

EndTime Issues...

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The Antichrist ?

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EndTime Issues... Magazine

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Manuscripts are welcomed for consideration. They should relate to end-time events that have recently been occurred to a clearer view of prophetic truth or have a deep spiritual concern, be simply written and well documented with a focused interest to Christians. Length should be limited to 10 double-spaced pages. The ongoing appeal: "Issues of concern to the last generation."

Letters to the editor: We welcome your letters of encouragement, deepening insight on relevant topics and plain feedback relative to *EndTime Issues...* Please keep your communiques brief. Your letters will be the property of Christian Heritage Foundation. Personal answers normally cannot be made. Selected letters may be published in subsequent issues of *EndTime Issues...*

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Islam – the Antichrist? No Way!

In 1946 the Military Intelligence Service of the U.S. War Department published a *confidential* (declassified in 1979) 76-page document on the political force of Islam. It stated:

“The Moslems remember the power with which once they not only ruled their own domains but also overpowered half of Europe, yet they are painfully aware of their present economic, cultural and military impoverishment. Thus a terrific internal pressure is building up in their collective thinking. The Moslems intend, by any means possible, to regain political independence and to reap the profits of their own resources.... The area, in short, has an inferiority complex, and its activities are thus as unpredictable as those of any individual so motivated.

“In an atmosphere so sated with the inflammable gases of distrust and ambition, the slightest spark could lead to an explosion which might implicate every country committed to the maintenance of world peace.”

In a biography of one of the most influential modern Islamic thinkers, Abdullah Azzan, Chris Suellendrop noted that his life “revolved around a single goal, namely the establishment of Allah’s Rule on earth.” When Theo van Gogh, the Dutch film maker was assassinated in 2005, his murderer, Mohammed Bouyeri, attached a note on the body: “Islam will be victorious through the blood of martyrs who spread its light in every dark corner of this earth.”

At his trial he said: “I did what I did purely out of my beliefs. I want you to know that I acted out of conviction and not that I took his life because he was Dutch or because I was Moroccan and felt insulted.”

Analysts have struggled to define the motives behind the growing Islamic violence. Though “inferiority” and “poverty” often come to the top, most say that it goes “unexplained.” When Islamic radicals commandeered a Russian elementary school in 2004 and killed so many children, the world was aghast, yet could not explain. Its lack of outrage rivaled the heinous crime itself.

One out of six people on earth today are Muslims – 2.3 billion strong. They are infiltrating many countries with seemingly unlimited financial resources, creating educational institutions and building mosques, which spew out hatred against Christians. The Koran states:

- Kill the disbelievers wherever we find them (2:191).
- Fight and slay the pagans (translation: that’s us) seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (9:5).
- Slay or crucify or cut the hands and feet of the unbelievers (5:34).
- Strike off the heads of the disbelievers ... [make a] wide slaughter among them, carefully tie up the remaining captives [for ransom] (947:4).
- [Treatment of disbelievers] ... garments of fire shall be cut and there shall be poured over their heads boiling water whereby whatever is in their bowels and skin shall be dissolved and they will be punished with hooked iron rods (22:19).
- The Koran also instructs Muslims to slay or crucify or cut the hands and the feet

of the unbelievers (5:34), fight unbelievers until no other religion except Islam remains (3:85).

Articles are pouring from the presses with titles such as "Judgment Day!" and "It's Later than We Think" related to this Islamic phenomena. The late Pope John Paul II worked for over twenty years to establish a constructive dialogue with Islamic people. After his death 115 cardinals came to Rome to elect his successor. A Vatican official said that the issue of Islam came up in their discourse and the church was now debating whether to consider it a collaborator in combating secularism or a religious rival. Peter Hans Kolvenback, head of the Jesuits, said last year (2005), "There is an unbridgeable gap between" Christianity and Islam.

Because Islam is a rising world religious force bent on violence and desiring to conquer, many scholars are reinterpreting prophecy, viewing the "man of sin" and the "antichrist" as representing the Islamic world. That's a problem. There are significant parallels to the characteristics of the Biblical antichrist – but the differences are significant. The papacy, the "classic" antichrist in Protestant literature, fits the mold with precision. Let's look at some of the issues.

Antichrist Characterized

In both the Old and New Testaments there are many references to an end-time apostate power associated with conflict and desolation. Let's begin by looking at the *comparisons* and then the *contrasts* between Christ and that Antichrist.

"Comparisons between Christ and the Antichrist

1. Christ was the subject of Old Testament prophecy: so also is the Antichrist; many are the predictions which describe this coming one, see especially Dan. 11:21-45.
2. Christ was revealed only at God's appointed time: such will also be the case with the Antichrist. Of Jesus we read, 'But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son' (Gal. 4:4); of the other it is said, 'And now we know what withholdeth that he might

be revealed *in his time*' (2 Thess. 2:6, Daniel 8:17, 19 – an appointed time).

3. Christ was a Man, a real Man, 'the Man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2:5); the Antichrist be – 'that Man of Sin' (2 Thess. 2:3).
4. Christ is our 'Great High Priest;' so Antichrist will yet be "Israel's" great high priest (Ezek. 21:26).
5. Christ was and will be the King of the Jews (Matt. 2:2); the Antichrist will exalt himself above God (Dan. 11:36).
6. Christ will be the King of kings (Rev. 17:14); so also will the Antichrist be a king of kings (Rev. 17:12,13).
7. Christ wrought miracles: of Him it is said 'approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs' (Acts 2:22); so also will the Antichrist, concerning whom it is written, 'whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonder' (2 Thess. 2:9).
8. Christ's public ministry was limited to three years and a half; so also will the Antichrist's final ministry be (Rev. 13:5).
9. Christ will return to the earth as Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6,7); the Antichrist will portray a time of peace (1 Thess. 5:3).
10. Christ is called 'the Morning Star' (Rev. 22:16); so also is the Antichrist (Isa. 14:12).
11. Christ is referred to as Him 'which was, and is, and is to come' (Rev. 4:8); the Antichrist is referred to as him that 'was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit' (Rev. 17:8).
12. Christ died and rose again; so also will the Antichrist (Rev. 13:3).
13. Christ will be the object of universal worship (Phil. 2:10); so also will the Antichrist (Rev. 13:4).
14. The followers of the Lamb will be sealed in their foreheads (Rev. 7:3; 14:1); so also will the followers of the Beast (Rev. 13:16,17).

15. Christ has been followed by the Holy Spirit who causes men to worship Him; so the Antichrist will be followed by the Anti-spirit – the False Prophet – who will cause men to worship the Beast (Rev. 13:12).

These show the incredible lengths to which God will permit Satan to go in mimicking the Lord Jesus. Did you observe the golden thread that weaves itself through each comparison? We turn now to consider:

“Contrasts between Christ and the Antichrist

I. In their respective Designations

1. One is called the Christ (Matt. 16:16); the other the Antichrist (1 John 4:3).
2. One is called the Man of Sorrows (Isa. 53:3); the other the Man of Sin (2 Thess. 2:3).
3. One is called the Son of God (John 1:34); the other the Son of Perdition (2 Thess. 2:3).
4. One is called the Seed of woman (Gen. 3:15); the other the seed of the Serpent (Gen. 3:15).
5. One is called the Lamb (Isa. 53:7); the other the Beast (Rev. 11:7).
6. One is called the Holy One (Mark 1:24); the other the Wicked One (2 Thess. 2:8).
7. One is called the Truth (John 14:6); the other the Lie (John 8:44).
8. One is called the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6); the other the wicked, profane Prince (Ezek. 21:25).
9. One is called the glorious Branch (Isa. 4:2); the other the abominable Branch (Isa. 14:19).
10. One is called the Mighty Angel (Rev. 10:1); the other is called the Angel of the Bottomless Pit (Rev. 9:11).
11. One is called the Good Shepherd (John 10:11); the other is called the Idol Shepherd (Zech. 11:17).

II. In their respective Careers

1. Christ came down from heaven (John 3:13); Antichrist comes up out of the bottomless pit (Rev. 11:7).
2. Christ came in Another's Name (John 5:43); Antichrist will come in his own name (John 5:43).
3. Christ came to do the Father's will (John 6:38); Antichrist will do his own will (Dan. 11:36).
4. Christ was energized by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14); Antichrist will be energized by Satan (Rev. 13:4).
5. Christ submitted Himself to God (John 5:30); Antichrist defies God (2 Thess. 2:4).
6. Christ humbled Himself (Phil. 2:8); Antichrist exalts himself (Dan. 11:37).
7. Christ honored the God of His fathers (Luke 4:16); Antichrist refuses to (Dan 11:37).
8. Christ cleansed the temple (John 2:14,16); the Antichrist defiles the temple (Matt. 24:15).
9. Christ ministered to the needy (Isa. 53:7); Antichrist robs the poor (Psa. 10:8,9).
10. Christ was rejected of men (Isa. 53:7); Antichrist will be accepted by men (Rev. 13:4).
11. Christ leadeth the flock (John 10:3); Antichrist leaveth the flock (Zech. 11:17).
12. Christ was slain for the people (John 11:51); Antichrist slays the people (Isa. 14:20).
13. Christ glorified God on earth (John 17:4); Antichrist blasphemes the name of God in heaven (Rev. 13:6).
14. Christ was received up into heaven (Luke 24:51); Antichrist goes down into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20)."²

The references to an end-time anti-God leader are protean and extensive. His energies are bent on opposition to heaven's moral and representative

framework. There is an irrational quest for power over persons and ideas. At the end there is a battle over individual choice versus subjugation. Loyalty will be defined from moral standards or from ideals based on opposition and rebellion against God. What is the golden thread? The whole Biblical antichrist concept is a religious paradigm bonding the world together.

