

The Ecumenical Movement Today

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Editorial

If in Germany's next election, a group of people who advocated the beliefs and ideals of the Nazi party were to stand as candidates, there would be many who would not like to see that group elected into office. Similarly, it would be expected that Cambodians would not wish on themselves a return to the regime of Pol Pot. The reasons for this are obvious - you only need to look back in history to see what the results of these two organizations were when they were given the power they desired. It has been said that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely!" Perhaps we can be thankful that man has shown himself to be so predictable in this sense, so that by seeing the mistakes that have been made in the past we can hopefully avoid their reoccurrence.

Certainly a desire for peace and unity is a thing to be commended rather than denounced. However, has any one really stopped and asked themselves what the repercussions of such an action as combining all denominations and faiths into one super-church would be? The advocates of this movement promise great world-wide peace and prosperity for this generation and for generations to come. Have we forgotten that prior to the commencement of World War II the public was assured the same thing with regard to Hitler?

Considering how repetitiously erring man has been in the political arena, would it not also be prudent to take a look at current religious trends in the same light? This issue of the Morning Star will be doing just that - especially with regard to the Ecumenical movement which is rapidly gaining the favor of not only the different Christian denominations, but also of non-Christian faiths and various political groups.

The world has already suffered it's own "Holocaust" because of religious domination. It was not restricted to just one city and it's inhabitants, but instead devastated the entire world - it was the dark ages. The Protestant churches, of all people, should remember that period of time. Their founding fathers gave their lives in their fight for truth during this period.

Nevertheless, it seems that the atrocities committed in the name of God have been forgotten, and as a result caution and conviction are now thrown to the wind. "What experience and history teach is this--that people and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on the principles deduced from it." G. Hegel, The Philosophy of History. Perhaps it is time we did some very quick learning! With the unification of all churches before us, let us not forget the words of Christ Himself who said, "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many that go in by it." It takes a person with a strong character indeed to face the facts of an issue, even if it means learning he has been wrong or misinformed. As we look in this issue at the history of the Church, it's beliefs and the Scriptures on which it bases it's beliefs, may we each be willing to follow what God has said, instead of just going along with popular religious thought, is our prayer.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

The policy and aims of this publication are to uphold the Bible as the living Word of God; and to present the issues dealt with in this Word as they relate to the current world situation. We are committed to Jesus Christ alone, and do not hold to any political affiliation. We do not intend to attack personally any political or religious group; but will not hesitate to expose facts that you should be aware of. We welcome any comments and criticisms you may have.

How Did The Church Change?

Have you ever wondered why there are so many different Christian churches if there was only one to start with? And why they have so many doctrinal differences if they all believe in the one Bible? Surely the Christian church wasn't meant to be like that, was it?

After the death of Christ, there was a great acceptance of Christianity in all parts of the then known world which led to the establishment of the first Christian church. It's rapid growth was largely due to the unity that those early Christians shared. Many dream for a return to that type of Christianity, but is it possible? To answer this question, we need to go back and look at the history of the church from it's beginnings - to see how change did come into the church, what it changed from, and what the church must return to.

Spreading it's Roots

As early Christianity spread to different nations, it adopted the prevailing languages of those areas. Conveniently this provides one way of tracing the influence of those churches, since quite often the same language was used by several nations. Therefore, for the sake of this article reference to Syrian Christianity refers to churches which owe their origins to Syrian origins such as Syria, Assyria, Persia, India and China. Similarly the term Celtic Christianity will refer to those churches using the Celtic language such as Galatia and France, Ireland, Scotland, and England (prior to it's overthrow by the pagan Anglo-Saxons). The importance of this will shortly be seen.

The Jews were by far the largest proportion of the early church, since the new converts lived right in the centre of the Jewish nation. As the church grew in numbers, the territory it covered also grew. "Previous to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman army, at which time the apostles were dispersed, the gospel had gone to Samaria, Ethiopia, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and India. As a bright and shining light it evangelized Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Greek philosophers, and Confucianists, laying strong foundations for the future." [1] There was something in this new sect that was different from any other religion, it would seem. The new church continued to grow.

Spreading it's Branches

Through the efforts of the apostle Paul who was a master of many languages, the church was to enter into new fields. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, the leadership of the Christian church passed on to Antioch, the capital of the Roman province of Syria and remained there some time. [2] It is interesting to note that it was in Antioch that the believers of this new faith were first labeled as 'Christians'. [3] It was as a result of this strong Syrian influence in the early church that the scriptures were first translated into Syriac shortly after the death of the apostles. [4]

After Paul had established the new Christian centre in Antioch, he also visited Galatia and a church was started from there among the large Celtic branch of the human family which eventually spread to the western rim of Europe and also Ireland. Following his work in Galatia (or Asia Minor as sometimes referred to) he moved on to Greece and founded a church at the world's intellectual centre of paganism. From there he moved to Rome (as a prisoner due to dissension caused by the Jews) [5] and although he was not responsible for the planting of the gospel seed in that part of Europe, his labors were responsible for the strengthening of the church there. Yet the church did not prosper there anywhere near as rapidly as it did in the Syrian and Celtic churches due to the strong influence of Italian heathenism [6]. With this basic understanding of the establishment of the various Christian centers, we will much better understand why we have the problems that we do today.

