



The Paths We Take

**An Historical Review
of the Protestant Reformation
and its Relevance
to the Modern Day Ecclesia**

By Arthur Sankey

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls”

Jeremiah 6:16

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***"Those who don't know history are
destined to repeat it."***

Edmund Burke

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~ Preface ~

This interesting historical study compiled by Bro. Art Sankey traces Protestantism's struggle to come out from under the heavy hand of the Papacy during the Protestant Reformation. That is the subject of the book being reviewed, *The Story of Christianity*, by Justo Gonzalez.

This review is about religious conflict, which for Christadelphians is defined early in Scripture by the antagonists of Genesis 3:15: "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" The players, as defined in this verse, are either of the seed of the serpent or are numbered amongst the seed of the women. This makes them either contentious or contenders or both, depending upon which side of the issue they are on and if they are wielding the Sword of the Lord in defense of Yahweh's truths. No one escapes the conflict. *No one*. Most people do not like conflict and go to great lengths to avoid it, especially in this age of human rights. Scripturally, however, we are told to contend for the Truth, if necessary even unto death (Jude 1:3).

The two witnesses of Revelation 11 represent the religious and political contingencies who opposed the apostate "God of the Earth" or the Roman Catholic System, and who, as secular reformers, contended during the 1,260 years ending with the French Revolution (Rev. 11:13); and during those many years endured the serpent casting "*out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood*" (Rev. 12:15).

It is an observable fact that history tends to recycle and repeat itself because, after all, history is about the exploits of man of which “all is vanity”. We now live “in the days of Noah” and of “just Lot”.

Reflecting upon our day, Bro. Sankey raises some very real concerns about the direction in which Christadelphia is headed. In this age of Laodicea to contend over such scriptural issues as mixed fellowship, contemporary prophecy, doctrinal twists on salvation, moral issues and disruptive rebellion within our Ecclesia’s is seen by some as contenting for the Faith, yet the outcome is potentially devastating to Ecclesias and to the Brotherhood. This work is a valuable read with an eye on our own end time: “*when the Son of man cometh, shall He find (the) faith on the earth?*”

Don Northey



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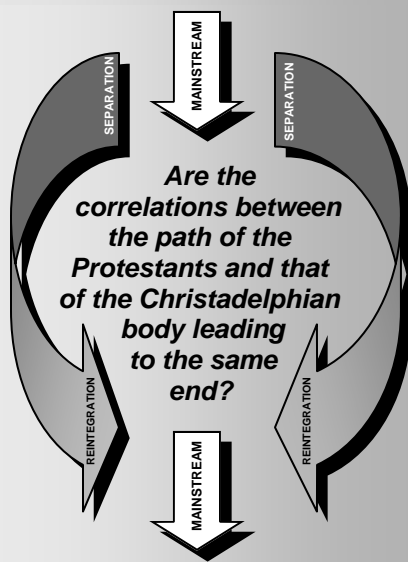
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~ Introduction ~
**"Those who don't know history are
destined to repeat it."**
Edmund Burke

This well known quote from Edmund Burke is a very appropriate theme for the subject of religious history in relation to the modern day Ecclesia. It brings before us a practical exhortation as well as a warning with regards to the paths we take as a community trying to maintain the doctrinal purity and standards of conduct of the first century Ecclesia.

Our study will consist of an overview of the time period ranging from the Protestant Reformation to the present. We will briefly consider the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of these early reformers, while tracing the changes that subsequently occurred within Christianity over the course of 400 years. Our intention is to seek to learn from the mistakes of these various groups who at one time had at least a portion of the Truth, but have now relinquished it entirely. The admonition that we hope to convey to the present body of Christadelphians is that we not follow in these footsteps of apostasy, but rather hold fast to the Truth that has been handed down to us from the Word of Yahweh. Throughout this study we will seek to highlight some of the more obvious points and correlations between the path of the Protestants and that of the Christadelphian body. Certainly there will be similarities that the reader will recognize, though not specifically addressed. In any case, we have personally found the similarity in paths to be striking, and very much a warning and admonition; for if one does not identify the enemy (in this case, doctrinal and moral decline), his chance of withstanding and overcoming that enemy is limited. As will be evident, much of the historic research for this effort has been derived from a book entitled, *The Story of Christianity*, by Justo Gonzalez, which will be referenced at length.



The Impetus for Reformation

From *The Story of Christianity* we quote:

“As the fifteenth century came to a close, it was clear that the Catholic Church was in need of profound reformation, and that many longed for it. The decline and corruption of the Papacy was well-known. While most people still believed in the supreme authority of the Roman See [Pope], many found it difficult to reconcile their faith in the Papacy with their distrust for its actual occupants.”

As is usually the case in any organization and as is witnessed throughout the Scriptures in regard to Israel, the beliefs and actions of those in a leadership position have a profound effect upon their followers, who will usually mimic their leaders beliefs and actions. This was no different within the Catholic Church in that the corrupt leadership set the tone for most of the lesser clergy. For instance, Pope Alexander VI (1431-1503) was known for embracing the most vile immoral acts within the walls of the Vatican and for having fathered a child by his illegitimate daughter, Lucrezia Borgia.

The Papacy was also well known for nepotism during the 15th and early 16th century. Sixtus IV (1471-1484), for example, appointed six nephews and grandnephews to the College of Cardinals, and he appointed an eight-year old boy as Archbishop of Lisbon. Leo X (the Pope that excommunicated Martin Luther), appointed six cousins and nephews as cardinals. The aforementioned Alexander VI (1492-1503) actually appointed his illegitimate son (Cesare Borgia) to the College of Cardinals. This poor moral example extended downward to the Clergy. By the 16th century, the lax discipline in many monasteries and nunneries in Europe had reached almost epidemic proportions. Gluttony, sexual excess, greed, and other vices were common in many religious houses to the point where monks and nuns in many areas became targets of either hatred or derision from local townspeople.

Continuing with *The Story of Christianity*:

“As a result, the religious conscience of Europe was divided within itself, torn between trust in a Church that had been its spiritual mother for generations, and the failures of that Church. Some among

*the more thoughtful Christians were becoming convinced that the teachings of the Church had also gone astray. From such [beliefs] came the conviction that it was necessary to return to the sources of Christian faith, and that this would result in a reformation of existing doctrine and practice. [This belief] confirmed their basic tenet: that it was necessary to return to the sources of Christianity, particularly through the **study of Scripture**. ”*

In addition to the moral and doctrinal issues that were being questioned, the poor began questioning the excessive wealth that was being compiled by the Church, as well as their continued subversion and oppression by those in power. They resented that the Church had betrayed them by casting her attention upon those who could give her the power and prestige that she craved, the wealthy land-owners and higher classes of society.



Sixtus IV (1471-1484)

According to statistics compiled from the book *Christian History*, in 1502

the Catholic Church held 75% of the currency in France, and in 1522 they controlled 50% of the wealth of Germany. In this same time period, the Church owned more than 50% of the real estate in Scotland. Therefore, as stated in *The Story of Christianity*:

“[The Church’s] support of increasing inequality was seen as a betrayal of the poor, and eventually as a sign that the Antichrist had gained possession of the Church. The ferment brewing in such quarters periodically broke out in peasant revolts and calls for a new order.”

A main source of this wealth was derived from the sale of Indul-



***“As soon as the coin in the coffer rings,
the soul from purgatory springs.”***

gences, which was the most notorious form of excess of the Roman Catholic Church during the period of the Reformation. Though the practice did not originate this way, beginning in the mid-1400s, indulgences were defined as the remission of sin granted by the Church for monetary payment. The wealth gained from these sales was typically used to finance wars or to finish the Sistine Chapel. Of course, the idea of selling “*a remission of worldly punishment due to sin*” for a price is a concept ripe for abuse. In 1476, Pope Sixtus IV declared that indulgences could be applied to people in purgatory, prompting peasants to begin purchasing them with the belief that they could buy their loved one’s salvation.



As with all sin and folly this corruption led to more corruption as demonstrated by the fact that, in 1517, Pope Leo X announced that indulgences bought during this period were not just for sins already committed, but also could be purchased for sins *not yet committed*. The riches gained from these sales were then used to finance the construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, of which Paul, in describing the Man of Sin in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, writes, *"who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God [St. Peter's], showing himself that he is God."*

One of the primary perpetrators of this practice of selling indulgences was Johann Tetzel, who has been described as a "medieval P.T. Barnum", in that he sold indulgences for Pope Leo X in Germany from a push cart, while proclaiming, *"As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."*

He and his preachers were also heard announcing that the indulgence that they sold made the sinner *"cleaner than when coming out of baptism,"* and *"cleaner than Adam before the Fall,"* and that *"the cross of the seller of indulgences has as much power as the cross of Christ."* It was Tetzel's irreverent sale of indulgences which eventually led Martin Luther to tack his Ninety-five Theses on the door of Wittenberg Castle in 1517.



Leading Figures of the Reformation and Their Beliefs

The intention of this section is not to applaud the beliefs or lifestyles of those Reformers to be considered, but to demonstrate their understanding of the errors of the Catholic System and the need to distance themselves and their followers from it. It must be remembered that, though many of the Reformers' beliefs were indeed correct, there were many beliefs held by them that were false. The accompanying charts on pages 48, 60, and 61 are an effort to track the movement of the Protestant system in comparison to Catholicism, and then to compare the history of Protestantism with current trends within the Christadelphian body.

John Wycliffe (1320-1384)

In 1370 at Oxford University, John Wycliffe stirred up controversy in teaching the freedom of religious conscience of the individual believer who stood in faith directly before God, which of course was in opposition to the Catholic belief that God could only be approached through a Catholic ordained priest who acted as a mediator. Wycliffe attacked a multitude of practices and features of the Church, especially its wealth. His followers, contemptuously called “Lollards,” from a Dutch word

***Wycliffe taught freedom of
religious conscience***

meaning “mumblers” (in that they opposed, or “mumbled” against the Church), preached reform throughout England.



Wycliffe also repudiated the doctrine of transubstantiation (the Catholic doctrine that the bread and wine at communion changes into the actual body and blood of Christ), held that the Bible was the sole standard of Christian doctrine, and argued that the authority of the Pope was not well-grounded in Scripture. Some of Wycliffe's early followers translated the Bible into English, held that the Bible was the sole authority, and that Christians

were called upon to interpret the Bible for themselves rather than having it interpreted for them by Papists. The Lollards also argued against clerical celibacy, mandatory oral confession, pilgrimages, and indulgences. Wycliffe's Lollard movement was eventually suppressed, but its beliefs and teachings continued to be manifested in other communities that began to question the scriptural validity of what the Catholic Church was teaching.

In summary, Wycliffe and his followers attacked what they determined to be corruptions within the Church, including:

- The sale of indulgences
- Pilgrimages
- The veneration of "saints"
- The low moral and intellectual standards of ordained priests

Jan (John) Hus (1369-1415)

Hus was a strong follower of John Wycliffe and therefore adopted many of his ideas, such as:

- Christ, not the Pope, is head of the Church, and the Church is not limited to Catholicism
- The Bible is the ultimate spiritual authority (contrasting Catholic teachings of papal tradition)
- Protesting lax practices of Clergy
- The Church should have no worldly goods
- Questioning transubstantiation

Hus was burned at the stake on July 6, 1415, by the Roman Catholics

Hus also held other views that would later be adopted by Reformers such as John Knox, Martin Luther, and Ulrich Zwingli, such as:

- Questioning the existence of Purgatory
- Rejecting confession, worship of images, and elaborate religious rites
- Condemning the taking of fees by priests for baptism, marriage, burials, and masses



Like Wycliffe, Hus's greatest legacy was probably his influence on later reformers. Some Christian historians would argue that the Moravian Church which Hus founded, and not the Lutheran or Reformed Church, was the first Protestant denomination (100 years before Luther tacked his Ninety-five theses on the door of Wittenburg Castle).

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)

Zwingli was a Swiss theologian and a leader of early Reformation movements in Switzerland. In 1518, he displayed zealous outrage against what he determined to be, *"the superstition that passed for Christianity, the exploitation of the people by the leaders of the Catholic Church, and against mercenary service."* When a peddler of indulgences arrived in Zurich, he convinced government officials to have him expelled. His main goal, so far as he was concerned, was to restore Biblical faith and practice, as he had determined that the Catholic System was in error and void of the true faith, and Zwingli went so far as to ban the use of organs in Church, because he could find no support of their use in Scripture. His efforts met with a harsh response from the Catholic Church, and in 1531, five



Catholic armies launched a surprise attack on Zurich, and Zwingli died fighting in battle. Some of his beliefs included:

- The Bible was the sole source of moral authority
- Priestly celibacy was not scriptural
- Everything in the Roman Catholic system not specifically prescribed in the Scriptures should be eliminated
- Catholic Priests do not have the ability to forgive sins:
"God alone forgives sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord alone."
- Identified the Pope as the Antichrist, as shown in such proclamations as:
"The power of the Pope and the Bishops has no foundation in the Holy Scriptures and the doctrine of Christ."
- Purgatory was a false belief
"The Holy Scripture knows nothing of a purgatory after this life."
- Vigorously opposed the sale of indulgences

Under Zwingli's leadership:

- Religious relics were burned
- Ceremonial processions and the adoration of the saints were abolished
- Priests and monks were released from their vows of celibacy
- The Mass was replaced by a simpler and less elaborate communion service

Martin Luther (1483 - 1546)

Born a peasant in Germany in 1483, Martin Luther joined the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt in 1505 at the age of 22, and was then sent to the University of Wittenberg to teach Scripture. Having been forced to prepare lectures on the Bible, Luther began seeing meanings in it contrary to that which he was taught previously in his Catholic learning structure. He also came to a belief and understanding of “pre-determination” from his study of the book of Romans that was in stark contrast to those teachings of Catholicism, and began a rift that would ultimately lead to the rise of Protestantism and its complete separation from the Catholic Church.