Islam Characterized

The roots of Christianity, Judaism and Islam go back to Abraham and his two sons. One by God's purpose, the other from man's will. Ishmael and his mother Hagar were driven from home, work, family and associations because of hatred towards the heir of God's promise.³ How did this happen?

- Hagar and Ishmael (perhaps even Abraham and Sarah) thought Ishmael would inherit Abraham's wealth and the covenant promise.
- When Sarah became pregnant, their disappointment culminated in hatred towards Isaac.
- Sarah saw that spirit and "mistreated" (NIV) Hagar – Hagar fled. Abraham loved Ishmael. This caused "unspoken grief."⁴

Hagar had idolatrous kindred and Ishmael had intimate associations with heathen women.⁵ Hatred towards Isaac and his descendants were to become a legacy. God did promise Ishmael that he would become a great nation – but noted that he would be:

1. A wild man
2. His hand would be against every man
3. Every man's hand would be against him

The curse on Ishmael, his life and his future was violence. *The prophetic imagery was a destiny against man. The Antichrist was against God.* The Ishmaelites were in opposition to and in rebellion against *people*. The antichrist heritage was in opposition to and in rebellion against the *principles of heaven*.

The present-day animosity of Islam towards Christianity and the Jews can be traced to the spirit

of Ishmael. Out of his line came a man called Muhammad (570–632 A.D.), who founded Islam. It perpetuates the spirit of violence, rebellion and opposition toward mankind. Reconciliation is foreign to its "spiritual" ideals.

He hallowed violence by sanctifying vengeance (Quran 42:39) and fighting (Quran 2:216, 4:74, 9:5 and 61:4, as examples). Will there ever be peace? Never. The stumbling block is Jesus Christ, the "seed of Abraham."⁶

Complicating the tension is another Biblical story related to Esau. After the birthright was sold to Jacob, the Scriptures say that "Esau hated Jacob" (Genesis 27:41). Esau's descendants were the Edomites. Over the centuries the descendents of Ishmael and Esau have intermarried. Esau's grandson was Amalek (Genesis 36:12), the father of the Amalekites. They became bitter foes against Jacob and his descendants. Prophecy said that they would be people of violence "from generation to generation" (Exodus 17:16).

The Prophetic Connection

With these characteristics we question: Is there any imagery in Prophecy that is forward-moving to our time that represents Islam. The answer is in Daniel 11.

Relegated as one of the "more difficult" chapters of Biblical understanding, its study has either been neglected or filled with the fascinations of conjecture. In the light of the "antichrist" metaphors in Daniel 11, an amazing picture unfolds. This has been outlined in detail in three fascinating chapters:

www.endtimeissues.com/articles/163/Daniel-8-12-Ch31-The-Vile-Person-Rises-Again/

www.endtimeissues.com/articles/168/Daniel-8-12-Ch32-Pretending-to-be-Like-God/

www.endtimeissues.com/articles/173/Daniel-8-12-Ch33-The-Papacy-Comes-to-its-End/

The King of the North is a great end-time symbol for the "man of sin," "the son of perdition" (II Thessalonians 2:3). The description is precise and extensive in Daniel. It ties to the ever-growing accord one can make between that King and the actions and spirit of the Vatican.

Biblically, that vast civil and ecclesiastical power is seen as the “beast” in Revelation 13:1-2. It is honored and even worshiped by the world (something that will never occur with Islam). And – it is tied to spiritualism and apostate Protestantism in a false trinity called Babylon. The King of the North in Daniel is first *that* anti-Christian pivotal power, but in its greater apocalyptic imagery, Babylon.

Is violence depicted against that “king of the north” by the “king of the south?” Just before Michael stands up (Daniel 12:1-2) and the last scenes of earth’s history unfold, the King of the South fights the “Christian powers” symbolized by the King of the North. The Hebraic description is explicit and reveals what is unfolding today.

Islam is not the antichrist. Any attempt to instruct otherwise undermines the message regarding the papacy. Daniel 11 makes amply clear that the King

of the North is against the restoration themes of the covenant. *Additionally*, the third Angel’s message of Revelation 14 is thematically tied to Daniel 8–12. The Sabbath issue is a pivotal prophetic concern at the end in all those chapters. Only powers that draw *that* into question can fulfill the antichrist issue. Islam – the antichrist? No way!

Franklin S. Fowler, Jr.

References:

¹www.danielpips.org/article/3370

²www.biblebelievers.com

³*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 146.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵*Prophets and Kings*, p. 174.

⁶www.injil.org

PROTESTANTS MARKET CATHOLICISM

Part One

We begin a series of articles on some of the more subtle issues drawing the Protestant world toward Rome. Our deepest appreciation to our insightful friend Richard Bennett in his careful analysis in the first three of these publications.

Dear Friend,

When the Catholic blueprint for false ecumenism appears in Evangelical circles, it is time to sound the alarm. The Emerging Church movement has become such a toxic and dangerous threat at the present time that I see it will take three articles to analyze it. In this first article I will deal with the methods employed by Brian McLaren, a chief leader of the movement. In the second article I will address the tenets of doctrine that the movement holds. In a third article, with the help of Ken Silva and Virgil Dunbar, I will write on the mystical aspect of the whole association. All three articles will be posted on here on our website: www.bereanbeacon.org/The_Emergent_Church_Markets_Catholicism.htm

Yours in the grace of the precious Savior,
Richard Bennett

THE EMERGENT CHURCH MARKETS CATHOLICISM

“Not since the Jesus Movement of the early 1970s has a Christian phenomenon been so closely entangled with the self-conscious cutting edge of U.S. culture. Frequently urban, disproportionately young, overwhelmingly white, and very new—few have been in existence for more than five years—a growing number of churches are joining the ranks of the “emerging church.” Thus declared *Christianity Today* in its article, “The Emergent Mystique.”¹ While this new movement is permeating modern Evangelical circles in the Western world, few seem

to understand its essential *modus operandi*. Careful analysis shows it to be a theory that repudiates any single defining source for truth and reality beyond the individual.

EMERGENT CHURCH IN ITS LARGER CONTEXT

The Emergent Church movement did not start and does not operate in a vacuum. Hence to evaluate its function in the larger context, it is essential to understand that thirty-five years ago, the Roman Catholic Church published its non-negotiable agenda on ecumenism in its Post Vatican Council II documents. A crucial passage states, “...ecumenical dialogue is not limited to an academic or purely conceptual level, but striving for a more complete communion between the Christian communities [churches], a common service on the Gospel and closer collaboration on the level of thought and action, it serves to transform modes of thought and behavior and the daily life of those communities. In this way, it aims at preparing the way for their unity of faith in the bosom of a Church one and visible: thus ‘little by little,’ as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into that unity of the one and only Church which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning.

“This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose...”²

Thus rather than looking for unity based on truth, the Papacy, as ever, is seeking to secure visible outward conformity through the compromise of

others. This is the larger context into which the Emergent Church is set.

A MAN FOR THE ECUMENICAL SEASON

Brian McLaren is the pastor of the non-denominational church he founded in the late 1980's and a leading spokesman for Emergent-US, a dominant group within the Emerging Church movement. As such, he is a prime example of the success of the Catholic ecumenical agenda, a fact is well demonstrated by the strategy of this particular leader. McLaren's website bio states that he obtained both a B.A. and an M.A. in English from the University of Maryland. He has had no formal degree from any seminary, other than an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Carey Theological Seminary in Vancouver, BC, Canada in 2004. His academic interests, listed as including "Medieval drama, Romantic poets, modern philosophical literature, and the novels of [Roman Catholic] Dr. Walker Percy," have fitted him well for the task at hand.

Leaning heavily on Roman Catholic writers, particularly G. K. Chesterton and his book, *Orthodoxy*,³ McLaren has written a book entitled *A Generous Orthodoxy*. Here he moves beyond Chesterton's censure of Calvinism and sponsorship of mysticism to present what he thinks is a whole new method of knowing Christian truth, i.e., through Eastern mysticism. But to sell this mindset to the Protestants with their memory verses intact and their Bibles in hand, his approach to them is pitched on a strongly subjective level. This subtle tactic is part of the methodology of ecumenism spelled out in 1970 in Post Vatican Council II documents.