Apart from their heavy leaning on the scriptures, these newly founded churches would soon have died. Not only did they draw their religious beliefs from these ancient texts, but they made them the centre of their cultures. Everything from their education for their children, their industries and trades, their knowledge in practical skills such as agriculture and architecture, right down to their methods of worship and religious beliefs were all based on and enhanced by their knowledge of the scriptures. Within the next few centuries from the time of the apostles, the churches and civilizations born from the Celtic and Syrian churches reached such a high degree of civilization as to be superior in many respects to what we enjoy today, in our 'modern' society [7]. Far from leaving them poor and destitute, they became highly regarded educational centers and were also unrivalled for the standard of living which they attained. While surrounded by many and varied pagan cultures and religions, they retained the pure teachings of scripture.

A Change of Direction

The Christian church that was planted in Rome did not fare quite as well as it's Syrian and Celtic counterparts and inherited a different sort of Christianity. Mithraism, or Sun-Worship invaded the Roman Empire in 67 BC and by the middle of the third century AD seemed on the verge of becoming the universal religion [8]. Since the Jews were regarded with such a large degree of contempt by these sun-worshippers (and therefore also anything connected to the Jews such as the scriptures, methods of worship etc), and anything connected

with the Roman religion was treated with utmost respect, the temptation to blend the Christian faith with ‘the Mysteries’ of the pagan worship was succumbed to, and the holy sacraments particularly were given that title that it may be accepted more readily by those of that area who were pagan. As this line of the Christian church adopted the policy of conforming it’s methods of worship to that of

the multitude, many of the Greek scholars accepted ‘Christianity’. Unfortunately though, they retained their heathen philosophy, and as a result also brought into the church with them much of their former viewpoints and teachings. Christianity there soon became so much like Mithraism that there was only a step between them both [9].

Alexandria, of Egypt, was another centre of paganism which had it’s effect on Christianity. For two hundred years prior to the birth of Christ, the Jews that had settled there had come to blend pagan religion with their own, which developed a mode of thinking that was not entirely overcome with the introduction of Christianity [10]. The religion that emerged, Gnosticism, was a blending of pagan philosophy and gospel truths. It rejected the Old Testament, denied creation and held in contempt all Jews, even Christian Jews. “In the great Christological controversies of the fourth and following centuries, Alexandria and Antioch were always antagonists, Alexandria representing a mystical transcendentalism and promoting the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures (i.e. regarding the accounts of the Bible as being stories of fictional type); Antioch insisting on the grammatico-historical interpretation of the Scriptures (which accepts the Bible as factually complete and as it’s own interpreter), and having no sympathy with mystical modes of thought.” [11] The modified Christian religion grew nevertheless.

During the later part of the third and early part of the fourth centuries there arose in the Roman Empire a man who was to play an important role in the Christian church of that area. Constantine I (228 - 337 AD), like most of his ancestors, was strongly influenced toward the religion of Mithraism. Noting that the empire had at times been ruled by two, four, or even six Caesars jointly, and desiring to become the sole Emperor, Constantine saw that if he gained the influence of the Christians (who had suffered severe persecution by other ruling Caesars) without losing the pagans, he would be well on the way to achieving his aim [12]. Therefore, while still retaining the beliefs he had previously held, he accepted the Christian faith, and soon after his nominal conversion, ‘Christianity’ became the state religion. With Constantine at the head of this union of Church and State and it bearing little resemblance to the Christianity which was taught by the disciples, the church was well on the way to being accepted by the non thinking multitudes.

A Forceful Power

Constantine eventually died, yet his personal dream to be leader of an all inclusive empire did not die with him. The church grew in power and ambition. Not being content to subdue the citizens that were already under it’s power, it sought to take control of the entire world. The haughty pontiffs that successively took over the Church of Rome became more aspiring with regard to the degree they should rule, and less and less concerned with the scriptural base that their predecessors had denied. Above all things, they detested the Scriptures for they knew that an acceptance of these writings would eventually lead to their demise. With the sixth century marking the commencement of the Roman Church’s political ascendancy, they conferred to themselves the power to ensure the pure church’s extinction.

Papal emissaries were sent to the Celtic churches such as were in Britain and Ireland (which still retained the pure teachings of the Bible), with orders that these people were to submit themselves to the Pope, recognizing his authority over them. To say that they refused would be to understate the situation, yet it was not pride that kept them from accepting the Roman Church’s domination - it was simply that Biblical truth mattered to them [13]. The Catholic church’s response to this type of reception, however, was “If you will not receive brethren who bring you peace, you shall receive enemies who will bring you war. If you will not unite with us in showing the Saxons the way of life, you shall receive from them the stroke of death.” [14] These people, for the most part, chose the later, and their civilizations and educational centers were eventually destroyed.

“If you will not receive brethren who bring you peace, you shall receive enemies who will bring you war...” With the pure Christian church driven either into seclusion (such as the Waldenses, Albigenses, Huguenots) or totally destroyed, the dark ages commenced. The only thing that advanced during this period of time was the degree of Papal supremacy. Education was denied the average person unless employed to further the dominance of the church. The lot of the subjects of the papal kingdom was poverty, while the popes and prelates enjoyed feasts and banquets in the luxurious monasteries they built for themselves. The adoption of many un-scriptural beliefs also occurred during this period:

Doctrine	Year AD
Prayers for the dead	300
Veneration of angels and saints	375
The use of images	375
Exalting Mary as “Mother of God”	431
The doctrine of purgatory	593
Prayers directed to Mary	600
Prayers to dead saints and to angels	600

