are built up into - “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” 1 Tim.3:15.

Church Of The Firstborn

We are further told that the followers of Christ have come to “an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” Heb.12:22,23. The inspired writer says:

“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest.”

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” Heb.12:18,22,23

The Church to which the followers of Christ have come, is the “church of the firstborn,” that Church which includes an innumerable company of angels. This is the Church which is the Body of Christ.

Grand Reunion

The grand reunion of God’s family that is comprised of those who have been reconciled to God, both in heaven and in earth is the fulfillment of that mystery which, from ages and generations have been hid in God. This idea is expressed in Ephesians 1:9,10. It says:

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”

This mystery “which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God” (Eph. 3:9) is “that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.”

On that glorious occasion that will extend into eternity all will reflect the glorious image of God, being filled with all the fullness of God, as is expressed in Ephesians 3:19, that God’s will is that all His people be “filled with all the fullness of God”. Accordingly, the apostle John heard the lofty strains of singing from a reconciled universe as expressed in Revelation 19:1,6 where he says:

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.”

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Rev.19:1,6.

For this joy that was set before Him, Christ endured the cross. In the joy and peace of this grand reunion, there will be fulfilled the words which He is reported as saying:

“In the midst of the church will I sing praise.” Heb. 2:12.

Also will be fulfilled that which is said of the Father:

“He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” Zeph. 3:17.

This Is the Church

That reconciled universe is The Church, The Body of Christ, the fullness of God, the pillar and ground of the truth. That is The Church that Christ gave Himself for, that He might “cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph.5:25-27.

This thought is borne out quite forcibly in Colossians 1:19,20, which reads as follows:

“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

Christ gave himself that all might be reconciled to Him, both in earth and in heaven. That is The Church for which Christ gave Himself. That is The Church which is the Body of Christ.

Chapter 3

The Mystery Of Iniquity

What Is Seen

According to the Biblical picture of The Church we see first, the individual in whom Christ dwells through His Holy Spirit. Secondly, we see two (2) or three (3) or any number of these gathered together - this being a particular church; and finally, we see The Church, The Body of Christ; that universal entity that is composed of all them that are Christ's.

In the world today, to what extent is this Biblical picture of The Church reflected? Numerous little groups, sects and denominations issue their claim that they are The True Church, and hence, claiming also that any genuine acceptance of salvation necessarily leads to some level of belonging to, or association with them.

In light of the Biblical picture of The Church, wherever then did this idea originate that The Church - The True Church, Gods's Church is some little organization that a group of individuals come together and establish, for which they lay down their own little rules and regulations, and admit to its membership such as they choose to admit and cast out whom they will? Wherever did that idea originate?

This phenomenon is the working of the "mystery of iniquity." We will see exactly how it began and the progression of its development.

Early Manifestation

From as early as the days of the apostle Paul, the "mystery of iniquity" had started to work, as is said in 2 Thess. 2:7, that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." Individuals like Diotrefes who is spoken of by the apostle John (3 John verses 9,10) had already started to take upon themselves authority and power which would exalt them to be seen by fellow believers as dignitaries to be obeyed in matters of faith. Consider the words of John:

"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrefes, who loveth to have the preeminence 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." 3 John 9,10.

From as early as the days of the apostles, individuals like Diotrefes had started to introduce a principle that was totally contrary to the faith of Christ. Not only did Diotrefes refuse to accept John the beloved disciple and other believers, but he took it upon himself to cast out of the church those that did.

Do you remember how it was shown from the Scriptures the work of the Holy Spirit, dwelling in each individual and the guidance that is offered to each? The question is: with Christ dwelling in each individual, what need is there for persons like Diotrephes, to determine whom one should accept, so much so, that he casts out of the church whom he will, because they accept certain believers, like John the beloved disciple?

The Falling Away

This whole principle manifested itself and eventually culminated in the falling away - falling away from the true faith of Jesus that the apostle Paul spoke about in 1 Thess. 2:3. Writing to the Thessalonian believers who had started to become anxious about the seeming delay in the return of Christ, the apostle said:

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.”

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” 2 Thess. 2:3,4,7,8.

The apostle Paul was saying (in the first (1st) century A.D.) that a principle, which he referred to as “the mystery of iniquity” had already started to work and would result in a falling away from the faith held by the apostles. In this apostasy a leading or dominant figure whom he characterized as “that man of sin,” “the son of perdition” and “that Wicked” (verses 3,8) would emerge and remain until the second coming of Christ, when he would be destroyed.

Notice the earmarks of this power. He “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.” Further, he takes unto himself prerogatives of God, sitting “in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

Does this description bear any resemblance to that attitude which had already started to manifest itself through Diotrephes? Follow the progression carefully: Diotrephes loved “to have the preeminence among them.” John, the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 21:20-24), through whom the Word of God as recorded in the Gospel according to St. John, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Epistles of John and the book of Revelation was declared, was himself and his writings not received by Diotrephes. He “forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.” To be in the church, rejecting both messenger and messages from God and at the same time dictating that all in the church do the same on pain of excommunication is nothing else but exalting oneself above God, sitting “in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

Indeed, the “mystery of iniquity” had already started to work, and it continued to work and will yet continue to work until an end is put to it at the second coming of Christ.

Thus, according to the Scriptures, a religious principle, one that is a counterfeit of the true principle of God's Church had already started to work before the decease of the apostles. This counterfeit would intensify into direct apostasy, a "falling away from the faith that was held by the apostles and it would continue until the second coming of Christ.

Is it any wonder that Jesus when asked by His disciples on the mount of Olives "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?", rather than addressing first of all the specific question asked, He started by saying: "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many"? Matt. 24:3-5. He further stated "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matt. 24:24.

Thanks be to God that Jesus said "if it were possible", which means that the elect will not be deceived, even though the deception will be almost overmastering. Indeed, the elect will not be deceived because they are aware as was the apostle Paul that there exist "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness." 2 Cor. 11:13-15.

The Man Of Sin

But let us establish more precisely who or what is this "man of sin" who would exalt himself above God, and how his activities have affected The Church of God and the perception of it.

The same "mystery of iniquity" that Paul said had already started to work and would continue after his day until an end is put to it at the second coming of Christ, is described in Revelation 13 under the symbol of a leopard-like beast that has seven heads and ten horns. Consider the description that is given of his activities:

"And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev.13:6-8.

Notice the very same type of activity as was said by Paul of the "man of sin."

1. He "opened his mouth in blasphemy against God."
2. He blasphemed God's tabernacle.
3. He will be worshipped.
4. He will oppose God by making war with His people.

Finally, he will be destroyed only at the second coming of Christ, as is said in Rev.19:20:

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.” Rev. 19:20.

Cosmic Conflict

The line of prophecy that introduces this leopard-like beast begins in Revelation 12 with the dragon that tried to destroy Christ at his birth. The story is as follows:

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.

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.” Rev. 12:1-6.

The “man child” that was “brought forth” “who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron” and “was caught up unto God, and to his throne” is Jesus. Jesus is the one spoken of in Revelation 19:13-16 of whom it is said that “out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron,” “and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,” “and his name is called The Word of God.” Rev.19:13-16 (see John 1:1,14)

The dragon is Satan according to Rev.12:9: “the great dragon... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan.” Satan was the one who motivated Herod to attempt to put Jesus to death at His birth.

The Woman

One of the prominent characters portrayed in the scenario presented is a woman. Now, who is this woman?

It should be quite clear that the woman portrayed is not the literal mother (the virgin Mary) that gave birth to Christ. Indeed, there was no literal red dragon that stood before Mary when she was about to give birth. Neither was she standing on the moon, nor did she have the sun as her clothing, and there is no record that she had to flee into any wilderness. Therefore, we are sure that this woman portrayed is used to symbolize something.

We are looking at a prophecy that is highly symbolic (certain things are used to represent other things). We cannot hope to arrive at the correct interpretation of a symbol if we simply go by our personal opinion of what we think a particular symbol might represent. We must first investigate whether or not the interpretation is given in the passage itself. If the interpretation is not to be found in the passage itself, then we must consider other Scripture passages to see whether or not the particular symbol is used elsewhere. If the symbol has been used elsewhere, then we can consider the circumstances and context of its usage to see whether it is appropriate for the same interpretation to be applied in the particular case that we are concerned with.

Now, there is no direct statement in the passage that says what the woman represents. Hence, we must consider other passages that make reference to a symbolic woman. There are many other cases in the Bible where a woman is used as a symbol. In these cases, consistently, a woman is used to represent the very same thing. Consistently in Scripture, a woman is used to represent a church.

Throughout the Bible, the symbol of a pure and virtuous woman is always used to represent God's people. An impure woman or a harlot is used to represent a backslidden or apostate church. An example of this symbolism is seen in the following words of the apostle Paul, addressed to the believers at Corinth.

"I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Cor. 11:2.

In contrast, Israel's sin in departing from God resulted in their being classified as a harlot.

"And thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown." Eze. 16:13-15 (see also verses 28-39)

"Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord. Jer. 3:20.

The Church In The Wilderness

So, at the birth of Christ, Satan tried desperately to destroy Him, working through the imperial authority of the Roman Empire, which eventually ordered His crucifixion in league with the spurious accusations brought against Him, by the Jews. While the dragon primarily represents Satan, it is in a secondary sense a symbol of the Roman power through which Satan actively tried to destroy Christ. Despite Satan's using the Roman soldiers to crucify Christ and also to guard His tomb, He was gloriously resurrected and "was caught up unto God, and to His throne."

But the battle was not over. Satan having failed to destroy Christ turned his venomous wrath against the true followers of Christ.

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." Rev. 12:13,14.

Because of the intense persecution that was levelled against it, The True Church - “that nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” had to dwell in seclusion and obscurity as symbolized by the woman fleeing into the wilderness, in order that it might “worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” This experience of persecution has always been the fate of God’s True Church as is indicated in Paul’s words: “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2 Tim. 3:12.

Satan would continue his warfare against Christ and His people down through the ages unto the very end of time when the last set of followers or remnant shall exist.

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, 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.

The Beast

But according to the Divine description Satan would then continue his activity through a masterpiece of evil based on a counterfeit religion, “the mystery of iniquity” which the Divine account symbolizes as the leopard-like beast that has seven heads and ten horns. The description of the war continues in Rev.13:1 with the emergence of this power.

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.” Rev. 13:1-3.

So, this “mystery of iniquity” which had already started to work from Paul’s day eventually gave rise to the full emergence of this monstrous power which would continue its warfare against God’s true church, though doing so under a religious guise and claiming Divine authority. The power, seat and authority of Satan which was centered in the emperors of Rome was given to this power which would continue where pagan Rome had ended.

Insight From John’s Experience

Valuable insight can be gained from the particular circumstances that were experienced by John (the writer of the book of Revelation), as to a possible reason why all this information is given in symbolic language. John wrote these symbolic prophecies while he was on a rocky deserted island (Patmos) where he had been banished from the rest of the world because of his preaching about Christ.

While on the Isle of Patmos, John received a number of visions from God which he was commanded to write and share with others. However, the information, like the words that he preached were considered subversive, from the standpoint of the civil authorities that had banished him. It was hence, very appropriate that the prophetic information be coded so that those who were antagonistic to such information might not understand it, while the true followers of Christ, by comparing Scripture with Scripture would understand.

It was a similar case with Jesus speaking in parables. Consider Jesus' words to His disciples:

"Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." Luke 8:10.

The same is true today, of prophetic truth. The true followers of Christ can understand and will understand since they have the Holy Spirit in them, whose pleasure it is to guide them into all truth. But for those who are not prepared to weigh honestly the evidence that is presented to them and change their opinions and lifestyles according as they are convicted by the truth, they will be left in darkness, without the capacity to understand.

Characteristics Of The Beast

Let us note once again the characteristics of this power.

1. The principle upon which this power operates had already started to work from Paul's day (2 Thess. 2:7).
2. The emergence of this power would be linked with a falling away from the true faith (2 Thess. 2:3).
3. It is a religious power that claims prerogatives of God (2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:6-8).
4. It is a power that opposes God (2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13 :6-8).
5. It is a power that exercises authority of worldwide extent (Rev. 13:7).
6. It is a power that persecutes the followers of Christ (Rev. 13:7).
7. It received the power, seat and authority that was centered in the emperors of Rome. (Rev. 13:2).
8. It will be revered and admired by almost the entire world. Rev. 13:3,8).
9. It will not cease to exist until the second coming of Christ. (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:20).

Mystery, Babylon The Great

Based on the specifications thus far, many may have already settled in their minds the identity of this power, because indeed there is but one power that satisfies all the above specifications. However, in order to make the identity more certain we will consider just one other passage of Scripture that fills in some additional details about this power. The passage is Revelation 17. In this chapter the very same power represented by the leopard-like beast of Revelation 13 is brought to focus, but this time, the hand that guides the beast is also brought into the picture, namely a woman called BABYLON. Here is then description:

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgement of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they beheld the beast that was, and is not and yet is.” Rev. 17:1-8.

Let us first establish that it is the same beast that is brought to view. The characteristics that indicate this are as follows:

1. The beast has seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 17:3) -compare Rev. 13:1
2. The beast is full of names of blasphemy (Rev. 17:3) -compare Rev. 13:1
3. The beast was and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit (Rev. 17:8) - consider that the beast in Rev. 13 received a deadly wound and the deadly wound was healed (Rev. 13:3)
4. Those whose names are not written in the book of life shall wonder when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is (Rev. 17:8) - consider that the beast in Rev. 13 was greatly wondered at, when his deadly wound was healed (Rev. 13:3) and will be worshipped by those whose names are not written in the book of life (Rev. 13:8).

With these specifications it should be clear that it is the same beast that is being referred to. The beast is now seen ridden by a woman who is described as a harlot and the mother of harlots. This means that this monstrous system is steered and directed by a church (remember that woman represents church - 2 Cor. 11:2; Eze. 16:13-15, 28-39) - a backslidden apostate church which is the mother of all such churches. This woman “sitteth upon many waters”. John the Revelator was told what the waters represent:

“And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” Rev. 17:15.

The woman is also described as being a great city:

“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” Verse 18.

The seven heads which the beast has are declared to be seven mountains on which the woman sits.

“And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.” Verse 9.

