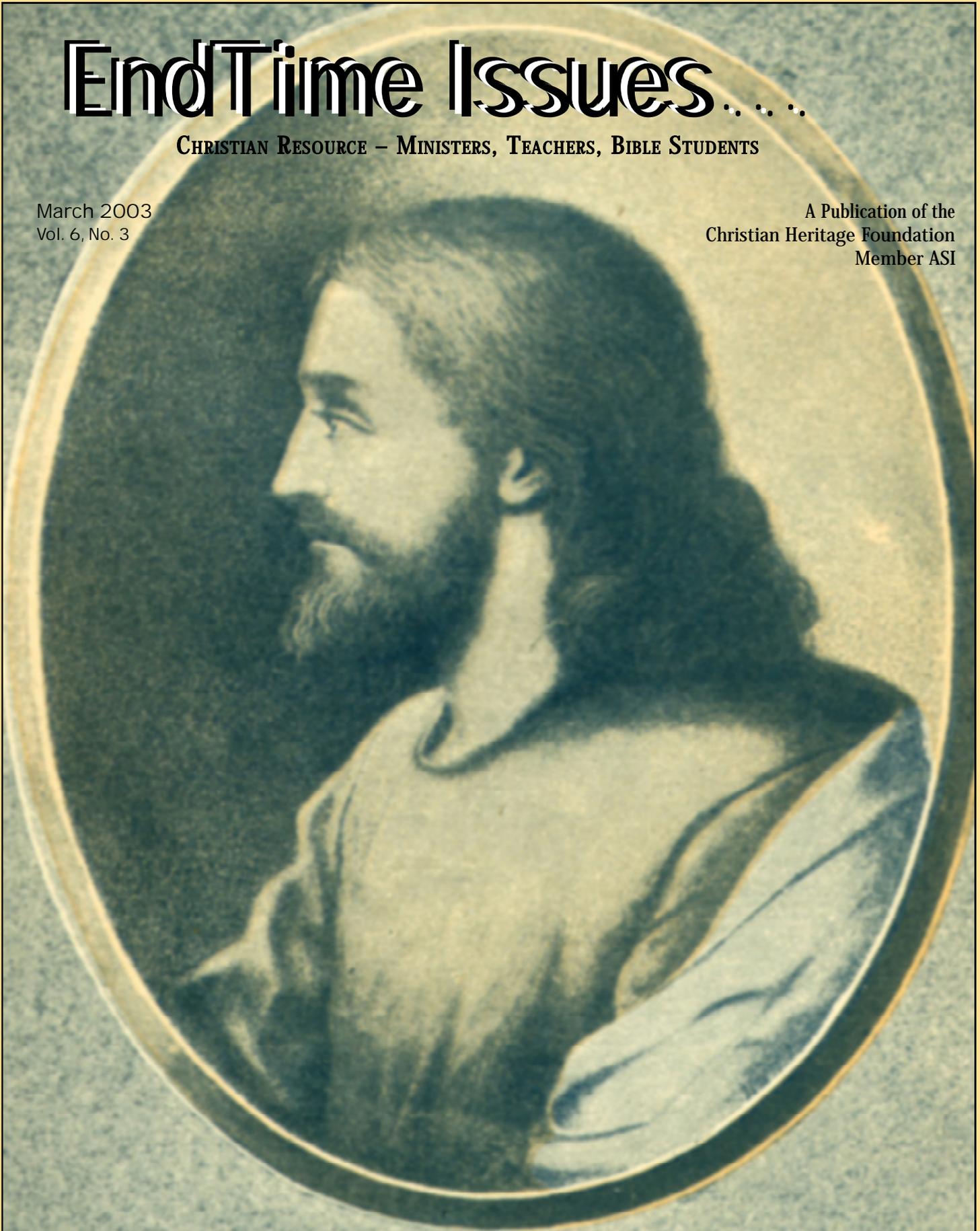


End Time Issues

CHRISTIAN RESOURCE – MINISTERS, TEACHERS, BIBLE STUDENTS

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THE MESSIAH

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EndTime Issues... e-Magazine

12000 W. Engebretsen Road
Granite Falls, Washington 98252 USA
Phone: 360-691-4524
E-mail: christianheritagefo@earthlink.net
Web: www.endtimeissues.com

Franklin S. Fowler Jr., M.D., Editor
Jeanne C. Fowler, Layout Editor
Kenneth D. Bevins, Internet Administrator

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

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

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As the demands for the services of this ministry increase, so does the need for its support. This work started with great *sacrifice* and *faith*. It continues under those same banners.

We need your support in prayers and funds. If our financial basis was broadened, it would open the doors for a greater number to hear and see these special truths for this time.

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The Trumpet Sounds – No One Seems to Care

An intensity of epic proportions has broken upon this world. Moves are underway to impeach President Bush,¹ Pope John Paul II is frantically trying to avert the war in Iraq by tacking an exile provision for Saddam Hussein on the next United Nations resolution,² many across this nation are calling for a boycott of French products because of obstructionism, North Korea is threatening to test fire potentially lethal missiles, and environmentalists are crying foul over possible Alaska oil drilling. Confusion and unrest are widespread.

Pastors and many large religious organizations are once again calling for a national revival. Craig von Buseck, producer of the Christian Broadcasting Network³ asked pointedly, "What will be the result if the hedge of protection that has been around the United States comes down?" He noted that we would be vulnerable to physical and spiritual terrorism. (Prophecy does note that a point in time will come when national ruin will come to this nation.⁴)

von Buseck then said, "Just as serious as the threat from the outside is the danger of America crumbling from within. The history of the world is littered with the carcasses of great civilizations that have been destroyed, not from external attack, but from internal moral collapse.

"If there was ever a time in the history of mankind for revival, it is now.

"The Church Needs revival.

"If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land' (2 Chronicles 7:14 NKJV)."

There is an alarm that is reverberating throughout Christian churches here in the

United States. An ill defined subliminal fear is gripping many hearts.

The outcry is related more to what might happen to our nation, its assets or people than it is over the great issues of eternity. A revival call is being heard everywhere. It portrays a secularized reason for knowing God. Like most of the bystanders at the baptism of Jesus, only a few saw or really heard the display of heavenly grace. Today, very specific things are occurring that herald the soon coming of Jesus, but the trumpet isn't being heard. Christians are waiting for some *specific sign* to be motivated to be ready. Some expect specific laws restricting worship. Others anticipate Jewish work on the Temple Mount in Old Jerusalem.

Jesus' words to the pharisees and Sadducees in Galilee, "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Matthew 16:3. The issues of turmoil throughout the world are important to know about. But unless they are discerned in a spiritual motif, we are hypocrites.

Long ago in a dual prophecy, the young prophet Amos gave warning after warning to God's people. "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Amos 3:6.

God's wrath is about to be poured out in judgments. He warned through Amos that economic collapse was coming (4:6), natural disasters would follow (4:7), lack of water would supervene (4:8) and terrible plagues would devastate (4:9-10). Amos described a lion roaring (symbolizing a judgment was about to come), a trumpet was sounding, "repent," but no one seemed to care. This draws upon the sad imagery of Revelation 3, where the Laodicean Christians felt a need of nothing (3:17). Jesus cried out, "Let me

in." as He banged on the door. They weren't inclined to respond.

Then Amos pled for Bethel – the house of God where worship is made. There was a time when it could be said of the place of Bethel (that sacred place of worship), "The Lord is in this place" (Genesis 28:16). But the cry now regarding so many churches and "professed" Christians: "The Lord *was* in this place."

Judgment is about to begin at the house of God (Revelation 11:1-2). Amos pled, "Seek the Lord – lest he breath out like fire into the house of Joseph." (5:6). His protection is about to be withdrawn.

As unrest and turmoil mount, it will soon be seen that there is no healing balm left. The cry is going out to turn to the Lord. It is a final appeal to have an eternal friendship with Jesus. Judgments

are coming. Most fearful of all, the time to finish a covenant relationship with God is running out. Few realize that a point in time will be reached where their eternal destiny has been forever made. Few Christians realize that in Bethel judgment comes before the rest of the world. It is time to solicit the transforming power of heaven. It is time to fully grasp that salvation is a verb and not a noun – a covenant activity. It is now time to make everything second place to having a heart fully submitted to Him.

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¹*World Net Daily* – 3/12/03.

²*Sunday Herald*, Scotland – 3/9/03.

³CBN.com – 3/10/03

⁴*Selected Messages*, bk 2, p. 373.

POPEDOM

From Inception to the Demise of Pope John Paul II,
Its Nature and Purpose

By Richard Bennett

We are, again, honored to have this insight from Richard Bennett, a former priest in the Roman Catholic Church. He was Jesuit trained in Ireland by the Dominican Order and later at the Angelicum University, Rome, Italy. He finished his studies in 1964. After a life-threatening accident, he spent 14 years contrasting Biblical truth with Catholicism. In 1986 he made the step, by God's grace, to leave the Roman Catholic Church because of what he discovered. He is articulate and a deep thinker, evangelist, writer and apologist now working at Dayspring Fellowship, Reformed Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. www.bereanbeacon.org; – www.the-highway.com



Richard Bennett

Part II: The Claim and Boast to have the Keys of the Apostle Peter

A holdover of medieval tyranny, the Papacy is the bulwark and foundation of the Church of Rome. It also is the pride and joy of devoted Catholics, giving them, they are assured, a direct link to Jesus Christ. And in these latter days, it appears that the world has rekindled its love of the Papacy. Against the voices of Scripture, history and reason, the Papacy declares its Church to be founded on the Apostle Peter alone, stating that he was the first bishop of Rome thus bequeathing all of his authority to subsequent Popes and Bishops. This is the lynch pin of Roman Catholicism. Officially the Church of Rome states,

“The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the ‘rock’ of his Church....This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church’s very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.”¹

The whole Roman Catholic structure is based on three false presuppositions:

1. That the text of Matthew 16:16-20 means that Peter was the foundation of the Church; that the Church was built on him;
2. That Peter went to Rome and was the first bishop in Rome;
3. That Peter’s successors are the bishops of Rome under the primacy of the Pope.