BITTERNESS AGAINST HIS HERITAGE

At the outset, McLaren classes his book as "confessional," which gives him latitude to express his opinions without the necessity to give any formal argument.⁴ Indeed, he states, "you should know that I am horribly unfair in this book, lacking all scholarly objectivity and evenhandedness." Excusing himself on the basis of his heritage, he goes on, "I am far harder on conservative Protestant Christians who share that heritage than I am on anyone else. I'm sorry. I am consistently over sympathetic to Roman

Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, even dreaded liberals, while I keep elbowing my conservative brethren in the ribs in a most annoying—some would say *ungenerous*—way. I cannot even pretend to be objective or fair."⁵ Here the author shows by his own admission what amounts to bitterness against his conservative Protestant heritage and the personal context out of which *A Generous Orthodoxy* arises. While this same book is being hailed by many admirers as the "manifesto" or public declaration of the Emergent Church movement, the larger context in which it is set is the ecumenical movement of the Roman Catholic Church—as the Papacy moves to regain the loss of her political empire, i.e., the Holy Roman Empire, which loss she suffered at the hand of the Reformation three and a half centuries ago. Since the Papacy thinks in terms of centuries rather than decades, it is not too much to think that among Protestants, Brian McLaren (and Rick Warren as well) could be very useful to the larger papal cause.

McLaren says his book is addressed primarily to those who are ready to give up Christianity altogether, but encourages them not to do so. The basis on which he encourages them, however, first involves insulting the conservative Protestants' and Pentecostals' view of Jesus with their insistence on individual salvation or "a personal savior." He then points them approvingly to his definition of the Roman Catholic "Jesus," including the Liberation Theology "Jesus" and liberal Protestant "Jesuses."

Next, McLaren is bold enough to re-define the Holy God. He does this by making a distinction between "God A" and "God B" via the present gender pronoun dispute. He writes, "Think of the kind of universe you would expect if 'God A, created it a universe of dominance, control, limitation, submission, uniformity, coercion. Think of the kind of universe you would expect if 'God B' created it a universe of interdependence, relationship, possibility, responsibility, becoming, novelty, mutuality, freedom" (p. 76).

By this fictitious contrast he entices his readers to choose between two highly subjective conceptions of a god of his own imagination. That done, he has set his standard of truth, which is not the inerrant Word of God, but rather his own current theory.

HARMFUL, OFFENSIVE TACTICS DISCLOSED

McLaren also informs the reader that, “as in most of my other books...I have gone out of my way to be provocative, mischievous, and unclear, reflecting my belief that clarity is sometimes overrated.”⁷ Further, he fully intends that “shock, obscurity, playfulness, and intrigue”⁸ are all to be a part of the style of his book. His tone is also highly reflective of Roman Catholic Chesterton’s own style. The springboard of permissive subjectivity laid, McLaren demonstrates his understanding of Christianity in the major section of his book, “The Kind of Christian I Am.” He claims to be many kinds of Christian simultaneously.

His method is usually to launch his bitterness against conservative Protestants by carefully assigning a major focus of his own choosing to that particular group and then redefining whatever words or terms delineate the target group. Under the new definition, which usually is nearly totally opposite of the original definition, he then declares himself to be one of that group, as “Fundamentalist/Calvinist,” “Methodist,” “Evangelical,” “Charismatic/Contemplative,” “Liberal/Conservative,” “catholic,” “green,” “biblical,” “(Ana)baptist/Anglican,” “Mystical/Poetic,” “incarnational,” “missional,” etc. An instance of his tactic is when he defines Calvinists by their acrostic TULIP, which he clearly detests. Using the same letters, he makes a parody of the acrostic—which totally redefines it in a way antithetical to what TULIP commonly means—and on the sole basis of his redefinition calls himself a Calvinist.

Another group he dislikes is the Fundamentalists, or “fighting fundies,” from whom he says he will take the term, “fighting.” He now claims that this word is his legitimate heritage from them, and therefore he can “fight” for his own cause under the name of Fundamentalist—although what he is fighting for is directly opposed to Fundamentalists. Hence he has defined himself as a “Fundamentalist/Calvinist,” but what he means by those terms is totally different from what is commonly meant by them. In this way, he shows how his unbiblical method deliberately foments confusion and division. By contrast, however, he does not basically re-define the terms of the groups he likes, such as the liberal Protestants, Catholics, mystics, and environmentalists, all

of which he also claims to be, except Roman Catholic. There is good reason for this: he claims to be “Post /Protestant,” retaining then in the larger ecumenical debate the legitimacy of his heritage to protest—but not to protest Roman Catholicism, as classically the term Protestant has meant in its historical context, but rather to protest against the conservative Protestants of his own day. It should be noted that his chief sources of authority in nearly every chapter are Roman Catholic, particularly G. K. Chesterton.

RELATIVE AND QUALIFIED COMPROMISE

Although McLaren denies that he is a relativist, his explanations give him away. He states, “How do you know if something is true?... First, you engage in spiritual *practices* like prayer, Bible reading, forgiveness, and service. Then you see what happens; you remain open to *experience*. Finally, you report your experience to others in the field of spirituality for their *discernment*, to see if they confirm your findings or not.”⁹

In another place, McLaren redefines theology. He does this by drawing heavily from Vincent Donovan, a Roman Catholic missionary priest. Donovan came to the conclusion that “praxis [practice] must be prior to theology” and that *his* theology would be derived from *his* theory that was derived out of *his* experience with pagans.¹⁰ McLaren enlarges Donovan’s (and others’) definition to “rather than seeing missiology (the study of missions) within theology, theology is actually a discipline within Christian mission. Theology is the church on a mission reflecting on its message, its identity, its meaning.”¹¹ McLaren has thus redefined theology. In short, McLaren says that mission defines theology rather than theology defines mission. His standard is pragmatism, or “what works,” rather than the absolute authority of Scripture. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, “*The scripture cannot be broken.*”¹² “*Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*”¹³ McLaren’s assertion that theology is actually a discipline within Christian mission is an utter denial of absolute truth as it is revealed in Scripture. Like the existentialists before him, McLaren has clearly denied biblical faith.

ADDING FUEL TO HIS RELATIVISM

McLaren also shows that he is denying biblical authority when he states, "The earliest Protestants [meaning those of the Reformation of the sixteenth century] transferred the fulcrum or center of authority from the church to the Bible (which the...invention of an improved press facilitated greatly). But the Bible requires human interpretation, which was a problem..."¹⁴ Here McLaren totally ignores the fact that Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture, as Psalm 36:9 explains, "*for with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.*" God's truth is seen in the light of God's truth, "*Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*"¹⁵

Having left Scriptural truth behind, McLaren now lays the groundwork for his theory by which he hopes, in the words of Vatican Council II, to remove one of "the obstacles to ecclesial communion." His theory is that both Conservative and Liberal Protestants have trouble accepting the authority of the Bible in the "post-evangelical" or "post-modern" or "post-liberal" world in which their civil, political views are based in their religious convictions, causing a polarization between them. Of this, he says, both groups must repent because "[both] having survived in different ways the rough waters of modernity, they are now facing a new challenge: working together to save the village which we call planet Earth."¹⁶ His own religion-based solution to what he casts as a civil and political problem that liberal and conservative Protestants have made is to say that times have changed and it is now necessary to change the norm of biblical interpretation accordingly. This is most interesting, since this is the same *modus operandi* as Papal Rome. In the beginning of her latest *Catechism*, the Vatican states, "Read the Scripture within the 'living Tradition of the whole Church.'"¹⁷ Then Rome goes so far as to reprimand those who stray because she states there is "...the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church."¹⁸ McLaren is in the early stages of presenting the same protocol as Papal Rome. But then, Rome said that the induction of Protestant churches was to be "little by little" as their thinking was changed by dialogue with Catholics.

MCLAREN RESHAPES HISTORY

In trying to lump liberals and conservatives together, McLaren also shows his prejudice against Evangelicalism by strongly insinuating that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was the beginning of believers placing their trust in the written Word of God.¹⁹ He is wrong about this, as the history of the Vaudois, Albigenses, and Waldenses show. His point is that there is a shift today away from the emphasis on the authority of the Bible (he leaves out the word "alone"), just as in the time of the Reformation there was a shift away from the authority of the Roman Catholic Church to the Bible. His attack on Martin Luther is to show him only as an individualist who would not bow to Catholic authority—but that is not why Martin Luther is important in church history. He states that in the context of "Martin Luther's famous individualistic statement, uttered before the Catholic authorities with whom he disagreed, expresses this shift perfectly: Here I stand. That sentence might be understood as the first statement uttered in the modern world."²⁰ Here McLaren uses historical fact to chip away at individual salvation, which will dovetail nicely into his argument for emphasis on universal salvation. He totally neglects the content of Martin Luther's historic position—which was to stand for justification by faith alone based in the authority of the Bible alone. In this way, he is able to use Martin Luther as simply a man of another time, not relevant for today because that time, which he calls modern, is now over. What he has failed to comprehend is that the biblical truth that justification is by faith alone is timeless. But McLaren's opinion falls directly in line with the 1999 concordat between the Roman Catholic Church and the German Lutheran Federation in which it was declared that Lutherans and Catholics now agree on the issue of justification by faith alone and that the Reformation was a mistake.

MCLAREN MUM ON THE INQUISITION

What McLaren never tells is that the authority of the Roman Papacy was not well established until near the end of the eleventh century, when by crusades and the Inquisition, the Papacy by coercion forced people to submit to her ecclesiastical dictates. Many refused. Uncountable millions were robbed, tor-

tured, and martyred because they held to the authority of the Bible in those bloody centuries and refused to accept Roman Catholic doctrines and traditions. At one point, McLaren admits that he is being unfair in his presentation of English history, but he does not apologize or correct his illicit revision of historical fact.