Fitting The Pieces Together

We now have a number of pieces which, together should give us a clear picture of this counterfeit religious system through which Satan has effectively carried out his warfare against Christ in the past, and through which he will continue to operate until it is destroyed at the second coming of Christ. We shall now list the characteristics of this woman which sits at the helm of this counterfeit system.

1. It is a church - a backslidden apostate church (Rev. 17:1,2; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eze. 16:13-15, 28-39).
2. It is the mother of all such churches (Rev. 17:5).
3. It is a church that has persecuted the followers of Christ she was drunk “with the blood of the saints” (Rev. 17:6).
4. This church is also a city that sits on seven mountains (Rev. 17:9,18).
5. This church bears dominion over many multitudes and nations (Rev. 17:1,15).
6. This church reigns over the governments of the world (Rev. 17:18).
7. This church possesses great wealth and carries a display or awesome grandeur (Rev. 17:4; 18:16,17).

The reader is invited to look at the seven identifying marks for just one moment. It does not require even much thought to realize that there is only one (1) entity on the face of the earth that satisfies these specifications - THE VATICAN. The Vatican city exactly fits every detail. The Vatican is located in Rome which is built on seven hills. (See **Encyclopedia Americana, International Edition, 1975, Vol. 23, p. 659.**) It is the only church that is a city which sits on seven mountains. Indeed it is a mother church which reigns over the governments of the world. In recent times it has been reported through the news media that the collapse of a number of communist governments in eastern Europe was largely the work of the Papacy (see **TIME, Dec. 4, 1989, p. 74;** also **LIFE, Dec., 1989**). And these are but few instances out of many that give some idea of the far-reaching influence that the Vatican authority exercises over world governments.

As to its activities in persecuting the followers of Christ, the pages of history are stained with the record of so-called heretics that have been tortured, maimed and put to death in the most gruesome manner by the Vatican authority during medieval times (see - **J.A. Wylie, The History of Protestantism;** also **J.H. Merle D’Aubigne, History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century**). The subjects of the Vatican power are scattered all over the world and are quite accurately referred

to in Scripture as multitudes and nations (Rev. 17:1,15). In terms of wealth and grandeur, one needs only to take a look at the Vatican city itself with its magnificent palaces and cathedrals.

It is quite interesting that even the Vatican has represented itself as a woman with a cup in her hand, and bearing dominion over the world. Says **Alexander Hislop** in his book *“The Two Babylons”*:

“In 1825, on the occasion of the jubilee, Pope Leo XII, struck a medal, bearing on the one side his own image, and on the other, that of the Church of Rome symbolized as a ‘Woman’, holding in her left hand a cross, and in her right a cup, with the legend around her, ‘Sedet super universum’, ‘The whole world is her seat.’ “ -- *The Two Babylons*, page 6.

The identification of the Vatican with the mystery woman BABYLON is like a nail in a sure place. It leaves absolutely no room for equivocation. Indeed it is to the credit of God’s Word - the sure word of prophecy that words written so many centuries in advance could so accurately depict a power whose existence was yet future.

Unveiling The Mystery Of Iniquity

The woman being THE VATICAN, it follows that the beast, that counterfeit religious system through which Satan operates to wage his relentless war against Christ and His people is the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH which is steered and directed by the Vatican. Indeed, a number of the specifications that identify the woman are also identifying marks of the beast. The beast is said to be a religious power (Rev. 13:6-8); it persecutes the followers of Christ (Rev. 13:7); it exercises authority of worldwide extent.

But let us consider some of the other specifications that will further identify the Roman Catholic Church.

1. **The principle of its operation had already started to work from Paul’s day (1st Century A.D.).** Indeed, the Roman Catholic Church claims to have had its beginning from as early as Paul’s day.
2. **The emergence of the system would be linked with a falling away from the faith held by the apostles.** The Roman Catholic Church herself acknowledges that the images, relics, holy days and rituals that are so central to her religious activity were largely adopted from pagan customs which related to the worship of pagan deities and were in principle contrary to the faith of Christ. Consider the words of **Cardinal Newman**:

“Confiding then in the power of Christianity to resist the infection of evil and to transmute the very instruments and appendages of demon worship to an evangelical use - we are told by Eusebius, that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments, to which they had been accustomed in their own..... The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees, incense, lamps and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water, asylums; holy days and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the field, sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure (shaving of the head), the ring in marriage, turning to the east, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical

chant, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the church.” - Cardinal Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, pages 272, 273.

Of course, they fail to acknowledge such an activity of adopting pagan customs as falling away from the faith, but consider what God instructed Israel in regards to the heathen customs that were practiced by the surrounding nations:

“Learn not the way of the heathen.” *Jer. 10: 2.*

“Enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise.” “Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God.” “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” *Deut. 12: 30, 31, 32.*

Furthermore, they have chosen to build their structure on the wrong foundation - Peter, instead of Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic Church claims to have been built on Peter as the foundation rock, despite the clear Scriptural declaration that “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 3:11. Peter himself pointed to Christ as the Rock on whom God’s spiritual house is built (see 1 Pet. 2:3-8).

3. The power, seat and authority that was centered in the emperors of Rome was transferred to the system represented. This Biblical idea most accurately depicts the legacy that was bequeathed to the Roman Catholic Church by the Roman Empire. In fact, one can view today, in the Vatican a large painting which shows Pope Sylvester I receiving a figurine of a warrior from Emperor Constantine as the Emperor was preparing to leave Rome for the newly established capital of Constantinople. Under the picture are the words “Donation of Rome from Constantine to the Pope.” The Roman Emperor actually gave the “seat” or government centre - Rome, to the Pope and shifted his location to Constantinople. But it was not only the seat of power that was transferred; great power and authority was also given to the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church.

It is therefore not surprising that the Roman imperial title, which had lapsed in the 5th Century was revived in the year 800 by Pope Leo III and conferred on Charlemagne, king of the Franks (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Micropedia Part V p. 99}.

Neither should it be surprising that Pope Boniface VIII in the year 1303 recognized King Albert I of Habsburg as the Holy Roman Emperor and hence supreme over all other kingdoms. Indeed, in the previous year (1302) this same pope (Boniface VIII) in his papal bull *UNAM SANCTAM* (“One Holy”) had declared all kingdoms in the world to be subordinate to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. (*The new Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Micropedia Part II p. 146)

4. It is a power that exalts itself above God and tries to stand in the place of God. This specification is ever so true of the Roman Catholic Church. To give evidence of this fact we will consider a few of the claims that they have made.

**(a) Titles and authority which belong only to God are attributed to the Pope.
Considered their own words:**

“We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty”

- Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical letter of June 20, 1894.

“Our Lord God the Pope”

- See a gloss on the *Extravagantes of Pope John XXII*, title 14, ch. 4, “Declaramus.” (In an Antwerp edition of the *Extravagantes* dated 1584 the words “*Dominum Deum nostrum Papam*” (“our Lord God the Pope”) occur in column 153; in a Paris edition dated 1612 they occur in column 140).

“The pope is of great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man but as it were God, and the vicar of God.

“The pope is called most holy because he is rightfully presumed to be such.

“Hence the pope is crowned with a Triple Crown, as king of heaven and of earth and of the lower regions.

“So that if it were possible that the angels might err in the faith, or might think contrary to the faith, they could be judged and excommunicated by the pope.” - *Prompta Bibliotheca Canonica*, Vol. VI pgs. 438, 442, article “Pope” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913 edition, Vol. VI, p. 48, speaks of this book as “*a veritable encyclopedia of religious knowledge*”).

(b) The Roman Catholic Church claims the authority to forgive sins.

“It is theirs to judge offences against the laws, to impose and to remit penalties. This judicial authority will even include the power to pardon sin. - *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XXI, art. “Pope”, page 265.

Even quite recently this claim was reaffirmed, as reported in the media:

“Pope John Paul II... told Roman Catholics to seek forgiveness through the church and not directly from God. - *The Associated Press*, Dec. 11, 1984.

(c) The Roman Catholic Church claims infallibility.

“All dogmatic decrees of the Pope, made with or without his general council, are infallible Once made, no pope or council can reverse them This is the Catholic principle, that the Church cannot err in faith.” - *The Catholic World*, June 1871 pages 422, 423.

(d) They claim the authority to change God’s Word as recorded in the Scriptures.

“The Pope is of so great authority and power that he can modify, explain, or interpret even divine laws.” - *Ferraris’ Ecclesiastical Dictionary*, article “Pope.”

(e) The power of being able to create the Creator is attributed to the priests in their performance of the mass.

“With regard to the power of priests over the real body of Jesus Christ, it is of faith that when they pronounce the words of consecration, the Incarnate Word has obliged himself to obey and to come into their hands under the sacramental species

Thus the priest may in a certain manner, be called the creator of his Creator, since by saying the words of consecration, he creates, as it were, Jesus in the sacrament, by giving him a sacramental existence, and produces him as a victim to be offered to the eternal Father. As in creating the world it was sufficient for God to have said, Let it be made, and it was created, - He spoke and they were made, - so it is sufficient for the priest to say, ‘Hoc est corpus meum~ ‘ and behold, the bread is no longer bread, but the body of Jesus Christ.” - Dignity and Duties of the Priest; Selva, St. Alphonsus Ligouri (R.C.) pages 26-34, New York: Benziger Brothers, 1889.

(f) The mass is considered in some ways to be more important than Calvary.

“So far as the practical effects produced upon the soul are concerned, the Holy Mass has in some sense the advantage over Calvary.” - **Herbert Vaughan**, *The People’s Manual - The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* ([St. Louis]: P. Fox 1881), pages 42, 43.

Through its own words and activities the Roman Catholic Church has identified itself unequivocally as that masterpiece of deception through which Satan tramples the truth of God under foot and wages its relentless war against God and His people.

Two Very Important Points

I must break the thought at this moment to make two very important points.

1. The system is a counterfeit and operates under the direction of Satan to fulfill his bidding, but this does not mean that all persons associated with the system are insincere and have bad intentions. Many - probably most are genuinely misled. To such persons, the Word of God declares “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.” Acts 17:30.

The choice is yours, whether you will accept the plain words of Scripture or you will allow popular sentiments and tradition to cause you to reject God. It is never an easy thing to give up a cherished belief especially when it relates to something that has become an indelible part, if not the main focus of one's life. It is very painful, but the Lord has promised to grant you both strength and courage to serve him, as well as the Comforter - His Holy Spirit to soothe your pain.

Now, there are those who will readily oppose and despise the words written here, classifying it as spreading hate. Well, I dare anyone who claims to have a sincere conscience to justify any such claim. My dear friend, I stand entirely on the Word of God, and I believe the Bible has made itself abundantly clear on the identification of this false system. Also, historical facts have amply verified it and the truth of this identification has been attested to, even from the very words that have been recorded by that system.

Each individual must decide for himself/herself what is of prime importance in his/her life, whether to worship the Father in spirit and in truth or to set truth aside and follow our own pet preferences. One thing is certain and it is this: each individual will have to give an account to God of himself, and only those who have served the Lord in sincerity and have striven diligently to know the truth and to live in accordance with it will be deemed worthy to share eternity with a Holy God. Because, as certain as the earth exists (and even more certain) are the words of Christ: “behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Rev. 22:12.

Chapter 4

The Leaven of Babylon

Moral Darkness

So, we get back to our main point of discussion. This power, the Roman Catholic system has taken the focus of attention for a number of centuries. As a result, many generations knew no other church. The fact is that The True Church of God - those individuals who worshipped the Lord in spirit and in accordance with the truth of His Word, were in hiding in desolate corners of the earth due to persecution from that system which presented itself to the world as God's Church. Quite true to the words of the prophecy, "the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there." Rev.12: 6.

During this time (mainly during the sixth to seventeenth century), the Bible was forbidden to be read by the ordinary people upon pain of death. The Bible, God's Word being removed (except as preserved by the faithful ones in hiding), superstition and ignorance flourished and the truth of God was trodden under foot. Daniel the prophet also spoke about this situation when the truth of God would be trodden under foot and men would usurp the place of God. Under the symbol of the "little horn" he describes it as follows:

"It waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered." Dan.8: 10-12.

The Reformation

As foretold by the Word of God, and as recorded in history, the truth of God was trampled under foot.

But this state of affairs would not remain indefinitely. The Spirit of God moved upon humble and sincere servants of God who had access to the Scriptures, so that they realized that the popular church was truly not representative of the God who revealed Himself in the Bible. A major revolution took place, that saw individuals braving the threat of torture and death in order to make copies of the Bible available to the common people and to exercise their God-given right of worshipping Him in accordance with the dictates of their own conscience. This great revolution which is known as The Reformation resulted in people throwing off the yoke which bound them to human theories and dogmas.

For the first time, many people breathed the air of freedom and experienced what it meant to be able to think for themselves and act in accordance with their own convictions, in matters of faith. The tide was irreversible. The threat of torture and death no longer served as a deterrent because the minds of the people were now free and they clearly understood that it was neither relevant nor

necessary to salvation for them to show any obedience or allegiance to that system which was long perceived as God's True Church.

Thus, in the fullness of time, God ordained that the truth should be brought back to light. This propelled the Reformation. But as we would imagine, the truth was brought back gradually. Revelation was progressive, under the influence of persons such as Luther, Wesley, Huss, Calvin, Jerome, Wycliffe and others.

The Problem

However, there was a problem: when a particular truth was brought to light - brought to the understanding of one individual who was in touch with God, that individual understanding the truth of how God's Word should be shared with His people, proceeded to share that truth with as many as he could. In many cases he understood quite clearly the truth about God's Church. As a result, he felt no guilt about separating himself from that which then posed itself to the world as God's Church - that counterfeit which had trodden under foot the truth of what God's Church really is, and had set up itself in its place) to the world as God's Church. But that truth about God's Church, in many cases, was not properly understood by those who embraced the particular truth that came to the understanding of that particular reformer. Thus, instead of sharing the particular truth that was revealed to them progressively with others until eventually, all those who are called by the name of Christ - all them that are Christ's, came to a knowledge of that truth,, they said: Ah! We are The True Church, because truth has been brought to us that has not been brought to the rest out there. So, we are The True Church.