(It is worth mentioning here, that the list of Popes concocted by Rome is a fable. In its humble beginning,

the church at Rome was guided by a plurality of elders, and not one single bishop. Then throughout its latter history, as two, even three, concurrent Popes vied for the throne, intrigue and deceit crowned the victor.)

Presupposition 1: The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church, i.e., foundation of His Church.

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” (Matthew 16:16-20).

Here we are taught that whatever contemporaries apprehended Christ to be, plainly the disciples had a distinct knowledge of Him, expressed without hesitation by Peter on their behalf. The Lord attributes this intuitive knowledge that He was “the Christ” (Anointed-Messiah) and “the Son of the Living God” (Co-eternal with the Father and therefore likewise God) to be a revelation from His Father in heaven. It is this revelation, the Lord declared, that would become the rock, or foundation stone, upon which He would build His Church. This cannot be argued against, as it is the

very concluding subject of the Lord's charge to the disciples, "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." To hold the view that Peter himself is the rock is to deliberately pervert the plain sense of the Lord's own words. To infer that the Church was built upon a mere man, and not upon God's revelation of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, is to insult Christ's doctrine and corrupt God's Word. Peter could be the foundation for nothing, being called "Satan,"² or adversary, by the Lord Himself, and later, formally rebuke by the Apostle Paul for compromising the Gospel message.³

The Holy Spirit confirmed the true meaning of the verse by having it written in Greek. The word for Peter in Greek is petros. It is masculine in gender and signifies a piece of rock, larger than a stone. In contrast, the word for rock in Greek is petra. It is feminine in gender, describing bedrock, massive in size, and immovable. The Church was thus founded upon a massive bedrock, not a mere chip of granite. That bedrock is the God-given revelation by the Father in heaven. Congruent with this revelation is the distinct commission given to Peter in verse 19. "Unto thee," that is, to Peter personally, was given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven." This prophetic declaration of the Lord was literally fulfilled when Peter was made the first instrument of opening the same revelation to the Jews, "God hath made that same Jesus...both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), and to the Gentiles, (Acts 10:34-44). The power of the keys was concerning this same revelation of the Person of Christ, actuated by the initial proclamation of this revelation to the Jews and to the Gentiles and was fulfilled by the Apostle Peter, and by him alone. Succession to this prophetic commission cannot be countenanced, since there was but one first opening of the kingdom for the Jews as for the Gentiles. The second part of verse 19 was a commission for the responsibility of binding and loosening. This is concerning Church discipline and was given as well to the other Apostles, as is seen in Matthew 18:18. The whole focus, therefore, of the Matthew 16:16-20 text is on the divinity of Jesus as "the Son of the living God," and His role as Messiah or Christ, this is the rock on which the Church is built.

The Preposterous claims for a Pontiff Christ

The Roman Catholic Church abuses Matthew 16:16-20, twisting it to say that Peter, as first Pope, had the divine attribute of infallibility and that he also is the Christ, having the title of "the true vicar of Christ."⁴

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What is such absurdity but understanding the Lord's words to mean that Peter was also "the Son of the living God" and "the Christ." "Nay!" Rome will say, "We claim not such." But logic will endure no other path for their folly. She may not have worded it thus, but reasoned understanding of her doctrine does. To take the doctrine of Jesus being "the Son of the living God" and "the Christ" and to apply it to Peter and his self-styled successors, the Roman Pontiffs, is at once, a most ludicrous and horrendous assumption of the offices of the Lord. This is precisely what the Roman Catholic Church does. Further, she not only claims the divine attribute of infallibility for her Pope, her equivalent to being "the Son of the living God," she also decrees that the Pope is rightly called "Most Holy,"⁵ and the "Holy Father,"⁶ usurping the very title of the first person of the Trinity.

Christ's power and the Pontiff Christ's power

Jesus as the Christ has full, supreme, and universal power. This prerogative is His alone and any pretension by another is heinous and despicable. Yet the Church of Rome does not blush to claim the same power which is solely Christ's, for her Pope, "[T]he Roman Pontiff...as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."⁷ Consequent to Christ Jesus being the very Son of God is the necessity for every human creature to be entirely subject to Him in faith and practice. This is what Rome also holds for her Supreme Pontiff, the Pope.

"Furthermore, we declare, say, define, and proclaim to every human creature that they by necessity for salvation are entirely subject to the Roman Pontiff."⁸

The very fullness of grace and truth belongs to Christ Jesus, who by nature is Divine. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," the Apostle John proclaims, "and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." Believers receive grace for grace but the very fountain – the very fullness of grace and truth – belongs to Christ Jesus alone. All that went before Christ Jesus was but typical and in representation, and all that comes after Him is but a reflection of the glory that is His alone.

The Pontiff's lust for control is not satiated by usurping supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, for he alleges further that the Church, his Papal domain, has been allotted the very fullness of grace and truth. "...[T]he very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church"⁹ is the official wording of Catholic

dogma which settles the issue, and none may contest. Well might the Pharisees have chided our Lord, "Who can forgive sins but God . . . and the Roman Catholic Church!"⁹ The Pontiff Christ has willed it so – "There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive."¹⁰

Outrageous and pretentious as these claims are, the Pontiff goes further still, claiming the power to judge in the temporal sphere, even those who hold the highest civil office in a state. Present Catholic law asserts without apology, "It is the right of the Roman Pontiff himself alone to judge...those who hold the highest civil office in a state..."¹¹ This is in antipathy with Christ who declared emphatically "my kingdom is not of this world." There was another that claimed the kingdoms of the world were his to do with as he pleased; we would do well to dismiss Papal pretensions with Christ's words – "Get thee hence, Satan!"¹² The end result of the Church of Rome's interpretation concerning what Christ said to Peter is the creation of a Pontiff Christ who is also claimed to be "The Holy Father," with inerrant infallible teaching authority, and power, and that over all creatures in both spiritual and temporal realms. Such an absurd office was foretold by the Apostle Paul when he prophesied, "The son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."¹³ In place of "the Christ, the Son of the living God" has been erected the Pontiff Christ, the son of perdition. The Papacy at its core office and institutional essence, professes to be an entire substitute for the true Christ and His work. It must therefore be identified and denounced in accordance with Holy Scripture as the seat of Antichrist.

Presupposition 1: That the Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church, is not only a proven lie, but also the superstructure of infallible Pontiff Christs, with full, supreme, and universal power reigning sovereignly, is shown to be the age old pretense of Satan. This is the Antichrist as represented in Revelation 17:4-5, as seated in Babylon, the spiritual seat of arrogance, oppression, and pride.

Presupposition 2: That Peter went to Rome and was the first bishop in Rome.

The Scripture is utterly silent about the Apostle Peter going to Rome. His visits to Samaria, Lydda, Joppa,

Caesarea and Antioch were carefully recorded. But there is simply no mention made of his going to Rome, which is essential to establish the Roman Catholic position. Certainly the Holy Spirit would not have passed over an event so significant and essential. In his letter to the Romans the Apostle Paul offers no salutation to Peter, as he greets many in the Church at Rome. The same Apostle Paul, being at Rome in the reign of Emperor Nero, never once mentions Peter in any of his letters written from Rome to the churches and to Timothy, although he does remember very many others who were with him in the city. While these two Roman Catholic presuppositions are conjectural, they are not the fabric on which faith is based, which is the Written Word of the Lord. The second presupposition of the Roman Catholic Church is therefore a deception, pure and simple.

Presupposition 3: That Peter's successors are the bishops of Rome under the primacy of the Pope.

In Scripture there is no mention of successors to Peter or the Apostles. The criteria for apostleship are given in Acts 1:21-22. The position of the Apostles was unique to them and to Paul, all directly chosen by Christ Jesus with no hint of succession. In the New Testament, the Apostles appointed elders and deacons, and not a line of Apostles.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the Roman Catholic Church attempts to defend her position in the name of personal succession from the Apostles. But if we are constrained to conceive an "apostolic succession," then the true successors of the Apostles are those who continue "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."¹⁵ If that doctrinal foundation is destroyed, speak not of "apostles" but rather of "apostates." "Apostolic succession" without apostolic doctrine is a fraud. The real roots of the Papacy are those of the Roman Emperor and not the Lord Christ Jesus. The Lord commanded, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so."¹⁶ Christ absolutely proscribed all domination in his kingdom. The same condemnation of worldly ways was repeated by the Apostle Peter, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock."¹⁷ The Roman Catholic Church is not the successor to St Peter, but rather to the Roman Empire, as her hierarchical and totalitarian control demonstrate.