Kissing the Pope's foot	709
Worship of the cross and images	786
Holy water	850
Worship of St Joseph	890
Fasting on Fridays and during Lent	998
The mass developed, made obligatory	1075
Celibacy	1079
The Rosary	1090
The Inquisition	1184
Sale of Indulgences	1190
Transubstantiation	1215
Auricular Confession	1215
Adoration of the wafer	1220

Bible forbidden to laymen	1229
Jesuit order founded	1534
Tradition equal to Scripture	1545
Apocryphal books added to Bible	1546
Immaculate Conception of Mary	1854
Infallibility of the Pope	1870
Assumption of Mary	1950
Man proclaimed Mother of Church	1965

N.B. Some of the dates are approximate, as traditions developed gradually. [15]

Yet the Roman Church was never entirely free from the influence of the pure apostolic Christianity. While the pure church had found it necessary to retreat into the secluded Alpine regions for safety, their missionaries were sent forth into the Roman Church's domain and many became adherents of the pure faith through their efforts. However, their selfless efforts only incurred upon themselves the greater persecution from the Roman church due to the setting up of the Inquisition. As a result of the Roman Church's hatred to the pure teachings of Scripture, countless millions were tortured and killed.

Retreating Darkness

Despite the enormous opposition waged against the true church, its patience finally bore fruit with the commencement of the Protestant Reformation. With it came the gradual return to freedom; freedom of thought and belief, freedom of education, and freedom to live in a free society. This great reform movement would never have proceeded very far if it had not been for its access, once again, to the Bible; indeed, the Bible was the cause of the Reformation. The Old Testament as used by the Jews together with the New Testament was the springboard to take an oppressed world back to civilization. Yet there was a long way to be traversed before the Roman Church would lose its influence in the minds of the people.

William Tyndale (c 1494-1536) who first translated the New Testament into English. William Tyndale was among the first of the reformers to stumble across a copy of the Bible and become enraptured by it. The simplicity of the book compared to the complexities of the tradition of the church stood out in clear contrast. Realizing the value of the book, he made it his ambition to translate it into English. This dream reached its fulfillment in 1526 with the printing of 6,000 copies of the New Testament [16]. Martin Luther was another whose efforts greatly established the work of the Reformation. Although a "poor popish monk" as he called himself, through him the eyes of many were taken from the Roman Church and were redirected to the teachings of the Bible. Many others took their stand in this noble cause:

Zwingli in Switzerland, Huss and Jerome in Bohemia, Melancthon and Luther laboring in Germany, plus countless others. They did not set out to start their own denominations. Rather, they hoped to benefit the existing church through their search for truth. It was only at the instigation of persecution from the Papacy that of necessity, new churches sprang up.

The next three hundred years were to witness a fierce struggle between those who sought to restore the place of the scriptures and those who hoped to suppress it. The pages of history are written in the blood of those who died rather than compromise their faith. However, the year 1798 marked the end of its political and religious domination, which it did not regain until just over a century later. With its overthrow came new freedom to spread the word of God, and with the establishment of Bible societies such as the

British and Foreign Bible Society (in 1804) the Bible became available to people who had never had the opportunity to read it for themselves. The Protestant Reformation had almost reached the pinnacle of its achievement. One of the results of this long history of oppression was the discovery, and establishment of a new nation - America. With the memory of religious tyranny still very fresh, its founding fathers were careful to ensure the freedom of the generations to come through the drafting of their Constitution. The first 10 of the 26 amendments of the American constitution guarantee individual liberties, with the first amendment ensuring religious liberty. Thus there was a place of refuge for the churches that had suffered so much and for so long.

It is obvious that the Protestant church has changed since those times, but has the Catholic church changed? Well, it certainly seems a lot less severe than those times, but what does the Catholic church have to say about itself? "The Roman Church never erred; nor will it, according to the Scriptures, ever err." [18] And despite comments like these, the Protestant denominations are happy to ally themselves to this influential world power. Do they know what they are doing?

To be a Protestant does not mean that you have to be 'anti-' anything. The derivation of the word comes from pro-test-ari which means I speak in favor of or give witness to truth. The Protestants of the fourteenth through to the eighteenth centuries, in that sense, truly lived up to their name! How do the Protestants of today compare to the Protestants of that era? Indeed, where have all the Protestants gone?

Many people have held themselves away from the church on the basis of the amount of blood-shed and warring that has proceeded under its instigation. Perhaps by understanding that the church divided into two churches, one pure (which suffered persecution), and the other apostate (which was the persecutor), will help things to appear in a new light.

The Church Today

Almost two hundred years have passed since that time, and we still enjoy to a great degree, the freedoms which the Reformers fought and died to secure. Do we appreciate the importance of this?

Although this review of the history of the church has been greatly summarized, one thing becomes immediately apparent - there's Christianity, and then there's CHRISTIANITY. It is an easy thing to label one's self as a Christian, but Jesus Himself cautioned His followers, "...by their fruits (deeds) you shall know them." [17] However, it seems that time has dulled the recognition of the relevance of this history and of Christ's advice. We have seen how the Christian church gradually accepted the prevailing religion that co-existed with it, and how as a result it changed into a church which divorced itself from truth - so much so that while professing to represent God on earth, it actually became the greatest persecuting power this world has ever seen. This is the same power that the Ecumenical movement would have as the leader of a unified Christian church - and because of this we are now in the precarious position of having history repeat itself with very few seeming to be aware of it. Are you?