But this is an error! As we have shown, one is not a member of God's church by virtue of the amount of knowledge that he has, or the amount of light that has been communicated to him. Remember Apollos. He was no less a member of God's Church than those who shared that further light with him. The Bible declares that Apollos was "fervent in the spirit" and "spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord." Acts 18:25. Such an individual would definitely be a part of God's family, in accordance with the words of the apostle Paul:

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Romans 8:14,17.

So, Apollos did not become a member of God's Church upon his gaining new light. Rather, he was a member of God's Church by virtue of having the Spirit of God in him. (Acts 18:25).

So, from the very moment that they started to see themselves as being The True Church, rather than seeing themselves as being a particular church, or particular churches, depending upon the number of groups of worshippers there were, they had started to go off track. All this occurs because of their misconception created by that original false system, that The Church of God is some little organization that a group of individuals gather together and set up, and lay down their own little rules for, and administrate and run in the manner that they see fit.

So, they immediately sit and write creeds and dogmas and policies that ensure that further light is not communicated to them. Having convinced themselves that they are The Church of the

Scriptures -"The pillar and ground of the truth", they as it were feel that they have "the truth", and hence, any other truth that is yet to be revealed will have to be revealed through them. Further, whatever they lay down, has to be the truth, because, being the "pillar and ground of the truth", they cannot preach error.

All Over Again

So then, when God is to bring another bit of truth to light, the individual through whom that truth is to be brought to light has to go back and cover old ground. He has to go back through the process of being seen as a heretic, a schismatic, a "disturber of the brethren", an "offshoot" and all the other like names, in order to struggle earnestly to bring that truth to light.

The reason for this, is that those who had embraced that first truth, who had organized themselves into a body claimed to be The Church, now set up a barrier that inhibits and prevents them from being open to receive this other truth that the Lord now brings to light. Those creeds that they had laid down had, as it were, come to be regarded as the laws of the Medes and Persians, which could not be changed. To change them and accept this new truth which is now brought to light is to admit that, on that particular point, they were really not teaching the truth before. Hence, they would not have been The True Church - "the pillar and ground of the truth."

So now, this person through whom the Lord brings to light this other truth, struggles earnestly by the Spirit of God to communicate this truth to as many people as he can. But unfortunately, those who embrace this other truth, having the same false concept about The Church, go back and make the same mistake. They too, settle down and say to themselves: Ah! We are The True Church; and hence, proceed to do the very same thing.

As a result, when another truth is to be brought to light, the same process has to repeat itself all over again. God has to speak to one who is attuned to him. Having spoken to that one, that one is motivated to respond to Him, and that one has to go through the same old process of being seen as a heretic, as a schismatic and all the other names that are generally used to refer to such so-called revolutionists.

Devil's Strategy

This whole activity is a reflection of an ancient strategy of the Devil. That strategy embodies two principles: CENTRALIZATION and HIERARCHISM. God has His way and the Devil has his way. God reigns as Sovereign by being Sovereign over each individual - by dwelling in the life of each individual and making that individual walk according to His way; His dwelling in that individual being so, only by that individual willingly inviting Christ to dwell in him. But, for the Devil it is different.

The Devil tries to gain control over the entire world by the principles of CENTRALIZATION and HIERARCHISM. These principles are generally represented as a pyramid with an eye at the apex. The base of the pyramid represents the masses of people. The eye at the top represents the "enlightened ones", or the ones with the -vision". Between the base and the eye at the top is a hierarchical structure. Those at the base submit to the authority of those at the level immediately

above them. Those at that level, submit in turn to those at the next higher level. This continues progressively for each level, leading up to the eye at the apex of the pyramid.

The “enlightened ones” represented by the eye at the apex exercise authority over all who are below. This authority might eventually culminate in a single person who is the ultimate ruler.

God’s Way

In God’s way it is different. There is one Head - Jesus Christ, and all human beings are on the same footing, forming one large base. Consider what Jesus said to His disciples:

“Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you.” -Matt. 20:25,28.

“But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. -Matt. 23:8-12.

So, in Christ’s programme all human beings are on the same footing. The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion and authority over them, but, says Jesus: “it shall not be so among you”; no exercise of authority by any human being over another in matters of faith. There is only one Head - Jesus Christ. This one Head comes into intimate contact with every member of the Body, and He directs and leads and guides only as each individual willingly invites Him to do so in his life.

At Its Highest, A Servant

It is important to note that Jesus outlined not only the relative status of each follower with respect to the other - namely, that all are equal, but He also specified their absolute status: “he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”

The greatest of His followers (which is every genuine follower, since all are equal) can rise no greater than being a servant. Servants do not exercise rulership. Their role is simply to obey and do their masters bidding. The wise man Solomon was fully aware of the incongruity of one who is rightfully only a servant assuming kingly power. Consider his words in Proverbs 30:21,22.

“For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear.” The first on the list in the order in which the wise man Solomon chose to list them, is: “a servant when he reigneth.”

Indeed, the fact and truthfulness of those words could hardly be verified more forcibly than by looking at the Roman Catholic Church kingdom.

That which originally was declared by Christ to be at its highest, only a servant, rejected its only legitimate Master and proceeded to make itself “that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

And what has been the result? Moral and intellectual darkness as well as the most abject tyranny that the world has ever seen, protracted over the greater part of nearly two (2) millenniums. So deep was that night of darkness that the gradual breaking of its power was marked by two (2) great revolutions: One relating to intellectual recovery - The Renaissance (or rebirth of learning - 14th century - 16th century); the other relating to moral and spiritual recovery - The Reformation (16th century).

We have seen Christ's way and we have seen the Devil's way. The Devil's way, that hierarchical structure based on the principle of the pyramid with the eye at the top is the same principle we see in virtually all the systems of this world. But for the Church of Christ it is different. This is not the principle that Christ employs in governing the affairs of His Church.

Attempts By Satan

Consider how the Devil operates using these principles of centralization and hierarchism. We see these principles in operation as far back as the experience of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). God told the inhabitants of the world to spread - to scatter over the face of the earth and multiply. God did not need to have them all amassed at one place because God could dwell in the heart of each individual who would willingly allow Him.

But the Devil had a different idea. He wanted them to gather together in one place and come together under one system. By virtue of controlling the head of that system the Devil would automatically gain control over all those who give their allegiance to that system. As for the minority that doesn't, he is able to suppress them, using the majority that have submitted to him through that system. Of course, as the record tells us, that first attempt did not work, because God Himself intervened and thwarted that plan of the Devil.

The Devil did not, however, abandon his idea, because, even in the Christian dispensation we see the same plan operating again. Persecution was very heavy upon God's people. They scattered all over the world. But this was an advantage to the spread of the gospel, because each one that fled to some corner in the world took the message with him. The Devil, realizing that he could not wipe out all of them in order to get rid of the gospel of truth from the face of the earth, decided to go back to the old plan; He decided to befriend them and bring them together under one system operated by deception.

That system which he eventually brought them under, is the same system which bore sway over the entire world throughout medieval times, which is generally reckoned as the dark ages. Of course, in the activities of that system we see the very nature of the Devil coming out, because that was why he instituted that system. He used the system to deceive the majority through their conforming to it, and ultimately to him, then he subverted the minority who would not conform. That minority naturally included God's true followers. Accordingly, during those dark ages, individuals were killed simply because they were found with a Bible, even though that particular system presented itself to the world as The Church of God.

But thanks be to God, there were individuals who, through the Holy Spirit and their contact with God were able to realize and say: NO—this is not The Church of God; this is not the way God works.

Hence, God was able to use them to bring back the truth to light -the truth that was trampled under foot by this' system that presented itself to the world as the Church of God.

But alas, as one truth was brought to light the Devil reared his ugly head once again, by deceiving those who embraced that truth with that same original deceptive strategy of centralization and hierarchism. He was determined to bring them together, and bring them back under his power; to stop the promulgation of that truth; to have them lock it up to themselves, and not only locking it up to themselves, but also to close the door to God bringing further light to them.

For each truth that the Lord has brought to light, the Devil has motivated individuals to do the very same thing. He has led them to establish a centralized organizational structure which they are made to regard as The Church of Christ. Thus, the faith of a multitude becomes dependent on the pronouncements of either one individual or a small group of religious elite who are, in some cases, not even converted. Hence, the multitude, being conditioned to walk after these leaders and not being diligent to "prove all things" from the Scriptures, allow themselves to be led astray. Such has been the spiritual downfall of many who were initially zealous and sincere followers of Christ.

Eventually those to whom the truth about the Sabbath, the Sanctuary and the gift of prophecy was revealed, followed the very same erroneous pathway. They have followed the same example, building up a system on the very same principle that the Devil motivated men in those early centuries of the Christian era to build that first false one.

The Bible depicts the governing authority of that first false system as a woman (BABYLON) that is a mother (Rev. 17:5). Indeed the mother Babylon is the first of many, all of which, though claiming to have protested against the mother Babylon (by their being classified as Protestant) have all assimilated her doctrines and traditions, one of which is the setting up of men in the place of God for regulating the faith of God's people. Not only does the Bible refer to the fact of Babylon having daughters, but these daughters, like the mother Babylon are referred to as harlots. (Rev. 17:5). They all have sacrificed truth and the approval of God in order to form an unlawful alliance with the world. They all had an origin of purity but rejected Christ in accepting the Devil's gifts of centralization and hierarchism, and seeking popular favour at the expense of truth.

Repeat Of Israel's Mistake

It is important to note however, that these religious groups which initially started on the foundation of genuine faith and genuine desire for Godly reform are not rejected by God simply because of their mistake in establishing a centralized hierarchical structure similar to that of mother Babylon. Despite their mistake God tries to work along with them in order that they might be enlightened and He tries to accomplish His purposes for them and through them despite the obvious limitation that they have placed upon their openness to be led by God.

But invariably, these religious groups end up compromising and rejecting truth in order to obtain popular favour for their religious establishment and also to sustain their man-made creeds and dogmas. It is when truth is thus rejected that they positively place themselves along a path of backsliding.

Their experience becomes similar to that of Ancient Israel. Israel rejected the guidance that God had been giving them and desired to have a king in an effort to be like the surrounding nations. Although God was displeased, He allowed them to have their way in having a king. Nevertheless He did not leave them utterly to their misguided judgement, but made the choice for them. The Bible outlines God's response to their request:

“But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice and make them a king.” - 1 Sam. 8:6,7,9,10,19,20,22.

The person that God chose to be king of Israel was Saul, the son of Kish. Israel's demand for a king proved to be a great snare to them, because their level of spirituality and commitment to God, as a nation, rose no higher than that of the various kings that successively ascended the throne. When there was a king who did good in the sight of the Lord, Israel obeyed God, but when they had a king who did evil in the sight of the Lord, Israel did the same. Unfortunately for them, most of the kings that reigned chose to do evil in the sight of the Lord and Israel drifted progressively further away from God.

Eventually, because of their backsliding, God allowed them to be taken into captivity (2 Kings 17:18-22). The ten tribes that comprised the kingdom of Israel were overthrown by the Assyrians and scattered among the nations (2 Kings 17:8-8) and the kingdom of Judah was later taken captive also when it was declared:

“And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him. Eze. 21:25-27.

Thus the kingly office, throne and diadem of Israel was discontinued.

Like with Israel, God bears patiently with each group of genuine believers even though they unknowingly set His leadership aside by establishing their own systems of centralized self-government and taking their guidance from the various religious dignitaries that they have appointed to themselves. However, when they openly reject the truth that is presented to them and place themselves as its opponents, God has no choice but to leave them to walk in the course that they have charted for themselves. Of such the apostle Paul declares:

“Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. - 2 Thess. 2:10-12.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” - 2 Tim. 4:3,4.

The condemnation which individuals and groups face is not particularly due to the fact that they are in darkness, but “this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light.” John 3:19.

Rejected By Reformers

If there is one thing that many of the reformers had in common initially (apart from their rejection of Roman Catholicism and the desire to see a restoration of true Godliness) it is an appreciation of the Biblical concept of The Church. Consider the words of a few of the notable ones:

“There is one only universal Church: consisting of the whole body of the predestinate.” “All who shall be saved in the bliss of heaven are members of the Holy Church, and no more.” - WYCLIFFE.

“Certain of the tenets of John Huss and the Bohemians are perfectly orthodox. This much is certain. For instance, that there is only one universal Church; and again ‘that it is not necessary to salvation to believe the Roman church superior to all others.’ Whether Wycliffe or Huss has said it, I care not. It is the truth.” “There is no other Church than the assembly of those who have the Word of God and are purified by it” - LUTHER.

“In every nation whosoever believeth with the heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, is saved. This is The Church out of which no man can be saved.” “The Church universal is diffused over the whole world wherever there is faith in Jesus Christ - in the Indies as well as in Zurich. And as for particular churches, we have them - at Berne at Shaffhausen, here also. But the Popes, their cardinals, and their councils, are neither the Church universal, nor the church particular - ZWINGLE.

The words of the three (3) reformers quoted above reflect the general understanding that many of the others had. In some instances, earnest efforts had to be made to resist trends that were leading to the adoption by fellow believers of a form of church establishment in accordance with the principle of Babylon. A typical example of this is found in the words of a pioneer of one such group that, notwithstanding his earnest protests eventually followed the same path of building a structure in accordance with the example of Babylon. Says the pioneer:

“While Israel obeyed God, He defended and blessed them; but when they desired a king like the surrounding nations, and said, “Give us a king, God departed from them, or suffered them to follow their own wisdom: and the result was, a yoke was laid upon their necks by their: king, who was given to them ‘ in wrath and taken away in anger.’

“While the primitive church stood upon the foundation laid by Christ, obeyed His law, and followed Him, they were humble, prosperous and happy.

“But when they began to lay other foundations, adopt other laws, and follow other leaders, the glory departed from them:

they committed fornication with the kings of the earth, and soon constituted the ‘mother’ whom John saw seated on the scarlet coloured beast, drunk with the blood of the saints.

“While the seceding sects were young, humble, and submitted to Christ and His word, they were blessed, and proved a blessing to The Church and the world.

“But when they patterned after the “mother of harlots”, they, like her, “committed fornication”, and became identified with mystery Babylon, that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth of the earth.

“From this fallen city, brethren, we have fled, in obedience to the command, “Come out of her”. Let us not go back to her polluted temples, nor build one of our own after any of her patterns.