Conclusion

In the book of Revelation the Apostle John portrays the fourth, or ten-horned beast as representing the Roman Empire, and so the angel interprets it. The Papacy belongs to the second or ecclesiastical stage of the Roman Empire. In Chapter 17, this ten-horned beast bears a mystical woman, dressed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold, precious stones, and pearls, a harlot, and the mother of harlots and abominations. She is the guilty seducer of kings, the cruel persecutor of saints, intoxicated with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus. We strive in vain seeking such explicit fulfillment in any but the Pontiff's Rome. She is the only Church that is also a City, a Civil State and that sits also on the Seven Hills.¹⁸ Her official colors are scarlet and purple.¹⁹ For 605 years the fires of her Inquisition scorched every country in Europe. Such years of cruelty and torture bespeak her and none else. She has made war with the saints, overcome them, worn them out, and would have totally crushed and annihilated them, but for the sustaining hand of the Lord upon them. History corresponds to prophecy as deep calls to deep. Throughout history here has been only one apostate Mistress of the world; the one Babylon the great, the one City is that which is also a Harlot.

The Papacy is about to have John Paul II retire or die, so that a new head may reign on which she can continue to seduce the religious world. Now is not the time for furtive whispers, but rather shouts from housetops ascribing to her, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." The Pontiff's power, however, is also temporal and political with ambassadors, civil concordats, with civil rights and power in real estate, education, medicine, and commerce, menacing the very political freedom of a Nation.²⁰ Believing on Christ and believing on the Pontiff Christ are antithetic, and incompatible positions. Wherever is found an "altar" instead of a communion table, a "priest" instead of a preacher, ceremonies instead of sound doctrine, sacraments instead of saving grace, traditions instead of the Written Word of God, this is not in the Church of the living God but the tangled, twisted web of the Pontiff. And when this Harlot announces to the world that the Pontiff's throne is vacant and awaits election of a new Pope by her cardinals, it is but to fill Satan's seat.

"Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to

her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."²¹

Those persons or nations submitting themselves to her and her Pontiff Christ, know neither life nor freedom, for only in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, is found freedom and Eternal life. Believe on Him and Him alone "and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness"²² but rather expose the Pontiff Christ for that which he is, "the son of perdition"²³ and the woman who rides on him to be none other than "that that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."²⁴

<http://www.bereanbeacon.org/>

(Endnotes)

- ¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994) Para. 881. Catechism hereafter.
- ² Matthew 16:23
- ³ Galatians 2:11-14
- ⁴ Henry Denzinger, "Unam Sanctum", Nov. 18, 1302, The Sources of Catholic Dogma, Tr. By Roy J. Deferrari, 30th ed. of Enchiridion Symbolorum, rev. by Karl Rahner, S. J. (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1957) #694. (Hereafter Denzinger). See also Catechism of the Catholic Church (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994) #882 & #936.
- ⁵ Denzinger, #649.
- ⁶ The Catholic Encyclopedia, Robert Broderick, ed. (Nashville, TN: Thos. Nelson Inc., 1976) p. 217.
- ⁷ Catechism, Para. 882.
- ⁸ Denzinger, #468-469 (Decree of Pope Boniface VIII).
- ⁹ Declaration "Dominus Iesus", On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, Sect. 16, Sept. 5, 2000.
- ¹⁰ Catechism, Para. 982.
- ¹¹ Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Ed. (Washington DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983) Canon 1405, Sec. 1.
- ¹² Matthew 4:10.
- ¹³ II Thessalonians 2:3, 4.
- ¹⁴ The terms overseer and elder/pastor are interchangeable. See Acts 20:17, 28; I Peter 5:1-4.
- ¹⁵ Acts 2:42.
- ¹⁶ Luke 22:25-26.
- ¹⁷ I Peter 5:3.
- ¹⁸ Broderick, pp. 528-529.
- ¹⁹ Broderick, pp. 95-96.
- ²⁰ See John Cornwell, Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999) and John Robbins, Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church (Unicoi, TN 37692: The Trinity Foundation, 1999) ISBN 0-940931-52-4.
- ²¹ Proverbs 7:24.
- ²² Ephesians 5:11.
- ²³ II Thessalonians 2:3.
- ²⁴ Revelation 17:18.



“ Faithful Unto Death”

Though politically influenced atrocities seem to get the media spotlight, each month 13,000 people are martyred somewhere in this world! Most of these are Christians. In addition, in 2001 (the latest accurate date), 29,920,000 new refugees were created because of civil war, ethnic violence and religious cleansing.¹

Most persecution and death occur in Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Somalia, China, Iran, Morocco, Libya, Egypt and Algeria.² Every life snuffed out for Jesus has a story. Every person imprisoned or sent to hard labor has a suffering family. The data noted above mean, on the average, 433 people die each day because of their convictions. Few in North America grasp the solemn import of those lives being tortured.

A recent publication: *Death by Government* by R. J. Rummel, a University of Hawaii political science professor, has documented that during the 20th century, an estimated 203,000,000 people were killed by their governments either through war or through mass killings. The nations that were responsible for the greatest number of human slaughters were atheistic and/or totalitarian like former Communist Russia, Communist China, Nazi Germany, Cambodia, Vietnam, North Korea, and others. The reason for most of the deaths was religious hatred. The Islamic nation of Turkey is high on the list of those countries that deliberately killed their citizens. Turks massacred an estimated one and a half million Armenian Christians between 1915 and 1923 in what is considered the first genocide in the 20th century.”

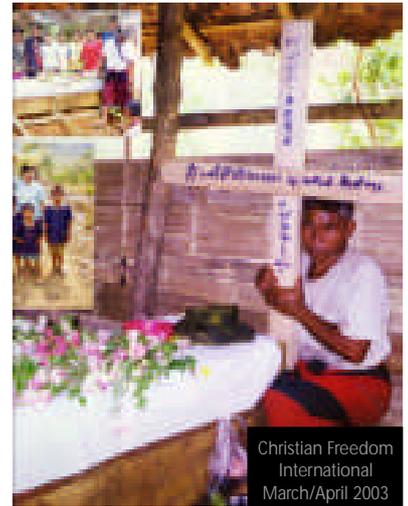
Jesus warned: “take heed to yourselves: for they

shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten ... and shall cause them to be put to death.” Mark 13:9, 12. Saw Htun Tin, a Burmese backpack medic, was killed a few weeks ago by governmental militia because he was heading to a remote Christian village to help the sick. A

grieving wife and four children are left behind.³

[In the center] ... are Hmong Christian believers escaping a jungle fortress in Vietnam because of torture. Gia A Dia was targeted there for his faith, and jailed for 15 days. He only had water and grass to eat (growing on the floor of his cell). When released, the police came into his village and destroyed every home. Here they are moving to another Vietnamese Providence to get away from the persecution.

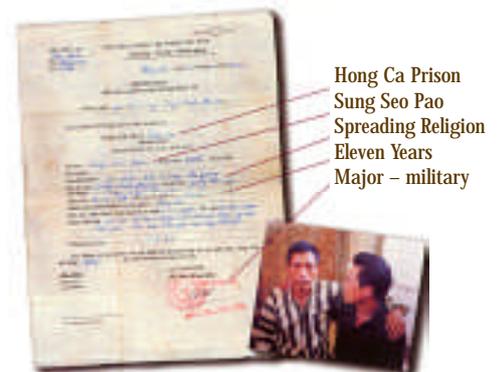
Sung Seo Pao, an evangelist, was first jailed in 1990 for his faith [below]. He was released after eight months. 1995 he was unexpectedly handcuffed in his home, drug to the police station because he listened to a religious radio program and then shared his faith. He was beaten severely. You can see his picture (stripped clothes), the document sentencing him shows he is to be incarcerated for eleven years. What has he left behind – a wife and five children. One of his children was born while he’s been in prison. He has seen her once when mission funds came to pay for the wife’s travel to the prison



A mourner of Saw Htun Tin, a Burma Martyr



Hmong Christians Fleeing Jungle Home SE Asia



for a brief visit.

How does she survive? By working in the fields each day with two of her children, ages 8 and 9.

The converts to Jesus are precious. Many of those are obtained through their own blood as they accept the cleansing blood of Jesus. These believers [to the right] are being baptized, illegally, in a North Vietnam jungle.

“Christian Martyr’s Story – The Hidden Stones in Our Foundation.

“You are of our blood, and unless you return to our traditions, I will take back your blood myself!” shouted Brother U Maung Than’s uncle, therefore making Brother Than a marked man by his own family in his homeland – Myanmar.

“On several occasions, one of Than’s friends tried to visit him to encourage him in his witness in the area of Southern Chin State but was prevented by monsoons, floods and terrible road conditions.

“Finally, in March 2002, two Christians named Maung Maung and Kam Lian Ceu were able to reach Than’s area but found out that he had been arrested and imprisoned on trumped-up charges.

“Maung and Kam learned of the seriousness of Than’s case as well as the intense hatred of his faith in Christ: The military dictatorship had used the uncle’s hatred of Brother Than’s faith to sentence him to death. For two days the two men diligently sought permission to visit him in prison but were continually rejected.

“On the third day, the military police in that area informed Maung and Kam that if they wanted to meet Than, they would have to go that day. They were ordered not to speak with Than.

“Maung and Kam traveled with Than and the police to a nearby wooded area where they were



Illegal Baptism – Hanoi

surprised to receive permission to speak with him. But before any of the men could share some words of encouragement, Than pleaded with them: ‘I am very glad you’re with me. Please go to my area and share the gospel? this is our responsibility, that the gospel cover the entire neighboring area. You must be faithful unto

death.”

“Suddenly, one of the police shouted at Than, ‘You have spoken too much!’ He drew out his pistol and shot Than in the head.

“The men were permitted to bury Than’s body.

“However, two of Than’s friends who were present at his execution were sternly warned to recant their Christian faith, or the same would happen to them.