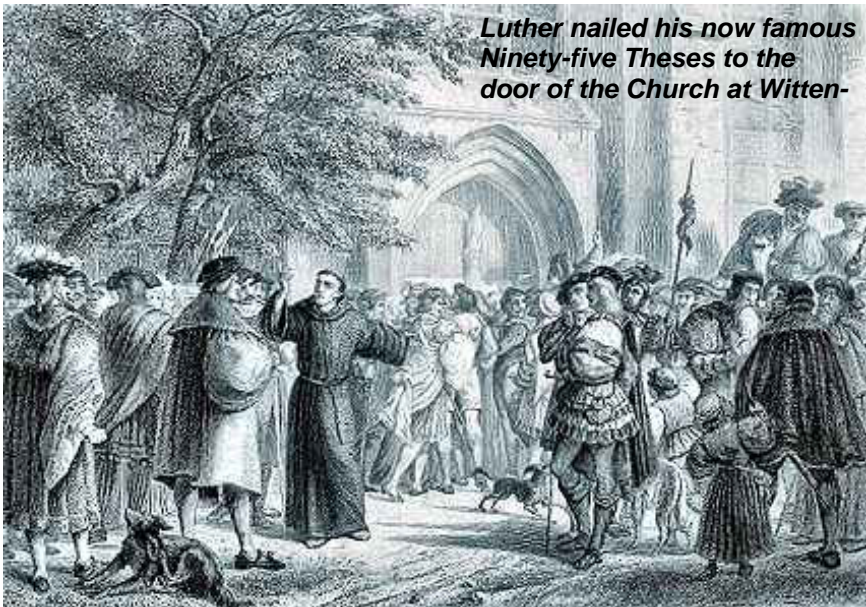
As a result of his new understanding, Luther became convinced that he must challenge traditional views. His work, known as “Luther’s Ninety-five Theses,” attacked the sale of indulgences and its theological presumptions. This was at the time when Pope Leo X had authorized a great sale of indulgences in an effort to finish the building of St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome. The sale of indulgences by the afore mentioned Tetzel aroused the indignation of many, including Luther, as they believed that Tetzel and his preachers were misrepresenting the doctrines of the Church. According to Luther, *“If it is true that the Pope is able to free souls from purgatory, he ought to use that power, not for trivial reasons as the building of a Church, but simply out of love, and do so freely”* (Thesis 82). “In truth,” said Luther, *“the Pope should give his money to the poor from whom the sellers of indulgences wring their last coins, and he ought to do this even if it were to require selling the Basilica of Saint Peter”* (Thesis 51). He became so indignant of the abuses of the Church of Rome with its false teachings



and its sale of indulgences, that he finally broke from the Church on the question of its authority and nailed his now famous Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Church at Wittenburg.

Luther was duly condemned by the Catholic Church and labeled a heretic, in that the Church's actions were not to be questioned, and Pope Leo X described Luther as a wild bore who had entered the Lord's vineyard. As was the norm for the Catholic System, it was ordered that all books by Luther be burned, and Luther, under the penalty of excommunication, was given 60 days to submit to Roman authority. However, throughout Germany and even beyond its borders, there were increasing numbers who saw Luther as the champion of Biblical faith, and supporters of Luther began to burn the works of his opponents in defiance to the papal decree.

When Pope Leo's declaration finally reached Luther, he burned it publicly, together with other books that he declared to be proponents of "popish doctrine." The breach was final at this point, and the Protestant Reformation had officially begun in force. Luther was then taken before the Emperor and the Diet of Worms in 1521 (an assembly of rulers in the Holy Roman Empire), with his opposition demanding a recant of his actions, beliefs, and publications. To the demand, "*Do you recant, or do you not?*", Luther responded, "*My conscience is a prisoner of God's Word. I cannot and will not recant, for to disobey one's conscience is*



**Luther nailed his now famous
Ninety-five Theses to the
door of the Church at Witten-**

neither just nor safe. God help me. Amen."

Luther's most notable beliefs included:

- Condemnation of the Sale of Indulgences
- The Bible exceeded the authority of the Catholic Church, the Pope, and tradition.
- Baptism and faith are closely related, so that baptism without faith is invalid. However, he still believed the error of infant baptism, with the notion that they would eventually gain the faith that would make the baptism valid.
- Disagreed with the doctrine of "transubstantiation"
- Identified the Pope as the Antichrist
- Refuted the Catholic contention that the Bible did not contain the *entire* Word of God, but that the apostles communicated some things in writing and others verbally. This had led the way for the Church to claim that tradition, as well as the Pope's decisions, were infallible and just as pertinent as the Scripture.

As could be expected, the papal response against the teachings of Luther was harsh. The Edict of Worms proclaimed, "*Luther is now to be seen as a convicted heretic. No one should give him shelter. His followers are to be condemned, and his books will be erased from human memory.*" This prompted Luther and his followers to take the name "Protestants", in that they presented a formal "protest" to the authority of Rome, stating that everyone must "*stand and give account before God for himself.*" From this, it can be easily understood that the root of the word "Protestant" is derived from the concept of "to take a stand." From this point forward, the "*Lutheran*" movement began spreading across north Germany, would soon overtake Scandinavia, and eventually spread to all parts of Europe and ultimately the globe.

The main instrument by which these Protestant beliefs were spread like a fire throughout England and Europe was Gutenberg's printing press. Through this medium the Bible finally became available to the common person, whereas it had previously been a very bulky book, chained to the pulpit, written in a foreign language, and available only to the clergy. Thus the ties which had bound the people to Rome had now been severed, and the doctrines of the Protestant faith had become that of the common populace.



Anabaptist Movement

The “Re-baptizers”

According to *The Story of Christianity*,

“Both Luther and Zwingli were convinced that, in the course of centuries, Christianity had ceased to be what it was in the New Testament. Luther sought to cleanse it from all that contradicted Scripture. Zwingli went farther, holding that only that which had scriptural foundation should be believed and practiced. But soon there were others who pointed out that Zwingli did not carry such ideas to their logical conclusion. According to these critics, Zwingli and Luther forgot that, in the New Testament, there is a marked contrast between the Church and society around it. Therefore, the compromise between Church and State that took place as a result of Constantine’s conversion was in itself a betrayal of primitive Christianity. In order to be truly obedient to Scripture, the reformation begun by Luther must go much farther than was allowed by the Reformer. The Church must not be confused with the rest of society.”

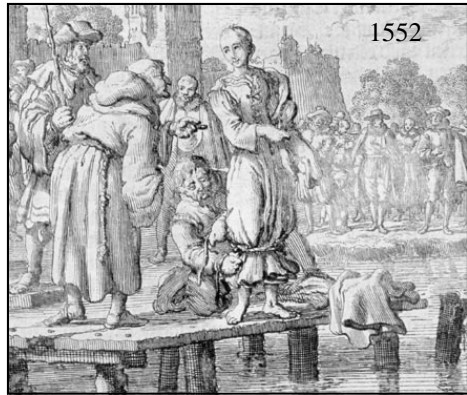
Thus began the Anabaptist Movement. The word *Anabaptist* was taken from the Greek words “*ana + baptizo*,” meaning, “re-baptizers”. The term was coined by their critics, who objected to their practice of performing baptism for adults whose previous baptism, as infants, the Anabaptists had determined to be invalid. The Anabaptists believed, based on their understanding of the Scriptures, that “*infant baptism must be rejected, for it takes for granted that one becomes a Christian by being born in a supposedly Christian society. This obscures the need for a personal decision that stands at the very heart of the Christian faith.*” Though their opponents called them, “re-baptizers,” the Anabaptists did not consider themselves practicing “re-baptism” in that they did not recognize infant baptism as properly administered the first time. This view on infant baptism is summarized in the following quote from their statement of beliefs:

“All other so-called Christians have, yet without true foundation, this in common that they baptize infants; while with us the baptism only which is accompanied by faith and a penitent life, according to the word of God, is administered to adults...”

Unlike Luther and Zwingli before them, the Anabaptists held to the belief that pacifism is an essential element to Christianity, that the Sermon on the Mount must be obeyed literally, and any who object that

this is impossible simply show their lack of faith. Furthermore, they believed that Christians should not take up arms to defend themselves, nor to defend their country, even if threatened. In fact, the original believers in this movement sought to convince Zwingli to take the necessary, more radical steps of separation, but upon recognizing that he would not do so, they broke from him and began their own congregation practicing adult immersion in conformity with the New Testament teachings.

The Anabaptists believed that they were part of an apostolic succession of churches from the time of Christ. According to this belief, there had been a continuity of small groups outside the Roman Catholic Church from A.D. 30 to 1525 (which we believe continues to the present, as Christadelphians), and they supported this belief by citing the many common expressions of belief in those who dissented from the Catholic faith over the course of time. The Anabaptists are of Waldensian origin, who are also mentioned by Dr. John Thomas in *Eureka* as the predecessors to the Donatists and then the Novatians.

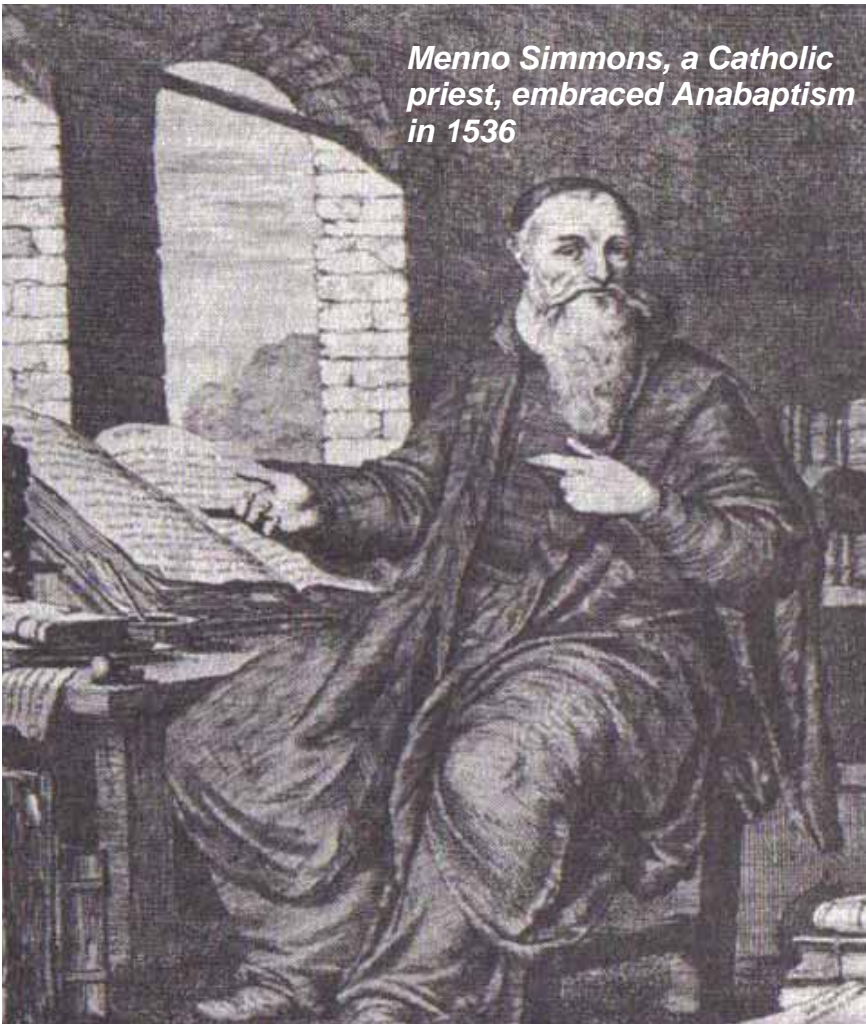


The Story of Christianity states the following regarding the Anabaptist movement:

“[They] drew great opposition from the Catholics as well as other Protestants. They were persecuted because they were considered subversive. Their extreme pacifism was unacceptable to those in charge of maintaining social and political order, particularly amid the upheavals of the 16th century. By insisting on the contrast between the Church and civil society, the Anabaptists implied that the structures of power of that society should not be transferred into the Church, and that the Church was a voluntary community, totally distinct from the civil community. All this (was considered) highly subversive, and therefore Anabaptists had to face severe persecution. In 1525, the Catholic areas of Switzerland began condemning them to death, and the following year, the Council of Governments of Zurich followed suit. In a few months, persecution spread to the rest of Switzerland. In

1528, Charles V ordered that they be put to death on the basis of an ancient Roman law (the Code of Justinian in 529 AD), [originally] directed against the Donatists, that established the death penalty for all guilty of re-baptizing.

“The martyrs were many—probably more than those who died during the three centuries of persecution before the time of Constantine. The manner of their death varied from region to region, and even from case to case. With ironic cruelty, many were drowned. Others were burned to death, as had become customary with heretics centuries earlier. Some were tortured to death, or drawn and quartered. The stories of heroism in such difficult circumstances would



Menno Simmons, a Catholic priest, embraced Anabaptism in 1536

fill several volumes. And still, the more fiercely it was persecuted, the more the movement grew.”

One historian of that time period writes the following in regard to this group:

“They are far readier than followers of Luther and Zwingli to meet death, and bear the harshest tortures for their faith. For they run to suffer punishments, no matter how horrible, as if to a banquet; so that if you take that as a test either of the truth of doctrine or of their certitude of grace, you would easily conclude that in no other sect is to be found a faith so true or grace so certain.”