“Obey Christ and His word, and you have nothing to fear. But if you depart from Him, like the examples before us, He will cast us off forever.

“Finally, we object to the doings of the Albany Conference, because the proceedings as a whole, look like forming a new sect, under a sectarian name, instead of coming to the order of the New Testament, under the name there given to the true Church.

“It looks like laying plans of our own devising, when we have in our possession the perfect economy of the Lord, by which we should be guided, and when we profess to be looking for His coming every hour.

“Can we for one moment suppose it is a time now to be fixing up a creed for years, or even months, to come? Is this our faith? O I cannot, I cannot - I must not,

“What! The advent people have a creed?

“What! The advent people organize into a sect?

“O, brethren, do let us be consistent.

“Did not our enemies tell us that after the time passed - if it did pass - we should organize into a sect? What did we answer them?

“You who are disposed to organize and have a creed, answer it. “Let us remember three things, and overcome them.

“1. The beast.

“2. His mark.

“3. The number of his name.

“Here is the patience and faith of the saints. Let the Gentile princes exercise their dictation; but let us not be so.” - Advent Review, 1850; (published by Hiram Edson, David Arnold, Geo. W. Holt, Samuel W. Rhodes, and **James White**; article from which the above is taken signed with the initial “W”.)

Chapter 5

Effect Of Tradition

Misconstrued Interpretation

In virtually all situations where a group of individuals either claim to have found some new light or for whatever reason feel the need to be different from other groups of religious practitioners, they invariably end up making the same mistake. Invariably, they end up creating a structure of the very same nature as Babylon, built on the principle of the “mystery of iniquity”, whereby the leadership of God is laid aside and replaced with human authority.

With each of these man-made structures claiming to be The Church, it serves to subvert and keep still under foot that truth of what in reality is God’s True Church, The Body of Christ.

One of the factors that contribute to the promulgation of this erroneous concept of The Church is the effect of tradition. Many people tend to interpret things on the basis of that to which they are accustomed. The tendency of many individuals, when they read is to interpret words according to its current usage and not in accordance with the usage of the word at the time when it was used. A typical case is the use of the expression “Lord’s Day”.

Consider Lord’s Day

The term “Lord’s Day” is generally understood as referring to Sunday. Even in modern dictionaries, we look for the entry “Sunday” and we see “Lord’s Day” as one of the synonyms. As a result of this general understanding of the term “Lord’s Day”, when individuals read in the Bible: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10), they take it to mean that John (the writer) was “in the Spirit” on Sunday. In fact, some individuals even attempt to use that text as a means of establishing the validity of using the term “Lord’s Day” to refer to Sunday.

The fact is, however, that the term “Lord’s Day” has come to refer to Sunday subsequent to the usage of the term in the Bible. Therefore, it is not reasonable to foist on the Scriptures an interpretation based on a meaning that has come about subsequent to the time when the term was used in the Bible. Rather, one should look at what the expression meant at the time when it was used, if one should understand exactly what the Scripture passage is saying.

Now, according to the Scriptures there is only one day that could possibly be referred to as the “Lord’s Day”, and that is the seventh day Sabbath. This is the day, which, according to the Bible the Lord Himself referred to as “my holy day” (Isa. 58:13). The seventh day Sabbath is the only day in all the Bible that we see the Lord proclaiming special blessing on, and claiming it as His in a very special way. According to the Biblical record, during the very first week of this world’s existence, the week of creation, we see God setting apart the seventh day. Consider the Divine record:

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had

made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” - Gen. 2:1-3.

Subsequently, we see the Lord commanding His people to “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” that Sabbath being the seventh day. He also gave the reason why the seventh day is the day chosen for special observance (Ex. 20:8-11). We also see Jesus declaring Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).

So, from the Scriptural standpoint there is only one day that could ever be reckoned as the Lord’s Day, and that is the seventh day Sabbath. There is not a single text that even alludes to the possibility of Sunday being reckoned as the Lord’s Day, and yet individuals desperately grope around and vainly try to find justification in the Bible for their disregard for the seventh day Sabbath as the Lord’s Day. In its place they revere Sunday.

N. B. Even the names and terminal points of the Gregorian system are unscriptural. The Bible refers to the first day, the second day, the third day et cetera, unto the seventh day which marks the end of the week. Each day is reckoned from sunset to sunset (not from 12:00 midnight to 12:00 midnight).

An example of the Biblical reckoning of a day from sunset to sunset is given in the following command made to ancient Israel with reference to the Day of Atonement:

*“Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.”
“It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.” - Lev. 23:27,32*

The day of Atonement was the tenth day of the seventh month, and this was reckoned from the evening of the ninth day of the month to the evening of the day following. The same principle applies in the reckoning of the seventh day Sabbath. (Note that the word “even” is frequently used in Scripture to refer to sunset - see for example Deut. 16:6 and Mark 1:32. Also, the Scriptures clearly make a distinction between “even”, and midnight - see for example Mark 13:35). Thus, the seventh day Sabbath is in reality from sunset on the day that is commonly called Friday to sunset the following day, which is commonly called Saturday.

Trying To Escape

Instead of bringing their lives into willing obedience to the Word of God, every possible escape route is sought. Some say “any day is just as good as another day”, yet that same reasoning is not applied to Sunday or Easter or Christmas or other days to which they attach religious significance. Others ask “how do I know which day is the seventh day of the week?”, being conveniently naive or feigning ignorance. Still others claim “O, the law is done away with”, notwithstanding such plain statements of Scriptures as those found in Matt. 5:17,18:

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

The only possible fulfillment that one can identify with the Ten Commandments (of which the Sabbath commandment is the 4th) is that of obeying them, which fulfillment was evident in the life of Christ Himself, and should also be evident in the lives of all those who profess to be His followers; Further yet, the apostle Paul says:

“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” Rom. 3:31.

Regardless of the reasons concocted in order to justify the disregard for the seventh day Sabbath as the Lord’s Day and substituting Sunday in its place, it is abundantly clear that Scriptural support is lacking.

Legacy Of Paganism

Sunday sacredness is really a legacy of paganism.

History attests to the fact that Sunday was the day revered by sun worshippers, and that is where the name “Sunday” came from- sun’s day. It was Emperor Constantine of the old Roman empire, a sun worshipper, who, though claiming to be converted to Christianity, passed the first law commanding the subjects of the Roman empire to cease working on Sunday. This law was passed on March 7, 321 AD -see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 5th ed., Vol. 3 p. 380.

It was some years later that church leaders of the day, who, through lack of faith in the power of the straight gospel of Christ to change the lives of pagans, felt it necessary to make concessions in adopting some of the pagan festivities, so that Christianity might be made attractive to the pagans. With this idea it was felt that adopting Sunday might be a means of attracting pagans to the Christian religion, since the pagans themselves were already worshipping on Sunday as a part of their practice of worshipping the sun.

So, the church leaders of the day met at the special Council of Laodicea and commanded all Christians to refrain from keeping the seventh day Sabbath, and to acknowledge Sunday instead, which they referred to as the Lord’s Day. At this Council of Laodicea an edict was issued threatening to excommunicate all those who continued to keep the seventh day Sabbath - see Charles J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 316.

Mark Of Roman Catholic Church Authority

That was how the entirely unscriptural regard for Sunday as a sacred day entered the Christian arena. The Roman Catholic church even boasts that the imposition of a so-called Sunday sacredness on the Christian world is her doing, and is a mark of her authority to change the commands of God as recorded in the Bible. Consider this statement by Roman Catholic priest Thomas Enright:

“My Brethren, look about you upon the various wrangling sects and denominations. Show me one that claims or possesses the power to make laws binding on the conscience. There is but one on the face of the earth - the Catholic church - that has power to make laws binding upon the conscience,

binding before God, binding under pain of hell fire. Take for instance the day we celebrate - Sunday.. What rights have Protestant churches to observe that day? None whatever. You say it is to obey the commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." But Sunday is not the Sabbath according to the Bible and the record of time. Every one knows that Sunday is the first day of the week, while Saturday is the seventh day and the Sabbath, the day consecrated as a day of rest. It is so recognized in all civilized nations. I have repeatedly offered \$1000.00 to anyone who will furnish any proof from the Bible that Sunday is the day we are bound to keep, and no one has called for the money. If any person in this town will show me any Scripture for it, I will tomorrow evening publicly acknowledge it and thank him for it. It was the Holy Catholic Church that changed the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday, the first day of the week. And it not only compelled all to keep Sunday, but at the Council of Laodicea, AD 364, anathematized those who kept the Sabbath, and urged all persons to labour on the seventh day under penalty of the anathema.

Which church does the whole civilized world obey?... The Bible says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," but the Catholic Church says, "no, keep the first day of the week, and the whole world bows in obedience." - Father Enright, in the *Industrial American*, Harlan, Iowa. December 19, 1889.

By their own admission) the Roman Catholic system claims authority superior to that of God Himself. The command "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" was spoken by God Himself from Mount Sinai (Ex. 20: 1,18,19), written with His own finger on tables of stone (Deut. 9:10,11) and rewritten with His finger again on tables of stone after the first tables of stone were broken by Moses (Deut. 10:2-5). Roman Catholic Priest Thomas Enright boasts that whereas God says "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy", the Catholic church says "No, keep the first day of the week", and he cites this case as evidence of the power and authority that the Roman Catholic church claims to have.

In A Similar Way, The Church

The fact is that Sunday sacredness has absolutely no biblical foundation. The term "Lord's Day" can properly be applied with reference only to the seventh day Sabbath.

But the main point of this entire reference to the "Lord's Day" is this: Individuals came into the world and found a certain concept weaved into the ,culture of society, and hence, their idea on the subject is deeply influenced by the concept prevailing. Many, thus, fail to see the testimony of the Scriptures on the subject for what it is.

Mention has been made of the misconception surrounding the term "Lord's Day" in order to highlight the fact that the very same situation has taken place with respect to the concept of "The Church. Individuals came into the world and found a certain concept of "church" prevailing. As a result, whenever they hear the **term** "church", or read it in the Bible, the only thing that comes to their minds is that concept of "church" that is generally held in the society. And yet, in not one single instance where the term "church" is used in the Bible is it ever used with reference to anything, the likes of such institutions as are commonly known by that name - namely, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witness, etc, etc.

Chapter 6

Divine Co-ordination of the Body

Biblical Analogy

Now, individuals may ask: If there is no central authority to Coordinate and give directions in order to guide the activities of the Body of believers, will not the progress of the gospel be impeded and the purity of the gospel corrupted as a result of chaos, due to every individual doing his own thing? In answering this question, the reader is invited to consider first another question: Which human being or group of human beings can claim wisdom and holiness) sufficient to be able to direct the affairs of God in mobilizing and co-ordinating the universal body of believers, so as to fulfill upon this earth the will and mission of a perfect and holy God who tells us that His ways are higher than the ways of human beings as much as; the heavens are higher than the earth (Isa. 55:8,9)?. Only One who has the mind of God can fulfill such a mission. The only One qualified in the entire universe is Jesus Christ Himself.

As to how Jesus fulfills this role, we can understand only by considering an analogy that is given in the Bible. The apostle Paul likens The Church, The Body of Christ to the human body (1 Cor. 12:12-27). The closest that human beings can come to understanding how Jesus fulfills this role is by considering the way in which the head controls the body (that is, the human body). The Bible refers to The Church of God as The Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22,23), and Christ Himself as the Head.

Consider The Body

The head is the seat of central intelligence that controls and directs the actions of every member that is a part of the body. Every member of the body has direct contact with the head (or the brain) - the contact being provided by nerve cells. Hence, the hands are not directed by the feet or the eyes by the ears, or the nose by the mouth. However, despite the fact that each member of the body has a different function, the different functions are coordinated harmoniously by the head in order to fulfill the will of the mind.

Thus, when an athlete is running a race, for example, the legs propel the movement of the entire body in order to reach the finish line, while the adrenal gland pumps adrenaline into the blood, the heart beats faster in order to provide adequate supply of blood to the limbs, the hands have their particular type of movement, and likewise the eyes, the ears, and the other members of the body playing their part. All work together in order to fulfill the particular mission, which is that of winning the race. The action of each member might seem haphazard when considered by itself, but in concert with all the other members, a well co-ordinated set of actions is seen. Indeed, there is a co-ordinator, which is the only intelligent part of the body - the brain.

It is inconceivable that the hands and feet or whatever other combination of limbs and organs, should attempt to co-ordinate their own actions, let alone the actions of the other members. That capacity lies only in the head.

In a similar manner, The Body of Christ has only one intelligent member - The Head, which is Jesus Christ Himself. It is not even within the province of human capability to assess or understand the coherent, consistent and harmonious actions of the Universal Body of Christ. In fact, there doesn't even lie within them the ability to determine who belongs to The Body and who doesn't. Only The Head knows, and hence only The Head can co-ordinate, direct, lead and offer effective guidance. This He does through the invisible Holy Spirit and the holy angels. Human beings need only to co-operate with Christ by yielding themselves willingly to Him so that He may activate them in such areas of the work as He deems appropriate.

Guidance Illustrated

Has there been any evidence or illustration of that type of guidance and direction within The Body of Christ, as illustrated by the physical body? Indeed so. A few such situations will now be highlighted.

The first such situation that will be highlighted is found in Acts 8:26-40. We see Philip, a servant of Christ being directed by the Holy Spirit to "go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is a desert." Verse 26. There, he met an eunuch who was travelling in a chariot, reading the Book of Isaiah but could not understand what he was reading. Philip was directed to join the eunuch in the chariot. There, he expounded unto him the prophecy that the eunuch was reading in the Book of Isaiah so that the eunuch understood, accepted the truth, got baptized by Philip and became a follower of Christ.

So remarkable was the unseen hand of guidance involved that "when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus." Verses 39,40.

What human guide could have provided such a well co-ordinated set of actions, to take one member of The Body and lead him just to the point where he was needed, so that he could fulfill that need, and immediately as that need was fulfilled, he was bodily removed and taken to another point where there was another need to be fulfilled? Only the intelligent working of Jesus Christ Himself, The One True Head of The Church, The Body of Christ.