“Brother Than’s dying wish was for his friends to be ‘faithful unto death’ (Revelation 2:10). We may never witness a friend’s martyrdom for his faith in Christ, but we can heed Than’s last words and share about the One who possesses the ‘crown of life’ with our unsaved friends.”⁴

“Why is there so much silence? Why are atrocities like these going on every day and receive virtually no attention?”

Robert Balzola of the NSW Knights of the Southern Cross recently spoke out in Sidney, Australia: “One of the greatest reasons that the persecution of Christians around the world has now reached such a massive scale was that no Christian organization appears to be doing anything about it on a diplomatic scale.

“Many refugees who come to Australia claim asylum because they say they were persecuted in their own countries because they were Christians, but at the government level there is systematic denial of the problem,’ he says.

“There are 10 million Christians in China who also face persecution. But now China is in the World Trade Organization and there are increased opportunities for trade, the Australian government doesn’t want to raise it.”⁵

Balzola is right. The concern over persecution holds little political value in light of the “greater



Brother of U Maung than prays at his graveside

issues.” In diplomatic and legislative circles it is a “local” “cultural” “civil” matter. Addressing it is a barrier to international relations and trade. It gets swept away. Every year the U.S. State Department produces a major document on global persecution. Every year it is filed away and not addressed. As with the abortion issue, the word murder is avoided. So with the persecution issue, the word murder is avoided. The outcome? The world is quickly adopting a concept that drives its political agenda. “The end justifies the means” if it is for the “common good.” The Bible talks about this psychological posturing in an end-time setting.

The U.S. – the papacy – the world will persecute God’s true people, the pure woman, the remnant on a vast scale for the greater benefit of all.

The evolution towards adopting justifiable homicide (the Bible calls persecution) is rapidly

becoming acceptable, first through tolerance and soon through active participation. The “culture of life” is being promoted by governmental and non-governmental agencies, but tolerance of a “culture of death” is driving their ideologies. This mind-set and the denial of persecution are signs of the end.

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Revelation 2:10. How valuable is your commitment to Jesus?

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²www.houstonperspectives.com/missiontrivia.html

³Christian Freedom International, March/April 2003, “Burma’s Persecuted Church”

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⁵The Catholic Weekly, Sidney, 12/1/02.



Health Quest

The Metabolic Syndrome

Receiving growing attention in the medical literature is what is being dubbed “The Metabolic Syndrome” – formerly known as “Syndrome X” or the “Insulin Resistance Syndrome.” Coronary artery disease (CAD) was the leading cause of death in the U.S. (460,000 in the year 2000). Risk factors leading to CAD and death have been under study for decades. This “new disease” addresses some of those.

The Metabolic Syndrome is a special combination of those risk factors. These are:

- Older age (greater than 40)
- High blood pressure (greater than 135/85)
- Low level of HDL (high density lipoprotein) (less than 40 for men and 50 for women)
- High levels of triglycerides (> 150 g/dL)
- High plasma level of glucose (fasting > 110 g/dL)
- Obesity (BMI > 25)*

These are associated with resistance by the body to insulin in those 20 years of age or older. This is serious and raising growing concern within the medical community, since early death is a result of this entity.

The Dilemma

What is the main culprit behind this? Diet and sedentary life style. This comes as a bolt of lightning to physicians. They are fascinated by this syndrome scientifically, but in the very literature in which it is being described to them, the authors raise the question as to whether it's worth treating! Why? Patients don't follow instructions when it means a lifestyle change! When they do (and it is rare), it takes so much time the insurance companies question payment. This is a catch-22 that defies a good

professional answer at this time. The doctor will likely do studies to diagnose it, then make general recommendations – to do his legal duty – but patient attitude and insurance regs are almost impenetrable barriers. Doctors' real interest waits for something to happen. Then the insurance company will pay.

The Cause

The bottom line:¹ Dietary sugar – dietary sugar – dietary sugar – lack of exercise.

The Treatment Formula² [This stern of a recommendation is usually not seen in a medical journal, but this was published last November.]

Beverage – No regular soda, sugar-sweetened ice tea, soft drinks, sports drinks (i.e., Gatorade), alcohol or fruit juices – use water instead.

Snacks and Deserts – No cookies, crackers, pretzels, candy bars, cakes, pies or ice cream – use fruit or small serving of nuts instead.

Bread, pasta, potatoes – No white bread, dinner rolls, bagels, white pasta or rice, mashed or fried potatoes – use whole grain foods and potatoes with skin.

Fruits and vegetables – Use 5+ servings of fruits and vegetables each day. There is an inverse association between volume of the foods and hardening of the arteries. Also, diets that includes at least 4 of each per day have lower blood pressures. Snack (if you must) on celery or carrot sticks (without dips) or a small glass of V8 vegetable juice).

Fat intake – No fats that are solid at room temperature; avoid red meats, full fat dairy products, butter, cheese, hot dogs, luncheon meats, bacon, sausage, ice cream and baked deserts – use olive, canola and nut oils.

Salt – Shaker not on table. Avoid fast foods and prepared dinners.

Exercise – 150 minutes per week of moderate activity.

This may all seem like a “bunch of do’s and don’ts.” That’s exactly what they are. It is a direct attack on how we normally live from day to day. That “normal” life is not working out well. Since physicians have a growing reluctance to address lifestyle changes, the onus is on “I looked for the enemy and discovered it was me.”

There’s a deeper issue to all of this. One that is often avoided or side-stepped.

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

“That perfection of character which the Lord requires is the fitting up of the whole being as a temple for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God will accept of nothing less than the service of the entire

human organism. It is not enough to bring into action certain parts of the living machinery. All parts must work in perfect harmony, or the service will be deficient. It is thus that man is qualified to cooperate with God in representing Christ to the world. Thus God desires to prepare a people to stand before Him pure and holy, that He may introduce them into the society of heavenly angels.”³

That is why we have Health Quest in the EndTime Issues... e-magazine.

* BMI (body mass index) – calculated as weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters.

Franklin S. Fowler Jr., M.D.

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¹Park, Woo Park, et al.; Archives of Internal Medicine, vol. 163, 2/24/03.

²Saapary, Philippe O., et al.; Patient Care, 11/2002, pp. 75-88.

³Our High Calling, p. 265.



Why Jesus is Coming Soon

~ Reason Four ~

Sudden Interest in Religion

– Even by Secular Journalists –
What's going on?

Dateline – March 2003. Magazine – Newsweek cover: “Bush and God.” Howard Fineman detailed the importance of morning devotion to the U.S. president, his frequent references to traditional Christian beliefs and values and gave a stunning report on Bible-study groups being conducted each day all over the White House since President Bush came to office. Fox News, Los Angeles Times and the New York Times are all devoting more time and space to the influence religion has in society. Nicholas Kristof, though avowedly antireligion, noted in a recent (3/4/03) New York Times editorial, the media’s “sneering tone about conservative Christianity” was now inexcusable.

Many “atheists” are admitting that Christianity improves lives, family, purpose and society. Historians are noting the impact this has had on women’s freedom, development of charities, hospitals, institutions of higher learning from music to literature and, most of all, on concepts of individual freedom.¹

Recently, Dr. Alvin J. Schmidt, historian, wrote: “With the increasing secularization of society and the current emphasis on multiculturalism – especially in matters of religion – the massive impact that Christianity has had on civilization is often overlooked, obscured, or even denied. For this and many other reasons, a powerful response is long overdue, not only in the interests

of defending the faith, but more urgently, to set the historical record straight.” Schmidt’s book should be required reading for our nation’s university journalism majors and for the editors and reporters on our nation’s newspapers, TV and radio networks. “There would be less ‘sneering’ at Christians among our nation’s journalists if they truly understood where their freedoms originated.” Schmidt said, “Those freedoms did not come from atheism or from Islam. They came from Christianity.”²

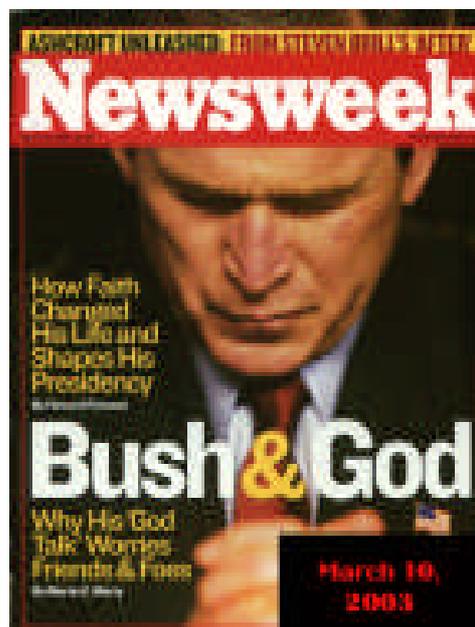
Christianity Today noted recently that key columnists around the country are beginning to realize there is a dearth of conversation regarding religion in newsrooms. Eric Burns from Fox News admitted he lacks a point of view and longed for help so he could take a stand.³

Rather intriguing has been the media’s religious focus on the seven astronauts who died in the recent shuttle accident. “Seven Heroes, Seven Faiths,” Beliefnet noted:

“The grieving are calling out to Jesus – and God and HaShem and Krishna. They are chanting passages from the New Testament, the Torah, Unitarian readings, and the Vedas.