The principal figure of the movement was Menno Simmons (left), a Dutch Catholic priest who embraced Anabaptism in 1536. He joined a Dutch Anabaptist fellowship, and eventually his followers came to be called “Mennonites.” In addition to those referred to previously, more of their principal beliefs included:

- Christians ought not offer any oaths whatsoever, and they should not occupy positions requiring them to do so.
- Christians should obey civil authority, as long as what is required is not contrary to Scripture.
- Christians should not engage in military service.

The following statements are taken from the Anabaptist’s Third Confession of Dort (1632):

Of the Fall of Man: *“...Adam and Eve...became disobedient to their Creator; through which disobedience sin has come to the world, and death by sin, which has thus passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, and, hence, brought upon themselves the wrath of God, and condemnation...”*

Of the Coming of Christ into this World, and the Purpose for Which He Came: *“...the Son of God died, and tasted death and shed His precious blood for all men; and that he thereby bruised the serpent’s head, destroyed the works of the devil and obtained forgiveness for all mankind; thus becoming the cause of eternal salvation for all those who, from Adam unto the end of the world, each in his own time, believe in, and obey Him.”*

The Law of Christ, i.e. The Holy Gospel or The New Testament: *“...before his ascension He instituted His New Testament...and left it to His disciples...that neither angel nor man may alter it, nor add to it nor take away from it.”*

Of Repentance and Reformation of Life: *“...since the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and, therefore, prone to all unrighteousness, sin, and wickedness, the first lesson of the precious New Testament of the Son of God is repentance and reformation of life...”*

Of the Church of Christ: *“We believe in, and confess a visible Church of God, namely, those who truly repent and believe, and are rightly baptized...”*

Of the Washing of the Saint's Feet: *“...We also confess a washing of the saint's feet...as a sign of true humility.”*

Of Revenge: *“...we must not inflict pain, harm or sorrow upon anyone, but seek the highest welfare and salvation of all men...and when we are smitten, rather turn the other cheek also, than take revenge or retaliate.”*

Of the Swearing of Oaths: *“...we understand that all oaths, high and low, are forbidden...”*

Of the Ecclesiastical Ban, or Separation from the Church: *“We confess, a ban, separation, and Christian correction in the Church, for amendment, and not for destruction...”*

Of Shunning the Separated: *“...we believe and confess, that if anyone, either through his wicked life or perverted doctrine, has so far fallen that he is separated from God...the same must, according to the doctrine of Christ and His apostles, be shunned without distinction, by all the fellow members of the Church...”*

Of the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Last Judgment: *“[We believe that] in the last day all men who shall have died, and fallen asleep, shall be wakened and quickened, and shall rise again through the incomprehensible power of God...”*

These cited quotes demonstrated beliefs that were the obvious result of the diligent study of Scripture. Today the descendants of the 16th century European movement (particularly the Amish & Mennonites) are the most common bodies referred to as Anabaptist. Yet other bodies (such as the early English Baptists) were also referred to by their enemies as Anabaptists, and are clearly Anabaptists in the generally accepted sense of the term.



John Calvin (1508 – 1564)



Though born into the Catholic faith, John Calvin came to the conclusion through the study of Scripture that he must leave the Roman communion and follow the route of Protestantism, later writing, *“I was stubbornly tied to the superstitions of the Papacy.”*

Taking essentially the same position as Luther, Calvin began to assemble Protestant scholars and teachers who would take the movement back to their home provinces. During the second half of the 1500s, his *“Reformed”* movement was well planted in the towns and cities of England, Scotland, Netherlands, France, Western Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, and even parts of Poland and Spain (where it later was eradicated by the Catholic Counter-Reformation).

According to *The Story of Christianity*, Calvin *“argued that Constantine’s Council of Nicea, in promulgating the doctrine of the Trinity, had offended God.”* The following are excerpts from Calvin’s Confession of Faith in 1536:

- *“First we affirm that we desire to follow Scripture alone as the rule of faith and religion, without mixing with it any other thing which might be devised by the opinion of men apart from the Word of God.”*
- *““..We think it an abomination to put our confidence or hope in any created thing, to worship anything else than (God),*

whether angels or any other creatures, and to recognize any other Saviour of our souls than him alone, whether saints or men living upon earth.”

- *“...We confess all our life ought to be ruled in accordance with the commandments of his holy law in which is contained all perfection of justice.”*
- *“We acknowledge man by nature to be blind, darkened in understanding, and full of corruption and perversity of heart, so that of himself he has no power to be able to comprehend the true knowledge of God as is proper, nor to apply himself to good works.”*
- *“...It is Jesus Christ who is given to us by the Father, in order that in him we should recover all of which in ourselves we are deficient.”*
- *“...That being in our own nature enemies of God, and subjects of his wrath and judgment, we are reconciled with him and received again in grace through the intercession of Jesus Christ, so that by His righteousness and guiltlessness we have remission of sins, and by the shedding of his blood we are cleansed and purified from all our stains.”*

As part of their beliefs, the following was determined to be inappropriate, and was banned:

- “Dancing, singing, pictures, statues, relics, Church bells, organs, altar candles, ‘indecent or irreligious’ songs, staging or attending theatrical plays, wearing rouge, jewelry, lace, ‘immodest’ dress, swearing, gambling, playing cards, hunting, drunkenness, naming children after anyone other than figures in the Old Testament, ‘immoral or irreligious’ books.”

Calvin met his death when he was captured by Catholic sympathizers and thirty-eight accusations were levied against him. He was beheaded in 1564.



The Huguenots (France, circa 1550-1575)

The Huguenots had been members of the Reformed Church of France, originally established by Calvin, and quickly grew to a large number, as evidenced in *The Story of Christianity*, which states the following:

“The Protestants in France were numerous, for there were some 2,000 Huguenot churches. They shared John Calvin’s fierce reformation beliefs which decried the priesthood, sacraments and doctrines of the Catholic Church. Above all, they were known for their fiery criticisms of worship as it was performed in the Roman Catholic Church. They believed the ritual, images, saints, pilgrimages, prayers, and hierarchy of the Catholic Church were useless to help anyone toward redemption. The Christian faith is to be lived out in a strict and godly life, in obedience to Biblical laws, out of gratitude for God’s mercy - not in performing rituals and in obsession with death and the dead. As other Protestants also believed at the time, they thought that the Roman Church needed to be radically cleansed of its impurities, and that the Pope represented a worldly kingdom which sat in mocking tyranny over the things of God, and was ultimately doomed. Rhetoric like this became fiercer as events unfolded, and stirred up the hostility of the Catholic establishment.”

The growth of the Huguenots between 1555 and 1562 was explosive, being chiefly amongst the nobles and city-dwellers. It was during this time that the Protestants began to be called Huguenots, but they called themselves *reformés*, or “Reformed”. By 1562, there was a total membership estimated to be at least a million, though they never numbered more than a little over two million, compared to approximately sixteen million Catholics during the same period.

Violently opposed to the Catholic Church, the Huguenots attacked images, the use of monks, and Church buildings. Most of the cities in which the Huguenots gained control were subject to iconoclast attacks, in which altars and images in churches, and sometimes the buildings themselves were torn apart. However, this zealous defiance of the Catholic Church quickly led to their demise, as Dr. John Thomas remarks in *Eureka*, Vol. 3, as follows:

“Many were cruelly tortured and put to death; many were imprisoned or sent to the galleys; dragoons, ‘the basest troops of the kingdom,’ insulted and pillaged them, in order to force them to change their religion. ‘Die or be Catholics!’ was the war-cry of these savages who executed the behests of the Little Horn. M. Claude, in his Short Account, published in 1686, says: ‘Amidst a thousand hideous lamentations and horrid blasphemies, they hung men and women by the hair of their heads, or by the feet, to the roofs of their chambers; or to the racks in the chimneys, and there smoked them with wisps of wet hay, till they were no longer able to bear it; and when they took them down, if they would not sign, they immediately hung them up again. They plucked off the hair of their heads and beards with pincers, till they left none remaining. They threw them on great fires kindled on purpose, and did not pull them out till they were half roasted. They plunged them again and again into wells, from whence they would not take them up till they had promised to renounce their religion. They bound them as they do criminals put to the rack, and in this posture, with a funnel poured wine down their throats, till the fumes of it depriving them of reason, they were made to say they were Catholics. They stripped them naked, and after having offered them a thousand indignities, they stuck them all over with pins. They lanced them with penknives, and sometimes with red hot pincers took them by the nose, and so dragged them about the room till they promised to turn Catholic. They dragged them bruised to the churches, where this forced appearance was accounted abjuration. They kept them from sleeping seven or eight days together; they tormented them in a thousand ways. They tied them to bed posts, and ravished their wives and daughters before their eyes. They plucked off the nails from the fingers and toes of some; and blew both men and women up with bel-lows till they were ready to burst.”

St. Bartholomew's Massacre

Eventually persecution led to the taking up of arms against their Catholic oppressors in order to win concessions from the Roman Catholic majority. (Note: This is a strong indicator that these “reformers” did not possess the Truth in its entirety, but provided protection nonetheless for those who did.) Such concessions, however, were only an expedient hypnosis that a viper places upon its prey before the deadly strike! The shattering of the so-called “peace” therefore occurred without notice on Saturday, August 23, 1572, in which thousands perished in the flood of the serpent’s venom (Rev. 12:15).

Catherine de Medici

It was Catherine de Medici who persuaded her weakling son Charles IX to order the destruction of the Huguenots. On Sunday morning August 24th, 1572, she personally walked through the streets of Paris to inspect the carnage.



Catherine de Medici, the real power behind Charles IX on the throne of France, after a fashion of Jezebel, began the conflagration by ordering the assassination of the brilliant Huguenot Admiral Gaspard Coligny. Having failed in the attempt and panicking in the face of possible reprisal, it is thought that she conspired with other authorities for the destruction of all Huguenots. This, as it so happened, occurred as thousands of Huguenots were converging on Paris for the wedding of her daughter to Henry of Navarre, a Huguenot noble. It is difficult to imagine the obstinate fury that would cause her to act with such a callous disregard for human life, and all for the sake of her own pride and superstition.

The conflagration began in Paris on the evening of St. Bartholomew's Day and spread to the countryside on the following days. It is estimated that between 40,000 and 100,000 Huguenots lost their lives for refusing to conform to the dictates of the apostacy. No doubt, this "Jezebel" appearing upon the eve of the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet was true to the prophetic type: ***"For they have shed the blood of Saints and prophets"*** (Rev. 16:6). The Huguenots were one of this class of prophets in that they were a prophesying witness against the murderous character of the Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth. Surviving Huguenots fled to their fortresses followed by continuous war until the Huguenot prince, Henry of Navarre, became heir-elect to the throne of France. On April 13th, 1598, King Henry IV issued the



Henry IV, himself a former Huguenot

Edict of Nantes, which brought an end to the Wars of Religion.

The Huguenots were allowed to practice their faith in 20 specified French “free” cities. France became united and a decade of peace followed. However, in 1610 the persecution of the “dissenters” resumed in all earnestness. The Huguenot free cities were lost one after the other after they were conquered by the forces of Cardinal Richelieu, and the last and most important stronghold, La Rochelle, fell in 1629 after a siege lasting a month. The events that led to the eventual removal of the Huguenots from their fortified cities began with Churchmen calling for King Henry IV to strip away Huguenot privileges, passing laws making it hard for Protestants to enter the trade guilds (Rev. 13:17). Huguenots were forbidden to establish schools. They were forced to leave France by the thousands, yet, if caught, were punished with prison and death.

Louis XIV (the Sun King, 1643-1715) revoked the **Edict of Nantes** on October 22, 1685, thus beginning the 105 year prophecy that would terminate in the French Revolution in 1790 (the “three days and a half” of Rev. 11:9).

The large scale persecution of the Huguenots resumed (“*And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified*” - Rev. 11:8), driving hundreds of thousands of France’s best citizens abroad who took with them the best skilled artisans in Europe. France declined from being the most powerful and rich nation in Europe to a virtual “empty shell” pressed to hold its own against powerful foes. Poverty and a broader separation of social and economic classes ensued, making the nation ripe for revolution.

Rome Rejoices and Sends Gifts of Medals One to Another

One of the most significant and convincing pieces of evidence as to the veracity of the “Continuous Historical” exposition of Revelation chapter 11 concerns verse 10: “*And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.*”

"HUGONOTORUM STRAGES" = Massacre of the Huguenots



The above medal struck by order of Pope Gregory XIII commemorates the victory of the Roman "Church" over the "Heretics"

This verse is an accurate account of the horrible events of 1572 as witnessed to by the perpetrators themselves by striking a medal in commemoration of the criminal deed (above) and rejoicing with elaborate celebrations as described in *Eureka*, Vol. IIb, by Bro. John Thomas thusly:

"The massacre with which they were overwhelmed at the outbreak of the war against them in 1572, and which was then supposed to have entirely ruined them, when known in Rome was a cause of great joy to their enemies in that city. When the letters of the Pope's legate residing at the Court of Charles IX, were read in the assembly of the cardinals, by which he assured the Pope that all was transacted by the express will and command of the French king, it was immediately decreed that the Pope should march with his cardinals to the Church of St. Mark, and in the most solemn manner give thanks to God for so great a blessing conferred on the See of Rome [Dan 7:8 – Ed.] and the 'Christian world;' and that on the Monday after, solemn mass should be celebrated in the Church of Minerva, at which Gregory XIII and the cardinals were present, and that a jubilee should be published throughout the whole of 'Christendom', and the cause of it declared to be, to return thanks to God for the extirpation of the enemies of the truth and the Church of France. In the evening the canons of St. Angelo were fired to testify the public joy; the whole city illuminated with bonfires; and no one sign of rejoicing omitted that was usually made for the greatest victories obtained in favor of the Roman Church."