The second such situation that will be highlighted is found in Acts chapter 10. We see a very devout man by the name of Cornelius earnestly seeking the Lord for guidance. The Lord directed him in a vision to send to Joppa and ask for a man by the name of Simon Peter. While the servants of Cornelius were on their way to Joppa to see Peter, Peter was being given a vision; one that prepared the mind of Peter for receiving those that were sent by Cornelius (verses 28,29). Peter then went to the house of Cornelius where he expounded the Word of God to them, which resulted in the Holy Spirit being received by "all them which heard the word." Verse 44.

There are many other such situations like those mentioned in Acts chapter 16, for example. The apostle Paul was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia" (verse 6), "they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not" (verse 7), but he was later given a vision to go over into Macedonia (verse 9). The apostle Paul clearly understood that the place where the Lord wanted him to go at that particular-time was Macedonia. There, he indeed went and performed a

mighty work for the Lord. Even though the apostle Paul was a godly man, yet, left to himself he would have gone to Asia or Bithynia, of which, neither place was where God wanted him to go at the particular moment.

We read of similar guidance given in Acts 18:9,10, whereby, at Corinth the Lord told Paul not to be afraid, but that he should speak boldly for him and not hold his peace, that He is with him and that no hurt would come to him, assuring Paul that He had “much people” in that city.

No Hindrance

The fact is, the Lord Himself would like to direct the affairs of His work in the same way that He directed it then. But how can He so direct His people if they are both individually and collectively taking directions from some other source or attempting, themselves, to direct the work in the place of Christ?. When human beings prescribe channels through which the Lord must be obliged to work, how can the Lord freely direct the affairs of their lives? Now, this is how human beings are hindering the progress of the work of God.

The natural mind tends to relate only to that which can be seen physically, so the absence of a visible head directing the affairs of God’s people has led human beings to set up agencies for the purpose of directing and regulating the activities of The Body of Christ. This in itself is an act of usurping the role of Christ, who is the Head of The Body. It is an attempt by individuals to fulfill a role for which they are wholly incapable. All it serves to do is to frustrate the cause of Christ by weakening or severing the direct connection between Christ and His followers, and diverting their attention from receiving guidance and direction from the only One who is capable of offering it in accordance with the will of God.

Is it any wonder that, for about nineteen hundred (1900) years subsequent to the decease of the apostles there has not been witnessed the mighty workings of the gifts of the Spirit as they were manifested in the days of the apostles?

Each individual must connect himself to Christ directly if he/she would obtain the guidance that Jesus offers. The Bible says that there is “one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” 1 Tim. 2:5. Also, we may “come boldly unto the throne of grace.” Heb. 4:16. We need not approach Christ through any priest, pastor, bishop or any other channel, because Jesus has offered to live in the heart of each one of us if we would let him. He is willing and ready to offer guidance to each individual, in the same way that He offered guidance and directed the lives of each of the apostles and His other followers that we read about in the Scriptures.

Two Situations.

At this point it is worthwhile to consider two (2) situations involving Jesus when He was on earth. Valuable insights can be gained that might shed some light on the subject at hand.

The first situation is described in Luke 9:49,50 as follows:

“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.”

From Christ’s words we may understand that being with Christ was not a matter of being physically identified even in His own presence. Rather, being with Christ was and is a matter of one’s attitude and behaviour with respect to Him and His mission. One’s privilege of representing Christ is not tied to membership in **some** exclusive association. This is borne out even more forcibly in the second situation that will now be cited.

The other situation is recorded in Luke chapter 8. Jesus and His disciples had entered into the country of the Gadarenes. There they encountered a man who was controlled by devils. Jesus commanded the devils to come out of the man. Immediately, the devils left the man, and the man, rehabilitated, afterward sat at the feet of Jesus “clothed, and in his right mind.” Verses 26-35. The episode continues:

*“Now the **man** out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.” Luke 8:38,39.*

Jesus sent the man away for him to go and live for Him, and share the good news with others. It was not necessary for him to be identified physically in Jesus’ presence. The reason is that being a follower of Jesus does not require being physically identified with some particular location, structure or clique.

Typically Laodicean

Regardless of what any religious clique or denomination might claim, so long as one lives in accordance with the truths of God’s Word, being guided by the Holy Spirit, he/she can never go wrong.

The apostle Paul lists some of the works of the flesh and contrasts them with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23). After listing the ways in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in the lives of individuals, he states: “against such there is no law.” Gal. 6:23.

Under the cover of religious affiliation some individuals practice some of the grossest evils of dishonesty, injustice and self-indulgence without the slightest appreciation that they are really serving the Devil. Why is this so? Because they soothe their consciences with the external and peripheral tokens of what is considered “good standing in the church.” This sorry state of self-deception is very aptly portrayed by the case of the Laodicean church. The Divine portrayal of the Laodicean church is as follows:

“I know thy works) that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou

mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”- Rev. 3:15-18.

Standing on the outside and longing to enter the heart of the Laodicean, Christ pleads:

“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.” Verse 20.

He admonishes:

“Be zealous therefore, and repent.” Verse 19.

The only hope for the Laodicean is repentance. One cannot remain a Laodicean and hope to enter God’s kingdom. Except one repents and ceases to be a Laodicean, the “true witness” declares: “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” Verse 16.

Indeed, these religious structures which seek to place themselves as the doorway to Christ are of the nature of the Laodicean church, have always been of the nature of the Laodicean church and cannot ever be anything else but of the nature of the Laodicean church.

The reason is that they impose artificial and man-made standards of right-doing which stand in place of, and in many cases are elevated to greater primacy than the truth of God’s Word, which can only be made of effect in one’s life through one’s own conscientious conviction. The admonition of Christ to Nicodemus is well worth heeding: “Ye must be born again.” John 3:7.

That principle which involves dictating to the consciences of human beings is an exercise of authority at a level that even God Himself, in His Divine wisdom has chosen not to exercise it. Hence, it is more than usurping the authority of God, it is exalting oneself above God.

Consider God’s word through Isaiah:

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.” Isa. 1: 18.

God respects the right and privilege of individuals to think freely and to follow Him only as they are persuaded in their own conscience. Satan on the other hand would reduce human beings to mere automatons, devoid of the will to think for themselves.

Chapter 7

The Final Conflict

Age - Old Aspiration

Consistently throughout the Bible there is shown in contradistinction to God's Church, the operation of a principle of opposition and counterfeit to all that God does. This principle, the "mystery of iniquity" stands at the foundation of that master counterfeit system, Babylon, through which Satan will continue to work until an end is put to it at the second coming of Christ.

This principle of the "mystery of iniquity" originated with Satan and represents the ultimate objective of all his devices - exalting himself above God and being worshipped. It was for the very same reason that he had to be thrown out of heaven (Rev. 12:7-9). Consider his presumptuous ambitions and his fall:

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." - Isa. 14:12-14.

Having been thrown out of heaven, Satan has made successive attempts to establish an empire on earth based on absolute submission to him. He has tried and failed in his efforts at the tower of Babel; his master kingdom of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar was likewise overthrown (Isa. 13:19-22; Dan. 5:30,31); and finally we see "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT" built on the principles of centralization and hierarchism for the very same purpose of bringing the entire world in submission to Satan.

Each individual needs to flush out of his mind the idea of considering other human beings as his spiritual superiors whom he is under divine obligation to obey in matters of faith. This is wholly an idea which springs from the "mystery of iniquity." Any religious group that is established in a manner that fosters human agencies or individual human beings exercising authority over the believers in matters of faith usurps the role of Christ and follows the same principle as the Papacy which is the mother Babylon.

It is pleasing to the Devil when one by one, pure groups of believers adopt the principle of "the mystery of iniquity," establish a structure after the pattern of Babylon, foster the submission of individuals' conscience to human authority and degrade themselves to become one of Babylon's daughters. The grand aim of the Devil is to gather all such systems (the mother Babylon and all the daughters) together into one Babylonish confederation.

Tripartite Union

The apostle John, in vision, saw the final attempt by Satan to bring the entire world under his dominion and to eradicate once and for all the people of God who steadfastly resist his control. In

this final conflict the Devil brings together all the powers on earth that he can garner into his camp under the leadership of a tripartite union. This mighty confederation was seen by John standing in array against Christ and His people. He describes it as follows:

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” Rev. 16:13,14.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. “And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. “And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.” - Rev. 19:11,13,18,19.

As we have already learned, the dragon is Satan (Rev. 12:9). Satan works through many different agencies, many of which are subtle and channeled through natural human experiences at the physical level. However, Satan also interacts directly with human beings at a level that is clearly supernatural and involves open, direct and unconcealed interaction between humans and evil spirits. This direct and unconcealed interaction between Satan and human beings is what is brought to view in the scenario presented, that is, the occult and spiritualism. Satan duplicates the appearance and mannerisms of deceased individuals perfectly (at least, to human perception), in a manner similar to the way in which he duplicated the appearance of Samuel when he appeared to king Saul (1 Sam. 28:7-20). This artful device of Satan’s, and his attempts at telling the future forms the basis of spiritualism and the occult.

The other two agencies identified in this tripartite union are the beast, which has already been identified as the Roman Papacy (see Chapter 3), and the false prophet.

The False Prophet

In describing the false prophet, the apostle John says:

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image.” Rev. 19:20.

The false prophet is described as the one that “wrought miracles” and who deceived those who received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

In order to see more clearly who is the false prophet we need to look back at the point where he was first introduced. He was first introduced in Revelation chapter 13. Remember that scenario that was cited earlier with the dragon who tried to devour the man child as soon as he was born, but failing to do so the dragon persecuted the woman who brought forth the man child (see Chapter 3). Remember also that the dragon later invested this leopard-like beast with “his power, and his seat, and great authority.” Rev. 13:2. The leopard-like beast received a deadly wound but “his deadly

wound as healed: and all the world wondered after the beast”. Rev. 1:3. Then is introduced the false prophet under the symbol of a beast with lamb-like horns:

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell there to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Rev. 13:11-17.

That this beast with lamb-like horns is the same false prophet that is mentioned is evident from the fact that he is said to be the one who uses miracles to deceive the world, and sets up an image of the beast, which he causes the world to worship, and also to receive the mark of the beast.

Putting It All Together

Picturing the false prophet in real terms, it has the following characteristics:

1. It is a religious power that claims to represent God. It is represented as a prophet, but a false one who even works miracles. Rev. 19:20; 13: 13,14.
2. It presents a picture of innocence, sincerity and genuineness (it is represented as having lamb-like horns. Rev. 13:11). Though seeming as innocent as a lamb” yet it bears dragon-like or devilish characteristics.
3. It will create an image of the Papacy and will lead the world back into submission to the Papacy. Rev. 13:12,14,15.
4. It will impose upon the world the mark of the Papacy. Rev. 13:16,17.

The religious grouping that is here pictured is apostate Protestantism, the daughters of Babylon. These are the various religious entities which have adopted the principles of the Papacy and have joined the ecumenical movement to forge closer links with Roman Catholicism. It should not be difficult to appreciate how modern Protestantism fulfills the first two (2) characteristics. Though claiming to be founded entirely on the Bible, one by one, the popular churches have sacrificed truth, courted the favour of the world and assimilated the example of Babylon.

Image And Mark

The last two (2) characteristics reveal future activity of modern Protestantism. We can be sure that these actions will be carried out because God, who knows the end from the beginning, knows from before, that they will occur and has revealed it. We can be sure also, by the fact that the popular

churches have already started to perform these activities. We will look more closely at both activities (the establishment of an image of the Papacy and the imposition of the mark of the Papacy) so that we can be sure exactly what is involved and see how modern Protestantism has already started to perform these activities.

First, we consider an image of the Papacy. What is the Papacy? It is a religious group that claims the right to function as a theocracy; a group that claims a divine right to enforce morality and godliness in the world, with the power of the state subordinate to it and subject. To be used by it for enforcing its decrees (refer to Papal bull *UNAM SANCTAM* - "One Holy," Pope Boniface VIII, November 1302). An image of the Papacy is another religious body that bears similar influence over the state, just like the woman (church) BABYLON who is pictured sitting on a beast (kingdom - see Daniel 7:17,23).

Secondly, we consider the mark of the Papacy. By their own admission, the mark of Papal authority is Sunday sacredness. As already quoted, Roman Catholic Priest Thomas Enright boasts that the only church "on the face of the earth" that has the "power to make laws binding upon the conscience", and the only church that "the whole civilized world" Obeys is the Catholic church. And what is the token that supports this claim? He declares it to be "the day we celebrate - Sunday" (see page 48). This idea is stated even more explicitly by Cardinal Gibbons. In reply to a letter inquiring whether it was the Catholic church that changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday Cardinal Gibbons responded as follows, in his official organ, the *CATHOLIC MIRROR*:

"Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act. It could not have been otherwise, as none in those days would have dreamed of doing anything in matters spiritual and religious without her, and the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters. - Cardinal Gibbons, *Catholic Mirror*.

Cardinal Gibbons identified the change of the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to Sunday as the doing of the Catholic church and identifies the change as "a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters".

The same position is officially stated in their *DOCTRINAL CATECHISM* as follows:

"Question - Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept? Answer - Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her, - she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority." - *Doctrinal Catechism* p. 174. New York: Edward Dunigan and Brothers, 1851.

Protestantism In Future

Now, having looked at what are the image and mark of the Papacy we can now better appreciate the way in which modern Protestantism has already started to fulfil the role of the "false prophet" highlighted in the prophecy, and the activities that they will yet carry out in the future.

According to the apostle John, the "false prophet," also represented as the beast with lamb-like horns will cause "the earth and them which dwell therein to worship" the Papacy, "the first beast,

whose deadly wound was healed.” He will also create a church/state union which is a replica (image) of the Papacy. This church/state union will demand reverence from the world such that it will “cause that as many as would not worship” this image of the Papacy “should be killed”. Also, it “causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive the mark of the Papacy (that is, reverence for Sunday) and “that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” All this activity will be accompanied by “miracles” and “great wonders” by which the world will be deceived and coerced into submission. Rev. 13:11-17.

Thus, in reality, the Protestant churches which have imbibed the errors of Roman Catholicism and are justly classified as daughters of Babylon will influence state authority to enforce by law Sunday observance which is the mark of the Papacy. This act, in itself creates a union of church and state which constitutes an image of the Papacy. This activity will be carried out worldwide and will be rigorously enforced by means of economic sanctions and eventually by death penalty.