“The crew of Columbia represents an extraordinary variety of faith traditions:

“Kalpana Chawla – Hindu and Sikh background
William McCool – Roman Catholic



Llan Ramon – Jewish
Rick Husband – Charismatic
Laurel Clark – Unitarian
David Brown – Episcopalian
Michael Anderson – Baptist

“This is just the way America is right now. Seek the best and the brightest, and you’ll invariably scoop up a great assortment of faiths.”⁴

Where is all this leading? For the United States to direct the world into religious activities (Revelation 13 – the land beast), there must come first an affirmative support for “spiritual” ideals. It must be convincingly clear they possess intrinsic value. Logically, this must be seen as a thread of societal virtue, even by the media. This will come about partially by the circumstances of need created from a declining economy and calamities. But an anticipatory need will crescendo – and has begun – because Satan realizes a great conflagration over spiritual loyalties is soon to begin. Religious interests must deceptively lean in his direction. Expectancy of a great revival of “primitive godliness” is on the horizon for God’s people. He anticipates that and is beginning to introduce a false societal religion. First, it will be expressed as a curious interest. Then as a passionate need.

“... and before the time for such a movement shall come [among God’s people], he will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power he will make it appear that God’s special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world.”⁵

Through Faith Based Initiatives, vouchers for religious charitable and educational services and the growing solicitation of counsel from religious institutions on political matters, a trend is underway that will not turn back.

This is being fueled by remarkable events throughout the United States. In Iowa the Newton Correctional facility has a unit of 210 inmates with unusual freedom and privileges. The inmates agreed to join InnerChange Freedom Initiative, designed to convert them to fundamental Christianity. This is a tax supported program. Chris Geil, director of the

program, said, “If you turn your life over to Jesus, you’ll have the tools to change your life.”⁶ The program is working and recidivism is down.⁷

The Christian Coalition is pouring funds into lobbying for religious laws in this country. As this “goes to press,” HR 235, one of their sponsoring bills, is gaining momentum. Dubbed the “Houses of Worship Free Speech,” it would make it possible for all churches, synagogues, mosques and houses of worship to become a staging area for political forums without any threat to tax status.

The Catholic Church is putting increasing “Christian conscience” pressure on Catholic politicians. They have recently come out with a significant document for national leaders, “The Participation of Catholics in Political Life.”⁸ Religious values are to be publically promoted.

Iowa buys new Bibles for each of its senators annually. Maryland spends \$5 million each year for textbooks that mainly help Catholic schools. Wayne Pederson, of the Center for Christian Statesmanship, was fired for suggesting the National Religious Broadcasters association should be spending more time on spreading the gospel than politicking. Dobson of Focus on the Family, lobbied for his firing.⁹ Bush has set a tone for revived religious thinking and devotion in America. Though we should not judge Bush’s personal commitment, his influence is raising peculiar fascination. For most, it will be a metaphysical curiosity. For some, investigative and heart changing.

It will nationally unify and ignite into a pseudorevival, but in the end become a flammable unyielding mixture of legislative religious enactments. As this religious trend heats up, new questions are even now being asked: “Who will certify what is religious?” “Who will certify religions?”¹⁰ “Will coercive religious laws soon follow?” That is what is happening in the InnerChange prison program. Miss a religious meeting or show a lack of interest in the tax supported Christian meeting, you’re back in the restricted area of prison. For now – to a committed Christian – these words from a U.S. president are heartwarming:

“Inaugural Address, Jan. 21, 2001: An angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm.

“Hours after Shuttle Tragedy, Feb. 1, 2003: ‘The crew of the shuttle Columbia did not return safely to earth; yet we can pray that all are safely home.’

“Speech to Congress, Sept. 20, 2001: ‘Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.’

“West Point Commencement, June 1, 2002: ‘We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name.’

“State of the Union, Jan. 29, 2003: The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world, it is God’s gift to humanity.’

“9-11 Remembrance, Sept. 11, 2002: ‘And the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it.’

“State of the Union, Jan. 29, 2003: ‘There’s power, wonder-working power, in the goodness and idealism and faith of the american people.’¹¹

Later, but not long from now, secularized religious interest will become a scurrilous prison for the remnant – the few who remain true to God.

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- ¹ Traditional Values Coalition, 3/6/03, www.traditionalvalues.org/print?sid=788
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- ³ www.christianitytoday.com/global/pf.cgi?/ct/2003/1009/21.0.html
- ⁴ www.beliefnet.com.
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- ⁶ *New York Times*, 4/2001.
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- ¹¹ *NewsWeek*, 3/10/03.



LIBERTY

IN THE

BALANCE

Pakistan's Christians Fear Backlash Over Association With West. New Delhi (CNSNews.com) – Already living in fear because of threats from Islamic militants, Pakistan's Christians are now urging their government to provide them with greater security, saying they expect their plight to worsen in the event of a war against Iraq.

“The U.S. is identified here as a Christian country, and Christians are targeted by terrorists to express their anger against America,” according to Samuel Azariah, a church leader in Lahore. *Religion Today*, 0203

According to ASSIST News Service, Christian leaders in the country of Georgia, a former Soviet state, have urged President Eduard Shevardnadze to end the “intolerable religious situation in the country,” after an attack against a church in the capital Tbilisi. As Christians were gathering to meet at the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia for the Day of Ecumenical Prayer, they were attacked by a well-organized group of hooligans led by a defrocked Orthodox priest. They penetrated the church building, raided the sanctuary, tore religious literature and forcefully occupied the church. The police apparently did little to provide security despite being warned about the service a few days earlier. VOM - USA

School Board Drops Bible Club Ban. Pressured by a religious discrimination lawsuit, school officials in a Colorado community decided last night to allow Bible clubs and other student-led groups to meet on school property. The Boulder Valley School Board voted 6-0 to revise a 19-year-old policy that banned from Boulder district schools student-formed religious and other clubs that weren't directly linked to curriculum, “The

Denver Post” reported. Two students who wanted to start a Bible club at Monarch High School filed suit last month targeting the old policy, saying it violated their First Amendment right to practice religion. Lawyers representing the two girls who sued will review the policy change before deciding whether to go ahead with the lawsuit, said American Center for Law and Justice spokesman Gene Kapp, the “Post” reported. The suit had noted that numerous other clubs, including a pro-gay group, had been approved that bore little relationship to the curriculum. *Charisma News*

Christian Retaliation Increasing in Nigeria.

Seventeen Christians from various church denominations in Aba, a city in Nigeria's southern Abia state, were arrested in late January over reprisal attacks on Muslims. Sources said Christians were reacting to “incessant” assaults on Christians in northern Nigeria by Muslim extremists. Abia state police authorities reported that the central mosque and several Muslim businesses were damaged in the January 18-19 attacks. Clashes on January 11 in Central Nigeria's Plateau state left two Muslims and one Christian dead. Violence between Muslims and Christians flared up there in September 2001 and escalated throughout 2002. In November, religious riots ignited by a newspaper article led to the death of an estimated 1,000 people and the destruction of some 125 churches in the city of Kaduna. Both Muslim and Christian leaders express frustration over the conflict. “The nation is sitting on a religious time bomb that can explode any moment with devastating consequences,” said Kaduna state governor Alhaji Ahmed Makarfi. *Compass*

Schools 'Hostile' to Prayer Risk Funds. Schools that prohibit students from praying outside the classroom or do not allow teachers to hold religious meetings among themselves risk losing federal funds. Issued by the Department of Education last Friday, the guidelines reflect the Bush administration's desire to ensure that schools give teachers and students as much freedom to pray as court rulings have allowed, the Associated Press (AP) reported. Supporters say the directive may clarify the debate and free students and teachers to express themselves without fear of reprisal. "These guidelines on prayer and religious expression will be a blessing to students and teachers," said Mathew Staver, president of the Christian-based Liberty Counsel. "The message is simple — school officials must stop discriminating against students and teachers who chose to pray or engage in religious expression." Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, disagreed: "The Bush administration is clearly trying to push the envelope on behalf of prayer in public schools." Under federal law, the burden is now on schools to prove they have no policy that prevents constitutionally protected prayer. The department's new guidelines make clear that schools can lose their federal money if they don't comply, the AP reported. Charisma News

A Colorado station affiliated with National Public Radio (NPR) has come under fire for rebuffing a Christian dentist's sponsorship. According to "The Durango Herald," Ignacio-based KSUT, which regularly provides on-air statements for sponsors, recently rejected Glenn Rutherford's dental practice motto, "Gently Restoring the Health God Created." "I was called and told that there was a meeting of the [radio's] staff and they unanimously agreed that I can't put the word 'God' in our sponsorship spot," said Rutherford, noting that the motto is on his office's letterhead and business cards. KSUT officials declined to comment on the matter.