Considering this history, what could the results of the Ecumenical movement be, if its influence continues to grow? It was the move away from the Bible that commenced the change of the Christian church and now the power that was born from that departure from the Word of God is regaining its strength to achieve its final goal - unity under its complete authority. If moving away from the Scriptures was the primary cause of the long ages of oppression and tyranny, to accept anything into the church which cannot be found in the Bible, or to minimize the importance of its doctrinal teachings will certainly not make things any better. On the contrary, it will leave the door wide open for the same history to be repeated today. Let us follow the example of those who lived according to the Bible and the Bible only. This is the only way that the church will return to what it was when Christ was alive.

Footnotes

1. Truth Triumphant, BJ. Wilkinson, page 21.
2. Ibid, page 23.
3. Acts 11:26.
4. Truth Triumphant, page 26.
5. This ordeal can be read in Acts Chapter 28 and 2 Timothy.
6. Truth Triumphant, page 30.
7. Ireland & the Catholic Church, Stokes, page 242 (Cited from Truth Triumphant page 37).
8. Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th Edition, 1911, Volume 18, page 624, Art. "Mithras".
9. Facts of Faith, C. Edwardson, page 99.
10. Truth Triumphant, page 25.
11. A Manual of Church History, Newman, Volume 1, page 297. (Definitions of terminology supplied).

12. Facts of Faith, page 109.
13. The World of Bede, P.H. Blair, page 83 (Cited from 'The Battle of the Celtic Church, page 23).
14. The Battle of the Celtic Church, P. Trumper, page 25.
15. The Protestant Review (Cited from Signs of the Times).
16. History of the Protestant Reformation, Rev J. A. Wylie, Volume 3, page 359.
17. Matthew 7:20.

Altering The Unalterable

There are many laws that govern life that even a child will learn before it goes to school. For example, it learns the law of gravity as it takes it's first few steps! Also there are the laws of Physics, of Chemistry, of Biology and human health, and through learning these laws and the realm of their domain men have been able to harness energy from the sun and water, cure infectious diseases and send men into outer space, and that's to name just a few of man's achievements.

These are laws of a type which we have no control over. If you jump over a cliff you will fall, no matter how much you may wish you wouldn't. If you put your hand into fire, you will get burnt. Indeed, these laws when violated bring unfortunate and sometimes disastrous results. No one would dare to question these laws and most are sensible enough to live in harmony with them. Yet there is another set of laws which are equally unchangeable - that man unfortunately has thought to change.

The law that I am referring to is, of course, the Ten Commandments. It seems strange to me that while man is happy to live in harmony with the laws that are given by God to ensure his physical well being, he is as equally determined to undermine the laws which govern his spiritual being.

The Law: It's Nature

Governments and kingdoms and nations have risen and fallen, and with them has gone all that they worshipped and lived for. Yet the Ten Commandments have stood the test of time while other man-made laws have come and gone. To understand why this is so demands an understanding of the nature of God's law.

It is a common belief that the Ten Commandments originated at Mt Sinai when given to Moses by God, yet there is ample evidence to show that God's law was known before that - even in the Garden of Eden. Although they were not recorded as clearly as when spoken to the Israelites at Mt Sinai, the principles of that law are still found in scripture prior to that time:

- 1st Genesis 35:1-4.
- 2nd Genesis 31:19, 34, 35, 35:2-4
- 3rd Leviticus 18:3, 21, 24, 27.
- 4th Genesis 2:1-4,8:10,12, 29:27,28, Exodus 16:4, 22,23,25-30.
- 5th Genesis 9:22-25
- 6th Genesis 4:8-11, 23, 24, 9:5, 6.
- 7th Genesis 20:5-9, 38:24, 39:7-9.
- 8th Genesis 30:33, 31:19, 30, 32, 39 44:8.
- 9th Genesis 39:7-20.
- 10th Had to break this commandment before breaking 8th Commandment.

"Well", you may say, "the law must have originated at Eden." Actually, to pin point the origin of God's Law would be as hard as finding out when God began to exist. Could it be that both are likewise eternal?

By looking at the character of God and the character of His Law we begin to see how inseparable they are (the Bible repeatedly describes the Law of God and God Himself with the same terms i.e. holy [1], pure [2], righteous [3], just [4]). If they are inseparable during the short period of earth's history, they most certainly will be (and have already been) inseparable throughout the ages of eternity.

Just as each country has it's own government and it's own laws that dictate the behavior of it's citizens, so God is the supreme ruler of the Government over all of His creation, and the Law of God is the law which governs all of His created beings. Yet there is one essential difference between these two governments - man's laws are constantly changed to make up for it's deficiencies, while God's Law cannot change (and why would it need to considering it is already perfect?[5]).

The Law: It's Contents

A brief look at the Ten Commandments will quickly reveal that they are all inclusive in their scope. They are practical and most societies base them as their code of ethics. Even the Efe Pygmies of the Central African Ituri Forest have a body of moral law and practice which closely parallels that of the Law of God and which predates the coming of the Europeans to that continent. However, there is one commandment of the ten which does not immediately appeal to human reason, but which is the identifying sign of the true and living God.

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:8-11

God himself was not slow to give the reason for this law:

“And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God “Ezekiel 20:20.

From this we can clearly see that the knowledge of the true God was to be spread through faithful observance of the Commandments, especially the fourth.