"In addition to this, medals were struck commemorative of the joyous event. A copy of it is before me in Elliot's work, taken from Sir W. Cockburn's work on the Massacre. It is about two inches and five eighths diameter. One face is the bust of the Roman Deity, Gregory XIII: and on the obverse a winged angel with an uplifted cross in the left hand, and a drawn two edged sword in the right, symbolizing the papal destroyers of 'the earth' in France. Men, women, and children are before the angel dead, dying, falling, and about to fall by the sword; while in the background is a woman, with uplifted arms supporting a mantle, and looking complacently upon the massacre, symbolizing the Catholic Church. On the margin is the legend, Ugonotorum Strages, 1572 – 'The Massacre of the Huguenots, 1572.' These medals were for free distribution to one another commemorative of the death blow inflicted upon the hitherto unconquered enemies of Catholic idolatry. Thus was fulfilled the tenth verse of this eleventh chapter, stating, 'They that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them and make merry, and shall send gifts (of medals) one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt upon the earth'."

According to *The Story of Christianity*, "the number of victims reached the tens of thousands. Pope Gregory XIII, while declaring that he deplored the bloodshed, ordered a celebration of the night of St. Bartholomew, and that the same be done every year in memory of such glorious deeds."

In 1682 Louis XIV threatened the Huguenots with every evil imaginable if they did not convert to Catholicism. His religious training, harsh upbringing, and cruel advisers led him to believe he could not be saved unless he wiped out the heresy of the Protestant movement. The Huguenots, among others, were reduced to meeting secretly in caves and in the woods (Hebrews 11:38), becoming the subject of savage reprisals and immediate death by burning at the stake if they were caught. Their churches and houses were destroyed, and their Bibles and hymn books burned.

In light of these brutal conditions of life, verily, how much we in this age take for granted. We have our peaceful homes, meeting where we will, displaying our signs in public, organizing Bible studies, public lectures, etc., without fear of public reprisal. We indeed should give praise and thanksgiving to Yahweh for His mercy towards us! And yet, sadly, there is always the danger of treating these privileges of unmolested freedom with contempt, preferring the pleasures of this life to

the privileges of eternal worth. Brethren, in the little time we now have to prepare ourselves as a chaste bride to meet the bridegroom, let us not just serve Yahweh with our lips, for the Truth is not merely a creed, or a faith to be kept upon our bookshelves, but is what we need to be manifesting in our lives, in ourselves, and in the way we spend our time and pursue each day unto the LORD.

The Flight from France to America

The flight of the Huguenots was a double blow to France. The hard-working Huguenots were among the most prosperous citizens, their work ethic having made them masters of the crafts in which France excelled. When they fled, they left behind most of their possessions but carried with them their skills. France's enemies were taught techniques of weaving, lace-making, silk-work, and hattery, which were once the exclusive possession of the French. Sadly, those people who were expelled might have put up the greatest resistance to the atheistic elements within the Enlightenment. The French Revolution was perhaps now almost inevitable. But, according to some historians, its cruelties were not nearly so terrible as what the Huguenots had suffered.

Between 1618 and 1725 between 5,000 and 7,000 Huguenots reached

The last surviving Huguenot congregation in the Western Hemisphere meets in this building on "Church Street" in Charleston, SC.



the shores of America. Those who came from the French-speaking south of Belgium, an area known as *Wallonia*, are generally known as *Walloons* (as opposed to *Huguenots*) in the United States.

The organized large scale emigration of Huguenots to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa occurred during 1688 - 1689. By 1692 a total of 201 French Huguenots had settled at the Cape of Good Hope. Most of them settled in an area now known as Franschhoek ("French Corner"), where many farms still bear their original French names.

In the year 1700, more than five hundred emigrants were brought to the New World by means of four successive voyages. Two years before the date of the departure, negotiations were opened by the leaders of the Huguenot refugees with land owners of the "*proprietary of Carolina and Florida*," for the purchase of half a million acres of land in the latter territory. At another time Carolina was the objective point of the expedition. Here they came eventually to Charleston, Carolina, where exists today the last and only still active congregation of French Huguenots extant in the western hemisphere. It is sad to note, however, that despite their once pious and sincere worship and hope of a future resurrection, they eventually lost (as most every other so-called "Protestant") their anti-papal zeal, co-mingling themselves into extinction amidst the current fog of Roman superstition. Hence, the Huguenot Church in Charleston is but one of the many architectural attractions to be found along "Church Street". It stands like a "whited sepulcher", beautiful in stature and reminiscent of more vigilant days, but on the inside it is like every other religious bazaar of the soul merchants – "full of dead men's bones".

A third site suggested for the settlement was in Norfolk County, Virginia, on the Nansemond River near the Dismal Swamp. Nevertheless, they appear to have settled at different points: some in Jamestown, some in Norfolk County, others in Surry, and two hundred or more at a spot some twenty miles above Richmond, Virginia, on the south side of James River (now in Powhatan County), where ten thousand acres of land were given them by the King of England.

It is on account of Divine mercy to His Saints, that groups such as the Huguenots have been provided as a protectorate or "insulator" between the Household or remnant of the woman's seed, and the Dragon, which continues to have its effect where ever possible to scorch the earth with its godless decrees. Thus, while there is opportunity, let us busy ourselves with filling our spiritual lamps with the oil of the Word, which is

A Church near the White House in Washington, DC has a memorial that claims 21 US presidents are of Huguenot descent. The National Huguenot Society, more modest, maintains that eight can definitely be traced as Huguenot descendants. They are:

- ***George Washington***
- ***Ulysses S. Grant***
- ***Theodore Roosevelt***
- ***William Howard Taft***
- ***Franklin Delano Roosevelt***
- ***Harry S. Truman***
- ***Gerald Ford***
- ***Lyndon B. Johnson***

As the Bible student may readily perceive, Yahweh has not been slack in making every provision for the Truth to be sown, cultivated, and to thrive in an atmosphere where the Papacy has been stripped of temporal authority.



The Coat of Arms of Pope Gregory XIII (complicit in the Huguenot tragedy) is resplendent with the Dragon, the symbol of his rule and authority. (Rev. 12:15-17)

indeed the “oil of gladness” (Heb. 1:9). In so doing we will in time be anointed with immortality in the presence of Yahweh and His anointed for the Kingdom and beyond, without end.

Summary of Key Events in Huguenot History

1533 John Calvin flees Paris, becomes pastor in Geneva in 1536, and maintains strong ties with French reform movement

1550's Calvinism comes to France, wins thousands of converts

1559 First Huguenot synod held, in Paris

1559 Attempt to replace the Catholic Guises with the Huguenot Condé as regent

1560 Huguenots petition the king and threaten revolt if persecution persists

1562 Massacre at Vassy begins the French religious wars

1562 Huguenots sign a manifesto saying they were forced to take arms

1565 Huguenot colony massacred at St. John, Florida by Pedro Mendendez

1572 Catherine de Medici orders an attempt to assassinate Huguenot leader Coligny

1572 St. Bartholomew's Day massacre kills as many as 100,000 Huguenots

1585 Huguenots and other Protestants are ordered expelled from France (most stay)

1593 Huguenot Henry IV converts to Catholicism to gain the throne

1598 Edict of Nantes promises protection to Huguenots

1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes leaves Huguenots defenseless; 400,000 flee (*Begin 3 days and a half - 105 year period of political death of the Huguenots and other anti-papal groups – Rev. 11:11*)

1790 French Revolution (*End 3 days and a half - 105 years of political death*)



The Puritans (circa 1600's)

Following a time period in which the zeal of the Protestants in general cooled, being replaced by a prevailing laxity in their morals and beliefs, the Puritan Movement entered the religious scene with an intent to correct this decline. The central tenet of Puritanism was God's supreme authority over human affairs, particularly in the Church, and especially as expressed in the Bible. This view led them to seek conformance to the teaching of the Bible, and to pursue both moral purity down to the smallest detail as well as Ecclesiastical purity up to the highest level. According to *The Story of Christianity*:

"They were called 'Puritans' because they insisted on the need to 'purify' the Church by a return to Biblical religion. They opposed many of the traditional elements of worship that the Church of England (Protestant) had retained, such as the use of the cross and certain priestly garments. They also insisted on the need for a sober life, guided by the commandments of Scripture, and lacking in luxury. Since a great deal of the worship of the Church of England appeared to them as needlessly elaborate, this caused further objection to that worship. Many insisted on the need to keep the Lord's Day, devoting it exclusively to religious exercises and to the practice of charity. They were not absolutely opposed to the use of alcohol, for most of them drank moderately, but they were very critical of drunkenness, particularly among the ministers of the Church of England. They were also very critical of all that they considered licentious—and this included the theater, not only because immorality was often depicted, but also because of the 'duplicity' implicit in acting. Many Puritans were opposed to bishops. They argued that the episcopacy, at least as it existed in their time, was a later invention not to be found in the Bible; and that the Church ought to look to Scripture as its constitution not only in matters of doctrine, but also in things having to do with its organization and governance.



Among them were some who believed that baptism ought to be administered only to believing adults, and who therefore were called 'Baptists'."

The Puritans tended to admire the early Church fathers and quoted them liberally in their works. Another of their important distinctions was their approach to Church-State relations. They opposed the Anglican idea of the supremacy of the monarch in the Church, and following Calvin, they argued that the only head of the Church in heaven or earth is Christ (not the Pope). However, they believed that secular governors are accountable to God (not through the Church, but alongside it) to protect and reward virtue, including "true religion", and to punish wrongdoers — a policy that is best described as non-interference rather than separation of Church and State. Other notable beliefs included:

- An emphasis on private study of the Bible
- A desire to see education and enlightenment for the masses (especially so they could read the Bible for themselves)
- The priesthood of all believers
- The Pope was an Antichrist
- Simplicity in worship, the exclusion of vestments, images, candles, etc.

We know from American history that the Puritans were some of the first to migrate to America, seeking religious freedom and an end to the persecution that they encountered due to their beliefs and opposition to the Catholic Church.



Baptist Confession of Faith 1660

The Baptists have been mentioned on a couple of occasions, in that they were aligned with the Anabaptists and the Puritans. The following Confession of Faith, circa 1660, would seem to be sufficient in specifying their beliefs at that point in time. It is not difficult to recognize the striking similarities that exist between the beliefs of the Baptists at that time in history and those beliefs that we have historically held as Christadelphians. The question that obviously comes into view is how did this group of believers lose these vital doctrines of fellowship that separated them from the common errors of Christendom? Moreover, is it possible that the Christadelphian body, whose current Statement of Faith is but a parallel of the 1660 Baptist statement, could be following the same pattern of migration back to the evangelical and emotion (phileo) based “mainstream” of apostate Christianity?

The following is taken from *Crosby's History of the English Baptist*:

“The following confession of faith, signed by John Bunyan and 40 other ‘elders, deacons, and brethren,’ and approved by more than 20,000 others, was presented to Charles II in London, in 1660. In presenting this confession of their faith, these Baptists declared, ‘We are not only resolved to suffer persecution to the loss of our goods, but also life itself, rather than decline from the same.’

- *We believe that the Lord Jesus who showed Himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3), which was taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner as he was seen go into heaven (Act 1:9-11); and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory (Col. 3:4). For the kingdom is his and he is the governor among nations (Ps 22:20), and king over all the earth (Zech. 14:9), and we shall reign with him on the earth (Rev 5:10).*
- *The kingdoms of this world, which men as mightily strive after here to enjoy, shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ (Rev. 11:15). For all things are yours (ye that overcome this world); for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's (I Cor. 3:21-23). For unto the saints shall be given the kingdom, and the greatness of dominion, under the whole heaven (Dan 7:27).*



***The Baptists baptizing in the Ebbw River,
South Wales, England, circa 1660***

- *When Christ shall appear, then shall be given unto them power over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron (Rev 2:26-29). Then shall they receive a crown of life, which no man shall take from them, or they by any means be turned or overturned from; for the oppressor shall be broken in pieces (Psa 72:4), and their vain rejoicings be turned into mourning and lamentations (Job 20:5-7).*
- *We believe that there will be an order in resurrection, Christ is the first fruits, and then next, or after, they that are Christ's at his coming; then, or afterwards, cometh the end.*
- *Concerning the kingdom and reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we do believe that he is now in heaven at his Father's right hand, so do we believe that, at the time appointed of the Father, he shall come again in power and great glory; and that at or after his coming the second time, he will not only raise the dead, and judge and restore the world, but will also take to himself his kingdom, and will, according to the Scriptures, reign on the throne of his father, David, on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, for ever.*
- *We believe that the kingdom of our lord will be a universal kingdom, and that in this kingdom the Lord Jesus Christ himself will be alone, visible, supreme king of the whole earth.*

- *We believe that, as this kingdom will be universal, so will it also be an everlasting kingdom, that shall have no end, and cannot be shaken, in which kingdom the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus shall receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls: where the Lord is they shall be also.*
- *We believe that the New Jerusalem that shall come down from God out of heaven, when the tabernacle of God shall be with them and He will dwell with them, will be the metropolitan city of this kingdom, and will be the glorious place of residence of both Christ and his saints forever, and will be situated as that the kingly palace will be on Mount Zion, the holy hill of David, where his throne was.”*

As shown by the fact that scriptural references are used throughout the context of this statement in order to establish these beliefs, it is clear that the Baptists derived these correct conclusions and understandings from their study of Scripture. However, it is sad to note that this Confession is a far cry from what the Baptists currently believe: immortality of the soul, a kingdom in heaven rather than on earth, a literal immortal devil, observance of Catholic “Holy Days” (such as Easter and Christmas), the development of a professional ministry, identification with the word “Church”, use of the cross as a religious symbol, foreign missionaries to “increase the fold”, and the baptism of children as opposed to adult baptism.