American Family Association chairman Don Wildmon said KSUT and NPR are taxpayer-funded, and this type of discrimination is typical of their hostility toward Christianity. "KSUT and NPR should make their motto, 'If you are a Christian, we don't want your money... we don't want your support,'" Wildmon said. "Every Christian business owner in America should immediately pull his or her foreigners. Charisma News

Last month, a shadowy militant group named Jesh Ahle-i-Algiblat al-Jihadi al-Sari al-Alami distributed pamphlets demanding that Christian Pakistanis convert to Islam or face death. The group said every Muslim had a duty to take such action against Christians. It also called on Muslims to attack and kill Christians. Religion Today, 0203

Muslim Cleric Faces Possible Life Imprisonment for Terrorism AI Webb. (RNS) The first Muslim cleric to go on trial in a British criminal court has been convicted of soliciting the murders of "unbelievers," including Jews, Hindus and Americans, with chemical weapons and faces the possibility of life in prison. A jury in London also found Abdullah el-Faisal — a self-styled "sheikh" born 39 years ago in Jamaica as plain William Forest — guilty of preaching racial hatred in a series of videotaped recordings. It marked the first time in more than 100 years that anyone had been charged under Britain's 1861 Offenses Against the Persons Act of soliciting murder without a specific victim — a crime that can mean life imprisonment when he is sentenced March 7. During his trial, videotapes were played showing el-Faisal preaching that "every Muslim hates the unbeliever," that "we want to see their extermination" — and he singled out Americans, Jews and Hindus. "One of the truths about Islam," the bearded cleric said, "is that Allah said, Kill them.' You can use anything — even chemical weapons." Religion Today, 0203

CALAMITY BULLETIN

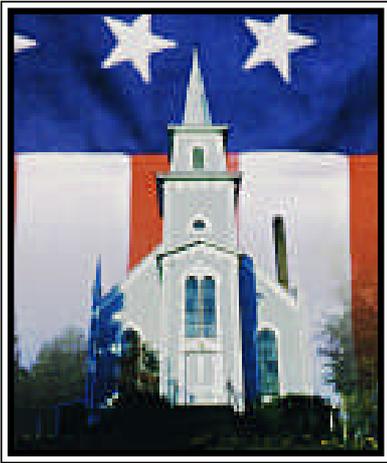
(February 2003 Calamities – with damage)

CALAMITY WATCH TOTALS – FEBRUARY 2003

	February	Yr to Date	Avg./Mo.
Deaths	630	12,993	6,497
Homes destroyed	26,984	711,698	355,849
Resume' February:	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Homes Destroyed</u>	
Cyclones	22	1,728	
Rain/Snow	20		
Storms (general)	204	1,150	
Earthquakes	268	18,964	
Floods	72	5,053	
Drought	32		
Landslides	23	89	
	<hr/> 630	<hr/> 12,993	

February Extremes:

Australia – Lowest rainfall on record (worst affected area – New South Wales)
United States – Worst storms in decades



Focus on the Sabbath

[This section is devoted to news, articles, laws, sermons and political events that draw attention to the Sabbath. We are especially interested in how the Christian world views a weekly “rest day.” This is to help our readers have insight into what others think regarding the fourth commandment – a pivotal prophetic end-time issue.]

What is the Christian Sabbath?

PART I

by Peter Ditzel (Protestant Bible Expositor)

Have you ever wondered what day Christians are to keep? Saturday? Sunday? Are we to keep the day as a Sabbath or as a Lord’s Day? Or maybe there is no day for Christians to keep. This might sound like a relatively minor issue. But this question, simple as it sounds, has divided Christianity into four camps, each supporting its own view.

What’s more, three of these camps tend to judge others for not keeping the same day they do. We are to defend the faith and expose error. But does the Bible authorize the judging of others over the issue of days? This article will answer these questions from the Bible. Whatever your view, please read this entire article to get the full picture.

These four views concerning the day Christians are to keep are:

1) The Sunday-Sabbath View. Christians are to keep the Sabbath because it is part of the moral law, but the day (Saturday) on which it was kept in the Old Testament was merely ceremonial and was changed to Sunday with the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Sunday morning. Those who hold this view sometimes call Sunday the Lord’s Day, but because they view it as a Sabbath, their use of this term does not put them into the Lord’s Day view discussed below. Presbyterians, Reformed Christians, Methodists, and some Baptists, among others, have historically held the Sunday-Sabbath view. Today, however, only the more conservative churches in these denominations adhere—often quite adamantly—to Sabbath (Sunday) keeping. The rest seem to view the

practice as a quaint custom of the past that has little relevance to today.

2) The Seventh-day Sabbath View. Christians are to keep the seventh day (Saturday) as the Sabbath as commanded in the Ten Commandments. This view is held, among others, by Seventh-day Adventists; the Seventh-day Baptists; the Church of God (Seventh Day); the Church of God 7th Day; and the various splinter groups of the Worldwide Church of God that adhere to the tenets of Herbert W. Armstrong, such as the Philadelphia Church of God, the United Church of God, the Living Church of God, and the Church of God, International.

3) The Lord’s Day View. The Sabbath day belongs to the Old Testament and is past, but Christ, by His resurrection and appearances to His disciples, instituted a new day called the Lord’s Day. The Lord’s Day is Sunday. Those who hold this view do not always agree as to how to observe the Lord’s Day. The spectrum ranges from those who treat the day as if it were a Sabbath in everything but name (and who are sometimes judgmental of those at the other end of the spectrum) to those who believe that it is the day on which we should go to church, but that it does not otherwise affect what we do outside of church (these people tend not to be judgmental). The Lord’s Day view is held by most who do not fall into the first two views. Some people hold a variation of the Lord’s Day view in which they say the Lord’s Day was not instituted in the Bible, but should be kept because it was an early church tradition.

The Lord's Day view, by the way, is the official position of both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches (the Eastern church also gives some special regard to the seventh day [Saturday] as the day on which God rested from His works of creation and the day on which Christ rested in death in the tomb). In reality, however, the Roman church has wavered and continues to waver between the Lord's Day view and the Sunday-Sabbath view. Cæsarius of Arles led a movement in the Roman church in the sixth century that taught a form of the Sunday-Sabbath view, but the church officially opposed this. Albertus Magnus (1193–1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) also held to a Sunday-Sabbath view. Pope John Paul II has called on Catholics to return to a Sunday rest, while at the same time saying that the practices of the Jewish Sabbath are gone. An interesting article in this regard can be found at <http://www.catholic-homeschool.com/Library/Articles/Sunday/sunday.html>.

4) The God's Rest View. This position is somewhat similar to the third view in agreeing that the requirement to keep a Sabbath day (whether seventh day or Sunday) ended with the Old Covenant. The difference between this view and the Lord's Day view is that those who hold this fourth view believe that the Bible does not enjoin Christians to observe any day. The Sabbath was a shadow and a part of the law pointing to Christ. Christians have entered God's true rest and no longer need the shadow. Also, Jesus did not institute a new day called the Lord's Day for Christians to keep. This is very much a minority view held only by small groups of Christians.

The Sunday-Sabbath View

The view that the Sabbath was transferred to Sunday, and that Christians are obligated to keep this day as a Sabbath, is called semisabbatarianism. In the thirteenth century, the scholastic theologian Albertus Magnus explained how this transfer from one day to another could have happened. He said that the command in the Old Testament to rest upon a Sabbath was moral and perpetual, but the day of the week on which this rest was commanded to the Jews was only a symbol subject to change. Those who today hold to a Sunday-Sabbath view still use this argument.

The Fourth Commandment, as found in Exodus 20:8–11 states: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy

work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Do these verses allow for the Sabbath to be transferred to Sunday?

Notice that the command says, "the seventh day is the sabbath." It does not say one day in seven is a Sabbath. It specifically names which day is the Sabbath—the seventh. It goes on to explain why that day is the day on which to rest: because God made the heavens and the earth in six days and rested the seventh. The commandment makes no distinction between the rest as moral and the day as symbol. Since the command actually defines the Sabbath as the seventh day, it is impossible to divide the command by saying the Sabbath is moral law, but the seventh day is ceremonial law. To say that another day—the first day—could be the Sabbath is to do violence to the commandment.

The Sabbath command is repeated in Deuteronomy 5, where again it is stated that the seventh day is the Sabbath. It is also repeated in Exodus 31, where it says, "the seventh [day] is the sabbath of rest" (verse 15), and "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (verse 17). These verses all intimately connect the seventh day with the Sabbath rest. The two are inseparable. As far as these passages are concerned, one must conclude that as long as there is a day to be kept as a Sabbath, it must be the seventh day.

Of course, those who believe that Sunday is now the Sabbath have additional arguments to support their case. Central to these is Jesus' resurrection on Sunday. (The Seventh Day Adventist Church also teaches that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, after resting in death in the grave on the Sabbath. But most other seventh-day Sabbath keepers believe Jesus was resurrected on the seventh day. For the Bible's answer to this view, see "[3 Days + 3 Nights = 1 False Doctrine](#).") Other evidence offered includes the facts that Jesus, after His resurrection, met with His disciples on the first day of the week (John 20:19); that He met with them again "after eight days" (John 20:26), taken to mean a week later;

that, during a visit from Paul, the disciples met to break bread (take the Lord's supper) on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7); and that Paul ordered everyone in the Corinthian church to "lay by him in store" on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2). This article will mention these Scriptures again in discussing the Lord's Day view. Here, only those aspects of them that specifically pertain to their being used as evidence supporting semisabatarianism will be addressed.

Does Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week make that day a Sabbath? Proponents say that because Jesus' death and resurrection make possible God's free gift of grace, so that we can now rest in grace instead of doing the works of the law, and because the Sabbath pictures God's rest, Jesus' resurrection on Sunday shows that God was making Sunday the Sabbath day. Does the Bible say this? No. The Bible nowhere states that Jesus' resurrection changed the day of the Sabbath. In fact, as we have seen, the Old Testament Sabbath command does not allow for such a change.

Can we logically deduce that the day on which Jesus was resurrected became the Sabbath day? It is certainly true that Jesus' death and resurrection make possible God's gift of grace. Jesus' death paid the penalty for the sins—past, present, and future—of all believers. His resurrection showed that those sins are truly gone because if He still bore them, He would have remained dead in those sins. It is also true that because of this, we are no longer bound to try to do the works of the law for our salvation, but can rest in God's grace. Because of what Jesus has done, we enter God's rest (more about this later). It is also true that the Sabbath day was a picture of that rest. But there is absolutely no reason to conclude that because Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, that Sunday became the Sabbath day. There is simply no logical connection. As a Lutheran minister, the late Leo Gruendemann, says of the proponents of the Sunday-Sabbath view, "Their conclusion therefore to say the least is not even a logical deduction" (<http://www.wls.wels.net/library/Essays/Authors/G/GruendemanOld/GrundemanOld.rtf>). Semisabatarianism requires us to assume that God is using various hints to show us that He changed the Sabbath day to Sunday. But there is no reason to make such an assumption, and God does not change clear commands through vague hints.