The Counterfeit

With the spirit of rebellion very much alive in his heart, and having led Adam and Eve into disobedience against God, Satan set forth with the aim of setting up his own territory on earth and finally driving God's presence from the hearts and minds of the earth's inhabitants. How could he do it? The Creator had made man with an in-built desire and need to worship the true God. The answer: form a counterfeit religion that will so nearly fill man's desire that he will look no further and will turn away from God.

From this began the birth of all pagan religions. While the religion of God led to humility and total dependence upon God, the religion of Satan led to self-glorification and pride. While the true God was recognized by His followers as the “Creator of heaven and earth”, the false religions began to deify the creatures that God had made. Sun worship found its home in the ancient civilization of Babylon, and began to be an integral part of the worship of the gods in the pagan religions. Many other things in nature were idolized such as beetles, fish, eggs, bees, dragons, serpents, not to mention the endless list of conglomerate creatures that were part human and part animal. With the basic understanding of man's natural desire to worship, Satan gave them ample opportunity to do so by instigating his own day of worship. With the sun becoming almost the central figure of the worship system, it should be no surprise that the day they chose to worship it should have been called Sun-day. [6]

The Old Testament of the Bible gives many examples of the Jewish people being influenced by this false religious system [7]. However, with the birth of Christ came the one who was to once again “magnify the law and make it honorable” [8]. As the Christian church grew and was accepted, the Law of God was restored to its rightful place among Christ's followers.

Following the example of Christ, the apostles and the Christians of the first centuries of the Christian church held both the Old and New Testaments in high regard and maintained their worship of God on the Sabbath [9]. Unfortunately though this did not continue on a universal basis. With the influence of paganism still strong in the lives of the new converts to the faith, the observance of the Sun-day started to make a gradual appearance at around the beginning of the second century. Gnosticism, being a blend of pagan philosophy and the gospel, tended to reject anything connected to the Jewish faith, and as a result, less and less attention was paid to the Sabbath, and more was paid to the worship day it preferred - the Sunday.

A Ready Acceptance

This false day of worship, having found an entrance to the church, was welcomed with open arms by the Roman Emperor, Constantine. After his conversion to Christianity, he made the observance of Sunday a civil duty in the year 321 AD, and the law which commanded it is found in the Roman code. “Let all judges and people of the town rest and the trades of various kinds be suspended on the venerable day of the sun.” Up until this time Sunday and Sabbath worship had more or less shared equal footing. However, now the use of the first day of the week started to come in to its own through the vehicle of the Roman Church [10].

Although time has covered the details of this change in the Christian church, it is not for want of opportunity to return to the keeping of the true Sabbath that it has not already been done. The Catholic church has already stated, “The Pope has power to change times, to abrogate laws, and to dispense with all things, even the precepts of Christ.” [11]

God foresaw the way His Law would be received and rejected, and predicted the change in almost the same words: “And he shall speak great words against the most High and shall wear out the saints of the most High and think to change times and laws.” Daniel 7:25. The one power that fulfills this description is the Roman Catholic church. Even though the Ten Commandments appear as given by God in the Catholic version of the Bible (Douay version), new converts to their church are instructed from the Catholic Catechism which contains the abridged version of the law.

The Law of God as changed by man.
Compare to Exodus 20:1-17

1. I am the Lord thy God: thou shall not have strange gods before Me.
2. Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor thy father and thy mother.
5. Thou shall not kill.
6. Thou shall not commit adultery.
7. Thou shall not steal.
8. Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s wife.
10. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s goods.

By removing the second commandment, the Catholic church was no longer condemned for the proliferation of idols and relics which abounded in it’s institutions, and which were an integral part of the Catholic worship ceremony. Then, by splitting the tenth commandment into two, it was conveniently able to divert any immediate attention from this slight alteration, knowing full well that most would not bother to check the Commandments in the catechism against those of the Bible. Finally, by changing the fourth commandment (the third commandment for the Catholic) they thought that they could free themselves to worship on a day which God did not appoint, Sunday. (Butler’s Catechism, page 28.)

The Final Word

Jesus Himself said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:17-19. How tragic that the church should place itself in a position where it no longer has the favor of God! Yet even now God is still trying to redirect our attention to Himself as not only the Lawgiver, but as the Creator; “Fear God, and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment is come, and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Revelation 14:7.

Once again God is seeking to make the knowledge of Himself as Creator known through His Law, and especially the Sabbath. The previous verse calls this message to return to the Sabbath a part of the everlasting gospel (or, the everlasting good news). If you would like to know more about this subject, why not write to us and ask for a copy of the leaflet, “Why Not Ask God”, or for more information of fulfillment of prophecy with regard to this change of the Law of God, write for your copy of *Darkness Before Dawn* by Ellen G. White, and remember the promise of Christ, “If you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Footnotes

1. Isaiah 6:3, Romans 7:12.
2. 1 John 3:3, Psalm 19:8
3. Psalm 145:17, Psalm 119:172.
4. Acts 3:17, Deuteronomy 92:4; Romans 7:12.

5. Psalm 19:7.
6. History of the Sabbath, J. N. Andrews, Chapter = 'Origin of Sunday Worship', page 312.
7. 1 Kings 18:18, 2 Chronicles 15:2-6, Daniel 9:9-11.
8. Isaiah 42:21.
9. History of the Sabbath, J. N. Andrews, p 436-450. 10. Truth Triumphant, B. J. Wilkinson, page 268.
11. Decretal, de Translatic Episcop.
12. John 8:31-32.