Nor does McLaren mention that it was the Papacy that locked away the Bible from the common people during the Middle Ages with their version in Latin, which only the clergy could have.²¹ Nevertheless, it is a well established historical fact that even in the fourth century, the bishops of Milan of Northern Italy were in no way subject to the bishops of Rome. The historical record shows that they used the Bible alone as their authority, having only two sacraments, baptism and communion, prayed to God alone, and allowed no images of the Deity.²² The Vaudois of the Cottian Alps in that same area were by the ninth century known for their apostolic faith in the Bible alone, as Claude, bishop of Turin makes clear. The tenants of these ancient churches of the Alps were well demonstrated by their faith and practice to be essentially the same as those proclaimed by the Reformers of the sixteenth century. The same is true of the Albigenses, against whom the Papacy sent its first domestic crusade in the twelfth century. Thomas M'Crie gives an amazingly similar report of historical facts regarding the pre-Reformation believers in Spain in the sixth century.²³ The historical facts show that from early on the Church of Rome was the schismatic. It remains the same today. Her *corruptions become traditions*, spread by the Papacy during the centuries of the Holy Roman Empire, are now flowering in that same Papacy's new tactic of "ecumenical outreach." It is an entirely logical development that the open welcome of Eastern mysticism by Vatican Council II²⁴ into this four-hundred- fifty year old apostate system²⁵ should transfer a yet more potent strain of mysticism through her ecumenical outreach to those who have not received a love of the truth.

MCLAREN PLAYS BY VATICAN COUNCIL II RULES

In adopting this all inclusive format, McLaren is certainly playing by the rules for dialogue laid out by Vatican Council II, which states, "Each partner [in

the dialogue] should seek to expound the doctrine of his own community in a constructive manner, putting aside the tendency to **define by opposition**, which generally results in certain positions becoming overstressed or unduly hardened."²⁶ "The partners [in the dialogue] will work together towards a **constructive synthesis**, in such a way that every **legitimate** contribution is made use of, in a joint research aimed at the complete assimilation of the revealed datum."²⁷ McLaren is well versed in Catholic literature. In this book, the approach to his subject of dealing with conservative Protestantism is a pristine demonstration that he has successfully assimilated Vatican Council II methodology and doctrine. Rather than defining by opposition, as Bible based public discussion would require, McLaren has followed the Vatican II tactic of presenting subjective opinion in a subtle attempt to pervert biblical authority and historical fact through fictitious contrast, revisionist history, and "constructive synthesis." He has redefined commonly understood Protestant terminology in order to claim his compromises of truth as a "legitimate contribution" that Vatican II dialogue requires of its participants. These Catholic dialogue parameters, which are the working orders of the larger context in which the Emergent Church is set, work well for both the Catholic Church and McLaren because they sow confusion and discord among believers and unbelievers alike. The Papacy is most likely the bigger winner, for McLaren will be gone in a few decades, but the walls of doctrinal separation between the Catholics and the Protestant world will have been further damaged through McLaren's assistance. And McLaren for his part, fueled by bitterness and informed and protected under the rules of the larger context agenda, is able to implement his own goal of moving the religious global village toward a new knowledge of God through mysticism. In Part II and III we will explore these things in more detail. McLaren claims to be a true prophet by bringing in his new ideas of emergent thinking.²⁸ The infallible Spirit of God through the Apostle Paul warned Christians about "*grievous wolves...not sparing the flock.*"²⁹

Christ Jesus said, "*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*"³⁰ Good spiritual fruit shows the nature of the doc-

trines that have been taught. The Holy Spirit produces spiritual fruits in those who are truly born again. There are fruits of repentance, personal faith, and deep fellowship with God and His people. New birth bears fruit in an awareness of God's absolute Holiness, and in awareness of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. When Christ Jesus saves a person, He saves from hell and the power of sin. The Lord also delivers the true believer from the dominion of Satan and from the love of and the ways of the world. When we see in a person neither the conviction of sin, nor the fear of God, but rather both a love for the world and its methods, we "know them by their fruits." Thus it is with McLaren. Not only do his tactics, methods, relativism and rewriting of history reveal whom he is following, but also we see much more is he revealed by what his message is missing. The Holiness of God, the conviction of sin, the fear of God, and the Gospel message are major parts of what is missing from *A Generous Orthodoxy*. Rather than compromise these precious tenants of the faith, the believer is to separate from those who promote such heresy by "earnestly contend[ing] for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Richard Bennett of "Berean Beacon"

Endnotes:

- ¹ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/011/12.36.html> 1/18/06.
- ² Vatican Council II Document No. 42, "Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue," S.P.U.C., 15 Aug 1970, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, ed., New Rev. Ed., Vol. I, Sec. II, pp. 540-541.
- ³ G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) has been very influential in literature of the twentieth century. His book, *Orthodoxy*, is considered by many to be the centerpiece of his writings. McLaren's work largely reflects both the content and style of Chesterton, who was staunchly Roman Catholic and who is aggressively promoted on the Internet and elsewhere by Catholics.
- ⁴ John Henry Cardinal Newman in the nineteenth century did the same thing in his well-known treatise, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, in which he presented his arguments in the form of a testimonial. Newman started out as an Anglican

prelate who wanted to become a Catholic, but in 1844 was persuaded by the Papacy to remain an Anglican. From his position, inside the Anglican Church, he was to use all his influence and power to move the Church of England back into the Roman Catholic fold. It has proven to be a very effective strategy. See Walter Walsh, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement* (Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1898).

- ⁵ Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), p. 35 (emphasis in original).
- ⁶ A primary example of one of the Papacy's long range plans has been its Oxford movement to reclaim England from Henry VIII's defection in the sixteenth century. Papal plans were put in motion in 1844, using John Henry Newman as their point man within the Church of England for the express goal of subverting that body to Catholicism and thereby regain England as a Catholic country. The group Newman succeeded in establishing within the Church of England became known as Anglo-Catholics, to which belonged the famous Wescott and Hort. That movement is still progressing, although not now known by the same name.

Another example is the Papacy's snaring of the German Lutheran Federation in a concordat signed October 31, 1999 in Augsburg, Germany. Four hundred forty-four years prior to this signing was the signing of the Treaty of Augsburg (September 25, 1555) in which Germany ratified the Peace of Passau of 1552. This completely established the Reformation by confirming the Protestant Churches of Germany in all their rights and possessions, making them entirely independent of the Pope. The basic issue was justification by faith alone, which Martin Luther had so clearly published on October 31, 1517. The basic issue of the 1999 concordat was the same issue but in 1999 it was declared that the Reformation was a mistake and that the Lutherans and Catholics now believe the same on justification. Nothing could be further from the truth; but after thirty years of dialogue with the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans compromised their historic stand for the biblical truth. The October 31st 1999 concordat, which overturned Martin Luther's historic stand of October 31, 1517, was signed in Augsburg, the same place where the Treaty of Augsburg, declaring liberty of worship for

Protestants, had been signed in 1555. In light of these historical facts, the significance of dates and places is hard to miss.

⁷ McLaren, *Op cit.*, pp. 22-23.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ McLaren, *Op cit.*, p. 199 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹² John 10:35.

¹³ Jeremiah 23:29.

¹⁴ McLaren, *Op cit.*, p. 133.

¹⁵ I Corinthians 2:13.

¹⁶ McLaren, *Op cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), Para. 113 (emphasis in original).

¹⁸ "DOMINUS IESUS" September 5th 2000 http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html

¹⁹ McLaren, *Op cit.*, p. 133.

²⁰ McLaren, *Op cit.*, pp. 132, 133.

²¹ Thomas M'Crie recounts that in the sixteenth century in Spain, Archbishop Fernando de Talavera wanted to translate the Bible into Arabic in order to win the Moors to Christ. Cardinal Ximenes, who carried enormous influence with the Spanish government, was strenuously opposed to this because in his opinion to do so was to throw pearls before swine. Therefore, his solution was that "the sacred scriptures ought to be exclusively preserved in the three languages in which the inscription on our Saviour's cross was written.... This opinion, of Rome, that ignorance is the mother of devotion, has met with the warm approbation of his biographer." Further, of the vulgar or common people, the cardinal was of the opinion that "they were in danger of wresting the Scripture to their destruction... Therefore, the books which the Cardinal had promised as a substitute for the Gospels and Epistles made their appearance, consist-

ing of treatises of mystic or rather monastic devotion, and the lives of some of its most high-flying zealots, both male and female." Thomas M'Crie, *History of the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Spain in the Sixteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Wm Blackwood; & London: T. Cadell, 1824) Reprinted by Hartland Publications, 1998; pp. 46-47.

²² Peter Allix, *The Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont and of the Albigenses* (1619, 1690, 1692, 1821). Reprinted by Church History Research & Archives (CHRA), 1989. Ch. III, IV. See also Jean Paul Perrin, *History of the Ancient Christians Inhabiting the Valleys of the Alps* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Simon, 1847). Reprinted by CHRA, 1991. Perrin, a Waldensian pastor from whom Allix got his information, attended a very important meeting which drew up six articles condemning the church of Rome as the whore in the book of Revelation and clearing the Albigenses and Waldenses of the charges of Manicheism.