In fact, there is biblical evidence that shows that even after Christ's resurrection, the Sabbath remained the seventh day. Matthew 28:1 describes the scene after Jesus' resurrection: "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." Notice that it says that the Sabbath was ending as the first day of the week was beginning. Even after Jesus' resurrection, the first day of the week was not the Sabbath. Matthew wrote this several years after the resurrection. If he understood Sunday to be the new Christian Sabbath, why did he not take the opportunity of explaining it in the context of the resurrection? And Mark 16:1–2 agrees: "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." Notice that on the morning of the first day of the week—Sunday—the Sabbath was past. Also, there are numerous places in the book of Acts where the day on which the Jews met in the synagogue—the seventh day—is called the Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 15:21; 17:2; 18:4).

Nowhere in the entire Bible is Sunday or the first day of the week ever called the Sabbath. The reason is that it is not the Sabbath.

The Seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath View

If the Old Testament Sabbath commands do not allow for the separation of the day of the week on which the Sabbath was to be observed from its actual observation, and if nothing in the New Testament states or logically implies that the Sabbath was changed to another day, then the Sabbath day must still be the seventh day. The question that must be asked then is, Are Christians supposed to keep the Sabbath day?

Both sabbatarians (seventh-day Sabbath keepers) and semisabatarians (Sunday-Sabbath keepers) will almost invariably try to prove the perpetuity of the Sabbath by saying that it began at the foundation of the world as a creation ordinance given to all humankind. To support this claim, they cite Genesis 2:2–3: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God

created and made.” But we should notice that these verses do not contain a command to keep the seventh day as a Sabbath. These verses do not tell us that God told Adam and Eve or anyone else (before He told the Israelites just after the Exodus) to keep the seventh day as a Sabbath. These verses do not tell us that God even informed Adam and Eve or anyone else (before He told the Israelites just after the Exodus) that God rested on the seventh day and sanctified it. Context is important in understanding the Bible, so it is important to understand that Moses wrote Genesis 2 in the context of the Exodus, centuries after the Creation, just after he led Israel out of Egypt. He wrote this account in the context of the law being given at Sinai.

The connection of Genesis 2:2–3 to Exodus 20:11 cannot be overlooked, but neither should it be misunderstood. From the Creation to Exodus 16, the Sabbath is never commanded nor even mentioned. We must conclude that the reason is that it had not yet been instituted. The Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write Genesis 2:2–3 to show why the seventh day was the day God later commanded the Israelites to rest on. This information about God resting on the seventh day is repeated in Exodus 20:11. By observing the Sabbath, they were keeping a type of the rest God had observed at the Creation as described in Genesis 2.

Another common argument of Sabbath keepers is that the Fourth Commandment says, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). If the Sabbath was something new, what was God telling them to remember? Only two possible answers fit the biblical evidence. 1) God was telling them to remember from that day onward. If I am giving a man directions, I might say, “When you get to Main Street, remember to turn right.” This in no way implies that this is information he should have known before. It merely means that he should remember this information at the time he needs it. God may have started the Sabbath command with “remember” because he knew the Israelites would have a tendency to forget it. The reason God ordered the Israelites to make fringes for their garments (Numbers 15:38–39) shows us the Israelites had trouble remembering the commands God gave them at Sinai. 2) Another possible explanation for God using the word “remember” may be that He was telling them to remember the events of Exodus 16. This chapter is an account of how God introduced

the Sabbath to the Israelites through a physical example, much as one might teach a child. He told them that He would give them manna for six days, that they would have enough for each day, and that they were not to keep any overnight or it would spoil. The one exception would be on the sixth day, when they would gather enough for two days. They were to prepare this two-days’ worth on the sixth day, and they would be able to keep some overnight for the seventh day. They would not gather manna on the seventh day because it was the Sabbath. Exodus 16:23 is the first place in the Bible that the word Sabbath is found: “And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.” In Exodus 20:8, God may have been telling the Israelites to remember the lesson they learned in Exodus 16. Considering the lack of any evidence of the institution of the Sabbath before Exodus 16, there is no reason to assume that God wanted the Israelites to remember the Sabbath from some earlier period.

In Nehemiah 9:14 we read that God “made known unto them [the Israelites] thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant.” This Scripture is important because it does not say that the Israelites knew of the Sabbath already and that God used Moses to remind them of it. It says that God, by the hand of Moses, made the Sabbath known to the Israelites. The Sabbath was first introduced to the Israelites at the time of Moses, over two thousand years after the Creation.

Ezekiel says something similar: “Wherefore I caused them [Israel] to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them” (Ezekiel 20:10–12). Here again we find that God gave the children of Israel the Sabbath after He brought them out of Egypt. He says nothing about their knowing this before that time and His having to remind them.

An interesting point in this regard is found in Numbers 15:32–36: “And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that

gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.” The Sabbath command was so new that the people did not know how to punish someone who broke it.

There is another biblical proof that the Sabbath could not have been a creation ordinance given to all humanity. In Exodus 31:12–17, we read, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.” God says the Sabbath is a sign between Him and the children of Israel. Ezekiel 20:12 and 20 also say that God gave Israel the Sabbath as a sign between Him and them. If the Sabbath had been given to all humanity at Creation, it would not be unique to Israel and, therefore, it could not act as a special sign between God and Israel.

Additionally, in Deuteronomy 5, in the listing of the Ten Commandments found in that chapter, God gives the Israelites a reason other than His rest at Creation for keeping the Sabbath. He says that because He brought them out of Egypt, therefore, He commands them to keep the Sabbath (verse 15). So God, in the Ten Commandments, gives two reasons why He gave the children of Israel the Sabbath. One is because he rested on the seventh day at Creation (Exodus 20:11). The other is because He brought

them out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). This second reason, God’s bringing Israel out of Egypt, happened only to the Israelites and is further evidence that the Sabbath day is specific to that nation.

Based on the above, then, we must conclude that the belief that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, given at the Creation to all humanity, is an unfounded assumption. There is no biblical evidence to support this idea, and there is much biblical evidence against it.

Seventh-day keepers also see another reason in Exodus 31:12–17 to believe in the perpetuity of the Sabbath. What is pointed out is that the Sabbath is said to be “a perpetual covenant” and “a sign...for ever.” The Hebrew word translated “perpetual” and “for ever” is ‘ôlâm. (From this point forward, I will simply use olam for this Hebrew word, as not all browsers will display the correct characters and diacritics.) Although this word, when the context calls for it, can mean eternal, there are many places in the Bible where it clearly means for a simple duration, or for a long time.

For example, on the subject of a servant who wants to remain with his master, Deuteronomy 15:16-17 states: “And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee...Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever [olam].” A mortal human being cannot serve another mortal human being for all eternity. “For ever” in this verse is limited by the human life span of the parties involved. In Leviticus 6:20-22 “is the offering of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer unto the Lord in the day when he is anointed... And the priest of his sons that is anointed in his stead shall offer it: it is a statute for ever [olam] unto the Lord; it shall be wholly burnt.” Most Christians would agree that this offering is no longer required. Yet the Bible says it was to be “for ever.” In Exodus 27:20-21 and Leviticus 24:2-3, God orders that the lamps in the Tabernacle were to be kept burning continually (olam). This was to be a statute “for ever” (olam). Are these lamps burning today? No. In Leviticus 24, the instructions concerning the showbread (bread of the Presence) are described as “everlasting” and “perpetual.” All of these examples, and many others we could cite, use the same Hebrew word translated in Exodus 31 as “perpetual” and “for ever.”

A reexamination of Exodus 31 reveals that the Sabbath was to be a sign between God and the

children of Israel throughout their generations—that it was to be a “perpetual” covenant, but this does not have to mean a covenant literally lasting for eternity. In Deuteronomy 5:2, we read that “God made a covenant” with the children of Israel “in Horeb” (Mount Sinai). From the verses that follow, we see that the Ten Commandments were that covenant. That covenant includes the Sabbath command (verses 12–15), which Exodus 31 says is a sign between God and the children of Israel. It is never said to be a sign between God and anyone else. No one else is ever commanded to keep the Sabbath.

God’s covenant with Israel given at Mount Sinai is the Old Covenant, and it has been replaced by the New Covenant: “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:7–13).

You can search the New Testament (New Covenant) from beginning to end, and you will find nine of the Ten Commandments from the Old Covenant repeated. But you will never find the Sabbath command repeated. The only people in the New Testament who try to enforce Sabbath keeping and who accuse others of Sabbath breaking are the Pharisees and their ilk.

As mentioned earlier, many Scriptures in Acts mention the seventh-day Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 15:21; 17:2; 18:4). Certainly, these show that the Sabbath remained the seventh day, even after Jesus’

resurrection. But they do not, as the promoters of the seventh-day Sabbath would like them to, indicate that Christians were obligated to keep the day.

In Acts 13, beginning with verse 14, Luke tells of how Paul and his companions went to the synagogue on the Sabbath in Pisidian Antioch and Paul preached. Afterward, “the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath”(verse 42).