The Teacher

He never taught a lesson in a classroom... He had no tools to work with, such as blackboards, maps, or charts. He used no subject outlines, kept no records, gave no grades, and His only text was ancient and well-worn. His students were the poor, the lame, the deaf, the blind, the outcast - and His method was the same with all who came to hear and learn. He opened eyes with faith, He opened ears with simple truth. And opened hearts with love, a love born of forgiveness. A gentle man, a humble man, He asked and won no honors, no gold awards of tribute to His expertise or wisdom. And yet this quiet teacher from the hills of Galilee has fed the needs, fulfilled the hopes and changed the lives of many millions. For what he taught brought heaven to earth and revealed God's heart to mankind.

If you would like to learn more about this Man, then why not download your free copy of the book, Desire of Ages. Then to learn more about the simple truths He fought we can also offer the book, Christ's Object Lessons from this website.

Predicted by a Prophet?

Peter Stoner in his book, Science Speaks, estimates that 'more than three hundred Old Testament prophecies about Jesus were fulfilled by his birth, life and death. Were these simply coincidental? He takes just eight of those three hundred predictions and discovers, using the laws of probability that the chance of those eight prophecies being fulfilled in any single person is only one in 10 to the power 17. That would be one in 100,000,000,000,000,000! And that's only eight prophecies! It would be impossible for all three hundred predictions to be fulfilled in one man by chance or by accident, or even by coincidence [1]. Since there is such a high degree of accuracy in this aspect of the Messianic Prophecies, surely it is only reasonable to conclude that other Bible prophecies are just as accurate.

Archeological investigations over many years have served time and time again to underscore the dependability of the Bible and have refuted the errors and ill-founded assumptions of more than one 'higher' Bible critic. What other volume from antiquity can be compared to it? The great principles of the Protestant Reformation are enshrined in its sacred pages; principles that meant so much to our Protestant forebears that they willingly gave their lives in the struggle against the superstitious slavery of their era. And they were willing to pay that price to win the God-ordained freedom which succeeding generations, including our own, have since enjoyed.

The apostle John was not only privileged enough to spend three and a half years with the One who was the fulfillment of so many prophecies, but was also given prophecies to communicate to God's people right through to the close of time. Writing in his book, Revelation, he was not only shown the tribulations of the Protestant Reformation, but also the satanic 'principalities and powers' ranged against God's people at the close of earth's history [2]. These opposing forces to God's church were depicted by the symbols of:

1. A dragon,
2. A beast and
3. An image to the beast.

Under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit he also foreshadowed the betrayal of those eternal principles for which our Protestant fathers died so long ago.

Where does Ecumenism fit in with it's objective of co-operation among the various churches and religions of the world? This organizational interlocking of all church divisions is to include other non-Christian religions such as Muslims and Hindus etc. Stealthily, but steadily, this movement has grown and it has now become a vast political, as well as religious force in the U.S.A. with protagonists among whom are Jerry Falwell, Tim la Haye, Pat Robertson and Chief Justice William Kehnquist, to mention some of the more politically-minded. These men are now backed by sufficient voting power to bring enormous pressure to bear upon legislators not only to achieve unity of all religious denominations and groups, but also to implement it's political policies and objectives too.

Trouble-Shooting

The central problem of Ecumenism is the question of who is going to head up the great 'world church'. The growing consensus among ecumenists is that the Pope should be the spiritual father and leader. However, one wonders how this could be achieved considering the doctrinal problems still to be overcome such as: the Catholic Church's claim of Papal infallibility; its doctrine of the Eucharist involving the mass, transubstantiation and recurring sacrifice of Christ; the priesthood with its claim to have power to forgive sins; and the Papal claim of being the head of the church on earth. This particularly conflicts with Jesus' own claim to be the Head of the church in heaven and earth. Such a claim to having ultimate and final authority would mean that the Christian would have to relinquish his personal faith in Christ.

There are other issues also such as the Roman Catholic Church's statement that where the Holy scriptures conflict with Papal tradition, tradition is to be regarded as of greater authority. Also the worship or adulation of the Virgin Mary (Mother of God, Mother of Jesus) her 'immaculate conception' and her 'assumption' into heaven similarly are not scriptural in any manner of speaking, nor is the teaching that Christians can approach Jesus Christ only through her as mediatrix. These dogmas, though borne in an era of superstitious religious beliefs and in a time when Bible knowledge was well nigh nonexistent, are still as persistently maintained and upheld, and have been re-affirmed by the Catholic Church in recent years. As if that wasn't enough, add to this list of teachings the Papal claim to be the only true church and that outside of its sphere of influence all mankind is lost.

Although many churches have made that claim, and probably out of all sincerity, when that claim is based on the teaching that the Pope is Christ's representative on earth, and is given titles such as "Holy Father" (titles that the Bible denotes as blasphemy against God [3]) and teaches that the Pope has power to forgive sins [4], one wonders how bold one can become in its assertions - especially when having nothing more to substantiate its claims than tradition! Will the Christians at the grass-roots level of their particular denomination have to turn a blind eye to these teachings because of the actions of their church's representatives in giving final homage to the Pope? No doubt the pressure will be 'on' to accept their 'brothers and sisters' of this vastly different faith.

Catholics on the other hand are taught to detest others opposed to the Catholic Church in the pledge that new members make at their induction. Even to this day, every Roman Catholic bishop when he is consecrated to his office, takes the following oath of allegiance to the Pope:

"With all my power I will persecute and make war upon all heretics, schismatics and those who rebel against our lord (i.e. the Pope) and all his successors ... so help me God and these the holy gospels of God." Pontifical Romanum Summorum Pontificum. Belgium, Mechlin, page 133.