Right On Target

The Protestant churches which are now protestant in name only, are fulfilling the details of the prophecy with amazing exactness. A number of recent news articles have demonstrated this most vividly. Consider a few of the statements made in recent times by leading Protestant personalities, as reported in news papers and periodicals:

“Anglican leader Robert Runcie appealed to the world’s Christians... to accept the pope as a leader “presiding in love” over different churches...

“For the universal church I renew the plea... could not all Christians come to reconsider the kind of primacy the bishop of Rome (pope) exercised within the early church, a ‘presiding in love’ for the sake of the unity of the churches in the diversity of their mission?” asked Runcie. - *The Sunday Gleaner*, October 1, 1989.’

Robert Runcie who was archbishop of Canterbury when he made the above call was spiritual leader of the Church of England and leader of the world’s seventy (70) million Anglicans. Similar sentiments have also been echoed by Dr. Robert Schuller, one of America’s leading Protestant televangelists. His words were as follows:

“It’s time for Protestants to go to the shepherd (the pope) and say ‘what do we have to do to come home?’” - Dr. Robert Schuller, *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, September 19, 1987.

Such statements as are quoted above are not isolated cases, but reflect a general tendency that is being followed by most Protestant churches, to desire closer links with the Papacy on terms that concede primacy to the Papacy.

Legislated Observance Of Sunday

As to the matter of seeking legislative enactment of Sunday observance, consider the words of one Evangelical spokesman:

“...This issue is being brought to your attention this third time, not for the sake of controversy, but because, as a nation, we are suffering in every way economically and otherwise, for failure to establish and enforce observance by all people, including the strangers in our midst, of a Sabbath Day, holy unto the Lord. It is not the duty of any particular group of people, it is not the duty of any church, it is the duty of the government of His people to thus proclaim a day as the Sabbath to be uniformly observed through the length and ‘breadth of our land. Our forefathers did this by government enactment and God blessed and prospered their undertakings.

They were not troubled by opposition to the day, for all were aware that Sunday, the Lord’s day, was number seven, following six days of labour...

... We hold that the Sabbatarians are definitely responsible for contributing to the increased desecration of this national appointed Sabbath Day.” - SPECIAL ALERT - number 29, May 1982, Destiny Editorial Letter Service, Howard B. Rand, L.L.B., Editor.

“... While the penalty of death for Sabbath violation was written in the instruction given to Moses, there is also, and I believe for the Christian era, another type of punishment to be imposed for the desecration of the Lord’s Day. In the first place, the Lord emphasized the importance of keeping the Sabbath Day holy by making its observance a part of the everlasting covenant throughout all generations. Following the pronouncement of the sentence of death, it also stated that the soul that desecrates the Sabbath “shall be cut off from among the people” (Ex. 31:14). Ferrar Fenton renders this “shall be excommunicated from the community of his people.” To be excommunicated is to be deprived of all rights, with exclusion from fellowship with a special group of whom one might have been a member. - SPECIAL ALERT . - number 33, September 1982, Destiny Editorial Letter Service, Howard B. Rand, L.L.B., Editor.

According to the above release, it is the duty of the state to enforce Sunday observance. Failure to do so has resulted in the nation suffering economically and otherwise, and this continued desecration of Sunday is to be blamed on the Sabbatarians (those who observe the seventh day Sabbath). The penalty for desecrating Sunday should be excommunication which involves deprivation of all rights.

Enforced Religion

Can you imagine, dear reader, that it is actually proposed that the state should begin to legislate religion? That which wholly and solely involves personal conviction by way of reverence for God should become a matter of simply outward exhibition and external conformity regardless of whether or not one even believes in God? The state should now leave its legitimate sphere ‘of governing civil conduct to govern conscience with respect to God. As absurd as it sounds, it has occurred in the past, the Bible predicts that it will yet happen in the future and it is even being proposed by leading religious personalities for implementation at present.

The case cited above is not an isolated situation. Similar calls have been echoed from other quarters by other religious dignitaries. Consider even the following appeal from Mr. Cleve Grant, a leading clergyman of the Church Of God in Jamaica, as reported in *The Daily Gleaner*:

“The increasing inroads into the observance of Sunday - The Lord’s Day - has received strong condemnation from the Revd. Mr. Cleve Grant of the Church of God.

Sunday’s desecration, he said, was just another sign of the moral and spiritual devaluation which was accompanying the financial devaluation.

... He called on the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce to stop and think again about the new business-as-usual on Sundays.

... He said the churches in England had been alert and had urged and got the British Parliament to vote to keep Sunday “special” which was the theme of their campaign.

“We do need to keep a ‘Sunday Special’ campaign in Jamaica the Revd. Mr. Grant said.” - The Daily Gleaner, Thursday, February 8, 1990

The fact is that a well orchestrated move is afoot, masterminded by the Devil, and calculated to bring the entire world under his dominion. This plan as indicated by the apostle John, will see the enforcement of Sunday observance by law and the dictates of a religious alliance being enforced by state authority. The Roman Papacy will once again bear sway as it did in medieval times.

Major Obstacle

However, there will be one major obstacle to the smooth implementation of this New World Order. It is, that God’s commandment keeping people will not honour the Papacy by desecrating the seventh day Sabbath, nor will they allow any human instrumentality, be it legislative enactment or otherwise to prevent them from offering to God the kind of service and honor that they are conscientiously convicted is required by God, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. This fact is alluded to by the apostle John in the following words:

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev. 13:8.

All the world will wonder after the beast (the Papacy) when it has recovered and has been brought back to its former power. It will be worshipped by those “whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Of course, this power tolerates no resistance. It will not co-exist with anything that acts indifferently to its authority. Likewise, that church/state union, the image of the Papacy that will be established by the backslidden Protestant churches will bear the same characteristics as the Papacy. It will lead the world to honor the Papacy and receive the mark of the Papacy, Sunday observance, and neither will it tolerate any resistance. Hence, the apostle John says:

“And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Rev. 13: 15-17.

But equally resolute are the people of God, in obedience to the command of God. They will obey God comes what may. In the Scriptures, the sternest warning ever issued by God is against conformity and complicity with this worldwide rebellion and apostasy. God’s warning which will be fully heeded by His people is as follows:

“If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” Rev. 14:9,10.

Leave The Cities

For God’s people to survive in this time of trouble (during the Mark of the Beast crisis), not being able to buy or sell, they must be able to lead a life that is to a large extent independent of the systems of this world. This will require a predominantly agrarian lifestyle similar to that of the ancient Biblical patriarchs.

The people of God will need to leave the cities and relocate to the rural areas where they will be able to produce their own food and where they will not be bound by the externally imposed constraints of time and circumstances.

For many individuals, life in the city has imposed on them constraints that encourage an attitude of self-seeking, materialism, self-indulgence and callousness (as in the days of Sodom). Country living on the other hand brings one closer to the Edenic type of life which God in His Divine wisdom had originally given to mankind while yet untainted by sin. Country living is more conducive to the development of Christ-like graces and offers better opportunities for healthy living.

Even though ones survival in the time of crisis will rest wholly on the mercies of God, there is a need for God’s people to make adequate preparation within the bounds of Divine mercy. Indeed, many of the temptations to which God’s people are subjected and many of the sins which they routinely commit (albeit unwittingly in many cases) are directly related to the framework and circumstances in which they choose to lead their lives. The television, the hustle and bustle and money-making activities that account for so much of ones time each day has created a false impression of what constitutes a successful and fulfilled life. Like Moses, many of God’s people will need to leave Egypt and go into the land of Midian where they will unlearn and be taught by God a new philosophy of life.

The Sabbath In Honor Of The Creator

In this “Mark of the Beast” crisis the issue will be the matter of worship, which will divide the human family into two (2) groups:

Those that worship the beast and his image by honoring Sunday, the mark of Papal authority, and those that worship God, the Creator, by keeping the seventh-day Sabbath Holy. In order to appreciate the significance of this conflict which, externally, seem to revolve around two days, one needs to consider what the seventh day Sabbath represents: and on the contrary, what Sunday represents. The issues are very aptly set forth in the following words of Ellen G. White:

“The duty to worship God is based upon the fact that He is the Creator and that to Him all other beings owe their existence. And wherever in the Bible, His claim to reverence and worship, above the gods of the heathen, is presented, there is cited the evidence of His creative power. “All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heaven’s.” Psalm 96:5. “To whom then will ye liken

Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things.” “Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it: I am the Lord; and there is none else.” Isaiah 40:25,26; 45:18 ... And the holy beings who worship God in heaven state, as the reason why their homage is due to Him: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things.” Rev. 4:11

“The importance of the Sabbath as the memorial of creation is that it keeps ever present the true reason why worship is due to God” - because He is the Creator, and we are His creatures. “The Sabbath therefore lies at the very foundation of divine worship, for it teaches this great truth in the most impressive manner, and no other institution does this. The true ground of divine worship, not of that on the seventh day merely, but of all worship, is found in the distinction between the Creator and His creatures. This great fact can never become obsolete, and must never be forgotten.” - J.N. Andrews, History of the Sabbath chapter 27. It was to keep this truth ever before the minds of men, that God instituted the Sabbath in Eden; and so long as the fact that He is our Creator continues to be a reason why we should worship Him, so long the Sabbath will continue as its sign and memorial. Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man’s thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, and atheist, or an infidel. The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God. “Him that made heaven, and earth and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” - Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 436-438.

Consider the words of the Sabbath commandment which is the fourth of the decalogue, noting the reason given for the Sabbath:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” - Ex. 20:8-11.

Test Of Loyalty

The Sabbath was given as a perpetual reminder to the human family that the earth, the heavens and all that is in them, ourselves humans included, were all created by God. As a result, our entire existence has its beginning and end in God and we therefore owe Him our allegiance. Sabbath observance is about spending quality time with God for our own benefit, and hence, the Sabbath is also directly related to God’s people being made holy, or sanctified. Hence, the following words of Scripture:

“Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.” Eze. 20:12.

“And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God.” Eze. 20:20.

Because of what the Sabbath represents and was intended for, the act of the Papacy in diverting the attention of human beings from the seventh day Sabbath to Sunday, which it claims represents its authority to change divine laws is tantamount to exalting itself above God. As a result, anyone who disregards the seventh day Sabbath and honours Sunday, the mark of the Papacy, is actually conceding to the Papacy superiority above God, the Creator. Hence, the issue is not simply a matter of days, but rather, a matter of worship and allegiance; whether one will worship the true God who

created the heavens and the earth, or he/she will worship another god. This idea is also quite aptly expressed in the following words of Ellen G. White:

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false Sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God’s law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class; by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other, choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God.” - Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

Battle Of Armageddon

As outlined, the papacy, spiritualism and apostate Protestantism will join hands to influence the kings of the earth and the whole world to establish an order of world government that stands in direct rebellion against God, and will try to force the people of God to submit to it. This conflict will constitute “the battle of that great day of God Almighty”, also known as the battle of Armageddon. The Scriptures describe it thus:

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” Rev. 16:13,14,16.

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse) and against his army.” Rev. 19:19.

“Him that sat on the horse” is identified as riding out of heaven and “hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (see Rev. 19:11,13,14,16), clearly a representation of Christ.

Ecumenism And New World Order

Already, through the ecumenical movement the churches are joining hands, emphasizing such points of doctrine as are held by them in common. If the prophecies of Revelation are to be believed, of which, we have abundant evidence that they have been accurate thus far, the next step will be to influence the various governments to legislate Sunday observance.

This new scheme which is soon to be implemented is the essence of the New World Order which has been so frequently mentioned by leading world officials in recent times. Consider, for example, the following statement by George Bush who was then President of the United States of America) proposing the establishment of a New World Order:

“It is a big idea: a new world order, where diverse nations are drawn; together in common cause... only the United States has both the moral standing and the means to back it up.” - President George Bush, in his State of the Union address, *Los Angeles Times*, February 181991.

In the above statement by President Bush is proposed a coming-together of the nations in a manner that directly fits the prophetic description of the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together.” Rev. 19:19.

Concepts of this New World Order are also being contemplated at the highest level of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, as indicated by the words of former Jesuit, eminent theologian and professor at the Vatican’s Pontifical Gregorian Institute, Malachi Martin. In his book, *The Keys Of This Blood*, Martin indicates that there are three powers that are contending for rulership of the New World Order. These are, Mikhail Gorbachev, the Capitalist West and Pope John Paul II, of which Pope John Paul II plans to win. The nature of the New World Order, as envisaged by the Vatican, is described by **Martin** as follows:

“Willing or not, ready or not, we are all involved

The competition is about who will establish the first one-world system of government that has ever existed in the society of nations. It is about who will hold and wield the dual power of authority and control over each of us as individuals and over all of us together as a community....

“Our way of life as individuals and as citizens of the nations; our families and our jobs; our trade and commerce and money; our educational systems and our religions and our cultures; even the badges of our national identity, which most of us have always taken for granted - all will have been powerfully and radically altered forever. No one can be exempted from its effects. No sector of our lives will remain untouched.” - Malachi Martin, *The Keys Of This Blood*, page 15; copyright 1990.

It is interesting that the concept of this New World Order is espoused by representatives of the very powers (the false prophet and the beast) that the Bible indicates will join hands with the dragon (Satan) in leading the world to fight against Christ and His people.

The concept of a New World Order is not new to the United States of America because, even on one side of the American one dollar note where there is pictured a pyramid with a glowing eye at the apex, there is written the words “Novus Ordo Seclorum” which is translated “New World Order.”

When the Roman Catholic hierarchy (the beast) consolidates its alliance with apostate Protestantism (the false prophet), then, according to the Holy Scriptures, Satan himself (the dragon) will also be a part of that alliance and they will influence the political powers (the kings) of the world to gather together. Quite differently from the popular view that is held, they will not be gathering to fight against each other. Instead, they will be gathering to fight against Christ and His people.

The result of this gathering-together will be the imposition of the Mark of The Beast, which is a worldwide decree that Sunday sacredness be upheld and the Sabbath of the Lord be trampled upon under pain of economic sanctions and eventually death. This will lead to the climactic battle of that great day of God Almighty”, commonly called the battle of Armageddon.