“And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God” (verse 44). We might wonder why Paul would wait a whole week in order to preach to the Gentiles the next Sabbath. Some might say that this was because Paul observed the Sabbath. But the Bible does not at all indicate this. Instead, the Bible says that the congregation included both Jews and God-fearing proselytes (verses 26 and 43). The Gentiles invited Paul to preach the next Sabbath and Paul heeded this invitation and waited until the next Sabbath to speak to them as an assembled congregation. Also, as Paul and Barnabas revealed after the Jews rejected them (verse 45), “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (verse 46). Paul waited until the Sabbath to speak, not because he observed the Sabbath, but because that was when he was invited to do so. Also, that was when he could speak to the assembled Jews, to whom he believed he had a responsibility to preach the Gospel first. There is no evidence that Paul waited until the Sabbath to speak because he kept the Sabbath.

Seventh-day Sabbath keepers sometimes point to Acts 17:2 and 18:4 as showing that Paul kept the Sabbath. Instead, these verses merely show that Paul used the Jews’ assembling in the synagogue on the Sabbath as an opportunity to preach to them while they were all assembled in one place.

It should not be ignored—in fact, it should be seen as highly significant—that while sabbatarians and semisabbatarians busy themselves accusing the church and the world of Sabbath breaking, often saying it is the number one sin for which God will punish us—neither Jesus, nor Paul, nor any of the apostles ever once list Sabbath breaking as a sin. Jesus, Paul, and the other apostles and writers of the New Testament never list Sabbath breaking as a sin.

Myriads of sins are condemned in the New Testament, but Sabbath breaking—despite its supposed importance—is not one of them. One would think that the Gentile churches, unfamiliar with God’s law and in need of being corrected in Paul’s letters on so many other points, would have been in need of some admonition concerning the Sabbath at least once. But no, not one such admonition is to be found. Why? To those who view the Bible with an unbiased mind, the answer is inescapable: God never intended the New Testament church to keep a Sabbath day.

Seventh day keepers often quote Martin Luther (1483–1546) out of context, giving the false impression that Luther agreed that Andreas Carlstadt’s (ca. 1480–1541) sabbatarian views were right. This is what is usually quoted: “Indeed, if Carlstadt were to write further about the Sabbath, Sunday would have to give way, and the Sabbath - that is to say, Saturday - must be kept holy.” But now read the quote in context: “Indeed, if Carlstadt were to write further about the Sabbath, Sunday would have to give way, and the Sabbath - that is to say, Saturday - must be kept holy; he would truly make us Jews in all things, and we should come to be circumcised: for that is true, and cannot be denied, that he who deems it necessary to keep one law of Moses, and keeps it as the law of Moses, must deem all necessary, and keep them all” (“Against the Celestial Prophets” as quoted in *The Life of Martin Luther in Pictures*, p. 147). Carlstadt was trying to impose seventh-day Sabbath keeping, but Luther saw that the Bible did not support it. So we see that Luther, far from admitting Carlstadt to be correct, was rightly using the principles of Galatians 5:2–4 to show that Carlstadt was Judaizing, or making people debtors to the law.

The Lord’s Day View

According to Lord’s Day adherents, Christians are not obligated to keep Saturday or Sunday as the Sabbath. But, this view further asserts, because His resurrection occurred on the first day of the week, Jesus instituted a new day, the Lord’s Day. The evidence used to support this view contains many of the same Scriptures used to support Sunday as a Sabbath.

Central to this theory is Jesus Christ’s resurrection on Sunday. Adherents to the Lord’s Day view say that by His resurrection, Jesus instituted a

new day that the church should observe. But the Bible never states that Jesus instituted such a day. There is no more reason to assume that Jesus instituted a new day called the Lord’s Day with His resurrection than there is to assume that He changed the Sabbath day with His resurrection. It is not stated, and it is not logically implied.

Revelation 1:10 is often cited as evidence for the observance of Sunday as the Lord’s Day: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.” Many scholars have debated the meaning of “the Lord’s day” in this verse. Does it refer to Sunday, the first day of the week? It is true that in post-apostolic Christian writings, “the Lord’s Day” is unmistakably used as the name of the first day of the week. The earliest of these writings seems to be the apocryphal Gospel of Peter (which was not really written by the apostle Peter), which dates to about A.D. 150. But does this mean that “the Lord’s day” in Revelation 1:10 also means the first day of the week, or Sunday?

An important principle of biblical exegesis reveals that it does not. This principle is that the Bible interprets itself. There is absolutely nothing in the Bible that equates “the Lord’s day” with Sunday, the first day of the week, or any day of the week. The closest words in the Bible to “the Lord’s day” are “the day of the Lord.” This exact phrase is found twenty-two times in the Old Testament and four times in the New. “The day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:8) and “the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6) are similar. “The day of the Lord” can refer to the church era, but especially seems to refer to the time of Christ’s second coming. Since this is precisely what Revelation is about, it makes perfect sense for John to say that he was in the spirit, in vision, on the day of the Lord (the Lord’s day) when he heard behind him a great voice that sounded like a trumpet (compare Joel 2:1–2). In other words, John was describing the period that his vision was about, the time of the Lord’s return. He was not describing the day of the week on which he received the vision.

And what should we make of the fact that the post-apostolic church called Sunday the Lord’s Day? Is this not evidence that supports the Lord’s Day view? No, it is not, because it is not biblical evidence. The evidence dates to a time after the Bible was written. Therefore, we cannot use it as a rule for doctrine or practice. Certainly, the church

may have begun keeping Sunday as the Lord's Day in commemoration of the Lord's resurrection. But it did so of its own choice, not by any biblical command or by any valid deduction that could be made from the Bible that it ought to keep such a day.

But what of the Scriptures in John that show Jesus appearing to the disciples on the first day of the week? Do these Scriptures mean that Jesus was establishing the first day of the week as the Lord's Day? Suppose the President of the United States signed into law on a Wednesday a bill that abolished the federal income tax. He then gave a speech later that day, and he gave another speech the following Wednesday. Must we conclude from this that the President wanted every Wednesday to be kept as a national holiday? Of course not. We would know that, since he is the President, if he wanted Wednesday kept as a holiday, he would declare Wednesday to be a holiday. Likewise, if Jesus wanted us to start keeping Sunday, why didn't He say so? Jesus' appearance on the first day of the week in John 20:19 and 26 can in no way logically imply that He wants the first day of the week to be kept as a special day.

Acts 20:7 says that the disciples came together to break bread on the first day of the week. Some people take this as evidence that the apostolic church kept Sunday. But another Scripture in Acts says they met daily: "And they [the church] continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.... And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:42 and 46). It should be obvious that there can be no reason to single out the first day of the week in Acts 20:7 when Acts 2:46 says they were doing the same thing every day.

The events on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 are sometimes used to say that God was putting His stamp of approval on Sunday. Pentecost was an annual feast of the Jews. Because of the way it was reckoned (see Leviticus 23:15–16), Pentecost (which means "fiftieth") always fell on the first day of the week. Pentecost was the fiftieth day from the day after the Sabbath (in other words, the Sunday) that fell during the feast of Unleavened Bread. On that Sunday during the feast of Unleavened Bread, a sheaf of barley was cut from the field, threshed, parched over a fire, ground, and then presented before the

Lord in the temple as the "wave sheaf." All of this was a type of Jesus Christ who rose from the dead on the Sunday during the feast of Unleavened Bread and presented Himself to the Father. Fifty days later, the Jews observed Pentecost by waving before the Lord two loaves that specifically had to be baked with leaven (Leviticus 23:15–17). Leviticus 23:17 says, "they are the firstfruits unto the Lord." These two loaves represent the firstfruits of the church. (Since leaven was typical of sin, false doctrine, and corrupt practices [Matthew 16:6, 12; Mark 8:15; 1 Corinthians 5:2, 6–8; Galatians 5:4–9], we see that these two loaves did not represent Christ, who was sinless [2 Corinthians 5:21].) In Acts 2, we see that on that Pentecost, Jews from many parts of the world became the firstfruits of the church, and this cosmopolitan aspect was a type of what was yet to come when Gentiles were added to the church. God began the New Testament church on Pentecost because He had planned Pentecost from its inception as an Old Covenant picture of the day we read of in Acts 2. Nothing in Acts 2 tells us to keep Sunday as the Lord's Day.

Some think 1 Corinthians 16:1–2 describes a collection to be taken up during a Sunday church service. But this is an assumption that is not supported by the evidence. This was not a weekly offering collected during church services, but a special collection for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Paul does not say to bring an offering to church on the first day of the week. He says that on the first day of the week, each person is to "lay by him in store." Clearly, the setting aside of this gift of charity for the Jerusalem saints was to take place in each individual's house. The Revised English Bible renders verse 2: "Every Sunday each of you is to put aside and keep by him whatever he can afford, so that there need be no collecting when I come."

Why did Paul choose the first day of the week? While some say that this was because it was a day of public worship, this is only conjecture. We simply do not know. We might suggest that it was to make it a priority in their week's duties.

So, while the resurrected Jesus appeared to His disciples on the first day of the week, He appeared to them on other days as well (John 21; 1 Corinthians 15:6–8). And, while there is an account of an occasion when the disciples met on the first day of the week, the Bible says they met daily. The bottom line is that nowhere does the Bible say the church is

to observe Sunday or any other day as the particular day of worship or as the Lord's Day. This is despite the fact that the Old Testament clearly defines the days Israel was to observe. If there are days Christians are to observe, why doesn't the New Testament clearly define them? We must conclude that the observing of Sunday as the Lord's Day originated not by the command of the Bible but by the will of the people in post-apostolic times.

<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/christiansabbath.html>

[Part II to follow in next issue.]