Even the right of other churches to exist is denied by the Catholic Church, as is stated in a pamphlet entitled 'Freedom of Worship, The Catholic Position'; "...no one has a real right to accept any religion save the Catholic Church." And the surprising thing to find is the varied Protestant denomination's submission to this assertive statement:

Bishop Fred Carson (Methodist Church) on the Ecumenical leadership by the Pope: "With our differences there is a basic oneness ... we may even find a way around that." (infallibility) [5].

Dr. Albert Outler (Southern Methodist University) poured contempt on those who objected to being ruled over by someone who was not a Methodist (i.e. the Pope). He felt it was God's leading to accept Papal leadership. [6]

Dr. J. V. Langmead (Cassidy Seabury-Western Theological Seminary) "Supposing in some way we should come to a new understanding of Papal leadership. If the Holy Spirit says that church unity is through the Bishop of Rome, who are we to accuse the Spirit of bad Theology?" [7]

Dr Billy Graham, on Ecumenism, addressed a large audience at Belmont Abbey College, Charlotte, North Carolina, a Roman Catholic institution and said: "This is the beginning of something so fantastic it could change all Christendom and will affect you, your children and their children." He also referred to Pope John Paul II as "one of the greatest moral and spiritual leaders of this century, an evangelist," who "sought to speak to the spiritual hunger of our age in the same way Christians throughout the centuries have spoken to the spiritual yearning of every age - by pointing people to Christ." Speaking from the same college he said, "The gospel that built this school and the gospel that brings me here tonight is still the way to salvation." [8]

As indicated by this small selection of quotes, there seems to be a growing fascination, almost hypnotic in its force, among the various Christian groups in favor of the Ecumenical movement. And yet if the current tide of public opinion which favors the unity of all churches were to turn tomorrow, how would one know which side to take? Would God leave us without indication of what He has planned for the future? Certainly not! Looking down through time, John the Revelator was given a picture of today's political and

religious climate with a view to warning us of the dangers ahead. The language employed is symbolic, yet with a little perseverance, it's meaning becomes plain.

The Problems Foretold

In Revelation Chapter 13, verses 1 to 5, we are shown the following picture:

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

The prophecy tells of a beast which has a blasphemous name (i.e. take a name that belongs only to God), but what is meant by the term “beast” which we mentioned at the start of our article? Other prophetic portions of the Bible use the term “beast” to designate a kingdom or government (see Daniel 7:23).

“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat and great authority.” This kingdom or government (likened to a leopard) was given it's power and authority from “the dragon”. This is the second power that we mentioned.

The first introduction to this “dragon” power in the Bible is in Revelation chapter 12. Let us take a moment to define the identity of the dragon.

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

The woman mentioned here is representative of a church (see Jeremiah 6:2, Isaiah 51:16, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:22-35). The sun is Jesus and the ‘gospel’ or truths which He taught (see Psalm 84:11, John 9:5, Malachi 4:2) while the moon refers to the reflected light of the Sun (or gospel), as found in the Old Testament ceremonies and system of worship. Putting the pieces together, we have a picture of God's church enveloped in the truth of the gospel, and having the Old Testament as her foundation. Continuing in the chapter we read:

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads... and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour the child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.”

Here is our introduction to the dragon. This power is standing before the woman (the church) waiting to destroy her child. Let's examine the features of this child: it was a male, was destined to rule all nations, and was caught up to God and to His throne. Only one person fits this description and that is Christ himself. Knowing the time of his birth, therefore, will give us the time period in which the “dragon” was in operation. History and scripture both show that the ruling power of that time was the Roman Empire, and the prophecy of the dragon standing before the woman waiting to destroy the child at it's birth was fulfilled when the Roman representative ruling over the Jews ordered the death of every male child of two years and under in the town of Jesus' birth. So, by this prophecy we can determine that the dragon is the Imperial Roman Empire. With this understanding we can return to Revelation chapter 13.

We were shown in the beginning of that chapter an irreligious kingdom which received it's power and authority from the dragon. Now we shall learn some more identifying marks of this “beast”.

“And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon that gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?’ And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name.”

There is only one organization that fits the description in these portions of scripture, only one that was the successor to the Imperial Roman Empire, and that was the Church of Rome [9].

‘One of his heads’ was wounded to death, a prophecy which was fulfilled in 1798, when the French General Berthier marched his army into Rome, captured the Pope who was then thrown into prison, and died a short time later. Napoleon himself, previous to the capture of the then reigning pontiff, had issued orders that at the Pope's death “no successor should be elected to the chair of St Peter.” [10]

The overthrow of the Papacy at that time was so complete that it was considered extinct, and not one finger among all the Roman Catholic powers at that time were stirred in it's defense [11].

A Timely Warning

However, the warning of the prophecy is that the deadly wound would be healed, and with the least amount of investigation it becomes apparent that the Roman Catholic church is on the upswing - into public favor in the eyes of Christians and non-Christians alike. And just as it was 'legally' declared to be finished, so it was also 'legally' reinstated to power by the Lateran Treaty in 1929, which was agreement signed between the Church and state in Italy recognizing it once again as the state religion. And so we see the fulfillment of the following portion of chapter 13: "...all the world wondered after the beast." Despite the many centuries of oppression, both physical (as experienced by those who tried to follow the pure teachings of the Bible), and spiritual (of those who preferred superstition to persecution), many prefer to look on the Catholic Church in light of the trend of public opinion. Much public exposure of the Pope 'kissing babies and greeting old ladies' has done the Catholic church a world of good as far as acceptance is concerned and people have become content to observe the external actions of this one man instead of sizing up this superpower in it's true context.