The amazing development of ecumenical unity that is now bringing the various religious groups together has been commented on by religion commentator Eron Henry as follows:

“The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches has been instrumental in bringing churches into closer dialogue with each other, not only to overcome divisions and differences, but to create opportunities where the different churches can learn from each other and draw on each other’s experiences.

A remarkable thing has happened where old enemies like the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church have participated in joint conferences and fora, such as that held by the Jamaica Council of Churches on May 21, 1991 in Kingston. - Eron Henry, *The Sunday Gleaner*, May 24, 1992, article “Church Government.”

Sabbath - Bulwark Against Deception

One of the few Protestant denominations that have not completely joined the ranks of the Babylonish confederation, even though it has imbibed some of the Babylonish philosophy of hierarchism, centralization and ecumenical unity is the Seventh-Day Adventist. The only thing that is restraining it from complete absorption into the confederation is the seventh day Sabbath which it still holds on to.

The Sabbath is a bulwark against deception and is the single most significant factor that inhibits unity and assimilation with Roman Catholicism. The seventh day Sabbath represents the very opposite of what the Papacy stands for, while Sunday observance represents the very essence of all that the Papacy claims for itself.

In keeping with the principle of God bringing back to light truth which had been trodden under foot, it must be asserted that there is Scriptural validity in the experience which started with William Miller in America in the mid 19th century. This experience which began with renewed interest in the second coming of Christ, gave rise to a more widespread understanding of the Sabbath truth and a deeper appreciation of Christ’s high priestly and heavenly ministry.

It should be clearly understood however, that the Seventh-Day Adventist Church organizational system as it exists today, which purports to be the continuation of that experience, does not capture or reflect the spirit that marked that period of awakening. Nevertheless, it does capture some of the main points of truth that came to light during that period, which consequently gave rise to the awakening experience.

Therefore, expediency and prudence is required in the way one relates to Seventh-day Adventism as a principle. One needs to be cognizant of the truth that is contained in the Bible as reflected in many of their teachings, while at the same time not allowing oneself to be caught up in the Sanhedrin-like dogmatism and the Babylonish ecclesiasticism, whereby one’s spiritual experience becomes linked with church membership, the holding of church office and the subjection of ones conscience to the dictates of a human hierarchy.

Any day that the Seventh-Day Adventist and other Sabbath-keeping church groups relinquish their observance of the seventh day Sabbath (which, may God avert), then one can be sure that they would have fully enlisted as daughters of Babylon that make up the Babylonish confederation.

Babylonish Confederation Defeated

Despite the mighty confederation of human beings and evil spirits that will be marshalled against Christ and His people at “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (also called the battle of Armageddon), they will all be overthrown. The Scriptures portray Christ’s victory as follows:

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” Rev. 19:17-21.

This onslaught which takes place at the second coming of Christ is also described by the apostle Paul in his brief warning to the Thessalonian believers about the “mystery of iniquity” which had already started to work in his day. He describes it thus:

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” 2 Thess. 2:7,8.

The apostle Paul also explains that this destruction will include all the ungodly:

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

Come Out Of Her, My People

All this will not take place however, without a warning. God loves us so much that, not only has He sent His only begotten Son to die in order that He might redeem us from the power of Satan, but He also gives ample warning of this master scheme of deception that will sweep the world, so that none might be deceived.

The apostle John was shown a warning message going out to the entire world before the visitation of God’s unmingled wrath against the entire scheme of rebellion against Him. The message is pictured as being given by an angel. John describes it thus:

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage, of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have, committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are

waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard 'another voice from' heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be' not partakers of her sins,' and 'that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.' Rev. 18:1-5.

A message that is powerful and unambiguous will be carried throughout the entire world, calling' God's people out of this Babylonish confederation which is spearheaded by the Papacy, spiritualism and apostate Protestantism.' Individuals can share responsibility for the sins" of' this satanic conglomerate by supporting any of the tributary systems that contribute to the continued existence of the confederation. "This includes all churches that take part in the ecumenical movement and which will, join forces and lend their "weight to the enforcement by civil authorities of Sunday observance, whether they do so actively or passively. Support can be given in many different ways, such as donating money to these systems, inviting others to join the membership or simply being.. oneself a member of one of these church groups.

The message from God is "Come 'out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye" receive not of her plagues." Rev. 18:5. These fallen counterfeit systems which present themselves as God's church will either be assimilated into the Babylonish confederation or be completely dismantled by the conglomerate, having forfeited Divine protection by their courting the favour of Babylon.

Stand Fast In The Liberty

'God's true followers, The True Church which is a spiritual entity and not one that is physically determined will stand in full liberty of conscience in Christ. In their minds they will not be fettered or held in bondage by either perceived or imposed obligation to be guided by tradition, man-made theories or church structure.

The gospel of Christ is a message of' liberty. The Lord Himself declared:

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:36.

When Jesus stood in the synagogue and declared His mission He said:

"The Spirit of ,the Lord 'is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Luke 4:18.,

The apostle Paul also echoed the sentiments of mental freedom in the following words to the Galatians:

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Gal. 5:1.

Dangerous Error

There is hardly another single error that has been propagated among professed Christian people that has been responsible for as many people going to their graves without the hope of salvation as

that particular error of each of these man-made structures claiming to be The Church of God. Not only does it serve to hide from the world the truth of what God's Church really is, but it also enslaves the conscience of human beings and creates a barrier to their responding to truth when it is brought to them.

This error is particularly dangerous because it robs human beings of one of the greatest gifts that God has, given to us, namely the freedom to think and choose. This makes it virtually impossible for God, to reach many, probably most of His people. God so desires that this gift be kept by mankind and used responsibly that He even took the risk of human beings rebelling against Him, by giving it from the 'very beginning, through which man was even able to choose to sin. Had mankind not been given that gift, they could not have sinned and rebelled against God. But God was willing to take the risk, because outside of mankind having that gift, they could not in reality be free moral agents and offer to God the genuine kind of honor and reverence that God deserves and truly enjoys.

However, the Devil has been instrumental in causing human beings to set in place, systems and propagate errors that, rob individuals of that gift. An individual who is captivated and held in bondage by these error's, thinking that this or that or one or another of these systems is The True Church closes his mind against anything that comes to him as truth once it does, not come through the particular system that he has come to believe is The True Church. Whatever he accepts has to be first endorsed, authorized or, sanctioned by that system, otherwise it will not be accepted at all.

This is the very same kind of situation that existed when Jesus came to this world as a babe. Men had set up their own system, and not even Jesus Christ Himself who is the Son of God could be such unless these individuals who had set themselves up as, the authority endorsed His Messiahship.

No Other Gods' Before Me

So, it would seem that Christ dwelling in the heart of each individual is not competent enough to offer to that individual all the guidance that He has promised him; to lead him into all truth and to direct him, so, men must set up some system to take that place, to do for each individual what Christ should be doing and has offered to do. In short, that thing stands in the place of Christ; that thing is an idol.

When Christ guides an individual in a particular direction, that individual has first to consult with that idol to seek endorsement or authorization. If that endorsement or authorization is not given, then Christ has to wait. He is thus unable, for that individual to finish the work that He has begun in his life, because Christ does not occupy first place in that person's life, even although the person deeply thinks that Christ is occupying that first place.

Dear reader, the question now faces you: How are you guided in matters of faith? What is your standard? Is it the Word of God, as you understand it, based on your personal study of it, or is it something else? If it is anything else, be it the word of your spouse, parents, church group, Pastor, Priest or whatever, then, be assured that you have an idol standing between you and God.

Accountable To God Only

Every individual will give an account to God of his own self. No one can give an account for you. So, do remember this: in matters of faith you are accountable to God and God alone.

For those who insist on regulating' and directing the faith of others, you are invited to consider these words of the apostle Paul:

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.” Rom. 14:4.

True it is, the Holy Spirit might use you to bring to a person’s attention, truth that he had no knowledge of previously. This, the person will consider and weigh for himself, comparing with other Scripture in order to ascertain its validity. But as to you or anyone else being an authority whose judgement that person is under divine obligation to accept in matters of faith, it is wholly a principle that is of the “mystery of iniquity?” and runs contrary to Scripture.

Even though The apostle Paul was specially called by God, a fact which he asserted and defended in his various epistles, the believers were not expected simply to accept what he said on the basis that he was the one who said it. Consider the following Biblical statement about the Bereans:

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Acts 17:11.

The Bereans were commended for searching the Scriptures to ascertain whether the things told to them by the apostle Paul were in harmony with what was already recorded in Scripture. How much more should the same principle apply today.

Learn From Christ

Many individuals defer to another person their God-given right and privilege to study the Scriptures for themselves and learn from Christ. It is often felt that one who has done more extensive academic studies in religion should possess a deeper understanding of Scripture and should be better able to rightly divide the Word of Truth. However, this idea is not in accordance with the principles outlined in Scripture in terms of a knowledge of God and a knowledge of matters pertaining to the kingdom of God, the starting point is not a Ph.D. degree but rather, having Christ in One’s life. Like Nicodemus, “ye must be born again.” John 3:7.

Academic training without the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit in One’s life will lead One to be, like the Greeks of Paul’s day, too “wise” to understand the “foolishness” of the gospel (see 1 Cor. 1:17-25). Such are fitly described as “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” 2 Tim. 3:7.

Once a person loves righteousness, hates sin and has the Holy Spirit in His life he can be taught by Christ. One needs only to sit at the feet of Him “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and

knowledge” (Col. 2:3) and one will obtain a knowledge of the mysteries of God’s kingdom, even if one is unlearned like Peter was when he first came in contact with Jesus.

Many individuals bypass Christ and seek to be taught by the “learned” doctors of the Sanhedrin, but one who starts to build on a faulty foundation can at best obtain an imperfect building. Hence, the student rises no higher than the level of his teacher, who himself is deficient in a knowledge of the truth.

Chapter 8

Pertinent Questions Considered

In this chapter will be considered a few pertinent questions that individuals might be naturally inclined to ask.

Called To What?

1. Question: Since the popular churches have, to a large extent, aligned themselves as tributaries, supporting the development of that Babylonish confederation which stands in opposition to God, what is proposed that God's people do in terms of worship and assembly, should they decide to disassociate themselves from these various religious bodies?

In response to this, it should first be understood that it is not within the province of this writer or any human instrumentality to propose a structure for God's people to fit into, in terms of spiritual experience, outside of what has been revealed by God. To do that would make one guilty of the very same thing that has been clearly shown to be unscriptural - that is, stepping over the leadership of Christ to prescribe a channel for Christ to work within, under obligation.

It has been shown that The Church is a spiritual entity, and hence, individuals are not called to some physical structure.

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Heb.12:22,23.

As human beings, our eyes have become too transfixed on the physical elements of things. We always look to some other human being to direct us and tell us what to do in spiritual matters. There is a need for us to think more in spiritual terms and to seek guidance from Jesus directly. The apostle Paul tells us:

"Look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:18.

We need to be able to see the invisible as was said of Moses:

"He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Heb. 11:27.

Fellowship and Assembly

In terms of worship and assembly, the Lord tells us:

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt.18:20.

Wherever people are gathered to worship God, so long as the Spirit of Christ has an influence in the proceedings, one certainly stands to gain spiritual upliftment. In fact, we are admonished not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). Hence, it is perfectly in harmony with Scripture for individuals to participate or even sit in at a church service where there is a spirit of reverence for God pervading the proceedings, inasmuch as one holds the right to excuse oneself from being present if the proceedings are irreverent. Neither should one feel obliged to sit and listen to false doctrine. Of course, one should always bear in mind the wisdom of tact and of acting as much as possible without offence.

Equally in harmony with Scripture are :the alternatives of fellowshipping in one's home, or that of, a fellow believer in a home-church setting, or simply retreating at a quiet place with fellow believers.

The apostle Paul recognized these principles quite clearly as is reflected in his various movements. He was attuned to God in worship whether in a synagogue of the Jews (Acts 17:1,2), in an upper chamber with fellow Christian believers (Acts 20:7,8) or even under the canopy of heaven, as was the case recorded in Acts 16:13:

“And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.”. Acts 16:13.

It should be well appreciated however that prudence and wisdom would not lead one to seek the society of those who show scant respect for God's Word, if one's desire is to learn further truth. For one to wade intentionally through a puddle of error, superstition and blasphemy, hoping to find some gem of truth is to place oneself on Satan's ground and to forfeit Divine protection.

In keeping with the principles that were followed by the early Christians, each follower of Christ should try to identify, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, other believers who share a sincere desire to live righteously and to follow Christ and Christ alone, in harmony with the Scriptures. These, believers, whether two, three or any number of them, according to.' Scripture constitutes a particular church. These should meet and pray together, strengthen each' others faith by sharing experiences of God's mercies and guidance and study the Scriptures to be further enlightened.

Through the work of God's Holy Spirit their knowledge of truth will increase according as they reflect in their lives each principle learnt, and they will be led to recognize other groups of genuine believers. Their mutual concern for each other, and their concern for the world of unconverted individuals will lead them, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to labour as did the early Christians for the salvation of sinners. Thus will be revived the true spirit of Christ as was evident in the apostles.

It is well in accordance with Scripture that the people of God work together in an organized manner, utilizing the different spiritual gifts and talents with which they are endowed in order to fulfil specific tasks in the mission of advancing the Gospel. The various systems and structures that are thus put in place, according to the particular necessities of the various tasks would therefore be regarded as facilitators and would be determined largely by the circumstances and the feasibility. Hence, no particular organizational system would be regarded as The Church, or could possibly

bear in it the authority as to make one excluded from Salvation, if one is convicted in his conscience, within the bounds of truth, to labour in some other way.

The Church remains The Body of Christ - those who have been called out of Satan's kingdom - those who have been born again; not some humanly instituted organizational structure.

The Bible - From Who?

2. Question: The Catholic church claims that the Bible itself came from the church and hence is subject to the interpretation of the church, rather than the dogma of the church being subordinate to the principles and commands of the Bible. How do you respond to that?

The claim of the Roman Catholic church that the authority of the church supersedes the authority of the Word of God as recorded in the Bible, because the Bible itself came from the church, immediately elicits a question: 'Did the Bible come from the Roman Catholic church? Most emphatically, NO!! The Old Testament writings, first of all, were in existence before the Roman Catholic church. Those were the Scriptures that the apostles and even Jesus Himself read from. Take for instance Jesus' statement, when tempted by the Devil in the wilderness:

"It is written Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matt. 4:4.