Sadly, this group of once zealous Bible students have forgotten the great truths that they once held in esteem as necessary for salvation. They have abandoned serious Bible study in favor of social programs and charities under the direction of professional ministry, have slipped from a firm foundation solidly laid upon the banks of Bible truth and have fallen headlong into the mainstream of Christianity. Where does the Christadelphian body stand in relation to these maladies of doctrinal error? Where similar activities prevail, no doubt the way of truth is overshadowed by the pursuit of “men pleasers”.



The Common Protestant Belief that the Papal Aystem is the Anti-Christ

Although many pre-Reformation writers perceived the Papacy as the Man of Sin, the leaders of the sixteenth century Reformation wove this identification into a larger prophetic picture and belief. That Martin Luther, known as the father of the Reformation, recognized the Papacy as the Man of Sin is obvious in such statements as, *“We are convinced that the Papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist.”* The Protestant Church of the Reformation saw the Papacy as more than just another apostate Church, and their prophetic vision and zeal resulting from this scriptural knowledge became the rallying point of the Reformation. Protestants correctly identified the Papacy as the prophetic Antichrist of Daniel and Revelation, and this belief inspired them to act upon it in such a manner that many died for that conviction.



***Above: Coin minted by Tiberius Cesar (14-37AD) with an image of his mother on the reverse and the Title of “Pontifex Maximus”.
Below: Pope Pius XI also bearing the title “Pontifex Maximus”***



Throughout the Reformation period the Protestants were energized and guided by the prophetic Word. Luther never felt inclined to war against the papal apostacy until he recognized the Pope as Antichrist. John Knox's first sermon that launched him on his mission as a Reformer was on the prophecies concerning the Papacy. All of the Reformers were unanimous in the conviction and declaration that the Papacy was indeed the Man of Sin spoken of by Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians. This understanding nerved them to resist the claims of the apostacy to the uttermost. It made them martyrs and sustained them until their death, and their views were shared by hundreds of thousands of their followers. The following quotes are from the various Reformers and leave no doubt as to the strength of their beliefs and convictions regarding this issue.

John Knox: *"The Antichrist's councils gather for private gain, setting up idolatry and abominations contrary to the Scriptures and according to Papists' own wisdom and foolish brains. It is astonishing that they disregard the fact that the book of God was sealed and confirmed in the days of the apostles, its effects and contents published so that it is extremely impious to make any alteration to that proclaimed by God's own voice."*

"O Papists! Where will you hide from God's presence? You have perverted His law, you have perverted His ordinances and you have placed your own! Woe and damnation to you! All men whose eyes Satan has not blinded can see that man cannot change any commandment of God."

In another series of what might be termed "political cartoons" entitled the *Passion of Christ and Anti-Christ*, Luther contrasts the life and actions of Christ with those of the Pope. Luther hired Protestant artist Albrecht Durer to develop many of these pictures including the "*Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*" (right) wherein the Pope at the bottom left of the picture is being devoured by the



judgments of God. This propaganda proved effective in challenging the power of the Roman Catholic Church, in that virtually all of Europe was familiar with the Protestant belief that the Catholic Church was the whore of Babylon shown in Revelation.

EPISCOPALIAN (Anglican): “The Irish Articles”, adopted by the Archbishops, Bishops and Convocation of the Irish Episcopal Church and approved in 1615 state:

“Article 80: The Bishop of Rome is so far from being the supreme head of the universal Church of Christ, that his works and doctrine do plainly discover him to be that ‘man of sin’ foretold in the holy Scriptures, ‘whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and abolish with the brightness of His coming’.”

PRESBYTERIAN (Westminster Confession of Faith):

“There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God.”

CONGREGATIONAL (Savoy Declaration):

“There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but it (he) is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God, whom the



NG IN VAIN TO DRAW THE FIRE.



Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

BAPTIST (The Baptist Confession of 1688):

"The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the Church is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner; neither can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof,

but is no other than Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God: whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

METHODIST: Notes of John Wesley on II Thessalonians 2:3:

"The Pope is, in an emphatical sense, the man of sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is, too, properly styled, the son of perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, both of his opposers and followers, destroyed innumerable souls, and will himself perish everlastingly. He it is that exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. Commanding angels and putting kings under his feet, both of whom are called gods in Scripture; claiming the highest power, the highest honour; suffering himself, not once only, to be styled God or vice-God. Indeed no less is implied in his ordinary title, 'Most Holy Lord', or 'Most Holy Father', so that he sitteth enthroned in the temple of God, mentioned in Rev. 11:1. Declaring himself that he is God - claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone."

LUTHERAN: The Lutheran *Book of Concord* states:

"[T]he Pope is the real Antichrist who has raised himself over and set himself against Christ . . . Accordingly, just as we cannot adore the devil himself as our lord or God, so we cannot suffer his apostle, the Pope or Antichrist, to govern us as our head or lord."

These Reformers, through the study of Scripture that resulted in clear understanding, came to the correct conclusion regarding the Antichrist, and in doing so, they nerved thousands to break from the tyranny of the dark ages of the Papacy. The realization that the incriminating finger of prophecy rested squarely upon Rome aroused the consciousness of Europe. In alarm, Rome saw that she must successfully counteract this identification of Antichrist as the Papacy or lose the battle. Hence the "Counter Reformation" was born.



The Counter Reformation

So great a hold did the conviction that the Papacy was the Antichrist gain upon the minds of the Protestants, that Rome at last realized that she must, in an effort to divert this belief and protect her interests, put forth other systems of interpretation in order to counteract the identification of the apocalyptic Antichrist as the papal system. Accordingly, toward the close of the century of the Reformation, two of the most learned Jesuit doctors set themselves to the task, each endeavoring by different means to accomplish the same end, namely, that of diverting men's minds from perceiving the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Antichrist in the papal system. The Jesuit Alcazar devoted himself to bring into prominence the Preterist method of interpretation, by which he endeavored to show that the prophecies of Antichrist were fulfilled before the Popes ever ruled in Rome, and that the Apocalypse was fulfilled primarily in the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore could not apply to the Papacy.

On the other hand, the Jesuit Ribera sought to set aside the application of these prophecies to the Papacy by advancing the idea of the Futurist system, which asserts that these prophecies refer not to the Papacy but to some future supernatural individual who is yet to appear, who will continue in power for three and a half years. In around 1590, Ribera published a 500-page commentary on the Apocalypse, denying the Protestant application of Antichrist to the Church of Rome. The following is a synopsis:

- While the first few chapters in the Revelation were assigned to ancient Rome in the time of John, the greater part of the prophecies of the Revelation were assigned to the distant future—to events immediately preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- Antichrist would be a single evil person who would be received by the Jews and would rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.
- Antichrist would rule the world from this temple in Jerusalem for a literal three and a half years.

Ribera's Futurist idea was polished and popularized by the papal controversialist Cardinal Bellarmine (1542-1621) of Italy, who took up the battle against Protestantism and became the foremost proponent for



Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) before Pope Paul the III pledges the Jesuit Order as the center for a Counter-Reformation movement that would vigorously combat Protestantism. This was the context in which the Council of Trent was held (Dec. 13, 1545).

Rome in the Counter Reformation. Bellarmine insisted that the prophecies concerning Antichrist by Daniel, Paul and John had no application whatsoever to the papal power, and between 1581 and 1593 he published the most detailed defense of the Catholic faith ever produced. The following quotation summarizes this work:

“For all Catholics think thus, that Antichrist will be one certain man; but all heretics teach . . . that Antichrist is expressly declared to be not a single person, but an individual throne or absolute kingdom, and apostate seat of those who rule over the Church.”

However, this concept fabricated by Catholic Jesuits that an individual Antichrist seated in a literal temple in Jerusalem would reign for 3 ½ years had little effect. So clearly was the Papacy “revealed” as the Man of Sin that Protestants stood united for nearly 300 years in declaring this fact. Dr. L. E. Froom, an authority on prophetic exposition in the Christian Church, noted that in the nineteenth century, three centuries after the Reformers first revealed the Papacy as the Antichrist, all the leading prophetic expositors (62 European and 57 American) were “a unit in identifying the Antichrist as the Papacy.”

Though this belief was strongly held for over 300 years, modern times have witnessed the forsaking of this belief and the acceptance of the Catholic deception that was promulgated in opposition to the Protestant view. Reverend Joseph Tanner, in his exposition, *Daniel and the Revelation* (1898), states, “...It is a matter for deep regret that those who advocate the futurist system at the present day, Protestants as they are for the most part, are really playing into the hands of Rome, and helping to screen the Papacy from detection as the Antichrist.”



The Decline of Protestantism

The Story of Christianity states the following with regard to the decline of separation between the Protestant churches and mainstream Catholicism:

“The 16th century had been a period of enormous religious vitality that swept Protestants and Catholics, theologians and rulers, the high and low. The bitter words and even violent actions with which Christians of one persuasion attacked others were partly due to the firmness of their convictions, and to the overwhelming experiences that stood at the root of their confessions of faith. But, as the years went by, there was an increasing number who did not share the enthusiasm (and often not even the convictions) of earlier generations. (Instead), political and personal considerations were paramount. Religious tolerance was one of the pillars on which modern France was built. Germans came to the conclusion that doctrinal disagreements should not lead to war, and that religious tolerance was a wiser policy. Rationalism took hold on Europe. Why be concerned about the details of Christian doctrine that produce nothing but quarrels and prejudice, when natural reason, a faculty common to all human beings, can answer the fundamental questions regarding God and human nature? Would it not be much more profitable to construct a ‘natural religion’ on that basis, and to leave matters of detail to the credulous and fanatical? Hence, the 17th and 18th centuries were characterized by doubts regarding the traditional dogmas of both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

“There were others whose zeal for the true doctrine was no less than Luther’s or Calvin’s. But this was no longer the time of great theological discoveries, leading along unknown paths. Theologians in the 17th and 18th centuries zealously defended the teachings of the great figures of the 16th, but without the fresh creativity of that earlier generation. Their style became increasingly rigid, cold, and academic. Dogma was often substituted for faith, and orthodoxy for love.”

In 1637 (after the thirty-years war in Europe between Protestants and Catholics that was so brutal and bloody), the following quotation seems to adequately explain the underlying feelings that led to this spiritual

demise: “*The principals of tolerance of the Peace of Westphalia were not born out of a deeper understanding of Christian love, but rather of **growing indifference** to religious matters.*” They had become tired of fighting and wrestling for their convictions. “*Thus the modern secular state began to develop. And with it there appeared an attitude of doubt regarding matters that previous generations had taken for granted. On what grounds did theologians dare to affirm that they were correct, and that others were mistaken?*”



George Calixtus

Some of the theology that resulted from this period was that which was promulgated by Georg Calixtus (above) a Lutheran who, according to *The Story of Christianity*, believed that, “*although the Lutheran doctrine was the best interpretation of Scripture, this did not suffice to declare all others heretics or false Christians.*” Rather, he saw a denial of the very spirit of Christianity in the controversies of the time, particularly in what he perceived as the bitter attacks against other Christians. In order to justify this belief, he made a distinction between the essential beliefs and the secondary beliefs. He proclaimed that, “*only that which relates to salvation is fundamental and absolutely necessary. The rest is equally true, and also important, and otherwise God would not have revealed it. But it is not essential for being a Christian. There is a difference between heresy and error.*” It is written that, “*by these arguments, Calixtus hoped to achieve better understanding and mutual appreciation among Christians of different confessions—and for this reason has been rightly called one of the forerunners of the ecumenical (worldwide Church) movement.*” This mode of rationale is without a doubt one of the great dangers to the present day Christadelphian body, the minimalization of doctrinal differences and absolute Truth for the sake of a larger fellowship.

Several other theological beliefs originated at this time, being obvious precursors to those ideas and beliefs of humanism that arrived in force at the time of the French Revolution. These ideas include:

Rationalism is another philosophy that stemmed from this time pe-

riod that is defined as, “the confidence in the powers of reason.” This theory supposed that by observing the world, one could find true and significant knowledge. This seems to be an obvious correlation with that corrupt false wisdom of man, or “gnosis” that Paul speaks of in I Timothy 6:20, where he writes, “*O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science [knowledge] falsely so called.*”

Empiricism, which comes from the Greek word meaning “experience”, included the belief that toleration is based on the very nature of society. The state does not have the authority to limit freedom of its citizens in matters such as personal morality and religion.

Deism is the belief that “true religion must be universal, and not be based upon particular revelations, nor on historical events, but rather on the natural instincts of every human being.” The followers of this belief system opposed the perceived *dogmatism* that they felt had taken hold on most branches of Christianity.