The prophecy does not stop here by simply foretelling the re-acceptance of this forceful religious power. Many people wishfully imagine that unification of all Christian denominations (and non-Christian faiths also) will bring about the long desired utopia on earth - a world where we can bring up our children without the threat of nuclear war, bigotry and animosity that is rife in the world today. John the Revelator saw things differently:

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. And he exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed... And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causes all both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six."

Here we are introduced to the third creature - one that at first appeared gentle yet spoke as the dragon. The role of this third power is to 'cause' or make all to worship the beast, whom we have already identified. In exchange the beast gives power to the "Image of the Beast" (i.e. the Lamblike creature) and it will eventually cause those who will not pay it homage to be killed.

The decision that will need to be made by each one of us, according to the prophecy is, 'Who will we worship?' Those who submit themselves to this movement for the sake of peace, unity and love, will find themselves at variance with those who don't agree, will try to force them to unite by means of oppression and restriction of civil liberties. It will then be manifest that their 'love' is not love at all - only favoritism for those whom they are in agreement with.

Could it be that Ecumenism will soon change it's colors to become this foreboding movement, and thereby fulfill this prophecy? Dr W M Montano, a former editor of Christian Heritage and a former Roman Catholic, said of those who hope for a union with the Roman Catholic Church: "These are foolish men who choose to walk in darkness. They cannot see the right path because they have chosen to walk in darkness. They cannot see the right path because they have chosen to be blind to the evils of the Roman Church, both past and present. Both of these concepts - the desire for a Protestant 'super-church' and the desire for union with the Vatican - are the very antithesis of Protestantism and will destroy the very thing that gave life to the Reformation ... only a militant Protestantism can save America and the world." Louis Veuillot, the French Roman Catholic writer said to a group of Protestants: "When you are in majority we ask for religious liberty in the name of your principles. When we are in a majority we refuse it to you in the name of ours." It has been said that "Rome in the minority is a lamb. Rome as an equal is a fox. Rome in the majority is a tiger." Perhaps 'leopard' should replace 'tiger' to harmonize with Revelation 13!

The first victims to fall under the persecution of the Catholic Church were the Protestants during the Inquisition of the dark ages. Now it's last obstacle is about to fall - the spirit of the Protestant Reformation. Soon it's long anticipated ambition to become the *katholikos* (Greek - universal) church will be realized or will it?

The Coming Storm

William Manchester writes about a hurricane of immense proportions that struck the East Coast of the USA on September 21, 1938. He says: "the great wall of brine struck the beach between Babylon (New York) and Patchogue at 2.30 pm. So mighty was the power of that first storm wave that it's impact registered on a seismograph in Sika, Alaska, while the spray, carried northward at well over a hundred miles an hour, whitened windows in Montpelier, Vermont.

As the torrential forty-foot wave approached, some Long Islanders jumped into cars and raced inland. No one knows precisely how many lost that race for their lives, but the winners later estimated that they had to keep the speedometer over 50 miles per hour all the way.”

Hurricanes are by no means unusual, yet this one stands out because the meteorologists – the people who should have known what was coming - either ignored or refused to believe the evidence of their instruments. And the general public was also blind to the onrushing disaster.

W Manchester continues, “Among the striking stories which later came to light, was the experience of a Long Islander who had bought a barometer a few days earlier in a New York store. It arrived in the morning post, September 21, and to his annoyance the needle pointed to below 28, where the dial read, ‘Hurricanes and Tornadoes’. He shook it and banged it against a wall; the needle wouldn’t budge. Indignant, he repacked it, drove to the Post office and mailed it back. While he was gone his house blew away!”
[12]

The prophet John leaves no doubt concerning the approaching storm and what will happen to the beast in the end - despite it’s aim for ultimate control through whatever means it may, be it religious or political. In the light of fulfilling prophecy and the Papacy’s self-assertive claims, can we give such an organization our support? What would the price of such action be the sacrifice of all those dearly won liberties of the Reformation, freedom to worship God according to conscience and the Word of God, to cherish the Bible as the rule of our faith, to be free and remain free moral agents.

Ultimately the decision will come down to each one of us. If you are interested in learning more of the prophecies that God has given to warn us of events to soon take place, I would recommend the book, *The Great Controversy*, and that you read about these prophecies that were written almost 2,000 years ago.

Footnotes

1. Science Speaks, Peter Stoner.
2. Romans 8:38.
3. II Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 7-11, Matthew 23:9, John 10:33.
4. Luke 5:21.
5. Quote from ‘The Ecumenical Mirage’, C Stanley Lowell, page 15.
6. Ibid, page 17.
7. Ibid, page 17.
8. Ibid, page 21. *The Rock*, August 1987, Volume 43, Number 7.
9. *History of the Roman Empire*, Seignobos, page 460.
10. *History of Europe*, Ch.25 par.72, (Cited from *The Source Book*, page 366.)
11. *Rome & Its Papal Rulers*, by Reverend G Trevor, page 440, (Cited from *The Source Book*, page 367).