Jesus said "it is written ...". Where was it written? It was written in Deuteronomy 8:3 as recorded 'by Moses many centuries before. So, Jesus appealed to the Old Testament - the very same Old Testament that we have today, in defence against the Devil's temptation (yet, amazingly, some individuals who claim to be followers of Christ would have us discard the Old Testament. Amazing! Is it not? But, back to our main point.).

Matthew, the person who recorded Jesus as quoting the above statement was one of the twelve disciples who went with Jesus from place to place, and was therefore in a position, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to record exactly what he heard. So then, where in this picture did the Roman Catholic church get involved, to justify their claim of being the one from which the Word came, hence, giving them the authority to supersede.

Consider another case. The apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy said:

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. 2:5.

The apostle Paul says that there is only one mediator between God and human beings, namely Jesus Christ. Now, either the apostle said those words or he didn't. If he did not say those words, then maybe there could be some room for questions. But if he did say those words, based on the record of his life and the consistency of those words with other scripture, then we know that they were inspired by God. Any attempt therefore, to nullify or alter the thought expressed would amount to nothing less than a disregard for the One who inspired the apostle with those thoughts. But what does the Catholic church say? They say that you may not go directly to Christ; you must go via the priest and also via the virgin Mary. To arrive at such an idea reflects guidance by a

completely different spirit from the One that inspired Paul. It has to be, for God does not contradict Himself.

Not, Even A Bearer

The most that they could probably try to claim is the role of a bearer or guardian, like a postman who carries letters and ensures that they are safely delivered. But then, this does not authorize the postman to tamper with the contents of any of the letters. But further yet, not even such a role can they justly claim. According to the historical record, it is to the Waldensians, the Albigenses, the Huguenots, later reformers like Tyndale and Wycliffe that we owe the present availability of the Bible. Many of these people copied portions of the Bible by hand, preserving it over successive generations, at times when, to be found in possession of a Bible meant death. Many of these people were brutally slain for the very reason of trying to preserve the Scriptures.

And where was the Roman Catholic church in all of this? -mercilessly hunting these people like animals, to kill them, in order that the Bible might not be distributed to the common people in their own language. Far from having anything to do with the origin or preservation of the Scriptures, the Roman Catholic church has been the greatest influence that has sought to destroy the Scriptures. As an evidence to substantiate this assertion, consider, for example, the attitude that was expressed by Pope Pius IX towards Bible societies: "Socialism, Communism, clandestine societies, Bible Societies... pests of this sort must be destroyed by all means." - Pope Pius IX; Encyclical, *Quanta Cura*, Dec. 8, 1866.

Reference has been made to various ecclesiastical councils that were held by the Roman Catholic church as points in time when the various portions of the Bible were officially put together and made available as one book, as to suggest that the Bible's existence is due to the instrumentality of the Roman Catholic church. Be assured dear reader, that every portion of the Bible was available before any such council was held.

The so-called Received Text from which the King James Version was derived had an entirely different history from the Latin Vulgate, which is the primary source of the Roman Catholic Douay Version. The Received Text was transmitted by the Vaudois and Waldensian Christians independent of Roman Catholicism.

As a result of persecution under the reign of the Roman Caesars, the early Christians fled to various parts of the world. The first Christians (who were Jewish), in obedience to the command of Christ (Luke 21:20,21) fled from Jerusalem just before its destruction in AD 70 and settled in the small town of Pella. The ecumenical Council of Nicaea (AD 325) was intended to harmonize all the various Christian groups.

However, it was perceived by some of these groups, that the city churches (which comprised mainly Gentile converts from paganism) had started to imbibe paganistic traditions which they viewed as corrupting the apostolic faith. Hence, some of these groups including those at Pella did not take part in this, or subsequent councils, which were dominated by the Bishop of Rome. Hence, there continued through the centuries a Bible-centred religion which was separate and distinct from Roman Catholicism. This, the Church of Rome tried relentlessly to extinguish by means of

persecution. Hence, the people who were thus persecuted, were called Vaudois (valley dwellers) because they were forced to take refuge in the caves, catacombs, valleys and desolate places.

Whether or not there had been any ecclesiastical council, individuals who were true to God would have accepted and be guided only by such writings as reflect Divine inspiration, as evidenced by the lives of the persons who wrote them and also by the consistency of such writings with other writings that are definitely known to be inspired (like Moses' writings and those of Jesus' disciples, for example).

To give evidence of this assertion, consider this: The Roman Catholic church presently holds certain apocryphal writings as belonging to the sacred canon of Scripture, yet most other professed Christians reject those writings. Why is this so? For the simple reason, that the classification of certain writings as belonging to the Scripture, by the Roman Catholic church, does not in anyway determine that they will be accepted, and considered as such. In a similar way, the acceptance of certain writings then, and the continued acceptance of those same writings today, as Scripture, is not hinged on any ecclesiastical council that was held by the Roman Catholic church.

Hence, the facts declare most emphatically that the Bible in no way came from the Roman Catholic church, and there is absolutely no basis for it claiming superior authority. Such a claim is only another demonstration of the "mystery of iniquity" - that principle of men exalting themselves above God.

Good Influence?

Question: Many individuals do testify that they have come to know Christ and have developed a meaningful relationship with Him through the influence of a particular religious denomination. How then do you reconcile this positive impact of church groups with your thesis that church organizations are manmade entities that essentially hinder rather than promote genuine Christianity?

Individuals do not come to know Christ because of particular religious denominations. They come to know Christ by virtue of their coming in contact with the Bible, the Word of God. Regardless of the particular means or circumstances through which that contact with God's Word was experienced, it is the contact and not the circumstances to which one owes his/her Christian experience.

An analogy will illustrate the point: One passes by a ditch one day and there, amidst the grime and debris one sees something that glistens. It was found to be a large diamond crystal that is worth a fortune. To what does one owe his fortune, the diamond or the ditch? Certainly the diamond! Indeed, the diamond would have been much easier to discover had it not been cluttered with the grime and debris that are associated with the ditch.

In a similar way, the Word of God, like the diamond is much easier to see when it is not cluttered. One will never probably realize how many unscriptural ideas he/she has imbibed as a result of the influence of church doctrine and dogma until one has freed himself/herself from all obligation to be guided by the same. The truth of the Scriptures will be seen in its purity,

unadulterated by human philosophies, theories, speculation and expediency. The process might be gradual, but sure, once he/she stands true to himself/herself and takes the Bible for what it says under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

To the scribes and Pharisees who had cluttered the truth of God with their own doctrines and dogma Jesus said:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” Matt. 23:15.

Jerusalem Council

4. Question: It is recorded in the book of Acts that a general council was held at Jerusalem in order to discuss the issue of circumcision. Does this not represent the existence of a central authority that directed the body of believers that were scattered throughout the various territories?

The answer is no. It was simply a meeting of believers who came from the different territories to discuss a matter that was of common concern to them. According to Acts chapter 15, certain individuals from Judea came to Antioch and started to teach the believers there that “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” Acts 15:1. Paul and Barnabas “had no small dissension and disputation with them” (verse 2), whereupon it was determined that Paul and Barnabas “should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.” (Verse 2).

There was a group of believers - a particular church, in Jerusalem. Among this group of believers were found the disciples who had personally been acquainted with Jesus. Up until the time when Peter met with Cornelius and his family (Acts 10) the disciples had remained in Jerusalem except for those who “were scattered abroad

upon the persecution that arose about Stephen.” Acts 11:19. Hence, after the disputation of Paul and Barnabas with those individuals at Antioch it is said:

“And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.” Acts 15:4.

After the meeting in question, when a consensus had been reached, based on Divine guidance, and the believers were able to say of their decision that “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us,” (verse 28) the resulting action was described as follows:

“Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren.” Acts 15:22.

It was not a meeting of some standing committee that periodically met to issue directives and formulate policies, as is the pattern followed by most religious denominations. The apostle Paul himself was a part of the council and as is abundantly evident, his life was that of an itinerant preacher who met his personal needs by plying his trade of tent-making (Acts 18:3; 2 Thess. 3:8).

Silas also was at that meeting and was one of the believers that returned to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Silas followed the same course as the apostle Paul in travelling from place to place preaching the gospel, because Silas became Paul's partner after Paul and Barnabas separated (Acts 15:37-40).

The life of the apostle Paul was not that of some resident Pastor or Bishop who was in charge of a conference or archdiocese. Neither was it that of a commissioned evangelist who was sent on particular missions, who on returning had to present a report to superiors.

The Storehouse

5. Question: If one is not connected to a church denomination, through what channel would one return to the Lord offerings and other donations out of his means?

The first thing that needs to be established unequivocally is that nowhere in the Bible is prescribed any specific channel through which Christians are required to funnel such gifts and offerings as are being returned to the Lord. Hence, church denominations do not have inherently any divine right to set themselves up as God's "storehouse."

Furthermore, one cannot justly claim that it is a divine imperative that one routinely donate money to church groups that are involved in such activities as donating medals to the pope of Babylon; investing money in business ventures that are disapproved by Scripture; hiring educational consultants from Babylon to "advise" them as to how their schools and colleges should be administrated; and teaching and fostering the practice of neurolinguistic programming and other forms of hypnotism, mind-control, witchcraft and sorcery. Such are among the heaven-insulting activities that are being carried out by some of these religious groups that claim to be God's "storehouse."

More and more openly is being manifested in the popular churches the leaven of Babylon which seems to be eating at the last vestige of vital godliness that they have ever represented.

How consistent with Scripture would it be for money to be used in supporting ventures that make the truth of God available to the world! It might even be the matter of buying books and giving them away.

Let each one be assured that if he/she takes that which belongs to God and use it to support systems that perpetrate and enhance the Devil's work there is absolutely no Biblical principle on which one stands. One stands on his/her own. In addition, one becomes equally responsible for the activities that such gifts and donations are used to carry out, and one will certainly be required by God to give an account of his/her stewardship.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

God's Purpose

God's purpose is still the same - to bring mankind back in harmony with Himself, by forgiving them of all the sins that they have committed and granting them the gift of His Holy Spirit to dwell in their hearts, and so enable them to live holy lives, not continuing in sin. His purpose is to reconcile the entire universe back to Him as one great family and to present to Himself this unified universe - His Church, a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish.

He makes available to every individual His Holy Spirit to guide him into all truth and to grant him the power to live a holy life, and bring him to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. As is stated by the apostle Paul, this is the glorious goal that Christ has for the life of each individual. He says:

"That Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Eph. 3:17-19.

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. 4:13.

To receive the gift of the Holy Spirit the requirement is very simple - just as the apostle Peter related to those who gathered to listen on the day of Pentecost:

"Repent, and be baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38.

Once there is no idol that is held between us and Christ to hinder His work in us and for us "he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it" unto its glorious finishing (Phil. 1:6).

May the Lord help us to yield to Him and break down every idol that we might be moulded by Him. It is His will that we should be among the number that will sing that grand song of reunion when the character of Christ would have been perfected in us, and we along with all the angels and all the other members of the universe, reflect that glorious character of God. We will then be able to sing a song of experience, that song of a work begun and accomplished in us. This will be the finishing of that mystery "which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (Eph. 3:9 Rev. 10:7; 11:15), finished according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Eph. 3:11.

The Struggle Continues

But until then, the true followers of Christ will continue to struggle “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Eph. 6:12.

The lot of God’s followers has always been the same - one of struggle against evil. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews describes the physical results of this continued conflict as follows:

“And what shall I more say? for time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Sampson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” Heb. 11:32-38.

Not Of This World

And what is the reason why their lives have often been so turbulent? It is because they belong to the kingdom of Christ which is not of this world. Jesus declared:

“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” John 18:36.

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” John 15:18-20.

“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.” John 16:2,3.

Satan, “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” 2 Cor. 4:4. The Devil continually tries to rid the world of the faithful who honor God despite the widespread disregard for the principles of righteousness.

Victory; At Last - The Church At Rest

But the time is coming when it will be declared:

“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.” Rev. 11:15.

The power of the Devil will be broken,

“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.” Dan. 7:27.

The true followers of Christ are often deprived, ill-treated, castigated and considered as misfits in the world, by those who have joined with Satan, the one who has usurped God’s authority on the earth and has claimed it as his. But the fact of the matter is that every single follower of Christ is legitimately entitled to live on this earth to no lesser extent than anyone else, even though human beings under the leadership of Satan will consider them not deserving, and try to rid the world of them.

This world was created by God. Human beings were placed in it to glorify God and such is their legitimate right to do. However, Satan has usurped dominion over the world and has established a completely different order from the one that God intended. As a result, the legitimate right which the followers of Christ exercise is worshipping God the Creator, is largely considered as being out of harmony with the world. Hence, the children of disobedience, in accordance with their spirit of rebellion against God try to rid them from the world even as Cain killed righteous Abel.

But each follower of Christ needs to assure himself that “the earth is the LORD’S, and the fullness thereof” and that he/she has been placed in the world as a representative of God. Hence, he/she is entitled to be here and he/she is also entitled to live in accordance with the will of God as Outlined in His Word, because neither Satan nor his followers have created this world, neither have they the power to sustain its existence.

The promise is that “the judgement shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion,” and it “shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High.” Dan. 7:26,27.

This is the glorious hope of God’s people. This hope is as real as the earth itself is real, for God Himself has promised it, and there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17) with Him. With this hope, the followers of Christ, as soldiers of the Most High will valiantly advance and defend the cause of God upon the earth, because the time is coming when The Church of God which is now militant against the kingdom of Satan, shall be The Church triumphant, “And the great Church victorious shall be The Church at rest.”

The church has one foundation, 'Tis Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation, By water and the word;
From heaven He came and sought her To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He brought her, And for her life He died.

Elect from every nation, Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation, One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses, Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses, With every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder, Men see her sore oppressed,
Though foes would rend asunder The Rock Where she doth rest,
Yet saints their faith are keeping; Their cry goes up, “How long?”
And soon the night of weeping Shall be the Morn of song.

'Mid toil and tribulation, And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation Of peace for evermore;
Till with the vision glorious Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious Shall be the church at rest.

Samuel J. Stone, 1866.

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