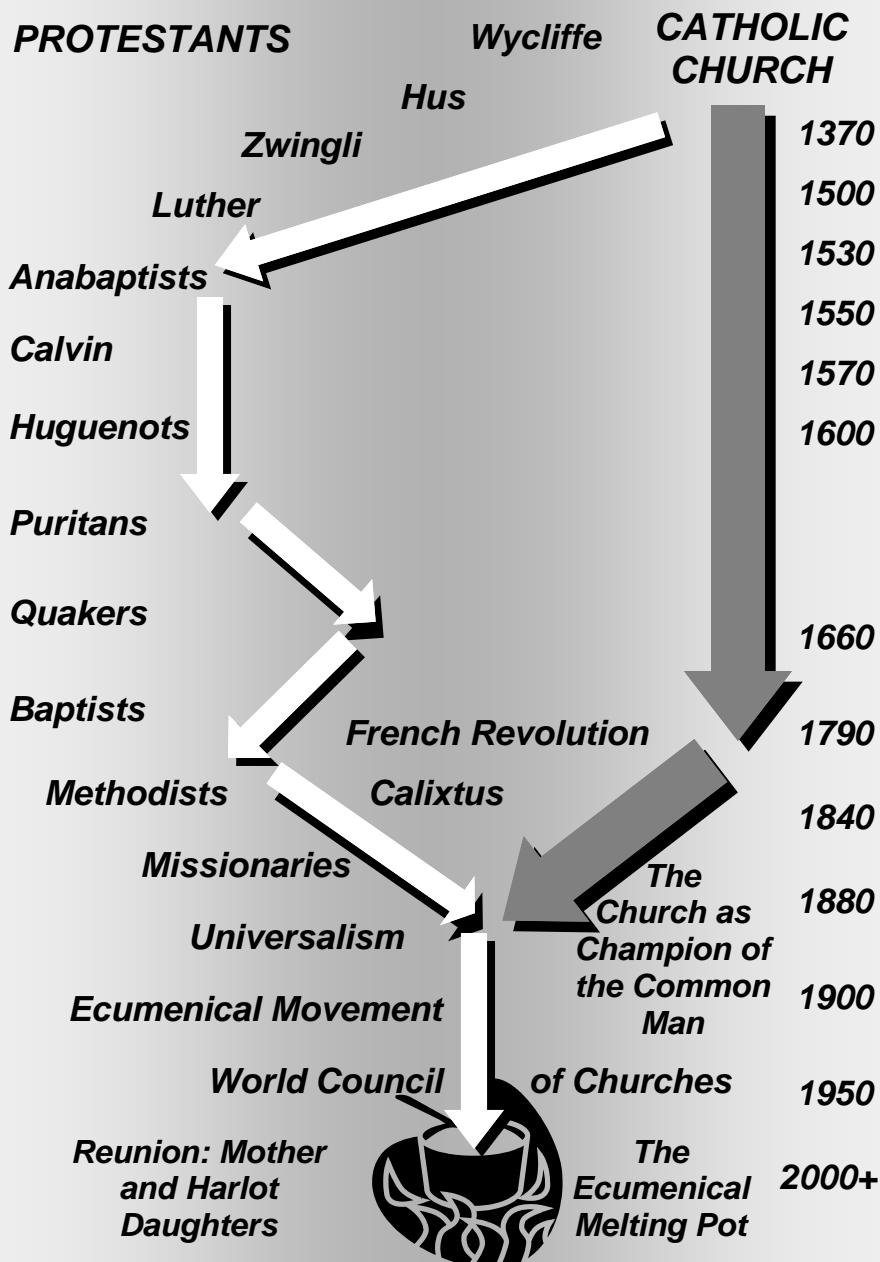
In France, the writings of **Voltaire** became popular, as they stressed the need for political and religious tolerance and the safeguarding of *human rights*. He declared that the government, being employees of the people, was in place to safeguard the freedom of the populous. In regard to religion, he held that *dogmas and institutions* are part of the corruption that had characterized the human process (evolution of the human).

From these ideas of religious tolerance, there came the belief that it was probable that more than one religion held the Truth. The doctrines of humanism had become planted in the population, and the rights of man and his human potential began to be the prevailing theme, rather than the fact that Yahweh rules in the kingdoms of men and that man is subject to Him. The Protestants in general became tired of contending for their faith, and the cares and concerns of the world, brought on by material prosperity, began to dull their scriptural senses.

Again the parallels of this trend in Protestantism are remarkably applicable to the waning growth and spiritual health of the Christadelphian body today, answering to the accuracy of the Laodicean period that describes the latter day Ecclesia as being “lukewarm”.



Graph tracking the Protestant movement, first away from mainstream Catholicism, and then back again into the fold of the Mother Church



The Quakers

One of the new religions that sprang up from this apathetic time period was the Quakers, which was begun in the late 1600s by George Fox. Fox believed that things such as hymns, the order of worship, sermons, and the like were hindrances to what he termed the “inner light” that exists in all human beings, and the only way to truly find God. All worship was very loosely conducted, in that the Quakers believed that their “inner light” would guide them as to what they would say during their worship. For this reason, there were no ministers in the group, but only individuals who would wait until the “light” instructed them as to what they should say or do. As brought out in *The Story of Christianity*, “Any who felt called to speak or pray aloud were free to do so. When the spirit moved them, women had the same right to speak as did men.”

The Quakers did not include in their services the traditional sacraments of baptism and communion, for they feared that physical water, bread, and wine would draw attention away from the spiritual. As part of their belief system, the Quakers put a heavy emphasis on *emotion, love, and their community, rather than sincere and diligent study of Scripture*. In regard to the Bible, the Quakers believed that Christ, not the Bible, was the Word of God; for example, they believed that the Scriptures “are only a declaration of the fountain, and not the fountain itself, therefore they are not to be esteemed the principal ground of all Truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule of faith and manners.” From this belief, some Quakers began to reject (or neglect) the Christian Bible altogether, in that, since one was guided by their “inner light,” the believer’s understanding was therefore not restricted to the Bible. Finally, Quakerism believed in the spiritual equality of the sexes. In addition, both women and men were granted equal authority to speak in meetings for worship. George Fox’s wife, Margaret Fell, was considered to be as vocal and literate as her husband, as she published several tracts in Quakerism’s early days.

As might be observed from many “Christian” congregations today, some aspects of this movement have been adopted with regard to equality of the sexes and the ordination of women. Regretfully, this is another trend that is taking hold within the brotherhood as sisters are being invited to teach adult classes at Bible Schools contrary to Scripture (I Timothy 2:12).



Establishment of a Universal Church



**World Missionary
Conference Logo**

Universalism was the crowning achievement of the ecumenical movement of the 1900's as revealed in *The Story of Christianity*. We quote:

"The most important event of the 19th century was the founding of a truly universal Church, in which peoples of all races and nations had a part."

One would indeed have to be blind not to recognize this reality today, but we will now concentrate our efforts on understanding the events that have led to this conclusion.

One of the outstanding events and circumstances that led to the reunion of the various Protestant denominations was that of missionary efforts to the non-Christian countries, as we are told in *The Story of Christianity*, which states, "*Missionary societies broke confessional barriers. An important consequence of the missionary movement was the spirit of cooperation that began appearing among various denominations. Rivalries that seemed justifiable in Europe or the United States were a stumbling block for missionary work in India or China. Therefore, many missionaries, and soon their converts also, took steps to lower the barriers separating denominations from each other. Some missionary societies drew their members from more than one denomination. In the mission field, ways were constantly sought to present a common witness and avoid competition. Thus, the ecumenical movement, at least among Protestants, has one of its main roots in the missionary experience of the 19th and 20th centuries.*" Another important result of this missionary movement was that women began to take leadership roles in the churches that were forbidden them at home, such as preaching and organizing congregations.

The word "ecumenical" means "pertaining to the entire inhabited earth", and this was a major thrust of the different churches in the 19th century, and continues presently. This movement was the result of those teachings issued by the French Revolution, and as is written in Revelation 16:14 regarding these frog-like teachings, "*They are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and*

of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” It is imperative to recognize that these events are not just happening by chance. Rather, they have been prophesied so that those who are alive in the last days might recognize and believe! These teachings of humanism and the rights of man that have echoed from the French Revolution have truly permeated the entire world, and they will accomplish the task of gathering all nations, peoples, and religions together to that great day of threshing and destruction that is characterized by the battle of Armageddon.

“Ecumenical sentiments gained ground as the result of various causes that appealed to people across denominational lines: abolitionism, temperance, fundamentalism, liberalism, and so forth. In overseas missionaries, cooperation became mandatory. Bible translations prepared by missionaries of one denomination were used by others, and it soon became apparent that coordination in such efforts would be good stewardship of limited resources. Also, where such vast lands were waiting to hear the word of the gospel, it made sense to come to some agreement as to what denomination or missionary agency would take responsibility for each area. Most important of all, however, was the difficulty in presenting the gospel to people who had never heard of it when what they saw was a number of competing interpretations of the gospel, each claiming to be true. Those who were consumed with burning zeal for the conversion of the world soon became convinced that Christians of different traditions must work together.” (The Story of Christianity).

One of the major results of this new attitude that had developed throughout the 1900’s was the forming of the **World Missionary Conference** in 1910, at which it was decided that questions of “*faith and order*” were forbidden, for it was felt that such discussion could only lead to further alienation. The obvious result is the general “watering down” of teachings and beliefs that was so contrary to the original zeal and doctrinal testimonies held to the death by the originators of the Protestant Reformation. Eventually, this mindset of not speaking of anything controversial for the sake of peace led to the formation of the **World Council of Churches** in 1948. As concluded in *The Story of Christianity*, “*The great legacy of the 19th century was that, for the first time in history, a truly universal Church had been born.*” Even the Eastern Orthodox Church, which had long ago broken from the Roman Catholic Church because they refused to call Mary the “Mother of God”, became involved in this ecumenical movement, though not without some difficulty. Continuing with *The Story of Christianity*, “*They*

**The Eastern Orthodox Church,
now an equal player in the World
Council of Churches**



feared that a willingness to discuss issues of 'faith and order' would be construed as uncertainty as to their own beliefs, or as a willingness to compromise such beliefs. They (at first) refused any official participation in discussion that could be interpreted as attempting to settle matters of faith by negotiation." However, since this original concern, most of the Orthodox churches have become full members of the World Council of Churches.

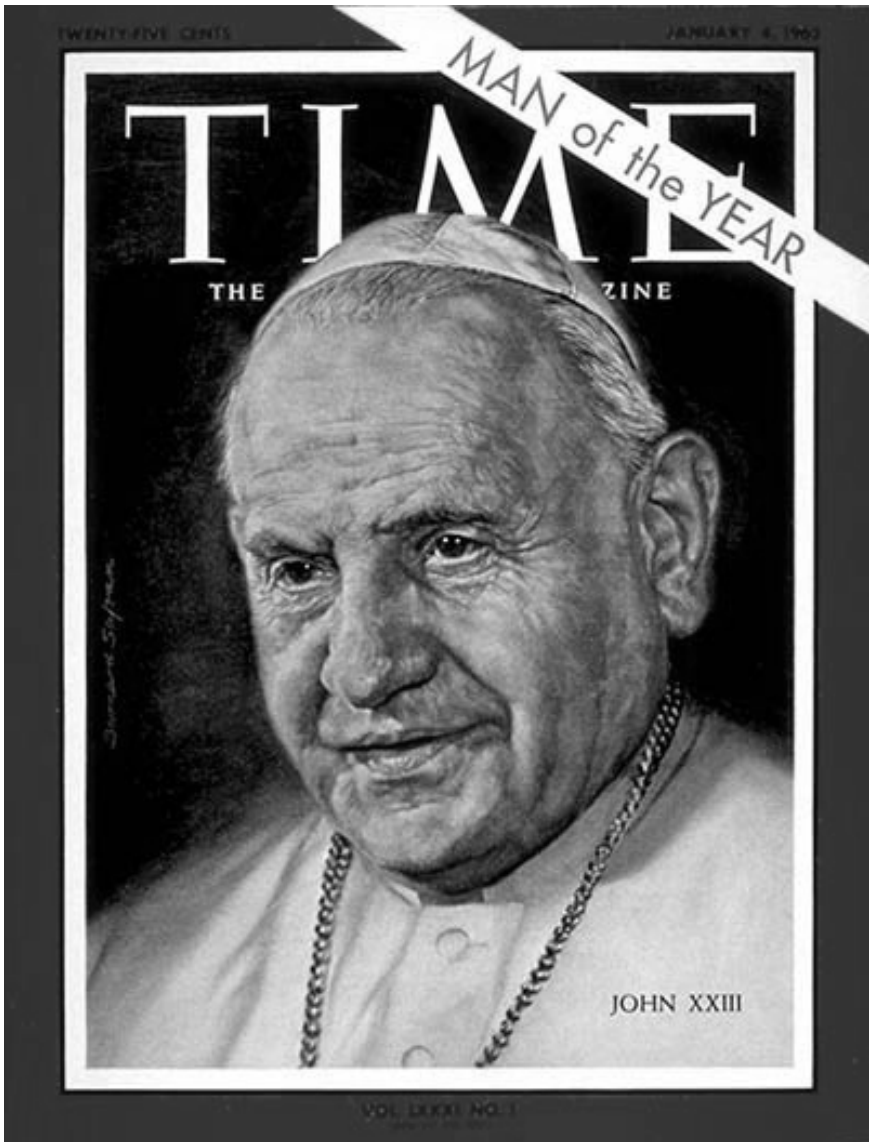
In the meantime, the Catholic Church continued to busy herself, albeit behind the scenes, as would be expected of that system that is described in Scripture as the "vine of

the earth". After coming to the understanding that the world was progressing toward a Democratic future after Germany's defeat in WWII, the Catholic System reacted accordingly.

In 1962, Pope John XXIII created the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, thus indicating the seriousness and desire of the Catholic Church to pursue the reuniting of her Christian daughters under her authority. During the 4th Vatican Council in 1965, it was resolved that it was time to "*manifest a different spirit than had prevailed in Catholicism for centuries,*" and they declared that "*the religious freedom of individuals as well as of groups must be respected, and that all religious groups have the right to organize according to their own principles.*"

The opening statement of the document produced by this Council shows the Catholic Church's intention of becoming the advocate of Human Rights, by stating, "*The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of people of our time, particularly of those who are poor or in any way afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of Christ's followers.*" Thus the Catholic Church has recast herself, a miraculous transformation from the once murderous persecutor of non-conformist "heretics" to the universal "champion of the common man".





Pope John XXIII was largely responsible for the major change in direction of the Roman Church towards Protestant groups, thus meeting them "half way" by creating a "no doctrine zone" and in effect, re-organizing all her rebel daughters back into the Catholic fold under the guise of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Since then the movement has become much broader in scope. The WCC now promotes a universal God applicable to pagan deities; the legitimate universalism of the Name of Deity including such blasphemous titles as "Lady of wisdom", "Lord of Stars", "Mother", etc. The WCC promotes baptism of heathens; ordination of woman; Sodomite behavior; negates the need for atonement; denies the existence of sin; and promotes the concept of "inner light".