²³ M'Crie, *Op cit.*, Ch. I & II.

²⁴ Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", Para. 2.

²⁵ Council of Trent, Session XI, Jan. 13, 1547, "If anyone shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone by which we are justified: let him be anathema [cursed]." Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, Tr. by Roy J Deferrari from *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 13th ed. (B. Herder Book Co., 1957) #822, Canon 12.

²⁶ Vatican Council II Document No. 42, V. Method of Dialogue, (b), p. 548, in Flannery.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, (c), p. 548.

²⁸ McLaren, *Op cit.*, p. 285.

²⁹ Acts 20:29.

³⁰ Matthew 7:16.

Patrick and the Early Celtic Church

By: BRIAN HOECK – TRUTHONTHEWEB.ORG

Many have heard stories of the “Patron Saint” of Ireland: Patrick. But of these stories that abound, and the beliefs that are held concerning him, much is quite erroneous. Many think that Patrick (born ca. 360 CE) was Irish – he was not, but rather he was of Scottish/British origin.

“The place of his birth was Bonnaven, which lay between the Scottish towns Dumbarton and Glasgow, and was then reckoned to the province of Britain. This village, in memory of Patricius, received the name of Kil-Patrick or Kirk-Patrick. His father, a deacon in the village church, gave him a careful education” (Dr. August Neander, General History of the Christian Religion and Church, Vol. II, p. 122. Boston: 1855).

“Patrick himself writes in his Confession: ‘I, Patrick, ... had Calpornius for my father, a deacon, a son of the late Potitus, the presbyter, who dwelt in the village of Banavan.... I was captured. I was almost sixteen years of age ... and taken to Ireland in captivity with many thousand men.’” (William Cathcart, D. D., The Ancient British and Irish Churches, p. 127).

“Patrick, a son of a Christian family in southern Scotland, was carried off to Ireland by pirates about 376 A.D. Here, in slavery, he gave his heart to God and, after six years of servitude, escaped, returning to his home in Scotland. But he could not forget the spiritual need of these poor heathen, and after ten years he returned to Ireland as a missionary of the Celtic church” (*ibid.*, p. 70).

Many also believe Patrick to be of the Roman Catholic system, yet in Patrick’s own Confession which we read part of above, he claims that his father was a deacon and his grandfather a presbyter. While the Roman Catholic Church holds

the doctrine of “sacerdotal celibacy,” wherein members of its ministry are to remain unmarried and thus virgins, the ministry of the Celtic Churches held no such doctrine. This is one of many doctrinal distinctions between the two faith systems. The claims that Patrick was a Roman Catholic are mere fabrications as we shall see clearly.

“There is here a hiatus of unknown length in his life; a chasm, however, which his mediaeval biographers have filled up according to the liveliness of their fancy, or the supposed credulity of their readers. They wrote of his studying with St. Germain, and of his attending a monastery near the Mediterranean, and finally of his going to Rome and receiving ordination from the pope. All these are mere inventions, and were not put forth till more than five hundred years after St. Patrick’s death, and all of them are presented without a shadow of proof.... In the establishment of his Church, St. Patrick in no instance ever appealed to any foreign Church [i.e., Rome, or anywhere else], pope or bishop. In his Epistle to Coroticus (sect. 1), he simply announces himself as bishop: ‘I, Patrick, an unlearned man, to wit, a bishop constituted in Ireland: what I am I have received from God’ ... These well authenticated statements of St. Patrick concerning himself are wholly at variance with those of Probus and Joscelyn, who, for the first time, put forth their fabrications full five hundred years after his death. In regard to his studying with St. Germain at Tours, and of his going to Rome for ordination, all these stories were invented in the 10th or 12th century. Joscelyn, who wrote the fullest life of the saint, about A.D. 1130, has, in one sense, really the

praise or dispraise of bringing the Irish Church into that of Rome. The abbe, not being embarrassed with facts, dates, or contemporary history, wrote easily and readily, and presented a life of the Irish saint that exactly suited his times, in the beginning of the 12th century. He represented St. Patrick and the early Church of Ireland in the 5th century as exact models of his own in the 12th. This life of the saint was readily received and adopted as the only true one by the Roman Catholic Church, and it has ever been the 'storehouse' from which his numerous and papal biographers have drawn their materials. After the publication, and the general reception of this book, there was no hesitation in the full acknowledgment of all the Irish Christians, and of St. Patrick among them. Archbishop Usher, on the Religion of the Early Irish, asks (iv, 320): 'Who among them [the early Irish] was ever canonized before St. Malachias, or Malachy, was?' (A.D. 1150). St. Patrick himself seems never to have been sainted till all Ireland was sainted or canonized" (McClintock and Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. VII, pp. 774,775; article: Patrick, St.).

"There is strong evidence that Patrick had no Roman commission in Ireland ... As Patrick's churches in Ireland, like their brethren in Britain, repudiated the supremacy of the popes, all knowledge of the conversion of Ireland through his ministry must be suppressed [by Rome].... There is not a written word from one of them [i.e., popes] rejoicing over Patrick's additions to their church, showing clearly that he was not a Roman missionary.... Prosper does not notice Patrick.... He says nothing of the greatest success ever given to a missionary of Christ, apparently because he [Patrick] was not a Romanist.... Bede never speaks of St. Patrick in his celebrated 'Ecclesiastical History.' ... So completely buried was Patrick and his work by popes and other Roman Catholics, that in their epistles and larger publications, his name does not once occur in one of them until A. D. 634" (William Cathcart, D. D., The Ancient British and Irish Churches, pp. 83-85).

Due to the world of Patrick's day knowing the truth about him and the Celtic Church, Rome

made no mention of, or claim to, Patrick until at least 200 years after his time. Bede did however make record in 431 A.D. of an attempt of a Roman Catholic missionary to bring the Celtic assemblies under the rule and doctrine of Rome:

"Palladius was sent by Celestinus, the Roman pontiff, to the Scots [Irish] that believed in Christ" (Bede, Ecclesiastical History, p. 22). But "he left because he did not receive respect in Ireland" (William Cathcart, D. D., The Ancient British and Irish Churches, p. 72).

Such disrespect would be unheard of if the Celtic assemblies had indeed been adherents of Rome's "gospel." Rome was looking to claim what the true Gospel already had when it entered the "Britians" (Britian, Ireland, Scotland) during the first century:

"That the light of Christianity dawned upon these islands in the course of the first century, is a matter of historical certainty" (Richard Hart, B. A., Ecclesiastical Records, p. vii; Cambridge: 1846).

"The Christianity which first reached France and England (i.e., Gaul and Britian) was of the school of the apostle John, who ruled the churches in Asia Minor, and therefore of a Greek, not Latin [i.e., Roman], type." (Gordon, World Healers, p. 78)

"A large number of this Keltic community (Lyons, A.D.177) – colonists from Asia Minor – who escaped, migrated to Ireland (Erin) and laid the foundations of the pre-Patrick church." (Thomas Yeates, East Indian Church History, p. 226)

Tertullian, ca 200 A.D., wrote "by this time, the varied races of the Gutulians, and manifold confines of the Moors, all the limits of the Spains, and the diverse nations of the Gauls, and the haunts of the Britons (inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ)... In all which places the name of Christ who is already come reigns." (Tertullian, Answer to the Jews, chap. vii.)

Tertullian had included the Britons among the many nations which believed in Christ, and he speaks of these places as being "inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ." In other words, the Church there was not founded by, nor subject to, Rome.

"He (Patrick) never mentions either Rome or the pope or hints that he was in any way connected with the ecclesiastical capital of Italy. He recognizes no other authority but that of the word of God.... When Palladius arrived in the country, it was not to be expected that he would receive a very hearty welcome from the Irish apostle. If he was sent by [pope] Celestine to the native Christians to be their primate or archbishop, no wonder that stout-hearted Patrick refused to bow his neck to any such yoke of bondage" (Dr. Killen, Ecclesiastical History of Ireland, vol.1, pp. 12-15).

"Patrick rejected the union of church and state. More than one hundred years had passed since the first world council at Nicaea had united the church with the empire. Patrick rejected this model. He followed the lesson taught in John's Gospel when Christ refused to be made a king. Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36). Not only the Irish apostle but his famous successors, Columba in Scotland, and Columbanus on the Continent, ignored the supremacy of the papal pontiff. They never would have agreed to making the pope a king" (Truth Triumphant, pp. 85,86).

"Two centuries elapsed after Patrick's death before any writer attempted to connect Patrick's work with a papal commission. No pope ever mentioned him, neither is there anything in the ecclesiastical records of Rome concerning him.... Patrick preached the Bible. He appealed to it as the sole authority for founding the Irish Church. He gave credit to no other worldly authority; he recited no creed. Several official creeds of the church at Rome had by that time been ratified and commanded, but Patrick mentions none. In his Confession he makes a brief statement of his beliefs, but he does not refer to any church council or creed as authority. The training centers he founded, which later grew into colleges and large universities, were all Bible schools. Famous students of these schools – Columba, who brought Scotland to Christ, Aidan, who won pagan England to the gospel, and Columbanus with his successors, who brought Christianity to Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy – took the Bible as their only authority, and founded renowned Bible training centers for the Christian

believers.... Patrick, like his example, Jesus, put the words of Scripture above the teachings of men. He differed from the Papacy, which puts church tradition above the Bible. In his writings he nowhere appeals to the church at Rome for the authorization of his mission. Whenever he speaks in defense of his mission, he refers to God alone, and declares that he received his call direct from heaven" (Truth Triumphant, pp. 82-84).