The Modern Era

With the advent of the twentieth century, the desire and focus on the reunion of the churches and the aspect of a worldwide Church has, for the most part, become somewhat of a reality. Following the 1910 World Missionary Conference that has been discussed previously, there arose a desire to begin open communication between the Protestant denominations with the intention of discussing the different beliefs that were held. In 1927 in Switzerland, the First World Conference of Faith and Order gathered, with delegates that represented 108 churches, including Protestant, Orthodox, and Old Catholic (those who had left the Roman Catholics when the doctrine of papal infallibility was proclaimed). The method of the meeting called for frank and open discussion of issues, and according to *The Story of Christianity*, the “*drafting of a document that began by stressing those points on which agreement had been reached, and clearly stating those other points on which differences still remained.*”

From these discussions, it became “*clear to all present that their agreements were much more significant than their disagreements, and that a number of the latter could probably be overcome by further dialogue and clarification.*” (This should sound eerily familiar to the Christadelphian today, in that we witness the continued push within the Christadelphian body for reunion at all costs, or faith by negotiation.) As *The Story of Christianity* states regarding this conference, “*Its most significant decision was to agree with the call of the 2nd Conference on Life and Work, gathered at Oxford the previous month, for the founding of a ‘World Council of Churches’.*” These movements resulted in the institution and organization of similar unification conferences, such as the “Practical Christianity Conference,” from which were uttered such phrases as “*the aspirations of the working people towards an equitable and fraternal order, the only one compatible with the divine plan of redemption.*” We must remember that the “frog-like” spirits of Democracy that will gather all nations and peoples to Armageddon are clearly at work, in this instance bringing the worldwide churches together in unity so that they may stand opposed to Christ and the Saints at his return.

In 1948, the World Council of Churches was called to order in Amsterdam, at which 107 churches from 44 nations participated. A most

telling quote of the outcome of this assembly is as follows:

“We bless God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gathers together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad. We are divided from one another not only in matters of faith, order, and tradition, but also by pride of nation, class and race. But Christ has made us one, and he is not divided. In seeking him, we find one another.”

By the time of the 2nd Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1954, there were 163 churches in attendance as the movement experienced tremendous growth. By the time of the 3rd Assembly in 1961, the member churches totaled 197. Later assemblies produced more aggressive results, and in 1983 in Vancouver, in response to the new openness of the Catholic Church through the efforts of Pope John XXIII and the 2nd Vatican Council, the World Council had also established what *The Story of Christianity* terms, “fruitful conversations with the Catholic Church, often leading to collaboration in various projects and studies.” The book goes on to say, “Since that time, there have been hundreds of union conversations throughout the world, and the mergers that have taken place are too numerous to mention.” Thus, while complete political reunion of Catholic and Protestant faiths awaits conclusion following the tide of doctrinal fellowship, true believers are witnessing the fulfillment of Bible prophecy in the latter day development of the Daniel’s fourth beast system. We realize that the Catholic Church is the harlot sitting upon the Beast of Daniel and Revelation, being identified as the “Mother of Harlots” (Rev. 17:5) whose “daughters”, consisting primarily of the Protestant churches, are willingly re-gathering under the headship of Rome and will therefore be unified in their rejection of Christ as the King of Israel and Lord of all the Earth.

Continuing this thought, in November of 1993, Moody Bible Institute in its periodical said, “Today, for good or bad, the lines that separate evangelicals and Roman Catholics are fading. More and more people from both sides are working together. . .” Charles Colson wrote, “It’s high time that all of us who are Christians come together regardless of the difference of our confessions and our tradition. . .”

In 1994 a group of forty prominent evangelical and Catholic scholars and leaders agreed that Christians must stop aggressive proselytizing of one another’s flocks and work together more closely to “contend against all that opposes Christ and His cause.” The statement, signed March 29 in New York further stated, “We dare not by needless and loveless con-

flict between ourselves give aid and comfort to the enemies of the cause of Christ.” Finally, the statement concluded, “Not since the 16th century have Protestants and Catholics ‘joined in a declaration so clear in respect to their common faith and common responsibility’.”

In May 1995, Pope John Paul II issued an encyclical on Christian unity, “That They May be One”. The encyclical was an unprecedented call for Protestant and Orthodox denominations to open dialogue on Christian unity that would accept the authority of the Pope. In response, a prominent group of Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars and Church leaders gathered in South Carolina to re-examine the road to unity. In spite of much disagreement, the consensus was to keep open the dialogue at regular intervals.

On May 12, 1999, the co-chairman of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission issued the document *The Gift of Authority*. It stated “*the need for a universal primacy exercised by the Bishop of Rome [the Pope] as a sign and safeguard of unity within the reunited Church*”.

On October 31, 1999, the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church issued the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification which they said ended a conflict that began with Martin Luther in 1517.

In regard to the Pope and his efforts to effectively gather all nations and people under this common union of people so that he can eventually control them, we recognize how the former Pope John Paul II had traveled throughout the course of his tenure to more countries than any other Pope that had preceded him. An article entitled “*Blessed Journey*” in the *Denver Post* that was printed after his death in 2005 stated, “*The Pope’s energy was best exemplified by the enormous number of trips he took around the world—more than any Pope in history—and the millions of lives he touched.*” One follower said, “*I don’t think people realized how much he tried to do for world peace. He tried to bring nations together.*”

The new Pope Benedict XVI will continue in his footsteps, as shown in an article entitled “*Pope to focus energy on uniting Christians*”. The article states, “*In his first mass outside Rome, he made an impassioned plea for unity in the deeply divided world of Christianity. He pledged to work ‘with all my energy’ toward rebuilding full and visible unity with all the followers of Christ.*”

Pope Benedict's efforts (and that of his predecessor) seem to have paid dividends, witnessed by the fact that according to a May 2005 article entitled "Anglicans say OK to Catholic take on Mary," we read that, "A group of Roman Catholic and Anglican leaders studying the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus, said that after years of talks they have agreed that Catholic teachings on the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary into heaven are consistent with Anglican interpretations of the Bible. The two sides issued a joint statement: 'Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ'. If accepted by the Anglicans, it would overcome one of the major doctrinal disagreements dividing the world's 77 million Anglicans and more than 1 billion Roman Catholics."



Pope Benedict XVI will continue to evangelize the Protestants and bring all of Europe and beyond to recognize his self-acclaimed authority, beginning with a re-write of the European Constitution.

It is clear that the Catholic Church seeks to return to the glory and power that she enjoyed throughout the Middle Ages but lost at the time of the French Revolution. She has feverishly been taking the necessary steps to ensure herself of this prized possession that she has coveted for so many centuries. The following is taken from a "Christian" website:

*"After World War II, the Papacy's rapport with Protestants began to intensify, as the Church identified that the growing movement of Ecumenism seemed the appropriate solution for both Catholics and Protestants in mutually bolstering up their credibility and survival. Although essentially the Papacy has not changed, a few cosmetic alterations have helped the Roman Church have a new look. Vatican II has played a significant role in the face-lift project. Bible studies in the Church, albeit restricted, are now permitted. Meat on Friday is okay. Philanthropic activities around the world abound. Services no longer have to be exclusively in Latin. And the Church of Rome beckons to its 'separated brethren', the Protestant churches. **Have the Protestant churches forgotten why they separated?**"*



It is estimated that the Roman Catholic Church has murdered over 70 million people and maimed and persecuted countless others in the name of papal authority and Catholic primacy.

Having become deceived by the false doctrines created by the Catholic System and the newly found doctrinal similarities that did not previously exist, the Protestant religions are now found to be re-aligning themselves with the pagan system that they originally separated from after correctly identifying her as the Antichrist. In doing so, they have re-joined that system that once persecuted them and spilled the blood of millions of their members throughout the course of history and have ignored the zealous pleadings of their forefathers who fought and wrestled against the apostasy. Most importantly, these Protestant daughters now erroneously look for the fulfillment of that Jesuit doctrine of the Futurist Antichrist that was created in order to deflect and combat the Protestant's original understanding that the Roman Catholic Church was already indeed the Antichrist. Now, the Protestants have come full circle, being re-integrated back into a system they once hated. They

have forsaken their original zeal and beliefs and have forgotten that one of the main reasons they left the Catholic fold is that they correctly identified Catholicism as that Man of Sin found in 2 Thessalonians. These “harlot daughters” now also erroneously believe that this Anti-christ is an actual person who will come to Jerusalem to deceive the nations and who must be conquered by those who remain on the earth.

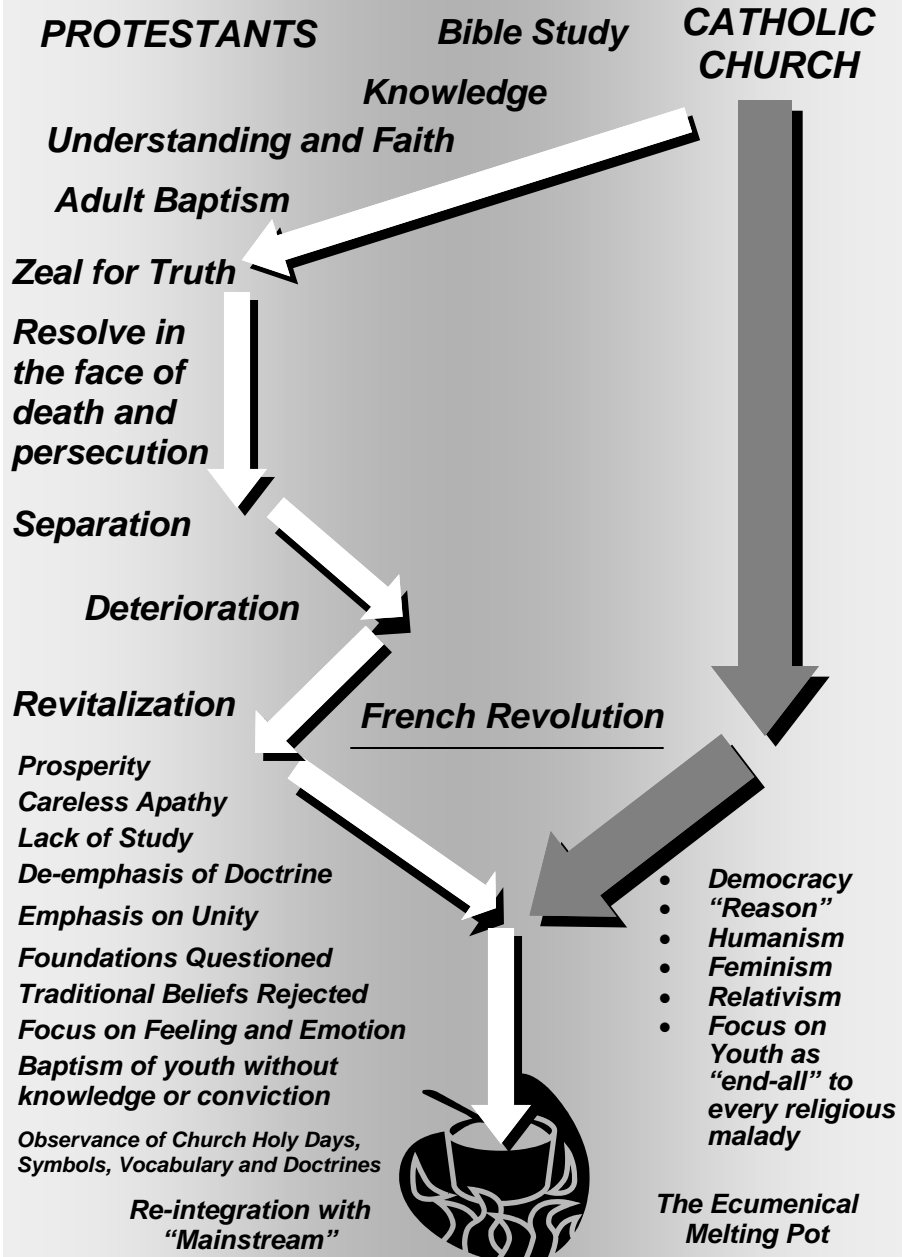
It is because of this re-integration and alignment with the Catholic System that the Protestant churches, who originally had come to so many correct conclusions regarding faith and doctrine, will stand side-by-side with the Catholic Harlot when she opposes Christ and the Saints at the inception of the Kingdom. By accepting the Catholic Church and the Pope as her head rather than Christ and the Saints, these churches will partake of the same destruction as will be poured out upon that Catholic apostacy, as shown in Revelation 14:18-20, which reads, “*And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*”

Christadelphians must be very careful that we do not slip into the same path of error regarding prophetic Scripture in suggesting that “*it does not matter how we interpret prophecy, since it is all in the future anyway*”. We must continue on the “old paths” and correctly identify this Roman system in our studies of prophecy, lest we suffer the same fate as those Protestant churches. This warning is very aptly stated in the following quote taken from Ron Able in his book, *The Man of Sin*:

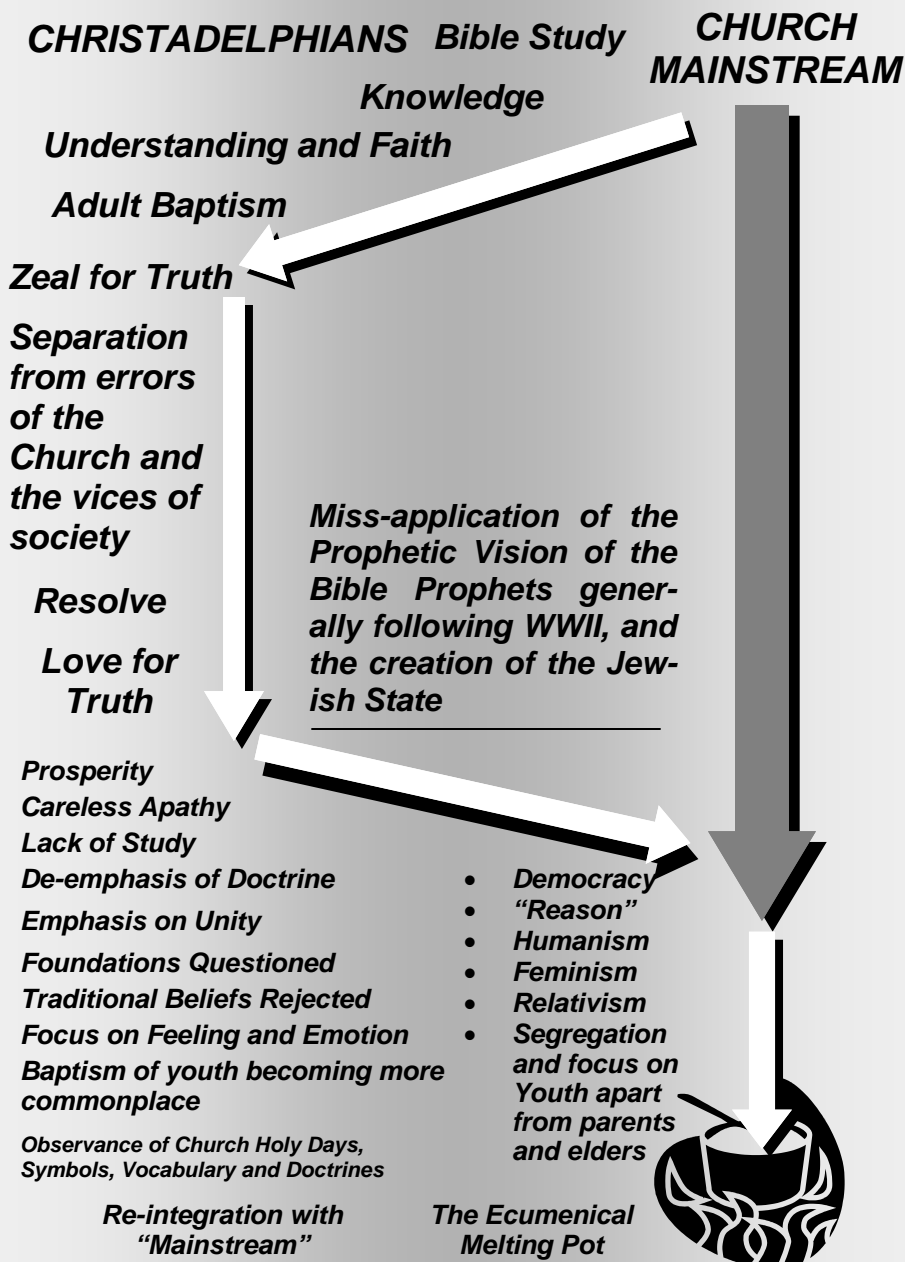
“*Today the original voice of Protestantism is hardly heard; the Jesuits through deceit, cunning, and lies have blind-folded their opponents who now rush headlong to re-unite with the Romish harlot. The Protestant cause has collapsed, and Rome, that butchered their fathers and burnt their Bibles, is now warmly greeted in the smiling face of Pope John Paul II.*” He goes on to ask a very pertinent question that we must consider for ourselves. “*Will Christadelphians repeat the compromise of the Protestant churches? That would be the ultimate tragedy.*” This fear, the writer may add, is the impetus to the subject at hand.



The Separation and subsequent re-integration of Protestants into the Catholic mainstream



The Plight of the Christadelphian Body and the slide toward ecumenism and identification of the Ecclesia with the “Church” mainstream



The Relevance of Protestant History to Christadelphians

The study of history is meaningless if it is only used for academic knowledge and not as a learning tool. Therefore, the writer's intention throughout the course of this study has been to call to mind the pattern of the Protestant Reformation movement—their original separation from Catholicism and the events and ideologies that eventually brought them back to the system that they at one time hated. This historical representation is a stark warning and admonition to the Christadelphian body. If we do not learn from history, we are destined to repeat the mistakes of the Protestants. On the previous pages, you will see that an attempt has been made to identify and categorize the prevailing issues and attributes of the Protestants throughout their 400+ year history, and show the dangerous correlation that we must recognize in the Christadelphian body. Some correlations are more obvious than others, such as the use of the worldly terms like “Church” to identify our assembly as

After years of fervent Bible Study and relentless dedication to finding the truth about religion, John Thomas uncovered the one singular truth beneath the trash heap of Christian dogma and superstition, even the “Hope of Israel”.



opposed to the correct term of “Ecclesia”. The wearing of so-called religious symbols such as the Star of David or the “Holy Cross” (neither of which have any part in Scripture as a sacred symbol) are growing in popularity. Other more troubling problems abound such as worldly and casual attire at Ecclesial activities, worldly friends, time consuming hobbies, children taught by example that participating in team sports is more important than the Bible and attending Ecclesial activities, unwholesome entertainment, exorbitant life styles, and so on, all which may be attributed to a lack of knowledge and understanding of what the Bible has to say on these issues.

As has been discussed, the Reformation Period began with the fervent study of the Scripture, which led the readers to the conclusion that the faith being promulgated by the Catholic Church did not coincide with that which they were reading. Those who understand the history of the Christadelphian community will readily recognize a great similarity with our origins and that of the Protestant Community, in that John Thomas, who pioneered a rediscovery of the Truth, recognized the error of the false religions around him through one medium—a zealous study of the Bible and a prayerful discernment of the Scriptures. Interestingly, this is somewhat again confirmed in *The Story of Christianity*, which states in regard to this time frame, “*Towards the end of the 1700s, what is described as a Second Great Awakening began in New England. This was not marked by great emotional outbursts, but rather by a sudden earnestness in Christian devotion and living. Attendance in worship increased noticeably, and many spoke of having had an experience of conversion.*”

It is the writer’s belief that it is imperative to recognize that this was truly a blessed time period—that period symbolized by the Philadelphia Ecclesia in Revelation 3:8, which states in regard to this time, “*I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door [a time period when scriptural learning increased], and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*”

Those who have read the accounts of the lives of Bro. Thomas and other prominent brethren that built upon his efforts readily understand that this period in time was one in which the study of the Bible was embraced not only by the Christadelphian community, but by the world in general, in that there was a genuine and sincere interest in this topic. This was a special time of re-enlightenment in Scriptural studies and a time when the zeal of the brethren was contagious, and the Body was greatly edified through the works of these brethren. It is important to note that the Philadelphia Ecclesia was not criticized as were the others, demonstrating the special status that it enjoyed while the Truth was rediscovered. As intended, the study and knowledge of the Scriptures led to good works and high moral standards and the zeal of prophecy uncovered, and the Truth that was revealed resulted in a zealous following of the Word of Yahweh.

The call to “come out of her my people” was heard loud and clear by the brethren of the 19th and early 20th century, who responded with a

fervent resolve to separate themselves from the Catholic Church and her now-harlot daughters who were already beginning to reintegrate into that harlot system, having been poisoned by the doctrines of Humanism that issued from the French Revolution. The following is just one of many excerpts from Bro. Thomas that clearly indicates the early understanding of the apostasy of the Catholic System. When considering those writings and proclamations that we have already discussed from the fathers of the Reformation, these words sound eerily similar.

“We reject as pure heathenism, the dogmas taught by the clergy, and popularly assented to, on the topics of heaven, hell, souls, and the devil. We hold, that the Roman Catholic Church is ‘Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, and Abominations of the earth;’ and that all the Names and Denominations of the Fourth Beast dominion, vulgarly styled ‘Christendom,’ which practice infant sprinkling, or sanction the immersion of sinners ignorant, and therefore, faithless, of the truth, are ‘the Harlots and Abominations’ - the ‘Names of Blasphemy of which the scarlet-colored beast is full.’ In the days of Donatus and his brethren, the apostasy had not expanded itself into that ample development with which we are but too familiar. We repudiate it in all its details of theory and practice, as irremediably corrupt, and fit only for capture and destruction by the hand of Deity - by Christ and the Saints. Hence we reject all its institutions - its baptisms, ‘sacraments,’ ordinations, consecrations, unctions, and so forth, as null and void, profane, polluting, and of no avail. We detest the system even to nausea, and ‘spue it out of our mouths’.”

Though the founders of our community did not face persecution to the death as those of the Protestants had before them, it is clear that they succeeded in separating themselves from that apostasy and remained steadfast in their beliefs and understanding that were derived from sincere and zealous study of the Scripture. There was nothing more important to them—not worldly riches, not prestige, not the frivolous pursuits of worldly happiness. Instead, they spent their time in traveling the globe, spreading the “good news” that they had found, and encouraging others to follow them in their desires to worship the Lord in “spirit and in truth”.

Bible students, it is unfortunate and disheartening to recognize that the current state of Christadelphia is a far cry from that which existed 150 years ago. Over the course of time, as with the Protestant religion, the cares of the world have crept into our midst and the philosophies of

man have permeated our understanding. That man-made doctrine of Humanism does not just affect the world around us, but we must recognize it has a profound effect upon the Body of believers as well, and has been the impetus for what will lead to our eventual demise if we do not recognize its symptoms and seek to combat it with all of our might and zeal. The French Revolution in Scripture is described as a “Great Earthquake”, in that it effectively changed the landscape of the political and social order during the last days of the Kingdoms of Men. The French Revolution was the main catalyst in changing the beliefs and theologies of the Protestant churches that will ultimately result in their complete reintegration into the apostasy of Rome that will stand in opposition to Christ’s rule. Let us not be so naive nor pompous to believe that these doctrines have not had a great impact upon the Christadelphian body as well.

Surely it does not take much thought and effort to recognize the same patterns in our midst that the Protestant churches have experienced previously. The cares and riches of the world that were prophesied regarding our time period in history in the letter to the Laodicians has certainly come to fruition in all of its completeness for this generation that precedes the return of our Lord. The diligent study of Scripture has oftentimes been replaced with the frivolous pursuits and vanity that are so prevalent all around us in society. From this apathy and belief that “*we are rich and in need of nothing*” has developed a many-times shallow understanding of Scripture that cannot defend its beliefs and is therefore subject to the invasion of false doctrine. As with the Protestants, study has many times been replaced with emotion and feeling rather than the true and intricate belief that only comes from time and effort being expended in a daily searching of Scripture. Through Biblical knowledge alone we may increase our faith that will ultimately produce good and profitable works in the vineyard for our Father. Regrettably, however, the same factors and traits that have led the Protestants to their demise are readily seen in the Christadelphian body: Lack of study, lack of adequate preparation for teaching Bible class and exhortations, the rejection of what is perceived as dogma or tradition, reunion efforts at all costs, a focus on feeling and emotion (the phileo love) rather than the agape love that is concerned with the best interests of the brother or sister in mind, no matter what difficulty arises. While these issues are very troubling, we must not be caught up in the worldly distractions that surround us every minute of every day. Instead we must look to the “joy set before us” which vision we can only establish through a clear understanding of Bible prophecy and the faith and works that are the result.

What Will the Future Hold?

A sister in my home Ecclesia called my attention to a website that provided the total number of members for various religious denominations. Needless to say, it was very disheartening to see that, since 1970, or a 35-year time span, the Christadelphian community in the United States has decreased from 22,000 members to 12,000. Of course, this includes both Unamended and Amended communities, but nevertheless, the results are frightening. Why the vast decrease? Integration, apathy, the cares of the world, and all of the symptoms that we have been considering have played a large role.

When will we learn that we cannot bring our children up to “love the world”, making its interests (fashion, sports, entertainment, education, career, material wealth, etc.) rank on a higher platform than the Truth? By so doing, we are blinding them with the glitter of the present to the eternal blessings of the future, watering down the Truth’s expectations as not to offend their natural senses. Can we then expect that our children will have any interest in Truth whatsoever? It is insanity so to think.

Where will the Christadelphians be in 10 years, in 25 years, if Messiah’s return is not as soon as we anticipate? Where are the Huguenots? The original faith of the Baptists? The Puritans? The Anabaptists? They have all become swallowed up in Humanism and the religion that their forefathers held to the death has been overcome by apathy. Will we as Christadelphians also suffer this fate? We will, unless we learn from the mistakes of these Protestant religions who at one time zealously held to their convictions—many of which were the Truth—only to have the cares of the world and the doctrine of Humanism steal this faith from them. We must learn from their mistakes, avoid their disastrous outcome, and heed the words of a wise man who stated in Ecclesiastes 1:9:

“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”

We have but one path we can take that leads to life eternal: ***“Do what is right, be valiant for the Truth, teach it without compromise, and all lovers of the Truth will approve you; for all others, you need not care a rush”*** (Bro. Thomas as quoted in *Christadelphian Standards*).



References:

- Eureka, An Exposition of The Apocalypse, By Bro. John Thomas, Volume III, (Logos Edition), Volume IIB Pg. 206 to 332 (Red Edition).
- The Story of Christianity, Volume 2, The Reformation to the Present Day, By Justo L. Gonzalez.
- The National Huguenot Society (including graphics and historical data), Mr. Ken Cutis, 9033 Lyndale Ave. South, Suite 108, Bloomington, MN 55420-3535.
- The National Huguenot Society of South Africa.
- The Huguenot Society of Virginia.
- Christadelphian Standards - Comprising Extracts and Short Articles restating the original Christadelphian stand in Faith and Practice.
- Www.inplainsite.org - The truth about the World Council of Churches.
- Graphics: Various internet resources on the history of the Protestant Reformation.

Notes

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Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

***"Those who don't know history are
destined to repeat it."***

Edmund Burke



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