Pope Gregory had sent delegates to the Christians Celts: "'Acknowledge the authority of the Bishop of Rome.' These are the first words of the Papacy to the ancient Christians of Britain. They meekly replied: 'The only submission we can render him is that which we owe to every Christian'" (Merle D' Aubigne, History of the Reformation, Book XVII, chap. 2). "'But as for further obedience, we know of none that he, whom you term the Pope, or Bishop of Bishops, can claim or demand' (Early British History, G. H. Whalley, Esq., M. P., p. 17 London: 1860; see also Variation of Popery, Rev. Samuel Edger, D. D., pp. 180-183. New York: 1849).

"The monks sent to England [in 596 A.D.] by Pope Gregory the Great soon came to see that the Celtic Church differed from theirs in many respects ... Augustine himself [a Benedictine abbot] ... held several conferences with the Christian Celts in order to accomplish the difficult task of their subjugation [submission] to Roman authority... The Celts permitted their priests to marry, the Romans forbade it. The Celts used a different mode of baptism [i.e., true baptism: immersion] from that of the Romans... The Celts held their own councils and enacted their own laws, independent of Rome. The Celts used a Latin Bible [i.e., the Itala] unlike the [Roman Catholic's Latin] Vulgate, and kept Saturday as a day of rest" (A.C. Flick, The Rise of Medieval Church, pp. 236-327).

"It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labor. They obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week" (James C. Moffatt, D. D., The Church in Scotland, Philadelphia: 1882, p. 140).

"In this latter instance they seemed to have followed a custom of which we find traces in the early monastic church of Ireland by which they held Saturday to be the Sabbath on which they rested from all their labours" (W.T. Skene, *Adamnan Life of St. Columba*, 1874, p. 96).

As noted above, the Christianity which first reached France and Britian was of the school of the apostle John, who ruled the churches in Asia Minor. Colonists from Asia Minor laid the foundations of the pre-Patrick church. They brought with them the doctrine which they received of John, Paul, Philip, and the other apostles of the Lord, which included not only the observance of the seventh day Sabbath, but also the commemoration of Christ's death upon the 14th of Abib – Passover!

"It is probable that the primitive Christians kept the Pasch on the 14th of Nisan as determined by the Jewish authorities, and regarded it as the anniversary of the crucifixion.... The churches of the Roman province of Asia... followed the older custom, keeping the Pasch on the 14th of Nisan, whatever the day of the week" (James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland*, Vol.1, pp. 211, 212; Columbia University Press, New York, 1929).

"...they ignorantly refuse to observe our Easter [Pascha] on which Christ was sacrificed, arguing that it should be observed with the Hebrew Passover on the fourteenth of the moon" (Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 19 wherein Bede quoted "Pope" John's words concerning the Celtic brethren).

Other doctrines that Patrick, Columba, and the Celtic assemblies held included the observation of the other Festivals of the Eternal (Lev.23), the belief in the mortality of man and the hope of the resurrection (vs. immortality of the soul and going to heaven, hell, and/or purgatory); the distinction between clean and unclean animals; "improvised" prayers (from the heart, rather than merely from the lip with repetitions); that Christ Jesus is our only Mediator – as opposed to various "saints," Mary, angels, etc.; and that redemption and atonement come through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ alone – separate from works and heeding commandments /doctrines of men (see *The Celtic Church in Britian* by Leslie Hardinge, as well as *Truth Triumphant* by B.G. Wilkinson, for documentation).

"The Roman Catholics have proudly and exclusively claimed St. Patrick, and most Protestants have ignorantly or indifferently allowed their claim ... But he was no Romanist. His life and evangelical Church of the 5th century ought to be better known" (McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. VII, p. 776; article: Patrick, St.).

We hope you have been edified in knowing the truth about the real saint Patrick who kept the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.



Prophecy Unfolds

The Seven Trumpets of Revelation

CHAPTER 9

Armageddon Arrives

“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,” Revelation 9:13.

Isn't it fascinating how God links different areas of Scripture together?! The last time we saw the Golden Altar was in Revelation 8:3. God was giving extra incense to Jesus, and Jesus was burning it on that altar. Then suddenly the imagery changed. Coals from the altar were put into the Golden Censer. Those coals were then cast from the censer to the earth. That act sealed God's people and brought judgment on the wicked.

Well, that all occurred some months ago when the Trumpets began. Now a voice comes from between the four horns of that same altar. It was Jesus, the “angel,” who had been officiating at that altar. It is understood that this is His voice *responding* to the Trumpet blast of the sixth angel.

We saw the exciting issues represented by the incense, fire, smoke, censor and coals in the eighth chapter. But what do these horns mean? Here, they symbolize might, strength or stability (Deuteronomy 33:17, Zechariah 1:18-19). On that altar it personifies God's mighty intercessory power, which extends to the four corners of the earth. Divine help from the altar's horns was graphically seen in the Old Testament where protection from others

was afforded anyone who grasped them and held on (1 Kings 1:49-53, 2:28).

Something unusual is happening in this scene. There is no incense, fire or coals between those horns – just a voice!

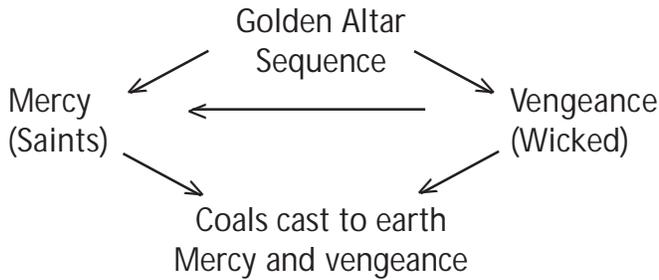
It commands action which brings judgment on the wicked. As with the coals, it becomes a blessing to the saints and a curse to evil doers. So, the altar of Intercession becomes an altar of destruction to those who rebel. This is again alluded to later when judgment comes from the altar at the time of harvest (Revelation 14:18-20).

The function of the Golden Altar “which is before God” has changed. No longer is mercy, intercession or reconciliation possible. The time of God's wrath now commences.

This is very graphic imagery when mercy ceases and probation closes. A great transition in the redemption of man occurs with this Trumpet. That makes it a woe of woes. From an altar that pled the blood of Jesus for interceding saints over millenniums now becomes the source of divine vengeance.

There is a beautiful paradox in this message. Though we see the great transition from mercy to vengeance, it is in mercy that sin and sinners will now be punished. From between the horns where the blood of the Lamb was sprinkled as an

atonement for Israel (Leviticus 4:7, 18, 25) comes the *final response* to the persecuted saints (Revelation 6:9) – “How long?” The answer is in the event.



“Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.” Revelation 9:14.

Since there are many angels that are being introduced, the little explanatory phrase, “which had the trumpet,” is inserted. Jesus orders this sixth angel to “loose the four angels.”

The way this is written in Greek suggests that these are beings that one should already be familiar with. Why, we aren't really told. Where have we previously seen a group of four angels? There are several four-angel groups in Revelation:

1. Four angels holding the four winds (7:1-3)
2. First four Trumpet angels (8:7-12)
3. First four Vial angels (16:2-9)

The angels holding the winds are “bound” from loosening them. But they are apparently located at the four corners of the earth. Here, the four are “bound” at the river Euphrates. The angels of the four winds appear to be “good” beings. Here, they are evil. Do they all relate in some way to each other?

The first four Trumpet and Vial angels do stand apart, but they are part of *seven* in a 4–2–1 grouping. The four-wind angels and river angels appear, however, to have an association. How? Throughout this amazing end-time Book, Satan is copying what Jesus does over and over. He has a *counterpart*.

In this verse it is exactly the same. God has four angels noted in 7:1, holding in check political strife and war. He contains the final assault of Satan on this earth, symbolized by his four angels, until the saints are all sealed in their foreheads. The Euphrates River represents the peoples of the world who support Babylon. It is the entire apostate earth.

“Everything in the world is in an unsettled state. The nations are angry, and great preparations for war are being made. Nation is plotting against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. The great day of God is hastening greatly. But although the nations are mustering their forces for war and bloodshed, the command to the angels is still in force, that they hold the four winds until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads.”¹

When that is accomplished God's kingdom will be made complete.

“When the third angel's message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received ‘the latter rain,’ ‘the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,’ and they are prepared for the trying hour before them. Angels are hastening to and fro in heaven. An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God.’ Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, ‘It is done;’ and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as He makes the solemn announcement: ‘He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.’ Revelation 22:11. Every case has been decided for life or death. Christ has made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The number of His subjects is made up; ‘the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven,’ is about to be given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus is to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.”²

¹Maranatha, p. 243.

There is no longer a need or reason for those four angels to hold the winds back. The great redemptive issues are closed. War and strife now come to the whole earth.

“Soon the four winds of heaven will be loosed, and in every part of the globe there will be dissension, strife, war, bloodshed. Satan is stirred with intensity from beneath.”³

The four angels of the Euphrates River represent the satanic powers that came out of the abyss in 9:1-3 but were still restrained from killing until now. They have control over the peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues of this world, symbolized by the waters of that river (Revelation 17:15).

The most treacherous power of Satan is exercised in its fury. The people and nations of the world are stirred into one deadly combat. This begins the stunning description of the physical battle of Armageddon.

Ezekiel prophesied that the god of the land of Magog would come from the “far north” and with its hordes advance against God’s people. It would be so horrible and violent that the creatures of land and sea would quake with terror and mountains would be turned upside down. Then God will turn on Gog and destroy him as He comes to rescue His people (Ezekiel 38:15–39:8). That was an early depiction of what is portrayed in the sixth Trumpet.

“The wrath of Satan increases as his time grows short, and his work of deceit and destruction reaches its culmination in the time of trouble. God’s long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation, and the Lord withdraws His protection, and leaves them to the mercy of the leader they have chosen. Satan will have power over those who have yielded themselves to his control, and he will plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole

world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.”⁴

“And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.” Revelation 9:15.

When one hears of a convict escaping from jail it creates anxiety and concern that the criminal might strike again. Now, think about the worst criminals you’ve ever heard about. Multiply that horror a thousand fold, and you begin – only begin – to get insight of what it means to loose these four angels.

These angels are not released from the abyss or bottomless pit. That already happened (9:3). There they had new freedom to create havoc, terror and fear – but they couldn’t kill. Now they can. Released from the center of humanity that supports Babylon, they demonstrate what Satan, his minions and followers will do with unbridled freedom. The Euphrates River depicts those masses who are arch enemies of God’s people, who invade the land like a flood (Isaiah 8:7-9).

Notice the words “were prepared.” Their wicked designs were in full readiness, awaiting the moment of release. It is amazing to review the expression “for an hour and a day, and a month, and a year.” This refers to one of God’s appointed times! These angels, though fully ready to execute evil, were held back until the sixth Trumpet angel was directed to release them. It is one of Scripture’s incredible expressions of divine control! Right to the very hour is the fulfillment of God’s designs and purposes. Not until that hour of that day of that month of that year would Satan be permitted to fully express his hatred and malignant character.

These four time elements are preceded by one article. They are all together to highlight a pinpoint in time. What a solemn statement of the precision God operates within! What an affirmation of the objectivity of prophecy and heaven’s wonderful designs!

²*The Great Controversy*, pp. 613-614.

³*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, p. 177.

⁴*Maranatha*, p. 275.

A sad chronicle is tied to this verse. That freedom gives permission to the demonic powers to kill one third of mankind. This occurs after probation closes and describes what will strike during the Battle of Armageddon. That is what Trumpet six is really all about.

In 7:3 the four winds had power to harm the land and sea. They were restrained till God's servants were sealed. The saints have now been sealed – a process completed during the time of the fifth Trumpet.

"The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits. There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere."⁵

"And the number of the army of the horsemen [were] two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them." Revelation 9:16

When the bottomless pit was opened (fifth Trumpet) smoke arose, and out of the smoke came locust. This verse does not reveal where the horsemen came from. The liberation of the four Euphrates angels is the apparent reason this army suddenly appears.

Here, the use of the word "horsemen" (*hippikou*) is unique in the New Testament and means cavalry or mounted troops (NIV). The imagery is one of a massive military campaign about to begin! Cavalry, in the ancient world, were feared as effective military machinery. To the east were the famed Parthians who perfected the technique of shooting arrows from their bows while their horses were galloping. Even the Romans were terrified of them. Here, the imagery is one of a bloodcurdling demonic cavalry that nothing will stop. We know that to be true. How? They will not be restrained until one third of the earth's populace are killed!

"The Spirit of God is gradually withdrawing from the world. Satan is also mustering his forces of evil, going forth 'unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world,' to gather them under his banner, to

be trained for 'the battle of that great day of God Almighty.'"⁶

What about that massive number? The words million, billion or even trillion are not used in the Bible. Large numbers are multiples of a thousand. In the Greco-Roman world "myriad" or approximately 10,000 is the highest number used.

Here, the wording literally means "two myriads of myriads" – some say 2 x 10,000 x 10,000 – thus the translated number 200,000 thousand or even 200 million.

Expositors who take prophecy literally (literalism) get into imagination trouble with this. "Where could such an army be found?" is asked. Suddenly, China or the Islamic world is discussed as being part of the prophecy. It states in distinct symbolic language that this cadre of people will come from the four corners of the earth. They would be supporters (Euphrates River) of Babylon [the papacy, apostate Protestantism and spiritualism (an expression of Satan) – the false trinity].

In Revelation 5:11 the number of angels worshiping God was "myriads of myriads." When these two words are used together they usually infer a great multitude or a number too numerous to count.

But you protest! John specifically says: "I heard the number of them." That is true, and some scholars would join you in that resistance. Most, however, in looking at that "double plural" in Biblical and extra-Biblical sources conclude that it is figurative for an innumerable host. A great cross-reference is in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 46 – LXX) where conquering soldiers associated with the river Euphrates are described as a cavalry with armor, moving like a serpent, that can't be numbered.

For those who claim this as only a literary expression, they must grapple with the declaration of John that he "heard" and in the next verse he "saw."

⁵*The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

⁶*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 983.

“And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses [were] as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone” Revelation 9:17.

John heard the cavalry number and assures us that he saw those horses and riders. Why does he so frequently preface the vision message with these personal remarks? They are powerful statements that he is an eyewitness and represents one who has a firsthand account those divine visions regarding the future.

Horses are usually associated with warfare and, more specifically in prophecy, people in battle. John said, “in my vision” and not “in the vision.” This is the only time he expresses himself this way. Because of that, many feel that this is his way of telling the reader, “What I’m about to describe I really did see in vision!”

Under the fifth vision hordes of locust were presented, representing the sudden freedom of Satan’s angels. The imagery here is very different and draws on the symbols of the first four Seals. There, the horses portrayed distinct groups of people at the end of time:

White horse – 144,000

Red horse – apostate Protestantism

Black horse – those in Babylon, waiting to be called out

Pale horse – papacy

Fascinating in those Seals are the riders. On the white and black horses it is Jesus; on the red and pale, Satan. In each, they are leading forward their respective end-time hosts.

Here, the horses collectively personify the wicked world after probation closes. The riders typify Satan’s millions of angels leading the wicked forward to the worst conflict ever seen on planet earth.

What John now describes is confusing. The grotesque description of armor that follows comes

after the mention of the riders. There is a vigorous debate over whether those images relate to the rider or the horse. Because it is not clear in the Greek, several cautious scholars have suggested it belongs to both. The functional meaning of what is about to happen should implicate both Satan and his earthly followers. The Parthian cavalry was noted for its bright armor on both horse and rider. They likely provide background for this vision.

The locust had breastplates of iron, the cavalry of “fire” (red), “jacinth” (dark blue) and “brimstone” (yellow as sulfur). Is it the color, the materials making the armor or another symbolic issue? Fire and brimstone represent the destructive force of God’s wrath (i.e., Genesis 19:24, 28, Isaiah 34:9-10, Ezekiel 38:22). As we see repeatedly in this Book, Satan always has a counterpart. The armor of his forces is like fire and brimstone. This time his wrath is against his own people. The righteous are now protected. The wicked are the only ones on whom he can now turn. Why are these symbols associated with the breastplate? Hatred and death are evil’s last defenses. They have nothing left. It is the last protection of their “heart.”

What about the “jacinth” (or hyacinth)? *Hyacinthinous* is a smoky blue color of dye (Exodus 25:4, 27:16). In Revelation 14:9-11 a most helpful textual link is given. Those who have the mark of the beast or worship the beast or its image will drink of the wine of God’s wrath. They are tormented with – and here it is – fire and brimstone. What is the outcome? The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever. Isn’t that interesting? In the third angel’s message fire, brimstone and smoke represent the finality of God’s judgments. Here, the last symbolic message on the breastplates, which protect the satanic hearts, is the color of smoke. That symbolizes the finality of his judgment against his own people – death without hope.

The horses’ heads were as lions’ heads. This means unlimited power from the “king” of the beast. Peter saw the lion as an apt symbol of the devil “walking about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). John even uses this animal to represent terror (in their rear – Revelation 10:3),

ferocity (in their teeth – 9:8) and destructiveness (in their mouth – 13:2).

The lion epitomizes another way Satan contrasts with Jesus. He was depicted by one of the 24 elders as the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Revelation 5:5). There He is seen as the king of the people who represent the 144,000, the firstfruits of that final holy body of redeemed (Revelation 14:4). Judah was positioned to the “east,” the direction that the Redeemer will approach the earth to deliver His people. Right down to the very end Satan usurps every symbol and imagery associated with Jesus as his own, including the lion.

Out of the horses’ mouths come wrath – fire, brimstone and smoke. The breastplate was the defense, the covering of the heart. The mouth initiates its action. How? We get a clue from the eleventh chapter. There, the two witnesses in “Loud Cry” imagery spew fire from their mouths, punishing their persecutors by their “prophesying” and their “testimony” (Revelation 11:5-7). Through hate-filled directives and words of vengeance, Satan’s followers stir up a spirit of war among the nations. They kill each other until another third of the world is annihilated.

“By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.” Revelation 9:18.

The pale horse under the fourth Seal symbolizes Satan’s people in their final work of murder and war. Their first victims are the saints who become martyrs, depicted in the fifth Seal. During the fifth Trumpet their death mission is restricted for several months. With the second woe or sixth Trumpet that loathsome bent reaches its pinnacle.

All eternal decisions have been irrevocably made. There is no turning back. Joy, peace and life for some or bitterness, terror and death for most lie ahead. Everyone will be rewarded one way or the other.

God’s People:

Purified – made white (Dan. 12:10)
– white horse (Rev. 7:2)
Grass – green things (Rev. 9:4)
Trees – His leaders (Rev. 9:4)
Sealed (Rev. 9:4)
144,000 (Rev. 7:1-9)
Receive protection (Rev. 9:4)

Satan’s People:

Wicked – evil (Dan. 12:10)
– pale horse (Rev. 6:8)
Grass – earth dwellers (Rev. 7:1, 8:13)
Trees – his leaders (Rev. 7:1)
Mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16)
200 million (Rev. 9:16)
Receive woes (Rev. 9-11)

That message should be impelling and lead reader and writer to galvanize their allegiance to Jesus. Have you ever stopped to wonder what that moment will be when you, your children, your spouse or a close friend suddenly, without any ceremony, realize that they are lost – or, they are saved?

The fire, smoke and brimstone are each preceded by the article “the” (*tau*). This indicates that each one is an individual element of destruction. Together this will account for the greatest catastrophic death toll in human history – one third of the world.

The Greek word *plegon* or plagues is used, referring to the fire, smoke and brimstone. They are distinct from the Seven Vials of chapters 15 and 16, though they are referred to as plagues there also (15:1, 6, 8; 16:9, 21). John sees these three destructive elements as distinct plagues but doesn’t define how they kill. To speculate on modern weaponry like helicopters, nuclear war or rockets is out of context and divine permission.

A chiasm is unveiled between verses 17 and 18. This is a prophetic tool that reinforces the messages and creates informational links.

- A from their mouths
- B proceeded
- C fire and smoke and sulfur
- D a third of humanity was killed,
- C' from the fire and smoke and sulfur
- B' which proceeded
- A' from their mouths⁷

The scene recalls Sodom and Gomorrah with their sudden and unmitigating destruction (Genesis 19:24, 28; Luke 17:29; Jude 7). In the Old Testament these plagues brought punishment to the wicked (Psalm 11:6, Isaiah 34:9-10, Ezekiel 38:22). God punishes those who have the mark of the beast similarly (Revelation 14:10-11). At the end of time Satan is permitted to have mankind, led by his evil angels, destroy each other with these plagues. At the final end, after the millennium, God once again uses these weapons when Satan, his angels and wicked humanity are destroyed (Revelation 19:20, 20:10, 21:8).

Many terrible things come from the mouth in Revelation. Three demon spirits come out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 16:13-14), representing the final deception to come on the earth from this false trinity. "Water," like a flood, pours out of the dragon's mouth against God's end-time church, represented by a persecuted women (Revelation 12:15). The mouth of the sea-beast blasphemes God, His name and tabernacle (Revelation 13:5-6).

A colloquial way of viewing this Trumpet scene is to see fire-breathing horses with lion's heads in a fierce battle. The imagery can only get worse – and it does – until we get a welcomed reprieve in chapter 10. That is a "breather" chapter, referred to as an "interlude" in the visionary theme.

"For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails [were] like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt." Revelation 9:19.

In the previous two verses power to kill came from the horses' mouths as fire, smoke and brimstone. Under the fifth Trumpet the locust had scorpion-like tails to hurt and deceive. Suddenly, John here describes these horses' power coming also from their tails. The mouth brought death. The tails bring torture and injury.

It is interesting that Jesus gave the disciples authority and power to trample on snakes and scorpions "and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19). Here, the serpent-like tails, like those of the scorpion, will be able to harm the wicked.

Later on, John will say: "The great dragon ... that old serpent" is the "Devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9; cf. 12:45-15, 20:2). Then he describes that "list" as representing a power that "deceiveth the whole world" (cf II Corinthians 11:3). That is amazing and most helpful. The serpent is seen in Scripture as deceptive (Genesis 3:1-7). Not only do these horses have snake-like tails but the snakes have heads! Just picture the tail of the snake attached to the horse and the tip of the tail is a snake's head. These horses have snakes for tails!

What does that all mean? Satan's authority and ultimate power were at the rear – hiding in its snake-like head. Viewing the lion heads, one couldn't see what the tail was like. Those snakes represent the power of deception. When the mouth spewed forth fire, smoke and brimstone to kill, it was done with no more cause than hate. Prophets that teach falsehood are like "tails" (Isaiah 10:14-15). They hide – they hate.

Daniel, in that great end-time prophecy of chapter 12, said: "The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand" (Daniel 12:10). That describes the blind destructive repulsive behavior narrated in this Trumpet.

This all began when the four angels of the Euphrates River were let loose. God's four angels holding the four winds of strife have now released them; and Satan's leaders from the Euphrates takes control, bringing political strife, war and natural disaster.

⁷Aune, David E.; *52A World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 6–16* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 540 (1998).

Expositor White reflected on this time: “As Jesus moved out of the most holy place, I heard the tinkling of the bells upon His garment; and as He left, a cloud of darkness covered the inhabitants of the earth. There was then no mediator between guilty man and an offended God. While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, *the restraint was removed and Satan had entire control of the finally impenitent.*”⁸

“The wrath of Satan increases as his time grows short, and *his work of deceit and destruction reaches its culmination in the time of trouble.* [Notice the combination of both items just as the prophecy outlines.] God’s long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation, and the Lord withdraws His protection, and *leaves them to the mercy of the leader they have chosen.* Satan will have power over those who have yielded themselves to his control, and *he will plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble.* As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. *The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.*”⁹

“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.” Revelation 9:20-21.

The use of the word “plagues,” beginning in verse 18, is new to the Trumpet story. Though it is plural, most feel this refers to the fire, smoke and brimstone of the fifth Trumpet. One third of humanity (in addition to the one third apparently killed under the first four) die. The message now relates to the survivors.

God’s permissive freedom given to Satan and his host results in destruction and death. It is very fascinating to see how inspiration defines the purpose of trials, plagues and even death in this setting. Everything that God does has a redemptive objective and vindicates His character. The freedom that Satan has been given becomes a summary judgment against him and his host. Instead of restoration and transformation, his power degrades and destroys.

In that light John notes that they “yet repented not” and “neither repented they.” Probation has closed. This does *not* imply that they could have changed. It does announce to us and the universe that in face of world devastation their hearts remained unchanged. God’s point is made. Just before He returns, the contrast is distinct, irrevocable and open. Satan’s kingdom self-destructs as it worships its own creations. God’s kingdom elevates and transforms as He is honored and revered!

Isn’t that wonderful? Can you catch even the slightest glimpse of His patience and love? For six thousand years He has been carefully working out a war plan. His strategy was so carefully laid that at the final battle the enemy willingly becomes its own adversary, fighting to the death!

“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Daniel 12:10). Jesus declares at that time: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11). The declaration at the cross once again reverberates through the universe, “It is done.”

What is God’s summation view of unchangeable evil? It is outlined here in these two verses. It is important to note that the word for “repent,” *metenoesan*, is a verb. When associated with “not” or, as here, “not even,” it presents the imagery of

⁸Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 280 (emphasis added).

⁹*Maranatha*, p. 275 (emphasis added).

tragedy! With all that has occurred, their hearts remain hardened. It echoes the amazing words of Isaiah: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Isaiah 5:4).

They failed to turn away from their idols. God gets quite specific. What is presented is a sermon from the pulpit of heaven – in fact, an altar call that they never responded to. "These are the things that kept them out of My kingdom."

"The works of their hands" summarize what follows. Paul articulated how abhorrent pagan worship was (Romans 1:18-32). Now John reveals how morally corrupt idol worship is. He equates this to the worship of devils! It is consorting with evil spirits that corrupt man (I Corinthians 10:19-21). The irony of sin ultimately shrieks truth – they worshiped the very beings that cause the destructive judgments.

What do these "gods" look like? Idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood that can't see, hear or walk (cf. Psalm 115:4-7, 135:17; Jeremiah 10:1-16; Habakkuk 2:18-19; Daniel 5:23). Though the picture of shrines and idols in temples immediately come to mind, the message is broad to include any earthly possession or attachment that takes priority over God.

This strikes against the first prohibition of the Ten Commandments. Then murder, theft and fornication are listed, another theme of those commandments. It could be contextually argued that these are a by-product of the idolatry.¹⁰ Finally, "sorceries" alludes to amulets, charms, drugs, objects which are icons to holiness, lust and witchcraft¹¹ (cf. Galatians 5:19-20; Revelation 18:23, 21:8, 22:15).¹²

¹⁰Stefanovic, Ranko; *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 313.

¹¹Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8–22 – An Exegetical Commentary*, (Moody Press, Chicago), 1992, p. 54.

¹²Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 387.



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